



The Soldiers' Perspective | April 8 and 9, 2023

## INTRODUCTION

*Welcome to Week 4 of our Easter devotionals! Each week you'll be prompted to read about a character from the events leading up to Jesus' death, engage in a few questions, and then given a prayer prompt.*

*This week, you'll be reading about the soldiers at the tomb of Jesus.*

## THE STORY

"Get your act together!" said Titus sternly. "We can't go in there looking like idiots. You've got to stop crying."

"And how, exactly, am I supposed to do that?" whimpered Marcus, tears still streaming down his cheeks. "You were there, too. You saw what happened. How are you keeping your cool so easily?"

"Because I know what's about to happen. We're about to get reamed for not doing our jobs! I'm thinking about saving my own life here. Why should I care about anything else? Besides, we're Romans. We can't go in there to talk to these religious nuts looking like we don't know what we're doing."

"Ok. You're right. One misstep in there and our lives are on the line. I can do this. I can keep it together."

With that, the door to the Chief Priest's house was opened and the soldiers were led into the courtyard where a few religious leaders were gathered.

"We've come to report that Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb," said Titus.

“WHAT!” screamed Caiaphas, “How could you let them take the body? Why didn’t you kill them? This is the *exact* thing we needed to avoid! How could you be so stupid?”

“Easy, old man. Don’t forget who you’re talking to.”

“We didn’t just *let* anybody take him,” said Marcus. “It was early morning, just the faintest pale light on the edge of the horizon. We had started our shift guarding the tomb. In an instant, the sky lit up brighter than noon. I couldn’t see because it was so bright and so sudden. Then the earth began to shake, just like it had in the middle of the day on Friday. And in the midst of the light was someone who looked like a god. He was like a bolt of lightning standing in front of us. We fell, paralyzed with fear. I couldn’t have fought him off if I wanted to. I’ve never been so scared in all my life.” His speech was broken by small sobs as tears streamed down his cheeks.

*So much for keeping it together*, Titus thought.

I didn’t matter anyway; the priests had stopped listening. Once they heard the body was gone, they gathered and started frantically whispering among themselves.

“Did you hear what we said?” Titus asked. No reply. They were still huddled together talking in urgent whispers. “Excuse me!”

With that, one of the priests turned to look at them. “Yes, we heard you. We understand what you thought you saw, but we don’t put anything past this group. Not surprising that they went to such elaborate lengths to fool you.”

Another priest reached out with two bags of coins and handed one to each of the soldiers.

“What’s this?” whimpered Marcus.

“This is to help you forget everything that happened,” the priest answered. “As long as you promised to keep your mouths closed, we promise to handle any issues that might come up for you if Pilate catches wind of this.”

Both soldiers understood the veiled threat, took the money, and left.

“Amazing,” said Titus, “that people can be so convinced of what they think is right, that nothing can change their minds. We’re the ones who were blinded by lightning, but those men are the ones who can’t see!”

## SCRIPTURE

Read **Matthew 27:62-28:15**.

## QUESTIONS

Welcome to the story of the soldiers at Jesus’ tomb. In our story and in our text, we learn that the soldiers at Jesus’ tomb concocted a cover-up. They were paid off. They were given hush-money to keep the reality of Jesus’ resurrection behind closed doors. But try as they might, it didn’t work. Jesus is alive and well. Jesus will not be kept silent. He has risen!

As you ponder this story, prayerfully reflect on the following questions:

- Do you believe that Jesus physically rose from the grave?
- If yes, how real is Jesus' resurrection to you and how does that impact your life? If no, what are your biggest hesitations?
- What is the good news that Jesus wants you to take into this next week from this passage?

## PRAYER

“Dear Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life! Your resurrection means the world to me. Because of it, I have hope and a future. Because of your resurrection, I put my trust in You. Because of Your resurrection, I know life is right around the corner for me even when *my* life isn't going how I'd like. Take my life and lead me. Help me to live every day in light of Your resurrected life. I love You and pray these things in Your name. Amen.”

## EXTRA

*As you go about your week, take some time to read and reflect on **1 Corinthians 15:26-27, 49-52, 54-57; John 11:1-44; John 14:1-3; Philippians 2:6-11; and Hebrews 2:14-15**. Sit with God in these passages, one per day. Allow the Scriptures to speak to you. Ask yourself, “Lord, what do you want to show me in this text today—about myself, about You, about Jesus' resurrection?” Then, listen and jot down any thoughts or reflections. After each day has wrapped up, finish in prayer.*

*EXTRA EXTRA: Watch William Lane Craig, a Christian apologist discuss the evidence for Jesus' resurrection with a skeptic of Christianity here:*

*[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsUwyC2cwNg&ab\\_channel=CosmicSkeptic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsUwyC2cwNg&ab_channel=CosmicSkeptic)*