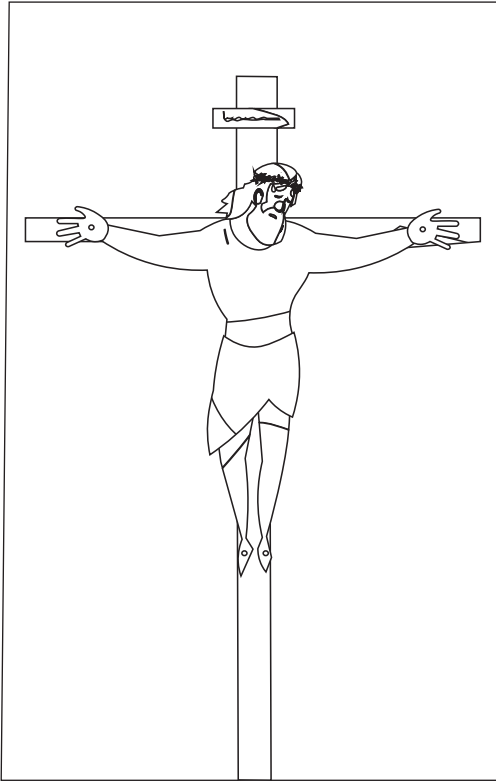




# The Crucifixion

## Colour me!



### Luke 23:38-49

**Jesus was arrested and sentenced to death, even though he had done nothing wrong. He was led outside the city and nailed to a cross, like a common criminal. Two criminals were also nailed to crosses, one on each side of Jesus.**

Above him was a sign that said, "This is the King of the Jews." One of the criminals hanging there also insulted Jesus by saying, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and save us!" But the other criminal told the first one off, "Don't you fear God? Aren't you getting the same punishment as this man? We got what was coming to us, but he didn't do anything wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into power!"

Jesus replied, "I promise that today you will be with me in paradise." Around noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until the middle of the afternoon. The sun stopped shining, and the curtain in the temple split down the middle. Jesus shouted, "Father, I put myself in your hands!" Then he died. When the Roman officer saw what had happened, he praised God and said, "Jesus must really have been a good man!"

A crowd had gathered to see the terrible sight. Then after they had seen it, they felt brokenhearted and went home. All of Jesus' close friends and the women who had come with him from Galilee stood at a distance and watched.



## Commentary

Even when he was hanging from the cross, Jesus continued to show love and bring hope to others. The criminals on either side of him were going through the same agony, but, unlike Jesus, they had committed crimes and deserved to die. One joined in with the crowd's insults. The other is clearly sorry for what he has done and simply hopes to be part of God's kingdom when he dies. Jesus promises that this criminal will be with him in paradise that day.

By now it is afternoon and the end is near. It is almost as if the whole world goes dark, but it is also the moment when Jesus defeats the powers of darkness. The curtain in the innermost part of the temple, where the high priest used to go and meet with God once a year, is torn apart, and the way to God is now open because of what Jesus has done. Only a completely innocent man could have achieved this; even the Roman soldier agrees that Jesus has done no wrong.

The crowd and Jesus' friends saw only defeat and went away broken-hearted, but in fact what had happened that day was the greatest miracle Jesus had ever done.

## Questions

- ▶ The two criminals had quite different attitudes towards Jesus. What could explain this, do you think?
- ▶ The second criminal ends up being the first person to get into heaven because of what happened at the cross. Is this a surprise?
- ▶ Why do you think it went so dark that afternoon?
- ▶ The officer on guard duty had probably only just met Jesus, so what made him think that Jesus was such a good man?
- ▶ Can you imagine what was going on in the minds of Jesus' close friends who were watching at a distance?



## Visual aid

Find an old piece of fabric that will tear easily from top to bottom. Drape it over a board showing the word 'heaven', and then pull it away to reveal what is hidden behind it.



## Activity idea

Talk about what it would have been like to witness all these things. Strangely, Christians call this day Good Friday. Talk about why they call it 'good'. Now take the letters of the phrase "Jesus dies" and rearrange them to read "Jesus' side". Because of his death we can all come close to God.



## Prayer idea

Anyone can get to heaven because of Jesus. The second criminal discovered this to be true. Offer a special prayer—either out loud or quietly—to say that you will trust Jesus just as the thief on the cross did. Heaven starts right here and now for everyone who prays this sort of prayer.

## Key verse

Jesus replied, "I promise that today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

## New Testament story link

Psalm 22: Many people believe that Jesus was remembering this psalm as he hung on the cross.



