

PALM SUNDAY 2018

Continued – Part 2

Collin: They arrived at Caiaphas' home, where the members of the Jewish Council waited. By this time a crowd had begun to gather in the courtyard outside, wondering what was going on. Peter had followed Jesus at a distance, and quietly entered the courtyard. Jesus, standing before the religious authorities, listened as many people gave false testimony against him. Because all the witnesses couldn't agree, Caiaphas asked him directly, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" Jesus said, "I am," which is the same name God used for himself - "I AM" - when Moses asked God his name thousands of years earlier. And then Jesus quoted from the prophet Daniel, who described the coming of God's Messiah, "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power; and coming with the clouds of heaven." They needed to hear no more. Jesus had just claimed himself to be both God and the Messiah. Some of these "religious" people begin to spit on him and beat him. They convicted him of blasphemy, and decided that first thing the next morning, they would take him to Pilate, the Roman governor condemning him on the grounds of treason – calling himself a messiah – a "king of the Jews." This, they knew, would result in Jesus' death.

Rebecca: In the meantime, Peter was outside waiting by a fire, along with various servants and soldiers who were warming themselves in the cold night air by a fire. One servant girl said to him, "Weren't you with Jesus, the Galilean?" "I don't know what you're talking about," said Peter. Soon another girl saw him and said, "This man was with Jesus." But again, Peter said, "I do not know the man." Later, a third time, one of the bystanders pointed to Peter saying, "This man is a Galilean, he must know him." Then Peter began to curse. He exclaimed, "I do not know him!" Immediately, the crow of a rooster sounded through the courtyard. Peter remembered Jesus' words, and he broke down and cried bitterly.

Collin: When Judas heard what happened to Jesus, he regretted what he had done and wanted to return the money. But Caiaphas wouldn't take it back – it was now blood money. Why did Judas betray Jesus? While we will never know for sure, it has been suggested that perhaps Judas let greed overcome him, or that Judas was trying to force Jesus into action, anticipating that he would lead the revolution the Jews so longed for against the Romans. But whatever the case, Judas was filled with such grief and remorse at his betrayal, he went out and hanged himself. A casualty of his own decision.

Rebecca: The Jewish Council wanted Jesus dead, but only the Roman government had the power to execute someone. They knew that blasphemy would not mean anything to a Roman official, but if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, a king, it could be construed that Jesus wanted to start an insurrection. And that was punishable by crucifixion. So at 7:00 on Friday morning, Jesus was hauled off to the Antonia Fortress, the home and military compound of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. There, the religious authorities accused him, “This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government, and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.” Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You say so.” After further questioning, Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, “I find nothing wrong with this man!” Pilate wanted to let Jesus go, but the Jews were insistent that Jesus be crucified. So to satisfy their lust for blood, Pilate offered the crowd a choice between Jesus and a notorious murderer, Barabbas. Certain that the crowd would release Jesus, Pilate asked, “Who shall I release for you?” “Barabbas!” shouted the crowd. “What shall I do with Jesus?” They said, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Collin: Yes, the crowd that celebrated him on Sunday now condemned him. For his message was not “let’s rise up and fight the Romans and end this oppression.” His message was “love your neighbor, pray for your enemies, go the extra mile.’ But no one wanted to hear this. So when the two men stood before the crowd – they chose the one symbolizing evil, power, hate, and sin, over the one symbolizing love, peace, and goodness.

Rebecca: As Pilate pondered all this, his wife sent him a message begging that he have nothing to do with Jesus, as she had a terrible nightmare about him. However, the angry crowds were creating such chaos, that Pilate acquiesced to their demands, washed his hands of the decision, and handed Jesus over to be beaten and then crucified. It was the Roman custom to flog someone prior to crucifixion, to inflict as much pain as possible, while still keeping them alive. Jesus was taken, stripped of his clothes and bound to a post where he would endure a horrible Roman flogging. Whips laced with hooks, glass, and metal tore into and ripped his skin and tissue to the bone. From there he was led by the guards into the courtyard of the Governor’s palace, where they were joined by hundreds of other soldiers, who jammed a crown of thorns on his head, threw a purple robe on him, spit at him and mocked him, until they had had enough of their sport. And though beaten and humiliated, Jesus accepted his fate. He never said a word to his tormentors. This was to fulfill the prophecy by Isaiah, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did

not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”

Solo: He Never Said a Mumbalin’ Word – Tom Hoke

Collin: Around 9:00 that morning, they led him to be crucified. It was about a third of a mile to the hill where Jesus was to be crucified. We sometimes call it Calvary, from the Latin word, *Calvaria*, meaning “skull”, or Golgotha, the Aramaic equivalent. Jesus was forced to carry the crossbeam of the cross, weighing close to one hundred pounds. Having just endured such torture, he began to stumble and struggle as he climbed the hill to his death. A bystander, a foreigner from Africa, Simon, was pressed into service, to carry the cross for Jesus.

Rebecca: Once there, the soldiers hammered Jesus to the cross, with spikes through his hands and feet, and he was lifted up for all to see. The only charge against him, “King of the Jews.” Jesus, who had endured so much pain and humiliation, who had seen the evil of humanity at its worst, looked down from the cross at the soldiers gambling for his clothes, at the priests with their self-satisfied looks, at the crowd shouting out, “If you are the Son of God, save yourself.” And with love and mercy that is beyond our understanding, prays to God, “Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing.” Two criminals who had also been charged were crucified at the same time. One mocked him along with the crowd, but the other, in humble repentance said, “We deserve to die, but this man is innocent. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus, looking at the man, assured him, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.”

Collin: One particular person who had to endure the pain of watching all this was Jesus’ mother, Mary. And Jesus, wanting to make sure that his mother would be cared for after his death, said to his disciple, John. “Here is your mother,” and to Mary, “Here is your son.” At noon, the sky suddenly turned dark, and stayed that way until 3:00 that afternoon. Jesus, feeling like we all do when God sometimes seem silent, cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” A little later, with blood and fluids having drained from his body, he said, “I thirst.” Later, as his breathing became more difficult, and with his life slowly ebbing away, Jesus said, “It is finished.” His mission on earth was fulfilled. God’s plan for the salvation of the world was complete. Then, Jesus, with a loud voice called out, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” And he breathed his last.

Choral Response: And No Bird Sang

Rebecca: Suddenly, the earth began to shake, and rocks split, and the curtain in the temple that separated the people from the holy place of God, was ripped in two. This showed that God's people would be separated from him no longer. A Roman officer and his soldiers were terrified at what was happening, and they said, "Surely this man truly was the Son of God."

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Collin: After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for Jesus' body. Nicodemus, also, who had first visited Jesus by night because he was afraid, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They took the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in linen cloths with the spices, as was the burial custom of the Jews. Near the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been buried. So they laid Jesus there, and rolled a great stone across the entrance and left. Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary and women who had followed him, saw where he was laid. Then, because it was now the Sabbath, they rested as required by the law.

Hymn: O Sacred Head Now Wounded 286