

## Easter

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

Jesus lived 2000 years ago, in the same era as the Romans. He spent his life in part of the area we call the Middle East. His country was ruled by the Romans, but his people, the Jews, were still allowed to practise their own religion. Jesus travelled around many towns and villages telling people about God's love.

"God loves you immeasurably!" Jesus declared. "But you ignore 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 and difficult place. You deserve to be punished. But God still loves you dearly! He wants to rescue you from the punishment."

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

The Bible says that Jesus performed amazing miracles wherever he went. He enabled blind people to see and deaf people to hear. He saved his friends from a fierce storm simply by ordering the howling wind and rain to be calm. He showed people that God loved them by helping them and providing for them. Many ordinary people liked Jesus and followed him.

However, some proud, important people did not like him. They were indignant at the idea that they needed any help. They were powerful religious leaders called Pharisees and Scribes, and they thought they were worthier 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 Pharisees did not like that, or when Jesus said, "God loves everyone." They also became envious of his popularity. So they plotted to kill him.

One day Jesus was eating a meal with his closest friends, who were called the 'disciples'. It was a ceremonial meal called 'Passover', where all the Jews remembered a story about God saving their ancestors from Pharaoh, an Egyptian king who had enslaved the Jews a long time before. As the disciples reclined at the table, Jesus picked up a loaf of bread and broke it apart. He handed each of his friends a piece, as if it were a parting gift.

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

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, a deceitful man named Judas, had devised an evil scheme with the leaders who loathed Jesus. During the meal Judas quickly crept away. He was going to help the authorities to capture Jesus. They would pay Judas 30 silver coins.

After singing a hymn, Jesus and his friends went to a quiet garden called Gethsemane. It was just outside the city walls, and they had often gone there before. Jesus needed support from his friends but, exhausted by sorrow, they fell asleep. Jesus went a little way ahead of them, for he was anxious to pray to God, his Father. He was very distressed, because 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 lived a blameless life. The Bible says that he loved people so much, he would do anything to save them. Even though it meant dying, he was ready. Resolutely, he got to his feet.

Suddenly the sound of many voices could be heard. Judas entered the garden with a menacing crowd and betrayed Jesus to them. Peter, one of Jesus' friends, leapt forward angrily and with a swift swing of his sword he hacked off a man's ear.

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

Full of compassion, Jesus touched the injured man and healed him. Despite this, the angry crowd seized Jesus and cast him before the council of religious leaders. The council tried in vain to find something that Jesus had done wrong.

At last they asked him, "Are you the Son of God?" When Jesus told them he was, they were livid.

"You can't say that you're God!" the leaders shouted. "You must die for saying such a thing!"

The council knew that only the Roman leader could give the order to kill someone, so hurriedly they sent him to the Romans.

"We'll tell them that Jesus is a rebel king seeking to replace their emperor!" they schemed.

The local Roman governor was called Pontius Pilate. He questioned Jesus but could not find any reason to convict him. He publicly pronounced that Jesus had not done anything wrong, but a screaming mob began to shout, "Crucify him! Crucify him!". Pilate was terrified that a riot would begin. After failing to calm them down, he reluctantly handed Jesus over to some rough soldiers. He washed his hands in front the chanting crowd.

"I am not guilty of this man's death!" he declared to them.

The soldiers brutally whipped Jesus and they spat on him. They mocked him and forced a crown made of thorns onto his head. Jesus' blood began to flow. Like dark red wine.

"King of the Jews are you?" they laughed, mercilessly. Scornfully they heaved a giant wooden cross onto his back and made him carry it, stumbling, to the execution place. A man called Simon aided Jesus when he became too weak to walk. At the top of a rocky hill the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross.

"Father, forgive them," Jesus gasped painfully.

Darkness filled the sky. It covered the land like a black veil. 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 cut into some rock. A large, weighty boulder was rolled across the doorway. Soldiers were instructed to guard it.

Three days passed. Some women who were Jesus' friends went to clean his body. They crept to the tomb as the first glimmers of dawn announced the arrival of a new day. But as they approached, a huge earthquake rumbled 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 shining angel called. "Jesus isn't dead anymore. He is alive!"

The women saw that the tomb was empty and were astonished! Joyfully they rushed to tell Jesus' disciples. Some of his friends dared to go and see if what the women said was true. When they arrived they were astounded as well!

"What is going on?" they wondered, bewildered.

Later, Jesus' friends were all back in a locked room. They had been hiding there for days, but now they were deep in discussion. They did not understand what had happened, and could not believe that Jesus was really alive again. But then he appeared there with them! They thought he was a ghost, and they were petrified!

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

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. His task was complete.

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

Then a remarkable thing happened. Jesus started to float upwards. Higher and higher into the sky he rose, until the clouds hid him like a set of great white doors being pulled shut. He had returned to heaven.

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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)

Look at the paragraph where it says 'his people, the Jews, were still allowed to practise their own religion.'  
What does the word 'practise' mean in this sentence? (AF2)

Choose the best word to finish the following sentence. (AF7)

The religious leaders were going to tell the Romans that Jesus wanted to commit

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| A. murder | B. theft   |
| C. fraud  | D. treason |

Why did the author choose to say that Jesus' blood began to flow 'Like dark red wine'? (AF5)

What does crucify mean? (AF2)

A veil is a piece of clothing which people sometimes wear to cover their face.

- (a) Can you think of an important event where someone might wear a *black veil*? (AF7)
- (b) Why do you think the author has chosen to say that darkness covered the land 'like a black veil'? (AF5)

Why do you think Jesus' friends had been hiding in a locked room? (AF3)

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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
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) **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 spirit.**

What was 'Passover'? (AF2) **A special meal where they remembered how God had saved their ancestors from Pharaoh, who had enslaved them.**

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.**

Look at the paragraph where it says 'his people, the Jews, were still allowed to practise their own religion.' What does the word 'practise' mean in this sentence? (AF2) **Worship their own God and perform their religious duties.**

Choose the best word to finish the following sentence. (AF7)

The religious leaders were going to tell the Romans that Jesus wanted to commit

A. murder

B. theft

C. fraud

**D. treason**

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**Comprehension – Easter – 4a – Genius ANSWERS**

Why did the author choose to say that Jesus' blood began to flow 'Like dark red wine'? (AF5) **To make the reader remember how Jesus had predicted these events at the Passover meal.**

What does crucify mean? (AF2) **Kill or execute on a cross.**

A veil is a piece of clothing which people sometimes wear to cover their face.

(a) Can you think of an important event where someone might wear a *black* veil? (AF7) **A funeral.**

(b) Why do you think the author has chosen to say that darkness covered the land 'like a black veil'?

(AF5) **Because like a funeral, this was a time of mourning for someone's death. It makes it seem as though the whole world is mourning.**

Why do you think Jesus' friends had been hiding in a locked room? (AF3) **Their leader had just been killed. They were afraid that the authorities would try to find and kill them too.**