

# **The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew**

Narrator

Readers:

A	Judas	Perjurer	Council Member	Bystander	
B	Disciple	Peter	Caiaphas	Chief Priest	Crowd
C	Maid servant	Pilate's Wife	Crowd		

Jesus

## **THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MATTHEW**

NARR One of the twelve disciples – the one named Judas Iscariot – went off to the chief priests.

A What are you prepared to give me if I hand Jesus over to you?

NARR They counted out thirty silver coins and gave them to him, and from that moment he looked for a good chance to betray his master.  
On the first of the days of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus.

B Where do you want us to make our preparations for you to eat the Passover?

JESUS Go into the city, to a certain man there, and say to him – “The Master says, ‘My time is near. I am going to keep the Passover with my disciples at your house’.”

NARR The disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover.  
When it grew dark he sat down with his twelve disciples. During the meal, he said –

JESUS I tell you plainly that one of you is about to betray me.

NARR The disciples were very upset, and began to ask him one after the other –

- B Not I, Lord, surely?
- JESUS Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man is going to his fate, as the Scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!
- NARR Then Judas spoke, the one who was to betray him.
- A Surely it is not I, Rabbi?
- NARR And Jesus answered –
- JESUS Yes, it is you.
- NARR While they were still at table Jesus took a loaf of bread, and having said the blessing he broke it, and gave it to the disciples.
- JESUS Take it and eat. This is my body.
- NARR Then he took a cup, gave thanks and offered it to them.
- JESUS Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. From now on, I tell you, I shall not drink the fruit of the vine until the day I drink the new wine with you in my Father's kingdom.
- NARR Then they sang the closing psalms and left for the Mount of Olives.
- JESUS Tonight, every one of you will lose his faith in me. For Scripture says, "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of his flock will be scattered."

- JESUS But I will go on before you into Galilee, when I have risen from the dead.
- NARR At this Peter exclaimed –
- B I will never lose faith in you, even if everyone else does!
- JESUS I tell you, Peter, this very night, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.
- B Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.
- NARR And all the other disciples said the same. Then Jesus came with them to a small estate called Gethsemane.
- JESUS Stay here while I go over there to pray.
- NARR He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. Anguish and dismay came over him.
- JESUS My heart is ready to break with grief. Wait here and stay awake with me.
- NARR He went on a little further, fell on his face in prayer.
- JESUS My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as you will.
- NARR Then he came back to the disciples and found them fast asleep. He spoke to Peter –
- JESUS What! Could none of you stay awake with me one hour?

- JESUS Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.
- NARR Again a second time he went away and prayed.
- JESUS My Father, if this chalice may not pass me by, but I must drink it, then your will be done.
- NARR Again he came back and found them sleeping; they could not keep their eyes open. Leaving them there he went away again, and prayed for the third time, repeating the same words as before. Then he returned to the disciples.
- JESUS You can sleep on now and take your rest. Now the hour has come when the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners.  
Get up! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer.
- NARR And all at once, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd, armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the traitor had arranged a sign with them.
- A The man I kiss is the one you want. Seize him.
- NARR He went straight up to Jesus –
- A Greetings, Rabbi.
- NARR ---and kissed him.
- JESUS Do what you came to do, my friend.
- NARR Then the crowd came forward, seized Jesus and held him fast. At that, one of the followers of Jesus

grasped his sword and drew it, slashed out at the high priest's servant and cut off his ear.

JESUS Put your sword back where it belongs: sooner or later those who use the sword are destroyed by the sword. Do you imagine that I could not appeal to my Father, and he would send more than twelve legions of angels to defend me? But then, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled? They say this is the way it must be.

NARR Then Jesus turned to the crowd.

JESUS Am I a brigand, that you had to set out to capture me with swords and clubs? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple and you didn't lay a finger on me. But all this is happening as the prophets said it would.

NARR Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus was led off under arrest to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest, where the lawyers and elders were assembled. But Peter followed at a distance till he came to the High Priest's courtyard. Going in he sat down among the servants, to see how it all would end. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus, however false, on which they might pass the death sentence. They failed completely. Even after a number of perjurers came forward, they still failed. In the end two of these stood up and spoke.

A This fellow said, "I can pull down the temple of God and rebuild it in three days."

NARR The High Priest then stood up.

- B Have you no answer to that? What about the evidence of these men against you?
- NARR But Jesus was silent. Again the High Priest spoke.
- B I put you on oath by the living God. Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God?
- JESUS (*Deliberately*) Yes. I am. And moreover I tell you this. You will see the Son of Man again, when he is seated at the right hand of God's power, and comes on the clouds of heaven.
- NARR At these words the High Priest tore his robes.
- B Blasphemy! That was blasphemy! We don't need any more witnesses! You heard it for yourselves! What is your verdict?
- NARR And the Council answered –
- A He is guilty. He deserves to die.
- NARR --Then they spat in his face and hit him with their fists.
- A Prophecy for us, Messiah! Guess who hit you!
- NARR All this time Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a maidservant came up to him.
- C You too were with Jesus the Galilean.
- NARR But he denied it in front of them all.
- B I don't know what you're talking about.

- NARR            When he went out to the gateway another servant girl saw him, and she told the bystanders –
- C                This man too was with Jesus the Nazarene.
- NARR            He denied it again, with an oath.
- B                I don't know the man!
- NARR            After a little while the men standing there came up to Peter.
- A                Of course you're one of them! Your accent gives you away!
- NARR            Then Peter started calling down curses on himself and swearing –
- B                I tell you! I do not know that man!
- NARR            And at that moment the cock crew. And Peter remembered what Jesus had said – 'Before the cock crows you will disown me three times.'  
And he went out and wept bitterly.
- NARR            When morning came the chief priests and the elders of the nation met in conference to plan the death of Jesus. They tied him up and led him away to Pilate, the Roman governor. When Judas the traitor saw that Jesus had been condemned he was seized with remorse, and he brought back to the chief priests and elders their thirty silver coins.
- A                I have sinned. I have betrayed an innocent man to his death.
- B                So what? That's your problem.



- NARR Judas threw the money into the Temple and then went out and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the money.
- B It is against the law to put this into the temple treasury: it was paid to have a man killed.
- NARR So they discussed the matter and decided to buy the field that belonged to someone who made clay pots. They wanted to use it as a graveyard for foreigners. This explains the name, “Blood Acre”, by which that field has been known ever since. And in this way fulfilment was given to the prophetic utterance of Jeremiah.
- They took  
the thirty silver coins  
the price of a person  
among the people of Israel.  
They paid it  
for a potter’s field  
as the Lord  
has commanded me.
- NARR Meanwhile Jesus stood in front of the Governor, and the Governor asked him –
- B Are you the King of the Jews?
- JESUS Yes, it is as you say.
- NARR But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders he refused to answer at all. So Pilate questioned him –
- B Do you not hear all these things they accuse you of?

- NARR But he still refused to answer one word, to the Governor's great astonishment.  
At the festive season it was the Governor's custom to release one prisoner, chosen by the people. There was then in custody a man of some notoriety, called Jesus Bar-Abbas. When they were assembled Pilate spoke to them.
- B Which would you like me to release to you, Jesus Bar-Abbas or Jesus called Messiah?
- NARR For he knew it was out of spite that they had brought Jesus before him. And even as he sat on the judgement seat his wife had sent him a message –
- C Do not interfere in the case of that holy man. I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him.
- NARR The chief priests and elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Bar-Abbas and the execution of Jesus. Pilate asked them again :
- B Which of these two do you want me to release?
- A Bar-Abbas!
- B In that case, what am I to do with Jesus called Messiah?
- A Have him crucified!
- B Why? What harm has he done?
- NARR Their voices rose to a roar . . .
- A & C Have! Him! Crucified!

NARR        When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but instead a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd.

B             I am innocent of this man's blood: it is your responsibility.

NARR        And with one voice the people cried –

A & C        His blood be on us,  
and on our children!

NARR        At that, Pilate released Bar-Abbas for them. Jesus, however, he first had flogged; then he handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers took Jesus inside the praetorium and called the rest of the troops. They stripped him of his clothes and wrapped him in a scarlet military cloak. Weaving a crown out of thorns they fixed it on his head, and stuck a reed in his right hand. Then they dropped on their knees before him and jeered –

A             Long live the King of the Jews!

NARR        They spat at him. They took hold of the reed and kept striking him on the head with it. Finally, when they had finished making a fool of him, they stripped off the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucifixion.

On their way out they met a Cyrenian named Simon: this man they pressed into service to carry the cross. Then, when they came to the place called Golgotha, which means Skull Hill, they offered Jesus a drink of wine mixed with some bitter drug,

but when he had tasted it he refused to drink.  
When they had nailed him to the cross they shared out his clothing by drawing lots. Then they sat down and kept watch.

Over his head they put a placard with the charge against him:

‘THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS’

Two robbers were crucified along with him, one on his left and one on his right.

Passers-by hurled abuse at him: they wagged their heads and shouted –

C You’d pull down the temple, would you, and rebuild it in three days?

A Save yourself, why don’t you? Come down from the cross and save yourself!

C If you’re the Son of God!

NARR The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way.

B He saved others but he can’t save himself! King of Israel, is he?

A Let’s see him come down from that cross, then we’ll believe in him.

B Did he trust in God? So let God rescue him.

A If he wants to.

B He said he was God’s son!

NARR Even the robbers who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way.

NARR            Darkness fell over the whole land from midday until three in the afternoon; and about three Jesus cried aloud –

JESUS           Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

NARR           - which means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders, on hearing this, said –

C                He is calling Elijah.

NARR           One of them ran at once and fetched a sponge, which he soaked in sour wine, and held it to his lips on the end of a cane. Others said –

A                Wait! Let’s see if Elijah will come and save him.

NARR           But Jesus gave one more great cry, and died.

NARR           At that, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked. The rocks were split. Tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people.

Meanwhile, the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified.

A                In truth, this was a son of God.

NARR           There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee and helped him. Among them were Mary Magdalene,

Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the wife of Zebedee.

Now it was evening, and a man came forward, by name Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea, who had followed Jesus as a disciple like the rest. He it was who approached Pilate and asked to have the body of Jesus, whereupon Pilate ordered that the body should be given up. Joseph took possession of the body and wrapped it in a clean winding-sheet. Then he buried it in a new grave, which he had fashioned for himself out of the rock, and left it there, rolling a great stone against the grave door. Mary Magdalen and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Next day, the morning after that Friday, the chief priests and the Pharisees called at Pilate's residence.

- A Your Excellency, we recall how that imposter said while he was still alive, "I am going to rise after three days." So will you give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day? Otherwise his disciples may come, steal the body, and then tell the people that he has been raised from the dead; and the final deception will be worse than the first.
- B Go, take a guard; make the tomb as secure as you know how.
- NARR So they went and made the tomb secure. They put a seal on the stone, and posted the guard.

END