

JERUSALEM TOURS

by Thomas E. Gibboney



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A Walk-Through Easter Experience

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SYNOPSIS: This immersive experience transports you back to 33 A.D., where you'll retrace Jesus' steps—upper room to empty tomb. A serialized walking tour takes place indoors in various Sunday school rooms, outdoors (weather permitting), or both. It's two days after the Crucifixion, and guide Moshe or Miriam leads small groups to several locations around the Holy City in an attempt to understand the controversial teacher named Jesus—his life and his death. Interviews with eyewitnesses—from servants to soldiers—heighten the drama of this tumultuous time that changed everything. Stops include the upper room where the Last Supper was held; the Garden of Gethsemane; Pilate's palace where Jesus was tried; Golgotha, where he was crucified; and a room where Jesus' followers are hiding. Features simple ideas for convincingly recreating each scene. May be used as an outreach event preceding your Easter service.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 4 males, 4 either; extras)

ALL SCENES, INTRODUCTION, AND CLOSING:

GUIDE (m/f).....Moshe or Miriam, tour guide. *(11 lines)*

SCENE 1:

MARK (m)Person getting water for the owner of the location of the Last Supper. *(1 line)*

OWNER (f).....Owner of the location of the Last Supper. Mary, mother of Mark. *(2 lines)*

SCENE 2:

GARDENER (m/f)Gardener. *(1 line)*

SCENE 3:

SERVANT 1 (m/f).....*(1 line)*

SERVANT 2 (m/f).....*(1 line)*

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SCENE 4:

GUARD 1 (m)(1 line)

GUARD 2 (m)(1 line)

SCENE 5:

MARY MAGDALENE (f)Follower of Jesus. (2 lines)

MARY (f)Mother of James and Joseph. (1 line)

PETER (m)Disciple of Jesus who denied knowing
him. (2 lines)

PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGING: Interviews with eyewitnesses at various locations in Jerusalem are intended to be presented as part of a walk-through tour led by actor/guide Moshe or Miriam. You may have as many guides as you anticipate needing for your group. The tour takes around fifteen minutes. You may want to start new tours about every five minutes or so with groups of 10-12. As one tour finishes, the guide may return to lead a new group through the scenes.

The tour may be outside, weather permitting, or inside in a series of rooms (such as Sunday school classrooms). A mix of indoor and outdoor scenes also works well. Consider marking the path for the participants. Although less preferable, the interviews may be conducted in an auditorium environment by having the characters enter from and exit to the wings.

SETS

SCENE 1—The upper room. Place a long wooden table in the center of the area, to hold the remnants of the Last Supper. A basin and towel may be placed on the floor. Light the area with oil lamps or candles.

SCENE 2—The Garden of Gethsemane. If held outside, choose an area with many trees. If inside, place a good number of large plants (real or artificial) and artificial trees (Christmas and any other types of trees) around the room, along with rocks and brown blankets or sheets on the floor.

SCENE 3—Pilate's palace. A backdrop may show a stately building, or you may use actual columns if available.

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SCENE 4—Golgotha. If performed outside, designate a hillside with three wooden crosses placed in the ground. If inside, a painted backdrop of the hillside with three crosses would suffice, or one or all three actual crosses (leaning against the back wall) with large stones around them would also establish the setting.

SCENE 5—A room where Jesus’ followers are hiding. A few simple biblical-era furnishings would suffice, such as a small wooden table with a few chairs, perhaps a bowl of fruit, and a lit candle.

PROPS

SCENE 1—Bucket of water, pottery chalice, and round loaf of bread broken in two.

SCENE 2—Hoe or other gardening implement.

SCENE 3—Broom and cloth.

SCENE 4—Crown of thorns, wooden sign reading “King of the Jews,” fake spear (either a toy or a broom handle with foil-covered cardboard point).

SCENE 5—Large basket or pottery container of “spices.”

COSTUMES: Most of the cast may be garbed in biblical attire. Simple robes in earth tones and sandals will suffice. Lengths of cloth may be worn on their heads, tied with a fabric cord for the men and draped loosely for the women. Twisted or braided cord may serve as belts. The only exceptions to this are the Guards. Their uniforms should match, and they should wear helmets instead of cloth headpieces. (These may be as basic as foil-wrapped baseball caps with the bills removed.) You may fashion shields for them from cardboard. Just how authentic or elaborate the soldier costumes are may be based on what is already in your supply of costumes or what may be easily designed.

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INTRODUCTION

GUIDE: Welcome to today's tour of Jerusalem. My name is _____, (*Either Moshe or Miriam.*) and I will be your tour guide. As you know, today is Sunday, the day after Sabbath. We usually visit the tourist areas, like the temple. But last week, there was extraordinary activity. A teacher named Jesus came to Jerusalem for Passover. First he was greeted as a hero. Then he kicked the moneychangers out of the temple and insulted the Pharisees. Two days ago, he was crucified for being a rebel and claiming to be God. So, this tour will be different. We will retrace Jesus' steps from Thursday night until Friday.

SCENE 1

THE LAST SUPPER

MARK has a bucket of water. OWNER is cleaning the table.

GUIDE: (*Leading the tour group to the next station.*) Here are the residents of the home where Jesus and his disciples celebrated Passover. (*To MARK.*) Tell us how Jesus and his disciples decided to have their Passover Meal at your house and what happened.

MARK: It was very strange. I was out getting water, and two of the disciples—Peter and John, I think—came up to me and followed me here. When we got here, they said the Teacher told them to follow a man carrying water to the place he wanted to celebrate the Passover. It was like they knew where I would be, what I would be doing, and where I was going!

OWNER: Yes, Jesus was here with his twelve disciples. It was quite a coincidence, because I already had the room set up. (*Points to basin and towel.*) Jesus washed the disciples' feet, even though they protested. Then he said some words that were hard to comprehend, (*Picks up bread.*) about the bread being his body (*Picks up chalice.*) and the wine representing his blood, a sacrifice to forgive sins.

OWNER: *(Continued.)* Jesus said one of the disciples would betray him, which upset everyone. Then one of the twelve sprang to his feet and left in a hurry. I don't know where he went. Jesus said many interesting things, like "I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other" (*John 13:34*) and "No one comes to the Father except through me" (*John 14:6*) and "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (*John 14:9*). He also said the Father would send the Holy Spirit when he was raised from the dead. After the dinner, they all left. My son Mark followed them.

GUIDE: Thank you for sharing your story. A man getting water during the day is unusual enough, but for the disciples to be told about it and follow him to the location of the Passover meal is extraordinary! We know the group headed to Gethsemane, so let's follow them to our next witnesses.

SCENE 2 **ARRESTED**

GARDENER uses his hoe or other gardening implement to work the soil.

GUIDE: *(Leading the tour group to the next station.)* We are in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus and his disciples went after the Passover dinner. Gardener, can you tell us what you saw?

GARDENER: Well, Jesus and the disciples spent some time here praying, but some of the disciples kept falling asleep. Then another one of the disciples—his name was Judas, I think—joined them, but he brought a crowd of men with him. The men had swords and clubs and were sent by the religious leaders. Judas kissed Jesus and called him "Rabbi." The crowd grabbed Jesus to arrest him. Then one of the disciples cut off the ear of one of the men in the crowd! Incredibly, Jesus reattached it! He said this was necessary to fulfill the Scriptures, and off he went, under arrest. After that everyone scattered, and there was also a young man who escaped the mob and ran away.

GUIDE: Jesus willingly submitted to being arrested, even though his disciples tried to protect him. That young man who ran away may have been Mark, the son of the owners of the house where Jesus had the Passover dinner.

SCENE 3

THE TRIALS

SERVANT 1 is sweeping. SERVANT 2 is cleaning with a cloth.

GUIDE: *(Leading the tour group to the next station.)* Now we are at the palace where Jesus was tried. Servants, what did you see?

SERVANT 1: Well, we were there in the room when Governor Pilate questioned Jesus. This was after the soldiers had taken Jesus to Annas, the former high priest, and then to Caiaphas, the current high priest. Jesus told them he was the Messiah.

The religious leaders were furious! They met again and sent Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, because only Romans could execute someone. They told Pilate that Jesus was claiming to be King of the Jews, because the Romans didn't care about religious leaders or Messiahs. Pilate knew what they were trying to do and didn't find anything wrong with Jesus, even though Jesus said he was a king. Then when Pilate found out Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to King Herod because Galilee was in Herod's jurisdiction. But King Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.

SERVANT 2: I'm not supposed to talk about what I saw, but the Governor didn't want to punish Jesus. Pilate could see that the Jewish leaders were plotting to get rid of Jesus. Pilate's wife even told him to leave Jesus alone, because he was innocent and she had a nightmare about him. In the end, Pilate asked the people if he should release Jesus, but they all said to release a rebel leader named Barabbas. Pilate agreed, washed his hands of the whole proceeding, and condemned Jesus to be whipped and then crucified.

GUIDE: After six trials over the course of a single night, Jesus was condemned to die. Let's follow the trail.

SCENE 4*THE CRUCIFIXION*

GUARDS 1 and 2 stand at attention.

GUIDE: *(Leading the tour group to the next station.)* So Jesus was marched off to Golgotha, where he was crucified on Friday. Here are two Roman guards. *(To GUARD 1 and GUARD 2.)* Guards, did you see what happened?

GUARD 1: Yes, I was here all day. There was quite a crowd. I'm ashamed to say that first we flogged Jesus with a whip, then some of the soldiers mocked him *(Holds up crown of thorns.)* by putting a crown of thorns on his head and a royal purple robe on him. He was very weak, so a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, had to help him carry his cross.

Jesus was put on the cross around nine o'clock in the morning. *(Displays sign.)* Pilate wrote a sign that said, "King of the Jews," which was nailed to the beams right along with him. We all stood there, shivering and deeply conflicted. To pass the time, we rolled dice for his robe. I didn't get it.

You'd think Jesus would be indignant and angry, but no. One of his final acts was forgiveness. He forgave those who had plotted against him, along with one of the two thieves who were crucified alongside him. He told the thief he would be with him that day in paradise.

It was so eerie—the sun went dark from noon until around three o'clock, when he died. An earthquake rumbled across the land, and there were flashes of lightning! I was told that the thick, heavy temple curtain was torn from top to bottom, and if that wasn't enough, even the dead rose up! Even our squad leader, a Roman officer, said, "Surely this man was innocent" *(Luke 23:47)* and "This man truly was the Son of God!" *(Matthew 27:54)*.

GUARD 2: *(Raises spear.)* Eventually we put a spear in his side to make sure he was dead, since it was getting late and the Jews wanted to bury him before sundown. We didn't have to break his legs like we usually do when we crucify someone. I saw one of the followers, who was also a member of the Jewish high council, take the body and put it in a tomb. Some of the women who were there all day saw where he was buried. Later, some of us soldiers were assigned to seal the tomb and guard it.

GUIDE: What a dramatic day! Jesus said he was King of the Jews, and yet he allowed himself to be crucified!

SCENE 5

THE RESURRECTION

MARY MAGDALENE, MARY, and PETER are deep in conversation.

GUIDE: *(Leading the tour group to the next station.)* Yesterday was the Sabbath, so everyone was off the streets. This is our last stop. We are going to visit some of Jesus' disciples. They have been in hiding since Friday night, so I don't know if they will be willing to talk to us. *(MARY MAGDALENE, MARY, and PETER talk loudly and excitedly about the empty tomb.)* Wait—there seems to be a lot of commotion inside. Let's see what's going on. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and Peter are all here, along with the other disciples. What has happened to your group since Friday?

MARY MAGDALENE: The most amazing thing just happened! *(Holds container up.)* Mary and I went to the tomb early this morning to put spices on Jesus' body, but he wasn't there! We know it was the right place because we saw Joseph of Arimathea put the body there Friday evening. There was an earthquake, and an angel rolled away the stone at the entrance to the tomb. The Roman guards posted there passed out from fright! The angel told us Jesus has risen! He urged us to tell the disciples that Jesus would see them in Galilee.

MARY: Yes, so we immediately came back here to tell everyone!

PETER: After they told us, John and I went to the tomb, too. It's true; he's not there! He said he would rise on the third day, and he did!



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