

PASSION READING 4

LEADER: Then they led him off to Pilate. To avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.

WOMEN: So Pilate came out to them and asked,

LEADER: "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

CONGREGATION: "If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you."

LEADER: "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

CONGREGATION: "But we have no right to execute anyone."

WOMEN: This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

LEADER: They began to accuse him, saying,

CONGREGATION: "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

WOMEN: Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus, and asked him,

LEADER: "Are you the king of the Jews?"

MEN: "Is that your idea, or did others talk to you about me?"

LEADER: "Am I a Jew? It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

MEN: "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

LEADER: "You are a king, then!"

MEN: "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

LEADER: "What is truth?"

WOMEN: Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

LEADER: The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him,

CONGREGATION: "Hail, King of the Jews!"

LEADER: Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

WOMEN: Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews,

LEADER: "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him."

WOMEN: When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them,

LEADER: "Here is the man."

WOMEN: As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted,

MEN: "Crucify! Crucify!"

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WOMEN: But Pilate answered,

LEADER: "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

MEN: "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

WOMEN: When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. He asked Jesus,

LEADER: "Where do you come from?"

WOMEN: But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate asked,

LEADER: "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize I have power to free you or to crucify you?"

MEN: "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

WOMEN: From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free. But they insisted,

CONGREGATION: "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

LEADER: On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

WOMEN: Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them,

LEADER: "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and release him."

WOMEN: Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them,

LEADER: "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

WOMEN: For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

MEN: While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message:

WOMEN: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

LEADER: But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

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