

THE STORY OF EASTER

Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feast of Passover. Passover was a feast the Jewish people held in remembrance of how God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt long ago. Jews had come from many places to worship and eat the special Passover supper.

Just a few days before the events in this story, on Palm Sunday, Jesus had fulfilled an ancient prophecy¹ by entering the city on a donkey that had never been ridden before. The people had hailed Jesus as the Savior that God had promised to send His people.

Previously, Jesus had told His disciples that He would be betrayed and taken away from them. He had told them not to be afraid, because even though He would be killed, He would live again. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, but they would soon find out.

While they were eating their evening meal, Judas, one of the twelve disciples who was not loyal to Jesus, left their gathering, and went to find Jesus' enemies to tell them where Jesus would be later that night.

Judas knew that after eating, Jesus and some of His disciples were planning to go to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Judas led the Temple guards to the garden, where they arrested Jesus.



While Jesus stood before the Temple priests, they accused Him of breaking their religious traditions and showing disrespect to God. They then took Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, to be judged. The nation of Israel was part of the Roman Empire at that time, and the Jews were not allowed to execute anyone without a Roman trial.

Meanwhile, Jesus' disciples had deserted Him, because they were afraid that they might be imprisoned too. Even Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends, denied that he knew Jesus when he was asked. Jesus experienced abandonment by those He loved.

Pilate did not want to condemn Jesus, as he could see that Jesus was a good man, but he also wanted to satisfy the Jewish priests, who had a lot of control over the people. In the end, to please the Jewish priests, he sentenced Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus suffered pain when He was dying, not only from being whipped and then nailed to the cross, but also the pain of feeling separated from His Father because of sin. That's because when He died, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world. By giving His life for us, He paid for our sins and fulfilled God's plan to forgive us of our sins so that we could one day live forever with God.

After Jesus was crucified, everyone thought that because He was dead they would never see Him again. His friends and loved ones were extremely sad. But they were soon surprised!





Three days later, on the first Sunday after Jesus was crucified, some of Jesus' friends—Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome—sadly made their way early in the morning to the tomb where Jesus' body lay. They were carrying jars of spices and ointments to spread on Jesus' body, which was a Jewish custom.

As they approached the tomb, the women were surprised to see that the heavy stone blocking its entrance had been pushed to one side, and an angel with robes as white as snow was sitting inside.

"I know you are looking for Jesus," the angel told the women, "but Jesus has been raised from the dead! He is no longer in the tomb. See for yourselves."

The angel said, "Jesus is going on ahead of you to the region of Galilee, where He said He would meet you. If you go there, you will see Him, as He promised. But first, go and tell Peter and the other disciples what has happened—Jesus has risen from the dead!"

The women left the tomb, dazed and shocked by what the angel had told them and what they had seen. They quickly went back to the disciples and told them everything that had happened that morning.

Most of the disciples thought the women were crazy.

"We saw Jesus die three days ago," one of the disciples said.



"He was crucified. How could He possibly be alive?" another one asked in disbelief.

But Peter wondered out loud, "What if what they are saying is true? I am going to find out!"

"I'm coming with you," said John. John and Peter ran to the tomb, but John ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. He stood outside the tomb, because he was afraid to go in. But Peter went straight inside and saw that the tomb was empty, with only the linen cloth that Jesus' body had been wrapped in lying on the stone slab.

"Where is Jesus?" John asked from outside the tomb.

Peter was speechless and could not answer, so finally John plucked up enough courage to enter the tomb, and the two disciples stared in surprise at the empty tomb. Could it be that what the women said was true? they wondered. Jesus is no longer here. Maybe He really is alive!

Later that day, Jesus appeared to two more of His disciples. Cleopas and his friend were on their way to a village called Emmaus, and while walking, they talked about Jesus' crucifixion and the disappearance of His body. Then Jesus met up with them on the road and walked with them, but they didn't recognize Him.

In the evening, they invited the "stranger" to have dinner with them. When Jesus took the bread and broke it in half, blessed it, and then disappeared, they finally realized who He was!

The two disciples hurried back to Jerusalem and told the others what had happened, but the other disciples didn't believe them either.



Later, Jesus appeared in the room before all of them, and then they believed. All the disciples were so happy to see Jesus alive.

After Jesus' resurrection, He remained on earth for 40 days and was seen by over 500 people. He spent time with His disciples to give them comfort and instruction for the ministry they would do for Him once He returned to heaven. Jesus was able to do many amazing things during that time, like suddenly appearing or disappearing.

At the end of the 40 days, Jesus left earth and went to heaven to be with His Father.



God loved you so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to earth so you could experience His forgiveness and live with Him forever (John 3:16). Here is a little prayer you can pray to acknowledge Jesus' great love for you.

"Thank You, dear Jesus, for dying on the cross and paying for my sins so that I can experience God's love and live with You forever. Please come into my life and stay with me always. Help me to be good and stay close to You, and teach me to be kind and loving toward others too. Amen."

Footnote:

¹Zechariah 9:9–10

