

# **THE RADICAL RESCUE**

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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	7
Introduction	9

## **Part I—The Rescue Work Begins**

Chapter 1: Radical Rescue Understood	13
Chapter 2: Hope for Tomorrow	19
Chapter 3: The Wilderness Battle	23
Chapter 4: “Follow Me”	26

## **Part II—The Rescue Explained**

Chapter 5: Why Micah Believed	33
Chapter 6: Sabbath in Capernaum	36
Chapter 7: Leper No More	39
Chapter 8: Wrecking the Roof	43
Chapter 9: Interrupted by Joy	47
Chapter 10: Peace After the Storm	51
Chapter 11: “Leave Us Alone!”	54
Chapter 12: Two by Two	58
Chapter 13: Walking on the Water	62
Chapter 14: Unexpected Changes	66
Chapter 15: Eyes Covered in Mud	70
Chapter 16: Jesus Is Our Guest	75
Chapter 17: Catching a Coin	79
Chapter 18: A Wealthy Man Wonders	82
Chapter 19: Who Is the Greatest?	87
Chapter 20: The Tree Climber	91

### **Part III—The Rescue Guaranteed**

Chapter 21: The King Rides a Colt	97
Chapter 22: The King Borrows a Room	100
Chapter 23: The King Betrayed	105
Chapter 24: The King Crucified	111
Chapter 25: The King Resurrected	117
Chapter 26: The King's Promise	121

## RADICAL RESCUE UNDERSTOOD

**M**ary had been looking forward to taking Jesus to Passover in Jerusalem for a long time. He hadn't been to the temple since she and Joseph took Him there as a baby to be dedicated. Now, as they were actually on the way, she wondered why He was so quiet. This was the third day of their trip, and soon they would enter Jericho.

"Jesus, do You remember the story about Jericho?" Mary asked.

"Yes, Mother. What a day that was for the Israelites when they finally arrived in the Promised Land," He answered. "Every day for a week, the army of Israel marched around Jericho one time. On the seventh day, they marched around seven times. When all the men shouted together, the walls fell down."

"You're absolutely right. What about Rahab?" Joseph asked.

"Well, Rahab had a house built into the wall of the city. She helped the Israelite spies who had her put a red rope in her window. When Jericho was captured, she and her family were saved. Later, she married someone from the tribe of Judah. She was one of our ancestors," Jesus ended the story.

"Jesus, You have learned Your lessons well. From Jericho, we will climb up the mountains to Jerusalem. We should be there by tomorrow," Joseph said.

"Please tell me about Jerusalem again," Jesus said. "I don't remember anything about it."

"Of course, You don't. You were a very small baby," Mary said.

"Jerusalem has thick walls and massive gates. Herod the Great, who was king when You were born, built himself a very beautiful palace which You will see when we get close to the city," Mary said. "The most magnificent building in Jerusalem is the temple. It was rebuilt when our ancestors came back from Babylon. Herod also has made it bigger and more beautiful. Many say that today it is the loveliest building in all the world. I can't wait for You to see it."

"Didn't King Solomon build the first temple?" Jesus asked.

"Yes, he did. It was destroyed when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem," added Joseph.

Traveling to Jerusalem for the feast was an experience like no other. It took them four or five days to walk from Nazareth. As they traveled along, more

## Radical Rescue

and more people joined their group. At night they slept near the road, each family staying together.

Finally, they came to the place where the road went up to Jerusalem. Many steps led up the mountain. Soon, someone in their group started singing,

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2).

All the others joined in.

That evening as they sat around the campfire, one of the children asked, “Why do we keep the Passover? What does it mean?”

One of the grandpas told the story of God saving His people from slavery in Egypt. God had told His people through Moses to get ready to leave Egypt. They were to kill a lamb and paint the posts of their doors with its blood. They roasted the lamb and ate it all in one evening. In the morning they all marched out of Egypt on the way to the Promised Land, the country where we live now.

“It was an independence day for us Israelites,” said another.

“Soon after, God opened a pathway through the waters of the Red Sea so our fathers and mothers could cross on dry land,” someone else commented.

Jesus spoke up, “The lamb had a special meaning too. It reminded everyone in our nation that God’s Messiah would come to save His people.”

Everyone was quiet. “May that day come soon,” many whispered softly.

“We visit the temple to praise God for what He did for our fathers and mothers long ago. We also remember, as Jesus said, that God will send His promised Messiah,” said another grandfather.

They all went to sleep, rolled in blankets on the ground, thinking about what God had done for their people.

They awoke to another beautiful spring day. The grass along the road was a vivid green. Flowers bloomed among the rocks and birds sang in the treetops. “Come on, let’s go,” someone shouted. “We’re almost there.”

Rounding a corner in the road, they saw Jerusalem ahead of them. It was a beautiful city, crowned with the glorious temple. They stopped walking, moved by the sight of the city. Again, everyone started singing,

“I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’  
Our feet are standing  
in your gates, Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:1, 2).

## Radical Rescue Understood

They quickened their steps, anxious to arrive in the city.

Some of their group stayed with family and friends who lived in Jerusalem, but Joseph's family joined many, many others who pitched tents on the slopes around Jerusalem. When the tent was ready, Joseph said, "Come, Jesus. Let me show You the city and the temple. We need to buy a lamb to sacrifice tomorrow for the feast."

Thousands and thousands of people had traveled to Jerusalem for the feast that would begin the next day. The streets were so crowded that people bumped into each other. "Sorry, sorry," they heard people apologizing. Joseph led Jesus to the temple at the hour of the evening sacrifice. They watched as the priest held up a knife to cut the throat of a squirming lamb. The people were quiet and listened to the chants and songs of the Levites, the helpers in the temple; some of them led the music and singing.

Jesus asked Joseph, "The lamb represents Messiah, doesn't he?"

"Yes, Jesus, the lamb represents Messiah," Joseph answered.

The two went to the market to buy a lamb for their Passover dinner. Jesus carried the lamb as they walked through the crowds back to their tent. "Couldn't we just keep the lamb?" Jesus asked as He petted his woolly coat.

"He would make a great pet, wouldn't he," Joseph said, "but a lamb is part of the celebration. He reminds us of what God has done for His people."

Joseph and Mary shared their lamb with some of their relatives because the three of them couldn't eat the whole lamb themselves. The next evening, the family celebrated Passover together with their relatives. The lamb was served with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast, more like crackers than regular bread. The children asked questions about the meaning of Passover. Jesus asked why the lamb had to die, but He didn't seem satisfied with the answers. Together they all recited Psalm 118, which begins and ends with this line, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (verses 1, 29).

Later in the evening Mary sat beside Him and whispered softly, "Jesus, You seem so serious. This is a happy occasion."

"Mom, I've been thinking. The lamb dies. In Exodus his blood was painted on the doorposts to save the firstborn son. Doesn't that mean that Messiah must die to save all men?" Jesus whispered back.

"I never thought of it that way, Son," Mary said. "I always thought that Messiah would destroy the Romans who have taken over our country."

"What about the prophecy in Isaiah? Doesn't it say that Messiah must die because of the sins of His people?" Jesus asked (Isaiah 53).

"You have such deep thoughts. You and I must pray for understanding," Mary tried to understand her Son. "Passover is a day of joy to remember how God has blessed our people."

## Radical Rescue

During the week, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to see the important places in Jerusalem. They walked by Herod's palace, visited the pool of Siloam, and climbed the Mount of Olives. Everywhere they asked Jesus questions about the history of His people in that location. Then on the first day of the week the family went to the temple to watch the priest wave the barley sheaf to thank the Lord for the beginning of the harvest. Jesus seemed to enjoy this sign of God's blessing.

Their time in Jerusalem passed quickly. Joseph and Mary with Jesus' help packed up their belongings getting ready for the long walk home. They joined the thousands who left Jerusalem for every part of Judaea and Galilee. The first part of their journey was down the steps to Jericho. They visited with their many friends along the way, rejoicing over the good time they had had at the feast.

When evening came, they found a place for the three of them to sleep. "Where's Jesus?" Mary asked Joseph.

"I thought that He was with you," he answered.

"I thought that He was with you," Mary replied. "He must be here with some of His friends." The two of them hurried, looking at each group of people, asking over and over, "Have you seen Jesus?"

No one had seen Jesus. "Oh, no, we've lost our Son, Jesus. What shall we do?" Mary started to cry.

"Mary, it's getting dark. We can't walk on the road at night. Tomorrow we will start early to go back to look for Him," Joseph tried to comfort Mary. Together they prayed that God would keep their Son safe and that He would show them where to look for Jesus.

In the morning, they hurried up the steps back to Jerusalem. Their friends all called to them, "God will bless you. He will show you where to look. We will pray as we go on to our homes."

The way seemed much longer to Joseph and Mary. They were anxious to find Jesus. Each one prayed, "Please God, help us find Jesus. We never should have let Him out of our sight." By evening they were able to enter Jerusalem before the gates closed. Again, they had to wait for morning to continue their search.

The next day—the third day since they had lost Jesus—they wondered where to look for Him. "Joseph, let's go to the temple. Jesus was fascinated with everything that happened in the temple. He asked so many questions. Maybe He will be there," Mary said.

"Yes, you're right. We'll start at the temple," Joseph agreed with her.

As they came into the temple, they heard a familiar voice, coming from a room with its door ajar. They stopped to listen. Jesus was asking questions.

## Radical Rescue Understood

“If Messiah is to save us from the Romans, why does Isaiah say that He will die for our sins?” He asked (Isaiah 53).

“He asked me that question the night we ate the feast,” Mary whispered to Joseph, as they listened to understand who might be answering Him.

They heard the deep voice of a stranger, “My Son, You ask very difficult questions. The lambs we sacrifice represent the Promised One who will save us. Other verses show Messiah to be a mighty warrior. We must all study more to understand how both these things are true. Our people long to be free from the Romans. Passover is to celebrate our independence from Egypt. Why should it not also represent our freedom from the Romans?”

The discussion seemed to be over. Joseph and Mary slipped into the room to see Jesus talking to some well-dressed rabbis. “Jesus, we couldn’t find You. We were very worried. We’ve been looking and looking for You,” Mary said.

“Have You been here the whole time? Didn’t You realize that the feast was over and it was time to go home?” Joseph added his comments to Mary’s.

“Didn’t you know that I needed to be about My Father’s business?” Jesus answered.

Two of the rabbis came to talk to Mary and Joseph. “Your Son is a remarkable young man. He has never been to our school. We have never seen Him until the day before yesterday. He asks such insightful questions and makes us think deeply,” one said.

“Can He stay here and attend our school?” asked the second one.

“We live far from here in Nazareth. I’ve already missed several days of work because we lost Jesus,” Joseph replied, “and I must support my family.”

“We would give Him a scholarship and find somewhere He can stay,” said the first rabbi.

“Thank you for your kind offer, but He is too young. We need Him with us,” Joseph answered. “Come, Jesus, we must get started home.”

Jesus left with Joseph and Mary and they started the long walk back to Nazareth. As they walked down the steps again, Mary thought about all that had happened on their trip to Jerusalem. *Does Jesus understand His mission? His questions are so thoughtful that they make me wonder if I truly understand it. Where is God going to lead Him? What will happen to Him and to us?*

When the family got back to Nazareth, Jesus continued to help Joseph in his carpentry shop as He had done before. Neighbors observed what a fine young man Jesus was becoming.



## OPEN YOUR BIBLE

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### ***Read the original story***

Read the story about Jesus' visit to the temple in Luke 2:41–52.

### ***Compare Bible stories and verses***

How do Isaiah 53:7 and John 1:29 connect the Passover lamb to Jesus?

### ***Answer some questions***

1. How old was Jesus when He went to the Passover?
2. How did going to the Passover in Jerusalem help Jesus understand His radical rescue mission?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “I needed to be about My Father’s business”?

### ***Learn a Bible verse***

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

### ***Share Jesus with others***

1. Ask a parent if any of the children in your family were ever lost. Talk about the parent’s fear when their child or children were missing. Write in your journal about the lost child.
2. Find a recipe to make unleavened bread. Ask your parent’s permission and make the bread. As you eat it, explain to your family what the unleavened bread meant as part of the Passover.
3. Ask an adult you know to tell you how old they were when they understood they were responsible for their own decisions about their friendship with Jesus. Ask them to explain what happened that helped them realize that. How old are you? Have you had a similar experience? Share your story.