**Eye-witnesses**

**The Passover Story from Seven Angles**

**by James Archer**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| lyse Doucet | What is walking therapy? |  |
|  | Sunrise Sunset Sky Calvary Crosses Christian Cross Religious Easter Resurrection A depiction of the three crosses of Calvary with a beautiful sunrise or sunset with blue, pink, coral and purple colors.  The cross of Calvary is a spiritual symbol of the resurrection of Christ. good friday stock pictures, royalty-free photos & images | Art-3000: Picture dutch servant girl |
|  | newspaper seller | Thomas Sexton, Irish Nationalist Thomas Sexton, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Irish Nationalist and journalist (circa 19th century). Vintage halftone etching circa late 19th century. verger stock illustrations |

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**Author’s comment**

These monologues and simple dramas tell the Passion and Easter story afresh while remaining true to the narratives in the gospels. They are told from the perspective of seven different characters – some who play a role in the story as told in the bible, some who are fictional bystanders – trying to imagine what it was like for them, seeing the story (or part of it) through their eyes.

These include quite a bit of imagination and in some cases updating to a modern context to make it more accessible. In bible times, there were obviously no newspapers, let alone the BBC. So please treat these as biblical fiction rather than as gospel history.

In a number of cases I have carried the characters through several bible scenes.

I hope that you enjoy them and find that they help you to see the story afresh.

James Archer

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**The Freedom Fighter** **– part one**

*This monologue should be delivered in a common accent – it has been written as Cockney, but adapt as suits you. Dysmas, the narrator, is a Zealot, fighting to free Judah from Roman rule until he is captured and sentenced to death alongside his commander Barabbas (charismatic, ruthless and popular, think Gerry Adams) and colleague Gestas (hard man and bully, think Ian Mitchell from East Enders). Dysmas is the sap who does what he’s told, who drifted into the wrong gang and hasn’t got the guts to stand up to anyone, until part 3.*

Free Judaea! Kick out the Romans! ‘ow long, o Lord, ‘ow long? Will you rescue us today?

Jesus is expected in Jerusalem. ‘e claims to be the Messiah, the promised saviour, but ‘e don’t seem to have no weapons nor military experience. What are ‘is plans? ‘e ’an’t even told ‘is disciples, accordin’ to Simon, our man on the inside.

We’re ready. Caches of arms ’idden around the city, 300 men ready to rise up. The crowds are floodin’ in for the festival – they’ll back us when they’re sure we’re winnin’. But Jesus? The Boss ain’t sure about ‘im.

We’ll know shortly. The Boss got ‘im a message with a challenge. “If you come in war, ride the ‘orse. If you’re too chicken, choose the donkey.”

Listen! A cheerin’ crowd. See, they’re reinforcin’ the guards on the Roman fort. The showdown must come soon. If ‘e draws the soldiers out of the fort, our men can smash ‘em in the streets. We’re lookin’ down on the gate. The Boss ’as ‘is ‘orn by ‘is side, ready to sound the assault.

The cheers are getting’ louder. They’re climbin’ up the ’ill to the gate. We’ll see ‘em any minute. I see people wavin’ palm branches. Where is ‘e? ‘ow is ‘e armed?

I don’t believe it! ‘e’s sittin’ on a donkey! Like a lamb to the slaughter! God ’elp ‘im when the Romans get ‘im.

The guards have seen ‘im. They’re chucklin’ with relief. Challengin’ ‘im to a fight. Guffaws.

‘e’s flunked it! ‘e’s turned left towards the temple. Didn’t even look at the guards. The Boss has dropped ‘is ‘orn in disgust. All our preparations are for naught. The men will stay around for the festival, ready to exploit any trouble. But the big ’ope is gone – for now.

**From Our Own Correspondent – part one**

*Cast: Clive Myrie, presenter of the World at One news show, based in the studio in London; Lyse Doucet, foreign affairs correspondent on the streets of Jerusalem; Jesus, always off-stage.*

*Props needed: whip, robust table that is light enough to be overturned, large pile of coins. Because this is all about the words rather than the pictures, you will need to think about how you present it engagingly.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Clive | Good morning and welcome to The World at One. This week, we will be on the streets of Jerusalem watching events unfold during Passover week. The excitement is building as the Jewish people prepare to celebrate the old story of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Every year, Jerusalem is a religious hothouse, with rumours flying about the coming of Messiah, the promised saviour, who, it is believed, will free the people of God from foreign occupation and set up a lasting Jewish kingdom. This year, the rumours centre on Jesus of Nazareth, the miracle-worker from Galilee, who has drawn large crowds with his miracles and homely teaching. But he has offended the religious authorities by refusing to support their traditions. Let’s go over to Lyse Doucet, who is on the streets mingling with the crowds. Lyse, what is going on down there? |
| Lyse | Thank you, Clive. The sensational news is that Jesus is just entering the city from Bethany, riding on a donkey. The crowds are going absolutely wild as he climbs the hill towards the castle and the temple. They’re tearing down branches from the trees that line his path to show their support, and they obviously believe he’s about to overthrow the Romans, even though he doesn’t exactly look like a revolutionary and is completely unarmed. Listen to the crowds. |
| Clive | They seem to be saying, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!” What does that mean? |
| Lyse | They’re proclaiming him their King! He’s almost reached the top of the hill now, and he’s about to turn right to lead the crowds into the castle. They’re right behind him. We’re watching history unfold before our eyes, and any moment he will come face to face with the soldiers. No-one can predict what will happen next……. He’s stepping down off the donkey now….. Hey! What’s going on? He’s turned left into the temple! He must have lost his nerve! The crowd are looking around at one another, wondering what’s going on. You can almost hear the disappointment. They really did think he was going to take on the Roman army! I wonder what the priests in the temple will make of him? I’m going to follow him in…….. |
|  | (*This scene all happens off-stage. Because the audience do not have any visual clues, the sounds need to be repeated or continued for longer than feels natural so that they work out what is going on. Props needed are a whip, a robust table and a large pile of coins. It is recommended to have two separate piles of coins – about £3 of coppers each, being tipped out of a basket onto something they tinkle off. A microphone is needed and should be carefully positioned to get the quieter sounds across, in particular the tinkling of coins and the banging of the table. Jesus speaks at great volume. Lyse listens from her position on stage and looks towards where the sounds are coming from.)* |
| Jesus | *(Sound of whip hitting table repeated throughout)* Out! Get out! All of you! Now! Out! Out! Out! *(Sound of the table being thrown to the ground and the coins being knocked over)* It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer”, but you have made it a den of thieves. Get out! |
| Lyse | In all my years of reporting, I have never heard anything like it. He’s really thrown down the gauntlet. The religious authorities will have to respond or lose all control of the situation. |
| Clive | Thank you, Lyse. I am sure we will talk to you again soon when you can update us on developments. |

**Scat ’o Nine Tails**

*(A newspaper vendor’s stand on the streets of Jerusalem – have the banners on the projector/screen or use a flipchart. Enter Phil, as the projector goes on or who uncovers the flip chart showing a headline “SCAT-O-9-TAILS” and another “Jesus whips the fat cats”.)*

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| --- | --- |
| Phil | Standard, Standard. Read all about it. Standard. *(To first buyer)* There you are, sir. Thank you very much. Serves ’em right, doesn’t it, ripping us off like that? *(To second buyer)* That will be 30p, sir. I’d have loved to have seen him lay into them. There you are, sir. *(To third buyer, Eli)*  Good evening, reverend. Did you see him in action, sir? |
| Eli | How dared he!? Who gave him the right to change the rules in the house of God? Only God and his priests can do that! |
| Phil | So what are you going to do about him, sir? |
| Eli | I challenged him to prove his authority to boss us around. |
| Phil | And what did he say, sir? |
| Eli | He said, “That’s easy. If you blow this place up, I’ll rebuild it inside three days.” *(Gasps and shakes head in horror)* |
| Phil | *(Laughing)* Ask a silly question, get a silly answer. He’s far too clever for you lot. There you are, sir. *(Eli walks off in a huff without taking the offered paper. Phil shrugs, packs up his stall/flipchart, and walks off.)* |

**The Verger – part one**

*Reuben is a verger in the temple at Jerusalem.* *He loves his work and is quite conservative – he values good order, and finds the hectic nature of the festival weeks difficult. In this first part, he is speaking late in the afternoon on the first Maundy Thursday.*

What a week! Thank God it’s nearly over. Most of the pilgrims have headed off for their Passover meals, and the temple is quiet at last. Quiet, but not at peace – not after all that has gone on here. How I long for things to get back to normal.

Passover week is always hectic. Thousands of pilgrims streaming in through the doors, demanding their rights, grumbling about the queues and the prices, filled with idealistic dreams about the perfect Promised Land and the Warrior King who frees us from the Romans, and angry that the reality falls so far short of their dreams. And this year, a new focus for their hopes and frustrations.

We’ve had trouble from Jesus of Nazareth before, but nothing like this. Whenever he comes to Jerusalem, he makes the temple courts his classroom, and there’s nothing we can do about it – unless he stirs up insurrection, which he is careful not to do. He’s had run-ins with the Pharisees for the last two years, but they haven’t managed to lay a finger on him.

No one knew if he was coming this year, but it was hardly a surprise. He turned up on Sunday afternoon, accompanied by a rag-tag crowd waving palm fronds, obviously under the delusion that he was the promised Messiah and waiting for him to speak. While they sat down and waited, he wandered around the temple, watching and listening.

The next thing I know, pandemonium is breaking loose. He’s gone berserk with a whip, bawling at the money-changers like a mad man and throwing over their tables. There’s screams of terror as they grab what they can and flee, and the lambs and goats are adding to the cacophony as they make their escape. “Get out!” he cries, “Get out! This should be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!”

By the time the temple police got there, it was all over. He was standing there alone glaring. He puts down the whip and walks out. Word gets out to his followers, who have missed the excitement. Eventually, when it’s clear that he’s not coming back, they drift away.

He’s back the next day, and teaching quietly. There’s no trouble, but the Pharisees are watching and whispering, hatching their plots. It could only be a matter of time. After lunch they challenged his authority. He fired a question back at them, and they retreated to lick their wounds and plan their next attack. While he told parables which only the dimmest could fail to spot were challenges to their authority. I feel like I’m caught in the cross fire as I try to keep the temple open and functioning.

It was a much more serious skirmish the next day – wave after wave of questions, challenges and traps. He handled them brilliantly, didn’t put a foot wrong, got the crowd on his side, and poked fun at them. When they paused for breath, he put them on the spot, so much so that they didn’t dare ask any more questions.

He says so much that seems right, and yet – it isn’t practical. He watched a poor widow put two coppers into the collection, all that she could afford, and said it was worth more than all the gifts of the rich put together. A lovely idea, but it won’t pay my salary. And we all know how much these old buildings cost to run.

Yesterday and today, he really went too far. Time after time, he called them hypocrites in the most colourful language – barriers to God, blind guides, children of hell, camel-swallowers, whitewashed tombs, broods of vipers, murderers of the prophets – you name it, he said it. And then he prophesied that the temple would be destroyed and spoke of a day of justice, calling on people to be ready for it. You could tell that he knew they were plotting to kill him. But he has asked for it.

Just one more day to go – I pray God that it will pass off quietly – then the Sabbath and people heading home on Sunday. I’m off home to celebrate the Passover, to remember God’s deliverance of his people. But I dread what might happen tomorrow. God, give me grace to cope.

**From Our Own Correspondent – part two**

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| Clive | Events in Jerusalem are moving towards a climax, as millions of Jews prepare to celebrate the Passover feast tonight. Tensions are running high as Jesus of Nazareth continues to take on the religious authorities, calling them hypocrites and warning them of God’s judgment. Lyse, is he getting the upper hand in this stand-off? |
| Lyse | Well, it’s very difficult to tell, Clive. He certainly knows how to offend - he described them yesterday as white-washed graves which look lovely but stink inside. The crowds loved that one. |
| Clive | What is the mood among the crowds, Lyse? Surely that must determine the outcome? |
| Lyse | I think they could swing either way. They like Jesus, but he baffles them. Just when he gets in a position to take charge, he seems to back down. They are afraid of the Roman soldiers and nervous of being thrown out by the priests. |
| Clive | And what are the authorities doing about it? |
| Lyse | The Romans are on the streets in case of serious trouble, but they are staying out of it. I think they are only too happy to let the Jews fight it out among themselves. The religious authorities are absolutely livid, and all week their leaders have been going in and out of the High Priest’s office with faces like thunder. They have been trying to corner Jesus with clever tricks, but so far he has not just side-stepped the traps but turned it back on them, making them look stupid. Everyone is wondering how much longer this can last. |
| Clive | Thank you, Lyse, and we’ll have more of that story as it unfolds. |



**The Olive Grove**

*This is a monologue by the apostle John, Jesus’s closest friend on earth, written in the garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper.*

I’m worried about Jesus. It feels like he’s heading for a nervous breakdown. Surely he can’t keep going like this for much longer?

It started on Sunday. While everyone else was going completely over the top as we approached Jerusalem, he seemed strangely subdued. And ever since he threw out the money-changers in the temple, he’s been winding up the Pharisees and Sadducees at every opportunity. He’s throwing caution to the wind.

The way he dealt with their trick questions was brilliant, but no one could mistake that the new parables he told were against them, and then he launched into a tirade against their hypocrisy. The crowd loved it, but is it wise to make so many enemies? Oh Jesus, my friend, be careful!

He’s still doing what he loves – making humble people feel valued. The smile on the face of that poor widow who put a couple of coins into the temple collection; the appreciation he showed Mary at her expensive expression of love with the perfume, when everyone else was accusing her of waste; even the challenge to the lawyer who asked a clever question and admired his response.

I was hoping that things would calm down with the Passover meal, just the band of us alone. He’d obviously been thinking about it all day, because once it started he got broody and talked about dying, again. He even talked about one of us betraying him. “Remember me when I’m gone,” he said – as if we could forget him! Then he turned the Passover rituals into being about him. I wish I could understand what he meant.

After the meal, he was fixing something up with Judas – I saw them whispering, and all I heard was him telling him to do it quickly. Once Judas had gone, his intensity went up several notches – as if he was running out of time. Instructions, warnings, reassurance, commandments, promises, prayers, one after another after another.

Thomas plucked up the courage to ask the question we were all thinking – “Where are you going?” He replied that we can’t follow where he is going, but that he will come back and fetch us. What does that mean?

It’s a relief to be up here on the hillside, away from the bustle of the city, in the quiet of the evening. He’s gone up a bit higher to pray alone. “Watch and pray,” he said. I can hear him calling out, crying out to God for help. He sounds desperate. Oh Lord God of hosts, give him strength!

*(Pause as John falls asleep. He wakes up with a start.)*

I’m sorry, Master, I didn’t mean to let you down. What’s that noise? Your betrayer? No, it’s all right, I can see Judas with them. NOOOH!!! Peter, get your sword out! We must protect him!

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*(Panting as he recovers from running)* Peter, I’m here. You did what you could, but he stopped you! It was as if he was in charge – healing that thug’s ear! I’m ashamed. We promised we’d stick by him, and we ran away.

What can we do now? They’ll take him to Caiaphas. Oh, Jesus! I know – Rhoda – she’ll let me in. At least I can see if I can help.

**The Servant Girl – part one**

*Rhoda is a servant girl in the house of Caiaphas the High Priest at the time when Jesus is arrested. The story tells of her interactions with Peter then and later. Choose your own common accent/dialect..*

I first saw ’im on the Sunday – a giant of a man, ’ead and shoulders above the rest. I was polishing the brasses in the drawing room in preparation for the festival when I saw them – about a dozen. The leader got gently off a donkey, and they trooped into the temple.

About ’alf an hour later, I opened the door to Lord Caiaphas, who looked black as thunder. ’e bawled for ’is secretary, so I made my escape before I got it in the neck too. There was an emergency meeting that evening over dinner, and we listened agog in the kitchen as the footman told us what ’e’d over’eard – that Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth, ’ad gone berserk with a whip and chased the traders out the temple.

I’ve never known a week like it. You could have cut the tension with a knife, and we all kept our ’eads down. Then on Thursday night it all changed. The Guard ’ad arrested the prophet and brought ’im to the ’ouse for trial. The Council were sent for, even though it was nearly midnight, and you could ’ear the relief in their voices.

I was crossing the courtyard back to the kitchen when I saw ’im, warming ‘is hands by the fire. In the flickering firelight I couldn’t see clearly, but there weren’t two people that big in the city.

“You were with ’im,” I said.

“I was not!” ’e replied, too strongly to be true.

“’ave it your own way,” I said as I went into the kitchen.

When I next came out with refreshments, ’e’d gone, or so I thought. I almost bumped into ’im, ’iding in the shadows by the gate. “You were with ’im,” I said.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” ’e replied.

“With Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth,” I answered.

“No way,” ’e said.

“D’you think I can’t recognise a Galilean accent?” I countered. Well, that really set ’im off.

“I swear to God, I don’t know the man!”

Just then, a cock crowed. And it was like ’e’d been shot. ’e was on the floor, crying ’is eyes out. I was like, what’s the matter with the man? So I called someone over to see if ’e was OK, and ’e starts panicking, and ’e runs off like ’e’d seen a ghost.

“Coward!” I called out after ’im. “With friends like you, no wonder ’e’s in trouble.”

**The Freedom Fighter – part two** 

Rats! Aargh! Cold. Damp. Dark. ’ungry. I’m afraid. But I wouldn’t admit it to the others.

After the body blow of the donkey-rider, we walked out the door ‘n straight into a Roman patrol. The Boss was carryin’ ‘is ‘orn, so they slammed ‘im up against a wall, ‘n a search soon found our daggers. ‘ow could we have been so careless? Now we’re on death row, waitin’ for the Romans to give the crowd some entertainment for the festival.

I’m afraid. Of the pain. Of lettin’ the side down. Of gaspin’ for breath. Of dyin’. Of the judgment to come. I’ve not been a good man. Done the Boss’s dirty work. Knee-cappin’. Extortion. Execution. ‘n now it’s my turn.

Gestas? For all ‘is bluster, I bet ‘e’s afraid too. But ‘e won’t show it. ‘e’ll go down screamin’ ‘n cursin’.

The Boss is different. There’s a smile on ‘is face. Thinks ‘e’s immortal. Like a cat with nine lives. “I’ll be out ‘n free,” ‘e says, “just you wait ‘n see. The Romans will let one prisoner free. ‘n ’oo will the crowds call for? ’oo’s a true patriot? Barabbas. ’oo else? My men will swing the crowds.”

‘e was right too. “Show ‘em ‘ow to die, like real men,” ‘e says, grinnin’, as they let ‘im go. Fools. ‘e’ll make ‘em pay for it.

**From Our Own Correspondent – part three**

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| Clive | Good morning. The dramatic news today is that the unrest in Jerusalem has been crushed. Following a tip-off, Jesus of Nazareth was arrested by the religious authorities late last night, and his supporters have fled, abandoning him to his fate. After an extraordinary series of night-time trials, when he apparently claimed to be God, he has been condemned to death. Lyse, what more can you tell us? |
| Lyse | Well, Clive, Jesus has just staggered past us, all battered and bruised, carrying his cross on the way to the place of execution, along with two other criminals, through the jeers of the crowd. The decisive moment came at breakfast time, when Pilate, the Roman governor, told the people to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, a notorious terrorist. Some loud-mouthed thugs swung the crowd against Jesus, and they turned on him, venting their anger and their frustration. The authorities have won convincingly and are now back in control. |
| Clive | So what happens next? |
| Lyse | I am with the crowds heading up the hill to watch the fun. A public execution always seems to bring out the worst in us – some have brought eggs and tomatoes to throw at them. I can see them now, holding him down while they nail him to the cross. |
| Jesus | *(Offstage)* Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they are doing. |
| Lyse | That’s amazing! How can he say that when he’s in such agony? They’re taunting him to prove he is God by climbing down from the cross – they’d get quite a shock if he did! ….. It’s getting very dark now, as if the skies are angry at what they see. He’s slipping away ….. |
| Jesus | *(Offstage - loud)* It is finished. |



**The Freedom Fighter – part three**

*(Loud scream, then pause, then a moan and another pause)* I couldn’t ‘elp it. The pain as they drove the nails in. I’m getting’ there. At least they didn’t stretch me tight as a drum, like Gestas. ‘e fought ‘em all the way. It took four of ‘em to ’old ‘im down even though ‘e was tied to the cross. ‘e’s still screamin’ abuse at ‘em.

Just before we were brought up ’ere, they threw another prisoner into our cell. ‘e’d been beaten black ‘n blue ‘n could ’ardly stand. It was some time before I realised ’e was the donkey-rider. God didn’t ‘elp ‘im when the Romans got ‘im. When they nailed ‘im, ’e didn’t even scream – just asked God to forgive ‘em. Amazin’.

So ‘ere we are, strung up on the ’ill for all to see our agony. The Boss is ‘ere to see us off, banterin’ with Gestas who’s playin’ to the crowds. ‘e tried jokin’ with me, but I’m not joinin’ in. It’s no joke dyin’ like this, ‘n it’s OK for ‘im crowin’ about being freed.

The donkey-rider’s getting’ it in the neck. There’s priests ‘ere tauntin’ ‘im, cheering as ‘e gasps for breath, bowin’ down ‘n ’ailin’ the “king”. They really ’ate ‘im. I bet they stitched ‘im up. I wonder why? Jealous of ‘is popularity, I dare say. I expect ‘e showed ‘em up. Cowards ‘n bigots. ‘e’s showin’ ‘em now what bravery is.

“‘e saved others, but ‘e can’t save ‘isself,” they’re sayin’. “If you’re really the Son of God, come down ‘n show us!” they cry. What a shock they’d get if ‘e did! Now Gestas is joinin’ in: “Save yourself ‘n us!” ‘e screams. Kick a man when ‘e’s down. I see red.

“Shut your face, Gestas,” I say. “We’re getting’ what we deserve, but this man’s done nothin’ wrong.” ‘n I turn to ‘im, ‘n I say, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” I don’t know why, but it seems to me that ‘e is a king, ‘n the sort of king I’d want to serve. ‘n ‘e turns to me, ‘n ‘e smiles. In ‘is agony, ‘e smiles. ‘n it sends goose-bumps all over me. ‘n ‘e says to me, “Dysmas, I promise you, today, you will be with me in paradise.”

‘n the sky turns black like it was night, as if the ‘eavens are angry, ‘n the priests slink away, ‘n the soldiers shiver like it were cold. ‘n Jesus is slippin’ away, as ‘e’s too weak to ’old ‘isself up, ‘n ‘e cries out, “It’s finished”, ‘n ‘e’s gone. ‘n the chief soldier falls on ‘is knees ‘n ’e says under ‘is breath, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

‘n now it’s getting’ towards evenin’, ‘n I’m getting tired, ‘n I see the soldiers coming towards us with ’ammers to break our knees, so as we won’t last long. ‘n I shut my eyes, ‘n I say to myself, again ‘n again, “Paradise. Paradise. Paradise. Today.” ‘n it’s nearly over.……

**The Verger – part two**

The temple’s been quiet today. They got him overnight and strung him up on a cross, God help him. Everyone’s stunned, hardly even daring to whisper.

It’s hot and sultry, and a storm is brewing. It’s turning eerily dark – and it’s only lunchtime. What’s going on? Is God angry? Everyone’s afraid.

Crash! I’ve never heard thunder like that! The whole temple shakes! I look up, and then I see it – Aaaargh!

I’m down on the ground, prostrate with terror! O God, have mercy on me, a sinner! Woe is me, for I have looked into God’s sanctuary! Again and again I cry out, “Have mercy!”

I don’t know how long I’ve been here, but I’m still alive. I keep my eyes shut, and crawl backwards to the door and out. Send for the High Priest. Tell him the curtain of the temple is torn from top to bottom and lying on the floor. God’s sanctuary, open for all to see.

I stagger home, appalled.

**The Freedom Fighter – part four**

I’m dreamin’, ‘n I’m rushin’ through the night sky, ‘n there’s a light, ‘n I’m ‘eadin’ towards the light, ‘n it gets brighter ‘n brighter until I can’t see the darkness no more. ‘n the light takes shape like a ’uge man in a white robe, ‘n I come to a ’alt before ‘im, ‘n ‘e’s lookin’ at me like ‘e’s never seen tattoos before. ‘n I says to ‘im, “Scuse me, mister, but is this paradise?” ‘n ‘e smiles, ‘n ‘e says, “It is.” ‘n ‘e asks my name, ‘n ‘e looks in a book, ‘n ‘e says, “The King asked me to bring you straight through.” ‘n ‘e leads me through a door that I ’adn’t seen before, ‘n I come into a ’all of light, ‘n there’s a king of light sittin’ on a throne, ‘n I see the eyes of the donkey-rider lookin’ at me, ‘n I fall at ‘is feet, ‘n I say “Your Majesty!” ‘n ‘e reaches out ‘is ’and ‘n pulls me to ‘is feet, ‘n ‘e ’ugs me, ‘n ’e says, “Welcome, Dysmas!” ‘n ’e turns to the gatekeeper, ‘n ‘e says to ‘im, “Gabriel, this is the man who cheered my ‘eart when I most needed it. For ‘e believed in me when I was ’angin’ on the cross, ‘n I knew at that moment that it was worth it, ‘n ‘e stayed with me till the end.”

**The Verger – part three**

I spent the evening and night in shock, unable to rest, unable to think straight, unable to eat, unable to pray. What to make of it? I need someone wiser to help me, someone who will listen and not judge. But who? Levi? Too set in his ways. Samuel? He couldn’t cope with it. Nicodemus? Yes, that’s the man.

I call in the morning. I have to knock several times. Eventually he opens up. He looks as bad as I must, as if he too has been weeping all night. I go in. We sit down. A long silence. But it’s good to be with him.

Eventually, he starts. “We buried him, Joseph and I. It was the least we could do for him. But too little and too late.”

I look at him, puzzled. Then I twig – perhaps? Surely not. “You mean, Jesus of Nazareth?” He nods. Another long pause. “How come?” I ask.

“I visited him secretly last year. He troubled me. I knew in my heart he was a good man. I needed to know more.”

“What did he say?”

“’You must be born again’, he said, ‘born of the Spirit.’ I’ve been thinking about it ever since, thinking about him, trying to understand. I was sure he was the One to redeem Israel. And now he’s gone.”

“I’ve been watching and listening all week,” I replied. “No one could have dealt with those questions unless God was with him. He ran rings around them. And yet – it was almost as if he wanted them to act against him. He pushed them beyond what they could endure.”

“’Suddenly the Lord will come to his temple. And he will purify the sons of Levi.’ Malachi.”

“You mean…?”

“Yesterday, on the cross, he cried out, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Psalm 22. Messianic.”

“He claimed to be Messiah?”

“’He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities’. Isaiah 53.”

“But that goes on. ‘After he has suffered, he will see the light of life.’ It doesn’t stack up.”

“I know. That’s why I’ve been crying.”

“When did he die?”

“Just before that huge clap of thunder. It was as if God was angry. Everyone thought so.”

“There’s more.”

“More?”

“You haven’t heard. The temple.”

“The temple?”

“At that very moment. The curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. God’s sanctuary open for all to see.” It was his turn to gawp. “There’s more to this than meets the eye,” I continued. “Let’s keep in touch.”

**The Servant Girl – part two**

The prophet was strung up on a cross the next day, and I thought no more about ’im. But on Sunday, the Council were called back, and their faces were grim. The rumours soon reached the kitchen. “They’re saying ’e’s come back from the dead!” Come off it!

Next we know, it’s official – the body’s been stolen by ’is friends. What sort of idiots do they think we are? That guy couldn’t have walked in a straight line, let alone got past the guards. Best to keep your mouth shut. But we’re all ears.

The rumours are spreading. ’e turned up in the garden and frightened the living daylights out of a young girl. ’e can walk through doors. ’e talked to some people on the road and then vanished into thin air. Some people will believe anything. Me, I don’t know what to believe. If only they could find the body…

**From Our Own Correspondent – part four**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Clive | Good morning. After the drama of Jesus’s sudden execution on Friday, Jerusalem is awash with rumours. Lyse, what more can you tell us? |
| Lyse | Good morning, Clive. The city is alive with whispering. On every street corner, you see small groups of people with their heads together, afraid of being heard but desperate to hear the latest news. |
| Clive | And what are they saying? |
| Lyse | They are saying – and the BBC has not been able to fact-check this – and I can only say it because of the protection of being foreign press – people are only prepared to talk on condition of anonymity – they are saying that Jesus has been seen in the city alive and well! |
| Clive | No! They don’t believe that, do they? |
| Lyse | It’s difficult to know what they believe. Indeed, I don’t think they know themselves – the idea is so ridiculous to anyone who saw him die on Friday. But there have been some very strange happenings this morning. |
| Clive | Such as what? |
| Lyse | It all started when there was a minor earthquake just as the sun was rising. Then a group of Roman soldiers were seen running from the graveyard where Jesus was buried, white as a sheet and screaming that they had seen a ghost. They ran to their barracks, where they were arrested for deserting their posts guarding the grave. The Governor sent a delegation to investigate, and they found the stone rolled away from the grave entrance and the tomb was empty. |
| Clive | What are the authorities saying about it? |
| Lyse | They have confirmed that the body is missing, and they have accused Jesus’s followers of stealing it. But that feels far too convenient. |
| Clive | What do you mean? |
| Lyse | Well, his followers fled before his execution and have been holed up in a safe house, too afraid to step out, let alone carry out a daring heist. And they could hardly have staged an earthquake. The authorities are desperate to find the body, but they don’t appear to have any leads at all. And the rumours are spreading. |
| Clive | What sort of rumours? |
| Lyse | A hysterical young woman was seen running from the scene, claiming that she had seen him alive and that he had spoken to her – he had even known her name. One of the guards apparently claimed that he had seen a ghost roll the heavy stone away as if it was no heavier than a balloon. And one man told me that Jesus had told his followers that he would rise again on the third day – which is today. People are also connecting the hours of mid-afternoon darkness on Friday with the earthquake this morning, and suggesting that these are signs that God is angry with the city and is planning to destroy it, as Jesus had predicted. |
| Clive | So what happens next? |
| Lyse | No one knows. The authorities have warned that anyone spreading false rumours will be arrested. The festival is now over, so the crowds are starting to disperse, and the authorities are hoping that things will quieten down as they do so.But unless they find the body or there is a credible sighting, it is difficult to see how this can get resolved quickly. |
| Clive | Well, that’s all from Lyse in Jerusalem for now. We’ll let you know when there are further developments. |



**Long walk home**

*Change the place-names to be local to you. Do not give any clues as to who the story is about until the end, since the aim is to bring back the surprise of the Resurrection of Jesus.*

A man and his wife were walking home from Deal to St Margaret’s Bay. Their hearts were heavy as they thought about the close friend who had died in agony a few days before. As they walked, a stranger came alongside and greeted them with a cheery “Good afternoon” in a broad northern accent. Seeing them close to tears, he asked kindly what was the matter, and it all came tumbling out – the whole story of their friend’s suffering and death, how unfair it all was, how much they now realised he meant to them, and how devastated they were by his loss.

It was a relief to be able to talk about it to someone who had not been involved, and they found themselves remembering stories about their friend over the last few years. He had been a lovely person, a warm personality, someone most people found attractive. He always made time in a busy life for those who needed help and listened to their problems – often he would ask them a question in a way which hit the nail bang on the head, and they just knew what they had to do to sort things out. He championed the cause of the weak and the powerless, which didn’t make him popular with the authorities – he didn’t let them get away with avoiding their legal obligations, and he seemed to know the rules better than they did. In fact, he didn’t just know the rules, he seemed to have an instinctive understanding of what they were trying to achieve, which made him impossible to argue with. The authorities got fed up with him, saw him as a trouble-maker and tried to silence him, first through the courts and then, when that did not work, by smear tactics, by increasingly open threats, and finally by bribing false witnesses to support trumped-up criminal charges. They could hardly contain their relief at his early death. It was all so unfair, and his friends were devastated. And as if they did not already have enough to cope with, one of their neighbours, who was a bit unstable, had come round at breakfast time to say she had just seen him on Walmer Green – he had said “Good morning, Mary” to her. It was all too much. Where was God in all this?

By now they had reached Kingsdown Golf Club, and the stranger had hardly spoken a word as they poured out their grief. But now, sensing that they were ready to listen, he picked up on this final question. Starting from Abraham, he gave them a thumb-nail sketch of what the bible has to say about it – how God has chosen and loves his people, and how time and time again they have rejected his love, ignored his advice, and abused his spokesmen, only turning back to him when they were in desperate trouble. And yet God continues to care for his people, to guide them, to come alongside them in their troubles, and to help them out of the mess they had made of their lives. In fact, what their friend had been through was just what you would expect from reading the bible. And as he talked about the familiar stories and other bible passages which had puzzled them, it was as if they had never heard them before – all of a sudden they fitted together into one big picture which for the first time made perfect sense.

They could have listened to him all day, but they had reached the memorial now and they had to turn off up Granville Road whilst he was going on towards Dover. Just as they were about to say good-bye, a few spots of rain came down, and it seemed silly to leave him to get wet. So they pressed him to come home with them and have a cup of tea – they could drive him on to Dover afterwards – and when they insisted he accepted. And as they sat at the kitchen table, they saw the scars on his hands as he held his mug, they recognised the way he held his biscuit, they looked at each other in astonishment as they realised together that this was their friend who had died, and by the time they turned back to him he had vanished from their sight.

**The Servant Girl – part three**

It was a few weeks later, and I’d gone to the market to get fruit for the kitchen. All of a sudden, a crowd of people surged out of a courtyard, all jabbering nineteen to the dozen. And then I ’ear someone calling out in broad dialect, so close it could have been from my own village, “Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. ’allelujah!”

What’s that?

“The ’eavens are telling the glory of God.” And there’s people running towards them, and a guy turns to me and says to me in a foreign accent, “Did you ’ear that? ’ow come ’e speaks perfect Parthian, telling of the glory of God?”

What’s going on? There’s absolute pandemonium out here. And then I see ’im.

It’s the giant. ’e’s clambering onto a dog cart so as ’e can be seen, and ’e’s silencing the crowd. And ’e starts to speak, and ’e says this is what was promised by the prophet Joel, that God would pour out ’is Spirit on all people. And ’e talks, and ’e talks, and ’e talks, and we’re all spellbound, and ’e finishes by telling us that God has made this Jesus, who we crucified, both Lord and Christ! And there’s a gasp as this sinks in, and into the silence someone cries out, “What then must we do to be saved?” And everyone’s calling out, “Yes, what can we do?” And ’e says, “Repent and believe the good news.”

Well, I’m no expert in religion, and I couldn’t understand everything ’e said, but one thing I do know. A few weeks ago, this guy was such a coward ’e couldn’t even say “Boo!” to a kitchen maid, and now ’e’s playing the crowds like the most amazing preacher. And I think, whatever this guy’s on, I want it, and I’m in.

And when I get back to the kitchen, it’s me who’s doing the whispering as I tell them what I’ve seen and ’eard. And soon there’s five of us ’umming praises to God and ’e’s filling us up with joy. And we can ’ardly ’old it in, but we know Lord Caiaphas would fire us if ’e knew what was going on in ’is own ’ouse’old.

**Eye-witnesses**

**The Passover Story from Seven Angles**

**by James Archer**

Do you struggle each Holy Week to see the story afresh or to bring together all the many aspects of the story? If so, this collection of original monologues and simple dramas may be for you. Seven biblical or fictional characters tell of or re-enact their involvement in the original story. Imagine yourself in their shoes.

A freedom fighter waits eagerly for Jesus to send the signal to start a rising against the hated Romans. A BBC news team report from Jerusalem. A newsvendor talks to his customer about the latest news. A verger in the temple finds his world turned upside down. A disciple struggles with all that Jesus is trying to tell them as the net closes in on him. A servant girl smells something fishy about Peter. A couple walk home in despair after all their dreams have been dashed.

This is a resource for teachers and church leaders, all supported by editable versions of the text on [www.christiandrama.online](http://www.christiandrama.online) so that you can tweak them into the language most appropriate for your context. Or perhaps you would prefer to create your own characters and write their versions of the Passover story?