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**AN ANCIENT AND INTERESTING DOCUMENT, FOUND IN
THE VATICAN AT ROME, WHICH PURPORTS TO BE THE
ORIGINAL REPORT OF PILATE, ROMAN GOVERNOR OF
JUDEA, TO THE EMPEROR TIBERIUS CAESAR:
EXPLANATORY OF THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO THE TUMULT
IN JERUSALEM, IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEATH OF JESUS
OF NAZARETH.**

(CONCLUDED FROM OUR LAST ISSUE.)

To Herod, who then reigned in Galilee, the enemies of Jesus addressed themselves to wreak their vengeance on the Nazarene. Had Herod consulted his own inclination, he would have ordered Jesus immediately to be put to death; but though proud of his royal dignity, yet he was afraid of committing an act that might diminish his influence with the Senate. Herod called on me one day at the Pretorium, and on rising to take leave, after some insignificant conversation, he asked my opinion concerning the Nazarene. I replied that Jesus appeared to be one of those great philosophers that great nations sometimes produce, that his doctrines were by no means sacrilegious, and that the intention of Rome was, to leave him to that freedom of speech which was justified by his actions. Herod smiled maliciously, and saluting me with an ironical respect he departed.

The great feast of the Jews was approaching, and the intention of their religious rulers was to avail themselves of the popular exultation which always manifests itself at the solemnities of a Passover. The city was overflowing with a tumultuous populace clamoring for the death of the Nazarene. My emissaries informed me that the treasure of the temple had been employed in bribing the people. The danger was pressing. A Roman centurion had been insulted. I wrote to the prefect of Syria for a hundred foot soldiers, and as many cavalry. He declined. I saw myself alone, with a

handful of veterans, in the midst of a rebellious city, too weak to suppress a disorder, and having no other choice left but to tolerate it. The seditious rabble had seized Jesus, and although they felt that they had nothing to fear from the Pretorium, believing with their leaders that I winked at their sedition, continued vociferating, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Three powerful parties had combined together at that time against Jesus. First, the Herodians, and the Sadducees, whose seditious conduct seems to have proceeded from double [R1368 : page 51] motives: they hated the Nazarene, and were impatient of the Roman yoke. They could never forgive me for having entered their holy city with banners that bore the image of the [R1368 : page 52] Roman Emperor, and although in this instance I had ignorantly committed the fatal error, yet the sacrilege did not appear less heinous in their eyes. Another grievance also rankled in their bosoms: I had proposed to employ a part of the treasure of the Temple in erecting edifices of public utility, which proposal was scowled at.

The Pharisees, too, were avowed enemies of Jesus, and they cared not for our government. They bore with bitterness the severe reprimands which the Nazarene, for three years, had been throwing out against them wherever he went. Too weak and pusillanimous to act by themselves, they had eagerly embraced the quarrels of the Herodians and the Sadducees. Besides these three parties, I had to contend against the reckless and profligate populace, always ready to join a sedition, and to profit by the disorder and confusion resulting therefrom.

Jesus was dragged before the High Priest and condemned to death. It was then that Caiaphas, the High Priest, performed a derisory act of submission. He sent his prisoner to me to pronounce his condemnation. I answered him that as Jesus was a Galilean, the affair came under Herod's jurisdiction; and I ordered him to be sent

thither. That wily tetrarch professed his humility, and protesting his deference to me, the Lieutenant of Caesar, recommitted the fate of the man to my hands. Soon my palace assumed the aspect of a besieged citadel. Every moment increased the number of seditionists. Jerusalem was inundated with crowds from the mountains of Nazareth. All Judea appeared to be pouring into the devoted city. I had taken a wife – a maiden from among the Gauls – who pretended to see into futurity; she, weeping and throwing herself at my feet, said to me, "Beware, and touch not that man, for he is holy. Last night I saw him in a vision. He was walking on the waters. He was flying on the wings of the winds. He spoke to the tempest and to the fishes of the lake – all were obedient to him. Behold! the torrent of Mount Kedron flows with blood! The statues of Caesar are filled with the filth of Gemonide! The columns of the Interium have given away, and the sun is veiled in mourning, like a vestal of the tomb! O Pilate! evil awaits thee, if thou wilt not listen to the entreaties of thy wife. Dread the curse of a Roman Senate, dread the powers of Caesar."

By this time the marble stairs groaned under the weight of the multitude. The Nazarene was brought back to me. I proceeded to the Hall of Justice, followed by my guard, and asked the people in a severe tone what they demanded. "The death of the Nazarene," was their reply. "For what crime?" "He has blasphemed. He has prophesied the ruin of the temple. He calls himself the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of the Jews." "Roman justice," said I, "punishes not such offenses with death." "Crucify him, crucify him!" belched forth the relentless rabble. The vociferation of the infuriated mob shook the palace to its foundations. There was but one that appeared to be calm, in the midst of the vast multitude. It was the Nazarene.

After many fruitless attempts to protect him from this fury of his merciless persecutors, I adopted a measure which, at the moment, appeared to me to be the only one that could save his life.

I ordered him to be scourged; then, calling for an ewer, I washed my hands in the presence of the multitude, thereby signifying to them my disapproval of the deed. But in vain. It was his life that those wretches thirsted for!

Often in our civil commotions have I witnessed the furious animosity of the multitude, but nothing could be compared to what I witnessed in the present instance. It might have been truly said that on this occasion all the phantoms of the infernal regions had assembled at Jerusalem. The crowd appeared not to walk: they were borne along, whirling and rolling like living waves, from the portals of the Pretorium, even unto Mount Zion, with howlings, screams, shrieks and vociferations, such as were never heard in the seditions of the Panonia, or in the tumult of the forum.

By degrees the day darkened like a winter's twilight, such as was witnessed at the death of the great Julius Caesar, which was likewise toward the Ides of March.

I, the continued governor of a rebellious province, [R1368 : page 53] was leaning against a column of my palace contemplating through the dreary gloom these fiends of torture dragging to execution the innocent Nazarene. All around me was deserted. Jerusalem had vomited forth her in-dwellers through the funeral gate that leads to the Gemonica. An air of desolation and sadness enveloped me. My guards had joined the cavalry, and the centurion, to display a shadow of power, was endeavoring to keep order. I was left alone, and my breaking heart admonished me that what was passing at that moment appertained rather to the history of the gods than to that of a man. A loud clamor was heard proceeding from Golgotha, which, borne on the winds, seemed to announce an agony such as had never been heard by mortal ears. Dark clouds lowered over the pinnacle of the Temple, and, settling over the city, covered it as with a veil. So dreadful were the signs that were seen, both in the heavens and on the earth, that Dionysius,

the Areopagite, is reported to have exclaimed, "Either the author of nature is suffering, or the universe is falling apart."

Towards the first hour of the night I threw my mantle around me and went down into the city towards the gates of Golgotha. The sacrifice was consummated. The crowd was returning home, still agitated, it is true, but gloomy, taciturn and desperate. What they had witnessed had stricken them with terror and remorse. I also saw my little Roman cohort pass by mournfully, the standard-bearer having veiled his eagle in token of grief, and I overheard some of the soldiers murmuring strange words which I did not understand. Others were recounting prodigies, almost similar to those which had so often smitten the Romans by the will of the gods. Sometimes groups of men and women would halt, then looking back toward Mount Calvary would remain motionless, in expectation of witnessing some new prodigy.

I returned to the Pretorium, sad and pensive. On ascending the stairs – the steps of which were still stained with the blood of the Nazarene – I perceived an old man in a suppliant posture, and behind him several women in tears. He threw himself at my feet and wept bitterly. It is painful to see an old man weep. "Father," said I to him, mildly, "who are you, and what is your request?"

"I am Joseph of Arimathaea," replied he, "and am come to beg of you, upon my knees, the permission to bury Jesus of Nazareth."

"Your prayer is granted," said I to him, and at the same ordered Manlius to take some soldiers with him to superintend the interment, lest it should be interfered with.

A few days after, the sepulchre was found empty. His disciples published all over the country that Jesus had risen from the dead, as he had foretold.

A last duty remained to be performed and that was to communicate to the Emperor these deplorable events. I did so on the night that followed the fatal catastrophe, and had just finished the communication when day began to dawn. At that moment the sound of clarions, playing the air of Diana, struck my ear. Casting my eye towards the Caesarean gate, I beheld a troop of soldiers and heard at a distance other trumpets sounding Caesar's march. It was the reinforcement that had been promised me – two thousand chosen troops who, to hasten their arrival, had marched all night. "It has been decreed by the fates," cried I, wringing my hands "that the great iniquity should be accomplished, that for the purpose of averting the deed of yesterday, troops should arrive today! Cruel destiny, how thou sportest with the affairs of mortals!" It was but too true, what the Nazarene exclaimed while writhing on the cross: "All is consummated."
