

# GREAT PASSION PLAY – 2025 PRIEST 1 (12.20.24)

## ACT I—Scene 2: Guards at City Gates & Witnessing Mourner

ROMAN 1: *(on the ground)* Who goes there?

PILGRIM/WITNESS 1: Only a traveler from afar who comes to Jerusalem to celebrate the great feast.

ROMAN 2: *(on the top of the wall)* It's just another pilgrim! The city is already overflowing with them.

ROMAN 1: *(on the ground)* Come down from there. We'd better get back to our post, Pilate is due to return any time now. You'll be getting us both in trouble.

*[Sheep run across set]*

WITNESSING MOURNER: Good Masters, I have just come from Bethany where I was mourning the death of Lazarus and consoling his family. Many of you knew him and some here attended his burial four days ago. The man, Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee, came and stood before the tomb and called upon God and RAISED LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD!

*(CROWD Noise with following voices overlapping)*

PRIEST 2: What?! What are you talking about?!

PRIEST 3: Impossible! Why did you even come here?!

**PRIEST 1: It can't be true!**

PRIEST 2: Never!

WITNESSING MOURNER: He was dead; now He lives!

**PRIEST 1: Guard, remove this man *(emphatically)*.**

ANNAS: *(Interrupting)* Wait, *(Approaching the WITNESS)* You were there, and you believe this? *[MOURNER nods agreement]*

CAIAPHAS: Annas, that he believes it is all that matters, true or not. *(To the MOURNER)* Thank you; you may go.

JOSEPH: Caiaphas, this man has done many miracles.

PRIEST 2: Yes, Joseph, he has. And what are we going to do about it?

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PRIEST 3: What can we do? It's a sign!

**PRIEST 1:** A sign of what? If He continues, everyone will believe in Him, Him! ... And declare Him as King! Then, the Romans will strip us of our privileges, and disperse our nation!

NICODEMUS: I do not believe He has proclaimed Himself as King.

*[ANNAS stands & all are quiet.]*

ANNAS: His followers do say it, and He doesn't discourage it. Nicodemus, though we've often disagreed, I have always respected you. You have believed in His... miracles; do you believe in Him? Is He your Messiah?

CAIAPHAS: Do none of you know or see the real issue at hand? It's better that One should die for all rather than the whole nation to perish. If we don't act, the Romans will. He must be arrested, apart from His crowd, so we may question Him. You may go.

*[PRIESTS disperse.*

*CAIAPHAS & ANNAS proceed out of Sanhedrin with GUARDS 1 & 2.]*

CAIAPHAS: *(Pausing & turning to GUARD 2)* Let it out that anyone who cooperates in His capture will be rewarded.

## ACT I—Scene 4c: Proclaimer & Jesus enters Jerusalem

PROCLAIMER: Jesus is coming, it is Jesus the prophet, and Lazarus is with Him.

*[CHILDREN proclaiming; CROWD meets JESUS at Gate #1 and swells around Him as He proceeds on donkey. As soon as He dismounts, CHILDREN run to Him and surround Him as He approaches the Temple JUDAS rejoins the APOSTLE group. Layered voices: Who is this? ---Who is coming? ---It is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee! --- It is the man who raised Lazarus from the dead!]*

*CROWD: Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in The Name of the Lord! Save us now! It is the man who raised Lazarus from the dead! Let us through! We must see him. (Children's voices and other voices as well layered, with mention of Lazarus as well)*

**PRIEST 1:** Master, Reprimand your disciples!

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**JESUS:** If my disciples keep silent, the very stones will cry out!

*(Children Heard Rejoicing)*

**JESUS:** Blessed are you my children. *[He notices the girl who cannot walk...a 5-10 year old girl]* Little girl with the cane.

**LITTLE GIRL:** Do you mean me?

**JESUS:** Can you not walk without the cane?

**LITTLE GIRL:** No, I can't.

**JESUS:** Would you like God to heal you?

**LITTLE GIRL:** Oh, yes!

**JESUS:** Then you do not need the cane. Throw it away and walk to me.

**LITTLE GIRL:** (Hesitant at first) Are you sure?

**JESUS:** Come to me.

**MARY MAG:** Aw, Look! She walks unaided!

**JESUS:** Let the little children come to me! I tell you the truth, unless you humble yourself and receive the Kingdom of God like a child, you will not enter in.

*[CHILDREN'S voices crying, "I love you, Jesus,"  
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," and "Hosanna!"]*

**PRIEST 1:** *(Looking first at NICODEMUS and JOSEPH,  
then addressing JESUS)*

Teacher, are you listening to what the children are saying?

**JESUS:** Yes, have you read what is written in the Psalm of David? "Out of the mouths of children, you make perfect praise."

*[PRIEST 1: leaves for Sanhedrin.]*

**JESUS:** Whoever receives a child like this receives me. But if someone causes one of these children to stumble, it would be better for him to have a millstone tied to him and be thrown into the sea! Don't ever look down on the children; their angels always behold the face of My Father in heaven.

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*[A BLIND MAN has approached from stage right and JOANNA has brought him forward.]*

**JOANNA:** Jesus, this man is blind.

**PRIEST 4:** I know him; he comes to the temple every day.

**BLIND MAN:** Jesus, our Son of David, have mercy on me! I want to see!

**JESUS:** As you have believed, *(He touches him)* so be it to you.

**BLIND MAN:** I see! I can see! Blessed be our God and Father! I can see!

**SMALL GIRL:** Don't go anywhere Jesus, I'll be right back!

**PRIEST 3:** You have healed a drunken sinner! A drunken sinner!

**JESUS:** Who among you, having one hundred sheep and losing one, won't leave the ninety-nine in the open field and search for the lost one until he finds it? When he's found it, he rejoices over that one more than the ninety-nine that didn't go astray! In the same way, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than for ninety-nine righteous who don't need to repent!  
*[Mary Laz. & Martha exit to prepare for anointing scene]*

## ACT I—Scene 4d: Sanhedrin Unrest Insert

**PRIEST 1:** Caiaphas, the Nazarene has come to the feast with His disciples and Lazarus. He is disrupting the commerce at the Temple, and His followers are hailing him as King! Our guards could not risk a riot...Pilate was watching.

**CAIAPHAS:** Pilate heard them proclaim Him King?

**PRIEST 1:** They cried, "Hosanna" and called Him the "Son of David." He might not understand.

**ANNAS:** He will understand! We can make sure of that, and use Pilate to solve this matter.

**CAIAPHAS:** The Nazarene is teaching at the Temple?

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## PRIEST 1: Yes, and working miracles!

**CAIAPHAS:** Then, ask questions that guide his teaching toward Rome. Perhaps he will say something Pilate will act upon.

**ANNAS:** If he even hesitates to answer, his followers will think he is afraid. If he cannot answer a question, he will lose their respect. That is what we want, to turn the crowd. Understand? We will come shortly.

### Aside with Priests

**PRIEST 1: *(To Annas and Caiaphas)*** See?! The whole world is going after him. Enough with these questions, we need to act.

**CAIAPHAS:** We can't arrest him here and now. The people would riot.

**ANNAS:** For now, just question him.

### Healing of Dead Child

**FATHER:** We've come to see Jesus; our child has just died, and we heard He raised Lazarus of Bethany from the dead.

**LAZARUS:** Yes, have faith! I am Lazarus of Bethany. I was dead, and now I'm alive!  
*(Turning toward JESUS)* Jesus! This man needs your help!

**MOTHER:** Help us, please!

**JESUS: *(Taking dead CHILD)*** Father! Glorify Your Name!

**PRIEST 1: *(Stepping forward as JESUS moves toward Temple)*** Master! You are a teacher come from God; your miracles are proof of that, and you speak truth plainly without respect of persons. Will you tell us, then, is it lawful for us to pay the tribute to Caesar?

**JESUS:** You are hypocrites. Why do you try to trap me? Show me the tribute coin. Whose name on this coin?

**CROWD:** Caesar's!

**JESUS:** Whose image?!



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**CROWD:** Caesar's!

**JESUS:** Then give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God what is God's.

## Act III—Scene 2: Sanhedrin trial

**CAIAPHAS:** Annas has questioned him and He wouldn't cooperate. We will hear testimony from those who have heard Him firsthand.

**PRIEST 3:** (*Rises and is acknowledged by CAIAPHAS*) We were in the synagogue on the Sabbath, as is our custom. Jesus of Nazareth was also present, and before us all, he healed a man whose hand was deformed.

**CAIAPHAS:** In the synagogue, on the Sabbath?

**PRIEST 3:** Yes! He has made it a point to call healing and deliverance His "work." Therefore, He "works" on the Sabbath!

**JOSEPH:** If there was a miracle, it had to be the hand of God!

**PRIEST 3:** God? God? Have you forgotten that Satan does signs and wonders?

**PRIEST 4:** He heals and delivers in the name of demons!

**PRIEST 3:** Even the prince of demons!

**JOSEPH:** And you heard Him call upon Satan?

**PRIEST 3:** Of course not!

**JOSEPH:** Then why did you say it?

*[Agitated Crowd noises]*

**CAIAPHAS:** Order! Order! You must wait to be recognized before speaking!

**SCRIBE:** Then call witnesses!

**PRIEST 4:** Jesus of Nazareth has not only taught in outlying synagogues, he's spoken openly in our own Temple courts. Many of you here were present when he threatened to tear down our Temple!

*[PRIESTS nod & acknowledge it as truth.]*

**WITNESS 1:** (Stepping up & being recognized) I heard Him say, "I will throw down this Temple made with human hands. And, in three days I'll build another not made with hands."

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**WITNESS 2:** He said, "I can pull down the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days."

**WITNESS 1:** That's what he said!

**NICODEMUS:** *(Stepping up & being recognized)* Is this supposed to be reliable testimony? He said He would 'build another Temple not made with hands," clearly symbolic, and that was from three years ago! If that was so serious, it should've been addressed then, not now. I've followed this man's ministry for these three years. I believe He's a man of integrity, honoring God Whom He calls His Father. Indeed, God's the Father of us all!

**CAIAPHAS:** *(Getting an idea from NICODEMUS' last line, silences all and steps up to NICODEMUS)* Honoring God in truth is the heart of our religion. *(Turning to JESUS)* Do you have anything to say concerning what has been...witnessed?

**CAIAPHAS:** *(Looking at NICODEMUS)* Then, in the Name of Almighty God, *(Turning to Jesus)* I place you under oath. Are You the Christ, the Son of God?

**JESUS:** I AM! And you will see the Son of Man seated on the right hand of God and coming with the clouds of heaven.

**ANNAS:** Blasphemy! *(and more commotion among the priests)*

**PRIEST 1:** He has claimed to be God!

**CAIAPHAS:** *(To GUARD 2)* Take Him to Pilate, then go and gather a crowd, our crowd, and have them there at daybreak.

**JOSEPH:** A time for prayer, my friend?

**NICODEMUS:** Joseph, a time for miracles.

## Act III—Scene 4a: Pilate Private Trial

**PILATE:** You are of the Sanhedrin? I have been expecting you. What of the prisoner?

**PRIEST 1:** *(From the ground @ porch steps)* One Jesus of Nazareth, a self-proclaimed teacher who subverts the traditions of our nation. He has gained a radical following; you witnessed it five days ago when He came to this festival.

**PILATE:** If He breaks your traditions, judge Him yourselves, by your Law.

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**PRIEST 2:** It's come to more than that. He has proclaimed Himself our Messiah, our King.

**PILATE:** Are you the king of the Jews?

**JESUS:** The words are yours.

**PILATE:** The words are mine. Yes, indeed they are. *(To Claudia)* What an extraordinary reply. *(Now to priests)* What charge do you bring against him?

**PRIEST 1:** We believe He's a danger to the peace of Rome as well as our own nation.

**PRIEST 2:** His followers are encouraged against Rome in matters of taxes and rule.

**PRIEST 1:** His crimes are worthy of death by our Law and by Rome's.

**PILATE:** DEATH? You wish to put this man to death over those matters you've accounted?

**PRIEST 2:** That is our desire, his teaching has caused discontentment among the people all through Judea. It started in Galilee and has spread as far as this city.

**PILATE:** Is this man then a Galilean?

**PRIEST 2:** Yes, he is your Excellency *(realizing he has made a mistake)*.

**PILATE:** Why did you bring him to me then?

**PRIEST 2:** For trial, your Excellency.

**PILATE:** For trial? But is he not under Herod's jurisdiction? ...*(They debate among themselves)*... Answer my question!

**PRIEST 2:** This man is under Herod's jurisdiction, but...

**PILATE:** Herod is here in Jerusalem at this very time! Take him to Herod. Don't trouble me further. I (have no time) (don't have time) for such foolishness.



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## Act III—Scene 5: It is Time!

**CAIAPHAS:** Is everything set then?

**PRIEST 1:** Yes, Caiaphas, there will be a mob gathering at Pilate's porch shortly. Word of punishment for His followers is out, and our guard will be watching the crowd.

**ANNAS:** Pilate will release a prisoner for the feast, and Jesus' followers may cry out for Him. Who else stands condemned?

**PRIEST 2:** There are three, one Gastas, another Dysmas, and Barabbas. Of the three, Barabbas is the most known. He has ties with the Zealots and our own guard.

**ANNAS:** Then spread the word to ask for him.

**CAIAPHAS:** It is time.

## Act III—Scene 7a: Carry the cross

**PRIEST 1:** Do you see what is written there?

**GUARD 2:** King of the Jews?

**PRIEST 2:** You must tell the high priest; Go!

**PILATE:** What is it, Caiaphas?

**CAIAPHAS:** Pilate, the charges on His cross read, "King of the Jews." Many of the people are reading it; it should say that He only "claimed" to be the King of the Jews.

**PILATE:** What I have written, I have written.

## Act III—Scene 8a: Crucifixion

**LONGINUS:** (*To SCRIBE*) (2:45) Record this: Three crucified at nine o'clock this morning, Gastas and Dysmas for theft and rebellion, and one Jesus, King of the Jews! Nail him to the cross.

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NICODEMUS: (3:00-3:05) It's as He told me.... Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness...

*(NAIL, NAIL.)*

MOTHER MARY: (3:15) so the Son of Man must be lifted up...

*(NAIL, NAIL.)*

NICODEMUS: (3:22) This is what he meant.

*(NAIL, NAIL, NAIL.)*

JOHN: (3:28-48) For God so loves the world that He has given His Only Begotten Son... (Record as well He has given His One and Only Son for redundancy)

JESUS: (4:01) Father, forgive them! They do not know what they do!

GASTAS: (4:05) Are You not the Messiah? Save yourself...and us!

DYSMAS: (4:17) Have you no fear of God? You are under the same sentence as He, for it is plain justice. We are paying the price for our misdeeds, but this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!

JESUS: (4:40) I tell you the truth. Today, you will be with me in Paradise.

**PRIEST 1: (4:56) You said you were The Son of God; if You are, come down from the cross!**

PRIEST 2: Are You, our King? Come down, and then we will believe!

PRIEST 3: (5:07) He has saved others; why can't He save himself?

**PRIEST 1: (5:11) Why won't God rescue Him, if He is God's Son?**

MARY LAZ: (5:30) What are they doing? What's happening?

SIMON OF CYRENE: (5:35) The Roman soldiers are dividing his garments.

JOSEPH: (5:37) How can this be? How can they know? Is this David's prophecy?

NICODEMUS: (5:43) It must be. "They have pierced his hands and his feet. They divided his clothes among them and cast lots for his garments."

JESUS: (6:00) Mother, see your son! (6:07) John, here is your mother!

JESUS: (6:20-23) *(Record two versions: One with a loud voice and another with a very soft voice)* My GOD! My GOD! Why have You forsaken Me?

ROMAN 1: (6:33) *(To ROMAN 2)* What is this? A Storm?

ROMAN 2: I don't know. It's midday, but the sun is going dark.

LONGINUS: I can feel this darkness. Report this to Pilate.

JESUS: (6:50) ...I...I am thirsty.

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**JESUS:** *(With a loud voice)* (7:06) It is finished! (7:17) Father! Into Your Hand, I commit my Spirit!

## Act IV—Scene 1: Sanhedrin Fear

**CAIAPHAS:** What is it you called us here for?

**PRIEST 1:** About the earthquake; it's damaged the curtain in the Temple. It's entirely torn!

**PRIEST 2:** Top to Bottom! And it happened precisely at the same time Jesus died!

**PRIEST 1:** Many are saying it was a sign from God, and that Jesus was a righteous man!

**ANNAS:** This is most unfortunate. It will give momentum to the cause of His followers.

**CAIAPHAS:** We have heard how He said He would rise after three days. If His disciples hid the body; this superstitious mob would be out of control!

**ANNAS:** Then we must guard his tomb; hold his body until after the three days. Then his words will mean nothing!

## Act IV—Scene 4: Posting the Guards

**PRIEST 1:** Check to see that the body is there.

**ROMAN 2** (possibly instead of Guard 2): The body is there.

**PRIEST 1:** Very well, seal the stone.

**PRIEST 2:** *(To the GUARDS)* The high priest said no one is to enter until after the third day.

**PRIEST 1:** *(To the GUARDS)* Keep a close watch and don't let anyone enter the Tomb.