

Easter 2026
People who were there.

Introduction:

1. This is not the traditional Easter message
2. We will look at the death and resurrection of Christ through the eyes of those who were there!
3. Looking down through the ages, we will see and feel what they saw and felt, learn from their responses, and gain a fresh perspective, and so revolutionize our perspectives of the familiar
4. So, I invite you to journey to the dusty speck to see what happened.

Malchus – Surprise:

1. Master and Commander - HMS Surprise - *Surprise is on our side.*
2. We read that Malchus, a High Priest servant, was in the group that came to arrest Jesus
3. Confronted by a huge force armed with a single blade, Peter waded into the mob, genuinely willing to give his life for his Master.
4. **Luke 22:50-51: “And one of them (Peter) struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man's ear and healed him.**
5. Malchus was completely surprised - attacked by a fisherman and healed by the man he came to arrest.
6. Could it be that his master Caiaphas was wrong about Jesus?
7. As he was healed, Malchus was exposed to four profound truths.
 - a. *God's purposes triumphed over Caiaphas' purposes.*
Matthew 26:52-54: “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will put more than twelve legions of angels at my disposal at once? But how would the Scriptures that say it must happen this way be fulfilled?”
 - b. *Jesus wasn't the enemy He was portrayed to be.*
- Mark 14:48-49: “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? I was with you every day, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”
 - c. *Malchus wasn't protecting Israel—Jesus was.*
- Luke 22:53b: “But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”
 - d. *There was more going on than Malchus knew.*
- John 18:11: “Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”
9. I have wondered what the impact of that night had on Malchus
10. If we were honest enough with ourselves about our true nature, God's expressions of love and care for us should surprise us as well.
11. **Romans 5:8: “But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Now that is a surprise!

Judas Iscariot – Suffering:

1. There are moments when a person chooses to walk a path that's not ordinary, and then the consequences of those choices matter
2. We can confront sin and the power of our choices to corrupt, distract, and destroy.
3. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ, bringing shame and dishonor to his name for all eternity because he yielded himself to the power of sin.
4. This average person who traveled with the Son of God during the days of His public ministry experienced the greatest privileges ever.
5. Some of the privileges Judas enjoyed as one who walked with the Messiah included...
 - a. *The privilege of exposure – what he heard and saw.*

- b. *The privilege of involvement - Luke 10:17-20: "The seventy-two returned with joy and said "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*
- c. *The privilege of responsibility*
- 6. His downward spiral may have begun when he became disenchanted.
- 7. **John 12:5-6 "Why was this perfume not sold and the money given to the poor ..."**
- 8. **Luke 22:3 and John 13:27: "Satan filled his heart."**
- 9. This is a vivid reminder that exposure to spiritual things, even the presence of Christ, is not the equivalent of a true relationship with God.
- 10. Judas leaned forward and kissed Jesus—the Greek verb is strong and emphatic. This means that Judas embraced Jesus and kept kissing Him.
- 11. The conclusion of Judas' story:
 - a. *Regret*
 - b. Self-destruction - **Matthew 27:5: "And he went away and hanged himself."**
 - c. *Judgment* – **In Acts 1:25**, Luke tells us that Judas' ultimate end was not at the end of a rope but in the place of judgment.
- 12. Judas was destroyed by the power of sin, a power seen clearly in his self-destructive choices.
- 13. Story of the Sicilian cathedral mural

The Centurion at the Cross – Significance:

- 1. The soldier is the centurion who oversaw the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
- 2. Four prominent Centurions in the New Testament
 - a. *The Centurion at Capernaum – Luke 7* – he desired his servant to be healed
 - b. *The Centurion at Caesarea (Cornelius) – Acts 10*
 - c. *The Centurion of Paul's shipwreck – Acts 27-28*
 - d. *The Centurion at the Cross —Matthew 27.*
- 3. **Matthew 27:54: When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"**
- 4. *This was no ordinary Execution.*
- 5. *It was no ordinary Power.*
- 6. *It was no ordinary Confession.* - He was the Son of God.
- 7. The foot of the cross is a place of significance where paupers and princes find level ground to kneel and embrace the Christ who died.

Joseph of Arimathea – Sorrow:

- 1. What to do with the severely brutalized Jesus from the beatings and the cross?
- 2. In Judaism, there were strict guidelines for the burial - how that was and was not to occur—particularly on the eve of a Sabbath.
- 3. **Luke 23:50-52: "Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body."**
- 4. Joseph was a man of Fear
- 5. When we allow fear to be the driving force behind our choices, the consequences can be devastating.
- 6. Fear can become a force that enslaves our hearts, resulting in the pain of regret. It leaves us haunted by the "what ifs" and "if only."
- 7. **John 19:38: "Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders..."**
- 8. What are you afraid of?

9. **2 Timothy 1:7: "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline."**
10. One of the Lord's favorite reminders to his men was, **"Fear not!"**
11. He demonstrated courage during Jesus' trial when he didn't consent to the Savior's death.
12. Joseph was a man who cared.
13. **John 19:38-42: "Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who had visited Jesus earlier that night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices in linen strips. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."**
14. Just a physical struggle of removing the battered and bloody body of the Savior from the cross would've been a gruesome one.
15. Joseph and his family ended up as missionaries in England.
16. Will you allow fear and regret to be replaced by the Savior's love and power, or will they define you?

The Women - Strength:

1. It was primarily the women, not the men, who displayed the strength of devotion and commitment to walk with Jesus through His final hours.
2. Except for John, the disciples were not at the foot of the cross.
3. In the time of Christ, women were not highly prized
4. **John 19:25: "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene."**
5. Who were the women numbered among the followers of Jesus?
 - **Mary** – the mother of Jesus
 - **Salome** was the mother of James and John, who were cousins of Jesus.
 - **Mary, Cleopas's wife**, was the mother of James the Less
 - **Mary Magdalene** – often portrayed as a prostitute - but incorrect.
 - **Joanna** was Chuza's wife, Herod's household steward.
6. **Luke 23:55-56: "The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes."**
7. The Gospels record the presence of women at the tomb on Sunday morning, the day of Resurrection.
8. **Luke 24:2-10: "They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."**
9. In their grief, they found the tomb empty, but their grief turned to terror and amazement.
10. **Matthew 28:8-10: "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly, Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; they will see me there."**

Emmaus Road Travelers:

1. We look at the two disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus.
2. Have you seen the power of the Word of God in action?
3. God still speaks to us today through His written Word, the Bible.

4. On Resurrection Day, there were questions and confusion.
5. All these two men thought they knew and believed had been swept away in a whirlwind of events that had left their Messiah dead.
6. But the power of the Word of God, spoken to them by the Son of God, would lift the fog
7. **Luke 24:13-16: "Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him."**
8. In the evening, Jesus appeared to the disciples - he suddenly stood in their midst while they were hiding behind locked doors.
9. **Luke 24:17-20: "He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know what has happened there in recent days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him..."**
10. **Luke 24:21-24: "...but we had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this occurred. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."**
11. On Resurrection Day, there was communion and wonder.
12. **Luke 24:28-32: "As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So, he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, thanked them, broke it, and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, they recognized him, and he disappeared. 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?"**
13. But in another town, Christ took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them.
14. And in that moment, their world was transformed.
15. Unlike any other moment, they truly, deeply, personally understood. Jesus was alive
16. That Word must burn in our hearts.
17. We need hearts ready to hear, and like those men on the Emmaus Road, our hearts will burn within us as the powerful Word of the living God transforms our lives into the image of Christ.
18. What they saw in real life, we see in the Scripture.
19. We have heard, and we have believed.
20. As the pair on the Emmaus Road experienced the faith and reality of a burning heart, we, too, must burn with passion to know Him.