

# The Story Of Easter Week, Told In A Modern Way

(This is the story of Jesus, from Palm Sunday to Easter, as it might be told today. This account is based primarily on the Gospel of St. Mark, King James version.)

The 12 devoted men who followed Jesus toward Jerusalem were frightened even before the city was sighted on the dusty road.

They knew they walked toward hostile men. There were sects among their own people whose powerful priests feared and hated the simple man from Galilee whom many already were calling Messiah or Heavenly King. Jerusalem was part of the Roman Empire, ruled by Caesar's conquering soldiers from across the sea.

Jesus knew why his 12 followers feared Jerusalem. But he also knew that sand was running fast from the glass of His life and there was still much He had to teach them—still many things He must do. So to prepare them for the tragic events which lay immediately ahead, He called them around Him and told them what was going to happen.

Then they continued on their way as Jesus preached faith and brotherhood to the people along the road just as He had done before. He told the people they must believe in God. He said they must treat others with the same kindness they would like to receive themselves. He healed the sick, each time telling sufferers that it was their own faith, their own belief in Him which had made them well again.

But it was this kind of teaching which had made the powerful men in Jerusalem hate Him. The priests and high officials of the temple were more interested in keeping their own great power than in helping others live good lives.

Before they entered the city two of the disciples brought to Jesus a donkey from a nearby village. They piled their clothing on the back of the little beast for a make-shift saddle. On this Jesus mounted for His entrance into Jerusalem. It followed an ancient prophecy that the heavenly Prince of Jerusalem would appear and be known because, among other things, He would be riding on a donkey.

As they continued forward, those who had gathered at the



"THE RESURRECTION," by H. Sodoma (1477-1549)

roadside showed their belief in the bearded man with the deep eyes. They cast their clothing and spread branches of trees on the rutted road before His animal's feet as they would have unrolled a carpet for a crowned king.

Jesus went directly to the temple but stayed only briefly before He went outside the city to a little village called Bethany to spend the night. The next morning He returned to the temple where there was much work waiting for Him.

The house of worship had become a place of business. Jesus first drove out the men who were buying and selling as though they were in the market-place. Then he tipped over the tables where the money-changers worked. He threw out the seats of those who sold doves used for sacrifice. Then He addressed the people, quoting the ancient law which, as God's word, was part of their religion: "My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer."

"But you have made the House

of God a den of thieves," He accused them.

The chief priests and their henchmen listened fearfully because they saw that the people believed the words of this man.

Jesus returned to Bethany with His disciples that night, teaching them and talking with them as He always did. But the next day as He reentered the temple, He found the priests and others waiting for him.

Referring to His actions the day before, they asked Him, "By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you authority to do these things?"

Jesus replied that He would answer their questions if He could put one question to them first.

"Did John's baptism carry with it God's blessing or just his own?" he asked.

The priests and others retreated and discussed their answer. They realized that if they replied that John's baptism was of God, Jesus would counter with: "Why, then, did you not believe what John said?" If they answered that it was only a human blessing, the priests feared the people would stone them, for most of the worshippers believed John was a holy man.

Finally they said they could not answer the question. Jesus retorted that under those circumstances He would not tell them His authority for driving the merchants from the temple. Then He returned to His preaching.

Soon the leaders in the temple sent a group to Jesus in still another attempt to trip Him by His own words. Was it lawful, they asked Him, to give tribute to Caesar? They knew that if He told them not to pay taxes, the Romans could arrest Jesus as one who preached treason.

But Jesus merely asked for a penny coined by the Romans which bore on it the features of Caesar. Showing them the coin, He asked: "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"

"Caesar's," they answered. "Give to Caesar the things which are Caesar's," He told them. "And give to God the things that are God's."

They tried even after that, but each time Jesus turned their questions so that the answers taught the people more about faith and love.

Then, to rest Himself, Jesus sat down by the treasure box of the temple where worshippers dropped their contributions. The rich threw their coins in and, as He watched, a poor widow dropped in a tiny piece of brass money worth less than a penny.

"This poor widow has given more than the rich," He told his disciples. "They had much money. She had nothing and gave from the small amount on which she must live."

Soon He quit the temple and went to the top of the Mount of Olives, a rise close at hand. With the four disciples who were closest to Him at His side, Jesus warned them that after He had gone many men would come to earth claiming to be the Christ and that many people would be deceived. Then He told them to go out in the world and spread His message among all peoples.

Later He prepared for the celebration of the Pass-over, a week-long religious holiday beginning

with a feast at which bread without yeast is eaten. As Jesus sat with 11 of His disciples in Bethany, the twelfth, whose name was Judas Iscariot, was in Jerusalem, talking with the enemies of His teacher. The priests were glad to find among Jesus' followers one who would betray Him and they promised to give him 30 pieces of silver for the deed. Judas agreed and a signal was agreed upon.

Jesus wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Pass-over. It had been arranged for the pre-Pass-over meal to be held in a city home where a large upper room had been made ready. Toward evening Jesus and the 12 gathered for the meal. His last on earth and always called "The Last Supper."

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them, saying, "Take; this is my body."

And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave the cup to them. They all drank of the cup and Jesus said to them, "This is my blood of the new Testament which is shed for many."

After that final meal they went back to the Mount of Olives where Jesus again warned them, preparing them for the future. He turned to Peter, one of his disciples, and told him that by the time that very night was over he would deny his Lord three times before the cock crowed twice.

Jesus came to a place called Gethsemane and as His disciples rested, He prayed. When He had finished, He said, "The hour is come. Behold, the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

As he spoke, Judas, followed by an armed mob, approached Him. They had been sent by the priests. Judas ran to Jesus and embraced Him, thus giving His enemies the sign which identified the Christ to them.

The crowd took Him directly back to Caiaphas, the high priest, and his underlings. Peter followed from a distance and when Jesus was taken into the priest's palace, the disciple stood among the servants and watched.

Then began a trial of sorts. A number of men came forward and told lies about Jesus. No one of their stories agreed and Jesus did not answer their lies. He did not speak until Caiaphas asked: "Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed?"

"I am," Jesus answered, "and you will see me, the son of man, sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

This was all Caiaphas needed. "You have heard the blasphemy," he cried to the crowd. And because it was believed that no man should call himself the son of God, Jesus was convicted. He was spit upon, struck and otherwise mistreated.

As this was happening Peter was approached by three persons, each of whom asked whether he was a follower of this Jesus of Nazareth. Each time he said he was not—and after the third time, a cock crowed for the second time.

The following morning the high priests had Jesus bound and took Him before the Roman Pontius Pilate, political governor of Jerusalem.

But meanwhile, according to the gospel of St. Matthew, Judas realized the dreadful thing he had done. He took the 30 pieces of silver back to the men in the temple and told them he had betrayed one who was innocent.

"What is that to us?" they told him. But he threw down the silver and left.

Judas hanged himself.

Before Pilate, Jesus was accused of many things. He did not answer them. It was the custom of the governor to release at the Pass-over one of the prisoners. And after talking to Jesus, Pilate suggested that this be the man he'd free. But the crowd, under pressure of the priests and elders, cried for the release of Barabbas, a man imprisoned for rebellion and murder.

Pilate debated the wisdom of his course, but finally he turned Jesus over to his soldiers to be executed.

Barabbas was freed as they led Jesus into a great hall. There the Roman soldiers made sport of Him. They took off His clothes and draped Him in a purple robe. They set a crown of thorns on His head. They mocked Him, struck His head, spit on Him again. Then they put on His clothes again and led Him, out to the hill of a skull Golgotha.

Soldiers placed Him upon the cross. Soon two others were crucified near Him—two robbers. And at the foot of the cross, soldiers cast dice for the clothing of Jesus.

At noon, after three hours of His suffering, the sun was obscured and darkness fell. Six hours passed before Jesus uttered His great triumphant cry and breathed His last. As He passed away, the Roman captain who stood facing him said: "Truly this man was a son of God."

A good and honorable man, Joseph of Arimathea, went openly to Pilate and asked for the body. Pilate first made certain that Jesus had died and then gave Joseph permission to remove the body. It was wrapped in fine linen and

then placed tenderly in a tomb which had been hewn from solid rock. A huge stone was rolled into the opening of the tomb, sealing it securely. Two days passed, and on Sunday women followers of Jesus returned to the tomb. They carried spices with which to anoint the body of their Lord. They wondered how the great stone could be rolled away so that they might enter the tomb.

As the sun rose on that first Easter morning, they saw the great stone rolled away. The women went away, trembling and astonished bearers of strange news: "He has risen!"

### TIMBER CUTTING

BALTIMORE—(AP)—Under a Maryland law recently tested in state courts, state officials have the power to regulate timber cutting practices on private lands and to forbid clearing forest land for crops where watersheds might be damaged and where lands are deemed worthless for agriculture.

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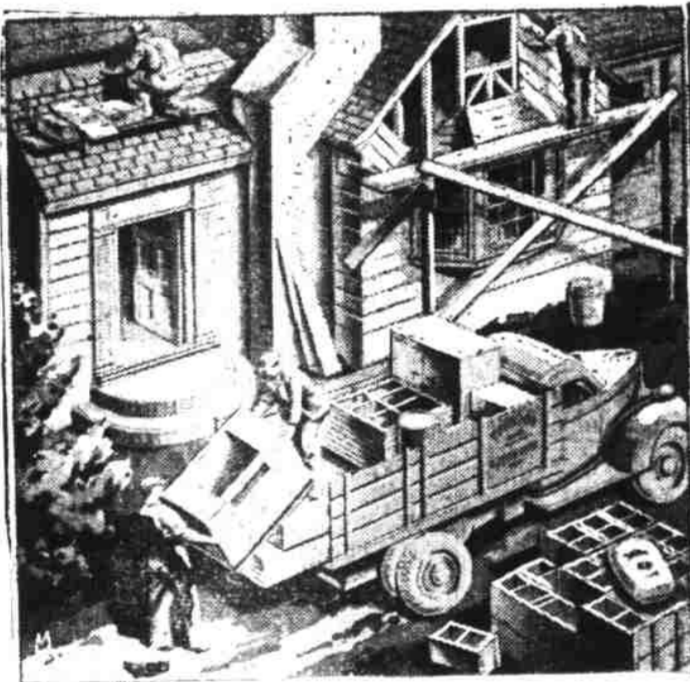
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