

The Easter Story

Characters:

Caleb	Tradesman 3	Girl in courtyard/Mary (Jesus' mum)
Bethel	Angry Crowd (5-10 actors)	Woman in courtyard
Jesus	Caiaphas	Man in courtyard
Peter	Priest 1	Mary Magdalene
James	Priest 2	Stage Crew
Judas	Malchus (Soldier 1)	Prisoner 1
John	Soldier 2	Prisoner 2
Thomas	Soldier 3	Crowd (to be made of anyone available, including the existing cast)
Andrew	Prisoner	
Matthew	Centurion	
Tradesman 1	Pilate	
Tradesman 2	Group in the courtyard	

Props:

Copper coins in a pouch.	Swords and clubs	Spear
Crosses made of bound garden canes	Cup	Curtain/large sheet of paper
Tables	Crown of thorns	Sponge on a stick
Palm leaves	Towel	Large white sheet
Rope Chairs	Bread	Toy horse/donkey
	Mock up tomb	
	Water bowl	

Scene 1

(Caleb and Bethel enter by walking along and stop centre stage)

Caleb: Oh hello, here you all are. Me and my sister Bethel have been walking for AGES trying to find you! We`ve got an amazing story to tell you all about an incredible man called Jesus. The first time me and my sister saw Jesus was around the hills of Mount Arbel near Magdala. He was speaking to a huge crowd. There were hundreds- THOUSANDS of people that all wanted to listen to what he had to say. He seemed to be a very wise man.

Bethel: Some people even said he managed to turn water into wine at a wedding! It was a miracle!

Caleb: It was late afternoon and Jesus had been talking for a long time and people were starting to get hungry so he asked his disciples to go and find some food. When we heard about this I offered the two fish and five loaves of bread that me and Bethel had been sent by our mum to fetch.

Bethel: (whispering loudly to the crowd) Caleb was really worried that mum would tell him off for that!

Caleb: What happened next was amazing! Jesus took the two fish and five loaves and prayed over them that the food would bless us all. He then asked his disciples to help him hand it all out. We thought the food would run out really quickly but by the time it had all been handed out, everyone had been given some and was full AND there was even some left over!

Bethel: I was the most amazed because I`ve seen Caleb eat more than that for lunch by himself.

Caleb: Everyone was blown away by this -

Bethel: -apart from our mum...

Caleb: No, she wasn`t best please with us but it did show the crowd what Jesus was capable of - we couldn`t believe our eyes!

Bethel: Well, since it was our food that Jesus had used, we wanted to go and talk to Jesus so we tried to push our way through the crowd. We just wanted to be around him to try and learn some of his wisdom from him.

Caleb: I followed Bethel through the crowd - she`s very good at being pushy (cross look from Bethel) but when we got close we were pushed away by Jesus` disciples saying that he wouldn`t want to be bothered by two small children.

Bethel: (laughs) This was very funny because it made Jesus cross - he stopped them and beckoned us over because we had been generous with our food saying that we were blessed because we were Greek.

Caleb: MEEK, not Greek “Blessed are the MEEK” ...said something about inheriting the earth as well.

Bethel: That sounds like good fun. All dad ever told us we`d inherit would be his smelly old sheep and I don`t think they like me very much.

Caleb: Jesus even healed one of our friends who we all thought was about to die - someone said he was so sick that he thought he`d been turned into a newt!

Bethel: Jesus asked us if we wanted to go with him to Jerusalem to go and celebrate the Jewish feast of Passover with him. We asked our mum and she thought this was a brilliant idea...it almost seemed like she wanted to get rid of us for a while.

Caleb: She did say that she reckoned it`d give us a chance to learn some wisdom and to help us grow up a bit.

Bethel: Some of us more than others... (looks accusingly at Caleb).

Caleb: We did learn a lot from him though. As we got to Jerusalem there were people cheering Jesus as he rode through the streets and covered the path with their clothes and palm leaves.

Bethel: Why DID they do that anyway?

Caleb: It was because they were so pleased to see him, it was like a mark of showing their respect to him and how happy and excited they were to see him. Like us, they wanted to learn from him.

Scene 2

Bethel and Caleb enter and stand at the front corner of the stage.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey as people place palm leaves in front of him.

Bethel: Everyone was excited to see Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem on his donkey. Everyone apart from some of the priests, especially that high priest.

Caleb: He looked like a grumpy chap...like he'd spent too much time near the wrong end of a donkey. So why didn't this high priest like Jesus? Jesus was doing loads of work for God, I thought he'd have loved Jesus!

Caiaphas storms on stage and knocks Caleb and Bethel out of the way, barely noticing them.

Caiaphas: (in a cross voice) This 'Jesus' man is far too popular with the crowds for my liking. They just don't realise that he keeps on breaking the Jewish law and I will not stand for it!

Priest 1: You are right, he even tried to heal someone on the Sabbath day. The SABBATH day no less, the one day of the week God gave us to rest and this 'Jesus' is trying to heal people. The cheek of it!

Caiaphas: But what can we do about this? (paces up and down. Stops all of a sudden) I know! We'll have him arrested.

Priest 2: But how will we do that? If we do it now during the Passover there'll be a riot amongst the crowds.

Caiaphas: (strokes his chin slowly)

The three Priests slowly walk off to the side of the stage stroking their chins and look quizzical. Bethel and Caleb walk to centre stage.

Bethel: One particular day Jesus walked into a temple to pray but was disgusted to find people in the temple selling animals to sacrifice for extortionate amounts of money.

Enter salesmen loudly advertising their wares along with their helpers carrying small tables and baskets full of stuffed animals, knocking Bethel out of the way.

All tradesmen chorus with shouts of 'animal sacrifices, animal sacrifices for sale, get them while they're cheap and alive etc'

After all the salesmen have arranged their wares on the tables

Tradesman 1: (loudly, pacing and waving arms) Get your sacrifice here. Don't get into the Lord's bad books, keep him pleased with your sacrifices.

Tradesman 2: (loudly, pacing and waving arms) That's right, special offer – three sacrificial animals for the price of two!

Tradesman 3: (loudly, pacing and waving arms) Wipe your slate clean with a fresh bird sacrifice.

Tradesman 1: (loudly, pacing and waving arms) Special offer on sheep, only two gold shekels each.

Tradesman 2: (loudly, pacing and waving arms) Whatever your sin, these sacrifices will take it away. Just 38 silver shekels and you're in the clear!

Tradesman 3: (loudly, pacing and waving arms) We've got sheep, goats, chickens and lambs. Get your pure white lambs for six gold shekels.

Jesus walks in and looks shocked at what he sees

Jesus: (in an angry voice) What on earth are you doing in the house of our Father? (Jesus storms over to tradesman's table and pushes it over/sweeps all the plastic money & soft toys of the top of it) My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers. You cheat widows out of their money!

Tradesman 2: My money!

Tradesman 3: You've let all my birds out you fool! How am I ever going to catch and cage them again?

Tradesman 1: You've got some cheek coming in here and disrupting our selling – these people need animals that they can sacrifice for their sins to become clean with the Lord

Jesus: If you cared about these people you would not be selling such OVERPRICED animals INSIDE the church.

The salesmen are all made incredibly angry at this and all shake their fists at Jesus, and begin picking up their wares and money.

Caiaphas and the other two priests are watching and are made angry by Jesus` actions.

The Tradesman gather their goods and leave the stage.

Caiaphas: (hits his thighs in anger with balled fists) We cannot have this type of behaviour happening in God`s temple. Who does this outrageous man think he is?

The three priests walk to the centre of the stage.

Priest 2: We must get rid of him, but how?

Priest 1: Agreed. We need to get rid of him but we must do it when he is not in the middle of the crowds. It would need to be done at dark. In secret.

Caiaphas: Correct. But how?

Priest 2: His disciples are the closest people to him. Perhaps they could lead us to him...with a little...persuasion (produces a small pouch of money which he throws and catches subtly *money jingles*)

Caiaphas: (touches his fingers together and in a very sinister voice says...) Excellent.

Judas enters the scene with a sneaky look on his face.

Judas: I believe I may be of some service to you.

Caiaphas: And WHY would someone such as myself need help from the likes of ...(slowly looks Judas up and down)... you?

Priest 2: Rabbi, this man is one of Jesus` followers. We could not ask for a better person to lead us to Jesus.

Caiaphas: Ahhhh, and what would make you want to go and betray one of your friends?

Judas: I`ve been doubting his teachings and doubting he is who he says he is. I struggle to believe he REALLY is the messiah.

Caiaphas: (takes the pouch of coins from Priest 2 and presents it to Judas) Thirty pieces of silver for the location of your associate. Just make sure the soldiers arrest the right man.

Judas: Easily done. I will make the man by kissing him on the cheek. (Judas exits with a smug look on his face).

Priests exit in the opposite direction with a sneaky, satisfied look on their faces.

Scene 3

Scene change to show Jesus, Judas, Thomas, Matthew, James, Andrew, John and Peter eating a meal. There is a small table with some bread, a bowl and a cup on top of it. Thomas and James are sitting next to each other.

Caleb and Esther enter the scene on tip toe

Bethel: (to the audience) Shhh, we don't want them to hear us. Me and Caleb are going to see what's Jesus and his disciples are up to.

Jesus picks up a basin, fills it with water then ties a towel around his waist and begins to wash the disciples feet. None of them object (although they do find it very ticklish). Jesus finally gets to Peter.

Peter: (Pulls his feet away)

Jesus: Come now Peter, your feet don't smell THAT bad.

Peter: No Jesus, I will not have you washing my feet. That is a job for a servant, not a for a great man such as yourself.

Jesus: You do not realise now what I am doing, but you will understand later. Unless I wash your feet, you will not be clean and pure. You must serve one another as I am serving you. I have set the example for you to follow.

Peter: Then don't just wash my feet, wash my hands and my head as well! I want to be as pure as I can be.

Jesus finishes washing the disciple's feet and returns to his place but looks sad.

Andrew: What's wrong Jesus? You look sad.

Jesus: (Pauses then sighs) To tell you truly, one of you sat with me now will betray me.

The disciples all looked surprised apart from Judas who looks shifty. Judas fidgets.

Thomas: (nudges James) Go on, ask him who he means.

James: (to Thomas) Only because you're too much of a scaredy cat to do it Thomas. So Jesus, which one of us will betray you then Jesus?

Jesus: (gets up and holds up a piece of bread) Whoever I give this piece of bread to after I've dipped it into the dish will betray me. (Jesus dips the bread and walks over to give it to Judas).

What you are about to do Judas, do it quickly.

Judas looks uncomfortable and exits quickly.

John: What on earth is he talking about?

Thomas: I think Jesus is starting to lose it.

James: He must be off his rocker.

Andrew: Well whatever's going on, Jesus always seems to know best.

The disciples all freeze.

Bethel: (gets up and walks over to the face the audience) None of the disciples knew what was happening, other than Judas. I can't believe Judas would do such a nasty thing to someone he calls his friend. (Shakes her head then goes back to join Caleb).

Jesus: I have one simple command to give you all; love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. I must go soon.

Peter: So where are you going now then, can we come with you?

Jesus: You won't be able to follow me now, but you will be able to later.

Peter: But why can't we follow you Jesus? I would be willing to lay down

my life for whatever it is that will happen to you.

Jesus: You have all shown that you care a great deal about me. If you really do then all I ask of you is to keep all my commands. And Peter, before the cockerel crows at dawn tomorrow, you will say three times that you do not know me.

Peter: I would NEVER deny knowing you!

The other disciples nod and chorus with 'nor would I'.

Jesus: (takes the bread from the table). Thank you for this bread (breaks the bread into chunks and gives it to the disciples) Take and eat this; this is my body. (Jesus takes the cup) This is wine is my blood. Drink this as it has been poured for the forgiveness of our sins (the mood is very serious).

Caleb and Bethel come to the front as Jesus and his disciples leave, taking the table, cup and basin with them.

Caleb: Oh, the breaking and bread and sipping of wine which people still do in churches today to remember Jesus – it`s called Holy Communion. So, the next day after The Lord`s

Supper we followed Jesus and his disciples into the garden of Gethsemane

Bethel: Jesus seemed to be very sad.

Bethel and Caleb exit.

Scene 4

Jesus: (walking back on with his disciples except Judas disciples behind him) Sit here and wait for me while I pray. (Jesus leaves them and walks over to pray by himself) Father this is not something I want to do. I feel very uneasy about this (pauses).

The disciples begin to fall asleep

If there is any other way that this can be done, please tell me. (pauses)
However, if this is your will then I shall go through with it.

Jesus walks over to his disciples.

Jesus: How can you have fallen asleep? The hour is near, rise up. Here comes my betrayer.

Judas enters followed by a crowd armed with swords and clubs

Judas: (to the soldiers) The one who's cheek I kiss is the man you want to arrest.

Jesus: Friend, do what you came for.

Two soldiers step forward to grab Jesus, but as they do Peter draws a sword and cuts off one of the soldier's (Malchus) ear.

Soldier 1 (Malchus): (hops from one foot to the other) ow ow ow ow OW!

Jesus: Peter, put your sword away. All those people who use swords will die by swords. I can call upon my Father who will give me twelve legions of angels to fight away these crowds, but that is not how it must happen. (to the angry mob) Am I leading an army which needs a big crowd armed with weapons to capture me? No. Every day I sat in the temples teaching but you did not come and arrest me there. (Jesus touches the soldier's wound and heals it)

Soldier 2: Malchus! He's only gone and healed your ear!

Soldier 1 (Malchus): (touches his ear in disbelief) But...what...how...why did he do that?

Soldier 2: Not a clue, shame we have to arrest him (laughs in a sinister manner)

Soldier 2 and Malchus roughly grab Jesus.

Jesus' disciples exit quickly and Jesus is calmly led away by the crowd (exit)

Scene 5

The three soldiers and Jesus enter, walking across the stage mocking and laughing at Jesus.

Soldier 1 (Malchus): Some messiah you are, why don't you get your God to save you now?

Soldier 2: He seems to bruise like any other normal man (mean laugh).

Soldier 3: And bleed like any other normal man.

The soldiers and Jesus walk exit to the far side of the stage.

Peter enters the stage and sits on a chair in the corner. There are a man and woman standing talking with each other in the opposite corner. A servant girl enters.

Servant girl: I recognise you – you were in the garden of Gethsemane.

Peter: (slightly flustered) urrrm, no no that definitely wasn't me.

Servant girl exits. Peter stands up and walks towards the group in the corner.

Woman: Hang on a minute, aren't you that chap who was with Jesus of Nazareth?

Peter: (again flustered) n-n-n-no, definitely not me. I've never even heard of any Cheeses of Nazareth.

A group of people enter and begin walking across the courtyard scene.

Peter walks away from the woman and right into the group who've just entered.

Group: Hey look, it's Jesus of Nazareth's friend; Simon Peter.

Peter: (whispers loudly) Curses. No, you must have me confused with someone else I swear I don't know of any Jesus of Nazareth.

Immediately a cockerel crows. Peter looks startled as he remembers what Jesus said about denying him three times.

Bethel and Caleb enter

Bethel: The Jewish priests wanted a good reason to find Jesus guilty.

Caleb: -Like healing people on the Sabbath.

Bethel: Exactly. But they found it almost impossible to hold anything against Jesus.

Caleb: They even paid people to tell lies about Jesus, but finally the Caiaphas asked a question.

Caiaphas: Are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus: Yes, it is as you say.

Caiaphas: BLASPHEMY! Take him to Pilate IMMEDIATELY!

Judas sees what he has just done and throws the pouch of money at the feet of the priests. In the bible Judas goes off to hang himself and as his body hits the floor, his intestines burst out. Have Judas go to the front corner of the stage, place a very loose rope around his neck which he gives a gentle tug upwards *makes a brief choking sound*. As Judas falls on the floor have him pull out a bundle of red wool or similar out from under his top/robe to simulate his intestines bursting out. Have him carried off by the stage crew.

Jesus is marched off stage.

Scene 6

A chair is placed on stage with Pilate sitting on it with the centurion standing next to him. Barabbas stands in front of Pilate. A crowd is gathered at the far side of the stage, preferably with a wall/partition/window between them and the palace (make the crowd as large as possible, include existing characters but they must look anonymous).

Pilate: CRUCIFY HIM!

Barabbas: (hangs his head and looks mortified)

The centurion roughly grabs Barabbas and leads him off stage. Centurion re-enters and takes his place.

Bethel and Caleb enter surreptitiously

Bethel: Pontius Pilate was the Prefect of Judaea and one of his duties was to work as a judge.

Caleb: The Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas and lead him to Pilate. They did not enter the actual palace because they thought this may have made them unclean for the Passover meal. Pilate had to come out to greet them

Caleb and Bethel move over to the side out of the way.

The three soldiers stand at the side of the stage with Jesus bound with a rope. Pilate

walks over to them.

Pilate: Is this man that you bring me guilty of anything?

Soldier 2: If he wasn't guilty we wouldn't have brought him to you!

Pilate: I've heard about this man, I know that he's not really guilty of anything. I don't want to be responsible for this man, take him and judge him by yourselves.

Soldier 3: But we don't have the authority to have anyone executed...we were hoping you might...?

Pilate: (breathes a very loud sigh, hands on his hips and shakes his head, turns away and walks back to his chair. Raises his hand and yells...) ...Come!

The soldiers push Jesus towards Pilate.

Malchus: (mockingly) On your way then, king of the Jews

Soldier 2: Not so high and mighty now are you?

Soldiers leave the scene.

Pilate: Now then, Jesus of Nazareth, 'King of the Jews'. Tell me, are you really the king of the Jews like they say you are? You can't really be king of the Jews, after all it was the Jews and the Jewish chief priests who brought you to me!

Jesus: My kingdom isn't in this world. If it was my servants would have fought to stop my arrest. My kingdom is in another place. I bring the truth. Whoever believes in the truth listens to me.

Pilate: You are a king then! Now then...what to do with you... What...to...do... with...you...

Pilate walks over to the window near the crowd

People of Judaea!

Crowd: YES!

Pilate: I cannot find any reason to charge Jesus, do you find him guilty?

Crowd: YES, HE IS GUILTY!

Pilate: Very well. It is also your custom to release a prisoner at the time of Passover.

Crowd: RELEASE ROGER!

Pilate: Very well. (in a loud voice) RELEASE ROGER!

Centurion: We let him go last week, sir.

Pilate: We have no Roger. We have Barabbas, or Jesus of Nazareth.

Crowd: WE WANT BARABBAS.

Pilate: RELEASE BARABBAS!

Crowd: HURRAY!

Pilate: What shall I do with Jesus of Nazareth?

Crowd: CRUCIFY HIM! **Pilate:** Very well. (Pilate holds his hands up) 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said. 'It is your responsibility!'

Everyone clears the stage

Bethel and Caleb go to the front of the stage. While Bethel and Caleb are talking, Jesus and the two prisoners are arranged behind them, Jesus in the middle. On crosses made of bound garden canes. Jesus` cross has a sign on it saying `THIS IS JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS` Mary (Jesus` mum stands watching at the sign looking upset) A woman stands to the side of the stage (Woman in the courtyard) along with 2 other members of the crowd, the 3 soldiers and centurion stand at the opposite.

Caleb: Pilate gave Jesus over to the soldiers who whipped and beat him.

Bethel: The soldiers made a crown of thorns to mock Jesus being `king` and placed in on Jesus` head which made it bleed and continued to beat his and spit on him.

Caleb: The soldiers then made Jesus walk up Mount Calvary. They made him carry the cross which he was going to be crucified on which was incredibly

heavy. People think it weighed between around 30 and 60 kilograms. Jesus had been beaten and whipped so badly he had to stop on the way up. Simon of Cyrene stopped and helped Jesus carry the cross to the top of the hill.

Bethel: The soldiers then crucified Jesus. Crucifixion is one of the worst ways to die and was only used for the worst criminals. Some people say they nailed his hands to the cross, others say the nails went cleanly between the two forearm bones. His feet were also nailed to the cross. This strains the wrists arms and legs. To breathe, Jesus needed to push with his legs and pull on his wrists as the weight of him was too much for his lungs. Crucifixion would make the victim suffocate when they got too tired to pull themselves up for each breath. Jesus was crucified around 9 o'clock and hung on the cross for about six hours.

The soldiers then drew straws as a way of finding out who would get Jesus' robes, which were very good quality. Whoever had the longest straw won the robes.

Caleb produces a dismally small straw and looks very disappointed. Bethel glares at him. Caleb throws it away and looks sheepish.

Bethel: (glares at Caleb)

Bethel and Caleb move to the back of the stage.

Passers-by hurl insults at Jesus. 'He saved others, but he can't save himself'.

Soldier 3 dips a sponge on a stick in a basin labelled 'vinegar'.

Jesus: (wrists tied to a cross with black spots on his wrists/hands). My God, my God why have you forsaken me?!

Woman from the courtyard dips a sponge on a stick in some wine vinegar and offers the sponge to Jesus.

Caleb: After six hours on the cross, at about 3 o'clock, Jesus could stand the pain no longer.

Jesus: (cries out in a loud voice) ARRRRGHH!!!! It is finished(then hangs his head showing he has died).

Immediately the temple curtain tears (this can be arranged to the side of the stage)

Soldier 2 pierces Jesus` side to check he was dead.

Centurion: This man must have been the son of God.

Everyone apart from the two members of the crowd and Jesus clear the stage. Bethel and Caleb remain.

Scene 7

The two members of the crowd take Jesus down from the cross and wrap him in a sheet and carry him to a tomb, place him inside and finally roll a large stone in front of the tomb. Bethel and Caleb are standing at the far side of the stage

The two crowd members leave the stage.

Bethel: Two days after Jesus was put inside the tomb Mary Magdaline who was a friend of Jesus comes back to the tomb to find that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance of the tomb.

Mary Magdaline: (enters the stage, sees the tomb and looks frantic) Someone has stolen Jesus` body! (sits down and begins crying by the tomb entrance).

Jesus: (enters the stage) What is wrong? Why are you crying?

Mary: They have take my Lord`s body away. You don`t know where it has been taken do you?

Jesus: (places his hand on Mary`s shoulder) Mary! Do not be afraid!

Mary: (begins to recognise Jesus voice) My lord, is it...is it really you? (she moves to hug Jesus but he backs away)

Jesus: Do not touch me now, but go and tell my disciples and Peter what you have seen.

Mary immediately runs off stage. Jesus also exits.

Mary bursts back onto the stage to find John and Peter

John: Hey look Peter, it`s Mary! Mary, what`s up? You`re looking excited!

Mary: (breathes heavily and tries to catch her breath) You...you...you...you won`t believe what I have just seen! It`s absolutely amazing!

Peter: Really? I bet it`s not that great. Me and John have just had the most amazing camel stew, I bet it can`t beat that.

John: AND it had spiced dumplings.

Mary: (still excited) I`ve seen the Lord! And he spoke to me! And he told me to come and tell you the news!

Peter: Really? But he`s inside a tomb.

John: With a whacking great stone in front of it.

Mary: Follow me!

(the three run off stage, then back on stage on the opposite side) The tomb has been placed back on stage.

Peter: (goes into the tomb and comes out with the sheet Jesus was wrapped in.) His body is gone. This is all that`s left.

Jesus subtly enters the stage, nobody notices him.

Peter: (turns around and sees Jesus, very surprised) Jesus! It IS you! It really IS you!.

Other members of the crowd enter the stage.

Jesus: (Pauses then outstretches his arms) My friends. My followers. Go and tell everyone you meet that you have seen me. I will soon be with my Father in Heaven. I bring peace to you all. Just as the Father sent me, I now send you. Now go, go and tell everyone about me and about God`s love. Spread the word to all nations that I have died for the sins of mankind.

The End