

"... I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen..."

# The Gardener's Story



By Andrew  
Moore

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## *Chapter 1*



Hello there, young one! It's so nice of you to come to see me. I don't get the opportunity to talk with many people here in the garden, and I definitely don't see many young people.

You've come at just the right time, as I have the most amazing story to tell you. It's all about a man I met recently. He died, and actually came back to life again after being dead for 3 whole days!

Oh there I go again, spoiling the ending to my story. My wife tells me I'm a terrible storyteller. But how can you keep quiet about an amazing story like that? I can't! I was there when he died, I helped during his burial too, and not only did I see him after he had come back to life again, but I actually spoke with him as well.

Let me start again: I've got this amazing story to tell you of envy, intrigue, a traitorous friend, and murder, all surrounding a man who, some say, was the Son of God. And I believe he was too.

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The Bible quotations are taken:

the Book of Zechariah 9:9

the Gospel of Matthew 27:19-25, 45, 28:5

the Gospel of Mark 15:28

the Gospel of Luke 23:34-43, 24:5-8

the Gospel of John 19:30, 20:13-18

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE

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Let me start at the beginning. My name is Thomas, and I am a gardener working in this cemetery, here just outside the city of Jerusalem. This is a special cemetery, and it is my job to keep it looking beautiful. It is a circular garden, planted with flowers and bushes, surrounded by tombs, that have been dug out of the surrounding rock. I get help from labourers to dig out a new one. The tombs are like caves in the soft rock. We have to dig them out by hand. It is very hard work and each one takes a long time. Each of them costs a lot of money too. Only people who are very rich can own a tomb here. I save whatever I can, but I will never have enough money to be able to afford one. Rich people usually buy one for their whole family to be buried in, once they die of course. When somebody does die, they are placed in their tomb, and a large, heavy stone is rolled across the entrance, to keep people out, and to keep bad smells in.



So this man I was telling you about, his name is Jesus, and he was a carpenter. He gave up his work and became a roaming preacher, you know, travelling around from town to town. He told people about God, telling them how much God loves them, and that they need to turn away from the things they do wrong, their sins, and turn back to God and follow his ways.

And Jesus didn't just teach people about how much God loves them, he cared for them too. He showed people God's love by praying for them. There are so many stories about sick people being healed; crippled people being able to walk again; blind people being able to see again. He even brought two dead men back to life again! On two different occasions, he provided food for thousands of people who

were following him. And he didn't buy it. He didn't pop down to the local shop and ask, 'Can I have enough food to feed 5000 people please?' No it was a miracle! He took one person's lunch, prayed, and somehow, don't ask me how, it just multiplied, and there was enough for everyone to have their fill, with leftovers for the next day. A miracle! I wish I had been there to see that.

So the people loved Jesus, and followed him. Some people followed him because they had been healed of their sickness or affliction, some people because they wanted to be healed, and some people just wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. And some people followed Jesus to hear his teaching, and because they believed what he was saying, that he had been sent to them by God.

When Jesus came into Jerusalem, a week before he was murdered, Jesus rode in on the foal of a donkey. In our culture, noble, or important people, travelled around on donkeys, and even kings rode them. King David had one as well as other Kings. About 500 years ago, one of our prophets said,

"See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

When Jesus came into Jerusalem the people cheered and shouted triumphantly. There was dancing and singing, a real party, all for Jesus who, just like the prophet said, they were welcoming as their king. They even called Jesus the 'Son of David', who was our greatest ever king. Some declared that Jesus came in the name of the Lord, our God. Others cried out 'Save us', which is exactly what Jesus did, 4 days later. However, all of this upset the Priests and Pharisees.

You see, not everyone was pleased to see Jesus. The Priests and the Pharisees, our church leaders, were very upset. These are the men who are **supposed** to teach the people about God. They are also in charge at the Temple in Jerusalem. They became very angry at Jesus, as he was very critical of them: saying they were selfish; that they weren't following God; and they weren't caring for the

People, like they should do. And the people, you know, people like you and me, they loved Jesus and followed him everywhere.

He had some people who were very close to him, 12 men that were called his disciples, and also some women who supported them. One of the women was his mother, Mary. And crowds of other people followed him as well.

He withdrew from all of them except the 12 disciples, his special friends, so that he could spend some quality time with them. One of them is called Peter. I have come to know Peter quite well since these amazing events. Jesus wanted to share a special meal with his 12 disciples, called the Passover Meal. At that meal, Jesus identified one of his special friends, one of the 12, as a traitor, who was going to betray Jesus to the Priests and Pharisees.



The traitor's name was Judas Iscariot. Later, Peter told me that the rest of them didn't understand what Jesus was saying at the time, so they didn't interfere. Meanwhile, the Priests and Pharisees were so angry at Jesus, and were so envious of the popularity he had with the people, they were looking for an opportunity to kill him. Isn't that incredible? However, they were afraid that the people might rebel against them, so they wanted to do it quietly. Peter told me that Judas went to the Priests and Pharisees, and offered to tell them where Jesus would be, when away from the crowds. They gave him 30 silver coins for the information. That's a lot of money and way more than all the money I have managed to save!

Judas told the Priests and the Pharisees that Jesus would go to the Garden of Gethsemane, another Garden just outside of the city, very early the next morning. He went there to pray to God, his Father in heaven. That would be the best place for the Priests and Pharisees to grab Jesus.

He even offered to lead them to Jesus, and would show who their soldiers should arrest by walking up to Jesus and kissing him on the cheek. I still can't believe Judas would do such a thing. He had been travelling around with Jesus for about 3 years, being one of his closest friends. I hope you haven't got any friends like that, my dear. Peter told me that he was there when Jesus was arrested. You see, the Priests have their own soldiers called the Temple Guard. They are not allowed to do very much as our country is under the occupation of the Romans. The Romans are the ones that really control things. But very early in the morning, while it was still dark, the Temple Guard marched into the Garden of Gethsemane, along with a crowd of people carrying swords, clubs and lanterns, and Judas walked straight up to Jesus and kissed him on the cheek. The Temple Guard arrested Jesus and led him away. But it was all a sham. Jesus had done nothing that deserved being arrested!

I have a friend who works at the home of the Chief Priest, and this palace is where all the Priests and Pharisees meet. My friend saw them bring Jesus in. He said that Jesus was in there for ages. The Priests and Pharisees were holding a fake trial, and trying to find evidence so they could get the Romans to kill him, all because Jesus had criticized them, and because they were jealous that the people loved Jesus so much more than them. They heard lots of people's testimonies about the things Jesus had said, but none of them could agree with each other. Then the Chief Priest asked Jesus if he was the Son of God, and the Messiah, and Jesus said that he was. We Jews believe that the Messiah is the one who is going to be our Saviour, and free us from our enemies, like the Romans.

Surely, if a man who had performed all the miracles that Jesus had, and said he was the Son of God, surely you would believe him, wouldn't you? But the Priests and the Pharisees said Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, of saying that he was the Son of God when they didn't believe he was. They took him to the Roman leader to try to persuade him to have Jesus killed. My friend told me that when they brought Jesus out of that false trial, Jesus looked like he had been badly beaten by the guards.

They took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the head of the Roman forces controlling our country. He lives in a big palace in Jerusalem. After listening to the Priests and Pharisees, and talking with Jesus, he knew that they had arrested Jesus because they were jealous of him. Pilate wanted to set him free.

“I have found no basis for your charges against this man.” said Pilate to the Priests and the Pharisees, but they kept on and on at Pilate.

It is a custom at the time of the Passover Feast, for Pilate to release from prison someone that the people requested. So Pilate decided to let the people decide. He took Jesus and another man, out to the Judges Seat, a place where Pilate addresses the people of Jerusalem. The other man was called Barabbas. He was a criminal and a murderer.

“Who do you want me to release,” Pilate said to the gathered crowds, “Jesus, who is called the Christ, or Barabbas?”

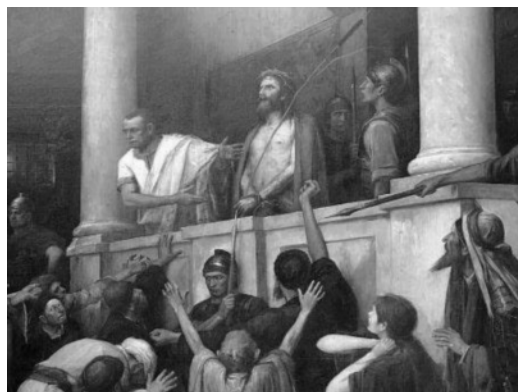
I was there in the crowd and I could see the Priests and the Pharisees going through the crowd, persuading them to shout for Barabbas, And so the people called out, “Release Barabbas!”

Pilate was surprised, and said “What shall I do then, with Jesus, who is called Christ?” \*

Again I saw the Priests and the Pharisees moving in the crowd, telling them to shout, ‘Crucify him,’ and the people did as they were told: “Crucify him! Crucify him!” they shouted, again and again.

“Why?” Pilate shouted back at them, trying to be heard above the chanting of the crowd, “What crime has he committed?”

But the crowd shouted louder and louder, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”



When Pilate saw that the people were getting out of control, he ordered that Barabbas be released and Jesus be crucified. An innocent man was condemned to death whilst a guilty man walked free. The innocent was handed over in place of the guilty. Pilate took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd.

“I am innocent of this man’s blood,” Pilate shouted. “It is your responsibility!”

“Let his blood be on us and our children!” the crowd of people shouted back.

What does that even mean? How could his blood be upon us and our children? It was most upsetting and my thoughts raged around inside me like a violent storm. It seemed like the same people who had cheered for Jesus as he entered into our great city, just days before, were now chanting for him to be crucified.

The next time I saw Jesus, he was staggering up the hill that leads out of the city, to a place called Golgotha, which means, ‘The Place of the Skull’. This is where the Romans take criminals to kill them, by nailing them to a cross made of wood. The cruel Romans force those people who were going to be crucified, to carry their own wooden cross up the hill towards Golgotha.



Jesus was covered in blood. The Romans must have flogged him with a whip, and there was blood everywhere. How awful it was. Pilate was going to crucify a man who, by his own words, had done nothing wrong, so why have him flogged as well? The Roman soldiers

had twisted together a 'crown', made of thorns. The thorns had dug into Jesus' head and he was bleeding from there too. He seemed to be bleeding from everywhere on his body. He staggered and fell under the weight of the cross, his strength almost gone. The Roman soldiers forced another man to carry the cross for him. Once at the top of the hill, they nailed Jesus to the cross. It is a horrible, horrible way to die! Two other men were crucified alongside Jesus, one on either side of him. They screamed, harrowing screams as the nails went through their hands and feet and into the wood of the cross. Somehow, I don't know how, but somehow Jesus kept quiet. His face was contorted with pain and his body writhed, but he managed to keep the scream of pain inside.

I heard him gasp, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

After all that the people had done to him, he prayed that God would forgive them. I would have been wanting them to be punished; but not Jesus. He still loved them and wanted them to be forgiven. What an amazing man he was.

Pilate had his soldiers nail a sign on the cross, above Jesus' head. It said; 'This is Jesus. The King of the Jews'. That upset the Priests and Pharisees. They demanded that it be taken down, or changed to 'he claimed to be the King of the Jews', but Pilate would not take it down or change it. He had been hailed King as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and now he was being killed for being a King. Treachery! What had the people done? Jesus had done so much good for them while he was alive, and now this betrayal. Once they had nailed him there, together with two other men who were criminals, they left them all to die a slow death, guarded by a Centurion, a senior Roman soldier, and just a few other Roman soldiers. The two criminals were being punished for what they had done wrong. Jesus was being punished but he had done nothing wrong. He was innocent!

The Priests and Pharisees hurled insults at Jesus, and other people joined it, including the Roman soldiers. They taunted him saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself," and, "He saved others;

let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

Even one of the criminals who had been crucified with Jesus, managed to cry out, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

The other criminal told him off. "Don't you fear God," he managed to say, "since you are under the same sentence? We are being punished justly, getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he asked, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Wow! Even whilst Jesus was in agony, hung on a cross, he still was ministering to people, forgiving him and welcoming him into his kingdom. I am ashamed to admit that I was there and witnessed all of this. I should have been at work in the Garden, but there was something about this man, Jesus. I felt compelled to follow him.

I'm not ashamed to admit that I cried. Lots of people there were crying, many of them were people who had followed him. Then the anguish inside me was just too much and I couldn't bear to watch Jesus on the cross any longer. I hurried back to my garden cemetery, just outside the city walls. I thought I would never see this man, Jesus, again, and I tried to busy myself with tending the garden.

About midday, it got darker and darker, until it was like the night. Maybe even the sun could not bear to look upon the sight of this innocent man. I couldn't stop thinking about him. It was so dark that I couldn't see enough to get on with any work. I fought against my thoughts, but no matter what I did, I felt drawn back to Golgotha, back towards, 'The King of the Jews'. I had not even met this man before today, but there was something about him. Something in his eyes that drew me to him.

I found myself walking, very slowly, back towards Golgotha. I had to go carefully as it was darker than night, even though it was the middle of the day, but I knew I had to be there. Some people had lit lanterns,

but their light did not seem to shine as far as they usually do. Just as I got to Golgotha, I heard Jesus gasp:

“My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?”

The Romans had brought lanterns to Golgotha, but they hardly lit the area at all. It was as if all the darkness in the world had descended upon our land. It was dark for as far as I could see, and that wasn't very far. This darkness was different, it was cold, and felt thick, and foreboding. It made me feel uneasy, even a bit scared.

“Into your hands I commit my spirit.” Jesus cried out.

Was he talking to his Father, God in Heaven? A Roman soldier filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on the end of a stick and offered it to Jesus. A short while later, Jesus gasped,

“It is finished.”



Suddenly, there was an earthquake, so intense that I fell to the ground, as did many others. From my position on the ground, I found myself looking up into the eyes of the Roman Centurion who was guarding Jesus. He looked terrified. He was kneeling, with his head bowed to the ground in front of Jesus' cross, and he exclaimed:

“Surely this man was the Son of God!”



I looked over to the foot of the cross. There was a crack in the ground and a pool of Jesus' blood was dripping down into the ground below. I looked up along the cross towards where Jesus hung, but he was dead. It was finished, just like he said. But it wasn't, my dear, the best is yet to come!

I stumbled back to my garden cemetery, thinking again that I had seen the last of this man, Jesus. It was becoming light again, but it was very cloudy and overcast, and it was still cold, as the sun was still nowhere to be seen. It would be time for the sun to set soon anyway. As I walked, there was the constant sound of tears or shrieks from terrified people following the earthquake, which had been felt throughout all of Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

When I got back to my garden cemetery, I found that the earthquake had been so bad, that three of the tombs had opened. One of the rocks that sealed a tomb closed, had split in two. The other two rocks covering two other tombs, had fallen forward and had completely smashed to pieces. How were we supposed to mend them before sundown. My two labourers were there. They both looked terrified. They were muttering about people that had come back to life, and had walked out of the three tombs that had broken open during the earthquake. I thought they must be drunk at first, but later I heard that the same thing had happened at other cemeteries around

Jerusalem. The tombs of holy people had broken open, and their risen bodies had been seen by many people, walking around, talking, praising God and trying to find their families. That must have been a shock, a relative you had buried years ago turning up on your doorstep.

My friend, who works at the Chief Priest's palace, he told me that he had heard the priests frantically discussing what to do about the huge curtain in the temple. This curtain separates the area that the priests are allowed to work in, from the area they are only allowed to enter once a year, because that is the place where God is said to live. This curtain tore from the top to the bottom, at exactly the same time that Jesus died. It was over 30 feet tall and was really thick. The temple itself was undamaged by the earthquake, just the curtain, torn in two. Even if a man were a giant, he would still not be able to tear a curtain that thick. It must have been God. Maybe God had left the temple because of what the people had done to his son.

I looked around my garden cemetery, most of which was undamaged from the earthquake except for the three tombs that had opened. As I wondered what we were going to do about the broken stones, I heard a melee of voices behind me.

I turned to see one of the Jewish high councillors, a righteous man named Joseph, from Arimathea, a town close to Jerusalem. He had not consented with the arrest and fake trial of Jesus. He strode towards me. I recognised him because we had only just finished cutting a tomb for him and his family to use, one that he even helped us start, which is very unusual. Behind him were four men carrying something in a sheet, and there were dozens of people following behind, mainly women, many crying. Joseph called my name.

"Thomas," he said, his voice filled with grief, "I want my tomb opened and this man laid to rest in there." I looked as the four men stopped behind him, and lowered the corners of the sheet. I could not believe my eyes. This man, Jesus, had come back into my life again. I stood, glued to the ground. Joseph walked up and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Can we have some water to wash his body?"

I looked into Joseph's eyes. "Of course, sir, but it is almost sundown." I warned him.

"I know. We will do what we can for him." Joseph said softly.

You see, it was almost sundown, and from sundown that day until sundown the next day, was the Sabbath Day, the day of rest. No one was allowed to do any work from sundown that day, until sundown the next. And the darkness of dusk was almost upon us.

I found some cloths and got some water and we quickly tried to clean Jesus' battered face and body, but there was so much blood. After trying for a few minutes and not making much headway, Joseph declared that we should stop, and he directed the people there to wrap Jesus' body in clean, fresh cloths, ready for burial.

"What about the spices?" I cried, "We can't bury him without the spices."

"I have the spices." A voice came from behind us, as a man stepped forward, pushing through the crowd of mourners. It was Nicodemus!

Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees, our religious leaders, who along with the Chief Priest, had held the fake trial, and condemned Jesus to death. What on earth was he doing here? He stepped up to the body of Jesus with a huge sack of spices, I reckon there was 60 or 70 pounds of spices. That is a massive amount. That is the sort of quantity you would use to bury a king.

Questions flooded my mind. Had Nicodemus become a follower of Jesus? Was he feeling guilty because of his death? Did he now believe that Jesus really was, "The King Of The Jews", as the sign above Jesus' crucified body had read?

I was pressed into action again by Joseph. The labourers and I heaved the heavy rock away from the mouth of Joseph's tomb, whilst others wrapped Jesus' broken body in clean cloths. Despite the stone being round, it was still very difficult to move as we heaved it from the entrance.

I helped carry Jesus' body into the tomb, Joseph said a prayer of thanksgiving, and we rolled the stone back across the entrance, closing it off. We all rushed home to get cleaned up, as Jesus' blood was all over us.



\* The word Christ, used by Pilate on page 6, is not a name. It is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah, and both Christ and Messiah mean the same thing - Saviour, or one who saves.

Jesus is sometimes called Jesus Christ, and this means Jesus the Saviour, or Jesus, the one who saves. This is because Jesus saves us from the consequences of our sins.

## Chapter 2

I was very unsettled that evening. This Sabbath Day was special as it was part of the Passover Celebration. The Passover celebration is one of our happiest, Jewish celebrations as we remember how Almighty God saved the Jewish nation from a powerful enemy, many years ago. But throughout the evening, all I could think of was this innocent man, Jesus. As I recalled eating the Passover lamb with my family, the night before, I thought about that innocent lamb, which had done nothing wrong to deserve us killing it, just so we could eat it as part of the Passover meal. And I thought about how it seemed to parallel that innocent man, Jesus, who had also done nothing that deserved death. As I ate this evening's meal with my family, I was very quiet, pondering on the things I had seen. I hadn't managed to get totally clean before sundown. I had clean clothes on but my hands were still stained with Jesus' blood. I had washed them many times, but it just would not wash away.

I went to bed early but sleep was hard to find. The next day was the first of two Sabbaths. The first one was the first day of a 7 day feast, celebrating our great God. The second was our usual weekly Sabbath. I didn't feel like celebrating. I still love God, but my thoughts were full of what I had seen happen to this man, Jesus. Two days of rest. Usually that would fill me with great joy, but I was restless and could not relax. I know it was a day of rest, but I could not help myself, I returned to the garden cemetery. I was not sure why I felt so compelled to be there, and I did not intend to do any work, I wouldn't be able to do much anyway without the help of my labourers. I just needed to be in the peace and quiet of the garden and try to get my thoughts straight. Even so, if I was found there, I could have been in a lot of trouble, as we are not supposed to do any work on the Sabbath Day, but rest instead.

I was shocked when I got there. Soldiers were there. The Temple Guards, remember them? I hid, creeping around the foliage to get closer and get a better view. I could see four soldiers standing by Joseph's tomb, where we had laid Jesus' body the previous day. The stone was still in place, but they had made a mud paste and

had used it to completely seal the round stone to the rock face behind it. Then there was also a cord of ornate rope, draped from one side of the rock face, across the stone in front of the entrance, and to the rock face the other side. There were three seals made of hardened wax, sticking the rope to the walls either side of the entrance, and onto the round stone cover, each stamped with the Chief Priest's personal seal. I wondered why on earth would they do such a thing?

As I watched, four more soldiers marched into my garden cemetery, to relieve those that were already there. I heard them talking.

"Why are we guarding a tomb?" One of the new soldiers complained to the ones they were relieving.

"So that no one comes and steals this body." one of the original four replied. "The man whose body is in this tomb, Jesus, while he was alive, had said that he would die and would rise back to life again. Pontius Pilate permitted us to guard the tomb, so that Jesus' followers can not come and steal his body, and then claim that he has come back to life again."

"Preposterous!" the new guard exclaimed, "What a waste of time."

"Waste of time or not, you need to guard this tomb and make sure no one comes near it." The old guard retorted. "No-one can enter the tomb without breaking the seals on and around this stone, so we will know if they do anyway."

"Did you hear about the people who have walked out of tombs like this one?" Another of the new guard asked. "I did not see them," he continued, "but a friend in my unit did, two of them, walking around, asking what year this was, and where certain families could be found. Some were supposed to have died years ago."

"What? Rubbish!" the first new guard exclaimed.

"Rubbish or not," the old guard said, "you will do your duty and make sure no one approaches this tomb."

“At least you had the night shift.” the first continued. “We have got to stand here through the scorching sun.”

“Stop complaining soldier and complete the task that you have been given.” the old guard ordered.

And with that, the four guards who had been there when I arrived, marched away, and the four new guards took their place, standing in front of the stone at the entrance to the tomb where Jesus had been laid yesterday. I knew that, with the soldiers there, I would not be able to have much peace and quiet to think in the garden, so I crept away and, after spending some time in the garden where Jesus had been arrested, I went home again.

The day dragged on. Later on I went walking through, Jerusalem, hoping to see one of the people who had come back to life, but I did not see any. I met plenty of people that had seen them though, and were very happy to tell me what they had seen. All had been seen outside of the city walls. They were people like you and me. They could talk, eat, drink, and were badly in need of some clothes as, when they had been laid in their tombs, they had just been wrapped in grave cloths, like Jesus was, in sheets and bandages. Many of them asked about their families. Some were reunited, but some found their family had long since passed away, they themselves having died many years ago. How incredible!

### Chapter 3

The next day after both Sabbaths had passed, very early in the morning, before it started to get light, I got up and headed to my garden cemetery. I arrived to find four soldiers from the Temple Guard, still guarding the tomb. I felt bolder that morning as I was supposed to be there, it was my job. I approached the soldiers.

“Get away from here, by order of the High Priest.” One of the soldiers growled at me, menacingly.

“I work here.” I replied, boldly, even surprising myself.

“I don’t care,” the soldier growled again, stepping forward and pointing his spear towards me. “You stay away from this tomb.”

I retreated, realising that my boldness was a bit foolish. I went to the other side of the garden and started to draw water from the well to refresh the plants there, as they had not had any water for the past three days, me not being allowed to work here the past two days, and also spending most of the day before that following Jesus.

A small group of women walked into my garden. They saw the soldiers, and then approached me.

“Where have they buried Jesus?” one of them asked me.

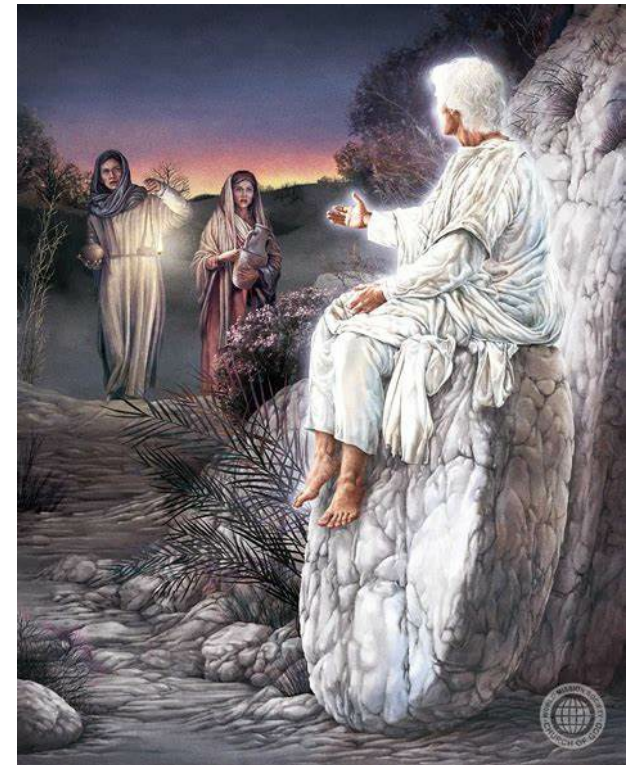
“We laid him to rest in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.” I replied, and pointed over to where the soldiers were standing. I looked again at them, the sun just beginning to meet the horizon. “Weren’t you here when we laid his body in there?” I asked.

“Can you move the stone for us?” One of the women asked, ignoring my question. All of them were clearly upset, and who could blame them. “We have spices to anoint his body.” they continued.

“I can’t do that. The stone is too heavy for me to move on my own, and you can see the soldiers, they will not let anybody near the tomb.”

Suddenly, there was another earthquake, and the ground shook so

much that two of the women fell to the ground. I managed to stay on my feet this time. I looked around me and could not believe my eyes. There was a, well, a, a man, but not like any man I had ever seen. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white, pure white, like newly fallen snow. He walked up to Joseph’s tomb, where Jesus had been buried three days ago, and he effortlessly rolled the stone away from the entrance, casting the rope with the wax seals on it to the ground. The ground finally stopped shaking. The man, well, I don’t know of any man who could have done that, it took me and two labourers to move that stone. Anyway, this super human man then climbed up onto the stone, and sat on it. I tore my eyes away from this, ‘super’ human, and looked at the soldiers. They were all cowering on the ground, terrified, shaking violently, arms raised in front of them, as if that would be any protection from anything *this* man could do to them. Then, without a word, they all fell flat on the ground, as if they were dead.



The man looked straight past me to the women who had come to anoint Jesus' body with spices, who were bowed down upon the ground.

"Do not be afraid," the man said to the women, "for I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here for he has risen, just like he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." And with that, he folded his arms in front of him and looked around the garden, as if he had said what he was sent to say, and that was that. He must have been an angel, sent by God, not that I have ever seen an angel before, but he must have been.

The women, slowly, approached the tomb, walking and bowing at the same time, their eyes mainly fixed on this angel, glancing away briefly to see where they were going. I followed them. The angel said nothing more, occasionally glancing at them. As we got to the tomb, we could see another angel inside. His brilliance lit up the inside of the tomb. He was sitting where Jesus' feet would have been.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" The second angel questioned. "He is not here; he has risen!. Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful people, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" He looked at them as if baffled that they could not understand the simple truth he had just spoken. A couple of the women went completely into the tomb. The others stood at the entrance, looking in. I pushed past them to see for myself. Lying where we had placed Jesus' body three days ago, were the linen cloths we had used to wrap around his body, and the cloth that had been used to wrap around his head, which was neatly folded, separate from the rest.

We looked at the second angel again, but he just smiled, as if he had given his message and done his job. We all walked back out of the tomb, the women chattering to each other in a mixture of bewilderment and excitement. Once they were all outside, after one more look at

the angel sitting on the large stone, they ran off to tell Jesus' disciples what the angels had said. They said nothing to anyone else, as they were still afraid. Going straight to the house where the disciples were, they then told them everything that had happened.

I walked slowly away from the tomb, wondering what all this meant to me. Why had I been drawn into the life of this, no, why had I been drawn into the *death* of this man, Jesus, and what was I supposed to do with what I had witnessed. I wondered; 'was he really alive again?'

I kept glancing back towards the tomb to check on the angels. Within minutes of the women rushing off to tell Jesus' disciples, the angels had disappeared. No earthquake, no fanfare, I glanced and they were there, I looked away, and glanced back again, and they were gone.

Almost as soon as the angels had gone, the soldiers came around from their faint. Had they missed everything the angels had said to the women? They looked at each other, still looking pale, as if someone had drained all the colour from their skin. They glanced at the open tomb, with the rope and broken wax seals lying on the floor, and bits of mud, scattered around from where they had tried to fix the stone to the rock face. Again they looked terrified. They spoke in panicked bursts. I couldn't make it all out, but they repeated some of what the angels had said, so they were obviously awake, and they were sure that they would be put to death. I guess they thought that no one would believe them that a large angel had appeared and opened the tomb that they were sent to guard. I could not help but chuckle to myself. What were they going to tell their commanding officers? And what would be reported to the Romans? Oh deary me. Despite their fears, they agreed to go to the Chief Priest, rather than their commanding officers, and tell them what had happened. They skulked away, continually looking around them as they went, hoping that no one would see them, I guess.

That had made me laugh at least.

I sat down on a bench and pondered on everything that had happened over the past few days. What was I supposed to do about the events I had seen? Would anyone even believe me if I did tell them?

Next to enter this, strangest of days, were two men racing into my garden in great haste. I say two men, first, *one* came sprinting up to the garden, skidded to a stop, and then walked over towards the tomb, where we laid Jesus' body, showing proper respect for the people who were buried here. I was sure I recognised him. I was sure he had been with Joseph of Arimathea when he brought Jesus' dead body to be placed in his tomb, only three days ago. His name was John I think, yes, that's it. He had helped carry Jesus' body from the cross into the garden, and had helped as we tried to clean him from all the blood.

John, walked up to the entrance to the tomb, and leaned in to see inside. I started to walk over to him but was stopped by the second man, running into the garden. He did not show due respect to the dead people who had been laid to rest there. Instead he continued to run right up to where John was, and then marched straight into the tomb. After a moment or two, John followed this second man into the tomb. I arrived at the entrance as the two men came out. John recognised me, and they asked me what I had seen, and a little hesitantly, I told them the whole story of the women, the earthquake and the two angels.

The other man with John was called Peter. They were two of Jesus' disciples. Peter said that the women had told them the same story, but they had not believed them. I'm not sure they were any more convinced now that I had told them. I noticed that one of the women, called Mary, had followed John and Peter back into the garden, and stood alone, off to one side.

I went on to tell Peter and John how, I had felt drawn to the terrible events of the last few days; the day Jesus was falsely accused, crucified and died. Peter and I became friends that day, and he has since explained to me all the events of these days, and why they happened the way they did. I'll come back to that in a minute.

Back to the garden. After John, Peter and I had talked, they walked over to Mary, who had followed them back here. I hoped they were apologising for not believing her. Peter and John then started back

towards the house where they were staying. None of us really understood the meaning of these past few days. Mary remained in the garden. She was still very upset, despite the good news that the angels had told her, that Jesus was alive again. She was pacing about in front of the entrance to the tomb, crying. I stood over to one side, wanting to give her room to cry. I saw Mary walk over to the empty tomb, and go in. I saw the tomb light up again, as it had when there was an angel inside it. I rushed over towards the entrance, and there were two angels sitting in the tomb, one where Jesus' feet would have been, and the other where Jesus' head would have been. I heard them speak to Mary;

"Woman, why are you crying?" The first one said.

"They have taken my Lord away," Mary replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

With no answer forthcoming from the angels she came back out, and saw a man, standing a little way behind me. Strange, I thought, as I hadn't heard him come into the garden. Mary went over to him.

"Woman," he said, "Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"



“Sir, are you the gardener?” Mary sobbed, throwing herself at his feet. The cheek of it, I thought, I’m the gardener, not him. “Sir, if you have carried him away,” she continued, “tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Mary pleaded.

“Mary.” The man said softly.

Mary looked up into his face, and she gasped:

“Teacher!” she exclaimed, finally recognising him, her grief falling away, and love filling her heart once again. They embraced, laughed, tears still streaming down Mary’s face, but this time with elation, rather than grief. I slowly wandered over towards them. Drawn again by this man, Jesus. I didn’t want to interrupt this most marvellous of reunions, but I could not let this event go by without seeing him close up.

“It is you, isn’t it?” I gasped. “Jesus. I haven’t been able to get you out of my mind.”

“Hello Thomas.” Jesus said. “Thank you for being there for me, for witnessing all these things. I have seen you following me.”

Millions of questions ran through my head, but I did not feel I should ask any of them.

“In a couple of days, go and speak with Peter and John. They will explain everything to you.” he said. With that I felt I should withdraw and leave Jesus alone with his great friend. After too short a time, Jesus said:

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

The two of them looked at each other, faces full of love and joy, and with that he was gone, just disappeared. Mary looked over at me.

“You saw him didn’t you, Thomas?” Mary gabbled.

“I did see him, and heard everything.” I said, adding, “I am a witness for you.”

She looked at the empty tomb, then back at me, and laughed. Then she ran off to tell the disciples that she had seen Jesus, and he was **alive!**

I looked around me and sighed. What was the point of doing any more work when you had been witness to a man die, brutally murdered, witnessed his death and burial, and then witnessed that he had miraculously come back to life. I stood in the garden, enjoying the silence. I walked over to the open tomb but it was empty again, the angels had gone, and the only things left in there were the cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus’ body and his head. I guess no one will be wanting them any more.

But, if I thought the strange goings on of that day were over, I should have thought again.

Into the garden bustled three of the Temple Guard. Do you remember me telling you of them before? They are the ones that look very important, but have very little power.

“Hey you!” one of them shouted at me, “Come here!”

I walked slowly towards them. Although they had no power of arrest or could kill anyone, they were still frightening, and they would not think twice about beating me severely.

“Did you see the soldiers guarding this tomb this morning?” barked one of the guards, pointing at the empty tomb.

“I did.” I replied, a little more assertively than I intended.

“So you were witness to the fact that the body that was in that tomb, was stolen by his disciples.” he said, intensely.

“No,” I replied, “that is not what happened at all. When I arrived this . . .” I was interrupted by all three of them advancing towards me with swords drawn.

"I'll tell you again what happened," one of the soldiers said, pushing me down to the ground and pointing his sword close to my face. "This man's disciples arrived here during the night, overpowered the guards, and stole the body, so that they could pretend that the dead man had risen from the dead. But he hasn't, has he?" And he thrust his sword right against my cheek.

"I will not be bullied into telling that lie." I said, amazing myself for being so bold.

At that, the expression of the guards changed. They looked puzzled by my response and they stood back up away from me.

"That's the story we have told the Roman authorities, and the story that will be told to Pontius Pilate, and will be circulated around Jerusalem, and anyone who says any different, will be dealt with severely. Do you understand?" The guard said, not so assertively, almost as if he was now a little afraid of me.

"I understand." I said, and with that they immediately turned and left. I looked around me, but I was alone again. "But I hadn't finished speaking," I said, out loud to nobody. "I understand," I repeated to myself, "that I will tell everyone I possibly can about that man, Jesus, the Son of God, a sinless and innocent man, who died a horrible death, taking the punishment of the whole world, so that we can be forgiven, and can join his followers, forever more."

Isn't that an amazing story? And I am witness to his death and resurrection. A man, betrayed by one of his closest friends, secretly arrested, being held in a false trial, falsely accused, and put to death for something he had never done. But to everyone's amazement, he came back to life again, and was seen by many people, including me. **Amazing!**

I never saw Jesus again, but I have met with Peter. He told me that he had now seen Jesus himself, and that Jesus had met up with all his disciples on a number of occasions. Then one day, the disciples

watched as Jesus rose up from the ground, into heaven, in front of their very eyes. I wish I had been there to see that.

I now understand fully what had happened to Jesus:  
"For God so loved the world, that he sent his only son, that whoever believe in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life."



## *Andrew's Epilogue.*

I, Andrew Moore, am also Jesus' witness. "*The Gardener's Story*" is a story that I have written about a man that I have named Thomas. Although the gardener may never have existed, hundreds of tombs, cut out of rock, are still just outside of modern Jerusalem, even today. All the things that happened to Jesus, as told in the Bible, have been faithfully reproduced here, in the order they happened: his betrayal by a close friend; the secret arrest and sham of a trial, leading him to being falsely accused; being beaten and whipped; his crucifixion at the hands of the Romans; and his death. Jesus was also laid to rest in the garden tomb, owned by Joseph of Arimathea, and a large stone was rolled across the entrance. The Temple Guard soldiers guarded this tomb, and an angel appeared three days later, rolling the stone away, but Jesus was not in there, as he had already come back to life again. He was seen by his family, by his disciples, and on one occasion by about 500 people. The Bible records it all.

The Bible teaches that God made the world pure, and without sin and death. But the first man and woman chose to reject God, thinking that they knew better. They wanted to live their lives independent of God. And mankind still does, and men and women do all sorts of terrible things to themselves and to each other. The Bible calls these things, sins. But despite men and women wanting to live independently of God, God does not want to live independently of them. God wants everyone to come and be a part of his family. But God cannot ignore everybody's sin. The Bible teaches us that the punishment for sin is death. That's not good news for any of us. We have all sinned. We all need someone to save us.

But God loves us all so much, that he wasn't prepared for us all to die and perish. So, God sent his only son, born as a baby, named Jesus, who lived a life free from sin. Jesus' goal on earth was to take the punishment for everyone's sin, and that is why the sinless Son of God, was brutally murdered. Despite being God, he suffered terribly when he died. But, being God, he came back to life again. Now that *is* good news!

So, could this Jesus be your Saviour too?

The Bible even asks that question: What must I do to be saved? And it answers it too: believe that Jesus was who he said he was, the Son of God; and believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Then, repent of your sins (that means saying sorry); and ask him to forgive you. Then give control of your life back to him. Billions of people around the world have believed. And if you also believe in Jesus and the story the Bible tells of his life, death, and of him coming back to life again, you could join them. You could pray right now (pray is simply talking with God):

Dear God. I know that I have sinned and I'm sorry. I believe that Jesus is your son, and that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. Jesus is my saviour. Please forgive me and receive me into your family, forever. Amen.

If you have prayed that prayer, welcome to God's family. Please send me an email to tell me you have prayed that prayer. You can now read the Bible stories for yourself, or you could access content that teaches about God, made just for young people like you. Click on the "What's Next" button below to find out more. But ask your parents permission first..

My email address is: [andrew@jesuslovesbexhill.org.uk](mailto:andrew@jesuslovesbexhill.org.uk)



You can read all about the first man and woman on earth in my new book, *Adam's Story*.