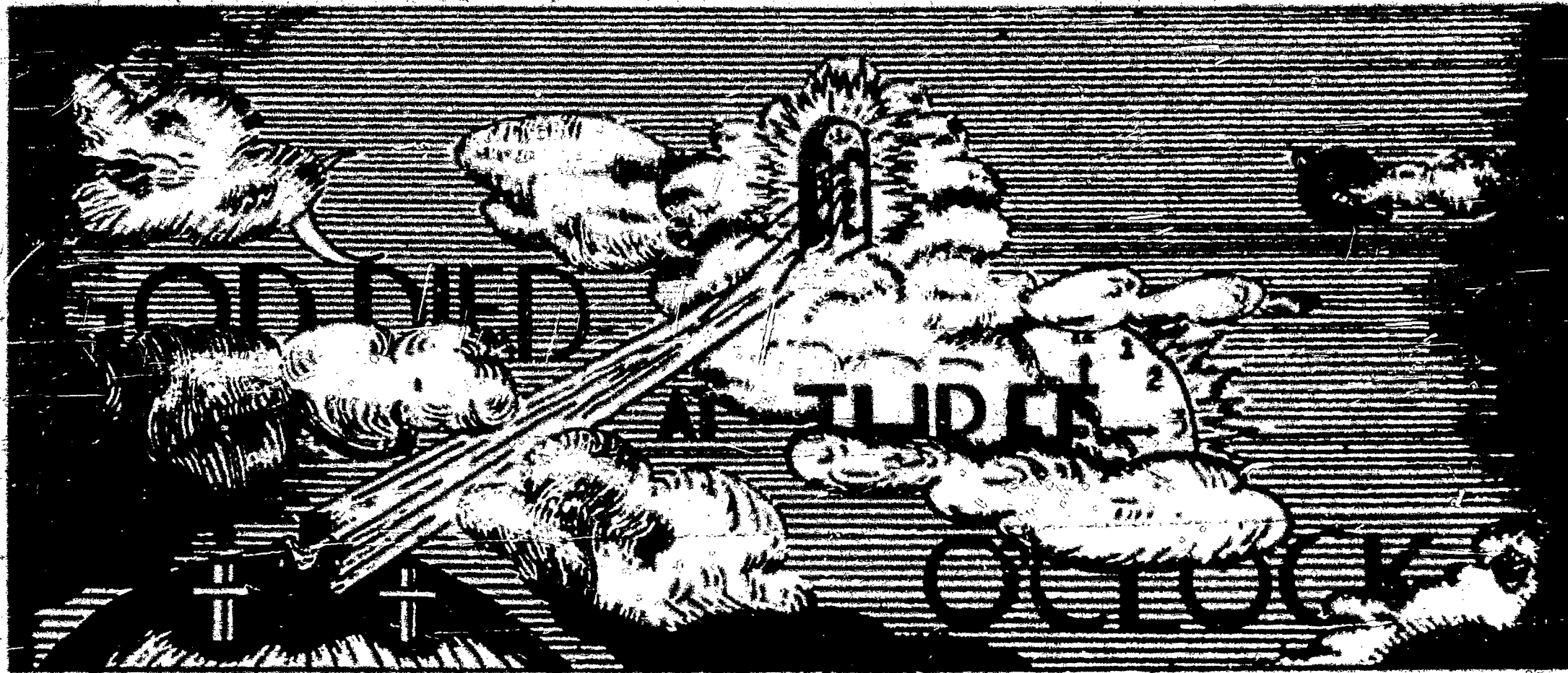


The Courier Journal

Youth Section



THE STORY UP TO NOW

On a Thursday night Jesus Christ is betrayed by Judas, one of His own Apostles. Captured in the Garden of Olives, Christ is brought to the Palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest and the leader of a plot to kill Jesus. Before Caiaphas and other judges, Christ is put on trial and falsely accused. Witnesses are brought in to the agonized Him. The dishonest judges agree that Christ is guilty of death. The Jews, however, cannot put a prisoner to death without permission of the Roman Governor, who is Pontius Pilate. Christ's enemies next plan how they may gain Pilate's consent to Christ's death.

By the Reverend Gerald T. Brennan

V—Pilate

Friday morning dawns in the City of Jerusalem. The world will call this day "Good Friday." But now one sees only evil. This is the day set by Caiaphas for the death of Christ!

After His unfair trial in the Palace of the High Priest, Jesus spent the night under close guard. It was a sleepless night for Him.

It was also a sleepless night for His enemies. They spent the dark hours planning for their Prisoner's death. They must not fail. But one thing still stands in the way of Caiaphas and his friends. They must have the consent of Pilate, the Governor. Will Pilate allow Christ to be put to death? Caiaphas knows that it will not be easy to gain Pilate's permission but the High Priest has plans for forcing the powerful Governor.

Early on this Friday morning Jesus is brought a second time before Caiaphas and the judges. They will question this Prisoner again before taking Him to Pilate.

"Are You the Christ?" is the first question of the judges.

The tired Jesus raises His head. "If I tell you," he answers, "you will not believe Me."

Christ's answer is aimed well. Why do they ask Him questions? They do not want to hear the truth. This is what Christ means. His judges understand but hatred has blinded them.

"Are You the Son of God?" they ask next.

Jesus looks straight at the judges. "I am," He answers firmly.

Jesus says that He is God! This is just what Caiaphas and the judges want Him to say. This Prisoner claims to be God! He must die, cry the judges. They do not stop to ask, "What if Jesus is God?" They forget His miracles. They have made up their minds. Christ must die—and today!

Pilate's Question

Caiaphas and his followers lose no time. They bind Jesus tightly with ropes. There must be no chance of His friends rescuing Him as He is led through the streets to the Palace of Pilate. Caiaphas, himself, leads the procession of Prisoner, guards and followers into Pilate's courtyard. A message is sent into the Roman governor and soon the haughty Pilate appears on the balcony to face the crowd. "Of what do you accuse this Man?" he asks.

"He is an enemy of our nation!" calls out the crowd. "He says that He is Christ. He

King." Caiaphas has seen to it that the crowd knows what to say.

Pilate turns, looks at Christ, and wonders. . . . If this Man is a King, why is there no one here to defend Him? Where are His armies? Where are His friends? Is it possible that this Prisoner standing here is a Man of power?

Why does this crowd hate the Prisoner so? There is something here that Pilate cannot understand. He must talk with Jesus alone. He goes back into his Palace and orders Jesus to be brought into him. Caiaphas and his followers wait outside in the courtyard.

Face to face with Jesus the Governor begins to ask Him questions.

"Are you the King of the Jews?"

"You say that I am," is the Prisoner's answer.

Pilate grows impatient. Will Jesus not defend Himself? The chief priests and the Jews, His own people, have handed Him over to Pilate. Has Jesus tried to make Himself King of the Jews? Pilate appeals to Him to explain what He has done.

Yes, Jesus is a King! This He admits to Pilate. But Jesus is not an ordinary king.

"My kingdom," He tells the Governor, "is not of this world."

Now Pilate is worried. This Prisoner is innocent. He plots no revolt against the Emperor. But what about Caiaphas and the crowd outside?

With the Prisoner, the Governor returns to the balcony to face Christ's accusers.

"I find this Man guilty of no crime," declares Pilate in a strong voice. He hopes that this will end all the trouble. Let the Prisoner be freed. And let the Jews go away.

But the crowd is angry at Pilate's words. It refuses to move. Pilate's sharp eye looks for signs of trouble. How can he save his pride without giving into the enemies of Christ? Then an idea comes to him.

"Is this Man from Galilee?" Pilate asks the crowd.

"Yes," the leaders shout back.

"Then He should be judged by Herod."

Two Kings Meet

King Herod! The ruler of Galilee! Caiaphas and the leaders of the Jews had forgotten about Herod who, at some distant

Jerusalem. The ruler of Galilee is a fearful king. He wants no king but himself. He should be very ready, thinks Caiaphas to condemn Jesus who claims to be a King.

King Herod has heard about Jesus. He has worried when he heard men talk about making the Teacher of Galilee a king. Even King of the Jews! Herod has heard much, too, about the many miracles which Jesus has performed.

For a long time the King of Galilee has hoped to meet Jesus. Now he smiles when at last Jesus is led before him. Christ stands a sad and sorry figure—and bound with ropes! Can this Prisoner be the rival for his

The King of Galilee laughs at the King of Heaven, but the King of Heaven is silent as He turns away to go back to Pilate.

VI—Cruelty Him!

Pontius Pilate has been the Roman Governor of Palestine for many years. He is a hard ruler, and at times, he is very cruel. But always he has a secret worry—the fear that the Jews may revolt. If this should happen, the Emperor in far off Rome might take away Pilate's governorship.

So, the Jews' demand that Christ be put to death worries Pilate. He believes Jesus to be



I am innocent of the blood of this just Man.

throne? Herod laughs at his own fears.

But this is the Jesus, Herod recalls, who has performed so many wonderful miracles. Perhaps He will show Herod a miracle.

Herod urges the Prisoner to show His power and asks Him many questions. But Jesus remains silent and refuses to speak to the king.

Jesus wishes to be a king of the Jews, says Caiaphas, and urges Herod to condemn Him to death.

The ruler laughs. No, he will not condemn Christ. He will return the Prisoner to Pilate but crown him a king!

Herod and his soldiers clothe Jesus in a white robe. They must deal with Jesus as he

innocent but Caiaphas and the chief leaders of the Jews are very set on Christ's death. These leaders have power among their people. If Pilate refuses them they may plot against him. Jesus says that He is a King. The Jews, if refused Christ's death, may tell the emperor that Pilate is protecting a new king! This would mean the end of Pilate.

Now the Jews and their Prisoner have returned to his courtyard. Pilate is disappointed. He had hoped that King Herod would settle the problem of Jesus, but that ruler is too crafty to get himself mixed up in this dangerous affair.

Pilate knows that he alone must deal with Jesus as he

for whatever happens to the Prisoner.

Standing on the balcony once more, Pilate listens to the crowd shout new demands for Christ's death. The angry temper of the crowd frightens the governor but finally he raises his hand for silence.

"You accuse this Man of many things," he says and points his finger toward Christ. "This Man is not guilty of the things you accuse Him of. He is innocent and should not be put to death. Therefore, I will punish Him and let Him go."

Why punish One who is innocent? Pilate hopes this may satisfy the hatred of the crowd. But harsh voices scold at Pilate's proposal. The crowd is stubborn. It wants the Prisoner's death!

A Choice?

At this desperate moment, a new idea comes to Pilate. He recalls that the Jews have a custom of freeing a prisoner each year at this time. He thinks quickly. To his mind comes a terrible name—Barabbas!

A robber and a murderer, Barabbas is now in prison waiting to be put to death. The people of Jerusalem know well how dread Barabbas and fear him. Now Pilate knows what he will do. He will save Christ yet. He will outwit this angry crowd. Let the crowd choose between Christ and Barabbas. Surely, it will free Christ, thinks the governor.

"It is time for you to free a prisoner," he calmly tells the crowd. "Whom shall I free? Jesus or Barabbas?"

The Jews are taken by surprise. "Has this clever Roman tricked them? How can they choose to free such a villain as Barabbas? What if they do not free Barabbas? Then Christ will escape!"

Caiaphas and the chief leaders of the people act quickly. They move through the crowd giving orders. Pilate is patient as he waits for the crowd to choose between Christ and Barabbas.

"Whom shall I free?" he asks finally.

The Jews shout their decision. "Give us Barabbas!"

Pilate is shocked. Once again Caiaphas, the High Priest, holds the upper hand.

Barabbas! The robber! The murderer! The crowd wants Barabbas to be free. This morning chosen the evil Barabbas over the innocent Christ.

"What then shall I do with Jesus?" asks Pilate nervously.

Quickly, loud voices from the crowd rear back. "Cruelty Him! Crucify Him!"

Pilate is Cowed.

Pilate's fight to save Christ is lost. The angry crowd, led by Caiaphas, has won. Pilate has tried to save Christ. He has tried all means and has failed. If he were a brave man he could save Christ even now. One word from Pilate and Christ would be free. But Pilate is a coward. He fears the wrath of Caiaphas and the Jews. He fears what his Emperor might think. But before the sad eyes of Christ, this proud Roman is ashamed of his own weakness.

Turning to one of his men, the Roman Governor orders some water to be brought to him. When the servant brings the water, Pilate washes his hands before the crowd.

"I am innocent," he says, "of the blood of this just Man."

The Jews scold at Pilate's silly gesture. All right, they stand ready to accept all blame for the death of Christ.

"Let His blood be upon us!" they shout again as they march away.

(Continued next week)

Visit From Rome

Pompeii, Dec. 20. (AP)—When Paul Martin, Consul General of the United States in Rome, visited the city of Pompeii, he was surprised to find that the city had been so well preserved. He had heard that the city had been buried under a mountain of ash and that only a few ruins remained. But when he visited the city, he found that it was almost as if it had never been buried. The streets were still there, the houses were still there, and the people were still there. He was amazed at the way the city had been preserved and at the way the people had managed to live in the city for so long.