

## **Easter: what really happened?**

**A meditative reading of Luke's Passion Narrative.**

### ***Introduction***

Easter is little bit like Christmas in that we are often a little fuzzy about what actually happened. We know the big picture but the details are sketchy. Unlike Christmas, however, the bible has a lot to say about the important details of the events of those few days— the most important 3 days of human history! In this study we want to think through ‘what really happened?’ We are going to get the *whole* story by reading all of Lk 22-24 in three parts. Read each part silently and reflectively first of all before discussing your answers to the questions printed below.

Remember that prior to these events, Jesus has made the following statements:

And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Lk 9:22).

"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. (Lk 9:44-45).

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about. (Lk 18:31-34).

### ***Read Luke 22:1-62 (10 mins)***

1. What do you think is the significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover in the Easter story?
2. How does Jesus use the Passover meal to interpret his death for his disciples?

### ***Read Luke 22:63-23:56 (15 mins)***

1. What do you think is the significance of the two thieves incident (Lk 23:32-43)
2. *Optional question:* How is the theme of Jesus' innocence before his accusers developed in this chapter? How might this relate to the Passover background?
3. *Optional question:* There appear to be some rather unrelated details included in the narrative of Jesus' crucifixion (darkness over the land, temple curtain torn etc, Lk 23:44-45). Why do you think Luke has recorded them?

### ***Read Luke 24:1-53 (7 mins)***

1. Do you think that the disciples initial response to Jesus' resurrection was credible or faithless or something else?
2. How does Jesus interpret and explain his resurrection?

### ***Your Response***

Pray in response to what you have now understood about Easter, thanking God that Jesus did this all for you.

**Leaders Notes:**

The goal of this study is that we be deeply impacted by the events of Easter and their significance in our lives. This impact will be reflected in the time of responsive prayer ant the end of the study. Hence, this is a reflective kind of study rather than a discussion based study. There will be long periods of silent reading. Explain to the group at the beginning of the night that this will be a 'different' night, and one where everyone should feel relaxed about the silences during the reading times.

The leader should allow a set time for each reading (recommended in brackets after the title). Everyone will have different reading speeds. That's OK! The leader should encourage the faster readers to slow down so as not to skim over the details and take time to reflect on what they have read during the set reading times. It's not a race!

*The big idea of the study:* Jesus dies on the cross as an innocent substitute for us so that we will surely be in 'paradise' with him.