

Jesus is killed - the crucifixion (Matthew 27)

Jesus and his apostles (his closest followers) shared a special meal. During the meal, Jesus said that he knew that one of his friends there would betray him – that means that he would not be a good friend but would become an enemy; he knew that it was Judas. When the meal was finished, they went out for a walk in an orchard of olive trees and Jesus went to be on his own to pray to his Father, God. At some point, Judas had left them and gone away. Then Jesus returned to the apostles and he was not at all surprised to see a group of people armed with clubs and swords approaching and Judas was with them.

Judas came up to Jesus and he said, “Jesus!” Then he kissed Jesus on the cheek. That could have been just a normal way to say hello but actually it was a signal to the soldiers. They marched up to Jesus and took him as prisoner. Jesus went with them without making any trouble.

All night long, Jesus’s attackers asked him angry questions. Then, early in the morning, they took him to see a man called Pontius Pilate. Pilate was a very important man who was in charge of part of the country. He worked for the Roman Emperor.

The chief priests accused Jesus of things he hadn’t done and Pilate told Jesus to defend himself, but Jesus didn’t argue with them. He just stood there quietly. Pilate knew that Jesus hadn’t done anything wrong. He wanted to set him free.

Pilate knew that there was a man in prison who had done lots of things wrong and deserved to be punished. His name was Barabbas.

In Jerusalem, there were big crowds of people who had come to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, which was celebrated every year. At this special festival time, Pilate would set a prisoner free.

Pilate called out to the crowds, “Who do you want me to set free, Jesus or Barabbas?”

“Barabbas,” the crowds shouted back.

Pilate said to them, “Jesus has done nothing wrong; he doesn’t deserve to be punished”.

“We want Barabbas, we want Barabbas,” the crowd shouted, their voices getting louder and louder.

Pilate was frightened that the crowds would start fighting if he didn’t give them what they wanted. So he set Barabbas free from prison. Jesus was punished instead.

The soldiers took Jesus away to a hill and he was nailed to a cross made of wood. People followed them and crowded round to see what was going on and what would happen. Jesus friends were there, too.

Even though it was only lunch time, the sky turned as dark as night. It stayed like that for three hours. The ground shook, too. It was a strange time. Back in the temple, there was an enormous curtain, really thick and heavy and it tore from the top to the bottom. Then Jesus died.

Later that day, a man called Joseph, who was a follower of Jesus, went and asked Pilate for Jesus’s body. Joseph took Jesus’s body and put it into a cave made out of rock and an enormous stone was rolled across the opening of the cave. Mary Magdalene and another Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb and watching, sadly.