



THE HEART OF A CHRISTIAN PLAYWRIGHT

Written by us, Inspired by Jesus

JESUS ON TRIAL

An Original Stage play

By

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SYNOPSIS

Judas told the soldiers that he would identify Jesus with a kiss. When he did, the soldiers arrested Jesus and took him away. As Jesus was taken into custody, His disciples scattered. Jesus was led to Caiaphas, the high priest, and the scribes and elders.

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the Jews plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. When they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, to be judged.

The trial takes place while outside the chief priests and elders assembled, and a crowd was gathering. Pilate enters the courtroom complaining about how early it is and states that whatever is going on had better be important.

Once the proceeding begin, he asks Jesus if He is the King of the Jews, but gets no response. The trial proceeds.

THE CHARACTERS

Judge
Defense
Prosecutor
Jesus
Baliff

THE WITNESSES

Mary – Mother of Jesus
Matthew
Peter
Nicodemus

THE SCRIPT

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP

Defense enters carrying his briefcase. Jesus is close behind him. They sit at the table SR.
Defense leans close to Jesus.

DEFENSE: I know you are God's son and you have much to say, but please let me do all the talking.

JESUS: Ok.

DEFENSE: Just ok?

JESUS: As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

DEFENSE: Still quoting scriptures I see. Well, be on your guard. The prosecutor is very cunning, very wordy, and very influential. I've seen him at work. In this very courtroom, I have seen him convince a man that he was a woman.

PROSECUTORS VOICE: You remembered that counselor?

Prosecutor enters. He takes his place at the table SL.

PROSECUTOR: That was a long time ago. You should let bygones be bygones.

Prosecutor comes over and extends his hand to Jesus.

PROSECUTOR: And you must be Jesus.

Jesus shakes his hand.

PROSECUTOR: Your reputation precedes you.

JESUS: Likewise.

PROSECUTOR: Yes...If what I have heard is true then we are in for a wild ride these next few days. I don't know about you, but I'm really excited.

DEFENSE: You are also early. That's not like you.

PROSECUTOR: I had to make an exception for this case.

Bailiff enters the courtroom.

PROSECUTOR: May the best man win.

Prosecutor goes to his desk.

BAILIFF: All rise.

Everyone (including the audience) should stand.

Judge enters and casually strolls to his high rise desk.

He settles himself and opens up his notebooks, adjusts his glasses on his nose and clears his throat.

JUDGE: Be seated.

Everyone sits.

JUDGE: In all my years governing a courtroom I have never seen anything quite like this. Many have come claiming to be many things, but never a son of the Sovereign God. I am going to ask the Defendant and his attorney to stand.

Defense stands with Jesus.

JUDGE: Jesus of Nazareth, your accusers have brought many charges against you today. Malicious destruction of property, blasphemy against the Most High God, disturbing the peace, initiating a riot, disrespecting religious leaders and other men of authority, and influencing people to disregard the Mosaic Laws. Of these charges, how do you plea?

DEFENSE: Guilty and not guilty your honour.

JUDGE: I was asking the defendant.

DEFENSE: I am his attorney, Your Honour.

JUDGE: This is my courtroom. You will have your chance to speak counselor, but I would like to hear this from him.

Pause.

JUDGE: These are some serious charges. Do you have anything to say in your own defense?

Silence.

JUDGE: Interesting. You do realize that I have power to find you guilty, or the power to release you?

More silence. The judge shakes his head and motions for the defense to proceed.

DEFENSE: You will see that this case will speak for itself, Your Honour.

JUDGE: I hope so, for your client's sake. Your opening statement, please.

Defense motions for Jesus to sit and begins his opening statement.

DEFENSE: Your Honour, I'm only stating what I expect the evidence to prove. We would want to believe that the events of these past few weeks are new, shocking and unexpected...but that is not the case.

PROSECUTOR: Objection, Your Honour. The defense is speculating.

JUDGE: Overruled.

DEFENSE: Every natural born Jew knew that this day would come. The ancient scriptures speak of it. Isaiah nine verse six: For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

PROSECUTION: Objection, Your Honour. The defense is assuming.

JUDGE: Overruled.

Judge seems a bit agitated with the prosecution.

Defense continues.

DEFENSE: Your Honour, there have been many other signs Jesus has performed in the presence of his disciples, which have not been written. But these things have been written in order that those who have seen might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life in his name. There have been teachings, miracles and personal interactions from Jesus' ministry to convince you that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Is it really that hard to believe that we are witnesses to the manifestation of these very words in this man sitting right here with us today?

If you've already made up your mind that Jesus is not who he claims to be, then there would be no point in this trial. If you're like most, then you've already heard, directly or

indirectly, the case against Jesus. But you've probably never seriously considered the case **for** Jesus. Are you ready to be objective? Will you listen intently to the totality of what the defense has to offer before making a judgment? If you are a nonbeliever, are you prepared to set your predetermined perceptions about Jesus aside so that you can take into account the witnesses called to the stand today with clarity?

Ultimately it is your choice to hear the presented evidence, listen objectively and then make an assessment. Is Jesus the Son of God, the Messiah as he claims to be, or is he a liar, or a lunatic? Today's presentation of the claims of Jesus won't leave you with any other option. Either he is the Son of God and deserving of our commitment, or he's a con man deserving of our judgment, or maybe insane and deserving only of our pity. I feel confident that through the evidence presented, you will see the truth and you will find not an ounce of guilt in this man, Jesus. Jesus has done nothing outside of the will of his father in heaven and for this reason he should walk out of this courtroom a free man.

Defense takes his seat.

Prosecutor gets up buttoning his jacket.

PROSECUTOR: Good day, Judge.

Judge nods in response.

PROSECUTOR: You are looking quite sharp today.

JUDGE: Get on with it, counselor.

PROSECUTOR: What is the significance of quoting scriptures in this courtroom? I am looking at this strapping man sitting here and I don't see any government resting on his shoulders, and isn't his name Jesus of Nazareth? Not wonderful, counselor, mighty God, Eternal Father or Prince of Peace. So, the most obvious question to ask is, am I the only one who was wondering what the Defense was talking about? The defense speaks of truth. The truth is, Jesus was originally tried and condemned by highly respected religious leaders, and in their very midst, for all to hear, Jesus admitted that He was the Christ, the very Son of God. Do you understand what that means? It means that Jesus was publicly claiming to be God Himself! That fact alone calls His character into question! You see, Jesus is not merely a preacher of God who gives us instructions for living a holy life. No. No, he claims to be the very Son of God. He claims that those who sin must trust in him for salvation. No mere preacher would say such things!

The more you hear about this man, Jesus, the more you will acknowledge that He is not the Son of God. The Son of God wouldn't mislead his followers. You will see that this man is a foolish and wicked person to teach such things, and that those who believe in him are deceived victims of His malicious teaching. With that said, with the intention of this being a

fair trial, you will hear witnesses who wish to defend Jesus. But I'm not worried. These witnesses that you will be hearing from are the people that actually know Jesus, people who have heard Him preach, and were supposedly healed by Him. And let me tell you, these witnesses are not exactly the kind of people you'd want coming to your defense! Be prepared, these are not the upstanding citizens the defense will try to tell you they are. Some of these witnesses have lived contemptible lives. Be prepared to listen to their testimonies with a judicious ear. They will try to persuade you that the claims Jesus has made are true!

Goes to his desk to have a drink of water and retrieves a file.

PROSECUTOR: I have taken the liberty of gathering a petition that has been signed by almost the entire Jerusalem population.

Prosecutor hands the Judge the file. He opens it and begins skipping through the pages.

PROSECUTOR: We just need the signature of a certified Judge to make it a done deal.

Prosecutor pauses and waits smugly at the Judge's desk.

JUDGE: You want me to sign a petition to have this man put to death?

PROSECUTOR: Yes, Your Honour. Death by crucifixion.

JUDGE: He has not yet been tried, counselor.

PROSECUTOR: He is claiming to be the Son of God.

JUDGE: And....

PROSECUTOR: It is the will of the people.

JUDGE: This is my courtroom.

Prosecutor interrupts the Judge.

PROSECUTOR: Surely such blasphemy is worthy of the same punishment as murderers and thieves.

JUDGE: How about we let the case speak for itself.

PROSECUTOR: As I'm sure it will. I simply wanted to save us some time.

JUDGE: Noted. *(Gives back the file)*

Prosecutor takes his seat.

JUDGE: Who wants to call the first witness?

Prosecutor gestures for the defense to go ahead.

PROSECUTOR: Knock yourself out, chap.

Defense stands.

DEFENSE: I call to the stand Mary – The Mother of Jesus.

Mary enters and goes to the stand.

DEFENSE: Will you tell the truth?

MARY: Yes.

DEFENSE: Please have a seat. *(Pause)* For the records, could you state your name and relation to the defendant?

MARY: I am Mary and I am the proud mother of Jesus.

DEFENSE: *(Addresses the judge)* If anybody knows this man, Jesus, it would be His mother. *(Turns back to Mary)* Can you help us to understand the type of person He is?

MARY: *(Mary smiles softly)* That may take a lifetime.

DEFENSE: Tell the court about the things that stand out most in your mind.

MARY: I remember the day He was born.

PROSECUTOR: Objection, Your Honour. Do we really have time for a history lesson?

DEFENSE: Your Honour, background is essential in understanding a person's character and motives.

JUDGE: I agree. Overruled.

DEFENSE: Mary, please continue.

MARY: Well, it is not exactly a mother's dream to bring her child into the world in a stable. It wasn't exactly what you would envision for a king. But the night was majestic in other ways. We had our perfect baby and it seemed like the world stood still. It all fell together like it was meant to be. Destined. And then we were visited by the Shepherds, and heard about their

remarkable journey. I tried to remember every detail, even as I wondered what this precious child would become. But even in the circumstances that surrounded his birth, it was impossible not to see something beyond us at work. And then He grew into such an amazing young man. He even managed to captivate scholars at times. Like the time we lost him when he was twelve.

DEFENSE: Mary, were there times when you questioned that Jesus, your own son, may not be king the angel who came to you said he would be?

MARY: When Simeon told me in the temple at my time of purification that a sword would pierce my heart, a lump came to my throat. I remember a sinking feeling that my Son's life wouldn't be what I hoped it would be. Up to then, I'd had visions of Him being crowned King in a traditional sense. Little did I know...

Mary pauses, trying to keep herself from getting too emotional to complete her sentence.

MARY: ...that His crown could be made out of thorns. But never once have I questioned that he is the living son of God.

DEFENSE: Thank you, Mary. I have no further questions, Your Honour.

Prosecutor stands, buttons his jacket and slides his hands into his pockets arrogantly.

Saunters toward Mary.

PROSECUTOR: You said when Jesus was twelve you lost him.

MARY: Yes. Though, I don't suppose you could consider Him lost. He stayed behind on His own.

PROSECUTOR: Stayed behind? Where did he go?

MARY: We found him in the temple courts. He was talking with scholars, answering hard questions and asking them for answers they could not give.

PROSECUTOR: A twelve year old boy?

MARY: Yes.

PROSECUTOR: Mary, some might accuse you of making this all up.

MARY: Why would I do that?

PROSECUTOR: Well, I'm sure you'd have your reasons.

He offers an accusatory smirk.

PROSECUTOR: What about between the ages of twelve and thirty? What was Jesus doing then?

Pause.

PROSECUTOR: Maybe he was studying the Holy Scriptures? After all, that would explain why he is so knowledgeable of scripture.

MARY: But that wouldn't explain how he can turn water into wine.

The prosecutor interrupts before Mary can continue.

PROSECUTOR: Jesus obviously has a very high IQ.

MARY: If that's what you want to call it.

PROSECUTOR: Simple science, Mary. He figured out a way to change the components of water.

MARY: You're entitled to believe what you want, but how would you explain that he can make the lame walk, the blind see, and the dumb speak?

PROSECUTOR: Those could easily be staged for the right price.

MARY: Do we look like we had the money for that?

PROSECUTOR: So, Mary, you want this court to believe that this man is God in human flesh?

MARY: In words and deeds.

PROSECUTOR: I must admit, it's impressive that you already have half this city convinced.

MARY: It's not me that has the power to convince anyone.

PROSECUTOR: Then why do you think you were called to this courtroom stand?

MARY: To tell you about the truth.

PROSECUTOR: And you want the good judge here to believe that the man sitting here isn't truly of this world? That he is, as you would have us believe, the son of God? He is of another world?

MARY: Actually, I expect you to believe that **he is** the truth.

PROSECUTOR: Lady, either you are the world's most insane mad woman or you are the most brilliant con artist that ever lived. It makes no sense that God would send a mere mortal to do what He could do himself.

MARY: So you're saying you believe in God and His capabilities to do just that? You are quick to judge what you do not understand.

PROSECUTOR: Am I? What is in all this for you, Mary? Is it fame you want? Fortune? Your name permanently etched in the history of man? Maybe you want a statute of yourself erected in the synagogue and people bowing to you? Surely you want something.

Mary remains silent.

PROSECUTOR: No further questions.

The Judge directs his attention to the defense.

JUDGE: Call your next witness.

DEFENSE: Your Honour, I call Matthew to the stand.

Everyone turns as Matthew makes his way from the back of the courtroom to the stand.

Matthew takes a seat.

DEFENSE: Could you state for the court your name?

MATTHEW: My name is Matthew. I'm an Apostle of Jesus the Christ. However, I was once known as Matthew, the Tax Collector.

DEFENSE: And your intentions here today, Matthew?

MATTHEW: I intend to tell you the truth, the entire truth, so help me God.

The defense smiles and Matthew relaxes back into his seat.

DEFENSE: So Matthew, how is it that you know the defendant?

MATTHEW: As I told you, I'm an Apostle of Jesus.

DEFENSE: And being an Apostle of Jesus, you've witnessed some occurrences that prove his claims. Is that correct?

MATTHEW: I have.