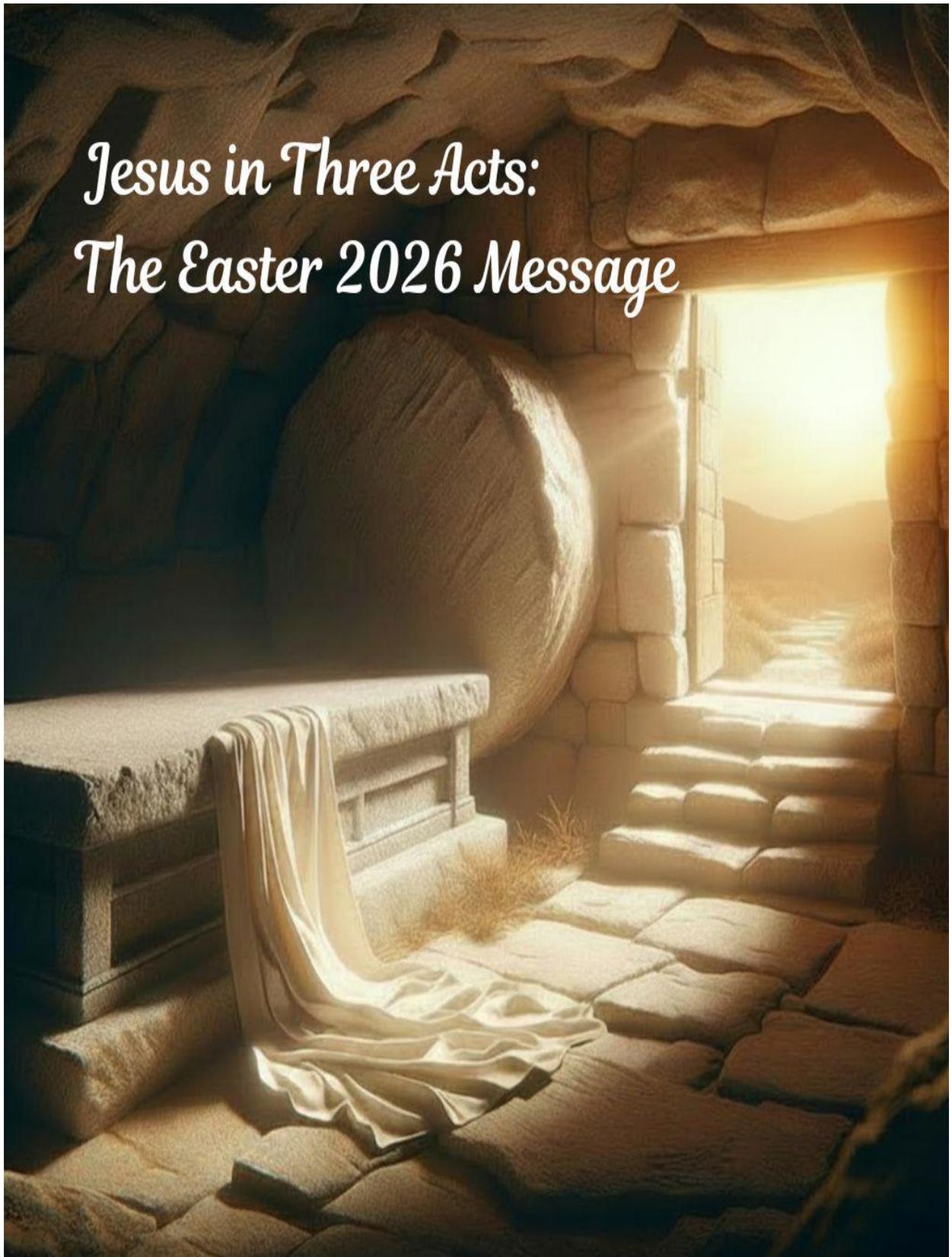


*Jesus in Three Acts:
The Easter 2026 Message*



Jesus in Three Acts

A Redemption Story from Before Time to the Age to Come

The Easter 2026 Message

by Candice M. Nutting

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..." —1 Corinthians 15:3–4



Every good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But the story of Jesus is not merely a good story — it is the story, the one into which every human life is woven whether we know it or not. Tonight, on this Easter, we look at that story in three acts. Not because God works in convenient literary structures, but because He does work with breathtaking intentionality — weaving every thread of history toward a single, glorious purpose.

The story did not begin in Bethlehem. It began in a garden, with a wound and a promise. And it does not end at an empty tomb. It ends — or rather, it opens — into an inheritance that is already yours if you are in Christ.

Let us walk through it together.

Act One: The Promise and the Preparation

A Wound and a Word

It starts in Genesis 3. The first man and woman have believed the enemy's lie — that God is withholding something good, that they must grasp what He has not given. Sin enters the world. Death enters. Shame enters. And God comes walking in the garden.

But even in that first terrible moment of judgment, there is a promise embedded like a seed in rock:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." — Genesis 3:15

This is the first gospel proclamation — the protoevangelium. The seed of the woman will one day crush the serpent's head. God has already set the story in motion. The enemy may wound the Son — but the Son will destroy him.

A Line Preserved Against All Odds

From that moment, God begins the slow and careful work of guiding history toward the fulfillment of that promise. What looks like genealogy — dry lists of names — is actually a thriller, because the enemy knows about the promise too, and again and again tries to sever the line.

Abel is murdered. God gives Adam and Eve a son named Seth — and the line continues.

Wickedness floods the earth. God preserves Noah and his family in an ark — and the line continues.

God calls Abraham out of everything familiar, leads him to a land he cannot yet possess, and promises that through his offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The promise narrows: not just any human offspring, but this family. Isaac, not Ishmael. Jacob, not Esau. Twelve sons — and the line continues.

Jacob's sons sell their brother Joseph into slavery. Joseph ends up in Egypt. What looks like catastrophe becomes the very mechanism by which God preserves the entire family during famine. The line continues.

The descendants of Jacob multiply in Egypt until a Pharaoh who does not know Joseph turns them into slaves and orders their infant sons killed. Into that darkness, Moses is born — hidden in a basket on the Nile, drawn out by Pharaoh's own daughter. God uses the enemy's household to preserve the deliverer. The line continues.

The Law: A Tutor, Not a Savior

Through Moses, God gives Israel the Law. And we need to understand what the Law was for — because misunderstanding this leads to misunderstanding Easter.

The Law did not save anyone. It was never designed to. Paul tells us it was a schoolmaster, a tutor — its purpose was to show Israel, and through them the world, the vast and unbridgeable distance between a holy God and fallen humanity. Every animal sacrifice, every year of atonement, every priestly ritual declared the same truth: blood must be shed, yet no amount of it is ever quite enough. You need to come back next year. And the year after. The system pointed forward to something the system itself could not accomplish.

*"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." —
Hebrews 10:4*

The Law was not the destination. It was the arrow pointing toward the destination.

Boaz and the Kinsman-Redeemer

Hidden in the genealogy of Jesus is a story most people hurry past. In the book of Ruth, a Moabite widow named Ruth follows her widowed mother-in-law Naomi back to Israel — land, family, god, and all. She has no standing, no inheritance, no rights. She is a foreigner, a widow, and poor.

Enter Boaz. He is a kinsman of Naomi's late husband — which in the law of Israel gave him the right and responsibility to act as a go'el, a kinsman-redeemer: to purchase the family's lost land, and to take Ruth as his wife, redeeming her from her hopeless situation.

Boaz does not have to do this. He chooses to. He sees Ruth gleaning at the edges of his field — the margins, where the poor were permitted to gather what was left behind — and he not only allows it, he instructs his workers to leave extra for her. He is moved by her faithfulness to Naomi. He acts.

Boaz marrying Ruth is a picture of what God is doing in the whole story. We are the foreigner with no rights, no inheritance, no standing. Jesus is the Kinsman — one of us by birth, with the legal standing to redeem, who chooses to pay the price to restore us to the family and the inheritance.

Boaz and Ruth become the great-grandparents of King David. The line continues.

David and the Covenant

God makes a covenant with David that his throne would be established forever — that a son of David would reign without end. David's kingdom rises, fractures, and falls. Jerusalem is destroyed. The people are carried into exile. It looks like the promise has failed.

But prophets arise in the darkness. Isaiah speaks of a servant who will be wounded for our transgressions. Micah names the town: Bethlehem. Jeremiah promises a new covenant written not on stone but on hearts. Ezekiel sees the Spirit poured out on dry bones. The promise does not die. It deepens.

And then — four hundred years of silence.

God has not spoken through a prophet in four centuries. The line runs through obscure names in a small Roman province. A carpenter. A young woman betrothed to him. A backwater town called Nazareth. Nobody is watching. Nobody suspects.

The stage is set.

Act Two: The Arrival and the Atonement

The Word Becomes Flesh

We celebrate Act Two's opening night at Christmas. The eternal Son of God, through whom all things were made, takes on human flesh. He is born of a virgin — fulfilling Isaiah's sign — in Bethlehem, the city of David. Angels announce it to shepherds. A star draws foreign astronomers from the east. The creator enters his own creation as a creature.

He grows. He learns. He works with his hands. He is tempted in every way we are — and does not sin. He teaches with an authority nobody has heard before. He heals the

sick, raises the dead, eats with sinners, and announces the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Everything about His life is a fulfillment of what came before. He is the prophet greater than Moses. He is the priest greater than Aaron. He is the king greater than David. He is the true Israel who does not fail where Israel failed.

Holy Week: The Events and Their Significance

And then we reach the week we now call Holy Week.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey — fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy precisely — and the crowds spread cloaks and palm branches before Him, crying Hosanna. They want a political king who will throw off Rome. They do not understand what kind of king He is, or what kind of throne He is riding toward.

He enters the Temple and drives out the money-changers. He teaches daily in the courts while the religious authorities plot against Him. He shares a final Passover meal with His disciples — and here, everything converges.

The Passover. Think about what Passover is. The night God delivered Israel from Egypt, every household slaughtered an unblemished lamb and painted its blood on the doorposts. When the angel of death passed through, it passed over every house marked with blood. The lamb died so the family lived.

Jesus takes the bread and breaks it: This is my body. He takes the cup: This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. He is not inventing something new. He is fulfilling what the Passover always pointed to. He is the Lamb. He has always been the Lamb.

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" —John 1:29

The Cross: What Is Actually Happening

Jesus is arrested in the garden — betrayed by one of His own. He is tried in kangaroo courts through the night. He is beaten, mocked, and handed over to be crucified. By nine in the morning on a Friday, He is nailed to a cross outside Jerusalem.

From the outside, it looks like defeat. It looks like the empire crushing another failed revolutionary. It looks like the religious establishment silencing a troublemaker. It looks like God has abandoned His servant.

But what is actually happening on that cross?

Jesus is acting as our Kinsman-Redeemer. Like Boaz, He has the legal standing — He is one of us, truly human — and He is paying the price to restore the lost inheritance. The debt of sin and death that stood against us, He is absorbing in Himself.

Jesus is acting as our Great High Priest. The whole sacrificial system — all those years of lambs and bulls and goats — was a shadow. Now the substance has come. He is

simultaneously the priest and the sacrifice. He is not offering an animal on our behalf. He is offering Himself.

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." —1 John 2:2

And when He dies, something extraordinary happens in the Temple. The curtain — the massive, thick veil that separated the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God's presence, from the rest of the Temple — tears from top to bottom. Not bottom to top, as a human hand might tear it. Top to bottom. God tears it.

For centuries, only the High Priest could enter the presence of God, and only once a year, with blood. The curtain said: you cannot come in here. You are not holy enough. There must be a mediator.

When Jesus dies, God tears the curtain. Access has been granted. The barrier is gone. The need for a human priestly mediator is over — because we have a better Mediator, one who has gone into the presence of God not with animal blood but with His own, once for all.

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all." —1 Timothy 2:5–6

And then — Easter morning.

The Resurrection: Death Has Been Defeated

Early on the first day of the week, the tomb is empty. The grave clothes lie folded. The stone is rolled away. The guards are as dead men. And Jesus appears — first to Mary Magdalene, then to the other women, then to Peter, then to the twelve, then to five hundred people at once.

The resurrection is not a metaphor. It is not a spiritual experience or a story the disciples told themselves to cope with grief. It is a bodily, physical, historical event. Paul stakes everything on it:

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." —1 Corinthians 15:17

But He has been raised. And His resurrection is the proof — the receipt, we might say — that the payment was accepted. The sacrifice was sufficient. The debt is cleared. Sin and death, which entered through one man, are undone by another. The curse that began in a garden is broken in a garden tomb.

And here is what the resurrection opens: the door is no longer only for Israel. Jesus commissions His disciples to go to all nations. Gentiles — people with no claim on the covenant, no lineage, no standing in the family of God — are now invited in. Not as second-class members, but as fully adopted sons and daughters. The family of God is thrown open to the world.

"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." —Galatians 3:26–29

One act of faith — trusting in Jesus Christ and what He accomplished — is all that is required. Not a lifetime of ritual. Not a checklist of moral achievement. Faith. That is the door Boaz opened to Ruth. That is the door the Father has opened to us.

Act Three: The Return and the Restoration

What Is Coming

The story is not over. Act Three has not yet fully arrived, but it is coming — and it is coming with the same certainty as Acts One and Two, because God does not begin stories He does not intend to finish.

Jesus will return. Not as the suffering servant this time, not riding a donkey into a city that will turn on Him. He will come in glory. Every eye will see Him. Every knee will bow. And those who belong to Him — those who trusted His work, who received the adoption He purchased — will receive what they were promised.

An inheritance. A restored relationship with God. Not the distant, mediated, behind-a-curtain access of the old covenant. Face to face. The dwelling of God with His people. Every tear wiped away. Death abolished. The curse fully reversed.

"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." —Revelation 21:3

But Not Yet Future — Already Now

Here is what I want you to hold onto before you leave today.

We speak of Act Three as something coming, and it is. But the critical mistake many believers make is treating everything Jesus accomplished as merely future. My redemption is coming. My adoption is coming. My inheritance is coming. I'm waiting for God's kingdom.

No. Listen to what Scripture actually says.

Your redemption is not coming — it is done. Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished." The Greek word is *tetelestai* — it was the word stamped on paid debts. Paid in full. Your sin debt is not in the process of being cleared. It is cleared. Past tense. Accomplished.

Your adoption is not coming — it has happened. "You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons," Paul writes in Romans 8. Not you will receive. You have received. You are already a child of God if you are in Christ.

The kingdom of God is not something coming in the future to replace the world as we know it — it arrived with Jesus. He said, "The kingdom of God is in your midst." The kingdom came when the King came. And when He sent His Spirit at Pentecost, He planted the kingdom inside His people and scattered it across the earth through them.

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." —Colossians 1:13–14

Past tense. Transferred. Delivered. You are already in the kingdom. The kingdom is already here, carried in the lives of everyone who belongs to Jesus.

Act Three will bring the fullness of what is already true. The restoration will be complete. The inheritance will be openly possessed. But you are not waiting to become what you already are. You are already redeemed. You are already adopted. You are already a citizen of the kingdom.

SO LIVE LIKE IT

This is the call of Easter, and it is not a small one.

God did not guide four thousand years of history — protecting a lineage, forming a nation, writing a law, raising up prophets, sending His Son, tearing a curtain, emptying a tomb — so that His people could sit in the waiting room of history, idly watching the clock until Jesus comes back.

He did all of that so that we would live as the people we actually are. Royal heirs who act like paupers. Forgiven people who drag their guilt everywhere. Citizens of the kingdom who take their cues from every other kingdom but His.

You are the seed of the woman, carrying the bruising heel of Christ into a world that still has a serpent slithering through it. You are Ruth, brought into the family not by your own merit but by the lavish grace of a kinsman who saw you gleaning at the margins and said, "Come. You belong here." You are the sheep for whom the Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine.

And you are already in the story. You are not watching it from outside. You are a character in Act Three, living in the space between the resurrection and the return — and the Author has already told us how it ends.

The question is simply this: Do you live like someone who knows?

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." —1 Corinthians 15:58

He is risen. We are His. The kingdom is here. Let us live like people who understand this.



To dive deeper into the meaning of Easter, check out "Talking Easter" by Candice M. Nutting, available on Amazon.com.



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