

Robbery on a Roman Road

**An (almost) Murder Mystery
based on the Parable of the Good Samaritan
By Kathy Applebee**



Brief overview of Robbery on a Roman Road

Jake got mugged traveling through a dangerous stretch of road and it's up to friends, family, acquaintances and shady characters to determine who did the dirty deed. Loosely based on the Parable of the Good Samaritan and other parables of Jesus, this almost murder mystery combines Bible study and character development to provide an evening or afternoon of fun. (OK, mornings work too.)

Host notes

Characters

Dossiers may be handed out randomly by gender or as host you may cast your guests in the roles you choose for them. If you want to be surprised by the ending use just the WHO YOU ARE portion of the character descriptions to select roles. If you read the complete character descriptions you will know all the details of the murder including who did it.

You may choose to hand them out several days before the giving people more time to prepare their character, costume, props, etc. counting on everyone to be present. You may wish to hold them until the guests arrive in case you have cancellations or no shows. Last minute cancellations and no shows occasionally occur. It's wise to line someone up in advance in case of a no show.

Props

Pencils or pens will be necessary to fill out the Whodunit forms

Fare at the Come On Inn

If you are planning to do refreshments, consider a Biblical banquet. Wondering what might have been served at the Come On Inn? Check out these websites for Roman and Israeli foods:

<http://www.therthdimension.org/AncientRome/RomanFoodDrink/romanfooddrink.htm> Lists/tables

<http://factsanddetails.com/world.php?itemid=2071&catid=56> description

<http://www.cookingwiththebible.com/recipes.aspx> Cooking with the Bible. Click on a main ingredient to get recipes

Host Time Line for Robbery on a Roman Road

For first time hosts we recommend you follow the time line more carefully than hosts with experience. It is however a suggested timeline not a cast-in-stone law.

To start:

Select a date, location, guests and refreshments

Decide if you will give characters sheets before the game or after guests arrive.

Two to three weeks before the game:

Modify invitations for your event and print or email one for each prospective guest.

Finalize your menu.

Have alternative guests in mind in case of an emergency cancellation.

Run off character dossiers for reference or to give to guests accepting the invitation to attend

The day of the game:

Set the scene with any music, additional props and the set up for refreshments that you have chosen.

Run off clue packet and one rules/Whodunit sheet per player.

Fold all the second thoughts so that the left column shows (who should and should not have the clue) then tape them shut so the right hand column does not show. Place them in a container so they can be drawn randomly.

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When the guests have arrived:

If guests are bringing some of the refreshments indicate where they should be placed.

Distribute character dossiers if you did not give them out earlier. (Nametags if using them)

Distribute a copy of the rules to each player and read them over

Begin by reading aloud the Opening Statement followed by the Introduction

Have the guests introduce themselves and allow for characters to interject comments, both those scripted and ad libs.

Allow guests to mingle, question and interact for 10 -20 minutes

(If you are doing a sit down meal we suggest you do so here, otherwise do munchies)

After 20 minutes (or for a sit down meal, just before dessert is served) explain characters are having second thoughts. Each one should draw out a random “second thoughts” clue. Before opening the clue, they should check to see if it is appropriate for them to have. If it is NOT, they put it back in the container and draw again. Have everyone continue to draw until all the clues are taken (some people may have multiples). After each person has had a chance to read their clue allow another 5-10 minutes before having each character take one last opportunity to say what they know and what they guess.

Distribute “The Jury Speaks” forms and pen to each guest. Explain they are to decide and write who they think did it, how and why. Explain if they are the murderer they should write a misleading guess. If they wish, they may nominate someone for an Academy Award for bringing their character and the party to life. When guests are finished collect the forms and read each aloud.

Read the Arrest Warrant.

Suggestions for Bible classes and youth groups

This party game can be used as a launching point or supplement to a Bible study. Delving into character analysis helps students of history or the Bible to make deeper and longer lasting connections and provides a context in which further study can take place.

Online games related to the parables

Parable of the Talents matching columns

<http://www.quia.com/cm/362765.html>

Parables 1 Jeopardy

<http://www.quia.com/cb/489982.html>

Parables of Jesus 2

<http://www.quia.com/cb/489992.html>

Parables in Luke 12-15

<http://www.quia.com/cb/770005.html>

Parables in Luke 12-15

<http://www.quia.com/cb/770005.html>

Parables in Luke 15

<http://www.quia.com/rr/857997.html>

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Invitation

You are invited to attend a murder mystery game being hosted by [fill in your name] at [fill in game location, time, date and phone number].

This mystery takes place at the Come On Inn, a seedy inn in Jericho. (reported to founded on the exact location of the inn where Rahab ran her business) Each guest will have a dual role as one of the suspects and one of the investigators to determine who robbed and nearly killed Jake on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. All the guests will try to solve the mystery while protecting any secrets they might have. You do not need to be an actor or have knowledge of investigations or first century culture to have a great time.

When your host gives you your character dossier, please do not show it to anyone, before or during the game. The dossier will explain who you are, who and what you know and what happened just prior to the murder. It is for your eyes only. If you have questions prior to the game contact [fill in host name and phone number] It is a good idea to read over the scripture references about your role to help get in character.

A few of the people you may meet are (and their scriptures):

Samantha (or Samuel) – owner of a thriving pottery business (Luke 10:25-37)

Red/Reuben - hard working businessman (Luke 10:25-37, Luke 18:1-4, Mark 12:38-40)

Zack – owner of an inn and the local magistrate (Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 13:44-45, Mt 20:1-16, Luke 19:11-26, Mt 25: 14-29)

Chris the contractor (Luke 15: 11-31, Luke 14:7-11)

Terry – a real estate guru (Matthew 13:44-45, Mt 20:1-16, Luke 19:11-26, Mt 25: 14-29)

Larry – people call you lazy but you're just laid back (Matthew 7:24-27, Mt 20:1-16, Luke 19:11-26, Mt 25: 14-29, Luke 14:7-11)

Abihu - A priest who does everything by the book (Luke 10:25-37, Luke 15: 11-31, Luke 18: 9-14)

Levi the Levite – a self-made scholar (Luke 10:25-37, Mark 12:38-40)

Barabbas (or Barbara) - a patriotic zealot (Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19, Luke 10:25-37)

As it is essential all characters be present, please inform the host if something arises preventing you from attending.

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PLAYING RULES

1. No one may look at another person's character dossier. While you are encouraged to read from your dossier for rounds one and two, you should use your own words and phrasing the rest of the game.
2. Lying is not permitted, unless you are the (attempted) murderer. Only the murderer may lie.
3. Fabrication to enhance one's character is not only allowed but encouraged.
4. If one does not want to answer truthfully one may do as in real life - evade the question, change the subject, tell partial truths or flat out refuse to answer.
5. It is possible to have more than one murderer.
6. At the end of the game you will be asked who you think did it, how and why.

Who dunit? (Your host will tell you when to fill this out)

Your name:

Who did it? _____

How? _____

Why? _____

The character I nominate to get the Academy Award of the evening:

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Clues for

The following pages contain the clues you will need to print before the party starts. The characters each have parts to read in the introduction at the start of the party.

Opening Statement (to be read by Zack)

Introduction (read by all characters)

Second thoughts

Arrest Warrant (We strongly suggest this be placed unread in a sealed labeled envelope immediately after printing. It names the assailant.)

OPENING STATEMENT

Jake was taking an extended business trip so he called his managers and entrusted some of his wealth to them to invest while he was gone, each according to his ability. Then he went on the first leg of his journey, an 18 mile trek from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jake had to pass through a narrow, rugged, steep pass called the Way of Blood because it was place where travelers were frequently mugged or robbed or even killed by bandits, cutthroats and dirty desperados.

Jake was attacked, robbed and left for dead. People unwilling to get involved passed him by, all except Sam who brought him to the Come On Inn, an establishment with a shady reputation. The innkeeper was paid to take care of him; a priest heard about the crime and insisted that there be an investigation. Since all of you are connected to Jake or the area, you have been summoned to figure out who and what happened.

BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE ROMANS ARREST WARRANT

Red's alibi of being at the inn working during the time of the crime is legit. The priest and Levite would never have broken the law and risked becoming unclean by touching a dead body so they wouldn't risk killing anyone. Mugging someone would require too much effort for Larry so we can safely eliminate these four.

While there had been some or even much bad blood between Red and Jake, Red realized Jake had changed his ways and was now an asset, not a liability, even if he was too compassionate sometimes.

This was not a crime of passion or a hate crime stemming from race relations. This allows us to eliminate Chris, Terry, and Sam. The motive was robbery, pure and simple. Arrest and detain Barabbas for attempted homicide, battery and robbery.

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INTRODUCTIONS

JUDGE ZACK: As the Roman appointed magistrate in this area, I have convened all of you to get to the bottom of this horrible crime.

SAM: If he would only regain consciousness, Jake could tell us what happened to him.

PRIEST: We should pray for him. (*overly pious tone of voice*) God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even tax collectors. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. You're lucky to have me on your side, God, so please make Jake better. Amen.

RED: An assault on my brother, Jake, is an assault on the entire family. May he rest in peace if he doesn't make it.

CHRIS: I can't believe he went through the Way or Ascent of Blood alone. Very unwise.

BARABBAS: Everyone knows the 17-18 mile trip from Jerusalem "down" to Jericho is dangerous.

LARRY: Horrible. There's that change in elevation (1300 to 3000 feet in .6 miles) and the steep, rugged and confined pass called the Ascent of Blood, that make the road one of the hardest and most dangerous in Israel.

LEVITE: This pass was nicknamed the Ascent of Blood as it was a favorite hangout for robbers and ruffians.

LARRY: Just thinking about that steep pass makes me tired. How long will this take? My nap time is coming up.

JUDGE: The sooner we get done the better. I have a business to run.

BARABBAS: You aren't the only one being inconvenienced here. I got places to go, people to see, rebellions to organize.

PRIEST: I don't see why I have to be here. I reported the crime. I have other important priestly things to be doing right now.

LEVITE: According to Deuteronomy 21, and I quote- "If someone is found slain, lying in a field in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who the killer was, your elders (*points at PRIEST*) and judges shall go out and measure the distance from the body to the neighboring towns. ...

PRIEST: Look here Levite; don't tell me what the law says.

JUDGE: Shut up, both of you. Rome is in charge here and I represent Rome. If I say you have to be here as witnesses, you have to be here.

CHRIS: I think we should concentrate on Jake. He's the one who nearly lost his life.

SAM: He might still die. He hasn't regained consciousness.

RED: Right. Let's figure out who did this to my brother.

TERRY: I think we should all take an oath to tell the truth, give our statements and let the judge sort it out.

PRIEST: Everyone will have to swear by the gold of the temple or the gift on the altar so the oath is binding.

CHRIS: Why not swear by the temple since it is greater than the gold?

RED: Or the altar itself.

LEVITE: That's not how we do things.

TERRY: Hold on. Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

CHRIS: Or the temple or the one who dwells in it?

PRIEST: You are unschooled ordinary people. Leave the thinking and the law to us experts.

JUDGE ZACK: Shut up, all of you. What we are going to do is this. Everybody say who you are, how you know Jake and why you are here for starters. Then I'll give you each some time to do some investigating on your own. You there; (*point to someone*) You start.

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ROBBERY SECOND THOUGHTS

(Run off, cut apart and fold up so that the left column can be seen but the information on the right column is hidden. Then tape shut. When they are distributed, instruct the guests to look at the “NOT FOR ____” portion first. If they get one with their name in the “NOT FOR” portion, they put it back and draw a different one.

NOT ZACK	Zack’s real name is Zacchaeus and he served as a tax collector for the Romans and everyone knows how dishonest they are.
NOT LEVI	Levi isn’t the goody two shoes he makes himself out to be. He once tried to cheat (it was some technicality he played upon) this widow out of a house. Zack gave it back to her because she was so persistent.
NOT SAM	Why was Sam even on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho if Sam came from Samaria and was meeting a client in Jericho? Jerusalem is out of the way.
NOT LARRY	Lazy Larry got demoted by Jake for building a house on the sand and it washed away.
NOT BARABBAS	Barabbas used to work at for Jake’s dad until he got delusions of grandeur and joined the rebel zealots
NOT CHRIS	Why did Chris stop off at some place on the Mount of Olives? Did he meet someone shady there?
NOT TERRY	Terry was once a day laborer, practically homeless, living from one day’s wages to the next before he moved up the ranks at Jake’s.
NOT TERRY	Terry was really upset with Jake the first time he worked for him. Something about getting cheated out of his pay.
NOT BARABBAS	Barabbas has been on trial for murder before but folks are afraid to testify against him
NOT ABIHU	Abihu got humiliated at some wedding banquet twice: once for taking the wrong seat and once for asking for cloth to strain his drinks so he wouldn’t accidentally swallow a gnat
NOT LEVI	Levi deliberately let the priest stay ahead of him so he’d have time to run away if robbers got Abihu.
NOT RED	Red was angry at his father for years for taking Jake back into the family and even still says Jake is way too compassionate to others which affects their bottom line.
ANYONE	Jake ran away from home, wasted all his money and made some enemies, including those in his own family.
NOT LARRY	Larry will be in a lot of trouble when Jake finds out his idea of investing money was to dig a hole and bury his talent.
NOT ZACK	Zack claims to have an alibi, that plenty of customers would swear the never left the inn. But he has enough money and power to bribe people to say that.

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WHO YOU ARE: SAM (Samantha or Samuel)

You have a thriving pottery business and your goods are selling well all over the area. You consider anyone in need as a neighbor who should be helped. You were delivering some pottery to Jericho merchants and a guy named Larry was picking up some stuff at Jericho to save you a trip to Jerusalem. You dislike Jerusalem since it is filled with many people prejudiced against you and your kind. Unfortunately, you are considered an outcast by the Jews who do not associate with you or any other Samaritans. They consider you to be inferior half-breeds. You try to do the right thing in business and in your personal life.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You are from Samaria. You could get blamed for anything and everything for no other reason than racial profiling so you try to keep your race a secret.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Barabbas is a known insurrectionist who steals from whoever he can to fund the cause for revolution. He hangs out in the area, stirring up trouble. Either he or one of his gang of thugs could be responsible. You suspect the Priest and Levite at this gathering were the ones who passed the guy by.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Red is Jake's brother. Hard working guy.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Luke 10:25-37,

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: You were traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when you noticed something in the distance that two other travelers (looked like a priest or Levite with an extra big phylactery and extra-long tassels) passed by. It turned out to be a man who had been attacked by robbers. They had taken his clothes, beat him and left him half dead. You took pity on him. You bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, put the man on your own donkey and took him to the Come On Inn. You kept him alive through the night but when you realized he was stable but still unconscious you asked Zack, the innkeeper, to care for him until your return. 'Look after him, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. I'm going to see if Doctor Luke can come take a look at him.'

Dr. Luke was off on a trip of his own so you returned to Jericho, met your contact named Larry to sell the pottery (you like dealing with him since he never makes much of an effort to haggle over the price). Turns out the victim is Jake, his boss. You both hurried back to the inn and found an inquiry going on.

WHO YOU ARE: Red/Reuben

You are a hard working elder son of a prosperous father. The family business has diversified from livestock, vineyards and wheat farming into precious metals and jewelry production. It is no secret you look down on your little brother Jake. First of all, he had the nerve to ask your dad to divide up the inheritance while your dad was a relatively young man and very much alive. Then your father foolishly did so. Jake set off for Persia and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. He hired himself out as a pig herder to a Persian citizen.

Meanwhile your mom and dad never stopped worrying about and caring about him. Your dad would look for him and ask around if anyone had heard anything.

Then Jake had the nerve to come home. While he was still a long way off, your father saw him, was filled with compassion for him; he ran to Jake, threw his arms around him and kissed him. Jake gave him some sob story about being a sinner and no longer worthy to be called a son. You'd have made him squirm a bit, and then given him a lowly servant job. Not your dad. He threw a party, gave him new clothes, the family signet ring (Jake had pawned his original one) and kept saying "Celebrate! This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You were angry and refused to go to the party even when your father pleaded with you, saying, "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found". You angrily replied "All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" You are ashamed of your reaction now that Jake has proven to be a good worker. He's earned back all he lost and then some. Plus his story of riches to rags to riches inspires others. He's too compassionate to others but it's probably because he knows what it's like to be homeless and hungry.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: The priest was really upset at Jake for getting a better seat than him at a wedding banquet. You heard him mutter that he'd see to it that Jake got his one day. All this priest cares about is looking good in other people's eyes.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Chris, Terry and Larry all work for Jake. Chris used to work for your dad and was a little miffed he got transferred to Jake's side of the business.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Luke 15: 11-31, Luke 14:7-11,

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: Jake said he was heading off to Jericho and would be back in a few days. That evening a messenger arrived to tell you he was in bad shape at the Come On Inn in Jericho. The Come On Inn is rumored to be a pretty shady place (according to local legend it was built in the same location Rahab's house was). The next morning you decided to see what was going on and headed down there. You would hate to think Jake was slipping back into his old bad habits of squandering his money on the wrong kinds of things and people. When you arrived you were shocked to find Jake had been beaten, robbed and left for dead.

WHO YOU ARE: JUDGE ZACK

You own an inn and are the local magistrate. You have a reputation of neither fearing God nor caring what people think about you. You do care about the Come On Inn's reputation so your business philosophy has always been "What's mine is yours, if the price is right." Thus you'll let anyone (Romans, Samaritans, anybody who can afford your rates) stay in your inn. You let circulate the rumor that your inn was built in the exact same spot as the house Rahab lived and worked out of in Jericho all those centuries ago. Rumors like that draw in business.

You have an alibi for the crime. You were seen by many customers who'll swear you never left the inn.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You served as a tax collector for the Romans for a while, built up a nest egg, bought the inn. When the Romans were looking for a local to appoint as judge or magistrate in the area, they remembered your loyalty and good service and gave you the job. A little power never hurts.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Could be Barabbas or Red or maybe even Levi. You'll hold back and see what the rest have to say.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Levi the Levite once cheated this widow out of a house. You would have let it go, but she kept bugging you for justice so you gave in and got her house back just to be rid of her. Levi has been mad at you ever since. If Levi brings anything up about you, you'll tell everyone about him cheating this poor widow.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Luke 10:25-37, Luke 18:1-4, Mark 12:38-40

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: Sam shows up with some half dead guy and asks for a room. You charged extra for the clean-up (hey, blood's not easy to get out) and were very happy to look after the comatose victim for some extra cash, paid for up front. Sam had been a customer many times before so when Sam said if the cost of care exceeded the deposit, put it on the tab, you knew Sam would be good for it.

Unfortunately the stupid priest heard about this and demanded you do your job and determine who mugged the victim. You really wanted to tell the priest to shove off but when he mentioned the victim was rich and the son of a very prosperous business man, you decided getting to the bottom of this crime might be lucrative and to your advantage.

WHO YOU ARE: Chris the contractor

A highly valuable servant/employee of Jake's. You came to his attention because you had the foresight to build a house on rock, not sand. Since then, you have been regularly promoted until you are in charge of several departments including livestock and liquid assets. Jake told you he was going away on a business trip and entrusted you with \$125,000 to invest. You invested in cattle and sheep. (5 talents of silver) While perusing the marketplace, you found a pearl of exceptional value gleaming in a stall. You quickly liquidated the livestock into cash and bought the pearl. It will probably sell for close to a quarter million dollars. You can hardly wait to surprise Jake with this doubling of money and the pearl.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You were unhappy when Jake's dad, (your original boss) transferred you over to serve his son. You thought Jake would continue to be irresponsible and you complained loudly and bitterly. You even said some rash things like you hoped he disappeared once again so you could go back to working for his dad.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Lazy Larry decided it was easier to build on sand than rock. An unseasonable rain caused flooding and washed out the foundation and the whole house was destroyed. Larry got demoted and grumbled about being blamed for bad weather by Jake and says what an unfair guy he is behind his back. Larry is probably too lazy to get revenge however.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Barabbas – used to work at for Jake's dad until he got delusions of grandeur and joined the rebel zealots. The judge probably got appointed judge because a while back, the judge was a tax collector for the Romans. Plus the Come On Inn is opened to any riff raff that has the money to pay. Terry is another employee of Jake's and the two of them were traveling as far as Jericho together. Then Terry was supposed to continue on to Perea.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 13:44-45, Mt 20:1-16, Luke 19:11-26, Mt 25: 14-29

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: You discovered Jake had forgotten some important papers so you hopped on your donkey and headed to Jericho to give them to him. (Jericho was to be the first stop on his journey to open up some new markets for the livestock and grapes – the family businesses.) You took a short detour to the Mount of Olives to see an old friend who might want to sell some lambs. The two of you got talking and dining and the time slipped by. You got to Jericho much later than you had planned. You were shocked to find Jake had been mugged and left for dead.

WHO YOU ARE: Terry

You work for Jake doing real estate transactions. Jake entrusted a \$50,000 CD (certificate of deposit) into your care. It would mature while he was gone so he wanted you to cash it in and invest in something else. While checking out some farm land, you discovered a buried treasure in a field, a chest containing about \$50,000 in old gold and silver coins. You used your own money to hold the sale of the property for about twice the asking price just to make sure the seller would wait for you to return with the purchase price, cashed in the CD and bought the field. You can't wait to tell Jake how you doubled his money AND got property for a new vineyard.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: Not so long ago, you were nothing but a day laborer, practically homeless, living from one day's wages to the next. You got hired on one day by Jake. Jake had hired people all day long. You got really upset when he paid you all the same. You muttered about what a raw deal it was since he paid those who worked an hour the same as those of you who worked an entire day, under the scorching sun.

You were mad and might have said some rash things. After you thought about it, you decided you'd rather work for a kind hearted person like Jake than any other so you worked hard to get hired on a permanent basis.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Sam. Sam is a Samaritan and everyone knows they are little better than dogs or pigs (you are very prejudiced). As far as you are concerned the earth should be rid of such half breed scum. Samaritans are a low class of people since they had intermarried with non-Jews and did not keep all the law. Chris left way before you did but somehow got to the Inn after you. Where has he been all this time?

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Chris and Larry who both work for Jake. Chris worked for the dad first, now the son. Larry is plain lazy, always taking shortcuts and trying to get out of doing his fair share.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Matthew 13:44-45, Mt 20:1-16, Luke 19:11-26, Mt 25: 14-29

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: Originally you were supposed to travel with Jake as far as Jericho, and then you were to head on northwest into Perea. About a third of the way there, Jake remembered he'd forgotten some important papers and asked you to go back to get them and meet him at the Come On Inn. You did. You were shocked to find Jake in a coma when you arrived.

WHO YOU ARE: LAZY LARRY

People call you lazy but you're not; you are simply misunderstood. You are conserving your energy. Back in the day when your parents forced you to hire yourself out as a day laborer you would show up around noon or 3 pm to get hired on. No sense working all day in the hot sun if you could get a shorter gig. One day you really lucked out. This guy named Jake hired you at 5 pm and quitting time was 6 pm. But getting by with just an hour's worth of work while appeasing your parents wasn't all. Jake paid everybody the same. He started with you guys hired last and paid you a whole day's wages.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You and Chris were once given instructions to build houses. It was easier so you built yours on the sand. How were you to know that some unseasonable rains would cause flooding and wash out the foundation? Stupid Jake blamed you when the whole house was washed away. You got demoted.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Terry was hired on the same day you were and grumbled and complained up a storm that (s)he'd worked all day in the scorching sun and got paid the same as the lazy lumps (meaning you among others). Terry was angry and said one day Jake would pay for his foolishness. Maybe Terry has just waited all these years to get Jake back?

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Not much. You don't have the ambition to really learn or remember anything. Something was going on about papers being missing and Terry and Chris were involved and someone was supposed to be traveling with Jake but it sounded pretty complicated and like you might get roped into doing extra work so you slipped away before you really caught the whole story.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Matthew 7:24-27, Mt 20:1-16, Luke 19:11-26, Mt 25: 14-29, Luke 14:7-11,

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: You got stuck going to Jericho to pick up some pottery to for the wine and grape juice produced at Jake's family business despite your efforts to lay low. So you wound up in Jericho, met Sam, paid for the pottery when you saw something strange. You noticed a rough looking guy selling a robe that looked allot like the one Jake wears. In fact you were sure Jake was wearing it when he left and somewhat sure this Barabbas guy here was the one selling it. Turns out the pottery seller Sam, found Jake half dead on the side of the road. You came with Sam to the inn to see how Jake was doing and now are involved in this investigation instead of taking a siesta.

WHO YOU ARE: Abihu

A priest who does everything by the book, the book of the law. You know the law inside out, upside down and backwards. You carefully tithe 1/10 of all your spices, even tiny mustard seeds. You make your phylacteries wide and the tassels on your garments long so everyone can see just how religious you are. You love it when people save important seats for you greet you with respect in the marketplaces and call you ‘Rabbi’. And well they should because you are a descendent of Aaron, the first priest. You are worthy of such honor. You carefully inspect anything you eat or drink to make sure you don’t accidentally swallow a gnat or anything else forbidden by the law. You wash your hands often to stay “clean” and insist on the best seating because you are an elite member of the religious community and deserving of all honor and respect.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: Ever since this wedding banquet where you were humiliated, you have wished to get Jake back for humiliating you. You, being an important person, took a seat near the head table. After all, how many people could be more important than you? (You deserve being greeted in the marketplace respectfully and having a seat of honor wherever you go.) Then the host of the wedding had the nerve to downgrade your seat to a lower table. And why? To accommodate Jake, the one who misspent his youth and money. You complained about it the whole time you were at that wedding banquet.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Red was terribly upset when younger brother Jake came home and dad welcomed him with open arms. Jake had gotten his share of his inheritance, run off, squandered it in riotous living and been reduced to feeding pigs. (how uncouth and against the law). Red was so angry that when dad threw a welcome home party for Jake, he would not even attend. You heard him say “All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” You won’t hesitate to compare Red and Jake to Cain and Abel or Joseph and his brothers that sold him as a slave to teach him a lesson. After all, you might as well show off how much history you know while accusing someone. Makes you look smart.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Levi the Levite. Thinks he’s something special because he’s a Pharisee and an expert in the law. He’s not a priest like you are, he doesn’t offer sacrifices for the people like you do and he’s not of priestly blood so you feel like you have to keep Levi in his place. I mean you’ll side with him on most things, as long as he acknowledges you are born to be superior.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Luke 10:25-37, Luke 15: 11-31, Luke 18: 9-14

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: You were traveling home to Jericho after a two month shift offering sacrifices and serving in the temple. You hated going by yourself since the road is notorious for criminal types to prey upon travelers but really, there were no other travelers of your social status to travel with so you committed yourself to God’s protection and went alone. Sure enough some guy had gotten mugged. If he was dead, you didn’t want to make yourself unclean by touching him so you passed him by on the other side of the road. Besides, according to the law, you have to love your neighbor and this guy doesn’t live in the same town as you and therefore is not your neighbor.

WHO YOU ARE: Levi

A Levite and teacher of the law. You came from a poor family but used your superior intellect and ambition to rise through the ranks of mediocrity to become a well-respected teacher of the law. You like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. You love to say lengthy prayers to show off. You are very conceited and prideful. You carefully wipe off the outside of any cup you drink from or the handle of any utensil you get with to make sure it's not "unclean" in the legal sense. You are meticulous about your appearance, wanting everything to look just right. You brag that you hold the key to knowledge and wisdom and are careful to wash your hands or sanitize them any time you touch something or someone who might be "unclean".

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You tried to cheat this one widow out of her real estate. She kept bugging the judge until he granted her justice and took the house away from you and gave it back to her. He didn't even make her pay you for the improvements you had made to it. You'd like to pin this murder on him or if Jake doesn't die, at least the mugging and robbery. You'll suggest that he was in league with Sam, who might have robbed him, then used Jake's own money to pay the innkeeper judge to take care of him. Yes, this may be a convoluted story, but you are an expert in the law and can talk circles around those other ignorant average people.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: The judge/innkeeper. The Come On Inn was supposedly built in the exact same spot as the house Rahab lived in and worked out of in Jericho all those centuries ago. Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho. Too bad she was allowed to marry into the tribes and as a result was the great grandmother of David. What was God thinking to allow that? The place should have been shut down years ago. It is a disgrace in Israel and you'll tell anyone who'll listen what a den of iniquity it is.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: Barabbas (or Barbara) is a zealot, an insurrectionist, and has been known to be part of a group that does some pretty shady things to raise money for his cause. You hope he succeeds in running the Romans out of town. You just wish he'd concentrate on preying upon foreigners. Also, Abihu the priest get son your nerves. He was born into the priesthood, never had to work a day in his life, just was handed his position on a silver platter. You have to respect his office (the law says so) but you are not sure you respect him.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Luke 10:25-37, Mark 12:38-40

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: You were traveling home to Jericho from Jerusalem. The trip makes you nervous (lots of people get robbed and waylaid) You figured you'd let the priest go first – get a ways ahead of you – and then if he got jumped, you'd have plenty of time to get away. Turned out the guy ahead of the priest had gotten mugged. Since the priest walked past without helping him, you did to. If he's too important to stop and help, you are too. Besides, according to the law, you have to love your neighbor and this guy doesn't live in the same town as you and therefore is not your neighbor. You reported a crime had been committed and as a legal expert came to volunteer your services. You won't hesitate to tell everyone the priest walked by without helping.

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WHO YOU ARE: Barabbas (or Barbara)

You are a zealot, an insurrectionist, robber and murderer. You are rough around the edges and not easy to get along with. People often refer to you as a bully but you prefer to think of yourself as a tough patriot. You have no faith that the religious leaders will see to Israel being free of Roman rule. All they seem to care about are a bunch of picky laws. You like to put them down whenever possible. You also don't like rich people much either. They should be expending effort getting rid of the Romans, not lining their pockets.

YOUR SECRET/WHAT YOU HIDE: You mugged and robbed Jake. Stupid guy, traveling alone like that. Didn't even get much money.

WHO YOU SUSPECT/ACCUSE: Anyone and everyone to take the blame off yourself.

WHO/WHAT ELSE YOU KNOW: You used to work for Jake's brother, Red, a long time ago. He was pretty mad when his brother left home and lost half the family fortune. He was madder still when Jake was welcomed back home as a son. You know Chris was unhappy when Jake's dad, (your boss a long time ago) transferred Chris to serve his son. Chris complained loudly and bitterly and even said it would be great if Jake were out of the picture again. Chris could go back to working for the dad. How come the priest and Levite didn't stop to help the guy? How come the pottery seller, Sam, did?

(The following should not come out until the Priest or Levite has mentioned not touching a dead body: They were going TO Jericho not to Jerusalem to serve in the temple so any excuse about not touching a dead body is sheer nonsense. They could have stopped and helped)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19, Luke 10:25-37,

ON THE DAY IN QUESTION: You waiting for some of your guys, maybe practice sword fighting or rob a few rich people to help fund your activities to rid the area of Rome. Along came this well dressed guy, all alone and you decided you didn't need to wait for back up. You jumped out from behind a rock and clobbered him. After stealing his valuables and even his clothes, you took off. Didn't even bother to check if he was still breathing. You hid the cash, sold off the clothes and were getting supper at the Come ON Inn (place is usually crawling with Romans so you can pick up handy info) when Judge Zack started investigating. Before you could get out of there, someone fingered you as the guy who sold the victim's robe. You claimed you found it when you ran off a bunch of scum Samaritans from a Jewish well. (You could have thought of a better lie if you'd just had more time)

The following additional FREE mystery party games can be downloaded from Fools for Christ (<http://www.Foolsforchrist.net>) or TeachersPayTeachers (<http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Kathleen-Applebee>)

Armor of God

Based on Ephesians 6, participants interview a cast of Biblical characters to collect tokens that represent the six pieces of the Armor of God. But not all the Bible characters they meet tell the truth. Will they be able to discern who can be trusted? Dossiers for 12 characters and directions included.

Assassination on the Ancient Nile

Someone has tried to assassinate Pharaoh Fatty-tut-tut and unless the suspects themselves figure out which one is behind the reprehensible act, pharaoh will execute them all. Packet includes character dossiers for 6 males and 6 females, clues, invitations, suggestions for Bible classes and youth groups and menu ideas.

Chariots of Death

First Julius Caesar is murdered and now Herod the Great. Right after the 4th and controversial chariot race. Who killed him? Add spice to Bible classes or youth group activities while immersing everyone in Roman customs of the first century. Dossiers for 6-13 players (and as many extras as you wish), a host pack with complete instructions, menu suggestions, and the clues needed to solve the murder.

Jake's Dead; who's in the will?

When Jake Izakson's will is read, long standing family feuds and secrets are on the precipice of exploding. Is forgiveness possible? Based on the Genesis account of Joseph, this item can be used as either a mystery party game or a script. It contains instructions, character dossiers for 7-15 players and extras, four scene script and optional extension materials (object lessons, free internet games, discussion questions and prompts).

Murder (almost) on a Roman Road

On the road to Jericho, Jake gets mugged and would have died if a kindly Samaritan hadn't stopped to render assistance. Was this a random act of violence or planned revenge? Will he recover? Can the suspects figure it out before the Roman authorities intervene? The suspects are detectives in this almost murder mystery based on the parable of the Good Samaritan and featuring characters from other assorted parables.

Package contains instructions, character dossiers, clues and everything you need to host this event. Makes a great lead in or culmination for a study on the parables of Jesus.

Murder Times 13

Various murderers in the Bible are brought together when one of them has killed again. Can the others figure out who the killer is and keep themselves from being his or her next victim? Characters include: Abimelech, Athaliah, Cain, David, Herodias, Herod the Great, Jezebel, Joash, Manasseh, Moses, Saul, Pharaoh, Zimri.

Persian Palace Poisonings

Who tried to assassinate King Xerxes? The list is long on suspects but short on answers.

This mystery party game is an engaging way to study life in the Persian Empire. It makes a wonderful drama or youth group activity, adds spice to Bible class while immersing everyone in Persian customs around the time of Esther. Acting experience and knowledge of police procedures are not necessary for a party no one will forget. Each guest serves as both a suspect and investigator.

Kit (.PDFs and 1 .JPEG in a ZIP file) includes character dossiers for 8-13 players (and as many extras as you wish), a host pack with complete instructions, menu suggestions, and the clues needed to solve the murder.

Search for Wisdom

Imagine wise King Solomon has sent your group on a mission to find his missing wisdom by interviewing 7 *Find royalty free Christian Drama skits at my Fools for Christ website at <http://foolsforchrist.net>. Find interactive Bible games at <http://guest.portaportal.com/applebeebible>*

characters who may or may not be telling the whole truth. Groups must use the Bible to discover where wisdom can be found without being duped by the fakes and frauds.

The seven main characters can be played by adults and teens for a camp or children's activity.

To Kill a King: Herod Antipas

Date: 39 A.D. Herod Antipas is throwing a big banquet with fine food, lavish entertainment and a number of unexpected guests. Which one killed him? Dossiers for 6-12 guests (as many extras as you wish possible), a host pack with complete instructions and the clues needed to solve the murder. Suggestions for menus (if part of a dinner or light snacks), and casting the roles make it easy for even a first-timer.