

The Crucifixion Coronation monologue

CHARACTER: Centurion

RUN TIME: 3-4 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Mark 15-16, Matthew 26-28, Luke 1:33, 22-24, John 18-20, Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 1:18

At rise: *CENTURION kneels center stage. As lights come up, he rises to address the audience*

CENTURION: Have you seen a triumph, the spectacular victory parade of a successful Roman general? Or maybe even an Imperial Triumph, when an emperor ascends the throne? I have seen them both as a centurion, seen the throngs, heard the clamoring as the people celebrate and deify a man.

It begins in the headquarters of the Praetorian Guard. These elite soldiers take the purple robe off Jupiter, the kings of the Roman gods, and place it on the man they chose to follow. They add a laurel crown and cry “Hail, Caesar! Hail Caesar!”

They lead him into the city to Capitoline hill, so named because when Rome was founded, a human head was found there. Behind him, a great cheering crowd and the bull to be sacrificed. As he ascends the steps, flanked by two officials, he is offered wine. He does not drink. Instead, he pours it out onto the ground, a symbol of his willingness to defend the empire with his own blood.

The sacrifice is made. Then we await a sign from the gods. When Augustus Caesar took the throne, a comet blazed across the sky in affirmation of both his deity and royalty. It is a time of great celebration, unless of course you happen to be the new emperor’s enemy. Then it is a time for dread.

I witnessed another Imperial Triumph today, not in Rome but in Jerusalem. Pilate was asked to condemn a Jewish carpenter to death because he had offended the Jewish leaders. The soldiers led Jesus away into their headquarters and called the whole company together. They dressed Him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on Him.

The guard saluted Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” before leading him out to Golgotha, the place of the skull. Upon arrival, they offered him wine but he refused it. He was crucified between two thieves with a great deal of people in attendance, leaders of the Jews, weeping women underneath a sign that read “King of the Jews”.

Do you see the correlations? Crowns, robes, hills, wine? But that’s not all.

No comet appeared. Only darkness, as if God could not bear to watch. Then the earth shuddered and quaked, a second sign.

Powerful signs to accompany a crucifixion coronation. *(Bow head for two beats)*

But maybe it’s the differences that mean the most. Instead of the bull being sacrificed, Jesus sacrificed himself. Instead of calling twelve legions of angels to obliterate his enemies, this king asked his Father to forgive them. *(With joy and confidence)* Instead of an earthly kingdom, he presides over one not of this world, one that will have no end.

(Looking to the heavens) Your throne, God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of justice. You have rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son You love. May you reign in my heart and life forever and ever.

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