

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Jesus preached the good news about God's salvation for three and a half years. During this time he went into every town and village in Israel to preach. Everyone living in the land of Israel at that time was able to hear God's message. Jesus knew that his teaching would upset many people.

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples.

Matt 10:34

'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.'

Jesus meant that there would be men and women who were totally opposed to him and would use force to stop him if they could. This happened. The leaders of the Jews planned to kill him.

Luke 19:47-48

'Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him.

Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.'

The leaders did not lead their people in worship of God as he commanded them. Jesus showed that they were dishonest. This made them angry with him and they wanted to kill him.

The rulers tried to find a way to condemn Jesus and put him to death. They could not do this by themselves. They had to get permission from the Roman governor; a man called Pontius Pilate. First they had to arrest Jesus. They did this at the time when he came to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.

Jesus went to Jerusalem every year to worship God in the Temple there. This was a great church built by the Jews. Every year all Jews had to go to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. They remembered a time in their history when God had saved Israel from great trouble. This was the time when Moses led the Jews out of Egypt. This time of the year was called Passover.

One of the 12 apostles, Judas, betrayed Jesus to the rulers.

Luke 22:4-6

'And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

They were delighted and agreed to give him money.

He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.'

Jesus knew that he was going to die. In the Old Testament, the prophets had spoken of his death. They said that he would be crucified. This means that he would be nailed to a tree and left to die in great pain. He knew that God wanted him to die as a sacrifice for the sins of the people and he was willing to give up his life in this way.

There was one last thing he wanted to do. He wanted to eat a final meal with his 12 apostles.

Luke 22:14-16

'When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God."

This special meal is very important to followers of Jesus today. Every week his disciples eat bread and drink wine to remember his death in this way. Jesus commanded his disciples to do this.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

'The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'

During this meal, Judas went out and brought the rulers to the place where he knew they would find Jesus. During the night the Jewish rulers put Jesus on trial. They decided he should be killed. In the morning they took him to Pilate and asked him to condemn Jesus to death. Pilate did not want to do this. He saw that Jesus was a good man. But the Jews insisted and so Pilate allowed Jesus to be crucified.

At his death, the disciples were all very upset. They had trusted Jesus and did not think he would die. They thought that he should have become king over God's kingdom at that time. They did not understand the need for him to die.

Two disciples took the body of Jesus and put him in a grave. It was all done in a hurry. They did not have enough time to finish preparing the body of Jesus. Three days later some women went back to complete this job. They found the grave was empty. There was an angel outside the grave who said;

Matthew 28:5-8

'The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.'

Because Jesus did not sin, God would not leave him in the grave. Jesus died for our sins, not for any sin he committed. So God raised him from the dead. After forty days, Jesus went up into heaven to be with God. God gave him the gift of immortality. This means life which goes on forever. Jesus is still alive today. He will never die again.

Soon he will return to this earth to set up God's kingdom. When he comes he will make all his faithful disciples like him. They too will become immortal. We know we can trust this promise from God because Jesus was brought back to life from the dead. What God did for Jesus, he will do for us.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

'But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.'

Because we are all descended from Adam we all die. If we believe in Jesus as our saviour, he will make us alive like him when he returns to set up the kingdom of God. The story of the death of Jesus is the saddest event in the Bible but the news about his resurrection is the happiest one.

Questions

- 1 Who wanted to put Jesus to death?
- 2 Was does 'crucified' mean?
- 3 What do the disciples of Jesus do every week to remember him?
- 4 What happened three days after Jesus died?
- 5 Where is Jesus now?
- 6 What will Jesus do when he returns to the earth?