

JERUSALEM REPORT

By Rod

This drama seeks to cover the main events of Holy Week as seen through the eyes of a fictional Roman news reporter, Kate Adie-Thirty. She is in the Jerusalem studio of Empire News 24 and has been investigating. By means of some explanations and some Reconstructions she is filing a report to Rex Romanus, who is the anchorman based in the studio in Rome. These two stay in their 'studio' positions throughout. Others only appear as required.

CAST

REX ROMANUS *He is in the studio in Rome so can read from a script*

KATE ADIE-THIRTY *She is in the Jerusalem studio so can also read a script*

JESUS *It is probably best if one person takes this part throughout and does not join in with other scenes.*

'CROWD' *They can share the various roles necessary [e.g. Donkey, John, Peter, Judas, Caiaphas, etc]*

REX Hello, good evening and welcome to this special edition of Empire News 24. My name is Rex Romanus.

Since early yesterday morning reports of yet another crisis in the troubled city of Jerusalem have been coming in to us here in Rome. There have been a number of bizarre incidents in the city over the last week centred round a man called Jesus.

The governor-general, Pontius Pilate, has imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the city. And the Roman army garrisoned there is said to be on full-scale alert. All leave has been cancelled.

For a special report on the week's turbulent events we go over to our Middle East correspondent, Kate Adie-Thirty, who is in our Jerusalem studio..

Hello, Kate.

KATE Hello, Rex.

REX Kate, first of all, what do we know about this man, Jesus?

KATE Very little really, Rex. I am told that he comes from a small town called Nazareth, which is in the northern province of Galilee, where he worked as a carpenter.

REX You say “worked”. Has he given up this trade?

KATE It would appear so.

REX Pity, I have been trying to get someone to put in some fitted cupboards for me for ages. What does Jesus do now?

KATE For the last three years he has been travelling about operating as a sort of religious leader, or ‘Rabbi’ as the Jews call it. He had a small band of followers – his ‘disciples’ – and went about preaching, performing so-called miracle and healing people.

REX Why all the fuss? Surely this would have made him very popular – particularly if his healings worked?

KATE Indeed it did. In fact this popularity with the people led to a huge outpouring of enthusiasm the Sunday before last.

[A sign appears with ‘RECONSTRUCTION’ written on it]

*CROWD appear on stage: They are excited and cheering
They start to lay cloaks etc on floor
They wave palms/flags etc*

ENTER JESUS riding on [or leading?] a donkey
CROWD shout ‘HOSANNA, HOSANNA’
They could sing song: ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord’

CROWD A Who is this?

CROWD B I don’t know.

CROWD C This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee

CROWD follow JESUS off stage. KATE returns to ‘STUDIO’ position.

REX Kate, it's interesting that the crowd called him 'the prophet' from Nazareth. He is clearly a religious man.

KATE Indeed, Rex; as well as his miracles and healings he has gained quite a reputation for his profound teaching. His 'Sermon on the Mount' is much talked about.

REX Was he also mounted on a donkey when he delivered that sermon?

KATE No, it was a mountain – or small hill.

REX I see. So being a religious man, no doubt he went to the temple – seeing as how last week was a big religious festival for the Jews.

KATE Yes, Rex, you're right, he went there on Monday; but his visit there turned out somewhat surprisingly.

[A sign appears with 'RECONSTRUCTION' written on it]

ENTER lots of SELLERS and MONEYCHANGERS who set up stalls.

They shout things like:

- “Pair of doves for a fiver”*
- “Pigeons – anyone fancy a pigeon”*
- “Money changed. Best rates in Jerusalem”*
- “Borrow now, pay nothing for one year” etc*

Also BUYERS who haggle with SELLERS and CHANGERS.

Together they create lots of noise.

ENTER JESUS. He looks horrified.

He turns over tables and scatters SELLERS and CHANGERS

JESUS It is written “My house will be called a house of prayer” but you are making it a den of robbers.

CROWD A Where is it written?

CROWD B I'll have the law on you.

JESUS drives the CROWD off stage.

REX I can't imagine that that sort of behaviour went down too well with the temple authorities.

KATE No, Rex, they were furious. And to make matters worse, Jesus spoke more and more bluntly about how 'the teachers of the law and the Pharisees' (as he called them) were like the blind leading the blind. They really started to hate him. They were worried that their position would be undermined and that he would become much more popular than them.

REX Did they try to fight back?

KATE Oh yes, they tried their best to catch him out while he was speaking to a crowd of people the next day – that's Tuesday.

[A sign appears with 'RECONSTRUCTION' written on it]

ENTER JESUS followed by a CROWD. They gather round him as if listening to preaching.

JESUS takes two members of the crowd and puts blindfolds on them. One leads the other. Other members of the crowd push them and trip them so they both fall over.

JESUS The teachers of the law and the Pharisees are like this.

CROWD laugh. ENTER JEWISH LEADERS. They look very cross. CROWD fall silent.

J. LEADER Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

JESUS Show me a coin. *[One of JESUS followers gives him a coin]* Whose portrait is on it?

J.LEADER Caesar's.

JESUS *[Throwing coin at Jewish Leader]* Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

CROWD laugh and cheer loudly. JEWISH LEADERS EXIT angrily. JESUS EXITS followed by CROWD.

REX Oh dear. No wonder the religious leaders got cross. Jesus made them look a right bunch of plonkers. What happened on Wednesday?

KATE Not much that I have been able to find out about. Jesus seems to have spent a quiet day with his friends.

REX What about his opponents – the Jewish leaders?

KATE My guess is that they gathered together under the leadership of Caiaphas, the high priest, and spent the day hatching a plot to ‘deal with the Jesus problem’.

A sign appears with ‘RECONSTRUCTION’ written on it

ENTER JEWISH LEADERS including CAIAPHAS who is chairing the discussion.

LEADER A He calls himself God, that’s blasphemy.

LEADER B We must kill him. He’s got to die.

LEADER C But we should wait until the Passover is finished.

ENTER JUDAS. The LEADERS fall silent.

CAIAPHAS Who are you?

JUDAS My name is Judas Iscariot. I am a follower of Jesus.

CAIAPHAS What do you want?

JUDAS What will you pay me if I betray him? [*LEADERS huddle together and discuss*]

CAIAPHAS 30 pieces of silver.

JUDAS Agreed. [*ALL put hands together in agreement and then EXIT*]

REX Kate, who is this Judas Iscariot?

KATE He was one of Jesus ‘disciples’.

REX Why on earth did he agree to betray him?

KATE From what I can gather, he was disappointed in Jesus. He expected him to be a great military leader who would enable the Jews to rise up and overthrow the Romans. Instead all he did was go on about peace and being kind to each other.

REX Still, it seems pretty treacherous to betray someone you have followed around for three years or so.

KATE He did regret it later and he hanged himself.

REX Not a happy man clearly.

KATE No.

REX So what happened next? I think we’ve got to Thursday. That’s the Jews’ big festival – the Day of Passover – is it not?

KATE Yes it is and Jesus ate the Passover meal alone with his 12 disciples.

REX Including Judas?

KATE Yes and they met together in an upper room. I have interviewed some of the disciples and have pieced together this account.

[A sign appears with ‘RECONSTRUCTION’ written on it]

ENTER JESUS and DISCIPLES. They sit at table eating and chatting. JESUS stands.

JESUS I tell you the truth; one of you will betray me.

ALL “No, never Lord”. “Not me”. Etc

JOHN Lord, who is it?

JESUS The one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. *[Dips and gives bread to JUDAS who gets up and leaves]*
[Holding loaf] Take and eat. This bread is my body. *[Passes bread round]*
[Holding cup] Drink this all of you. This is my blood. *[Passes cup round]*

EXIT JESUS and DISCIPLES.

REX Yuk, body, blood! It all sounds rather ghoulish, Kate. Was this Jesus trying to start some sort of new cult involving the eating of body parts?

KATE According to the disciples all they actually ate was bread and wine.

REX It still sounds rather strange. Was Jesus all right in the head?

KATE Well, he was certainly upset about something if the events, which followed in the Garden of Gethsemane, are anything to go by.

[A sign appears with 'RECONSTRUCTION' written on it]

ENTER JESUS and DISCIPLES. DISCIPLES lie down. JESUS kneels down a little away from them and prays animatedly. DISCIPLES gradually fall asleep. JESUS stops praying and goes to DISCIPLES. He starts to rouse them.

JESUS Wake up! Here comes my betrayer.

ENTER JUDAS and SOLDIERS. JUDAS goes to JESUS and kisses him. SOLDIERS go to arrest JESUS. PETER intervenes but JESUS restrains him. SOLDIERS seize JESUS and march him off. DISCIPLES remain. They look at each other as if frightened and run away in opposite direction. Only PETER goes after JESUS – but tentatively.

REX Jesus' followers were a cowardly lot. One betrayed him and the others fled at the first sign of trouble.

KATE Yes, Peter put up a bit of a fight but even he lost his nerve later on and denied ever-knowing Jesus.

REX I'd hope my friends would be a little bit more loyal. What happened next? Was there a public trial?

KATE No, not a public one; it all seems to have happened behind closed doors. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, Herod, the Jewish puppet King and Caiaphas worked it out between themselves. None of them have been available for comment so I can only guess as to what exactly happened.

REX Perhaps more details will emerge later. What do you think was the case against Jesus?

KATE It seems that the Jewish leaders wanted him put to death for claiming to be God.

REX Did he really make such a claim?

KATE By all accounts, yes he did.

REX Even if he did, doesn't that simply confirm that he was a lunatic? There are plenty of them around. Surely that doesn't merit the death penalty.

KATE That's what Pilate thought.

REX Then why didn't he just release him?

KATE He was afraid there would be a riot. So instead he came up with a cunning plan.

REX Was it as cunning as a plan devised by a fox with a degree in cunning from the University of Rome.

KATE Alas no.

[A sign appears with 'RECONSTRUCTION' written on it]

ENTER CROWD followed by PILATE with JESUS and BARABBAS + SOLDIERS

PILATE Who do you want me to release: Barabbas the murderer or Jesus the King of the Jews.

CROWD Barabbas. Barabbas.

PILATE What shall I do with Jesus?

CROWD Crucify him! Crucify!

PILATE signals for JESUS to be led away. CROWD continue to shout abuse. CROWD and all EXIT following JESUS

REX What an ugly scene. How the mood of the crowd changed from when Jesus first entered Jerusalem only five days before.

KATE Yes, Rex, it was extraordinary. From public hero number one he was turned into public enemy number one.

REX Was he crucified?

KATE Yes, he was and many people turned up to watch.

[A sign appears with 'RECONSTRUCTION' written on it]

ENTER CROWD. JESUS is crucified off stage. CROWD are 'looking' at this event.

JESUS *[From off stage]* Father forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

CROWD A Why is it so dark. It's the middle of the day. *[CROWD act as if in darkness]*

JESUS It is finished.

CROWD B What's that rumbling? It's an earthquake. *[CROWD are frightened and act 'shaken'. ENTER CROWD C]*

CROWD C The temple curtain has been ripped in two!

EXIT CROWD rushing off to see these events.

REX These were extraordinary events, Kate.

KATE Yes, they were and many people have told me about them so we can be pretty sure they really happened.

REX So that was the end of Jesus?

KATE For now, yes. The Roman soldiers made sure he was dead and then he was taken down from the cross and buried in a nearby tomb.

REX I expect the Romans were relieved?

KATE Yes – but just to be on the safe side they mounted a guard on the tomb.

[A sign appears with 'RECONSTRUCTION' written on it]

ENTER ROMAN SOLDIERS who stand to attention as if guarding a tomb to one side of the stage.

REX So why has all the trouble broken out again?

KATE Well the next day was the Jewish Sabbath so nothing happened at all.

REX Tell me about it! I broke a buckle on my tunic one Saturday. Could I find a Jewish tailor to repair it? Not a hope!

KATE Quite. So it was very early on the Sunday that some women went to the tomb to finish treating the body.

ENTER MARY MAGDALENE, MARY and SALOME. They cross to 'tomb', peer inside, see that it's empty and catch the attention of the guards.

MARY and SALOME run off to fetch disciples.

SOLDIERS confer, look worried and run off in panic.

MARY MAGDALENE remains and wanders to back of stage. JESUS appears and shows himself to her. She falls down on her knees. THIS IS DONE SILENTLY.

ENTER JOHN followed by PETER. JOHN stops at tomb but PETER carries straight on into it. PETER re-emerges and confers with JOHN.

They wander back across stage where they are joined by OTHER DISCIPLES. JESUS then moves from back of stage to show himself to them. They celebrate and walk off stage together.

REX You're not seriously telling me that this Jesus is now alive again – having been executed some of Rome's finest soldiers?

KATE That's what his disciples think and the news is spreading all round Jerusalem.

REX It sounds like a publicity stunt to me.

KATE A dangerous one. The authorities are hopping mad. They killed Jesus so they will probably now attempt to kill his disciples as well.

REX Well, Kate, whatever the truth, I am sure we have not heard the last of this. It sounds like a great story.

KATE It certainly is, Rex; in fact it could be the greatest story ever told. This is Kate Adie-Thirty for Empire News 24 in Jerusalem.

REX Thank you, Kate. That's the end of this special report but before I leave you can I remind you that we would really like to hear what you think:
Is Jesus dead or alive?
Is he the son of God or a dangerous lunatic?
Is the story Kate Adie-Thirty has pieced together just that – a story – or is it the single most important event in the history of the world?
Our `phone lines are now open for you to speak directly with Kate Adie-Thirty.
Or if you prefer you can email us on: www.newsextra@empire.co.roma

But for now, from me, Rex Romanus, it's good night.

THE END