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## **The Passion**

### **Jesus' soliloquy**

#### **based on the several accounts in scripture**

#### **by Ralph Milton**

I never thought it would come to this.

Somehow, I thought people would understand. I really didn't think I'd have to go all the way.

It was very pleasant, those days in Galilee. It is such beautiful countryside, especially in the spring. This was home, and almost everywhere we went, we felt welcome.

People would come out to hear me speak. They would sit on the grass on the hillsides, and I would talk with them, tell them stories, parables. They seemed to enjoy it, and sometimes some of them would talk to me afterwards, and I could tell they had heard with more than their ears and their head.

Late at night, we'd sit around and talk. Usually, it was just with a few of the friends who became part of my small group. Mary and Susanna and Judas and Peter and the others.

Together we talked and talked about what it would mean to live as if love were the rule of life, not power or money or wealth or status or knowledge. What does it really mean to love each other? What does it mean to love God?

Sometimes, you know how it is, you say something and then afterwards you think about it and you try and figure out what you meant?

We would pray together often, and we usually began with the traditional Jewish prayer, the Shema, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind." And then I began to add another line from the prophets. "And your neighbor as yourself."

When I told my friends about adding that line... "You shall love your neighbor as yourself..." Peter shook his head and said, "Well, how can you love someone else like yourself?"

Mary really pushed me on it. "I don't always love myself very well. I often don't, Jesus. But the more I follow you around, the more I hear you talk, the more I can love

myself. In fact, every time I hear you talk, you seem to make the concept of love a little bigger than it was before.”

“Except there is talk going around,” said Peter sharply, “that you should be a little more choosy about whom you are seen with, Jesus. It doesn’t do your reputation much good if you keep hanging around with all that riffraff.”

I guess I was a bit annoyed at Peter for saying that. I knew what he meant, and so did everyone in the group. Peter doesn’t like some of my friends. He calls them hookers and winos and I guess they are. But I like them. They are real people. They don’t pretend to be anything other than what they are.

“Peter,” I said, “can you believe that God loves those friends of mine as much as God loves you. Maybe even more.” That question got him really mad, and he sulked for a couple of hours.

I traveled around Galilee talking to folks, and before I knew it, people began speculating about who I was, and what I was up to. When people start talking and imaginations start churning, you never know what they’ll come up with. And that’s when a few friends, like Martha in Bethany, and Peter started wondering out loud if I was the Messiah.

I told them to shut up in no uncertain terms. That scared the blazes out of me. But the more they kept saying it, the more I thought about it. So I went to the synagogue in Capernaum to look at the scrolls of the Torah. Some of those ancient writings said the Messiah would be a conqueror, would raise an army and wipe out all our enemies. And I knew that sure wasn’t me. I didn’t even like competitive games, much less fighting. And the God I encountered in my prayers and in the lives of other people was not a military God. In fact, just the opposite.

But there was the prophet Isaiah. He talked about the Messiah as if the Messiah might be like one of those hookers or winos that Peter was so upset about. Someone who was considered ugly, someone at the bottom of the social ladder, someone you could easily write off as unimportant.

And then when I went to visit my friends Mary and Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, right near Jerusalem, they told me how the folks there were arguing about me, and wondering if I was the Messiah. Lazarus said he’d heard there had been some high-level government meetings to talk about me and what I was up to. My first instinct was to run as far and as fast as possible.

“If you just lay low for a couple of years, it’ll all blow over,” said Lazarus, and he was probably right. That’s what I should have done.

I didn’t sleep much that night. And the next morning I felt really, really rotten. Mary of Magdala could tell right away there was something wrong. “What’s eating you, Jesus?” she wanted to know.

I tried to tell her, but I don’t think it made much sense. I told her what Lazarus had said, and how I had prayed half the night and the sense I had of what God was saying was, “Love doesn’t give up. Love is prepared to go the distance.”

“Are you prepared to go the distance?” Mary asked. I could see tears in her eyes.

“I don’t know what that means, Mary.”

“Neither do I. But I know this. It won’t be easy.”

And so here I am, in the middle of the night, praying my heart out, and I get no response from God. Nothing. I shared the bread and the wine with my friends at supper

last night, trying to show them how love means giving. Giving everything. And then I washed their feet, and Peter, bless his pointed head, misunderstood the whole thing. Poor Peter. He's got a big heart but he isn't very smart.

Judas was the only one who understood, I think, and he didn't like it. He thinks I'm the Messiah all right, and he's determined for force the issue. He thinks if he brings the military in here, I'll do some really spectacular tricks and generate an instant army.

O God, I don't know if I am the Messiah. All I know is that I love those stupid, wonderful people I've been mixing around with. All I know is that I am sure God loves them too, but how can you let them know that? Would they know how much I love them, how much God loves them, if I go into hiding to save my own neck? If Judas brings the army in here, they'll string me up for sure, and what will that prove, eh?

What will that prove? God? Where are you? God? Why have you forsaken me? Now when I need you most, God, why don't you talk to me?

"God! Talk to me! Please!"

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,  
all of them available through Wood Lake Publishing.**

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