

DAVID KITCHEN

EASTER INSIDE OUT

THE STORY AS IF YOU WERE THERE

*A chance to see the story in your head, feel it in your heart
and know that dead men don't eat fish*

‘Dave Kitchen is a genius! He has a knack for helping us see old stories with new eyes. Dave’s great insight is that he knows that there is a massive difference between being outside a story and inside one. His talent is to present to us the old and familiar stories of the Bible in a way that enables us to enter them in our imaginations. As we get inside the story, we notice things we never noticed before; the stories become richer, deeper and more meaningful. This book is a great resource for Christians and churches to use during Lent. It is also accessible for readers with no prior knowledge or experience in reading the Bible. The Easter story has been one of the foundational stories of western civilisation, here we have a resource that will help people to enter that story, to feel its significance and meaning, and, even more excitingly, to explore what their own response to that story might be!’

The Revd Stephen March, pioneer priest in Leicester Diocese

‘The greatest story ever told with an invitation to not just read it – but step into it. Get ready for an incredible journey.’

Rob Parsons, founder of Care for the Family

‘In this very helpful book, David Kitchen brings us imaginatively into the events of Holy Week and Easter through a wide variety of witnesses. There is new insight on every page. Both individual readers and those who lead worship or study groups will find much to inspire.’

**The Revd Donald P. Ker, former secretary and president
of the Methodist Church in Ireland**

‘Dave Kitchen has done it again. Having brought characters from scripture to life in *Bible in Ten*, *Easter Inside Out* does the same for the most significant week in history. If we ever forgot that Easter was about real people at a real time in a real country, *Easter Inside Out* reminds us in a lively, readable, creative and captivating way.’

The Revd Dr Jennifer A. Hurd, chair of Wales Synod Cymru

‘Dave Kitchen has been getting inside the hearts and minds of the first followers of Jesus and those he encountered for more than 50 years, enlightening and inspiring so many people through in the process. Now he has done it again with *Easter Inside Out* in which we are invited to journey with Jesus and those who knew him from Palm Sunday to Good Friday and then to Easter and beyond. Suitable for personal reflection and devotion, it will also make an excellent small group resource during Lent or even as a one-off book group read, with stimulating questions provided for both.’

The Revd David Mullins, retired Methodist minister

‘Holy Week is the most significant week in the Christian faith that has literally transformed the course of human history. Dave Kitchen approaches the gospel stories of this crucial week with creativity and imagination. In a series of vignettes, he brings the story to life and locates the overarching narrative on the hustling and bustling streets of Jerusalem. He does so in a way that is always accessible and engaging. It is my hope that *Easter Inside Out* would enable anyone to think afresh about this story and the impact it can have on our lives.’

The Revd Andrew Charlesworth, chair of Wales Synod Cymru

‘*Easter Inside Out* does exactly what the tag line says: it’s a fascinating retelling of the Easter story as if you were there. David weaves together biblical and imagined characters to take the reader through the events of Easter week in their own words, bringing them to life as they deal with all the ups and downs of their being part of the days that changed the world. A detailed timeline helps the reader keep pace with the fast moving moments. David has given us a truly original version of the greatest story.’

Roger Aubrey, PhD, MTh, writer and international Bible teacher

EASTER INSIDE OUT



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Ministrías

For Reuben and Leni, the next generation

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It starts like this

I'm about fourteen. It's Easter again and a preacher is telling me how *wonderful* it would be to have been there on that very first Easter morning. I think I know what the preacher means by this. What an astonishing story to actually be a part of!

But *wonderful*? Terrifying might be closer to it. Remarkable, perhaps, but also disturbing. Definitely puzzling and troubling too.

Looking back from thousands of years later, we know how it all turned out. But when you're living it, you don't have that perspective. Looking back, we can relate in a way no one ever does in the heat of the moment.

Five hundred years ago, Christians like Ignatius of Loyola would make it part of their Bible study to try to bring a part of the gospel story to mind and to life by putting themselves in the situation they were reading about. It's an ancient and important part of getting to know and understand the Bible, but we don't use it as much as we might.

I've now spent the best part of a lifetime retelling bits of the Easter story in one way or another. One of the radio programmes I co-wrote even won an award for bringing three of the characters to life. It was a feel-good moment even if I wasn't sure I deserved it.

But what I've never done until now is explore ways that the story fits together as a whole from the various accounts. A couple of years back, I decided to see if I could get a good sense of what it must have been like, day by day, as the Easter story unfolded. Is there enough information to reconstruct that in a reasonable way from what we know?

A few wise heads told me I might not actually be able to do such a thing. That was just the encouragement I needed! Of course, after 2,000 years, people can always choose to draw slightly different timelines. But everything I've described here is based on the evidence or is a reasonable assumption that can be drawn from that evidence.

So, if you want to feel Easter as if you were there, to experience it from the inside out, to sense what it might have been like to live through those days, then this is the book for you.

To start, let's set the scene: it is the week of the Passover and everyone seems to be in Jerusalem. After quite an absence from the city, it's rumoured that Jesus from Galilee is planning to be one of the visitors.

An aerial, black and white photograph of a palm plantation. The image shows numerous rows of palm trees planted in a grid pattern, stretching across the landscape. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down on the rows. The text "PALM SUNDAY" is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

**PALM
SUNDAY**

Dangerous or religious: Albus, soldier at the city walls

I was stationed in the guard-house tower that afternoon. So almost certainly I was the first to get a glimpse of what was happening.

‘Some sort of party or it could be a religious ceremony coming our way,’ I yelled down to my commanding officer.

‘Dangerous or merely what you’d expect in this land?’ Quintillus shouted back up.

I heard the thump, thump, thump of his footsteps as he came up to join me. The group was a bit closer now and I could make out a man who appeared to be on horseback at the centre of it all. Suddenly it didn’t look too good. I smelled riot and revolution.

Quintillus hauled himself up the final couple of steps. He squinted into the middle distance and said, ‘Well, what do you think it is?’

‘Looks to me like a “hero” returning to make a nuisance of himself during the holiday season. What’s this one?’

‘Passover.’

‘Well, it would be better if they all passed over and left us in peace. If that bloke is on horseback, I reckon we need the legion out now.’

Quintillus sighed. He hated fuss. ‘Just keep the peace,’ he used to say. ‘That’s what we’re here for.’

‘Look more carefully, Albus.’

‘Ah, he’s side-saddle on a donkey.’

‘Exactly. Most military leaders don’t ride in on animals used for carrying sacks of grain, do they? And can you see any sign of weapons hidden under the folds of what they’re wearing?’

‘Not so far.’

‘Well, keep looking because there’s a chance that it will turn nasty, but I don’t see any sign of it at this moment. What do you think it looks like right now?’

‘More like an open air dance party. Seems a bit peculiar to me.’

‘Have you picked up nothing about this religion since you were posted here, Albus? Their scriptures are full of song and dance. Even their old kings used to do it.’

‘Doesn’t sound anywhere serious enough to count as religion in my book.’

‘Ah, that’s where you’re wrong. This is a religion filled with passion, fire and even dance. That’s why our job here is a bit trickier because they feel for their faith more powerfully than in some of our territories. It can get out of hand pretty quickly.’

‘So we stamp on it, sir.’

Quintillus sighed. ‘Our job is to keep the peace and collect the taxes. That’s what Rome wants and that’s what Rome will get. If you see weapons or horsemen, just tell me and I’ll have soldiers here on the double to remove the ringleader’s head from

his body if necessary. In the meantime, they can sing “Hosanna” as many times as they wish and dance until dusk. What harm can it do? Have you never called on your gods to save you?’

‘I would if I thought it would do any good.’

‘Well, keep watching, Albus. You might even learn something.’

And, with that, he turned and plodded back down the stairs leaving me to watch and wonder about what sort of saving this group were expecting from this strange god of theirs.

Where to find this story in your Bible?

- Matthew 21:1–11
- Mark 11:1–10
- Luke 19:28–38
- John 12:12–16

Looking over the edge:

Thomas follows instructions

It was extraordinary. No other word for it. None of us had any expectation we were going to draw a crowd of that size and it felt spine-tingling – the noise, the laughter, the cheering. I thought to myself: now this is truly what I call a festival.

But, as Jerusalem came into view, I noticed the guard-house high in the city wall. People call me a pessimist, but I've always argued that I'm a realist. When you're in the middle of a parade which has turned into an amazing outdoor party, somebody should be watching out for the people who might break it up.

Things had begun to go a little crazy when the crowd started cutting down palm branches to wave at Jesus as if he was lord and master of everything he surveyed. That was thrilling, of course, because it looked as if we were going to change the world.

Yet I spotted the guard-house. I think, deep down, I doubted that this was actually the start of a glorious new chapter. Part of me wondered whether it was something darker.

I knew how dangerous Jerusalem was. And Jesus had said plenty about suffering and death. Nobody who listened closely to him could end up with the impression that life was going to be easy.



That morning Simon Zealot and I had been given the task of collecting a colt for Jesus to ride on. The instructions were exact and they included a sentence to say if we were challenged: 'The Master needs it and will send it back shortly.' The reason seemed clear enough to me. Jesus didn't want news of his arrival reaching Jerusalem before he did. Enemies needed to be on the back foot if it was at all possible.

The distance between Bethphage, where his ride began, and Jerusalem itself is no more than a mile or two but the crowd just appeared from nowhere. A message seemed to have been going on ahead of us: 'Jesus is coming – the one they call the Christ.' By the time we were nearing the city, there was a massive throng around us.

I realise now that the whole afternoon had been planned with great care. People tend to think that, as the twelve disciples, we knew all the details and did everything. It wasn't true. There were plenty of other followers, men and women, who were involved. And the women, in fact, formed the operational heart of much of the work.

Yet, walking so close beside Jesus that afternoon, we did feel a bit special – celebrities at last. Here was a saviour, as King David had been, and we were his disciples. The eyes of the nation were upon us... and it should have been great. Well, I think it was for someone like Peter. He was just drinking it all in. Me? I was swept up by the good mood at the beginning but then I began to wonder where it was all taking us.

I knew how secretive the borrowing of the animals had been. No one was to know about this parade until it happened except for those who were essential to the arrangements. I could see why.

When the crowd yelled 'Hosanna in the highest' or 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' it would have sounded harmless enough to the Roman authorities. Just another page in the strange religious celebrations of this set of tribes they had conquered.

When they yelled ‘God bless the coming kingdom of our father King David’, I thought we were getting towards the edge of what the Romans would tolerate. And when some fools started shouting ‘Blessed is the King of Israel’, we were well over the line. Fortunately, not everything gets heard by the sentries when a large crowd is on its way.

And the donkey helped the impression of harmlessness. You don’t ride into war on a beast of burden. You don’t attack your enemies with a symbol of peace and service.

Nonetheless, the Pharisees, who had turned up to check what was going on, heard the words clearly enough and warned Jesus to stop the shouting. It was way too late for that. As he told them, ‘If you silence the people, the very stones will cry out.’

I had to think for a moment about what he meant. It was as if what was happening was an avalanche which nobody could turn back and nothing could stop. It was only later I thought it sounded like something from the prophet Habakkuk. He knew his scriptures so much better than any of us did.

We plodded up the steep hillside to the city and entered. I swear that I saw a tear in his eye. He loved Jerusalem but he certainly didn’t love everything about it.

I wasn’t close enough at that moment to hear clearly what he said. James told me later that he had spoken of how he felt so much sorrow that the city couldn’t see what was needed for there to be peace. The price of not grasping it would surely be war and destruction. And all because the people didn’t recognise the time that God came to save them.

Jesus went, as we knew he would, to the temple. He didn’t stay there long; just quietly surveyed the scene. At one or two things, he looked long and hard.

It should have been great to be back at the centre of our faith on this massive wave of approval but I'm pretty sure our master was not feeling that. His brow was furrowed as he surveyed the temple and a shadow seemed to fall over him.

It wasn't hard to guess what he thought as evening fell upon the temple: so much that should be right and beautiful, overgrown by so much that was wrong and ugly. I suppose we all hoped things would improve but it never seemed to materialise.

He didn't say much as we returned to Bethany. I guess he was still thinking about what he'd seen. In choosing to return to the city, he knew he would be walking into a lions' den. However glamorous our entrance might have been that afternoon, it was only a matter of time until the beasts woke up.

Where to find this in your Bible:

- Matthew 21:1-11
- Mark 11:1-11
- Luke 19:28-40
- John 12:12-16
- Habakkuk 2:11



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STEP INTO THE EASTER STORY...

Acclaimed storyteller **David Kitchen** reimagines the Easter narrative through a varied cast of characters, from Mary Magdalene to Caiaphas.

If you want to understand who might have been where and doing what as the Easter story unfolds, this book gives you answers. It also lets you sense what it could have been like to be one of those involved in the twists and turns of one of the most extraordinary stories in the whole of history.



David Kitchen is an award-winning writer, broadcaster, teacher and storyteller who has been making the Bible come alive for longer than he cares to remember. His hobbies include music, poetry and playing crawling-upstairs games with his grandchildren. He has also written **BIBLE IN TEN** (BRF Ministries, 2023).



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incredible journey.'**

ROB PARSONS, OBE

