

# The Son has Risen!

*John 20:1-18 NIV*

*Bible Lesson & Activities for Children*



**THE SUNDAY SCHOOL STORE**

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# The Son Has Risen!

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Easter is a wonderful time to celebrate the joy of the Resurrection...but it's also important to remember the darkness before dawn. Going through hard times can make the happy moments even better! This lesson describes several elements with contrasts to exemplify how we can have extra hope even when things are tough. Just as darkness makes the day brighter or cold days make summer warmer, the sorrow of Good Friday paves the way for an incredible and exuberant Easter! We recognize that life includes sadness and evil, but Jesus conquered death, and God has already won the victory!

The story of Easter is a great reversal...what a contrast the message of Jesus is from the punitive rules of the Law! Christ did not come to abolish the law, of course, but to fulfill it, and that happened on the cross. He bore our sin and punishment, suffering in our place and satisfying the consequences we deserve. Because of that, we have the reassuring wonder of knowing that everything we do, have done, and will do is covered by His blood. What a blessing to know that He paid the price and redeemed us!

**Passage:** John 20:1-18

**Target Audience:** Kindergarten-6th grade

**Materials Needed:** Construction paper; paper plates; magazines; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; cups; string; ; Bibles.

## More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [Storytellers: Easter](#) from Crossroads Kids Club
- Watch the [The Story of Easter](#) from Saddleback Kids
- For more free Bible illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children's Coloring Pages](#)

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## Object Lesson (5 minutes)

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*Greet the children and invite them to sample some spicy or sour foods.*

Hello, children of God! Today I want to talk about contrasts. Do you know what that means? Things that contrast are different. You can tell that one is quite unlike the other. I have a few contrasting things for you to consider. First, I want you to try this. *Hand students a small sample of something slightly spicy or sour, perhaps a lemon wedge or cinnamon candy.* How is that? Sort of leaves a funny taste in your mouth, doesn't it?

Okay, now I have this. *Hand students a small piece of candy or sweeter treat.* That's a little tastier, isn't it? The sweet thing tastes even sweeter after you have had something you didn't like as much. The contrast, or difference, makes it stand out. There are lots of things in life like that. For instance, seasons. I do NOT like it when we have cold, gloomy, winter months (*consider holding up a picture of these in example*). But when things change and it's finally spring again, it's even better! I love warm weather. And having to suffer through the cold actually makes me appreciate the warm sunshine even more. Or think about colors. Hold up a darker and brighter object. Looking at a darker color will make a bright one appear even brighter. Or think about a story you've read, or a movie you have watched. Sometimes there are sad parts in those, and it can even be hard to read or watch. But then the happy moments burst back in, and fill you with joy, and you hardly even remember the sad part anymore!

This reminds me of the wonderful story of Easter. Only it wasn't a make-believe book or movie. The events we celebrate at Easter really, truly happened. Jesus was killed. He suffered and died, and people mocked Him, beat Him up, and crucified Him. His disciples were heartbroken. They had thought this was the answer to everything, and that Jesus would rescue them and be a hero. They didn't understand or expect what was happening.

They thought it was all over. Good Friday was a dark, sorrowful day. But what a contrast it was on Easter morning! The women who went to the tomb were in mourning, thinking that they were going to anoint a dead body. Jesus wasn't in the tomb, though. He was alive! Really, fully alive! After that devastating Friday and Saturday, Sunday must have seemed incredible. What a wonderful change Easter made!

And Easter makes a huge difference for us. It makes all the difference! Because Jesus rose again from the dead, He conquered death and gave us the hope of new life. We know death is not the end, but that we will rise again, too! If we believe in Jesus, we will be with Him forever someday. This is a wonderful thing. It reminds us that even in tough times, He is with us. There will be hard times in our lives. There is evil in the world. We will face sadness, loss, and challenging things. Jesus promises to be with us always, through bad times and good. The hard moments just make the happy times even brighter and better! Even though life can be rough, Jesus has already won the victory. Because of Easter, we have the hope of the resurrection, not just of Jesus, but hope for our lives, too. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Let's pray and thank God for Jesus and the hope of eternal life?

**Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)**

Dear God,

Thank you for sending Jesus

Thank you for the hope of the resurrection

And the joy of Easter.

Help us to trust in you always

And look forward to your many blessings.

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

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## Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)

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He is risen! Easter is a fun and wonderful holiday to celebrate with kids. It's important to emphasize the real reasons for Easter, of course, over the bunnies and eggs. But there are plenty of fun ways to share the story. Open with some activities or discussions to spark thought and introduce themes. Here are some ideas:

- Resurrection eggs: place special items representing parts of the Easter Story inside plastic eggs. Have students open one egg at a time, and share the story as you go (for instance, a rock for the stone at the tomb, crackers for the last supper, etc.).
- Jelly Bean Prayer: Explain the story with the colors of jelly beans, using different colors to represent parts of the crucifixion and Resurrection (for instance, green for the Garden of Gethsemane, red for the blood of Christ, pink for the morning sunrise).
- Run to the tomb relay: Have children engage in a simple relay race, going back and forth across a room or playing area. Instead of tagging a neighbor, have them shout "He is risen!" before the next contestant goes.
- Creative storytelling: in place of (or in addition to) the regular read story, consider something more dramatic and creative. Host an "interview" with a first century character from the narrative, or dress up and give a monologue as Mary Magdalene, Peter, or another character.
- "He is...risen!" Play a variation on "Duck, Duck, Goose." Have students call out "He is, He is" instead of "duck, duck". Instead of "goose", tag students on the word "risen!"
- Easter charades: mime people or parts of the story for other students to guess.

Today's passage is the greatest story of them all! Jesus was killed, but He came back to life and now lives and reigns forever! He took our sins away, and someday we will be with Him in Heaven!

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## Main Bible Teaching

### (15 minutes)

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This passage could be a great one to encourage participation and have students act out parts. You could also read directly from the Bible, or read a storybook version of the Easter story. Even though children might be familiar with the basics of the story, it is still helpful to explain and emphasize the key components as you go.

**John 20:1-2 NIV** *Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. (2) So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"*

Provide a little extra background to the action here. Remind students of the sorrow of Good Friday, and how Jesus was beaten, mocked, and killed. His friends and followers were very sad. One of His close friends, Mary Magdalene, went to His tomb on Sunday morning to take care of the body. But when she got there, no one was inside! The stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. Mary thought someone must have moved or stolen the body. She must have been so upset! She went to Peter and John for help.

**Ask:** Have you ever had a family member, friend, or maybe a pet pass away? What did you do afterwards? How did you feel? (Note: This can be a tough question to consider, but is important, especially in setting the stage for the joy of the Resurrection).

**John 20:3-10 NIV** So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. (4) Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. (5) He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. (6) Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, (7) as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. (8) Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (9) (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) (10) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Peter and John ran to the tomb to see what Mary was talking about. It's interesting to note here that the author of this Gospel is John, the "other disciple" described in this passage. How nice of him to be sure to emphasize that he outran Peter and arrived first at the tomb! When the disciples arrived, they went inside, and found the clothes that had been wrapping the body, but no Jesus! The pieces might have been starting to finally come together for them. Jesus had told them He would rise again, but before this they hadn't quite understood or believed what He was saying. Seeing the empty tomb, it was becoming more real, but they still didn't do anything about it right away.

**Ask:** Have you ever heard news that seemed too good to believe?

**John 20:11-13 NIV** Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb (12) and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. (13) They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

Mary looked inside the tomb, and saw two angels. Somehow, this must have not frightened or phased her, perhaps because she was too distraught to fully understand or think about what was happening. She told the angels of her troubles: Jesus was missing, and she didn't know where to find Him. She just wanted to see the body one more time, to care for it and look at Jesus, even in death.

**John 20:14-18 NIV** *At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. (15) He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." (16) Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). (17) Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (18) Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

This is the big "reversal", the exciting and important turn-around that changes everything else. Point out that it is not entirely certain why Mary didn't recognize Jesus immediately. Maybe she was still too upset or her eyes too tear-blurred from weeping to know what was going on. Or perhaps she just wasn't expecting Jesus to show up. Another good possibility is that the appearance of Jesus had changed after coming back to life. He might have looked somewhat like his former body, but not quite the same. Whatever the reason, Mary didn't realize it was Him at first, and asked where Jesus was, so she could take Him away. That, too, is an ironic statement, because the body would have been much too heavy for her to carry. But all it took was Jesus saying her name for her to realize who she was talking to. Jesus instructed her to go tell the disciples what she had

seen, and to explain that Jesus would be going back to Heaven (although not right away; the 40 days post-Resurrection is another topic...). What a wonderful thing to share!

**Ask:** If you had really great news, who would you want to tell first? Have you ever heard something so great you couldn't wait to share it?

This is not the end of the story. Jesus came back to life, and later went up to Heaven. But He promised to be with us always. He is here now. We might not physically see Him like the disciples did, but He is in our presence, helping and guiding us! And because of His death and resurrection, we know death is not the end for us. One day, we will die, just as some of our loved ones have. But we will come back to life. We have the hope of being in Heaven with Jesus someday! We know that death is not the end, because Jesus conquered death and gives us new life! What a wonderful promise!

**Ask:** Why is the Resurrection so important to us and our faith?

Close with prayer, thanking God for Jesus and the hope we have in the Resurrection.

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## Craft Activities (15 minutes)

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The tomb is empty. The sun has risen and the SON has risen indeed! Jesus is alive! These crafts celebrate the hope and joy that Easter gives us. The Resurrection reminds us that death is never the end. We have Jesus with us, now and always! An “Empty Tomb Stone” provides a simple but powerful reminder of the exciting surprise of Easter morning. A “Sonrise Cross” is a colorful contrast in the dark and light that bring hope and happiness to the Resurrection.

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## Craft one: Empty Tomb Stone

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You will need:

- Paper plates
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Popsicle sticks
- Brad fastener
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors



Procedure:

1. Cut the bottom off of a paper plate.
2. Decorate the plate to look like a tomb, with “stone” colors and perhaps stickers.
3. Cut a doorway “stone” out of the bottom of the plate.
4. Cut a small square out of construction paper, to place behind the gap in the plate. Cut a cross, or glue popsicle sticks together as a cross.
5. Add verses and captions as desired.
6. Using a brad fastener, attach the “door” to the plate, so that the stone can be “rolled away” and reveal the inner color or picture.



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## Craft Two: Sunrise Cross

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You will need:

- Paper plate(s)
- Cross image (cut out or cardstock)
- Construction paper (dark and light colors)
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Crepe paper
- Glue or tape



Procedure:

1. Decorate a paper plate with sunrise-themed colors, such as reds, orange, pink, etc.  
Optional for extra effect: add watercolor.
2. Cut out a cross, preferably in a darker color. Place the cross in the foreground of the plate.
3. Add verses and captions.
4. Attach crepe paper streamers to add to the sunrise color scheme.
5. Add a hanger if desired. Remember the hope of Easter and the resurrection!

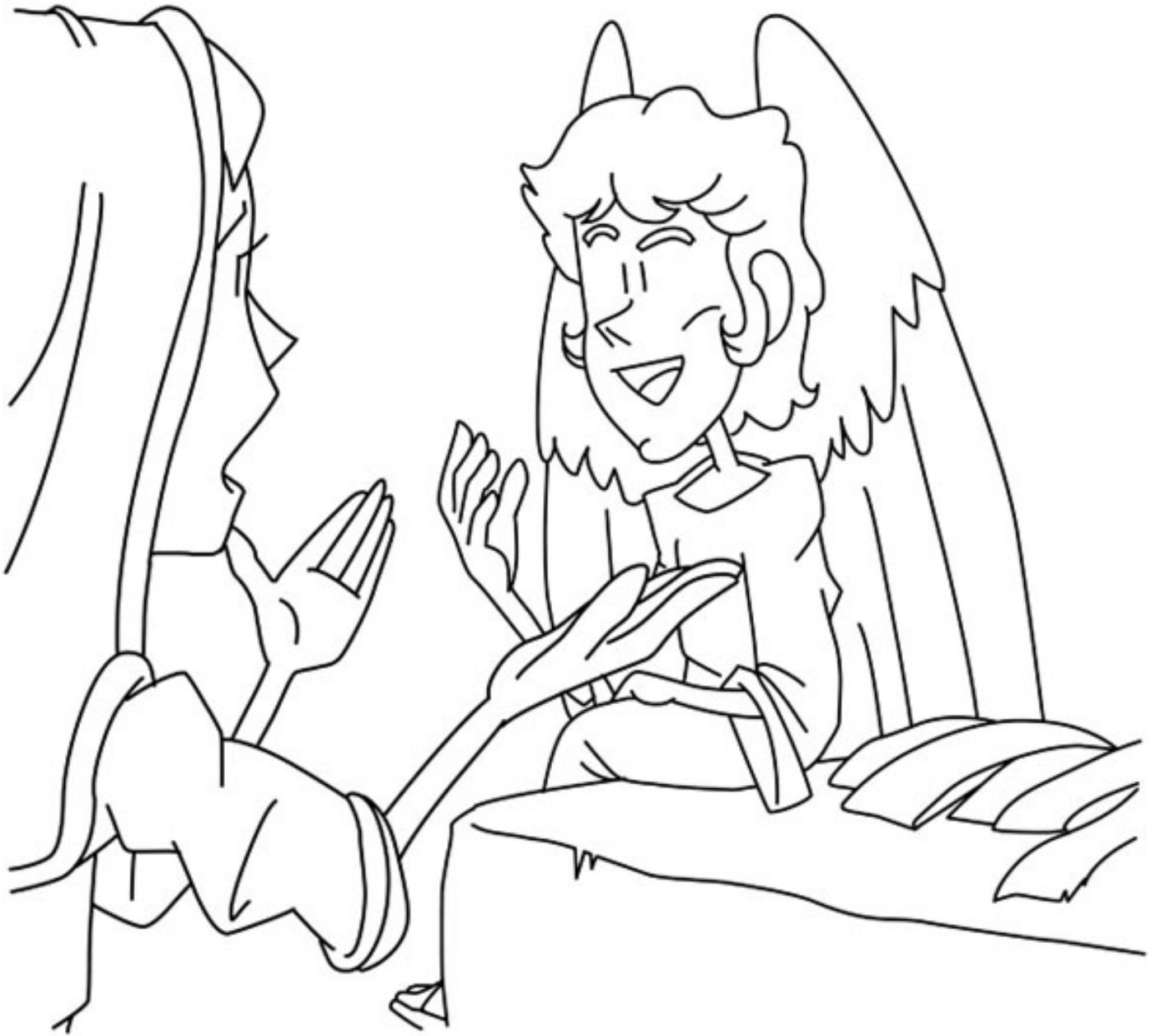
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## John 20:1 NIV

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*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.*





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## Word Search

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Risen - Tomb - Mary - Magdalene - Simon - Peter

Disciple - Weeping - Aramaic - Ascend - Father - Angel

T	W	R	J	Q	A	H	L	K	T	F
M	X	I	A	S	C	E	N	D	D	M
F	L	S	D	S	F	L	L	I	O	A
W	E	E	P	I	N	G	E	S	M	G
X	A	N	T	M	K	Y	X	C	J	D
G	R	X	E	O	P	O	Q	I	I	A
Q	A	H	A	N	M	E	A	P	R	L
B	M	D	C	I	A	B	T	L	I	E
F	A	T	H	E	R	K	K	E	B	N
I	I	X	O	V	Y	C	A	D	R	E
J	C	B	H	Z	A	N	G	E	L	Y

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## Word Search Answers

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# Bonus Teaching Skit

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## Were You There...?

### An Interview with a Roman Guard

*Premise: The interviewer (reporter, narrator, leader, etc.) has a special guest to help describe the events of the Resurrection: one of the soldiers who guarded the tomb of Jesus after the Crucifixion. Through this interview, the soldier will provide another perspective of the story and reveal the details as he describes how the experience impacted him.*

**Reporter:** Hello out there! I am so glad that you're here today. We are so excited about the opportunity to celebrate Easter. But what does it mean, anyway? It's not about candy or bunnies or eggs, but something much better, much more life changing and life-giving.

And to help me explain what this is all about, I have a special guest. He has traveled all the way from first-century Jerusalem, over two thousand years ago and many miles away! Thanks to the wonder of time travel (and our imaginations), we are about to meet a Roman soldier! Please help me welcome the chief of the guard, loyal protector of Rome and watchman over the tomb of Jesus Christ, General Petronius!!!

*Applause; **Petronius** enters*

**Reporter:** Hello sir. It's a pleasure to have you here today. Thank you so much for coming.

**Petronius:** Well, I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my experience with as many people as possible. Although I must say, these children have very strange ways of dressing. Is this how everyone is around here? What are those things on their feet?

**Reporter:** Well, those are called shoes, and they are much more practical for 21<sup>st</sup> century (location) than sandals or bare feet. We can talk more about that later, but what I really wanted to bring you out here for was to get a little more information about what you experienced. First, can you tell me a little more about your job?

**Petronius:** This is not a job; it's a way of life, a devotion to a cause bigger than ourselves. I was an officer of Rome. I was loyal to Caesar and served him at all costs. Roman soldiers are trained to fight, defend, and sacrifice for the state. We live and die for the empire. But some things have changed for me now, after what happened with this man Jesus.

**Reporter:** Yes, that's what I want to know more about! Had you heard of Jesus before His arrest and execution? Did you know anything about Him?

**Petronius:** I had heard of Him, yes. Another upstart trying to threaten the power of Rome, or so I thought. There were a lot of people who went wild for Jesus, following Him around, listening to His teachings, marveling at His miracles...He made some pretty incredible claims, though. He said He was the Son of God, and there were many who believed that. He said that love was the greatest commandment. Ha! Love can't control people. Love has no power. I wouldn't have paid much attention, if there hadn't been a political threat posed. I have a charge of 100 men; I don't have time for raving carpenters claiming to be Messiah. Some thought He had come to overthrow the government. No man could challenge the authority of Rome. But if anyone tried, they would be swiftly eliminated.

**Reporter:** So...Jesus was put on trial and taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Is that correct?

**Petronius:** That's right. See, it was the priests and Pharisees who really wanted Him gone. The Jewish leaders were the ones who saw the biggest threat from what Jesus was

saying and doing. But they didn't have the power to condemn someone to death. Only Rome had that power. So Pilate had to agree to hand over Jesus to be crucified.

**Reporter:** And from what I understand, crucifixion was the method that Romans would use for criminals, to set an example for other people to avoid further crime?

**Petronius:** That's right. It was pretty awful. Before we took Jesus to be crucified, we mocked Him, beat Him, spit on Him, and put a crown of thorns on His head, to make fun of what He was being killed for: being "king of the Jews." We were following orders, doing what we always did. *Pauses with remorse.* If only we knew... Jesus didn't even put up a fight. He let it all happen, like He accepted it. Like He had to die for some reason.

**Reporter:** And after all that, Jesus was crucified, and died?

**Petronius:** Yes. I'll spare you the details, but crucifixion is not a pretty thing. But while he was hanging on that cross, He spoke. One thing He said was "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That caught my attention. A man writhing in pain, dying, and taking time to speak forgiveness to His killers? A man that could love so deeply that even death could not deter Him?

(Pause)...When He finally died, the earth shook. It struck me that this was no mere man...He was either a lunatic, a liar...or Lord.

**Reporter:** What happened next?

**Petronius:** There was a rich man who asked Pilate for the body. So we gave it to him and he laid it in a stone tomb. I thought that was that, but it wasn't quite over...we received a request for a new assignment.

**Reporter:** An assignment? Oh, you mean the guard duty?

**Petronius:** Yes. Some of the priests were worried because Jesus said He would rise from the dead. They thought His followers might come and steal the body. So we were put on watch and secured the tomb. First, we rolled a six-foot stone over the entrance, and sealed it with the wax of the sacred Roman seal. Breaking that seal is punishable by death. Then our company took turns, four at a time for four hours at a time, standing guard. This was no slouch duty. If a prisoner escapes from a guard, the punishment is execution. If something had happened, we'd all forfeit our lives. If one of us fell asleep, it would be over. But guarding a dead man's tomb shouldn't have been too much of a challenge.

**Reporter:** It wasn't exactly a peaceful job, though, was it?

**Petronius:** Sunday morning, I was on watch. Some women were approaching the tomb, and I was ready to send them off and put them in their place. Suddenly, there was a blinding light and a huge earthquake. A terrifying figure came and rolled this thousand-pound stone away like a pebble, and then sat down on top of it. He looked like lightning. That was all I remember seeing for a while.

**Reporter:** Well, what do you think happened?

**Petronius:** I'm no scholar, but it doesn't take a genius to figure out. This earthquake was sent by God. An angel moved that stone. Jesus was no quack zealot saying crazy things. He truly was the Son of God, and He proved it that morning!

Still, though, we were in a tight spot. How could we explain this to the people who hired us? We were assigned to guard that tomb, in pain of death. The body was gone!

**Reporter:** So what did you do?

**Petronius:** We went to the city and told the chief priests what happened.

**Reporter:** Did they believe it? Did they know it was an angel, and change their ways and recognize that Jesus was the Lord and Messiah?

**Petronius:** (*Pause*) No. I don't know if it even crossed their minds. They were set on getting rid of Jesus, and nothing could convince them otherwise. The priests bribed us. They told us to tell people the disciples came and stole the body. They gave us a generous amount of money to spread this word around, and promised to keep us out of trouble.

What a joke! There's no way the disciples could have gotten past us, moved the stone, and taken the body. Impossible! Most of my fellow soldiers were willing to spread the lie, though, to keep the money and save their skins.

**Reporter:** What about you?

**Petronius:** I was a Roman soldier for over fifteen years. I've seen a lot in that time, and nothing could keep me from service to Caesar...until now. I've switched loyalties. If this man could cause earthquakes and angels and miracles, what else can He do? When Caesar dies, he isn't coming back to life. Rome won't last forever. I need to learn more about Jesus. I need to find His disciples and learn how I can be one, too. I don't know how I will do it, but I need to serve this God they know.

**Reporter:** But won't that mean giving up your job, your status...maybe even your life? What if they kill you, too?

**Petronius:** My life is worth nothing if I'm living for the wrong things. True, I am setting aside my position, and I will probably die. But I would rather die for Jesus than live for anything else.

**Reporter:** Petronius, thank you so much for that remarkable eyewitness account. I'll let you get back to your time now, and maybe you can tell Jesus hello for me, if you see Him!

**Petronius:** You are very welcome. And I'll let you talk to Him yourself. He's alive now, too, you know. Thank you, kids! *Exits*

**Reporter:** You know what, he's right! Jesus IS alive and He's still with us! He died on the cross to bear the pain of our sins. We were supposed to be punished and die, but Jesus did instead. He rose again so that we could have eternal life with Him. He promises that death is not the end. Someday we will be in Heaven. Meanwhile, His promised to be with us always, and He is. That's the hope and joy of Easter! Christ has come. Christ is risen. Christ will come again! Why don't we talk to Jesus right now? Let's say a prayer to thank God for the new life we have in Jesus.

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## Closing Prayer

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Dear God,

Thank you for sending your Son.

Thank you that He died for our sins

And rose again to give us life.

Thank you for always being with us.

Help us to love and follow you

And remember what Easter is all about.

Thank you for loving us.

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!