

# The Passion According to St. Matthew (26: 36 - 54)

## Scene One: The Garden of Gethsemane

Narrator takes up position at pulpit.

**Narrator:** The Passion of Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew.

*Introduction Music plays as the cast moves into position*

*See Entry Sequence for Scene 1*

**ENTER JESUS** followed by **JOHN & JAMES** from the Sacristy.

**Narrator:** Scene One, the garden of Gethsemane...  
Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray.  
He took with him, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee  
Grief and anguish came over him.

*Soft haunting Music plays in the background during the agony in the garden.*

**Spotlight focuses on Jesus as Altar lights go off.**

Jesus walks around in torment followed closely by John and James.  
John and James go to leave as the music fades momentarily.

**Jesus:** Don't go – stay close to me and keep me company.  
My heart is nearly breaking with sorrow and sadness.  
Sit here while I go over there and pray

John & James sit down with the disciples as Jesus goes away to pray

**Jesus:** Please, Father, don't let me go through this terrible suffering  
that lies ahead!  
Rescue me from it, if that is possible.  
But above all, I want to do what pleases you – Not what I want.

*Music increases in volume while Jesus prays before fading again.*

Jesus returns

**Jesus:** Why are you sleeping?  
Could you not watch with me for one hour?  
Keep watch and do not sleep again.  
The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

**Narrator:** Once more Jesus went away and prayed

Jesus goes away to pray again.

*Music increases in volume while Jesus prays before fading again*

Jesus returns to find the disciples sleeping again.

**Jesus:** You are sleeping again.  
You must stay awake and keep watch.

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**Narrator:** Again Jesus went away and prayed a third time

Jesus goes away to pray again.

**Music increases in volume while Jesus returns to pray.**

**Music fades out fully as Jesus returns to the disciples once more.**

**Narrator:** He returned and found the disciples asleep.  
They could not keep their eyes open.

**Jesus:** Are you still sleeping? Wake up! Look!  
The hour has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to  
the power of sinful men. Get up, let's go!

The disciples jump up.

**Spotlight goes off and the Altar lights come on.**

**Enter Judas and the Soldiers** from the Sacristy.

**Jesus:** Here is the man who has betrayed me to my enemies.

**Judas:** (To Soldier 1)

**The one I kiss is the one you want. See you take the right man.**

(To Jesus)

**Hello Master.**

**Jesus:** Judas, my friend, why are you going to betray me with a kiss?

Judas kisses Jesus on the cheek and the soldiers arrest him.

Peter draws his sword and chops off the Roman General's ear.

**Jesus:** (To Peter)

**Put away your sword.**

**If I wished to go free, I could call on armies of angels to fight for me.**

**But I am ready to give up my life, according to God's plan.**

Jesus gently touches the Soldier's wounded ear and makes it whole.

**Jesus:** (To the Guards)

**Did you have to come with swords and clubs to capture me?**

**You could have arrested me any time when I sat in the Temple  
and taught.**

**All this happened to fulfill the words of the Scriptures.**

The bewildered and terrified disciples run away (to the front seats) and leave Jesus.

Judas runs away (*down the aisle and back up the side to his seat*)

Jesus is taken away by the Soldiers (to the Sacristy) and does not resist.

**Appropriate Music or Hymn**

**See Entry Sequence for Scene 2**

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## **Scene Two: The house of Caiaphas, the High Priest.**

**Narrator:** Scene two, the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest.  
The High Priest, teachers of the Law and the elders are gathered.  
Although it is nighttime, the Council decides to meet at once and put Jesus on trial.  
They could not risk trouble from the excitable Passover crowds.  
Peter followed at a distance as far as the courtyard of the High Priest's house.

**THE HIGH PRIEST** comes to the front of the Altar.  
**ENTER JESUS** with the **SOLDIERS** led by the Roman General from the Sacristy.

**Man:** He said he could tear down God's temple and build it up again in three days!

**High Priest:** What have you to say about this accusation?  
In the name of God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

**Jesus:** I am. But I tell all of you: from this time on, you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right of the Almighty and coming on the clouds of heaven.

**High Priest:** Blasphemy! That settles the matter.  
The prisoner has claimed to be divine.  
We do not need any more witnesses.  
What do you think?

**Teachers & Elders:** He is guilty and deserves to die by our law.

Jesus is held firmly by the guards.

## **Courtyard outside.**

**Narrator:** Peter and John arrive at Caiaphas' house.  
John knows some of the household and walks straight into the courtyard.

Peter stands behind John.

**John:** (To a servant girl)  
May my friend come in too?

**Servant 1:** Yes, of course.  
(Pointing towards the courtroom, where Jesus faces his accusers)  
Aren't you a disciple of that man?

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**Peter:** No, I am not!

Peter goes through the entrance of the courtyard.  
Peter moves closer to the center of the altar.  
John follows a slight bit behind.  
A Man stares at him.

**Man:** You're one of that lot!

**Peter:** I don't even know the man!

**Servant 2:** Yes, you were with Jesus.

**Servant 3:** Whatever he says, he is a follower of the prisoner.  
Anyone can tell he comes from Galilee – listen to his accent!

**Peter:** I don't know what you are talking about.  
I swear that I don't know that man!

**Man:** You were with him.  
You know you were!

**Distant voice off stage:** Before the cock crows, you will say three times over  
that you don't know me.

A cockcrow is heard and Peter remembers Jesus' words.  
Peter looks at the face of Jesus.  
Jesus gazes back with great understanding and love.

**Narrator:** Peter cannot bear the fact that he has failed the person he loved and  
trusted most. Jesus looks at him with great understanding and love.

Peter slinks away into the crowd weeping bitterly (back to his seat).

## ***Appropriate Music or Hymn***

*During the hymn the soldiers take Jesus back to the Sacristy.  
John goes to join Mary.  
The High Priest and servants join the teachers and elders at the back of the altar  
The man stays at the front.  
The crowd stands up to the right of the altar.*

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## Scene Three: Jesus Stands Before Pilate

**Narrator:** Scene three, Jesus stands before Pilate.  
Jesus is taken before Pilate, the Roman Governor.  
Pilate is the only one who can pass the death sentence.  
The Council must try to convince Pilate of Jesus' crimes.

**ENTER PILATE** who comes to the front of the Altar.  
**ENTER JESUS** with the **SOLDIERS** from the Sacristy.

**Man:** This man has been stirring up trouble.  
He tells people not to pay taxes and says he's a king.

**Pilate:** I'm not sure that this man has committed the crimes you say he has.  
(To Jesus)  
Are you the King of the Jews?

**Jesus:** So you say.

The **Crowd** (led by the priests and elder) chant **Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!**  
Jesus is taken out to the crowd in the front of the Altar with Barabbas, a common thief.  
**ENTER Soldiers** with **Barrabbas**.  
Both Jesus and Barabbas are flanked by two soldiers.  
Pilate stands between the two.

**Pilate:** This man is completely innocent – he doesn't deserve to die.

The crowd chants louder – 'Crucify him!'

**Pilate:** It's Passover time.  
I shall set a prisoner free as part of the celebrations.  
Let me set Jesus, your Messiah free!

The crowd chants get even louder 'Crucify him!'

**Pilate:** Which one do you want me to set free? Jesus or Barabbas?

The crowd change chant to 'We want Barabbas!'

**Narrator:** Pilate is at his wit's end. If the crowd riots he may lose his job. He dare not release Jesus, even though Roman justice declares him innocent.

**Pilate:** I am not responsible for the death of this man!  
This is your doing.

**Exit Pilate** to Sacristy after washing his hands in a bowl of water brought to him by **Servant 1**  
Barabbas joins the crowd.

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**Narrator:** Pilate sets Barrabas free.  
Pilate had Jesus whipped and he handed him over to be crucified.  
The Soldiers stripped Jesus of his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him  
They made a crown out of thorny branches and put it on his head.  
The soldiers spat at Jesus and mocked him.

*The crowd gather to the front of the altar.  
Behind the crowd, the soldiers give Jesus a red robe and a crown of thorns to put on.  
Two soldiers can be seen whipping Jesus.  
The crowd throws stones at Jesus.*

**Soldiers:** Long live the king of the Jews.

*The soldiers give him the cross to carry*

**Narrator:** Jesus was give a cross to carry by the soldiers.  
Then they led him out to crucify him

*Jesus is brought on a procession around the church led by the Roman General.  
The soldiers follow next and then the crowd.*

***Appropriate Music or Hymn***

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## Scene Four: Golgotha

**Narrator:** Scene four, Golgotha

**They brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha which means the “Place of the Skull” to be crucified.**

**As Jesus carried his cross to Calvary, the crowds came onto the streets. They laughed and mocked Jesus, shouting “he said he is a King, now let him save Himself”.**

*The Crowd, teachers/elders and disciples return to their seats.*

*They chatter about the impending crucifixion.*

*They jeer and shout “Crucify Him”.*

**Spot light focuses on the crowd going up the aisle.**

*Jesus is led up the aisle by the Roman General with the soldiers following behind.*

**Spot light focuses on Jesus.**

*Jesus falls the first time*

**Narrator:** Weakened by torture and fatigue, Jesus falls for the first time

*Pause for a few seconds before getting up and continuing.*

*Jesus continues and meets Mary, his Mother and pauses for a moment.*

**Narrator:** As Jesus continues on His sorrowful journey, he meets his Mother.

**Mary:** My Son

**Jesus:** Behold My Mother

*Mary tries to come to Jesus but the Soldiers push her back.*

*Jesus Continues on.*

*Mary follows behind the soldiers*

*Jesus falls a second time*

**Narrator:** Again weakened by his heavy cross, Jesus falls a second time.

*Pause for a few seconds before getting up and continuing.*

*Jesus falls a third time (in front of Veronica)*

**Narrator:** Jesus is now very weak and he falls for a third time.

**A woman in the crowd named Veronica feeling so sorry for Jesus bravely stepped forward and wiped the face of Jesus with a cloth.**

*Veronica holds up the cloth momentarily before sitting down.*

*They soldiers and Jesus continue to the Altar.*

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*The soldiers go behind the Altar.  
The Roman General nails Jesus to the Cross.*

**Narrator: Jesus is stripped of his robe.  
Then he is nailed to the cross to be crucified.**

*The Roman General stands to one side.  
Mary (with Mary Magdalene behind) and John kneel at the cross*

**The Spotlight focuses on the cross.**

*There is a pause.*

*Optional appropriate Music or Hymn*

**Jesus: Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!**

**Man: If you really are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the Cross!**

**Jesus: (To John)  
Take my mother home and look after her always.**

**A shadow passes across the sun and it becomes strangely dark momentarily.**

**Jesus: My God, my God, why have you left me alone?**

**Narrator: Jesus becomes weaker – the crowd becomes still.**

**Jesus: It is complete.**

*Jesus hangs his head and dies on the cross...*

**Spotlight goes out.**

**There is a crash of thunder and flashes of lightning**

*There is a small pause.*

**The Spotlight comes on again.**

*All bow their heads.*

*The Soldier puts his sword into Jesus' side to make sure he is dead*

**Roman General: Truly, this man was the Son of God.**

**Narrator: This was Jesus Christ, and he not only died so that Barabbas could live.  
He died so that we could live too.  
He died in our place, because he loved us so much.**

**Appropriate Hymn or Music**

*Characters depart one by one from the altar with the Narrator last and leaving only Jesus.*