

SCENES OF THE PASSION

by Florence Schloneger



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Scenes of the Passion

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A "tour" of Jerusalem witnessing the events
leading to the Crucifixion

CAST OF CHARACTERS

All Scenes — GUIDES/MARK

Scene 1 — FOLLOWERS 1, 2 and 3

Scene 2 — MONEY CHANGERS 1, 2 and 3

Scene 3 — MATTHEW, PHILIP and ANDREW

Scene 4 — PETER, JAMES and JOHN

Scene 5 — PILATE, CHIEF PRIEST and SCRIBE

Scene 6 — CENTURION, BYSTANDER

**Scene 7 — YOUNG MAN IN WHITE/ANGEL, MARY
MAGDALENE, MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES,
SALOME**

PRODUCTION NOTES

In this drama, the audience becomes part of the production as it is lead in groups by actor/guides playing the character Mark. The guides lead the groups to a street in Jerusalem, the temple, the upper room, Gethsemane, Pilate's court, Golgotha and the garden tomb. These seven scenes are set up in rooms throughout the church building. The size of the rooms available and the size of the audience will determine the number in each tour group and the number of guides needed. Each tour will take approximately 20-25 minutes. One congregation accommodated a crowd of 150 by starting groups of 10-12 persons on the tour every five minutes. Six guides played the part of Mark, and as each tour finished, the guide returned to the starting point to lead another group. (The entire process took one hour.) Larger audiences could be handled if a church building had big enough rooms to hold 20-25 persons at a time.

Thought needs to go into what the groups will do before and after a tour. There might be Easter caroling in the sanctuary with groups leaving and returning as they begin and end their tours. One congregation started tours as members finished an Easter breakfast and ended the tour in the sanctuary to wait for the Sunday morning worship service. Extra preservice music was planned for those who needed to wait the longest.

Although there are seven scenes to plan, actors from each scene may practice separately and provide their own costuming and scenery. Sunday school classes or family units work well together. The guides should be given directions as to the sequence of rooms and the flow of traffic. Ushers need to gather groups together in a waiting area where they will meet their guide.

The success of the drama will depend on the actors of each scene being able to work and practice together. Although actors from all scenes may want to gather once for a dress rehearsal, it is possible to eliminate such a practice if staging from each scene is set up the night before the presentation so that the director can check to see if everything is in order.

Although each scene stands as a separate unit of action, in some of the scenes the tour groups become part of the action when the actors address the entering group. The stage directions will indicate when this happens. Also indicated in the stage directions are the times when the guide speaks to the tour group.

INTRODUCTION

(MARK meets his tour group and gives a brief introduction. He may be dressed in a housecoat with headgear formed by a towel over his head and held in place by a tie. Sandals may be worn. [Throughout the drama this will be referred to as Jewish peasant garb.] To heighten the sense of adventure, the hallways may be dimly lit. If so, the guides will need to carry flashlights.)

GUIDE/MARK: Hello. I'm Mark, called to tell you the beginnings of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I've heard the stories of Jesus since I was a young man and more recently have spent much time with Peter trying to get the facts straight. With Peter gone now and the other disciples threatened by the terrible persecution, I wanted to make sure the facts of the story are not lost. Of course, like any writer I bring my own emphasis to the gospel, but I don't apologize for that because I believe it is true to what Jesus taught. Enough about me! The story can speak for itself. First, let's go to the streets of Jerusalem and see what the people are saying about Jesus.

SCENE 1: A Street in Jerusalem

SETTING: The three followers can sit or stand in various positions around a bench. At least one person should hold some kind of leafy branch. All should be dressed as Jewish peasants. Light can be supplied with small oil lamps or some kind of lantern.

FOLLOWER 1: *(Sitting dejectedly and waving a palm branch slowly. Speaking to tour group)* If you've come to join the movement, you're too late. I thought he was the Messiah who would lead us to a victory over the Romans.

FOLLOWER 2: There would have been enough people to start a revolution, too. You should have seen us on Sunday. Hundreds of people waving palm branches and

1 shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name
2 of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father
3 David! Hosanna in the highest!"

4 FOLLOWER 3: The excited crowd followed him all the way
5 through Jerusalem, growing larger all along the way. By
6 the time he finally reached the temple it was late, so he
7 only stayed a few minutes.

8 FOLLOWER 1: Somewhere things went wrong. Perhaps it
9 was the next day in the temple. A person can't
10 deliberately upset the religious establishment and hope
11 to become a Jewish king.

12 FOLLOWER 2: Or was it the people that goofed things up?
13 They were so fickle! Waving branches one day, and
14 yelling *crucify!* the next.

15 FOLLOWER 3: I don't know what to think. Who was Jesus,
16 anyhow? I thought I knew, but now nothing makes sense.

17 GUIDE/MARK: (*To tour group*) Something must have
18 happened in the temple. Let's go there and see what we
19 can find out.

21 *SCENE 2: Gentile Court of the Temple*

23 **SETTING:** Several stuffed or cardboard sheep can be set around
24 the room. Small tables can hold moneybags and stacks of coins.
25 A bird cage or chicken coop would add to the scene. Actors
26 should be dressed as Jewish peasants. Sound effects such as
27 bleating sheep and cooing pigeons can be added with a tape
28 recorder.

29 MONEY CHANGER 1: (*To tour group*) Pigeons for sale, pigeons
30 for sale! Roman money exchanged right here! Buy a
31 pigeon and make your sacrifice!

32 MONEY CHANGER 2: Come on, we need your business.
33 That man Jesus put our profit back a month. He let all
34 my pigeons go and broke the leg off my best table.

35 MONEY CHANGER 3: Worse than that, he shut down business

1 for a whole day by not allowing anyone to carry merchandise
2 through the temple court. The people sat down and
3 listened to him and there wasn't a thing we could do
4 without inciting a riot.

5 **MONEY CHANGER 1:** I'm still upset about the things he said.
6 He came in here acting like he was Jeremiah. Said *we*
7 were the ones oppressing the poor. But we're only doing
8 them a favor — exchanging their pagan money so they
9 can pay their temple taxes, and providing them with the
10 best animals for their offerings. (*Louder*) Then he had the
11 nerve to call us robbers and this holy temple our hideout.
12 Slanderer! (*Shaking head*)

13 **MONEY CHANGER 2:** His teaching attacked more than just
14 us businessmen. Like Jeremiah, he implied that
15 Jerusalem will be destroyed and that this temple will
16 become a place of prayer for *all* the nations. He didn't
17 seem to understand that God called Abraham's family as
18 his chosen people. Gentiles can worship — but only in
19 this outer court. And I'm not for making them feel overly
20 welcome. We need all the space we have for doing
21 business.

22 **MONEY CHANGER 3:** Thank goodness this court isn't always
23 as full as the day Jesus was here. We'd have to shut down
24 business entirely. A *few* gentiles can worship in this place
25 if they want to, but I hope the noise and confusion will
26 keep most of them away.

27 **GUIDE/MARK:** (*To tour group*) Well, they don't seem very
28 happy! Let's see if we can find any of the disciples who
29 followed Jesus.

30 31 **SCENE 3: The Upper Room**

32
33 **SETTING:** The disciples, dressed as Jewish peasants, can sit on a
34 bench at a long table. A wooden tray with a loaf of bread, baskets,
35 and goblets, can make up the table setting. The room may be lit

1 with candles set in a menorah.

2 **MATTHEW:** *(To tour group)* Are you his disciples, too? Come
3 in. We've just come here to try and sort things out. It's
4 so confusing *(Shaking head)* ... so confusing ...

5 **PHILIP:** We knew Jesus had enemies. The Jewish leaders
6 had never liked him and tried their best to find some
7 charge with which to arrest him, but I really thought
8 Jesus was too smart for them. He had a way of always
9 turning the question around so that it was the questioner
10 that ended up looking like the fool.

11 **ANDREW:** I'm remembering so many things. Like all the
12 times he told us he was going to die. I didn't really
13 understand. Even the things he said at our Passover meal
14 puzzled me. He compared his body to this bread. *(Holds*
15 *up bread.)* Jesus twice fed the crowds with bread — once
16 on our side of the lake and once on the gentile side. I —

17 **MATTHEW:** *(Interrupting)* Yes, he made a real point of questioning
18 us about that later in the boat. He was frustrated with
19 our slowness. The point he was trying to get across was
20 something about providing bread for *both* Jews and
21 gentiles.

22 **ANDREW:** That's right. I had forgotten. But why would he
23 call a loaf of bread his body?

24 **PHILIP:** Or this wine his blood? *(Holding up cup)* What was it
25 he said? "This is my blood of the covenant which is
26 poured out for many." He said that he wouldn't drink it
27 again until he was in the new kingdom, but I didn't
28 understand.

29 **GUIDE/MARK:** Where are Peter, James and John?

30 **ANDREW:** Try Gethsemane. You might find them there.

31 32 **SCENE 4: Gethsemane**

33
34 **SETTING:** Large stones can be scattered around the room. A large
35 boulder can be simulated by overturning a card table and

covering it with a dark blanket. Shrubs can be made from parts of artificial Christmas trees or tree branches. Disciples should dress as Jewish peasants.

PETER: *(Frightened. To tour group)* Have you come to take me, too? This time I'll admit that I knew him. *(Bowing head)* I don't know why I said I didn't. Three times I lied. *(More animated and trying to explain)* . . . I was scared, that's why. I'm ashamed of myself. I *did* know Jesus — haven't always understood him, but I was one of his followers.

JAMES: Relax, Peter. I think they're friends. *(Nods to tour group)* You'll have to excuse us. We're all upset. We came here to try and be alone to sort through our thoughts. It was here that Judas handed Jesus over to the Jewish leaders. Yes, one of us handed him over. Judas did it.

JOHN: We always have been slow to understand. I remember one time he told us clearly that he would be killed, but we ended up arguing about who would be the greatest. Again he told us plainly that he would be killed and we responded by asking him for positions in his new kingdom. Why couldn't we hear him? *(Head in hands)*

PETER: I was so sure he was the Christ! I was upset when he started talking about being killed — tried to encourage him to think more positively. That was not the right approach! "Stop tempting me, Satan!" he said. It was like he knew he had to die.

JOHN: He seemed to know what was coming, all right. He was so troubled the night of his arrest. He told us to keep watch while he prayed, but I fell asleep.

JAMES: Three times we failed him at our watch. Yes, we are as guilty as Judas of handing him over to his enemies. We couldn't even watch one hour.

GUIDE/MARK: Where did they take Jesus?

JOHN: To Pilate's Court.

GUIDE/MARK: Thank you. We must be on our way.

SCENE 5: *Pilate's Court*

SETTING: Pilate should dress like a Roman governor — shirt and walking shorts covered by a toga made from a white sheet (fasten one end at the left shoulder, drape under the right arm, and bring up the back to again fasten at the left shoulder), sandals for the feet, and some kind of wreath on the head (eucalyptus or Christmas tree rope). The Chief Priest and Scribe can wear bathrobes with an extra cloth hung over and fastened at the left shoulder. Their heads should be covered with skullcaps. Phylacteries for the forehead can be made by tying little black boxes (film canisters work fine) around the head. Pilate can be seated in a throne-like chair. A small table with a goblet and scroll can be beside him. Other decorations can be added to make the room look rich — oriental rugs, baskets or dried plants, etc.

PILATE: (*Gruff and angry. To tour group*) Well, what do you people want? Hope it's not about that man Jesus again. The charge stands as written, "The King of the Jews." You brought revolutionary charges against him, so that's what you got.

CHIEF PRIEST: Don't be so touchy, Pilate. They haven't complained about a thing yet. We agree that Jesus was a revolutionary. We handed him over to you as a political threat, but for us he was also a problem. Not all of our leaders had the foresight that I did. I realized from the time he first healed a man on the Sabbath that his teachings would undermine the law and lead us to religious ruin. He even admitted that he would destroy the temple we made with our hands and in three days build another one *not* built with human hands.

SCRIBE: Yes, we appreciate how you cooperated, Pilate. We Jews handed Jesus over to you and you Romans handed him over to death. It's good to have found something both your law and our law finally agree upon.



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