

First Person Passion Narrative According to St. Mark Mark 14:1--15:47

Six Characters: **Woman Who Anointed Jesus**
 Peter
 Pilate
 Centurion

Woman Who Anointed Jesus

I love the smell of the alabaster oil. When I streak it through my hair and smooth it out over my skin, the fragrance fills the air. It is expensive oil imported from India, so I use it for only the most important of occasions.

I was among the crowd when Jesus came into Jerusalem. It was like a great festival or parade with Jesus leading the way. How excited we were because he was a great man--a teacher, a healer, a preacher, perhaps even a king. And so we cut branches from the fields and put them on the road and shouted "hosanna" because we believed he was the chosen one from God.

A few days later, I learned that Jesus was visiting the home of Simon. Simon used to be a leper, but Jesus healed him. I found Jesus seated at a table, and because I knew Jesus was a special man, I thought it was appropriate to give him a special gift. So, I took my vial of expensive oil and I gently poured some on his head. It was the finest gift I could give him.

Little did I know that I would cause such a ruckus! Some were very angry that I was "wasting" such expensive ointment when I could have sold it and given the money to the poor. I was about to run away in shame, when Jesus said, "Leave her alone. You will always have the opportunity to show kindness to the poor, but *I* will not always be with you. She has done a beautiful thing for me--she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. For her kindness to me this day, she will be remembered by all."

My heart soared! He appreciated my gift! I didn't know what this talk of anointing his body for burial was about, but it was clear that he appreciated *me*. I do believe he is God's anointed one and I'm glad we shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Peter

I am among the closest to the Lord. He is my master; he is my friend. My name is Peter.

Jesus instructed us to make arrangements so that we could celebrate the Passover. We gathered in a large, second-level room, and there we ate the meal of remembrance of how God saved the Hebrews of old from Egyptian bondage. How good it was to eat and drink and celebrate the deliverance of God with our Master.

Jesus was greatly troubled that night, however. He said that one of us would betray him. We ignored him at first. He broke bread and said, "This is my body." He had us all drink from a cup and said, "This is my blood of the covenant." And then he said it again, "You will all desert me."

I decided that was enough of that kind of talk. We were his trusted disciples and friends. We would stand with Jesus through thick and thin, so I tried to assure Jesus, "I will never desert you, Lord."

He replied, "No Peter, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

I promised I would not deny him; the other disciples said the same.

We then went to the garden. Jesus was quite troubled, so he told us to stand watch while he went off by himself to pray. Well, we had just eaten, my stomach was full, it had been a long day, and I and my companions dozed off.

Out of a sound sleep, Jesus shook me and said, "Simon, could you not keep awake even one hour?" I was so embarrassed. But it happened a second time--we fell asleep and Jesus had to wake us again. But this time, we awoke to a crowd with swords and clubs. Judas walked up to Jesus, addressed him as "Teacher," and kissed him.

Immediately, they grabbed Jesus. One of our men took a sword and whacked off the ear of the high priest's slave, but Jesus stopped the emerging battle and submitted to the arrest. Deprived of a fight, fear filled us all and we ran away.

While Jesus was being questioned before the high priest and beaten by the guards, I was trying to blend in with the night, but people kept asking me if I knew Jesus. "No," I said repeatedly--I was scared, defensive, and I didn't want to be arrested too!

When the rooster crowed, I remembered what Jesus said, dropped to my knees, and wept.

Pilate

It was early Saturday morning when I was rudely awakened. As governor of Judea, I, Pilate, should be able to set my own hours. But the priests, elders, and scribes demanded a trial for a man whom they accused of claiming to be Messiah and King.

Now look, I didn't care if Jesus claimed to be a Messiah--that's a religious concern that the Council of the Jews would have to deal with. But if Jesus claimed to be king, this would be a serious matter because only Caesar determines who is to be a king in his domain. If Jesus claims to be a king, he is a traitor and subject to the charge of treason.

So, I asked him straight out, "Are you the King of the Jews?" But Jesus didn't give me a direct answer in return, he said, "You say so." And then he wouldn't say another word.

Because it was the Passover festival, and because I wanted to find favor with my subjects, it was my practice to release a prisoner to show the good will and mercy of their governor. But this year, I decided to have a little fun. I knew that the religious authorities hated Jesus, but that he was very popular with the people, so I shouted out to the crowd, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

I was surprised at the resourcefulness of the chief priests and at the fickleness of the crowd. The religious leaders walked through the people and got them all stirred up so that they started shouting to release a thief named Barabbas instead of Jesus. And when I asked what I should do with the one called "King of the Jews," they screamed out in a frenzy, "Crucify him!" I challenged them by asking what evil Jesus had done to deserve death, but they screamed out all the more, "Crucify him!"

So, seeing that I could please the whim of the crowd, I had Jesus whipped and ordered him to be crucified.

The Centurion

I am a professional soldier, a centurion, and it was my job to carry out Pilate's orders.

In battle, 100 men serve under me. I also get special assignments such as carrying out the death penalty. My men typically torture those condemned to death, and Jesus was no exception. He was whipped repeatedly as Pilate had ordered, and because he was known as the King of the Jews, a crown was made of thorns and crushed into his skull; a purple cloak was draped around his bloodied back. He was the object of taunting, and my men bowed before him in mockery when they weren't spitting on him or striking him.

Like the others put to death, Jesus was made to carry his own cross. Jesus was so weak, however, that a man from the crowd was forced to carry the cross for him. On the outskirts of town is Golgatha, a hill that resembles a skull. There Jesus was nailed to a cross between two criminals.

Those who passed by laughed at Jesus and cried out, "Save yourself and come down from the cross!" The religious leaders joined in the mocking too, "Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe."

It was a long day as we waited for those condemned to suffer and die. At noon when the sun is the highest overhead, the sky became very dark. It was eerie and unnatural. I had heard about this Jesus--how he was wise in the ways of God, how he taught with authority, how he worked miracles and proclaimed God's kingdom. I wondered, what the darkness might mean. I wondered how Jesus could remain silent in the face of jeering and ridicule. I wondered if the rumors of a special relationship with God that I had heard about Jesus were true.

After six hours of hanging on the cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There amid mocking, darkness and loneliness, Jesus gave out a loud cry and breathed his last. There in his death, I could see his innocence.

I'm told that at that very moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. I was overcome with a power that was greater than myself. In the silent power of death, another power arose within me and I said, as a man possessed by something holy: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

And I believe it.

When I reported to Pilate that Jesus was in fact dead, the governor gave a man named Joseph permission to take the body. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus watched as the body of Jesus was placed in a rock-hewn tomb.

So much happened in just one week--from the time Jesus entered Jerusalem amid

shouts of “hosanna,” to the time Jesus was placed in a tomb. But there’s more to the story, more that confirms that my confession at the foot of the cross is absolutely true: “Truly this man *is* the Son of God.”

For the tomb would not hold this Jesus for very long.

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