

Dramatic reading of Jesus' final days

Narrator: Two thousand years ago, a young man called Jesus of Nazareth walked around the land of Israel with a small band of followers, teaching the people about the Kingdom of God and performing miracles of healing which amazed everyone. His fame spread rapidly, and soon there were rumours circulating that he was the Messiah, or saviour, for whom the country had been waiting since the days of the prophets. Jesus wasn't popular with everyone. He criticised the ruling classes – the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and elders of the land – for hypocrisy. They felt threatened by Jesus, and they hated him.



Narrator: The temple in Jerusalem was filled with new sounds

Family 1: pigeon's cooing, sheep bleating, coins in a jar being rattled, sound of pieces of wood dropping to the floor and the coins being emptied out of the jar, gasps of breaths from onlookers

Narrator: when they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple and began to drive out all those who were buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the stools of those who sold pigeons, and he would not let anyone carry anything through the temple courtyards. He then taught the people.

Jesus: it is written in the scriptures that God said, "my Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations. But you have turned it into a hideout for thieves!

Narrator: the chief priests and the teachers of the law heard of this, so they began looking for some way to kill Jesus. They were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, Jesus and his disciples left the city. Next morning, they arrived once again in Jerusalem. As Jesus was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders came to him and asked him

Lawyer 1: What right have you to do these things?

Lawyer 2: Who gave you this right?

Jesus: I will ask you just one question, and if you give me an answer, I will tell you what right I have to do these things. Tell me, where did John's right to baptise come from: was it from God or from man?

Narrator: they started to argue among themselves.

Lawyer 1: What shall we say?

Lawyer 2: If we answer from God he will say why then did you not believe John?

Lawyer 1: But if we say from man.....

Narrator: they were afraid of the people, because everyone was convinced that John had been a Prophet. So their answer to Jesus was

Lawyer 1: we don't know

Jesus: Neither will I tell you then by what right I do these things.

Taize chant: Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom

Prayer of confession:

Lord Jesus we confess we have failed you when.....

Lord forgive us: **Christ have mercy**

Narrator: The Jerusalem Passover was filled with new sounds

Family 2: crunch of marching feet made by soldiers on the move (tough tray and gravel), sound of people telling others to be quiet, coins in a jar being rattled

Narrator: when Jesus had finished teaching all these things, he said to his disciples

Jesus: in two days, as you know, it will be the Passover festival, and the son of man will be handed over to be crucified.

Narrator: Then the chief priests and the elders met together in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, and made plans to arrest Jesus secretly and to put him to death.

Chief priest: We must not do it during the festival or the people will riot.

Narrator: then one of the 12 disciples, the one named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and asked

Judas: What will you give me if I betray Jesus to you?

Narrator: they counted out 30 silver coins and gave them to him. From then on Judas was looking for a good chance to hand Jesus over to them.

Taize chant: Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom

Prayer of confession:

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Lord forgive us: **Christ have mercy**

Narrator: The Jerusalem house in the back streets was filled with new sounds

Family 3: noise of spoon scraping a wooden platter, drink being poured into a cup, sound of matzo (cracker) being cracked, door slamming shut

Narrator: on the first day of the festival of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked him

Disciple: where do you want us to get the Passover meal ready for you?

Jesus: Go to a certain man in the city, and tell him: the teacher says, my hour has come; my disciples and I will celebrate the Passover at your house.

Narrator: The disciples did as Jesus had told them and prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, Jesus and the 12 disciples sat down to eat. During the meal Jesus said.

Jesus: I tell you, one of you will betray me.

Narrator: The disciples were very upset and began to ask him, one after the other:

Disciple: Surely, Lord, you don't mean me?

Jesus: the one who dips his bread in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man will die as the Scriptures say he will, but how terrible for that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!

Narrator: Judas, the traitor, spoke up.

Judas: Surely, Teacher, you don't mean me?

Jesus: So you say.

Narrator: while they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples.

Jesus: take and eat it; this is my body.

Narrator: Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them.

Jesus: Drink it, all of you; this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink that wine with you in my Father's kingdom.

Narrator: They then sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives

Taize chant: Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom

Prayer of confession:

Lord Jesus we confess we have failed you when.....

Lord forgive us: **Christ have mercy**

Narrator: The Jerusalem courts were filled with new sounds

Family 4: clenched fists upon tables, angry voices, hands being washed in water, sound of feet dragged across gravel on a slow march to death (tough tray with gravel on)

Narrator: Jesus was taken to the high priest's house, where all the chief priests and the elders, and the teachers of the law were gathering. Peter followed from a distance and went into the courtyard of the high priest's house. There he sat down with the guards, keeping himself warm by the fire. The chief priests and

the whole council tried to find some evidence against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they could not find any. Many witnesses told lies against Jesus, but their stories did not agree. Then some men stood up and told this lie against Jesus:

Man: we have heard him say, I will tear down this temple which men have made, and after three days I will build one that is not made by men.

Narrator: Not even they, however, could make their stories agree. The high priest stood up in front of them all and questioned Jesus:

High priest: have you no answer to the accusation they bring against you?

Narrator: But Jesus kept quiet and would not say a word. Again, the high priest questioned him:

High priest: are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed God?

Jesus: I am, and you will all see the Son of Man seated on the right of the almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven!

Narrator: The high priest tore his robes.

High priest: We don't need anymore witnesses! You heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?

Narrator: They all voted against him: he was guilty and should be put to death. Some of them began to spit on Jesus, and they blindfolded him and hit him.

Man: guess who hit you?

Narrator: And the guards took him and slapped him. Peter was still down in the courtyard when one of the high priest's servant girls came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked straight at him

Girl: you, too, were with Jesus of Nazareth.

Peter: I don't know . I don't understand what you are talking about.

Narrator: And he went out into the passage. Just then a cock crowed. The servant girl saw him there and began to repeat to the bystanders.

Girl: He is one of them!

Narrator: But Peter denied it again. A little while later the bystanders accused Peter again.

Bystander: You can't deny that you are one of them, because you, too, are from Galilee.

Peter: I swear that I'm telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I do not know the man you were talking about!

Narrator: Just then a cock crowed a second time, and Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, before the cock crows twice you will say three times you do not know me. And he broke down and cried. Early in the morning the chief priests met hurriedly with the elders, the teachers of the law, and the whole council, and made their plans. They put Jesus in chains, led him away, and handed him over to Pilot. Pilot questioned him.

Pilate: are you the King of the Jews?

Jesus: so you say.

Narrator: The chief priests were accusing Jesus of many things, so Pilate questioned him again.

Pilate: Aren't you going to answer? Listen to all their accusations!

Narrator: Again, Jesus refused to say a word, and Pilate was amazed. At every Passover festival Pilate was in the habit of setting free any one prisoner the people asked for. At that time a man named Barabbas was imprisoned with the rebels who had committed murder in the riot. When the crowd gathered and began to ask Pilate for the usual favour, he asked them

Pilate: do you want me to set free for you the King of the Jews?

Narrator: He knew very well that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous. But the chief priest stirred up the crowd to ask, instead, for Pilate to set Barabbas free for them. Pilate spoke again to the crowd.

Pilate: What, then, do you want me to do with the one you call the King of the Jews?

CROWD: CRUCIFY HIM!

Pilate: but what crime has he committed?

CROWD: CRUCIFY HIM!

Narrator: Pilate wanted to please the crowd, so he set Barabbas free for them. Then he had Jesus whipped and handed him over to be crucified.

Taize chant: Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom

Prayer of confession:

Lord Jesus we confess we have failed you when.....

Lord forgive us: **Christ have mercy**

Narrator: The hill outside Jerusalem was filled with new sounds

Family 5: the banging in of a nail into wood, the sound of dice being rolled, the sound of some cloth being torn and the sound of rain/thunder (I've got some rain sticks)

Narrator: the soldiers took Jesus inside to the courtyard of the governors Palace and called together the rest of the company. They put a purple robe on Jesus, made a crown out of thorny branches, and put it on his head. Then they began to salute him.

Soldier: Long live the King of the Jews!

Narrator: they beat him over the head with a stick, spat on him, fell on their knees, and bowed down to him. When they had finished mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they let him out to crucify him. On the way they met a man named Simon, who was coming into the city from the country, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus's cross. They took Jesus to a place called

Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. There they tried to give him wine mixed with a drug called Myrrh, but Jesus would not drink it. Then they crucified him and divided his clothes among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get which pieces of clothing. It was 9:00 o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The notice of accusation against him said

Pilate: the king of the Jews.

Narrator: they also crucified 2 criminals with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left. People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus.

CROWD: Aha!

Person 1: You were going to tear down the Temple and build it up again in three days!

Person 2: Now come down from the cross and save yourself!

Narrator: in the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law jeered at Jesus, saying to each other

Lawyer 1: he saved others, but he cannot save himself!

Lawyer 2: Let us see the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him!

Narrator: at noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout

Jesus: Eloi, Eloi, Lema sabachthani?

Narrator: which means: my God, my God, why did you abandon me? Some of the people there heard him and said

Person 1: listen, he is calling for Elijah!

Narrator: The bystander ran out with a sponge, soaked it in cheap wine, and put it on the end of a stick. Then he held it up to Jesus' lips and said

Person 2: Wait! Let us see if Elijah is coming to bring him down from the cross!

Narrator: with a loud cry Jesus died. [pause] The curtain hanging in the temple was torn into, from top to bottom. The army officer who was standing there in front of the cross saw how Jesus had died.

Officer: This man was really the Son of God.

Narrator: This is the week that turns all endings into new beginnings... but not yet. Before the sound that would go out into all the world, there was just silence. And the world held its breath.