

## *The Rest of the Story*

It's late Thursday night, the fourteenth of the month of Nisan, A.D. 33.

Jesus is praying fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter, James, and John are sleeping. The Messiah isn't really going to die, is He? No, He's going to rescue Israel from the Romans. The mob is coming.

Judas is betraying Jesus with a kiss. The soldiers are arresting Him. Peter is fighting. Jesus is going peacefully. The disciples are fleeing. This isn't what was supposed to happen.

Annas is questioning Jesus. Someone nearby is striking Him, the first blow. Caiaphas is putting Him on trial before the chief priests. False witnesses are testifying against Him. Inside, the assembly is blindfolding Him, mocking Him, beating Him, and spitting on Him. Outside, Peter is denying Him.

It's early Friday morning, the fifteen of Nisan, A.D. 33. The Passover. The Jews should be remembering God's deliverance.

Instead, the chief priests are accusing Jesus before Pilate. Pilate is sending Jesus to Herod. Herod is questioning Jesus, mocking Him, and sending Him back to Pilate. Judas is hanging himself. None of this is what Judas expected either.

It's 9:00, mid-morning. Pilate is interrogating Jesus. The crowds are demanding Jesus's death. Pilate is having Jesus flogged. The soldiers are mocking Him, beating Him, and spitting on Him. They're leading Him to Golgotha. The women are crying.

The soldiers are nailing Him to the cross. Jesus is forgiving them.

The soldiers are dividing Jesus's garments. Bystanders are making fun of Him. The criminals are insulting Him. Can't their Messiah prove Himself?

It's noon. Darkness is falling.

Then it's 3:00. Jesus is crying out to God. The crowd is waiting. Jesus is breathing His last. The veil of the temple is tearing. The earth is shaking.

Rocks are breaking. Saints are rising from the dead. The disciples, from a distance, are watching. Their hope is dying.

It's evening. A soldier is piercing Jesus's side. The crowds are leaving. Joseph and Nicodemus are burying the body.

It's over. He failed. He wasn't the Messiah they thought He was.

Evil has won.

It's Saturday, the sixteenth of Nisan, A.D. 33. A sabbath. The chief priests are setting a guard on the tomb. The women are resting. The disciples are mourning. Jesus wasn't able to save them after all.

It's early Sunday morning, the seventeenth of Nisan, A.D. 33. Mary is standing at the empty tomb. She's talking to the angel. Could his news be true? Peter and John are running to the tomb. They're looking in. Where is the body?

Mary is turning. She's clinging to someone. If not the gardener, then who?

Two disciples are talking to another traveler on the way to Emmaus. Their hearts are burning. Who is this with them?

It's evening. The eleven are hiding. Someone's appearing to them. He's showing them His hands and His side. Amazement is dawning. Their faith is igniting.

It's Jesus! He arose! It's not over! The Messiah is alive!

Jesus has won.

\*\*\*

The crucifixion was vital to God's plan of salvation. By sacrificing Himself on the cross, Jesus made atonement for our sins and ratified the new covenant. He forever altered the relationship between God and man. But the gospel story doesn't end there.

If it had, redemption would be incomplete. We too would die, physically and spiritually, with no hope of life. As Paul wrote, "For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

Praise God that there is more to the story: Jesus rose! The Son of God conquered death, both for Himself and for us. When He walked out of the open tomb, He blazed the path for us to walk into heaven. Jesus's resurrection was the consummation and turning point of God's great work to redeem mankind.

The story of salvation is still being written, moving toward the final climax, and we're a part of it. Sometimes our lives seem dark and hopeless, like those days right after Jesus's death. But the resurrection brought victory out of defeat! A better day is coming. Evil cannot hold us. With Jesus, we are more than conquerors.

"When this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

*Melissa McFadden*