

The Story of Easter

Jerusalem bustled. The inns and guest houses for miles around were full to bursting, and tents crowded the slopes below the city.

In the shadow of the Golden Gate, we sampled fish and fruit. Merchants sold bleating sheep and cooing doves; pilgrims exchanged their money for Tyrian coin and haggled over the price of prayer shawls and shofars. The market was so busy that it was impossible to walk without being jabbed by elbows or trampled by sandals.

That's when we overheard the gossip.

"The King of the Jews is here! Move aside!"

Gabbling and pushing, the crowd drew back. Some laid palm fronds on the dusty road. Whoever was coming, he had to be really important.

Then, we saw him: a man riding on a donkey. He didn't look rich, powerful or special in any way, but all around, the crowd began to shout, "Blessed is the king! Peace in heaven!"

"Who is he?" said a voice, and answers flew from every side.

"He's a teacher!"

"No, he's a madman!"

"Wherever he goes, he cures the sick, the deaf and the blind."

"Wherever he goes, he angers people."

"He's the Messiah – the Son of God."

"Look, he's going into the temple. Let's hear what he has to say."

Some doubted him, some were devoted to him, but everyone swept eagerly into the temple. Little did anyone know that at that very moment, a few streets away, a plot was brewing – a plot against Jesus.



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While the crowd heard Jesus preach, the High Priest Caiaphas met with all the elders of the Jewish temple. They had gathered at his palace to discuss how they could arrest Jesus – arrest him and kill him.

"That young upstart! Who does he think he is?"

"He says that he's the Son of God!"

"He must be dealt with before he turns the people against us."

Caiaphas called for order. "The people are listening to this man, and soon, they will stop listening to us. I have been High Priest too long to let this commoner steal my power. If we condemn Jesus publicly, the crowd will turn on him. But first, we must find him when he is alone."

That's when a man arrived at their gathering. His name was Judas Iscariot, and he was one of Jesus' disciples.

"What will you give me if I agree to betray Jesus?" asked Judas.

Caiaphas counted out thirty silver pieces into Judas' palm.

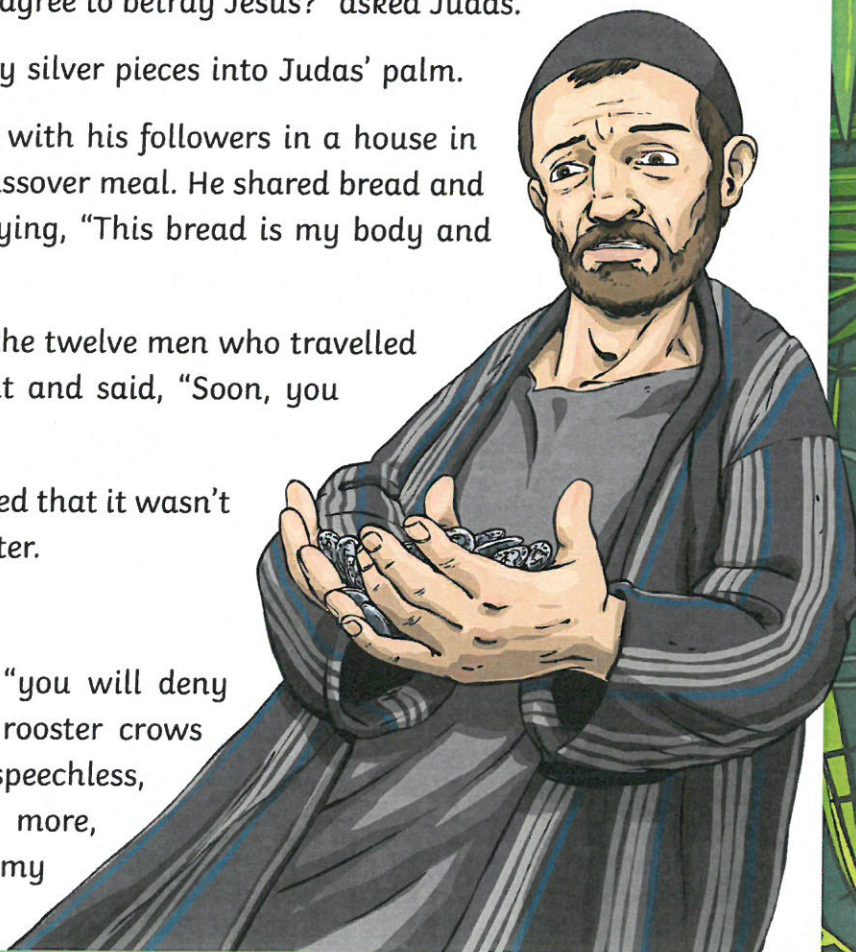
Soon afterwards, Jesus sat with his followers in a house in the city as they ate their Passover meal. He shared bread and wine with the disciples, saying, "This bread is my body and this wine is my blood."

Then, he looked around at the twelve men who travelled with him wherever he went and said, "Soon, you will all leave me."

Shocked, the disciples insisted that it wasn't so. None was surer than Peter.

"My Lord, I never would!"

"Peter," said Jesus kindly, "you will deny me three times before the rooster crows tonight." As Peter sat speechless, Jesus continued. "What's more, one person here will be my



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betrayer. This is the last supper that I will share with you, for tomorrow I will die."

The disciples fell silent.

Then, Jesus said, "But after that, I shall rise and go north, to Galilee. Meet me there."

Just imagine the looks on the disciples' faces then!



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Questions

1. Tick **two** things that were sold at the market.

- ☐ fish
- ☐ coins
- ☐ prayer shawls
- ☐ sandals

2. Match each noun with the word that describes it.

cooing

Golden

bleating

sheep

doves

Gate

3. What did people lay on the ground? Why do you think they did this?

4. What was unusual about the man for whom the crowd were cheering?

5. Find and copy a word from the extract which means 'talking quickly and excitedly'.

6. Explain why the author says that 'answers **flew** from every side'.

7. Look at this extract from the text.

"The King of the Jews is here! Move aside!"

Some doubted him, some were devoted to him, but everyone swept eagerly into the temple.

What does the word 'swept' tell you about the way in which the crowd was moving?

8. Why do you think the crowd wanted to hear what Jesus had to say?

9. What impression do you get of Judas Iscariot? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

10. How do you think the disciples felt at the end of this extract? Use evidence to explain your answer.
