

A black cross stands on a mound of sand against a blue sky. The cross is positioned on the left side of the image, with its shadow cast onto the sand. The text is arranged in a vertical column to the right of the cross.

WERE
YOU THERE
WHEN
THEY
CRUCIFIED
MY LORD?

Passion Week Devotional Guide

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Passion Week Devotional Guide

As you go through these days leading up to Easter Sunday, you may want to spend some time focusing on the last week of Jesus' life. This guide will allow you to read day by day what Jesus said and did on that same day during His last week of ministry on earth. The chronology of events during that last week is sometimes unclear, but these daily devotions are tied as closely as possible to the days of the week as represented in the Gospel accounts. The goal of this is not an historical exercise, it is to draw us closer to our Savior at the time we commemorate His death, burial and resurrection.

Take the time to read the Scripture for each day's devotion and to pray. You may want to read the other passages for further insight into the events in the life of Jesus on each day of the week.

May God bless you as you seek to be close to Him and remember His sacrifice and victory over sin and death.

Palm Sunday

Scripture for today: Matthew 21:1-11. You may wish to read the other Gospel accounts of the Triumphal Entry in Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:29-38 and John 12:12-15.

As you read your passage today think back on the crowds who celebrated Jesus' triumphal entry. Did they really know who it was who rode into their presence that day?

The prophet mentioned in the passage is Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9) who wrote, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Jesus fulfilled many prophecies that demonstrated that He was the Messiah whose coming was foretold centuries before. Jesus was their king, He was righteous and was bringing salvation with Him. The crowd recognized that He fulfilled all the requirements of the Messiah. That is why they gave Jesus a "kingly" reception.

The crowd was crying out, "Hosanna" which means, "please save!". See Psalm 118:25,26 where the term hosanna is used (where it is translated "save" in our English Bibles), verse 26 contains the very words the people used to greet Jesus on that first Palm Sunday, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".

Look at the contrasts in the thinking of the people and Jesus as they looked toward the unfolding of God's plan of salvation. The people were looking for an earthly king, but Jesus was their Eternal King. The people recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but they were thinking of their own political salvation. Jesus was concerned with the eternal salvation of the world. The people envisioned a throne; Jesus foresaw the cross.

Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem and the people's spiritual blindness, as we see in Luke 19:41. Do you and I have a clear view of Jesus as Savior and King today?

Prayer: Lord, may we see You as you really are, King of kings and Lord of lords, Savior of the world. May we ever make You the Lord of our lives. Amen.

Monday

Scripture for today: Mark 11:12-18. You may wish to read the other Gospel accounts in Matthew 21:12-19 and Luke 19:45-48.

Jesus had set His face towards Jerusalem in the latter part of His ministry. He was headed for the cross where he would suffer as the servant, but He never stopped being Lord of all. He continued to demonstrate His dominion and authority over all on this Monday.

As Jesus traveled from Bethany to Jerusalem He saw a fig tree in leaf, so He came near to see if it had any fruit. The fig trees in Jerusalem would produce small, edible buds in March, followed by leaves in April. In May or June the actual fruit of the tree would ripen during the “fig season”. The tree that Jesus saw had leaves, so it would be expected that the buds would be present as well, even though “it was not the season for figs” (v.13). When Jesus cursed the tree for its unproductiveness, He demonstrated His authority over creation.

More significantly, many see in this curse a connection to the people. They maintained outward appearances of worship, while they actually were spiritually unproductive. The people engaged in impressive religious show, which should have indicated tremendous spiritual fruit. Actually, the people were far from God.

After cursing the fig tree, Jesus continued into Jerusalem where He cleared the temple of all those who were making dishonest gain from the worshipers. They were responsible for taking God's house of prayer, the temple, and making it a den of robbers. Jesus cleared out the money changers and those selling doves for sacrifices. In this way, Jesus demonstrated His authority to cleanse His Father's house.

These men were like the fig tree. They had the appearance of productivity without the fruit. They were ostensibly working to further the cause of God, but their minds were on their own personal gain. As Jesus had judged the un-fruitfulness of the fig tree, He judged these parasites in the temple.

As we look at our lives do we see more leaves than fruit? Are we more interested in outward appearances and the furtherance of our own plans than with the spiritual fruitfulness God desires? Are there areas in our lives that we need to allow Jesus to cleanse?

Prayer: Jesus please show me where I need to be productive in my life. Cleanse me so that I can be a fit temple for your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tuesday

Scripture for today: Mark 11:27-12:1 and Matthew 24:1-3. You may wish to read portions of our Lord's teachings on this day as outlined below.

Jesus spent the entire day preaching and teaching the people. The parables and sermons recorded for us from this day take roughly two chapters in Luke's gospel (Luke 20:1-21:36), three chapters in Matthew (Matthew 21:23-25:46). We don't usually realize when we read our Bibles that all of the things that Jesus said and did in these chapters happened on one day or happened just two days before His death.

Jesus spent much time answering the questions of the Scribes and the Pharisees as they sought to entrap Him. The Jewish leader's questions about taxes, resurrection and the Messiah were asked not because they hungered for truth, but because they wanted to find something with which to change Jesus legally.

Jesus knew His ministry on earth was going to end in His suffering and death, and not in the reign of the Messiah the people expected. That is why He took much time in the sermon on the Mount of Olives to explain His second coming. Jesus wanted His hearers and us to know that He was coming again to establish His kingdom and rule over it. Many of these parables were given to share the truth of His second coming with His hearers.

The amount of time Jesus took to each and preach so close to the end of His ministry clearly shows the importance Jesus attached to sharing God's truths with the people. It also indicates the priority we should give ourselves to reading and applying God's Word in our lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please make me attentive to your Word, the Bible. I want to be led in reading and understanding Your Word by Your Holy Spirit so that I can apply it to my life. Amen.

Wednesday

Scripture for today: Mark 6:30,31. You may wish to read the portions of Scripture indicated below.

This day, along with the Sabbath (Saturday) before Palm Sunday, is not mentioned in the Gospels. Perhaps Jesus took time this day to do what He had advised the disciples to do in Mark 6:31, come apart for awhile and rest.

The day before Jesus had given Himself totally to the people in preaching and teaching. He had also silenced the critical religious leaders. His day had started early and ended late. It was Jesus' custom at the busiest times in His life to spend time with His Father (Mark 1:35), certainly this day would be no exception.

It is possible that this day was used by Judas Iscariot to go to the chief priests and agree to betray Jesus. Whenever Judas made the arrangements to betray Jesus, we know that it occurred before the Thursday Passover meal. You may wish to read Luke 22:1-6.

Judas may have been prompted by many events to betray Jesus. Many have suggested that the use of expensive perfume to anoint Jesus triggered envy and greed in Judas, as may be implied in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark (Matthew 26:6-16; Mark 14:1-11).

Perhaps Judas was disappointed that Jesus had not started His Kingdom. Whatever his motives, we can be sure that Judas put self-will before God's will, which allowed him to be controlled by Satan.

Today, as you face the business of life, remember that our Lord found time to be alone with His Heavenly Father and encouraged His disciples to do the same. It is necessary for us to spend time in quiet reflection, in prayer and Bible reading; just spending time alone with God.

Prayer: Dear Lord, let me never become so busy with my own plans and agendas that I forget to spend quiet time with you. May Satan never find a foothold in my selfishness to harm the cause of Christ. Amen.

Thursday

Scripture for today: Matthew 26:17-29. You may wish to read the other Gospel accounts for the Last Supper in Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Jesus had spent Tuesday disputing with the Jewish leaders and teaching the crowds of people, perhaps He had spent time Wednesday in solitude, but Thursday He spent with His disciples.

Jesus showed them, by His own example, what it meant to be a servant and that true greatness can only be found in servanthood (Luke 22:24-30; John 13:1-17). It was at this time Jesus told His disciples that He was the *only* Way to the Father. He taught them about the coming power of the Holy Spirit and victorious life in Jesus Christ (John, chapters 14, 15, 16). Jesus also told the disciples that they would all fall away during His time of suffering (Mark 14:27; Matthew 26:31-35).

Most of the conversation that is recorded for us took place during the Passover meal. During this meal the minds of the disciples were to be focused on God's deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt.

Passover celebrated the "passing over" of God's avenging angel who went throughout Egypt killing the first-born of every man and animal. Every house which had, according to God's command, killed the Passover lamb and placed its blood around the door way, was "passed over". The houses that had not killed the Passover lamb and applied its blood were struck with death.

Now Jesus was attaching new significance to the elements of the meal. The bread was to be His body, which was to be broken for them. The cup would be the symbol of the New Covenant in His Blood. He said that His shed blood would bring forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:38). Jesus' blood would save those who applied it through faith, just as hundreds of years before the blood of the Passover lamb saved the lives of their forefathers. Jesus said we are to participate in communion to proclaim His death until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Think of the deliverance from Egypt that God provided for His people and think of the deliverance from sin that God provides to us through the shed blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus.

Prayer: Thank you, God for loving us enough to send Jesus to die for our sins. Thank you for the remembrance of communion, the commemoration of His payment for our sins. Amen.

Good Friday

Scripture for today: John 19:16-30. You may wish to read the other Gospel accounts in Matthew 27:31-50; Mark 15:20-37; and Luke 23:26-46.

Many have wondered about the name “Good Friday”. What was so good about it? The events of the day seem to indicate that the forces of darkness and evil had won. The end had come.

The disciples no doubt thought that the end had come. The end of their dreams of the reign of Jesus as Messiah, the end of three years of Jesus' teaching, the end of three years of friendship with their closest friend.

The religious and political leaders thought that this must be the end. The end of the crowds following the Galilean preacher, the end of having their hypocrisy and self-centeredness exposed, the end of the One who cared more for the Word of God than their precious religious traditions.

Satan must have hoped that this was the end. The end of God's attempt to remove the curse of sin, the end of God's attempt to provide eternal life in place of the death that had reigned so long, the end of Jesus, whose coming had been foretold in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15).

But when Jesus, from the cross, declared “It is Finished” (John 19:30), He was not indicating the end of any of these things. He was indicating that through His death He had fully satisfied the demands of God. Our sin “debt” had been paid in full so that we could have an eternal relationship with God. “It is finished” was not the end, it was the victory cry of the One who had overcome sin and death once and for all.

As we think of the victory of the cross, let us never lose sight of the tremendous price paid by Jesus for our sins. He suffered pain, agony and shame of the most brutal kind. He suffered separation from His Eternal Father, a kind of pain we may never understand. He suffered all of this punishment for you and for me, so that by believing in His works on the cross we may have eternal life.

Prayer: Father, help me to see the death of Jesus as the only possible payment for my sins. By my faith in His works on the cross may I be assured of eternal life. Amen.

Saturday

Scripture for today: Matthew 27:62-66 and Luke 23:54-56.

This was the Jewish Sabbath day, the day of rest. But the chief priest and the Pharisees were busy taking care of their own business. They went to Pontius Pilate to ask him to make the tomb of Jesus secure. It seems that they had listened to and remembered the teachings of Jesus when His own disciples had not. Jesus had plainly spoken of His coming death and resurrection (Matthew 20:18,19).

The Jewish leaders wanted to keep the disciples from stealing the body and claiming that Jesus had resurrected. The disciples were in no condition to pull off such a feat, they were disappointed and frightened. However, the guard was posted, with Pilate's permission, and the tomb was made secure. It was certain there would be no human disturbance of the tomb of Jesus.

The women had followed the body of Jesus as it had been laid in the tomb the previous afternoon. They had gone home to prepare the spices until the beginning of the Sabbath on Friday evening. They planned to finish the burial of Jesus on the first day of the week (Sunday), see Luke 23:55,56. But on this day they rested according to God's commandment. It was the mournful rest of those whose dreams had been shattered.

Even early that first Easter morning the day dawned without hope. The women were going to a sealed tomb to embalm a corpse. Their friend was dead, the One who they had hoped would be their Messiah had died on a rough and bloody cross with common criminals. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus summed up the feelings of all the disciples when they said, "We had hoped that He was the One who has going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). The hopes of the followers of Jesus were buried in a cold, dark tomb.

The Sabbath day ended, but there was a new and radiant day coming to greet the dawn. The most pivotal day in all of history. On that day, the emptiness of the disciples hearts would be replaced by the glorious emptiness of their Savior's tomb.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you that we can place all of our hopes and dreams in you. You are the only One in whom we can place our faith. Thank you for filling our emptiness. Amen.

Easter Sunday

Scripture for today: Matthew 28:1-15. You may wish to read the other Gospel accounts for the First Easter Morning in Mark 16:1-11, Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-10.

The most remarkable news of all of history was first told to the women early this morning. “He is risen!” What marvelous, wonderful and awe inspiring news this was! This was news that changed the world. Never before had one been raised from death to eternal, immortal life. In His death, Jesus had paid the price for every sin ever committed in every age, past, present and future. Your sin and mine. In His resurrection, Jesus proved that the sacrifice for sin had been fully paid, death no longer held Him. If one sin remained unpaid, the consequence of sin, death, would have remained. The resurrection of Jesus proved that both sin and death had been conquered. What glorious news!

The women ran to tell the disciples the news. But they were not the only ones to run with news that morning. The soldiers who had guarded the tomb went and told what they knew (Matthew 28:11). The women told their news with joy, the soldiers told their news in fear. The story that the women told became the greatest truth ever shared, the story that the soldiers were paid to tell never amounted to more than the weak lie that it was.

What will you do with the news, “He is risen”? Will you respond to that news in joy and faith? Will you run to tell others Jesus Christ is risen indeed and eternal life is found only in Him? The news that literally changed the world has been passed on to you, what will you do with it?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, May I be filled with the greatest truth ever made known. May I respond in faith and then turn and share my faith with others. Thank you that Jesus Christ is risen indeed. Amen.