

THE STORY

Adult Sunday School Lesson Guide

Chapter 26

The Hour of Darkness

Timeless Truth: It is finished!

Teacher's Background Notes

The Story schedule was designed so that chapter 27 falls on Easter (Resurrection) Sunday. This week's chapter precedes and culminates on Palm Sunday. But the content of the chapter ranges from the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday through the crucifixion. Obviously, then, it covers a great deal of crucial Scripture. All of it is important. Most of it is somewhat familiar. As the holiest of all our Christian holidays, this week has often been eclipsed by the commercialism of Christmas. Yet, without it, our faith is in vain. Catholics and mainstream Protestants have continued to observe the holy week traditions while many evangelical Protestants have foregone the traditional observances except Easter morning. Perhaps we have "thrown the baby out with the bathwater" in this case. It is the goal of this week's lesson to bring fresh insights and life into familiar stories.

Nearly every ancient people group has some custom of blood covenant. Even secluded, tribal people groups today have blood covenant customs that are eerily similar to the ancient peoples of the Bible. It should be noted, however, that God does not need to secure His word in a covenant. By definition, all God's promises are totally and completely secure. Covenants do not make them any more sure than they otherwise would be. But God, in His love of us, condescended into the culture of His people and used covenants for their sake. This serves as just one more example of how far God is willing to go to secure the redemption of His people.

The Abrahamic covenant was unconditional. God made all of the promises and Abraham was not required to do anything. The covenant of the Law, or the Mosaic Covenant, was different. Its language was more of a legal treaty between a king and his subjects. It required the subjects (Israel) to yield undivided devotion to the King while He promised material blessings and provisions in return (Deut. 28). Their failure to keep this covenant cost them dearly. They lost the privilege of occupying the Land and they were severely disciplined. The Mosaic Law reminded them regularly of their sin (Heb. 10:3). The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4). It should have reminded them of their need for their Messiah, the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53). The New Covenant is again an unconditional covenant. God in Christ did all the work. Like the Abrahamic covenant, it is one-sided in that Christ's covenant partners do not have to do anything to enjoy all of the covenant benefits. We simply consent to enter into the covenant and reap its eternal benefits including actual and real forgiveness of sin (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:17). Because the New Covenant makes the Old Covenant with its vassal obligations obsolete (Heb. 8:13), these covenants can be confusing. Obviously the differences were confusing to some of our first century brethren because the author of



THE WHOLE FAMILY | THE WHOLE BIBLE | THE WHOLE YEAR

Hebrews felt the need to explain to them the benefits of the New over the Old (Heb. 8-10)! The marriage language that Jesus used in the Upper Room with His disciples helps us to see this difference. Yet our contemporary marriage customs are not an adequate parallel to the covenant because our marriages are more equal between partners. Understanding the ancient Hebrew marriage customs makes all the difference.

Option One focuses on the ancient tradition of cutting covenant. While Christians use the term frequently, most of us are only vaguely aware of its ancient roots. These cultural differences rob us of the richness that the original disciples were well aware of. The language that Christ used at the Last Supper was covenant language, but it was more than that. It was *wedding* covenant language. Because our eyes and ears are unaccustomed to such concepts, we easily miss it. But we can appreciate it once we are introduced to it. The marriage covenant language should challenge us to evaluate the depth of our personal commitment to our covenant partner Christ. This lesson also has major implications for the security of the believer. Furthermore, we must never confuse the familiar with the common. Since Oak Hills celebrates the covenant sign of communion each week, we risk the familiar becoming mundane. This lesson breathes freshness into the familiar remembrance of the New Covenant.

Option Two is more applicable to families. One thrust of our *Story* experience has been the total family immersion. Our goal has been to equip adult parents by building both competence and confidence so that parents can more effectively fulfill the Biblical mandate of teaching their children (Deut. 6:7; Ps. 78:1-8). This lesson plan presents several family-centered ideas that help parents teach their children through fun and age-appropriate activities. You can demonstrate these ideas so that your learners can replicate them in their own homes. Solicit volunteers to prepare some of the edibles to bring to class to enjoy. By making a set of Resurrection eggs, you will give each family a tool that they can walk out of your classroom with and use immediately. Any one of these activities can be added to Option One also.

Lesson Plan 1: Abiding in Covenant with Christ

In the film *Titanic*, passengers and cruise crew members react to their impending doom in various ways. The orchestra continues to play in the dining room, for example, while others panic. How would you spend your last twenty-four hours on earth? *[Either solicit responses from your class or give them a couple of minutes to discuss with a neighbor or table how each would spend their final day on earth.]* Knowing full well that He would be going to the cross in mere hours, how did Jesus opt to spend His last day? He spent it enjoying relationships, and loving and serving His disciples to the end. He spent it shoring up His teachings so that these men would be prepared to carry on the work He began. He spent it inaugurating the New Covenant and drawing His disciples into a covenant relationship with Himself.

I. The Covenant Customs

- A. Often we miss the full richness of the Scriptures because our 21st century cultural experiences are so far removed from the ancient customs of the Bible. Therefore, it is beneficial and even necessary to understand these ancient



customs in order to fully understand the subtle nuances of events. Today we're going to look at the customs of an ancient covenant to better appreciate the import of the New Covenant that Jesus provided. In addition, a better understanding of the Hebrew wedding will give us fresh insights into the language Jesus used, His imminent return, and the security of every believer.

- B. For many of us, our experience with a covenant is limited to a homeowner's association agreement. Most of us know that a covenant is like a contract. But for the ancients, a covenant was a solemn, binding agreement – a pact or pledge – that carried with it dire consequences for breaking. A covenant was “cut” rather than “made” because it involved passing between pieces of flesh. We still use the term *cut a deal* to describe an agreement that we expect to honor.
- C. Ancient covenants had common elements. Jonathan and David's covenant is a good example and included most of these elements (1 Sam. 18). The covenant between God and Abraham is another good example (Gen. 15).
 1. **Promises or oaths:** The promise or the oath laid out the expectation of each party in the covenant relationship.
 2. **Exchange of robes (clothing) and belt:** The clothing represented one's identity. When two parties enter into a covenant, they assume one another's identity in the sense that one agrees to care for his covenant partner in the same way that he would care for himself. The belt of an Ancient Near Easterner functioned differently than a belt does today. Back then, the belt held the sword and other instruments for protection. Therefore, to exchange belts symbolized the exchange of protection for one's covenant partner.
 3. **Blood sacrifice:** The blood sacrifice was usually a large animal cut into two mirror slices from head to tail. The parties dug a shallow trench for the blood to flow and laid the pieces of flesh on either side of the trench. The two covenant partners would then lift their robes and walk through the blood-filled trench to symbolize the gravity of their commitment. They essentially declared, “May God do to me (death) what has been done to these animals if I break this covenant.”
 4. **Sign or witness:** It was common to build a memorial, an outward reminder, of a covenant. In the Old Testament, this was often a pillar of stones.
 5. **Sharing a meal:** After the covenant was cut, the parties would enjoy a meal together (usually of the sacrificed animal). It nearly always included bread. When two or more people shared a meal together, it meant that they shared a trust and an intimacy. It would be unthinkable to betray someone with whom you had dined.
 6. **Name changes:** It was not uncommon to change one's name to reflect the “oneness” of the covenant relationship. We saw that God changed Abram's name to Abraham, and Sarai to Sarah.

II. The Covenant Couple



- A. A marriage is another covenant with which we are all familiar. However, it is certainly debatable whether or not we grasp the gravity of the covenant commitment that should accompany the blessed wedding ceremony. In Ephesians 5:22-33, the apostle Paul compares the relationship of Christ to the Church with the relationship between a husband and his wife.
- B. The Hebrew wedding ceremony differed significantly from our own present-day experience. The Hebrew wedding had three distinct parts or phases. It was a joyous celebration filled with food, friends and music and dancing. But more importantly, this custom is rich with spiritual truths that are expressed in the Upper Room when Jesus was with His disciples the night before He died. As we look at this ceremony, see if you can see elements of covenant.
1. **Stage 1: The *shiddukhin*:** This first step in the marriage process refers to the arrangements before the legally binding betrothal ceremony. The father of the groom was responsible for selecting a bride for his son. Sometimes he did it himself, but other times he designated a matchmaker—usually a servant—to do the selecting on his behalf. This was the case with Abraham who sent his servant to fetch a bride for Isaac. The concept of romantic love that precedes marriages today was not a part of this ancient tradition. Brides were often selected for political reasons or for good family connections. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the father chose the bride for his son. Often times this step included a written contract that delineated both parties’ provisions for the new couple. The groom promised to support and care for his wife-to-be while the bride stipulated her dowry contents. It should not be overlooked that the bride gave her consent, even in arranged marriages. After the terms were agreed to, the bride and groom each participated in a *mikveh*, a ritual immersion bath to symbolize spiritual cleansing and to prepare for the next stage, the betrothal ceremony.
 2. **Stage 2: The *eyrusin* (betrothal):** The second step in the marriage process took place shortly after the first. After the *mikveh*, the couple expressed their intentions to marry in a public ceremony under a canopy. The canopy symbolized the future household being planned. While under the canopy, the couple exchanged an item or items of value, i.e. rings, bracelet. Vows were exchanged and a cup of wine was shared to seal the commitment. At this point they are engaged or betrothed. But it is important to note that the Jewish engagement was taken far more seriously than ours today. It was legally binding, requiring a divorce to break. Even then, only the groom had the option of a divorce. The bride did not. (Mary and Joseph are referred to as “engaged” in one gospel and “married” in another – both are correct.) After the formal ceremony, the bride and groom each returned to their respective homes for about a year. During this time, they were expected to prepare for the final stage of their nuptials. They each had responsibilities. The groom was to prepare a room for his bride. He often built an extension onto his father’s house to prepare a place for his new wife and hopefully children. Likewise, the



bride had her tasks to do. She sewed her wedding garments for her joyous day. But more importantly, she consecrated herself through contemplation. She was to keep herself always ready for her groom. They did not engage in sexual relations during this time.

3. **Stage 3: The *nissuin* (marriage):** The third step in the marriage process took place approximately a year later. This word in Hebrew literally means, “to carry.” The anticipation of her groom kept the bride anxiously awaiting him to “carry her” back to her new home. The time of the groom’s arrival was to be a surprise. The whole wedding party was in fact a surprise. While the betrothal period was about a year, the exact day and hour were up to the groom’s father. The bride and her maidens kept their oil lamps burning in the evening just in case the groom would arrive. When the groom’s father determined it was time, he sent his son and the groomsmen to fetch the bride. One member of the groom’s party would shout, “Behold, the bridegroom comes!” and then sound the *shofar*, the ram’s horn. Then the groom would lead his party through the city streets inviting all who wanted to come to the home of the bride. Then the groomsmen carried the bride back to the father’s house for the final ceremony. Again under a canopy, the couple shared a cup of wine and said blessings. The vows are renewed and the marriage is considered consummated. The couple usually then fully consummated their marriage in the new room addition while the friends began the feasting and celebration. (Without being too graphic, God created this covenant to include the shedding of blood and the tearing of flesh within a woman’s body in this first sexual encounter.) This was no ordinary party either. It was commonly a 7-day non-stop bash! After dancing, celebrating and eating, the couple lived together in their new home in his father’s house, enjoying the full covenant of marriage.

III. The Covenant Language of Christ

While we are keenly aware of Christ’s initiation of the New Covenant, the wedding language that He used and that is used throughout the New Testament reveals the deep spiritual truths that the Hebrew wedding symbolizes. The wedding ceremony and resulting covenant relationship is an awesome illustration of Christ’s relationship with His disciples.

A. **The *shiddukhin*:**

The bride of Christ has been chosen by the Father. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” (Eph. 1:3-4) Sometimes the Father uses a matchmaker such as Paul to seek His bride, “I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him,” (2 Cor. 11:1-2). Yet the prospective bride can or cannot give her



consent to the relationship with Jesus. The stipulations of the New Covenant were expressed by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which basically stated God would put His law in hearts; He would be their God and they His people; He would forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more. He would do this by removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh and put His own Spirit within (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:24-28). The groom, Christ, promised to pay the price for His bride. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price,” (1 Cor. 6:19c-20a). The bride, His Church, has nothing to offer our Groom except a life of obedience. “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments,” (Jn. 14:15).

B. The *eyrusin*:

In the Upper Room, on the night He was betrayed, Jesus initiated a covenant with His disciples. This New Covenant included elements common to the betrothal ceremony of the Hebrew wedding. He shared a covenant meal with them, including bread and wine. He blessed the cup and said He would “not drink of it again until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom,” (Matt. 26:27-29). While some Christians do not hold to the eternal security of the believer, the Hebrew wedding symbolism should shed light on the issue. The New Covenant assures the Church that she is as good as married to her Bride, although she does not yet live with Him. The bride, which is the Church, cannot get a divorce and Jesus said that “no one will snatch them from my hands,” (Jn. 10:28). From the time a believer enters into the covenant, he/she is to prepare for the Groom’s return through diligent preparation of wedding garments, living a holy life set apart for her husband. “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless,” (Eph. 5:23b-27). She is to be always ready for His coming. Meanwhile, the Groom Jesus has His responsibilities. Like the ancient Hebrew groom, Jesus is busy preparing a place for His bride. He said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am,” (Jn. 14:1-3). Like brides before, the Church waits anxiously for her beloved.

C. The *nissuin*:

The last two thousand years have been a long betrothal period for the bride. The Groom Himself said He did not know when He will return. In speaking about His return He said, “No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father,” (Matt. 24:36). But when the Father sends the Son to get His bride, it will be an event unlike any other in all of history. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are



left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:16-18) Do you see it? The Son continues to prepare a place in the Father’s house. When the Father gives His “go ahead,” then the Bridegroom will return to earth to fetch His beloved bride, the Church. This event is called “the rapture,” which means “caught up.” The bride is “carried” away. While Christians might disagree about the exact sequence of events surrounding the rapture, the promise of being “caught up” to the Bridegroom at some point remains a sure promise. After all, we’re engaged! After this event, we can look forward to a blessed wedding feast. It is called the “marriage supper of the Lamb,” in Rev. 19:7-9. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Are you ready?

D. Covenantal elements:

1. Promises or oath: The New Covenant promises are given to the bride.
2. Exchange of robes and belt: Believers are to take on Christ’s identity and He took on ours. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, (2 Cor. 5:21). “All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Gal. 3:27).” “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom. 13:14a)” Jesus, the Good Shepherd, protects His sheep. “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep,” (Jn. 10:11).
3. Blood sacrifice: Christ Himself was the sacrifice.
4. Sign/witness: Christians celebrate communion or “The Lord’s Supper” as a sign of our covenant relationship. Jesus said it was a remembrance of Him (1 Cor. 11:25).
5. Sharing a meal: The Last Supper that Jesus shared with His disciples was a meal that we repeat with the bread and the wine at communion.
6. Name changes: The exalted Christ said of the Churches in Revelation, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it,” (Rev. 2:17).

IV. Application and Implications

- A. Have you taken your relationship with Christ as seriously as the ancient covenant relationship indicates He calls for? Stop flirting and commit to the relationship.
- B. All who hear the invitation should accept it.
- C. I am eternally secure because my Groom is faithful to His promises.
- D. I should be preparing for His coming by living a set-apart life, holy and blameless. Live in a way that is befitting such a Groom.
- E. If the Church is the bride, then I am also in a covenant relationship with my fellow church members. I should honor them as such.



- F. What a beautiful picture God has provided for us with the Hebrew wedding. I can know that Jesus is preparing me a place and He will return.
- G. The Father has chosen me as part of the Bride by grace alone.
- H. The bride has to consent to the relationship with the groom. All who are invited should accept the invitation.
- I. The only way to the Father's house is through the Groom, His Son.

Learning Activity: Discussion

Allow your students the opportunity to discuss the implications of this lesson. It has implications for both our relationship with Christ and our relationship with our spouse. Here are a few questions to stimulate small group discussion among tables or other small groups.

1. How might our marriages benefit from a better understanding of covenant?
2. If a Christian marriage is designed to represent to the world the commitment of Christ to the Church, how are we doing? How could we do better?
3. What are the implications of the Hebrew wedding covenant picture to your personal relationship with the Lord?

Lesson Plan 2: Family Easter Traditions

Since this week's chapter precedes Resurrection Sunday, it provides an excellent opportunity to equip our adult learners with tools to use with the whole family throughout Holy Week in anticipation of the single most important cornerstone of the Christian faith—the resurrection! If you wait till Easter Sunday to do these activities, it will be too late to take home and replicate. This lesson has three suggested activities to demonstrate to your learners. You might consider providing each member of your class the necessary items to create the Resurrection eggs so that each can take a set home to use. A dozen plastic eggs cost about \$1 which could be collected from participants so that you can recoup your investment. Other parts of the project have a minimal cost.

The cinnamon toms and the Easter story cookies also provide opportunities for our mothers and fathers to involve children in cooking projects as meaningful teaching tools for the resurrection. Provide the recipes to a couple of classroom volunteers ahead of time. Ask them to prepare the recipes at home and bring samples for the class to enjoy. Ask one of them to demonstrate the project before the class partakes in the treats. You might be surprised how willing class members will be to provide tasty samples of these fun treats! You can even make a sign-up list of the necessary items for the Resurrection eggs ahead of time, and ask class members to supply enough of a single item for all members of the class.



Resurrection Eggs

Resurrection eggs teach the story of Christ’s resurrection with homemade eggs. You can purchase a set for around \$15 if you choose, but the homemade eggs will work fine. You will need a dozen colorful fill-yourself plastic Easter eggs that will eventually fit into an empty egg carton for safe keeping.

Number your eggs 1 through 12 with a Sharpie permanent marker. Place an item and the corresponding Scripture reference (written on a small piece of paper) into each egg. Ideally, you would begin 12 days before Easter Sunday. However, since the timing of today’s lesson falls a week before Easter Sunday, open two eggs per day. Starting with egg #1, discuss the object in the egg. Read the message and Scripture, then discuss it with your child. If your child is old enough, have him or her find the Scripture in their Bible and read it. Leave each egg open in the carton to recall its contents. The next day quiz your child on the previous items before opening the next egg. On the last day, egg #12 is empty, like Jesus’ tomb!

<p>Egg #1</p> <p>Message: Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the people waved palm branches.</p> <p>Scripture: Matt. 21:1-11</p> <p>Item: A small plastic leaf, a piece of palm branch, or a blade of grass. An alternate item is a clipart picture of a donkey.</p>	<p>Egg #7</p> <p>Message: Soldiers divided up Jesus’ clothes and cast lots for them.</p> <p>Scripture: Mark 15:24-25</p> <p>Item: A die (or two dice).</p>
<p>Egg #2</p> <p>Message: Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples.</p> <p>Scripture: Matt. 27:17-19</p> <p>Item: A small piece of cracker to represent the Passover bread. An oyster cracker or the newest miniature saltine crackers work very well.</p>	<p>Egg #8</p> <p>Message: Jesus was nailed to the cross and they pierced his side.</p> <p>Scripture: John 19:18, and 33-37</p> <p>Item: A nail</p>
<p>Egg #3</p> <p>Message: Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.</p> <p>Scripture: Matt. 27:3</p> <p>Item: A dime or two, or plastic “silver” coins.</p>	<p>Egg #9</p> <p>Message: They gave Jesus vinegar to drink on a sponge.</p> <p>Scripture: Matt. 27:34</p> <p>Item: A small piece of sponge.</p>



<p>Egg #4</p> <p>Message: They scourged Jesus. Scripture: John 19:1 Item: A small piece of rope or thick string.</p>	<p>Egg #10</p> <p>Message: They used spices to prepare Jesus' body for burial. Scripture: John 19:38-40 Item: A few whole cloves, allspice or other whole spices and/or a piece of linen cloth.</p>
<p>Egg #5</p> <p>Message: They mocked Jesus as the King of the Jews. Scripture: Mark 15:16-20 Item: A small piece of purple cloth.</p>	<p>Egg #11</p> <p>Message: The angels rolled the stone away that covered Jesus' tomb. Scripture: Mark 15:46-16:4 Item: A small rock.</p>
<p>Egg #6</p> <p>Message: Jesus carried His cross. Scripture: John 19:17 Item: A thin popsicle stick that is cut and glued into the shape of a cross, or a cross from a necklace or earring.</p>	<p>Egg #12</p> <p>Message: He is risen! The tomb is empty! Scripture: Mark 16:5-6, or John 20:1-18 Item: None. The tomb is empty. As an alternative, you can use a piece of linen cloth to represent the burial clothes that were left empty.</p>



Resurrection Cinnamon "Tombs"

1 can Grands biscuits (OR frozen bread dough, thawed)

Melted butter or margarine

Cinnamon / sugar mixture

1 large marshmallow per "tomb"

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Have each child flatten a biscuit until it is about 5" across. Then brush melted butter on it, and sprinkle some cinnamon/sugar mixture on it. Explain that the spices represent the spices used to anoint Jesus' body for His burial.

Then give each child a large marshmallow to place in the center of the flattened biscuit. Fold the sides of the dough around the marshmallow to form a "tomb." Pinch the sides of the tomb closed and place it seam side down on a baking sheet. The marshmallow represents Jesus. It is white because it represents His purity and sinlessness. Then you may brush more butter and sprinkle more cinnamon-sugar on the outside of the tomb. Discuss with your child the sweet taste of the spices and how Jesus gave us the sweetest gift we will ever receive.

Bake the buns until golden brown, according to the package directions. Allow them to cool awhile before eating. The children will be surprised to bite into the "tomb" and discover the center is empty. The marshmallow has melted. When the children discover the empty tomb, say together, "He is not here; He is risen!"



Easter Story Cookies

This is BEST done on Saturday night before Easter morning!

1 c pecans (halves or whole; NOT chopped)
1 t vinegar
3 egg whites
Pinch salt

1 c sugar
Zipper baggie
Wooden spoon

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Place pecans in the zipper bag and beat with the wooden spoon to break into small pieces. Teach your children that Jesus was beaten after He was arrested by the Roman soldiers. Read John 19:1-3.

Let everyone smell the vinegar before placing it in a medium mixing bowl. Explain that Jesus was given vinegar on the cross to drink when He was thirsty. Read Jn. 19:28-30.

Add the egg whites to vinegar. Eggs represent life. Jesus gave His life to give us life. Read Jn. 10:10-11.

Sprinkle a pinch of salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it before brushing the rest into the bowl. This represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' disciples, and the bitterness of our own sin. Read Luke 23:27.

So far the ingredients are not very appetizing. Add 1 cup sugar. The sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because He loves us and wants us to belong to Him. Read Ps. 34:8 and Jn. 3:16.

Beat the mixture on high for 12-15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. The color white represents the purity of those whose sins have been paid for (forgiven) by Jesus. Read Isa. 1:18 and Jn. 3:1-3.

Fold in the broken nuts. Drop by teaspoons onto a wax paper covered cookie sheet. Each mound represents the tomb where Jesus' body was laid. Read Matt. 27:57-60. Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door and turn the oven OFF. Give each child a piece of tape and seal the door like Jesus' tomb was sealed. Read Matt. 27:65-66.

Go to bed! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies overnight. Jesus' followers were also sad when the tomb was sealed. Read Jn. 16:20, 22. On Easter morning, unseal the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! On the first Easter, Jesus' followers were surprised to find the empty tomb. Read Matt. 28:1-9.



Naturally Dyed Easter Eggs

Legend has it that the coloring of Easter eggs originated from Mary of Magdala who presumably brought eggs to share with the other women at the tomb of Christ. When she saw the Lord, the eggs in her basket turned bright red. Thus, the true meaning of dyeing eggs is to show the miraculous transformation of the whole world by the resurrection of Christ.

Consider dyeing eggs the old fashioned way – with natural substances rather than store-bought kits. Except for spices and juice, place a handful of dye material in a saucepan (more for more intense color). Use liquids as is. Cover with water to at least an inch above the dyeing material. Bring the water to boil and reduce to a slow simmer for about 15 minutes, longer for deeper color. Remove from heat and pour the liquid into a measuring cup. Add 2–3 teaspoons of vinegar for each cup of the colored liquid. Pour into a bowl deep enough to immerse your eggs. Lower your eggs into the hot liquid and leave them till they reach the color you like. Remove eggs with a slotted spoon and dry on a rack or strainer. For a textured look, dab the wet egg with a sponge.

Blue red cabbage leaves OR purple grape juice	Green spinach leaves	Light Yellow orange or lemon peels; OR carrot tops	Golden Yellow ground tumeric
Red lots of red onion skins; or canned cherries w/ syrup; or pomegranate juice	Purple small amount of red onion skins; or red wine	Pink beets; or cranberry juice; or red grape juice	Orange carrots; or yellow onion skins

