

The Last Week

Narrator:

Today begins Holy Week. We will present to you a day by day account of Jesus's final week in Jerusalem. The experiences of those involved in his life from Sunday to Friday will be recorded in the first person. What was going on in the minds of those that encountered Jesus during those five days ? He had a profound effect on people that week and you will hear from many of them. It will be my task to set the stage for you as we attempt to provide you with some insight into their characters and hopefully stir you to a greater understanding of Jesus's last days on earth.

Sunday:

The first scene takes place on the main streets of Jerusalem. It is the first week of Passover, the most sacred time of the Jewish year which celebrates the exodus of the Jewish people from slavery. Thousands were making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the capitol of ancient Israel. Jesus was among them as it was the perfect time for him to deliver his message as the prince of peace. Jacob, a person in the crowd, describes the scene.

Jacob : (breathlessly)

It was really exciting. We were waiting for this man to come down the street. He was thought to be the expectant Messiah. When he finally appeared people began to shout "Hosannah" which means "Save us". They called him "King" and "Son of David" and threw down palm leaves before him. I've never seen anything like it. I thought, "Perhaps this is the one who will deliver us from the Romans. Hosannah ! Hosannah ! " Only I would have expected him to be driving a war chariot or at least be on top of a white stallion. I would have expected him to be dressed in military armor. But no ! ... he was modestly dressed like anyone else in the crowd and he was riding a donkey ! He had been reported to say things like "Blessed are the Peacemakers and Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. I was really confused. I wasn't sure about this guy as a Messiah, but I decided to wait before jumping to any conclusions.

Narrator:

Monday:

Jesus and his disciples had camped out Sunday night in Bethany, but the next morning he reentered Jerusalem and the crowds were still in awe. But the chief priests and scribes had a different view of him.

Chief Priest: (from balcony)

A group of us following Jesus were very skeptical of his mission. So the first thing he did this morning ... he trashed the Temple ! He was saying " My house shall be called a house of prayer but you have made it a den of robbers". Jesus has been a constant threat to our teachings and to the law. He forgives sins .. now that is blasphemy! He calls us names like snakes, hypocrites. He accuses us of not practicing what we preach. He says we do our deeds to be seen by others. He said, "The greatest among you will be your servant." That was enough for me. I decided we needed to kill this man, but it is going to be hard because he still has the crowd spellbound and we don't want to turn them against us.

Narrator:

Tuesday:

Jesus had two groups watching him on Tuesday. The priests and scribes who wanted to kill him because he had seen that the temple was being used as a place to buy and sell animals for sacrifice and money was being used to purchase political and religious offices. The other group was the crowd some of whom were beginning to be skeptical and wanted to test him. Again we hear from Jacob.

Jacob:

Jesus was trying to get us to see the message of humility and charity that he was bringing. It didn't sound like a Messiah's message. We thought he was going to free us from Roman rule. His teachings accused the Hebrew leaders of hypocrisy so they challenged his authority, and they wanted even more to kill him.

We asked him a question about taxes. He took out a coin with Caesar's face on it. When we asked him if we should pay taxes he said "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Some of us in the crowd believed the words in the Hebrew scriptures " The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

After that we were ready to give up the idea of him being a political Messiah. He said many other things that day that began to turn us against him. He predicted the destruction of the temple, a time of suffering, earthquakes, famines, wars and persecutions. But his power was miraculous. He had healed a leper and a paralyze man. He reportedly fed 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. I was still in awe but beginning to be even more skeptical. He was not the Messiah that I had expected.

Narrator:

Wednesday:

Jesus spent much of the day with his disciples beginning to confide in them his ultimate destiny. The disciple, Andrew ,describes an incident in the house of Simon, the leper.

Andrew:

As we sat around the table, a woman came in with an alabaster jar of costly ointment. She broke open the jar and poured the ointment on ... This made me angry. I said to her, " That ointment was worth 300 denari. And the money could have been given to the poor. " But Jesus intervened. "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her ? She has annointed my body for burial." Jesus predicted his death and not for the first time. As disciples we were in disbelief. The man we had followed for three years now says he is going to die and he is only 33 years old !

Narrator:

Thursday:

It was the first day of Passover. Jesus gathered with his disciples in the upper room for the Passover meal.

Judas describes the scene.

Judas:

We had a great meal. There was some bickering about who would sit next to Jesus and who was the greatest disciple. I didn't get involved in that. I knew I was ranked pretty high with Jesus. After all he made me the treasurer. But then Jesus said, "One of you will betray me, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me." How did he know what was going to happen? And he looked at me when he said it. You see, I went to the priests yesterday and made a deal with them. I told them where they could find him

and they gave me 30 pieces of silver. I am really tired of his act. He is no Messiah and if he is he will perform a miracle escape. Jesus said, "That one of us is a devil." ...

What made him think it was me?

Narrator:

Peter relates more of what happened in the upper room.

Peter:

Jesus broke the bread and gave us each a piece. He said, "This is my body broken for you." Then he took a cup and we all drank from it and he said, "This is the blood of my covenant which is poured out for

many for the forgiveness of sins". We sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives. There Jesus addressed us saying, " You will all become deserters of me " to which I responded " Though all become deserters, because of you I will never desert you." Then Jesus said to me, "truly I tell you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times "

Again I said, "I will never deny you " and the rest of the disciples Agreed.

Narrator:

Jesus retreated to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and asked the disciples to wait. When he came back they were asleep. He woke them up. Andrew lets us know what happened next.

Andrew: (breathlessly)

There was a large crowd with swords and Judas ran over and kissed Jesus. Someone pulled out a sword and cut of the ear of a slave of the high priest. Jesus rebuked him "Put your sword away, For all who take the sword will perish by the sword". Then they grabbed Jesus and took him away. We all fled.

Narrator:

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the High Priest. Peter followed him at a distance.

Caiaphas (from balcony):

We interrogated him. One of the witnesses recalled Jesus saying, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and build it up in three

days.. Then he remained silent to all our questions. Finally I asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the son of God ?" He responded, "You have said so." Once again He had committed blasphemy. We all agreed that he deserved to die. Then we spit in his face, hit him, and mocked him. He was almost beaten to death. Blasphemy was the worst of all possible sins but we couldn't kill him. We needed to get Pilate, the Roman governor, to agree.

Narrator:

Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard.

Peter:

Then people started coming up to me. Three of them accused me of being a friend of Jesus. I was scared and didn't know what to say. At one time I had declared " Jesus was the Christ. The Son of the Living God." Now I wasn't so sure. After the third person insinuated that I was a follower of Jesus, I said "I don't know the man". At that moment the cock crowed and I remembered what Jesus had said. I loved this man but I didn't want to die. I was so ashamed. I wept.

Narrator:

Friday morning the chief priests and elders led Jesus to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. We hear from Pilate.

Pilate: (from balcony)

As Jesus stood before me I asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He responded, " You say so ". Now what kind of an answer was that ? We accused him of many things but he remained silent. I was amazed. It was the Passover festival and I always released a prisoner for the crowd ... anyone they wanted. We had in custody the notorious Barabbas who had led an insurrection. I gave the people their choice ... Jesus or Barabbas. I really didn't see anything that Jesus had done to deserve death. He wasn't a threat to me, but the crowd was jealous of his spiritual power. My wife had been warned in a dream to have nothing to do with this man. I was hoping they would allow me to let him go. " Jesus or Barrabbas, which of this do you want me to release?" I said. They cried out, " Barabbas! Give us Barabbas!" So I said, And what shall I do with Jesus who is called The Messiah ?" They all shouted, " Crucify him ! " "Crucify him ? " What could I do ? I didn't want a riot. I wanted to remain a popular governor. Still, I decided to wash my hands of the whole thing. I felt that I was innocent of this man's blood.

Narrator:

Jesus was taken to the governor's headquarters where they stripped him and put a scarlet robe and crown of thorns on him and mocked him. Then they beat him with reeds. Simon of Cyrene was made to carry the cross.

Cross carried in

Simon of Cyrene: (from balcony after cross is carried 2/3 way down aisle)

I'm not sure why they grabbed me. I am from a Jewish community on the Mediterranean coast west of Egypt. I was just there as a pilgrim. Jesus was very weak from all the beating. I could tell he was in a lot of pain. I guess they didn't think he could carry it. I was really tired when we finally got to Golgotha, the Place of the skull.

Silence as the nails are driven in

Narrator:

It was an ugly scene after they put Jesus up on the cross. Sarah, a woman in the crowd, describes the horror.

Sarah :

I could barely watch. They gave him some vinegar when he said he was thirsty. They taunted him. Even the two bandits of either side of him were saying things like " If you are the son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others but he cannot save himself. " Even though he heard the harmful words he said, " Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. " But then he began to cry out in pain and agony, " My God, My God, why have you forsaken me ?" At that moment the ground began to shake and rocks were split. Some say that tombs were opened. I was really scared. I had to get out of there.

Narrator:

As noted by Andrew, the disciples dispersed even before the crucifixion. One source said that Judas repented feeling that he had betrayed an innocent man. He returned the 30 pieces of silver and went out and hanged himself. Three people remained at the cross. We hear from each of them ... Jacob, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and a Roman centurion :

Jacob (pointing to the cross)

Now isn't that the most despicable sight you have ever seen ? He is dead. The people calmed down. They crucified him at 3:00 pm. He had his chance to escape. Pilate was a little indifferent. But those of us in the crowd were disappointed in Jesus. We had loved him, Now we hated him. How could he be the annointed ? Fortunately we chose Barabbas. There was no trouble with his closest friends. Most of them went back to the north. No sense in pursuing them. They are unimportant. The trouble is over. He is dead. A good thing since it is Passover. Pilate gave Jesus's body to a man named Joseph from Arimathea. What did he do that for ? They should look up his record. He may be a fanatic. Anyway that Joseph buried him. He didn't have to do anything. It's good that Jesus is not hanging there on the Sabbath. It would be an unpleasant sight. I'm glad we have seen the last of him. As for me, I am out of here.

(Exits. Slams the door)

Mary:

Thirty-three years ago he was my baby. I warmed him, washed him, dressed him. I fed his little mouth with milk. Thirty-three years ago and now he is dead.

Dead. That's what he is. Hung up in the air with thieves.

Broken and bleeding like a slaughtered beast. All the life gone out of him. That's what they did to my son. Respectable people, that's what they were. Priests, Judges, soldiers, gentlemen, even common folk like me. They did it. And now he is dead.

My son always had a strange way from the day he was born. His eyes ... they were wonderful, They held folk. That and the power of his words. And then there was his tender heart. He felt the pain in people and sought to heal them. Most of them didn't understand him. They were blind ... even me. Sometimes I would try to protect him. I was afraid for him, but then he would look at me with those wonderful eyes.

It all began the day he was twelve and we went to the city.

I lost him then. I have lost him ever since. He was with the teachers in the temple asking them questions and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding. When we found him and began to scold him for sneaking away he responded, " Did you not know that I must be in my father's house? " Little did I know what those words would come to mean.

From that day on he became a mystery to me. He studied with the learned teachers and then began to roam the countryside.

He talked about the kingdom of God. He healed. He told wonderful stories. He was gentle, meek, and mild. His message made people think and had the healing power of love and forgiveness.

Oh Son (looking at cross) It was your kingdom and the people thronged about you and followed you wherever you went. They hung

upon your words. They worshipped you. A power went out from you. You were always like nobody else.

A King ! A King ! You looked like a King ! You spoke like a King !

You are the little peasant boy I bore. I never told you, but I was so proud of you ... proud and afraid too. And now it's too late. You're dead and all has come to nothing. You are dead ... dead !

Killed by the judges and soldiers of this great city. Killed by the men you called your brothers. Killed by the children of your kingdom ... beaten, mocked, murdered by the mighty masters of the world. Hung up high in the air like a thief. Broken and beaten like a slaughtered beast. I love you, Son. I love you !

The Centurion:

I am a soldier. I have been helping to build kingdoms for over twenty years. I've never known any other trade. Soldierly, bloodshed, war ... that's my business. That's what kingdoms mean. And we are proud of that.

In war we attempt to possess the earth. Domination, power, glory. But what we really gain is enslaved hate and death that haunt our lives forever. It can't last. If we keep trying to build empires we will never be satisfied. Possess the earth ? We have lost it !

We never did possess the earth. The earth is God's and the fullness thereof. The soul of the earth is man and the love of him and we have made a desolation of both.

When this man cried out 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit ', I was overcome with emotion. I realized that we had it all wrong. He is innocent. Truly this man is the son of God.

I tell you, woman, this dead son of yours, disfigured, shamed, spat upon, has built a kingdom this day that can never die. The earth is his

and he made it. No doubt he has been making it his entire life. His idea of a kingdom is not for the proud, not for the vain, not for the wealthy, not for the arrogant empires of the world. Something has happened up here on this hill today to shake all our kingdoms of blood and fear to dust. The earth is his, the earth is theirs and they made it. The meek, the powerful meek, the followers of Jesus' teachings, are about to enter into their inheritance. It is just as He said, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. "