

Bible Stories for Adults

The First Easter

Matthew 28:1-15

Opening

Gathering: What would you think if someone told you that a friend you just buried was now alive?

Today's Focus: Jesus rose from the dead, as He had promised, and showed Himself to disciples on Easter.

Key Verses: *He is not here; He has risen, just as He said.* Matthew 28:5-6

They told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Luke 24:9, 11

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Easter

Early Christians celebrated Jesus' resurrection either on Passover day or on Sunday following Council of Nicaea, 325 AD – Church leaders agreed to celebrate on the same day
First Sunday after the ecclesiastical moon on or after March 21 (vernal equinox)
Western Christians use the Gregorian calendar, Eastern Christians use the Julian calendar
Early Christian missionaries to the Saxons converted their springtime festival into Easter
Used name of Eostre, their "Goddess of the Dawn" = Spring is the dawn of the year
Kept some traditions - Easter rabbit (fertility) and eggs (new birth)

Jewish Burials

Wealthy used caves, both natural and man-made, as family tombs, Others were buried
Shelves or niches in large caves would hold individual bodies, sealed by flat stones
Criminals could not be buried in family tombs - guilty could not be buried with the just
Criminal and poor bodies were burned in trash heap in Valley of Gehenna
Bodies were wrapped in strips of linen with spices to keep odor down = Didn't embalm like Egyptians
John 11:38-40, 43-44 = Jesus raised Lazarus after 4 days, Mary was afraid of the odor
After a body was placed in a tomb, a large stone was rolled in front of entrance = Often whitewashed
Matthew 23:27-28 = Pharisees as white-washed tombs, clean outside but dead inside

Jesus is Buried (Luke 23:50-56)

How was Jesus' body kept from being burned or thrown away as for other criminals?
Luke 23:50-52 = Secret disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, asked for Jesus' body
What did he do with Jesus' body? = Parentheses below are from other gospels
Luke 23:53 = Wrapped it (with spices) in (new) linen and put in (his own) new tomb
Did Joseph get any help? = 75 lbs. of myrrh and aloes
John 19:39-40 = Nicodemus - a Pharisee on the Sanhedrin (John 3)
Why was Joseph in such a rush and unable to fully wash and rub Jesus' body?
Luke 23:54 = Late afternoon and Sabbath was about to begin (day was sundown-sundown)
If Joseph and Nicodemus were alone, how did the disciples know where Jesus was buried?
Luke 23:55 = The women had followed Joseph and seen the tomb
Why didn't the women wait and add their own spices to Jesus' body after Joseph was done?
Luke 23:56 = *They rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment*

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Guard The Dead (*Matthew 27:62-66*)

How did the chief priests disobey their own traditions against working on the Sabbath?

Matthew 27:62-64 = They went to Pilate and asked him to secure the tomb

Did the leaders ask Pilate to do it so they wouldn't have to work on the Sabbath?

Matthew 27:65-66 = Did it themselves to protect their positions at any cost

The seal was a cord stretched across the stone and secured with clay on each side

The Women Go to the Tomb (*Mark 16:1-3*)

What did the women do their first chance after obediently observing the Passover Sabbath?

Matthew 28:1 = They went to look at the tomb

How anxious were they to get to the tomb?

John 20:1a = *While it was still dark*

What concerned them as they walked? = Didn't know about the guards

Mark 16:1-3 = How were they going to roll the stone away (100s-1000s of lbs)

The Earth Shook Again (*Matthew 28:2*)

Who would move the stone for them?

Matthew 28:2 = *An angel ... rolled back the stone, Creation reacted with a violent earthquake*

How had God's creation responded to Jesus' death?

Matthew 27:50-51 = *The earth shook and the rocks split*

The Women Reach the Tomb (*Luke 24:2-4*)

Did the women see the angel roll back the stone?

Luke 24:2-3 = No, they found the stone rolled away, Jesus' body was missing

How did Mary of Magdala (town in Galilee) react to what she saw?

John 20:1-2 = She ran to Peter and John and said that Jesus' body had been moved

What did the other women do?

Luke 24:4 = They stood confused, and then noticed two men in bright robes

How does Matthew describe the appearance of the angels?

Matthew 28:3 = *Like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow*

What does this appearance mean? = The glory of the Lord

Exodus 34:29, 34-35 = Moses' face shone after being in the presence of the Lord

The Angels Announce Jesus' Resurrection (*Luke 24:5-8*)

What did the angels say to the women?

Luke 24:5-8 = They proclaimed that Jesus had risen on the third day as He had said

Had Jesus clearly explained that He would rise or had He said so in a parable?

Luke 18:31-34 = He had explained it very clearly, but they still didn't understand

On the Third Day - Not after three days = Part of a day counts as a day (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

Did the angels give the women any instructions?

Matthew 28:5-7 = Tell the disciples He has risen and will see them in Galilee

Four messages: *Don't be afraid; He has risen; Come and see; Go quickly and tell.*

Did the women immediately go tell the disciples?

Mark 16:8 = No, they ran away afraid and said nothing

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Peter and John Go to the Tomb (*John 20:3-9*)

How did Peter and John react when Mary Magdalene told them Jesus' body was gone?

John 20:3-5 = They ran to the tomb, John arrived first and looked in, didn't enter

What did Peter see that showed Jesus' body had not been hastily stolen?

John 20:6-7 = The burial clothes were neatly and carefully folded

After seeing the empty tomb, did Peter and John believe and understand that Jesus had risen?

John 20:8-9 = They believed but didn't understand

How does Luke record Peter's reaction?

Luke 24:12 = *He went away, wondering to himself what had happened*

Mary Magdalene Returns to the Tomb (*John 20:10-18*)

After following Peter and John to the tomb, what did Mary Magdalene do after they left?

John 20:10-11 = She *stood outside the tomb crying* and looked inside

What did she see in the tomb and why was she crying? = Maybe body had been in wrong tomb

John 20:12-13 = She saw the two angels; Crying because Jesus' body was missing

Who did she think may have moved Jesus' body?

John 20:14-15 = The gardener - Who else would have been in the area this early?

How did Jesus let her know who He really was?

John 20:16 = He said her name, she recognized his voice

What did Jesus say when Mary tried to hug Him in her excitement? = Go tell the disciples

John 20:17 = Don't cling to My body, I'll still be leaving to return to My Father

What did Mary do in response?

John 20:18 = She went and told the disciples she had seen Jesus

Jesus Appears to the Other Women (*Matthew 28:8-10*)

Had Jesus appeared to anyone else before Mary saw Him?

Mark 16:9-11 = No, Mary was the first, Disciples didn't believe her story

Who did He appear to next?

Matthew 28:8-9 = The women going back from the tomb

What did Jesus say to them? = They hadn't gone to disciples as instructed by the angels (Mark 16:8)

Matthew 28:10 = Go tell my disciples to meet me in Galilee

What About the Guards? (*Matthew 28:11-15*)

What had happened to the guards when the angel came and rolled back the stone?

Matthew 28:2-4 = They were deeply scared and froze like dead men (fainted?)

Where were the guards while all of these people were visiting the tomb?

Matthew 28:11 = They reported what had happened to the chief priests

With this proof, did the chief priests come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?

Matthew 28:12-15 = No, bribed guards to say the body was stolen as they slept

On the Road to Emmaus (*Luke 24:9-18*)

After all that had happened in the early morning, did the disciples believe and understand?

Luke 24:9-11 = No, it didn't make sense to them

What happened as a couple of believers walked back home to Emmaus that afternoon?

Luke 24:13-17 = Jesus caught up with them as they sadly discussed the events

Common for travelers to join up and walk and talk together to pass the time (2-3 hrs)

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The Story of Jesus (Luke 24:18-27)

How did they indicate that Jesus' death and empty tomb were the topic of Jerusalem?

Luke 24:18 = Asked how he could have been in Jerusalem and not heard the stories

How did they explain Jesus' story to this stranger? = Write on board

Luke 24:19 = Jesus *was a prophet, powerful in word and deed*

Luke 24:20 = Chief priests and rulers had Him killed

Luke 24:21 = Had hoped He was the Messiah but now He's dead

Luke 24:22-23 = Women found empty tomb and angels on third day, said He was alive

Luke 24:24 = Some disciples also saw empty tomb, but didn't see Jesus

How did Jesus answer their confusion?

Luke 24:25-27 = He used the Scriptures to explain what had happened and why

A Revealing Dinner (Luke 24:28-32)

How interested were these disciples in hearing this stranger? = Jesus acted like He was going further

Luke 24:28-29 = They urged Him to stay with them for the night

What caused them to recognize who this stranger really was? = Then disappeared

Luke 24:30-31 = Jesus acted as host at dinner, gave thanks and gave them bread

After recognizing Jesus, did they feel they should have recognized Him earlier?

Luke 24:32 = Yes, only Jesus could have spoken to them as He had

The Response of Believers (Luke 24:33-35)

Although it was dark and dangerous outside, what did these disciples do? = uphill to Jerusalem

Luke 24:33 = They *returned at once to Jerusalem* and found the apostles

Had anything else happened since these men had left Jerusalem?

Luke 24:34 = Jesus had appeared to Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5)

After hearing this update from the apostles, what did the two do?

Luke 24:35 = They told their story

After a full day of events, did the apostles finally believe and understand?

Mark 16:12-13 = *They did not believe them either*

What amazing thing then happened that helped them believe? (Next week's lesson)

Luke 24:36 = Jesus appeared among them while they were still talking

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. How anxious am I to see Jesus? (*John 20:1-18; Matthew 7:7-8; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 2:41-50; 4:42-44; 8:40-48; Philippians 1:21-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18*)
2. Who have I told that Jesus has risen from the dead?
(*John 20:1-2, 18, 24-25; Luke 24:9-10, 33-35; Acts 2:36-41; 4:8-12, 18-20; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:1-11*)
3. How have I recognized the presence of Jesus in my life?
(*John 20:16, 20, 28; 14:20-23; Luke 24:31-32; Genesis 28:16-17; Psalm 16:11; 21:6; 139:7-10*)
4. When have I felt without hope?
(*Luke 24:17-21; John 20:13; 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Ephesians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13*)
5. How has God shown me that He is in control, even during seemingly impossible times?
(*Luke 24:17-27; John 20:13-18; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10; Ephesians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14*)