

DATELINE: JERUSALEM

By Michelle Van Loon

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DEDICATION

*The Two Marys, each of whom desires to share the Best
News with those around her.*

-The Playwright

STORY OF THE PLAY

This 35-minute reader's theater script offers audiences a fresh look at Jesus' death and resurrection. It uses the vehicle of media interviews to have some of those present at His crucifixion interact with Christ's seven last statements made from the cross. Contemporary language and vivid characterizations bring audiences the message that no one can remain neutral about the claims of Christ. Nine voices, and opportunities for additional music, make "Dateline: Jerusalem" a natural for an Easter production, although it could also be used effectively for evangelism anytime during the year.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 men, 5 flexible)

ANNOUNCER: Can be played by Reporter, or cast as a separate role.

PILATE: An older gentleman.

REPORTER: An impartial observer - either male or female.

VOICE 1: A male viewer at the crucifixion, simply telling what he's seen and heard.

VOICE 2: A Roman Guard - male.

VOICE 3: Someone wronged by one of the thieves being crucified - either male or female.

VOICE 4: A follower of Jesus - either male or female.

VOICE 5: A doubter - either male or female.

VOICE 6: A Roman Guard - male.

***Other casting needs:** Minimum of one vocalist.

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Props: Six stools or cubes, overhead projector or Powerpoint capability.

Setting: In the auditorium, out away from the stage, a large wooden cross can be centered in the audience. Alternately, the cross can be at the far end of the stage. Cubes or stools should be clustered opposite the cross on stage.

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DATELINE: JERUSALEM

In darkness, headlines set in Jerusalem flash on screen, leading audience into holy week.

Dateline: Jerusalem

Rebel Political Leader to be Executed!

Crowds Throng Jerusalem for Passover Celebration

Pilate Solidifies Political Grasp on Region

At the same time as these headlines are being shown, "news music" should come up, then fade out as an offstage announcer introduces the following news clip. It can either be presented as an audio clip, or as a videotape.

(AT RISE: VOICES 1-6 are seated on low stools or cubes clustered on one side of the stage. VOICES 2 and 3 should be toward the rear, the others can be in front, arranged in an informal grouping, seated at staggered heights. ANNOUNCER begins.)

ANNOUNCER: Live, at five. Tonight's big story: Pilate, after a lightning trial, has taken decisive action to quell the uprising that appeared to be threatening his leadership. It has long been rumored that Jewish teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, has had designs on leadership of His people. Though He and His closest associates deny it, there have been fears that the immense popularity of Jesus would galvanize the Jews to military action. When He came into Jerusalem last week, He was met with an overwhelming voice of support from the public.

ANNOUNCER: *(Continued.)* A conflict appeared likely. Those fears have been addressed by the arrest and trials of Jesus. Earlier this week, Pilate gave a news conference ...

PILATE: *(Can be a pre-recorded video that is shown on screen, an audio clip, or a live actor.)* ... the Jewish religious leaders brought Him to me. I'd heard a lot about Him and was expecting a fiery, powerful rabble-rouser. He stood before me, calm ... it was eerie, really, how calm He was ... while they shouted their accusations at Him. They accused Him of not paying taxes and of wanting Caesar's job. They kept insisting that, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place." *(Luke 23:5.)* Some of the people were stirred up all right, but they sure weren't Jesus' followers. They were His accusers! Anyway, when I found out He was from Galilee, I turned Him over to Herod, since that was his jurisdiction. He told me that he felt Jesus had done nothing to deserve the death penalty *(Luke 23:15.)* and sent Him back to me. I figured I'd shut the mouths of Jesus' accusers by punishing Him and sending Him on His way. They were screaming for the death penalty ... crucifixion ... and pretty soon, they got the crowd to see it their way. "What evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death ..." *(Luke 23:22.)* They were like a pack of ravenous lions. I had to do whatever it took to keep the peace. Fine, you want this Man's death, you got it, I said to myself. Jesus stood quietly, not fighting it. If it was any regular man, I would have taken His silence as a death wish. It wasn't a death wish I saw in His eyes, though ... it was something else, something bigger.

ANNOUNCER: Public opinion is strongly divided on this man, Jesus. For more on this breaking story, we go to our reporter, live at the scene.

End of Freeview

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