



## The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone

### Malchus

Malchus walked slowly along the dusty road that led from Bethany to Jerusalem. He tried to decide just what he would tell the high priest, Caiaphas. Caiaphas had sent him to the home of Martha and Mary to express his regrets at the death of their brother, Lazarus. But when Malchus arrived at their house, Lazarus was not dead, but alive.

"Lazarus has been raised from the dead!" the people shouted. "Jesus has brought Lazarus back to life!" they cried.

What would he tell Caiaphas? Malchus had seen Lazarus with his own eyes and had even spoken to the man. He was alive. But brought back to life by Jesus? Just the mention of the name, Jesus, was certain to cause trouble. For months now, the Jewish elders had been trying to find a way to get rid of Jesus. This latest news would surely anger the chief priest.

"This Jesus is trying to destroy the law," the Pharisees complained. "He seeks to overthrow our whole way of life. Jesus must be eliminated!"

When Malchus finally arrived back at the temple, Caiaphas had already heard the news. "Well, Malchus," he laughed, "what do you think of the resurrection of Lazarus?"

Malchus thought for a moment before he answered. He didn't want to say or do anything to annoy Caiaphas. As the chief servant of the high priest, Malchus enjoyed a position envied by many of the other household servants.

"I think," said Malchus, carefully choosing his words, "that this Jesus is not going to amount to anything. You'll see. He's like every other false prophet we've had. Pretty soon, the people will stop listening to him, and he'll just fade from everyone's thoughts."

Caiaphas looked satisfied. He wanted no trouble, especially not next week. Jerusalem would soon be crowded with people for the Passover celebration.

These people would be coming to the temple to pay the annual tax that made Caiaphas very happy. No, Caiaphas wanted no trouble.

But Malchus was wrong. Jesus did not fade from everyone's thoughts. As He entered Jerusalem for the Passover, the people lined the streets and cheered Him. "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail Jesus!" they cried. Caiaphas watched with disapproval from his window.

"No doubt these people have heard the strange story of Lazarus," Malchus said.

"Just the same," Caiaphas answered, "as soon as the Passover festivities are over, I must call a meeting of the Sanhedrin. Once and for all, we must decide what to do about Jesus."

"It's just religious emotion — nothing to worry about," Malchus assured him.

"I can wait. In time we will deal with Jesus. Now, I fear the people would riot. But in time," Caiaphas said, turning away from the window.

A few days later there was another incident. Jesus came into the temple court and overturned tables and threw out all of the moneychangers and merchants. "You have changed my Father's house into a den of thieves!" He shouted.

True, these merchants were dishonest. But the temple priests shared in the large profits, and the practice was allowed to continue. When Caiaphas heard about this latest incident, he called Malchus and said, "Send word to the elders and priests at once. I am calling a council meeting today."

Malchus was not permitted to go into the meeting of the Sanhedrin. He was, after all, just a servant. But the charges the priests made against Jesus were so loud and angry that he couldn't help hearing their arguments.

"Jesus must be stopped! He is a criminal!" they shouted.

"But how?" someone asked. "This is

a matter for the Roman government."

"What crime has He committed?" asked another.

"This man Jesus claims to be the Son of God — the Messiah!" one of the elders cried.

The meeting went on for a long time, and then something strange happened. A man came in and asked Malchus if he could speak to the chief priest. His name was Judas, and he was one of Jesus' own followers. He stayed only a few minutes, but after he left, the whole mood of the meeting changed.

"How fortunate! What a wonderful turn of events," Malchus heard one of them say after Judas had gone.

"The matter has been decided for us. Judas will take us to Jesus, and we will try Him in the high court," said another with obvious relief.

"Malchus, make ready," Caiaphas called. "You are to go with the priests and Roman soldiers to a garden. There this Jesus is finally to be arrested," Caiaphas said with pleasure.

The soldiers that came with the priests carried torches, clubs and other weapons. Malchus wondered why they needed so many men to arrest Jesus. He'd only seen Jesus once, preaching in the temple court. He certainly didn't look like a dangerous criminal to him.

Jesus was standing in the garden with some of His followers. Judas greeted Him with a kiss, and in a moment's time, Jesus was betrayed. He offered no resistance. It was almost as if He expected this all to happen. Just as the Roman soldiers prepared to tie His hands, one of His followers suddenly pulled out his sword and struck Malchus on the ear.

Malchus was stunned for an instant. He felt for his ear. His hand was bloody. Then just as quickly as the sword had struck, Jesus looked at Malchus and touched his ear, and the pain stopped. They led Jesus away after that to be tried as the criminal they had decided He was.

Something happened to Malchus at the precise moment that Jesus touched his ear and healed it. He wasn't sure, but like a tiny seed, a feeling deep inside of him started to take root and grow.

Later, Malchus showed his ear to one of the other servants. "There's nothing at all wrong with your ear, Malchus," the servant said. "No wound, no blood,

nothing wrong at all."

Malchus began to hope. Please let them free Jesus, he prayed. The feeling continued to grow. The trial before the Sanhedrin went on all night. In the morning, they took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Still Malchus continued to hope.

"As is our custom, I will free one prisoner in honor of your Jewish Passover," Pilate said.

Let it be Jesus, Malchus prayed to himself.

"We want Barabbas!" the crowd jeered. "Free Barabbas! Crucify Jesus!"

And then it was over. Malchus saw Jesus hanging on a cross between two real criminals. But still the feeling inside of him continued to grow.

"Well, Malchus," Caiaphas said, "you were right. Jesus can't make any more trouble. The problem is solved."

"I suppose you are right," Malchus answered sadly.

"I have a thought, Malchus. The Sabbath will begin soon. Go to the Roman authorities and tell them I want the tomb where they have put His body guarded."

"What is the reason for that?" Malchus asked.

"There is some talk that some of His followers are planning to steal the body. Then they can claim that Jesus has risen from the dead," Caiaphas replied.

Early in the morning, on the first day of the week, Malchus stood in the shadows and waited. It was just getting light when some women came with oils to anoint the body of Jesus. They looked into the tomb and they ran. Malchus followed at a distance. The two women stopped at a house, and after a moment, they disappeared inside. Malchus crept to the door and listened. He strained to hear what he already knew.

"Peter," one of the women said, "He has risen. Jesus is alive just as He said!"

#### For further reading:

1) The story of Malchus is a fictional account based on a real incident that did occur in the Garden of Gethsemane. This incident is found in the Gospel of John, Chapter 18:10-11.

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