

Crucify Him!

By

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Theme:

This play conveys the cruelty of the crucifixion. I believe that the knowledge of what Christ actually went through in order to pay for our salvation creates a powerful image of our Lord and Savior that most of us have either forgotten or have never seen.

Biblical References:

The crucifixion of Christ which is described in:

Matthew 27
Mark 15
Luke 23
John 18 & 19

Approximate Running Time:

15 minutes

Notes:

This play was written to be performed around Easter time. It takes place on the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Period costuming will enhance the powerful imagery which this play attempts to convey, but no props or set is needed. Some of the actions which are detailed are enhanced by miming the actions as the actor is narrating them, i.e. the scourging pole and the fisticuffs. This play is greatly enhanced if it is followed by "I Believed in Him."

Scene:

A Roman Soldier has just returned from the scene of Christ's execution. He has come upon someone who is interested in hearing the account of the events of the previous day from someone who had been there to witness the events first hand. This play is the retelling of his account.

My name is Jezere. I am a Roman soldier. I had been appointed to be a soldier just a few weeks before that Nazarene named Jesus was arrested. I was on duty yesterday when we crucified Him. I've been hearing stories about what others say we did to Him. I was there. I saw everything with my own eyes. If you really want to know what happened to the one they call the King of the Jews then listen to me. I'll tell you what we did to Him.

You know that Pilate had sent Him to Herod to be sentenced and that Herod let Pilate choose His punishment himself. That morning I was on duty when He arrived from Herod. He looked tired and beaten as He was set out in front of us soldiers and the others in the crowd that had gathered.

Pilate offered to free this Jesus as his traditional Passover offering to the people. There was some murmuring from the crowd and then some of the men began shouting for Barabbas instead. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. The crowd yelled out, "crucify Him!" I heard Pilate attempt to reason with them, but he soon realized that the crowd was too loud for him to speak over. I watched the few men who had begun the shouts for the release of Barabbas as they looked around, waving their arms up and down, encouraging all to join them in their plea for the crucifixion of this Christ. Small groups of the crowd began to shout along with them, and then more groups joined in, and more, and more. The chant started to pick up momentum until it seemed as if the entire crowd joined in the plea for the crucifixion of Jesus.

I turned to look at Pilate. He began to look scared. The shouting had become very loud, and the emotion of the crowd kept it going until it seemed that it would never lose any of its momentum.

Pilate threw up his hands in indecision and began to pace as they continued to chant and shout. Some shouting for Barabbas. Barabbas, Barabbas, we want Barabbas. Barabbas, Barabbas, we want Barabbas. Some shouting for the crucifixion of Christ. Crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify HIM!. Then Pilate, in an act of desperation, quieted them down again as he reached for a basin of water. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" A great cheer rose from the crowd in anticipation of another crucifixion.

Some of us guards dragged Him down from the platform and led Him away to be beaten. The crowd followed us to the square to see the scourging. I know that most of you have been able to witness a scourging, but I love telling the stories of how we punish those who dare oppose the Roman law.

As soon as we arrived a rope was tied around His wrists and pulled tight. Then the other end of the rope was thrown through the ring at the top of the pole. The slack was taken out until only the tips of His toes were touching the cobble stone below. Our commander came forward to inspect the prisoner's back, making sure that His skin was tight. He then reached for his whip. Our commander let the whip dangle behind him as he called out curses at the prisoner. We all shouted curses and insults at Him too. Then we all cheered loudly as the commander smiled as he stood poised to lash out with the whip. Then the cheers grew louder as the ends of the whip wrapped around the body of this man. The pottery and stones on the end of the whip dug deep into His flesh. When the whip was recoiled, deep grooves of His flesh were dug out of his back, chest, and side, opening paths for blood to flow. The commander's arm came down time and time and time again as we cheered him on. Each time the elements dug deeper into the flesh and muscle and veins of the prisoner's back and side. Each time the whip was recoiled more grooves dug deeper, opening more paths for more blood to flow to the cobblestone below. He was beaten until there was nothing left to beat. When the commander ceased the beating there wasn't a spot on His back, side, or chest that wasn't channeling blood down to His feet.

It was obvious that continuing the flogging was pointless. He was let down from the pole and led into the palace grounds where only the soldiers were allowed to follow. A couple of other soldiers had fetched a purple robe, which was wrapped around this King of the Jews before he was placed on a chair. His hands were tied to the chair as another soldier brought out a crown made of old thorns - they were hard as nails. The commander gently placed it upon the man's head, then he pressed it down firmly, causing streams of blood to trickle down His face. The commander then announced 'Here sits the king of the Jews, let us all pay Him His due respect.' He then bowed down low before Him, rose, and struck Him square in the jaw with his right fist, cursed Him, and stood aside so that we could do the same. We all followed suit, some spitting on Him, some pounding the thorns deeper into His head, some hitting Him with a staff, some pulling out his beard. Even I took my turn, bowing low before thrusting my fist into His bloody face as the rest laughed and cheered me on.

It was hard to discern the features of His face after we had all taken our turn. His eyes were black and swollen, His nose bleeding in many places, His lips enlarged and bleeding. He remained conscience through all that we did to Him, never crying out or moving to stop anything that we did. He was a brave one - that I'll give Him. Before I knew it, the commander announced that it was time for us to get on with the actual crucifixion. I couldn't believe it was morning already. The prisoner was ordered to stand up and the robe was stripped off of His back, causing all of the wounds to open again, as He was forced to walk out under the hot sun.

I had known that there were two thieves already scheduled to be crucified that day. They were to give their lives to pay for their crime. Now the three criminals were made to carry the cross beams of their crosses up through the village to the hill where their crucifixions were to take place. The other two had little problem doing this, but this Jesus was struggling under the weight of His beam. His arms and back were raw from the scourging, His face was dripping

with fresh blood, and His back was crusted with the blood that had dried there. He began to collapse from exhaustion, stumbling first, then dropping to His knees. Each time a soldier was quick to demand that He rise and continue forward, not allowing Him any time to rest. Then it all became too much for Him and He just fell in a heap there upon the ground. He lay there with the dirt sifting into his wounds, the cross beam pressing His face into the ground, as the soldier stood over him and demanded that He get up and continue walking.

We had gone ahead of the procession to clear the way for them. Many come to see the crucifixions. Although I was a new soldier I knew the drill from the crucifixions I had watched. I picked a portion of the street where the crowd was especially difficult to handle. As I turned away from the crowd, still holding my arms out to keep the crowd back, I saw the procession passing before me. I turned just in time to see Him fall for the last time. The soldier following Him cursed Him, kicked Him, and told Him to get up, but there was nothing that he could do that would get the prisoner moving again. He was too weak to stand let alone carry the cross beam. He looked around, pointed right at one of the men behind me and said, "you, come here and carry His cross." As I moved to one side to let the man pass through into the road I was able to see what effect the hot sun was having on this criminal who lay before me. He lay there in the street, His face in the dirt, His sides barely moving as He struggled for breath, physically unable to get to His feet. I can remember feeling a sense of satisfaction; a feeling of pride for a job well done. This man was definitely paying for all that He was guilty of.

The procession, having added another member, made its way to the foot of Golgotha. I could see that the criminals realized that this was the place where they were to die. I had never taken part in placing a criminal up on a cross before. I wanted to remember my first crucifixion, so I took careful mental notes of the entire scene, memorizing every movement. I could not have wished for a better first assignment, for it was my team who were to place Jesus on His cross.

I will never forget what I saw yesterday. First, we laid the cross beam that the criminal had carried over the main support beam, making sure that the notches in the wood were properly aligned. Then we tied the two beams together with rope. The cross itself was complete. We ripped every shred of clothing from the criminal's body, grabbed Him by his arms and feet, and laid Him out across the wood. We placed His left arm down, I forced His hand open, and another placed their heel down onto the criminal's wrist. Then he reached for the mallet and stake to secure the criminal to the wood.

His body convulsed in pain as the nail went through the palm of His hand. We did the same thing to his right arm and only his feet were left to secure. They were folded one on top of the other and one nail was driven through them both. He tried to scream out in pain again, but there was little life left in Him and He only winced as we thrust the final nail through His flesh. Now He was securely anchored to the cross.

It took four of us to pick up the cross with Him lying on it and drop it into the hole in the ground. I stood back a few steps to watch Him hang there. He was naked, bruised, bleeding - dying on that cross. Someone from the crowd behind me began to hurl more insults at Him as he hung there. "Save yourself, King of the Jews." Another said, "Let's see some miracles now!"

I felt my own breath leave me as I watched Him lift himself up on His feet to breathe only one breath of air and then collapse down onto His wrists again only to complete the process over and over again until he was too tired to do it anymore. Then he would die of asphyxiation. The last time he would pull himself up on his feet would be the last breath he would ever breathe.

I could see how much pain He was in and I knew that we had done our job properly. I stood there watching the criminal die until I was relieved by the next shift. I thought about staying to watch the rest of the crucifixion, but I was feeling tired after the long night I had and decided I'd better head home to get some rest. I put the matter out of my mind as I headed home after a full day's work.

That's the true story of how Jesus the Christ was crucified. Just remember that anyone who crosses us Romans will find himself with the same fate as this King of the Jews. Humph.

- CURTAIN -



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