

Easter

Easter is very special for Christians, even more special than Christmas. It is when they think about God's love and how he showed it to the world. They remember the Easter story, which is all about Jesus.

Jesus lived 2000 years ago, at the same time as the Romans. His country was ruled by them, but his people, the Jews, were allowed to follow their own religion. Jesus travelled around many towns and villages telling people about God's love.

"God loves you!" Jesus declared. "But you don't listen to him, and so you do things wrong. You love yourselves more than you love other people. You love yourselves more than you love God, and that breaks God's heart. It has separated you from him and made the world a sorrowful place. You deserve to be punished. But God still loves you dearly! He wants to save you from the punishment."

"I am the Son of God," he proclaimed. "I will show how much God loves you. I will make a way for you to be friends with him again."

The Bible says that Jesus performed amazing miracles wherever he went. He made blind people see and deaf people hear. He saved his friends from a fierce storm just by telling the wind and rain to stop. He showed people that God loved them by helping them. Many ordinary people liked Jesus and followed him.

But some proud, important people did not like him. They did not think they needed any help. They were powerful religious leaders, and they thought they were better than the ordinary people. Arrogantly, they believed that they were the only people God loved, because they obeyed lots of rules. But Jesus told them that they needed saving too. The leaders did not like that, or when Jesus said, "God loves everyone." So they plotted to kill him.

One day Jesus was eating a meal with his closest friends, who were called the 'disciples'. It was an important meal called 'Passover', where all the Jews remembered a story about God saving their ancestors. Jesus picked up a loaf of bread and broke it up. He handed each of his friends a piece.

"My body will break like this bread," he announced.

He poured them some wine.

"My blood will flow like this wine," he told them. "Whenever you eat and drink these things, remember me."

He was telling them that he was going to die. One of the disciples, Judas, had made an evil scheme with the leaders who disliked Jesus. During the meal Judas quickly crept away. He was going to help the leaders to capture Jesus. They would pay Judas 30 silver coins.

After singing a song, Jesus and his friends went to a quiet garden. His friends fell asleep. But Jesus was anxious to pray to God, his Father. He was very distressed. He knew it was nearly time for him to die.

"Father God!" he cried out desperately. "Is there any other way to save people?"

But Jesus knew God's plan. There was no other way. He was going to be punished for all the awful things people have done, even though he had never done anything wrong. The Bible says that he loved people so much, he would do anything to save them. He was ready.

Suddenly the sound of many voices could be heard. Judas entered the garden with a big crowd of people and quickly showed them who Jesus was. Peter, one of Jesus' friends, leapt forward angrily and with a swing of his sword he cut off a man's ear.

"Stop!" Jesus commanded. "I must go with them. It's God's plan."

Reaching out, Jesus touched the injured man and healed him. Despite this, the angry crowd seized Jesus and took him to the religious leaders. After only a few questions, they decided that Jesus should die. Only the Roman leader could give the order to kill someone, so they quickly sent him to the Romans.

The local Roman leader was called Pontius Pilate. He declared that Jesus had not done anything wrong, but he was terrified by the huge crowd. After failing to calm them down, he reluctantly handed Jesus over to some rough soldiers.

The soldiers whipped Jesus and they spat on him. They mocked him and forced a crown made of thorns onto his head.

"King of the Jews are you?" they laughed, mercilessly. They heaved a giant wooden cross onto his back and made him carry it to the execution place. A man called Simon helped Jesus. At the top of a rocky hill the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross.

"Father, forgive them," Jesus gasped painfully.

Darkness filled the sky. After a few hours, Jesus drew in a last, deep breath.

"It is finished!" he cried. Then he died.

Jesus' friends were distraught. A wealthy man called Joseph took down Jesus' body and placed it in a tomb. A large, heavy stone was rolled across the doorway. Soldiers were told to guard it.

Three days passed. Some women who were Jesus' friends went to clean his body. They went to the tomb early in the morning. But as they approached, there was a huge earthquake and a bright white angel appeared! His clothes blazed like lightning. The soldiers were so terrified they all fainted. When the women dared to look, they saw that the stone had been moved away.

"Don't be afraid!" the angel called. "Jesus isn't dead anymore. He is alive!"

The women saw that the tomb was empty. They were astonished! Joyfully they rushed to tell Jesus' disciples. When his friends came to see, they were amazed as well!

"What is going on?" they wondered.

Later, they were discussing everything. They did not understand what had happened, and did not think Jesus was alive again. But then Jesus appeared there with them! They thought he was a ghost, and they were afraid!

"What's wrong?" asked Jesus, with a smile. "It really is me! Come and feel my hands. I'm not a ghost!"

A few days later, Jesus and his friends went for a walk up a lofty mountain. The time had come for him to leave them.

"I was punished for you and everyone else." Jesus explained. "You can all be friends with God again if you are willing to ask him. I love people so much I died for them. Go and tell everyone!"

Then Jesus started to float upwards. Higher and higher into the sky he rose, until the clouds hid him. He had returned to heaven.

Ed Moss

Easter

Give two miracles Jesus did to show people that God loved them. (AF2)

Match these words to their meanings. (AF2)

mercilessly	one of Jesus' closest friends
punish	a place to put a dead body
distressed	very special or high level
important	normal
earthquake	family members who lived a long time ago
tomb	stop wanting to punish someone for something
miracles	without any pity
disciple	when the ground shakes
ordinary	do something not nice to someone because they have broken a rule
forgive	feeling very worried, sad or hurt
ancestors	events that do not naturally happen

Which of these is the best sentence to describe how the 'important people' felt about Jesus? (AF3)

- A. They did not care about him. B. They hated him.
C. They ignored him. D. They listened to him.

Why do you think Jesus wanted to talk to God in the garden? (AF3)

Where do you think you could find out the most about Jesus? (AF7)

- A. School B. The shops
C. A library D. A church

What do you think is the happiest part of the story? Why? (AF6)

Look at the sentence which says 'Judas quickly crept away'. What does the word 'crept' make you think Judas was thinking or feeling as he left the meal? (AF5)

Give two reasons why you think the angel said 'Don't be afraid!' to the women. (AF3)

Why did Jesus ask his friends to feel his hands? (AF3)

What was 'Passover'? (AF2)

Look at the sentence which says 'he was ready'. Why did Jesus feel ready to die? (AF3)

What famous Christian symbol can you find in the story? (AF7)

Which word describes Peter best? (AF3)

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| A. Impulsive | B. Calm |
| C. Quick-witted | D. Thoughtful |

Answer both questions. (AF6)

- (a) Does the author want you to think that the religious leaders were good or bad? Give a reason for your answer.
- (b) Does the author want you to think that Jesus was good or bad? Give a reason for your answer.

Jesus said that people should be loving and kind to their enemies. Find two times in the story when he does this. (AF2)

Easter

Give two miracles Jesus did to show people that God loved them. (AF2) **He made blind people see. He made deaf people hear. He ended a fierce storm just by telling it to stop.**

Match these words to their meanings. (AF2)

mercilessly	one of Jesus' closest friends
punish	a place to put a dead body
distressed	very special or high level
important	normal
earthquake	family members who lived a long time ago
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Which of these is the best sentence to describe how the 'important people' felt about Jesus? (AF3)

- A. They did not care about him. **B. They hated him.**
C. They ignored him. D. They listened to him.

Why do you think Jesus wanted to talk to God in the garden? (AF3) **Because he was sad/scared/about to die/he wanted comfort/he wanted reassurance/he wanted to ask if there was another way.**

Where do you think you could find out the most about Jesus? (AF7)

- A. School. B. The shops.
C. A library. D. **A church.**

What do you think is the happiest part of the story? Why? (AF6) **Various answers – must be justified.**

Look at the sentence which says 'Judas quickly crept away'. What does the word 'crept' make you think Judas was thinking or feeling as he left the meal? (AF5) **Various answers: he felt ashamed; he felt like he didn't want to be noticed; he wanted to be sneaky/quiet; others are justifiable.**

Give two reasons why you think the angel said 'Don't be afraid!' to the women. (AF3) **There had just been an earthquake; an angel had appeared; the stone had moved; the tomb was empty.**

Why did Jesus ask his friends to feel his hands? (AF3) **To prove that it was really him and not a ghost.**

What was 'Passover'? (AF2) **A special meal where they remembered how God had saved their ancestors.**

Look at the sentence which says 'he was ready'. Why did Jesus feel ready to die? (AF3) **Various answers: he had prayed; he loved people so much; he knew there was no other way.**

What famous Christian symbol can you find in the story? (AF7) **A cross.**

Which word describes Peter best? (AF3)

A. Impulsive

B. Calm

C. Quick-witted

D. Thoughtful

Answer both questions. (AF6)

- (a) Does the author want you to think that the religious leaders were good or bad? Give a reason for your answer. **Bad - various justifications are possible.**
- (b) Does the author want you to think that Jesus was good or bad? Give a reason for your answer. **Good - various justifications are possible.**

Jesus said that people should be loving and kind to their enemies. Find two times in the story when he does this. (AF2) **When he healed the man's ear. When he asked God to forgive the soldiers who nailed him to the cross.**