

Let's Act Bible Stories No. 22

Shocks and Surprises

A play for Easter

Characters

Narrator

Matthew *

Philip *

Sarah *

Joel *

Peter

John

House owner

Esther *

Jacob *

Eli *

Mary Magdalene

Mary

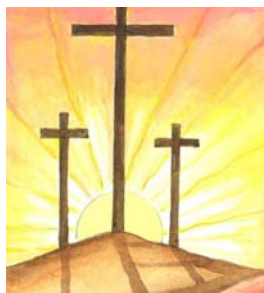
Salome

Angel

Cleopas

Mrs Cleopas *

Jesus



Author's Note

I have given names to characters marked with an asterisk (*) for dramatic purposes.

I have selected five episodes from the story of Easter. Teachers/Leaders can select one or more of these as best suits their purpose.

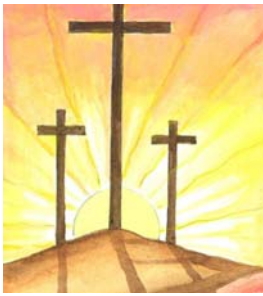
The story of the Passion of Jesus is found in all four gospels, with each writer giving his particular insight as the drama unfolds.

One thing is clear; the Crucifixion was a terrible shock to his disciples. The Resurrection was, if anything, a greater shock, totally unexpected, in spite of all that Jesus has said. The experience of meeting the risen Jesus was a shock and a life-changing surprise. Women were the first to be told that Jesus had risen from the dead. Not surprisingly, when they reported this to the apostles, the apostles thought that what the women said was nonsense and they did not believe them (Luke 24:11).

The Christian festival of Easter is rooted in the Old Testament story of the children of Israel's rapid exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12). Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. The Passover meal marked the night before the Exodus. The Lord's Supper marks the last meal Jesus had with his disciples before his betrayal.

Shocks and Surprises

A play for Easter



Narrator Our play is called *Shocks and Surprises*. The play is about some of the events that the Bible tells us happened during the first Easter. These events include Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper and his arrest and trial. We also see how some women went to the tomb where Jesus was buried. They were amazed to find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Finally, we join two friends of Jesus who meet a stranger as they walk home from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

We know the names of many of the people in these stories, but not all. We have given names to some of the people whose names we don't really know.

Scene 1 - Jesus comes to Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19: 28-40; Mark 11: 1-11; John 12: 12-19

Narrator Our story begins near a village called Bethphage. Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead of him.

Matthew We are nearly at Bethphage, Philip.

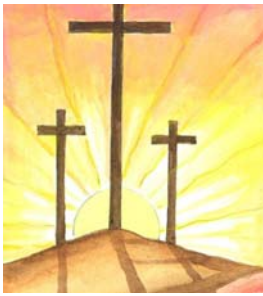
Philip Yes, Matthew. Can you see the house Jesus told us about, the one with the donkey and its foal tied up outside?

Matthew The house must be here somewhere. Let's have a good look around . . .

Philip Look, Matthew, over there! Do you see that house? It must be the one!

Matthew Well, the donkeys are there. Let's see what happens when we untie them.

Philip Remember what we must say if anyone asks us why we are untying them?



Matthew 'The Master needs them,' that is what Jesus said we must say.

Narrator Now we go inside the house.

Sarah Have you heard the news, Joel?

Joel I certainly have, Sarah. Jesus is coming this way very soon. He's on his way to Jerusalem.

Sarah I can't wait to see him again, Joel.

Joel We owe him everything really, don't we, Sarah?

Sarah Yes, our lives were in a complete mess.

Joel He showed us how to make a fresh start by putting our trust in him.

Sarah I would do anything for him, or give him anything.

Joel Me too, but what could we give him? All we have are the donkey outside and her foal. The foal has never been ridden by anybody!

Sarah Yes, they are the most valuable things we have.

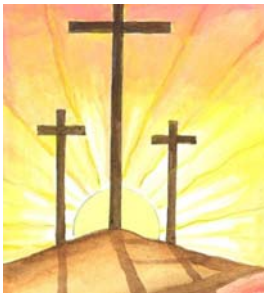
Joel What's that noise outside? I can hear someone shouting.

Narrator They both look out of the window and see the two disciples.

Sarah What do you think you are doing untying our animals?

Matthew The Master needs them. He will send them back straight away.

Joel You mean Jesus wants them? He can certainly have them. We are glad to help him!



Sarah What an honour to lend Jesus our donkeys!

Joel Let's go outside and see what is happening.

(Sarah and Joel go outside)

Sarah Look, the disciples are putting their cloaks on the donkey and its foal.

Joel Jesus is getting on the donkey.

Sarah Now the crowd of people are cutting branches from the palm trees and spreading them on the road.

Joel Can you hear what they are shouting? "Praise to David's Son! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God!"

(Sarah and Joel go back inside)

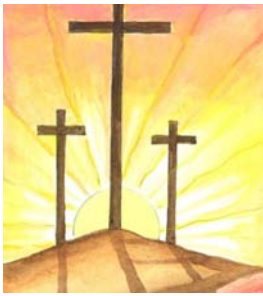
Sarah Could this be what the prophet Zechariah said would happen all those years ago?

Joel I think so. I remember learning it at Synagogue school as a boy.

Sarah And my mother taught me Zechariah's words at home.

(together) "Tell the city of Zion, look, your King is coming to you! He is humble and rides on a donkey and a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Narrator So, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the borrowed donkey and everyone cheered and waved palm branches. But Jesus knew that one of his twelve disciples, Judas, was going to betray him. Jesus wanted to eat one last meal with his disciples before that happened. He wanted to eat the Passover meal with them. He sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, into Jerusalem with secret instructions. So we go now to Jerusalem.



Scene 2 – Jerusalem

Luke 22:7 – 13

Peter Come, John, let us go at once.

(both start to walk towards Jerusalem)

John Yes, Peter, remember we shall be looking for a man carrying a jar of water.

Peter Yes, I keep thinking about that. It's very strange. Getting water from the well is women's work!

John I know, I don't understand it. But you know, Peter, we have always found that Jesus knows best!

Peter He certainly does. Well, Jesus said a man would meet us as we go into the city. He will be carrying a jar of water. Can you see him? There are so many people. . .

John Just keep looking . . .

(a man appears carrying a jar of water)

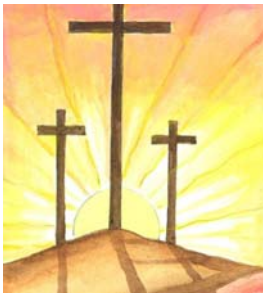
John Look, Peter, there he is!

(John and Peter meet the man with the water jar)

Peter Come, let us follow him!

(the man goes into a house with an upper room)

Peter Look, John, he has gone into that house with an upper room.



John We will follow him inside, just as Jesus said we should.

(Peter and John follow the man inside the house)

Peter Are you the owner of this house?

House owner

Yes, I am. What do you want?

Peter The Teacher says to you, "Where is the room where my disciples and I will eat the Passover meal?"

House owner

The teacher, you say? Of course! Come this way, I have a large furnished room upstairs where you can get everything ready.

Narrator That night, Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover Meal in that Upper Room.

Scene 3 – I do not know that man!

Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22: 54-62; John 18:12-26

Narrator Jesus was betrayed to his enemies by one of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot. Jesus was arrested at night in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken under guard to the house of the High Priest.

John Here I am in the courtyard of the High Priest's house. I am well known to the High Priest, so the girl at the gate let me in, but not Peter. I must go and have a word with her. *(to girl)* Please, Esther, let my friend come into the courtyard.



Esther If he is a friend of yours, John, he can come inside. *(Peter comes inside)*
(to Peter) Aren't you also one of the disciples of that man?

Peter No, I am not!

(a group of men warm themselves by a fire)

Jacob Being on guard duty is a cold job on a night like this, Eli. This fire is wonderful!

Eli Yes, Jacob, I wonder how long my master the High Priest will question the prisoner?

Jacob I hear he's a good man, this Jesus. What do you say, Eli?

Eli I heard him speak in the Temple.

Jacob What was he saying?

Eli My master wanted him to say whether or not we should pay Roman taxes.

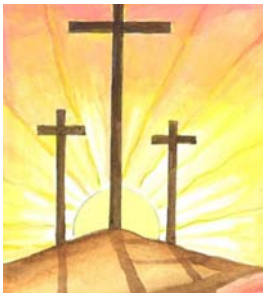
Jacob What did Jesus say?

Eli He held up a Roman coin with Caesar's picture on it. "Pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor and pay God what belongs to God", Jesus said.

Jacob A good answer, Eli . . . our friend here is very quiet. *(to Peter)*, Aren't you also one of the disciples of that man?

Peter No, I am not!

Eli My master is still questioning him. Oh! He's just slapped Jesus!



Jacob Tell me, Eli, how is your relative Malchus, the High Priest's slave?

Eli He who had his right ear cut off by one of Jesus' disciples?

Jacob Yes, that's the one, in the garden of Gethsemane.

Eli Malchus is fine. Jesus touched his ear and healed it.

Jacob And now Jesus is on trial for his life. Seems strange to me!

Eli Come to think of it, our friend here talks like a Galilean. *(to Peter)* Didn't I see you with him in the garden?

Peter No!

Jacob I hear a cock crowing, Eli.

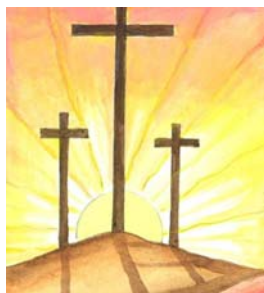
(exit Peter, crying with shame)

Eli Where's our friend gone, Jacob?

Scene 4 – He is not here, he has been raised!

Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24: 1-12

Narrator Jesus was condemned to death and handed over to the Romans. He was crucified between two thieves. The friends of Jesus were very sad when he died. Two of his friends, Joseph of Aramithea and Nicodemus went to Pilate. He gave them permission to bury Jesus' body. They wrapped him in a linen cloth and placed it in Joseph's own tomb. Then a huge stone was rolled down across the entrance. The tomb was sealed and guards left there on watch.



On the first day of the week, three women went to the tomb. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Salome.

Mary Magdalene

Have you got the spices, Mary?

Mary Yes, I have. Are you ready, Salome?

Salome Yes, I am ready, Mary.

Mary Magdalene

The sun has just risen, so no-one will be about.

Salome So who will roll away the stone for us? How will we be able to put on these lovely sweet smelling spices?

Mary Magdalene

I don't know. I just have to go there.

Mary We saw him die . . .

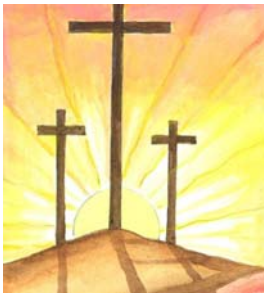
Salome We must see where he is buried.

Mary Magdalene

Just to be there and look. I still feel I love Jesus. He changed my life. "There goes that wicked woman, Mary of Magdela," people would say, and I was; until I met Jesus!

Salome She's not the only one, is she, Mary?

Mary No, Salome. There are so many of us!



Mary Magdalene

Well, here we are. I can see the guards in front of the entrance to the tomb. They are very still and look frightened. And there's the huge stone . . . but it has been rolled away from the entrance!

Mary Shall we go inside?

Salome Yes, let's go inside and see what has happened . . .

Mary Look, there is a young man sitting over there on the right.

Mary Magdalene

He is wearing a white robe . . . but it isn't Jesus!

Salome Where can Jesus be? I'm scared . . .

Angel

Don't be alarmed. I know you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is not here, he has been raised. Look, here is the place where they put him. Now go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: He is going to Galilee ahead of you. There you will see him, just as he told you.

Mary Magdalene

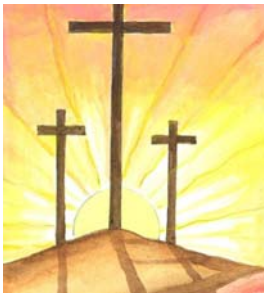
I'm terrified. How do you feel, Salome?

Salome I just can't understand. I so much wanted to see Jesus!

Mary Me, too. Let's get out of here!

Mary Magdalene

The angel has reminded us what Jesus told us many times. He told us he would be crucified but would rise again. Come, let us go and tell the others the good news!



Narrator But the other followers of Jesus didn't believe them! Then two of Jesus' friends set off for their home of Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem. Their hearts were heavy with sadness.

Scene 5 – The Walk to Emmaus

Luke 24:1-35; Mark 16:12-13

Cleopas It's time to go home now!

Mrs Cleopas Yes, we must be on our way to our home in Emmaus.

Cleopas What a week it has been! Everything has gone wrong!

Mrs Cleopas We had such high hopes about Jesus.

Cleopas Now, he is dead. Crucified!

Mrs Cleopas Buried in Joseph's tomb.

Cleopas He is a good man is Joseph. A member of the Council!

Mrs Cleopas But he didn't agree with their decision and action about putting Jesus on a cross.

Cleopas All very sad, and yet . . .

Mrs Cleopas And yet, is it all over? You know what Mary Magdalene and the others have said.

Cleopas Well, I really don't know what to say. It's very puzzling.

Mrs Cleopas Who is this stranger coming along?



Jesus May I walk with you?

Cleopas Of course you may. We are on our way to our home in Emmaus.

Jesus What are you talking about to each other as you walk along?

(Cleopas stands still and looks sad)

Cleopas Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?

Jesus What things?

Cleopas The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth.

Mrs Cleopas This man was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did.

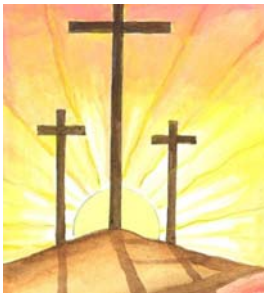
Cleopas Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death and he was crucified.

Mrs Cleopas And we had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free!

Cleopas Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. Some of the women of our group surprised us. They went at dawn to the tomb, but could not find his body.

Mrs Cleopas They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive.

Cleopas Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him.



Jesus How foolish you are; how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said. Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?

Cleopas Please, tell us more as we walk along.

(Jesus talks to them quietly as they walk along)

Jesus So, you see, all that happened was part of God's plan. Look, this is your village and I must be going on my way.

Mrs Cleopas Stay with us. The day is almost over and it is getting dark. Please be our guest. I'll get supper ready.

(they all go inside the house)

Mrs Cleopas There now, supper is ready. Let's sit down together.

Jesus Thank you, Father, for this bread . . .

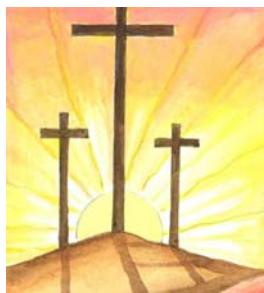
(Jesus exits)

Cleopas He has gone! I've just realised who he was!

Mrs Cleopas Yes! He was Jesus! Here with us! All the time on the road as he was talking with us, I felt inside me a wonderful warmth, a glow like a fire.

Cleopas Yes, a fire burning within us when he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures.

Mrs Cleopas Quick! We must go back to Jerusalem and tell the others we have met Jesus, our risen Lord!



Narrator So they hurried back to Jerusalem to tell all the believers what had happened. The eleven disciples and other believers were already excited. "The Lord is risen indeed", they were saying, "He has appeared to Simon".

So the two from Emmaus told them how Jesus had appeared to them. While they were telling them this, suddenly the Lord himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you".

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