

# ***THE MESSIAH INQUEST***

*By Carol Shively and Jim Ineson*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

In a contemporary courtroom, the characters in the real life drama of the last days of Christ take the witness stand to examine the question, "Was Jesus the Messiah?" The audience, cast as the jury, makes the final decision.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*12 to 14 flexible parts, approximately 7 m, 7 w  
(Listed in order of appearance)*

**Bailiff**  
**Judge**  
**Prosecutors\***  
**Defense Attorneys\***  
**Blind Man, Simon ben-Isaac**  
**Disciple, Judas Iscariot**  
**High Priest, Caiaphas**  
**Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate**  
**Joseph of Arimathea**  
**Mary Magdalene**  
**The Captain of the Temple Guard**  
**The Disciple, Simon Peter**

\*The roles of Prosecuting and Defense Attorney may each be split into two roles if a larger cast is desired. To increase the number of female roles, we recommend the Bailiff, Judge, Prosecutors, and Attorneys be played by women along with the role of Mary Magdalene.

**PLAYING TIME:** 2 hours

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**COSTUMES:** Costumes should be simple but representative of the characters' era and vocation. The attorneys, judge, and bailiff should wear contemporary clothes appropriate to their positions.

**SETTING:** A contemporary courtroom, requiring a judge's desk, the witness stand, and tables and chairs for the attorneys.

**PROPS:** Briefcases and assorted papers for attorneys; gavel for Judge; Bible for Bailiff; note for Pilate to read.

**MOVEMENT:** While not specifically stated, actors playing the attorneys are encouraged to walk between the witness stand, judge's bench, and their own table to create stage action. Attorneys and prosecutors should mime conferring with their partners occasionally.

**SERIES FORMAT:** This play may be broken down into five sections and presented as a study series, most appropriately, during Lent. To produce it as a series, the same beginning may be used each day/week (Page 1). An alternative ending such as follows will suffice:

JUDGE: This court will be in recess until tomorrow/next week. Court is adjourned. *(Strikes gavel.)*

BAILIFF: All rise.

*(JUDGE exits.)*

## **ACT I**

*(AT RISE: CAST MEMBERS should be seated in place as the BAILIFF enters.)*

BAILIFF: All rise. *(Audience stands.)*

JUDGE: *(Enters and is seated.)* Please be seated. We've come here tonight to consider a question that has been asked for nearly 2,000 years. Was Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God? The controversy rages on.

Our answer to this question is made solely on faith - faith that is determined by our ability to believe what we read and what we hear about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The people who played a major part in the events of Jesus' last days on earth had an obvious advantage over us. They made their decision based on personal contact with Him.

Today, we will produce several of these people as witnesses. We'll hear their testimony about the roles they played in these events and their impressions of the man, Jesus.

As jurors, I charge you to carefully reflect on the facts and opinions you are about to hear and then, to make your own decision. Was Jesus the Messiah? You are the jury. You decide.

Are the counsels ready?

PROSEC: Yes, Your Honor.

DEFENSE: We are, Your Honor.

JUDGE: The first witness will please take the stand.

*(SIMON BEN-ISAAC takes the witness stand.)*

BAILIFF: *(Holds out Bible for swearing-in.)* Please raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

SIMON: Yes.

BAILIFF: Please state your name for the court.

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SIMON: Simon ben-Isaac.

JUDGE: Counsel, you may proceed.

DEFENSE: Simon, will you please tell the court what you do for a living?

SIMON: I didn't make much of a living, till lately.

DEFENSE: Well then, please tell us who you are.

SIMON: Don't you recognize me? I've been sitting on the steps of the Temple all my life. (*Looks around.*) Maybe not. Judging from what you're wearing, I'd say you're not from Jerusalem. Where you folks from? Philippi? Ephesus?

DEFENSE: It's not important where we're from, Simon. We want to hear about you. Now, why did you sit on the Temple steps? Didn't you work?

SIMON: It's hard for a man to work when he can't see.

DEFENSE: You were blind?

SIMON: That's right, from birth.

DEFENSE: Tell us what happened.

SIMON: I was sitting in my usual place the other day, when a group of men came by. I heard one say, "Rabbi, Jesus, why was this man born blind? Was it to punish some sin of his parents, or did he commit sin himself in a previous existence?"

DEFENSE: Did you know who was speaking?

SIMON: I figured it was one of the Pharisees. They were always discussing the law, and blaming my parents for the fact that I was blind.

DEFENSE: Did you know who this man, Jesus, was?

SIMON: Never heard of him before. But I knew he was a gentleman.

DEFENSE: How?

SIMON: By how he answered.

DEFENSE: Which was?

SIMON: He said, "Neither he nor his parents are to blame. But it was ordained that the works of God should be shown in him." Now that was a new thought! I liked it. Cleared my parents' name after all these years.

DEFENSE: Did he say anything else?

## **End of Freeview**

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