

'It is finished' (A bystander's account)

'It is finished!' That's what he said.

It might be finished, but it's not over, not by a long way!

The priests and leaders of the temple might be breathing a sigh of relief, thinking they've finally rid themselves of the man who has plagued them forever, with his challenges, his so called 'do-gooding', his refusal to ever give them a straight answer to any question they've ever asked him.

After months of planning and scheming, they've at last seen the back him, or so they think! They've spent weeks trying to trip him into saying something they could hold against him, taken every opportunity to push him off a cliff, but got nowhere. Then finally, they managed to find someone willing to double-cross him. It's amazing how so-called friends find betrayal easy for a few pieces of silver!

I heard he was full of remorse once he realised what would happen, took the money back, I'm told, of course, it was too late by then. I heard he took his own life, couldn't live with guilt I suppose! But then, could any of us?

After that there was no stopping it, Caiaphas, the High Priest, the Council, Pilate, Herod, they were all involved. But in the end, it was the people who decided. Pilate gave them a choice: 'Jesus or Barabbas? 'Who should he set free?' 'Barabbas!' the crowd shouted. 'What then should be done with Jesus?' Pilate asked. 'Crucify! Crucify him!'

I couldn't believe what I was hearing, surely these were the same people who had welcomed him into Jerusalem just a few days ago?

They were incited by those in the crowd who had no intention that Jesus should be freed, of course, and Pilate had no alternative but to do as they wished.

God! You should have seen the state of him, beaten and bruised, his back red-raw from the lashes, blood pouring from his head, a make-shift crown made of branches, the sharp thorns piercing his forehead. And a blood-soaked piece of clothing, that only just about made him decent.

They tried to make him carry his own cross, but the torture had made him too weak, so they grabbed someone from the crowd and made him carry it instead. They took him to Golgotha, just outside the city, there they crucified him, hammering the nails through his hands and feet into the rough wood. I didn't want to watch, couldn't bear to watch, but somehow, I couldn't help myself.

Every now and again he said something, I wasn't near enough to hear the words, and once or twice, he was offered a drink from a sponge on a stick.

Gradually, it got darker and darker and even though it was the middle of the afternoon, it became almost as dark as night, and I moved a little nearer.

We all just stood there watching, those of us who had the bottle to stay. Maybe we were expecting something miraculous to happen, for him to save himself perhaps. Then we heard the words, 'It is finished!' and he was dead.

It was done, the agony, the torture, the awful, awful death. But like I said, it might be finished, but it's not over!

