

JESUS AT THE SANHEDRIN

The Original Stageplay



CHRISTIAN PLAYWRIGHT

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Sample Script



SCENE I

LIGHTS UP

A scribe and his apprentice son are hurrying across the stage on their way to work. They are dressed in the manner befitting their job (tunic, head covering and sandals). They are traveling to work early in the morning when they see a small crowd walking on the street, surrounded by guards.

Father: Have you brought with you the calligrapher's pens?

Son: Yes father.

Father: And the ink?

Son: Yes. I followed your special recipe exactly.

Father: And the parchment?

Son: Yes! Is the life of a scribe nothing more than responding to a grocery list of supplies?

Father: Yes, but you must first be prepared. Remember as my apprentice you are to learn the ways. Listen, watch, and speak only when spoken to, and with rather less attitude in the temple, please.

Son: Yes father. It's just that so far, I haven't seen a whole lot of benefits of being a scribe. You have to get up early and your hands are always dirty.

Father: Being a scribe is an honored role. Would you rather be fighting bloody battles or cleaning chamber pots or digging ditches to bring water to the city?

Son says nothing.

Father: Well?

Son: You told me to answer with less attitude and I'm afraid if I open my mouth I won't be able to follow your prescribed (*emphasis on scribe*) instructions.

Father: Very funny. While we walk, why don't we review the rules we discussed yesterday.

Son: (*groans*) Okay. Number 1, I must write on only clean animal skins and use the specially prepared ink. Number 2, I must say each word aloud as I write it. (*grumbling to himself*) Although I think that might be a bit distracting...

Father: Number 3?

Son: Number 3, No two letters will touch. If they do the document is invalid and I will have to completely start over.

Father: And finally, number 4?

Son: Number four, store the documents in a sacred place such as the synagogue.

Father: Very good. Now, why don't you begin reciting the...

A small crowd of people enters the stage with Jesus surrounded by guards and priests. They cross the stage and exit.

Son: (*excitedly*) Hey! Who are they? (*pointing*)

Father: Don't try to change the subject.

Son: No really, who are those men and what are they doing?

Another man enters, by himself and is watching the scene offstage. The father and son approach him.

Father: Sir, can you tell me what is going on here?

Man: That man is claiming to be the Messiah! The guards with him now first took him to Annas.

Son: (to Father) Why are they doing this now? Won't their mothers scold them for working during the Passover?

Father: (laughs a bit) You're right. This is rare – an arrest on a feast day. (to the man) You say he has just been to Annas?

Man: Yes.

Father: And at night! This is highly irregular, maybe even illegal.

Son: (to Father) Then why do they continue?

Father: I don't know.

Son: (to Man) What happened there? In Annas' presence?

Man: I was not there, but a guard told me it went something like this.

Shift the focus from one side of the stage to the other, where Annas, Jesus and a guard carry out the following actions.

Guard: Sir, we bring before you Jesus of Nazareth. He claims to be the Messiah. Your son-in-law and high priest of the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, has sent him to you.

Annas: What of the Sanhedrin?

Guard: Caiaphas would like your opinion on the matter, so we have brought him to you.

Pause.

Annas is deep in thought.

Annas: Fine. I see. Am I supposed to question this man about him being a Messiah?

Guard: He's actually claiming to be a King.

Annas: A king? Caiaphas needs to handle this himself.

Guard: *(discreetly to Annas)* The Sanhedrin are gathering sir, but they will not be ready for hours. Possibly until sunrise.

Annas: *(mostly to himself, but also so that the guard can hear)* My son-in-law thinks I have nothing better to do with my time. *(Then turning to Jesus)* You claim to be the son of man, the Christ, the Messiah, a King.

Jesus: I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in the synagogues where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me?

Guard: *(strikes Jesus in the face) (angrily)* Is that any way you speak to a high priest!

Jesus: If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?

Annas comes closer to Jesus. He looks at him from head to foot.

Annas: If you will not speak plainly, there are other ways to get information. Let us have some witnesses! Who knows this man?

Silence.

Annas: Come. Surely someone has seen him? Heard him speak?

Witness: I do!

Annas: (talking to the guard and motioning to the man, gesturing with his arm)
Bring him forward.

The guard walks the man forward to stand in front of Annas.

Annas: Do you agree before the gathered here to tell the truth?

Witness: I do.

Annas: If you should cause the accused to be condemned unjustly, his blood should cry for vengeance against you, and God will hold you accountable.

Witness: I swear, the words I speak are true.

Annas: So tell us, do you know this man?

Witness: Yes.

Annas: How?

Witness: I have seen him speaking in the temple.

Annas: What things did he say?

Witness: He said, 'I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins!' He said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and raise it in three days.'

Annas: He threatened to destroy Herod's temple!

Witness: He did!

Annas: And he said he would rebuild it in three days? Just three days?!

Witness: He did!

Annas: And he claimed to have this power?

Witness: He did.

Annas: (*flabbergasted/angry*) Did he say when... when this abomination would happen?

Witness: He said the day and hour were unknown, but to be prepared.

Annas looks at Jesus with rage in his eyes.

Annas: This, this is unheard of. These claims are surely blasphemy! The council will decide your fate. As for me, I cannot even stand the sight of you. Take him away!

Guard leads Jesus away from Annas and across/off the stage.

Annas freezes in his spot and the focus/stage lighting again focuses on the father, son, and man.

Man: I heard he stood there listening to the witnesses without saying a word, even when they were saying false things against him.

Son: Why?

Man: I do not know. I also heard he was slapped and beaten.

Son: What?! How unfair! He should not receive punishment if he hasn't even been at a proper trial yet!

Father: (*nodding and in serious thought*) What will happen now?

Man: I have heard the Sanhedrin is finally convened and ready to receive him. They are on their way there now to take him to the high priest, Caiaphas to be further questioned.

Father: This must be why we have been called to work today, even on a holiday. Most likely I will be placed in Caiaphas's chambers to scribe for him today.

Son: Father, let's hurry and get there before any other scribes arrive. We don't want to miss this!

Father: Wasn't I just telling you that there were benefits to being a scribe?! But, you are right, arriving before the others might let us in on this trial. Let's go.

Son: *(excitedly)* Yes sir!

They quickly exit.

The man continues to stare offstage. A woman approaches him. She glares at him with recognition.

Woman: I know you. I have seen you with this man Jesus.

The Man looks around nervously.

Man: I don't know what you are talking about.

The Man quickly exits.

LIGHTS FADE

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