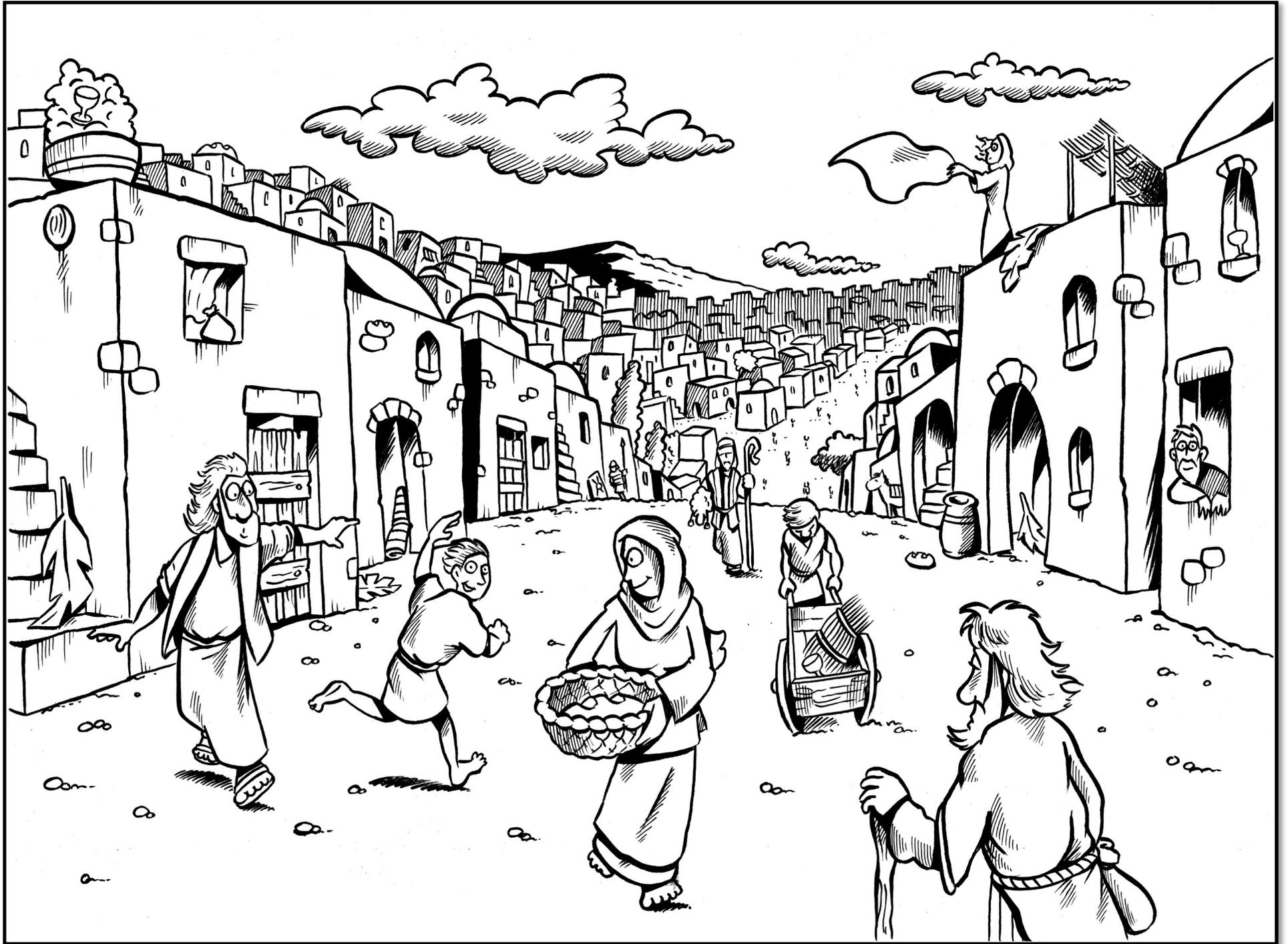




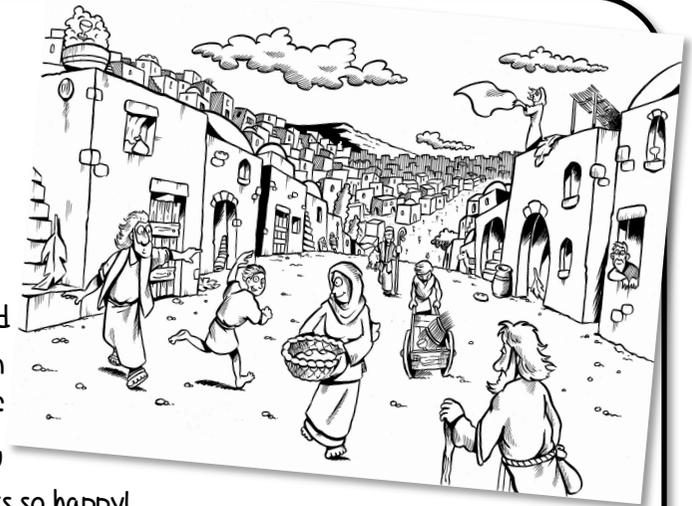
Easter Scene One



Easter Scene One

Thursday evening, Jerusalem

Shalom! (That's how we Jews greet each other). My name's Joel. That's me in the picture, running around earlier today, looking excited because of the Passover festival. It's always my favourite time of year, when Jewish people come to Jerusalem from their towns and cities for a great celebration. You can see some of them in the picture, too. Everyone is getting ready for the special evening meal when we remember how God's people had a miserable time being slaves in Egypt, but then God rescued them. No wonder everyone looks so happy!



But things have changed since then. Come closer and I'll tell you what happened.

My family normally gathers for the feast around a table in the upstairs room of a building that my father owns. But this year some friends of that man Jesus – the one everyone is talking about – came and asked if *they* could use it. Earlier this week, he rode into the city on a donkey. I joined the crowd that day to welcome him, shouting and waving palm branches because some say he is the king that God promised from ancient times. So when I heard that he and his followers were going to eat the special Passover meal in our room, I crept in and hid behind a tall water jar just to get a glimpse of him.



It was all a bit strange. Jesus and his friends talked about how, long ago in Egypt, the people made loaves of bread without yeast to take with them when they escaped. But Jesus broke a loaf in half and said, 'This is my body, given for you.' What's *that* all about?



Then it got even more weird. They got to the part of the feast where they drank red wine to remind them that God's people were saved from death by putting some lamb's blood on the doorposts of their homes. It was a sign that they belonged to God and would be kept safe. But - you won't believe this - Jesus took the cup of wine and said, 'This is my blood, poured out for you.' As though *he* was the lamb that saved everyone's lives.

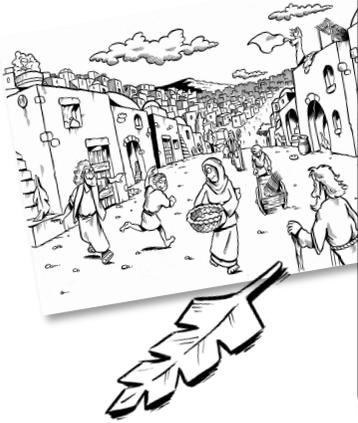


By this time, I wasn't feeling so happy any more. It seemed like something bad was going to happen to this kind man. So I tiptoed outside. It wasn't long before one of Jesus' followers, Judas, came out too. He stood in the shadows, muttering to himself, and took out his money bag. He seemed to be counting silver coins. Then he rushed away.



What on earth is going on?

Easter Scene One



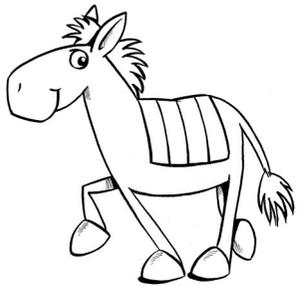
Matthew ch 21 v1-11

Mark ch 11 v1-11

Luke ch 19 v28-40

John ch 12 v12-19

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Jewish people had come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival.
What were they celebrating?

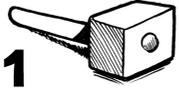
Why did the crowd shout and wave palm branches when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey?



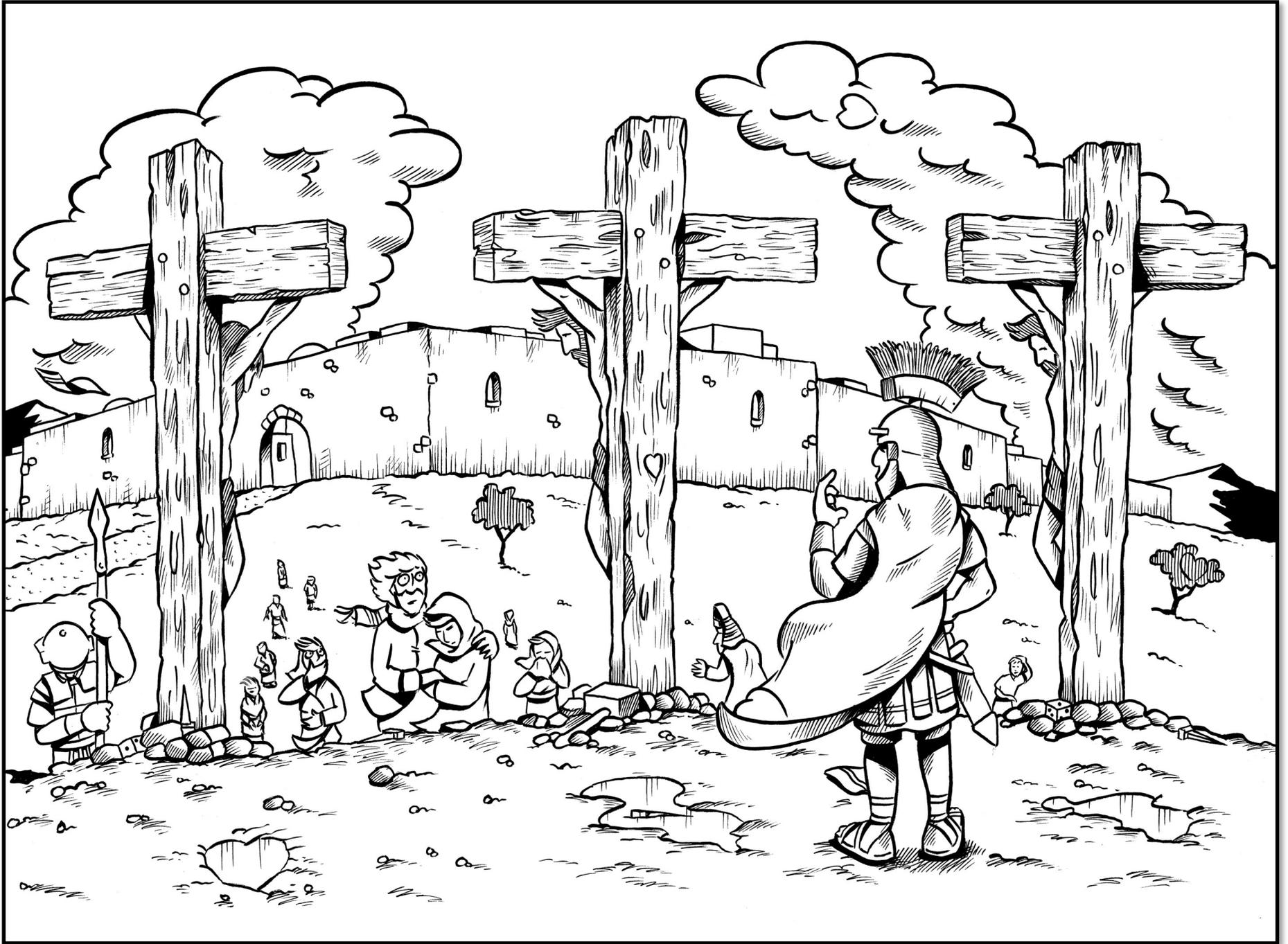
What did Jesus say when he broke the bread? Why do you think he said it? In the past, how had blood been used to save God's people from death?



Why do you think Christians today still remember this special meal that Jesus shared with his disciples?



Easter Scene Two



Easter Scene Two

Jerusalem, Friday evening

What an awful day! Now I know why Judas was counting his coins. The religious leaders of our city paid him to lead a bunch of armed soldiers to a garden where Jesus was praying. They arrested Jesus. His so-called followers abandoned him and Peter, who's supposed to be one of his best friends, said he didn't even know him.

Early this morning, Jesus was taken before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and also to King Herod. Neither of them could find anything that he'd done wrong, and he was going to be set free. But our Jewish leaders all shouted out that he should be killed on a cross, the most terrible punishment for murderers and thieves. And Pontius Pilate gave in.

Some of the Roman soldiers whipped Jesus and made a crown out of long, spiky thorns. They pressed it onto his head and put a purple cloth around him like a cloak, as though he really was the king we had all hoped for. But they did it to make fun of him.

By nine o'clock, you can see from the picture what happened. Jesus was pinned to a cross alongside two criminals, one on each side. It was too horrible to watch so I stayed behind the crosses, but I could see the hammer that had been used to drive the nails into their hands. I felt sick about it, but do you know what Jesus did? He prayed to God and said, 'Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing.'

 Forgive them. Even the Roman soldiers who sat and played a game with dice to see who would win Jesus' clothes, while he was in such terrible pain. Forgive them. Can you believe that?

One of Jesus' followers was there in front of the cross. John, I think they call him. He was with Jesus' mum. Can you imagine how she felt? They were holding each other up. Poor Jesus stayed on that cross for six whole hours. And something weird happened – the whole sky went dark from midday until three in the afternoon. Then Jesus said something. I could hardly make it out at first, because his voice was so cracked and full of pain.

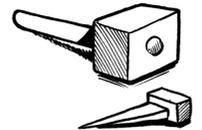
'It is finished,' he said. As though his work was done, or he had paid a debt.

And then he died.

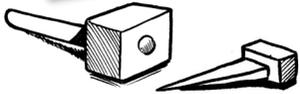
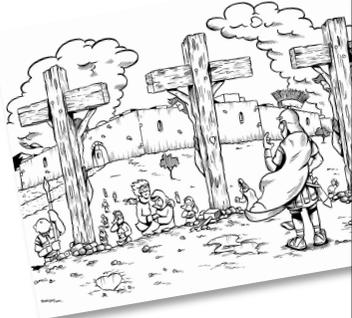


The Roman centurion near me gasped, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'

But I don't see how that could be true, because you can't kill God, can you? I think Jesus was right. It's all finished. Everything he taught us about love and freedom, and how God's kingdom was coming. It's over.



Easter Scene Two



Matthew ch 27 v32-56

Mark ch 15 v21-41

Luke ch 23 v32-49

John ch 19 v16-30

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Why do you think Jesus' friends abandoned him and said they didn't know him?

Jesus was punished as a criminal. What had he done wrong?

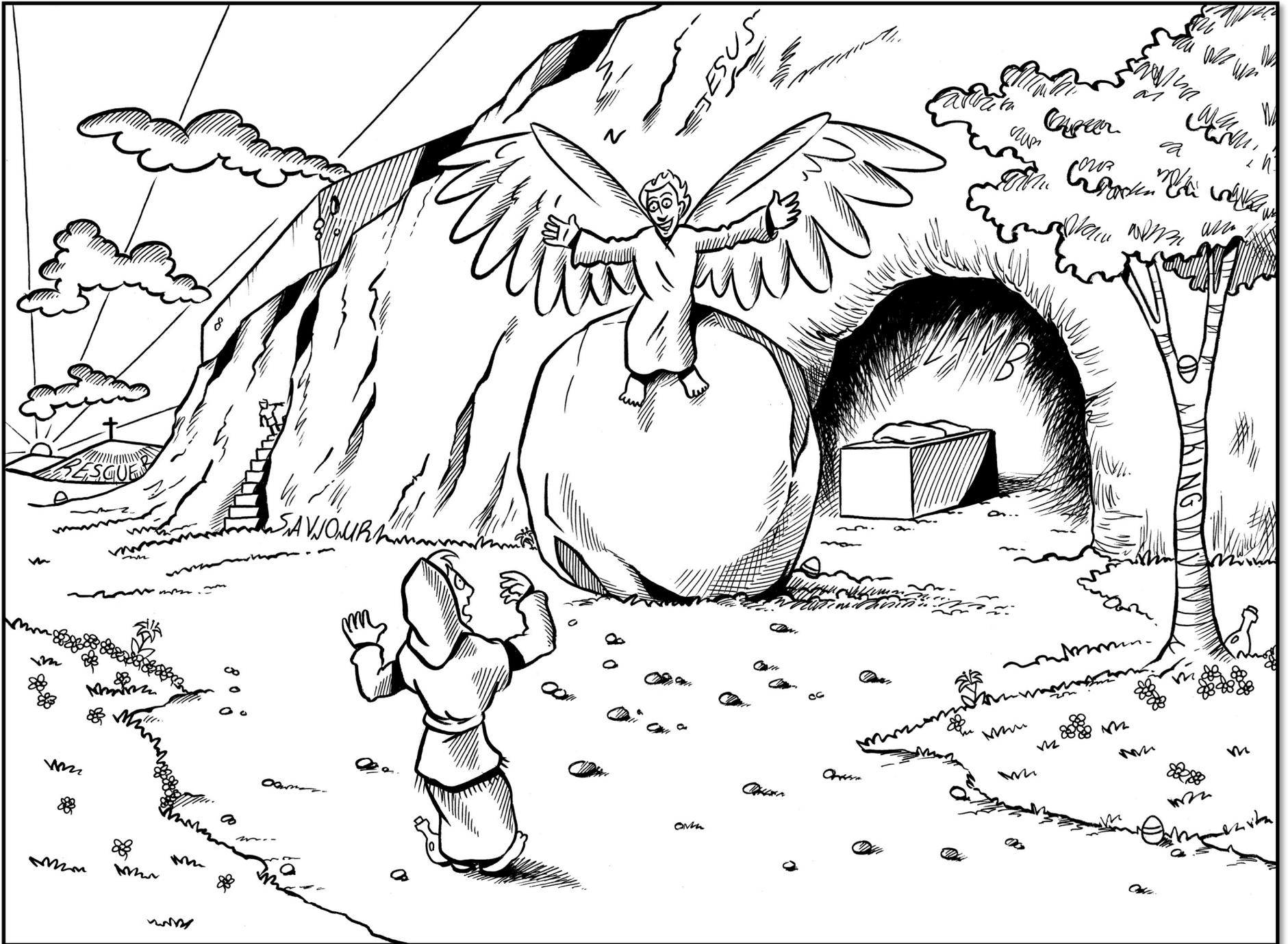
Why did the soldiers put a crown of thorns and a purple robe on Jesus?

Who do you think Jesus was talking about when he said, 'Father, forgive them'? What else did Jesus say from the cross?



5 names for Jesus

Easter Scene Three



Easter Scene Three

Sunday morning, Jerusalem

The most amazing, astonishing, astounding thing has happened! I can hardly believe it, but I saw it with my own eyes and the whole city is buzzing with the news.



On Friday, after Jesus died on the cross, two of his friends took his body and wrapped it in linen cloths filled with spices. Normally this is the women's job, but they were in a hurry because our Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday evening. It's a day of rest, and no-one is allowed to do any work until Sunday. They put it in a tomb dug out of the rock in a garden and it was sealed with a massive stone, as all our tombs are.

All through Friday night and Saturday, I was numb with shock. It was impossible to sleep, so I got up before daylight this morning and came to the tomb. I don't know why – I suppose I just wanted to see for myself that Jesus had really gone, and to think about all the things people had said about him. They said he would be our king, saviour and rescuer. I remembered what Jesus had said at the Passover meal, about his body and blood, as though he was the lamb that was killed to save people from death. He must have known what would happen to him. How could he bear it? I sat in the shadows and cried.

Suddenly, there was a dazzling light. It half-blinded me at first, so it took a while to make out what was happening. Mary was there – not Jesus' mother, but one of his closest friends – and she was shielding her eyes. The huge stone had been moved, and someone was sitting on it, shining bright white like a flash of lightning. I don't mind admitting, I was terrified. It had to be an angel; there's no other explanation for it.

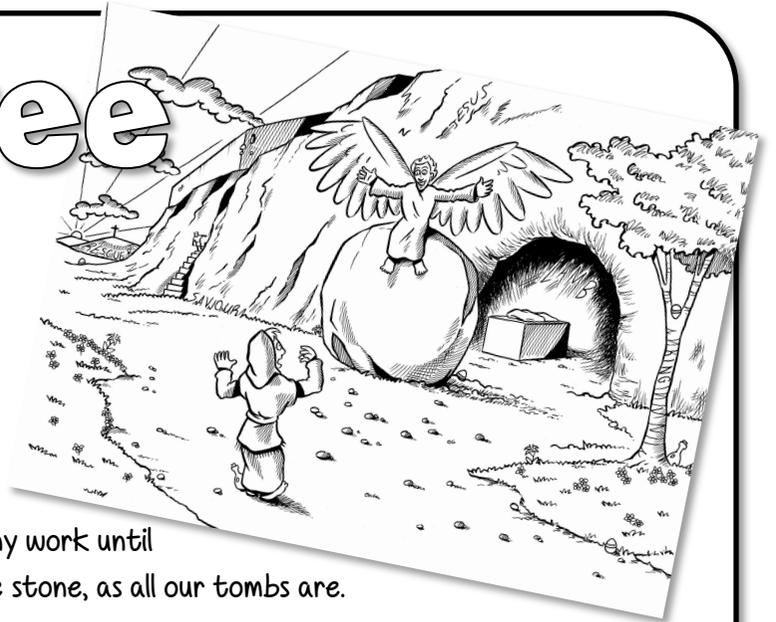
And the tomb was open.

"Why do you look for the living in the place of the dead?" the angel said to Mary. "Jesus is not here. He has risen, just as he said. See where he lay."

Then he was gone, and the gentle light of dawn began to creep into the garden. The air was scented with the lilies that grew there. I could just see, inside the tomb, the linen burial cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus' body and head.



As Mary ran away to tell the other followers, I was left staring at a bird's nest that had fallen to the ground. One of the eggs was just beginning to hatch – a new life. And as the sun rose, I knew without a doubt that nothing would ever be the same again.



Easter Scene Three



Matthew ch 28 vl-10

Mark ch 16 vl-14

Luke ch 24 vl-43

John ch 20 vl-31

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People said they thought Jesus would be their saviour and rescuer.
What do you think they needed rescuing from?

How do you think Mary felt when she saw the angel and heard what he said?

Why do you think the burial cloths were still inside the tomb?
Why is this an important detail in the Bible account?

Why do you think Easter is such an important celebration for Christians?

