



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1691 ~ Jesus before the Council.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

After Jesus raised Lazarus back to life from the grave, the Israelite chief priests and rulers' dramatically increased their determination to kill Jesus. A special meeting of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin was held to consider the matter. There Caiaphas, the ruling high priest and chairman of the Council, strongly promoted killing Jesus on national grounds. He said that it was better that one man should die for the people than that the whole nation be destroyed by the Romans. Their plans to this end were frustrated, however, by Jesus withdrawing Himself to the border of the wilderness, where He remained with His disciples. On Jesus' return to Bethany and Jerusalem, six days before the Passover, again the chief priests and rulers were deterred from carrying out their plan because Jesus was obviously so popular with the people at the time. Jesus had made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first day of the Passover week (Palm Sunday). Everywhere He went, the crowds gathered around Him and listened to His teachings in the temple.

They decided they wouldn't kill Jesus during the feast, in case a riot started among the people. It was also illegal under Jewish law to start a trial with possible death sentence on either the day before a Jewish feast or the Sabbath, because the elders hearing the case were expected to fast the next day of the trial to make sure they were making the right decision.

After Annas sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas in his palace, Caiaphas questioned Jesus. As high priest, it was illegal for him to ask Jesus any questions. There should have been more than one judge at the trial and judges were expected to be sympathetic towards the accused. The judges' were not to predetermine the outcome of a trial. However, Caiaphas ordered members of the Sanhedrin to come to his palace and they held a formal trial at night time. Such a request was also illegal as the trial should have been held in daylight hours and in the Temple. Jesus, the accused, was also supposed to be given legal representation and witnesses to speak on His behalf, yet this didn't occur either.

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What is blasphemy? Blasphemy is speaking disrespectfully of God and sacred things. Had Jesus actually done this? Many false witnesses had been brought forward to testify against Jesus but they themselves didn't agree in their testimony. Finally, one misquoted Jesus' prophecy that He would be raised from death in three days. In John, Chapter 2, Jesus had been asked for a sign after He had cleansed the Temple the first time. He replied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Jesus was speaking of His body and after He had risen from the dead and His disciples remembered His words. Then they believed the Scriptures and what Jesus had spoken.

During hostile questioning by the high priest, Jesus admitted He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. He said that Caiaphas and the other leaders would see Him sitting on the right hand of God and one day coming with the clouds of heaven. This was the first time Jesus publicly admitted that He was the Messiah. Jesus joined His title 'Son of Man' with 'Son of God'. He was indeed both fully God and fully man, yet came to earth as the one true incarnation of the living God.

For Jesus to claim to be the Messiah was a deep offense to the Jewish leaders; they believed that He wasn't. Instead, they expected the Messiah to appear as a mighty king. Had Jesus condemned Himself at this point? Not really! According to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned on his own testimony.

The Jewish Law stated that there must be 24 hours between a verdict and a sentence, and if the sentence is guilty, there must be 3 days between the sentence and execution, with the Sanhedrin members fasting the day in between just to make sure that their sentence is correct. None of this happened in Jesus' case. Caiaphas had certainly turned into a ruthless high priest devoid of any decency and respect for the law at all.

At a proper trial where a possible death sentence might be brought, the members of the Sanhedrin were to vote from the youngest to the oldest, so that the young ones weren't intimidated. No individual voting was done in this case against Jesus. With the Sanhedrin members unanimous in their decision that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy and therefore deserved to die, they mocked and abused Him badly before taking Him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for the signing of the death warrant. But Pilate wasn't quite as cooperative as they'd hoped.

The charge against Jesus was changed from blasphemy to treason against Rome. This was illegal to do. Although they badly wanted Jesus dead, the rulers weren't allowed to execute prisoners. So they charged Jesus with a Roman crime so that the Romans would become responsible for His death. Pilate questioned Jesus inside the building and came to the conclusion that Jesus was innocent. He went out and told the Jewish leaders so. However, they shouted back more accusations and Pilate discovered that Jesus was from Galilee. That was King Herod Antipas' area for administering justice. So Pilate sent Jesus bound even though pronounced innocent as well as His accusers to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at the time.

The trial that continued before Herod never produced anything new. In fact, Herod had only beheaded John the Baptist a few years earlier to please his wife. When Herod had heard about all the miracles Jesus was doing, Herod immediately thought that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life again. He was very frightened by this prospect. But the only knowledge he had of Jesus was from what people had told him. Herod dearly wanted Jesus to do a miracle for him but Jesus would do no such thing and never even answered his questions. So Herod and his soldiers mocked and treated Jesus with contempt. Then they sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people. He told them that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. He said that to appease them, he would have Jesus flogged and released. But the Jewish rulers continued to accuse Jesus of many things. What could Pilate do with such an angry mob? It was Pilate's custom each year at Passover to release one Jewish prisoner from prison to go free. Pilate offered Jesus and Barabbas as candidates to be released. Jesus was innocent; Barabbas was a thief and a murderer.

Pilate found no guilt in Jesus and wanted to release Him. Pilate knew that it was out of envy over Jesus' popularity that the Jewish leaders wanted Him killed. He thought that by letting the common people choose which prisoner should be released, Pilate could keep them happy and at the same time, avoid condemning an innocent man to death. But the people didn't choose Jesus. Only a few days earlier they'd been shouting "Hosanna" as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Now they turned against Him because the chief priests had stirred up the crowd to ask for Barabbas. The high priests held much power and sway over the people and Pilate's plan backfired on him.

That very same day, Pilate's wife had a dream about Jesus. She sent a message to tell her husband not to have anything to do with this innocent Man. This was a special warning to Pilate from God but Pilate didn't listen to it. He gave into the people's request. Three times Pilate appealed to the people to reconsider and allow him to release Jesus. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify Him!"

When Pilate could see that he was getting nowhere and that a riot might now be starting, Pilate decided to send Jesus to be crucified. Pilate was afraid of losing his job for failing to keep order. He had Jesus flogged and made one final appeal before washing his hands in water in front of the crowd. This was a Jewish custom from Deuteronomy, Chapter 21, which signified the removing of guilt. Pilate said, "I am innocent of this man's blood." And the people answered, "Let His blood be on us and on our children!" Just 40 years later, the Jews paid for Christ's death with their own blood when the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem and slaughtered all the Jews in that city.

Pilate handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified as a criminal. Pilate didn't even pronounce Jesus guilty. What a mockery of justice this trial was! But Jesus willingly suffered it all to pay the penalty of our sins instead of us.

Condemned prisoners had to carry their own cross to the execution site, Golgotha, known as 'the Place of the Skull.' It was a small hill outside Jerusalem shaped like a skull. Jesus at first carried His heavy cross but because of the flogging he'd received, was too weak to continue. The soldiers chose a man from the crowd to carry the cross for Jesus. The women offered Jesus wine mixed with a drug called myrrh. It was a Jewish custom to give this to criminals about to be executed. But Jesus refused to drink it. He was determined to endure the full suffering of the cross without the help of any drugs.

The four soldiers who crucified Jesus divided His clothes into four shares, one for each soldier but the undergarment was without a seam. So instead of tearing it, they cast lots for it, as prophesied in Psalm 22. Jesus is thought to have been crucified about 9 o'clock in the morning, so He must have left Pilate around 6 o'clock.

When nailed to the cross and hung to die, Jesus' first words were, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." From such a humiliating and cursed position, Jesus gave us the supreme example of how we too are to forgive our enemies. The symbol of the cross today represents the agony and suffering that Jesus went through to bear our sins and wipe them away. We all can be cleansed from our sin and guilt and be made right with God by Jesus' free and wondrous gift. How much should we remember the depth of Jesus' love for His Father and us, the people He created!

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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