

John at the Garden of Gethsemane

*Selected from the collection
"SEVEN STEPS to the CROSS"*

By Roy Wiegand

Cast: 1 m

Length: 2 pages of dialogue (1295 words)

Performance time: About 8 minutes

The Story

Easter comes alive with this dramatic reading, a monologue portraying John at midnight after the Last Supper. He relates how the Master invited him to sit next to Him for the meal, how he wanted to remember seeing Jesus pray in the moonlight, and finally how He stopped the bleeding from the guard's severed ear. But now the soldiers have taken Him, and in his heart John is afraid. He is a weak man, and he fears for Jesus.

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(AT RISE: JOHN enters, walking briskly from the back of the audience, the SPOTLIGHT following him. He is apprehensive, concerned that he is being followed, and from time to time he stops and looks behind him. He then climbs up to the pulpit. He is a young man, about 25 years old. He has a short beard and wears a white sackcloth type of cassock.)

I have come back here tonight because this is the only place in or near Jerusalem where I could find peace within myself, here in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives ... here where I was last with Him.

This has been a week filled with events. Jews from all over Israel have come to Jerusalem this week to celebrate the Feast of Passover. We were warned not to come, however, for it was rumored that Caiaphas, the high priest in the temple, was plotting to arrest Jesus and have him killed.

Jesus would not be swayed. He told us that we would enter Jerusalem and celebrate the first two days of the Passover together. On the third He would be taken up to be crucified, for thus it was written. So on the first day we journeyed on the dusty road from Bethany, the Master and his twelve followers. It was a quiet journey, for each of us constantly thought with apprehension of the perils that lay ahead. As we approached the village of Bethphage which lies on the outskirts of Jerusalem, we stopped to rest. Jesus said to me, "John, go with Andrew into the village. There you will find a colt hitched to a rail. Bring it to me."

Upon returning with the animal, He sat astride and we led Him slowly toward Jerusalem's gate. The city was swarming with people and we were unnoticed at first, but as we moved further into the city's bowels, fragments of people began to turn and point. Our eyes suspiciously darted among the crowd, fearing that at any moment they would rise up against us.

But to our astonishment when the great multitudes recognized Him, they began to line each side of the lane where we walked, and they threw their garments and palm leaves at our feet, shouting, "Hosanna! Hosanna! the Messiah is here," and they continued their shouting even until we stopped in front of the temple. "Hosanna. The Messiah has come, the Messiah has come!" And the fear in our hearts was gradually replaced with relief and comfort, and I looked up to the Master to see the joy in His face, but His was a sullen look ... and tears streamed down His cheeks. I shall never forget that vision.

Early this evening Jesus told Peter and me to enter Jerusalem through the Fountain Gate. There, He said, we would find a man bearing water. This man would lead us to an upper room in his house. There we would prepare the feast.

We found that man and he led us to that room. Peter then went to the market, purchased a lamb, and had it sacrificed at the temple. As we were making the final preparations, I heard the noises of our brothers as they climbed the stairway. Jesus was the first to enter the room. He stood silently, surveying it, and then looked at us and nodded His approval. He then took His seat at the center of the table and gestured to Peter to take the honored position to His left. All of us knew that Judas, the treasurer of our group, would be offered the second honored seat to His right, but to my surprise He looked at me and said, "John ... John, sit here."

I know not why He chose me but I was gladdened, for I felt a need to be close to Him tonight. He looked about us and said, "I have greatly desired to share this Passover feast with you before I suffer, for surely I say unto you I will eat of it no more until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

End of Freeview

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