

TOWARDS JERUSALEM

As Jesus travelled around, talking to people he met and preaching to big crowds, he was able to share his message of how people's lives would be better if they paid more attention to loving God and loving each other. Most people who heard him thought he was a wise teacher, who knew about the Bible and about what God wanted for the world. But his friends and followers, the people called his disciples, saw more. They saw him heal people who were sick in their body or their mind—even bring dead people back to life! And not just once or twice, but lots of times. Plus they got to hear just about every word he had to say. They knew Jesus was special from the beginning; that's why they left everything to follow him. But as the months passed, they began to see just how special.

One day, Jesus asked his disciples a question. "Who do people say I am?" "Well," they answered. "Some say you're John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and some say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

"But who do you say I am?" Jesus asked. This time only Simon Peter had an answer. "You are the chosen one, the Messiah, the son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because it had to be God who showed that to you. No one else told you. You are Peter, the rock, and your solidness will be the base of my church. But," he told all his friends, "don't you tell anyone else that I'm the Messiah!"

I wonder what it was like for Jesus' friends to hear that from him? But they didn't have much time to think about what it all meant, because before long Jesus started talking about how he would soon have to go to Jerusalem. That wasn't anything new—they went just about every year to celebrate Passover. But Jesus told them that, this time, the priests and religious leaders would do terrible things to him, and that he would be killed, then rise from the dead after three days.

I think they missed the last part—they were horrified to hear Jesus predict his death. "No way, don't even say that!" Peter exclaimed. "That could never happen to you!"

Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away, satan! You're a dangerous trap for me. You're looking at things from a human view instead of God's view." To all the disciples, he went on: "If any of you want to follow me, you have to stop caring only about yourselves. If you try and save your own life, you'll lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you'll save it."

It was a little while before Jesus and his friends headed to Jerusalem. But from that moment Jesus was focused on the journey. And twice more, he told his friends that when they reached the city he would be beaten and killed. They were filled with sadness when they heard, but they didn't object again... and they kept following him.

Wondering Questions

I wonder if any of Jesus' friends had a hard time not sharing the news that he was the Messiah?

I wonder what it was like for Peter to hear that he was a great solid rock, and then that he was Satan?

I wonder what it was like for Jesus' friends to spend the next few months with him, after hearing that he was going to die? Why do you think they don't seem to remember that as the story goes on?