

God is a grand storyteller. He is a historian, an artist, a master poet, and makes wonderful use of a form of foreshadowing called prophesy. Jesus came and walked on Earth, both fulfilling prophecies spoken hundreds of years earlier, and preparing the way for us today. Thank you for journeying through the Easter story. You are encouraged to speak with the Lord throughout your experience today and allow Him to speak with you.

STOP 1: Donkey/colt tied up to a tree (Hosanna by Hillsong)

Our story is told over the course of one week. We enter the story as Jesus and His friends are approaching Jerusalem.

Jesus said, "Go to the village ahead of you, and you will find a donkey tied there. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey." They brought the donkey and placed their cloaks on it for Jesus to sit on. A large crowd gathered and shouted to Jesus "Hosanna!" (*This is an expression of adoration that means "You Save" or "You Rescue"*). When the people of the city asked, "Who is this?", the crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

The people had been waiting for generations for their promised Savior and realized that Jesus was the one who had been foretold of hundreds of years earlier. They expected Him to come and overthrow the current government, ruling with strength, justice and power over the whole land. In the next week, Jesus spoke a lot against the leaders and their lack of understanding the ways of the Lord. Many people were offended or disappointed by His teachings.

STOP 2: Last Supper/large table set for a meal (Carried to the Table by Leeland)

A few days later, a religious holiday called the Festival of Unleavened Bread occurred. (This festival was a reminder to the Jewish people of the journey of their ancestors through the wilderness after they had been set free from imprisonment in Egypt. Their freedom had occurred immediately following Passover, when the Angel of Death had "passed over" the houses covered in the blood of a sacrificed lamb.) Jesus and his twelve closest friends planned to celebrate the festival with the Passover meal. The disciples had travelled a long way to reach the festival meal and their feet were quite dirty. It was customary for a servant to be present and to perform the lowly, humble job of washing feet. Jesus once more surprised his friends by doing the unexpected.

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. When he had finished, he asked, "Do you understand what I have done for you? Now that I, your Lord and Teachers, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. The world will know you are my disciples by how you love one another."

Later, while they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Jesus knew the great suffering that was to come to him within the next day. It is with this knowledge that he foretold his death to his nearest friends at this meal. They did not yet understand. When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

STOP 3: Gethsemane/two figures sleeping under a tree (Gethsemane by Keith and Kristyn Getty)

After their shared meal, Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, which is a garden at the base of the Mount of Olives. He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took His three closest friends further into the garden and began to be sorrowful and troubled. He said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Jesus went a bit farther, fell with His face to the ground and prayed, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine. If this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, Your will be done."

He returned to his friends and found them asleep. "Couldn't you keep watch with me for even one hour?" he asked. "Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give into temptation." After leaving to pray and returning to their sleeping figures another 2 times, he said "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise. Let us go!"

It is here, in the garden, that Jesus is approached by a betraying friend and a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs, having been sent from the chief priests and elders of the people (these are among those who had been offended by the teachings of Jesus). They seized Jesus and arrested him. Jesus posed one question to his captors. "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come to capture me? Every day I sat in the courts teaching, but you did not arrest me there. All of this has taken place so that the prophecies might be fulfilled."

And all the disciples, his closest friends, deserted him and fled.

STOP 4: Like a sheep.../Single sheep (Lamb of God by Twila Paris)

This is the moment in history that shook the world and changed things forever. Hundreds of years earlier, a man named Isaiah heard God speak. This is the moment that had been prophesied:

He was despised and rejected by mankind, he was acquainted with the deepest grief. He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's path to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

STOP 5: Jesus is mocked/Display of scarlet robe, crown of thorns, and staff (Scarlet Purple Robe by Ralph Stanley)

Those who arrested Jesus took him to the high priest, Caiaphas, where the chief priests and elders (who had arrested Jesus) were looking for false evidence against him so they could put him to death. They did not find any. When asked if He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, he replied, "It is as you have said". This enraged Caiaphas, who tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy, or profanely against God! Do we even need more witnesses?"

The priests and elders who wanted Jesus dead took him to the governor and judge, Pilate, who would determine Jesus' sentencing. Pilate was amazed at Jesus and his silence, even in midst of accusations being thrown at him. Pilate didn't want to incite public outrage by declaring Jesus' innocence; instead, had an idea – rather than set Jesus free, he would offer something to the crowd and encourage them to set Jesus free. It was the governor's yearly custom to release one prisoner chosen by the crowd. There was a well-known prisoner named Barabbas, a vile murderer. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and figured the crowd would not want to release Barabbas, given his deplorable past.

Pilate asked the crowds, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" But the religious leaders asked for the release of Barabbas. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked.

"Crucify him!" they answered. Jesus' sentence had been given. He was to be crucified.

After his sentencing, Jesus was spit upon, beaten, flogged or whipped, and then taken to a large gathering. They stripped his clothing off, put a scarlet robe around him and twisted together a crown of thorns, setting it on his head. They put a staff in his hand, knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spit on him, took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. Then they led him away to crucify him.

STOP 6: Crucifixion/Three crosses & sign "This is the king of the Jews" (Via Dolorosa by Sandi Patty)

Jesus was forced to carry the cross upon which he was to be crucified. After having been beaten, spit upon and struck, he carried this cross down the Via Dolorosa (the path we now call this one that he walked, translated to mean "Sorrowful Way"). They brought Jesus to a place

called Golgotha, stripped him naked and crucifying him by nailing his wrists and his feet to the cross. The written notice of the charge against him read: The King of the Jews. Even on the cross, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Those who passed by hurled insults at him; many mocked him saying, "He saves others, but he can't save himself!"

At noon, darkness came over the whole land. At three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? Into your hands I commit my spirit."

And with a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

Now, the Jewish leaders knew that the next day was to be a special Sabbath. They didn't want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath. They broke the legs of the two criminals who had been crucified, but when they came to Jesus and found he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

STOP 7: Burial/single cross, blood stained, a blood-soaked cloth and with a spear leaning against it (O praise the name (Anastasis) shane & shane)

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of government, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God. With Pilate's permission, he came and took Jesus' body down from the cross. He was accompanied by man named Nicodemus. Together, they took Jesus' body, wrapped it with spices in strips of linen, as was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. Joseph owned a garden and in it was a new tomb he had cut out of the rock. Jesus was laid here. Joseph rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

The next day, the chief priests and religious leaders went to Pilate. "Sir", they said, "We remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting a guard. The tomb was guarded for three days.

STOP 8: HE IS RISEN!/Empty tomb, "Christ is Risen" sign (Because He Lives by Caleb & Kelsey and Glorious Day by Casting Crowns)

At dawn on the third day, the day after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb. They brought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. They asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

There, in front of the guards and the women who had come to the tomb, was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen, just as he said! Come and see the place where he lay. Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

ON YOUR OWN (AMAZING GRACE)

That same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking about everything that had happened. Jesus walked up to them, but they were kept from recognizing him. Jesus asked them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there today? Jesus of Nazareth – he was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. He was sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. That was three days ago. And today, we have heard that those who go to the tomb cannot find Jesus there."

Jesus rebuked them, asking them, "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they walked along, the men urged Jesus to stay with them and share a meal. Much like a week earlier, he sat at the table, took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and then he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They went out, saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen!"