

The Easter Story ... Once Again

By Kent S. Larsen

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INTRODUCTION

The most authentic Easter story, of course, comes directly from the Christian scripture—the Holy Bible. To include all of the key events of the story, however, requires a careful merging of the separate accounts found in the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The writer, using the King James Version, has created a beautiful merger, an effort that involves frequent switching from one account to another. To maintain a reasonable length, some biblical incidents (e.g., Christ's appearances before Annas, Caiaphas, and Herod) were omitted. The writer took pains to preserve the purity of the scriptural accounts, avoiding personal interpretation.

Included in this volume are two different texts suitable for presentation during the Easter season—or at other times as well. The first, entitled Actor Script, is about half the length of the second (Narrator Script) but the time requirement of each—from 60 to 90 minutes—is affected by the number and extent of interspersed musical selections that may be chosen. Individual directors are free to choose the music they may desire for incorporation into the presentation: vocal solos, groups, or choirs—or instrumentals, or combinations. In the Actor Script, music could be presented after each reader or actor has completed that section, or following two of the shorter sections. In the Narrator Script, certain of the more obvious music insertion points are noted, but directors are free to use others. Some directors may prefer the presentation to stand on its own, without music.

The Actor Script presents the Easter story through the words of nine readers/actors. These individuals give their reports of the events: Rebekkah, John, James, Miriam, Pilate, Simon, Mary, Philip, and Nathanael. Rebekkah and Miriam, while their names are biblical, are fictitious characters; the others are real and very well could have observed these events. The words used are directly from the scriptures. Some leeway is taken to omit nonessential or duplicate words or passages, and a few connective words are added, all to make the story flow.

To achieve the desired effect, this Actor Script should not be presented by a single narrator (the Narrator Script accommodates that option). The approach requiring the least preparation would be similar to a reader's theatre, with different individuals simply reading each part. A greater effect is achieved, however, if the actors stand at a microphone and repeat the *memorized* text using appropriate emphasis and nuance. This requires a greater effort. The optimum effect, requiring more extensive preparation, would have each actor in costume delivering a theatrical performance. Producers should choose the approach that best fits their particular situations.

ACTOR SCRIPT

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The characters, in order of appearance

REBEKKAH
JOHN
JAMES
MIRIAM
PILATE
SIMON
MARY
PHILLIP
NATHANAEAL

REBEKKAH

In the Holy City before the feast of the Passover, I, Rebekkah, sat among the multitude at the feet of the Master. He chastised the scribes and the Pharisees for rejecting the prophets and wise men he had sent. I wept when his voice softened as he said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.... Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

JOHN

I am John, a son of Zebedee, of the twelve. After his administration of the bread and wine at our last supper, Jesus knew his hour was come when he should depart out of this world unto the Father. Jesus was troubled in spirit, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Then all of us looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. I then saith unto him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop." And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, and after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, "That thou doest, do quickly." Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

JAMES

I, James, followed Jesus and the others unto a place called Gethsemane. And he saith unto the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." And he took with him Peter, John, and me. And he began to be sorrowful and very heavy and then saith unto us, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." And he cometh unto us, and findeth us asleep, and saith unto Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." And he came and found us asleep again: for our eyes were heavy. And he left us, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

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