

A Guide To Holy Week

The Most Important Week In History

You may be familiar with the story of Holy Week; the week that took place between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. But have you ever wondered about the sequence of these events and the details surrounding them? This Guide to Holy Week will help you make sense of how this amazing true story unfolded.

This guide is designed to guide you through the Holy Week day by day. Each morning, read the day's passages and prayerfully reflect on the questions. Invite God to open your eyes to the events that took place in a new way and to know Him more through it all.

I have to give credit to some excellent sources that helped me better understand the timing and details of Holy Week. I've done my best to source them properly throughout this guide. I hope and pray this helps bring this Holy Week to life in your mind and heart!

The Final Days Of Jesus by Andreas Kostenberger, Justin Taylor
The New Testament In Its World by NT Wright, Micheal F. Bird
Preaching The Word Series Matthew, Mark, Luke, John by Kent Hughes
ESV Study Bible
CSB Study Bible

PALM SUNDAY Jesus' Triumphant Entry

Today is the beginning of Holy Week, the final days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. This is a great week to read about Jesus' final days in the Gospels, and to reflect on what He's done for us and how this radically transforms our lives.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, the day when Jesus caused an "uproar in the city" by riding a donkey into Jerusalem. This story is found in Luke 19:28-44

Before we read the story, we need to talk about some important details to help us understand and appreciate what was happening. This story takes place during the annual Passover Festival in ancient Jerusalem in the year 33 AD. During the Passover Festival, the Jewish people celebrated the moment in history when God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Families from all over Israel would travel to the small city of Jerusalem for the festival. Imagine 500,000 people traveling to a city smaller than Wrightsville Beach, then add in 50,000 lambs and goats to be used for the Passover sacrifice, and you begin to get an idea of the scene in ancient Jerusalem during the Passover Festival. The city was literally overflowing with people and animals!

On top of this, the power players in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover Festival were the Sadducees, Pharisees, Sanhedrin and Rome (via Pilate). During a normal Passover Festival the situation was already a tinder-box of political and religious tension ready to ignite at any moment, but when you add Jesus into the mix, the situation became a powder-keg ready to explode. Here's why.

Both the Pharisees and Sadducees were a subgroup within Judaism. The Sadducees were made up of aristocratic families who were wealthy and powerful. They were friendly with Rome and they were in charge of running the Temple. The Pharisees were made up of mostly middle class Jews. They were known for being "full of zeal for the laws, strict guardians of ancestral traditions," and they believed that by strict obedience and holiness they could "create the conditions necessary for the arrival of the The Messiah and The Kingdom of God." (NT Wright) The Sanhedrin was a Council of 35 Sadducees and 35 Pharisees that made legal decisions for all Jews. The Sanhedrin Council forced the Sadducees and Pharisees to cooperate with one another. Rome occupied and ruled over all the people of Israel, including the Sadducees and Pharisees. Pilate was the Governor of Judea, the province where the city of Jerusalem was located. His job was to maintain order for the Roman Government at any cost, usually by using intimidation or force.

As a result, all Jews despised Rome. The Sadducees however, had figured out a way to maintain financial and political power by working with Rome. This is why the Pharisees despised the Sadducees and saw them as sellouts and morally liberal. And the Sadducees hated the Pharisees and saw them as uptight conservative rednecks that took the Law too seriously, and were constantly getting in the way of the Sadducees' political agenda. On top of all of this, there was also a Jewish group called the Zealots who were not waiting for God's Kingdom to arrive, but trying to usher it in by using force to overthrow Rome. This is why there was so much tension in Jerusalem during Passover week.

Now, the scene is set for us to understand the significance of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on donkey during the Passover Festival. Let's read the story...

“Jesus went on toward Jerusalem, walking ahead of his disciples. As he came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. “Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’ So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, “Why are you untying that colt?” And the disciples simply replied, “The Lord needs it.” So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on. As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him.” Luke 19:28-44 NLT

What was the significance of the crowds spreading out their garments on the road? Laying down their garments was an act of humility that meant something big was taking place. We also see this happen in Acts 7:58, when Stephen was stoned to death and the crowd laid their garments at Saul’s feet. Same idea.

What was the significance of Jesus riding a donkey into Jerusalem? Matthew tells us that this happened to fulfill the prophecy about the arrival of the Messiah King, of the line of David, in the book of Zechariah 9:9, *“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey’s colt.”* Also, we know that during the time of David donkeys were the royal transportation for Kings during times of peace.

How does Jesus’ arrival compare to Pilate’s arrival? Pilate lived at the beach on the Mediterranean Sea. The only reason he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival was to maintain peace and order among the surging crowds. Pilate would have arrived in glory and power on a warhorse with thousands of centurions ready to use force. On the other hand, Jesus arrived in humility on a donkey, followed by hundreds of common people, ready to establish peace by love, not force.

How did the crowd respond to Jesus? Luke 19:37-38 NLT says, *“When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. “Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!”* Matthew says, *“The city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.”* The scene was electric, full of tension! This reminds me of the energy you feel in a sports arena during a big game - think of a Duke versus Carolina basketball game. Everyone in the crowd, the Roman soldiers, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, all wondered what Jesus would do next. Was he about to start a revolution like others before him? Remember Jesus was a threat to everyone’s power, because he had the hearts of the people!

How did the Pharisees respond? Luke 19:39- 40 NLT says, *“But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, “Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!” Jesus replied, “If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!”*

How did Jesus respond to the political tension in Jerusalem? Luke 19:41-44 NLT says, *“As he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from*

every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you." **Jesus wept because the people of Israel didn't understand his message or his kingdom. He didn't come to overthrow Rome or to establish an earthly and temporary kingdom at that time. He came to rescue and save broken and sinful people, and to bring peace on earth by establishing his eternal kingdom.** So many prophets before him proclaimed Jesus' message and moment. The book of Zechariah, written 600 years before Jesus, said, "I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. I will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth." And because they rejected him, he prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which actually happened 50 years later.

After Jesus wept, "He looked inside the temple, and then left the city for the night." Mark 11:11

Can you believe all of this took place on Sunday, the first day of the Passover Festival?

As we wrap this up, I want to leave you with some good news that you can take away from this story.

BECAUSE OF JESUS YOU CAN EXPERIENCE REAL AND ETERNAL PEACE!

Because of his life, death and resurrection, you can have peace with God. This means that you no longer have to clean yourself up to be acceptable to God. You simply have to believe in Jesus and trust that you are forgiven because of His sacrifice for your sins. The Bible says it this way, "We can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus...Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19,22 NLT

Because of Jesus' way of life you can have peace with others, even your enemies. Can you imagine your relationships with people, even difficult people, being marked by peace? This is possible if you practice the way of Jesus: his humility, love and forgiveness. The problem that we face is that our natural way of relating with people looks more like the ways of the Sadducees, the Pharisees and Rome than the way of Jesus. Rome used intimidation and force to get what they wanted. The Sadducees had to be politically savvy to work with Rome and maintain their power, and they used manipulation to get what they wanted. Manipulation has many faces. Sometimes people are nice in order to get what they want, sometimes they are deceptive or misleading, and other times they lay on a guilt trip. The Pharisees were passionate about obeying the rules and traditions of Judaism, so they used criticism and judgement to motivate people to obey.

If we want to experience peace in our relationships, we have to lay aside using force, manipulation and judgment to get people to do what we want, and instead, put on humility, love and grace. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit helps us. Paul says, "Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy." Ephesians 4:23-24 NLT

And when Jesus returns we will have peace on earth forever!

MONDAY Jesus Clears The Temple

Monday morning during Holy Week, the day Jesus turned over the tables in the temple. Tension were very high in Jerusalem on this day. The religious leaders were on edge because Jesus threatened their power, and they had no idea what he would do next. Let's read the story.

"The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13He noticed a fig tree in full leaf a little way off, so he went over to see if he could find any figs. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. 14Then Jesus said to the tree, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!" And the disciples heard him say it." Mark 11:12-14 NLT

Jesus was hungry, saw a fig tree, but realized it didn't have any figs, so he cursed it. We know that Jesus was intentional about everything he did, so I don't think this was simply an overreaction to being hangry. And we know that Jesus was capable of providing food when there wasn't enough. **So why did Jesus curse the fig tree?** Jesus was using this as a teachable moment for his disciples. "In the Old Testament, a fig tree was often used to represent the nation of Israel," so by cursing the fig tree, Jesus was making the point that "Israel was being judged by God for appearing to be alive, but failing to produce fruit." (Kostenberger)

"15When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, 16and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. 17He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves." Mark 11:15-17 NLT

Jesus showed up to the Temple and immediately went into action. He stopped people from buying and selling animals, turned over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of people selling doves. This caused quite a big scene in the Temple for a Monday morning.

What was Jesus thinking? Why was he being so dramatic? Was this some kind of holy temper tantrum, or was this an intentional display of righteous anger?

We know that Jesus wasn't having a holy temper tantrum, because we know his character. Jesus is incredibly patient, slow to anger and long suffering. Think about all the stressful situations recorded in The Gospels where Jesus responded with patience instead of unrighteous anger.

We also know this wasn't a holy tempter tantrum because we know Jesus wasn't surprised by what he saw. Remember, he had visited the Temple the day before, so he knew what he was walking into.

Jesus' actions were an intentional display of righteous anger. There's a big difference between righteous and unrighteous anger. This is probably one of the most abused scriptures that people use to justify their unrighteous anger. Unrighteous anger is an unrestrained response to a personal offense. Righteous anger is a measured response to the injustice of another. Unrighteous anger is when I want to use bad words and lay unholy hands on the young man that stole my waves at Masonboro with a lot

of attitude. Of course, this is only a theoretical example! On the other hand, righteous anger would be stepping in to help someone who was being bullied by someone bigger and stronger.

Jesus was intentionally and appropriately responding to the irreverent scene in the Temple. The people had turned the Temple, a place designed to be holy for worship, into a marketplace. Merchants were overcharging to exchange foreign money into the Jewish Temple Currency, and for animals for the Passover sacrifice. All of this money making took place in "the Court of Gentiles, the only place in the Temple where a non-Jew could go to pray and meditate." (Kent Hughes) Think about the injustice of this! The Sadducees had set up an overpriced marketplace in the only place in the Temple where non-Jews could worship, which meant they were excluded from worshipping the One True God! No wonder Jesus was upset.

This is why Jesus said, *"My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have turned it into a den of thieves."* This first part of Jesus' quote is from the book of Isaiah, *"Don't let foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord say, The Lord will never let me be a part of his people...I will bless the foreigner who commits himself to The Lord...and I will bring them to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and fill them with joy in my house of prayer...and my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations."* Isaiah 56:3,6,7 The second part of Jesus' quote is from the book of Jeremiah, *"Don't be fooled into thinking you will never suffer because the Temple is here. It's a lie...and then come here and stand before me in my Temple and chant, "We are safe!"—only to go right back to all those evils again? Don't you yourselves admit that this Temple, which bears my name, has become a den of thieves?"* Jeremiah 7:8,10 The wealthy Sadducees had physically blocked foreigners from being a part of God's people by turning the Temple into a marketplace, "a den of thieves"! **Jesus' actions and words were a severe judgment on the religious leaders. He was letting them know that they were out of line and things were changing!**

"18When the leading priests and teachers of religious law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so amazed at his teaching." Mark 11:18

The religious leaders had already been looking for a way to kill Jesus, but now they were determined to kill him. The only thing stopping them from taking action in that moment was fear of the crowd.

19That evening Jesus and the disciples left the city. 20The next morning as they passed by the fig tree he had cursed, the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots up. 21Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree on the previous day and exclaimed, "Look, Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered and died!" Mark 11:19-21

The dead fig tree was a physical display of the present reality of the nation of Israel and the Temple. Israel had withered and the presence of God no longer dwelled in the Temple. Because of Jesus, everything was changing. The people of God would now include all nations and Jesus would become the new Temple, the place where God's Presence "dwells among us."

This is good news for you and me!

BECAUSE OF JESUS YOU CAN HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO GOD THE FATHER.

Because Jesus cleared out the Temple, there is a way for you to be in God's Presence, and that way is Jesus Christ. He said, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6 NLT

Because Jesus fulfilled all the sacrificial requirements of the Temple by his life, death and resurrection, if you believe in Him, your sins are forgiven and you are made right in God's sight.

Because Jesus became the New Temple, you don't have to travel anywhere to worship God, His Presence is with you In Christ through the Holy Spirit in you.

This means you can confidently approach God anytime you want!

The Bible says it this way, *"We can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus...Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water."* Hebrews 10:19,22 NLT. Your confidence to approach God doesn't come from anything you do, it comes from the blood of Christ.

1Corinthians 6:19 NLT says, *"your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."* You don't have to travel to a temple to worship God. The Spirit of God dwells in you, and goes wherever you go. Think about this! The Spirit of God lives in you and is with you while you work, at school helping you learn, at home guiding your Netflix choices, and helping your lips and hands stay holy when you're hanging out with your boyfriend or girlfriend. What a gift!

- Have you responded to the invitation to become a member of God's family?
- Are you confident that your sins are forgiven and that you are Holy in God's sight?
- Are you paying attention to the Holy Spirit's presence and power in your daily life?

TUESDAY

Jesus Silences The Religious Leaders

On Tuesday morning of Holy Week, Jesus had a heated exchange with the religious leaders in the Temple. Everyone was on edge, waiting for Jesus' next move. And the religious leaders were determined to find a way to kill Jesus.

"27 Again they entered Jerusalem. As Jesus was walking through the Temple area, the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders came up to him. 28 They demanded, "By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right to do them?" 29 "I'll tell you by what authority I do these things if you answer one question," Jesus replied. 30 "Did John's authority to baptize come from heaven, or was it merely human? Answer me!" 31 They talked it over among themselves. "If we say it was from heaven, he will ask why we didn't believe John. 32 But do we dare say it was merely human?" For they were afraid of what the people would do, because everyone believed that John was a prophet. 33 So they finally replied, "We don't know." And Jesus responded, "Then I won't tell you by what authority I do these things." Mark 11:27-33 NLT

The religious leaders were looking for a way to arrest Jesus so that they could have him tried and killed. This question about his authority was a trap, and Jesus knew it. So he said he would only answer their question if they first answered his question. **Jesus' question about John's authority was an impossible question for the religious leaders to answer.** If they said, "John's authority was from heaven," it would confirm John's testimony about Jesus being the Messiah. If they said, "John's authority was merely human," they would potentially cause a riot with the people, because the people believed John was a prophet from God. So they eventually said, "We don't know." And so Jesus refused to answer their question.

"1 Then Jesus began teaching them with stories: "A man planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. 2 At the time of the grape harvest, he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the crop. 3 But the farmers grabbed the servant, beat him up, and sent him back empty-handed. 4 The owner then sent another servant, but they insulted him and beat him over the head. 5 The next servant he sent was killed. Others he sent were either beaten or killed, 6 until there was only one left—his son whom he loved dearly. The owner finally sent him, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.' 7 "But the tenant farmers said to one another, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' 8 So they grabbed him and murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard. 9 "What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do?" Jesus asked. "I'll tell you—he will come and kill those farmers and lease the vineyard to others. 10 Didn't you ever read this in the Scriptures? 'The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. 11 This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful to see. 12 The religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus because they realized he was telling the story against them—they were the wicked farmers. But they were afraid of the crowd, so they left him and went away. Mark 12:1-12 NLT

Jesus told this story to get the religious leaders' attention. The man who planted the vineyard represented God the Father. The vineyard represented the nation of Israel. The tenant farmers represented the religious leaders responsible to take care of the vineyard. The servants represented the prophets of God who had been killed by religious leaders over the years. The son represented

Jesus, God's son who was sent to the nation of Israel, but would be killed like the other prophets. And like the vineyard owner would, "come and kill the tenant farmers and lease the vineyard to others," God would judge and kill the religious leaders of Israel and extend His Kingdom to include non-Jews around the world.

Jesus then goes on to quote Psalm 118, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." **Jesus was the cornerstone on which God would build the new Temple, the people of God.** In the words of my son Asher, "Jesus was insane at roasting people." This story was the ultimate roast of the religious leaders.

13Later the leaders sent some Pharisees and supporters of Herod to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. 14"Teacher," they said, "we know how honest you are. You are impartial and don't play favorites. You teach the way of God truthfully. Now tell us—is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15Should we pay them, or shouldn't we?" Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, "Why are you trying to trap me? Show me a Roman coin, and I'll tell you." 16When they handed it to him, he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. 17 "Well, then," Jesus said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God." His reply completely amazed them. Mark 12:13-17 NLT

This question was another attempt by the religious leaders to trap Jesus. Right away, the fact that the Pharisees and the supporters of Herod are working together is suspicious, because they did not like each other. We also know this was a trap because the scripture says it was, and Jesus knew it, not only because he is all knowing, but because they were acting strange by trying to flatter him. The religious leaders knew that if Jesus said yes to paying taxes to Caesar, the people would have seen this as a compromise in Jesus' loyalty and faith in God, and caused doubt that he was the Messiah. But if Jesus said no, the religious leaders knew that Jesus would have been arrested for causing a rebellion against Rome. **So Jesus says, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God." This was a brilliant response that satisfied everyone, and completely amazed and silenced the religious leaders.**

18Then Jesus was approached by some Sadducees—religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They posed this question: 19"Teacher, Moses gave us a law that if a man dies, leaving a wife without children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother's name. (Note: See Deuteronomy 25:5-6.) 20Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children. 21So the second brother married the widow, but he also died without children. Then the third brother married her. 22This continued with all seven of them, and still there were no children. Last of all, the woman also died. 23So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her." 24Jesus replied, "Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God. 25For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 "But now, as to whether the dead will be raised—haven't you ever read about this in the writings of Moses, in the story of the burning bush? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 27So he is the God of the living, not the dead. You have made a serious error." Mark 12:18-27 NLT

This question was also suspicious because the Sadducees didn't even believe in the resurrection from the dead. They were trying to make Jesus look stupid by asking him to explain a theological concept that they thought was ridiculous. I love Jesus' response, *"Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God."* He went on to explain that their story didn't make sense because there will be no marriage in heaven. Then he asked them if they had read the story of the burning bush in the writings of Moses. Remember, these were religious leaders, of course they had read the writings of Moses. *"God said to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. So God is the God of the living, not the dead."* **Jesus was making the point that Abraham, Issac and Jacob are no longer on the the earth, but they are fully alive with God, because they have been resurrected from the dead!** The Sadducees were the only ones looking stupid after this conversation.

28One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' 31The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." 32The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law." 34Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. Mark 12:28-34 NLT

My guess is that this question was more of a theological test than a trap. The man who asked the question seemed genuinely interested in what Jesus knew about the Law, almost as if he was wondering if Jesus could be the real Messiah. This man was a teacher and expert in the law, so if he wanted to, he could have asked a very sneaky question to trip Jesus up. Jesus' answer was amazing. He summarized the 613 laws of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. No one had ever done this. The man was impressed with Jesus and Jesus was impressed with the man. The story says, after Jesus "realized how much the man understood," Jesus said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." ***This kind of summarizes the religious leaders' relationship to God, they were so close, because His Word was "on their lips," but not close enough, because "their hearts were far from Him."***

After the religious leaders grilled Jesus with questions about his authority, loyalty and theology, "No one dared to ask him any more questions."

35Later, as Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple, he asked, "Why do the teachers of religious law claim that the Messiah is the son of David? 36For David himself, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.' 37 Since David himself called the Messiah 'my Lord,' how can the Messiah be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with great delight. Mark 12:35-37 NLT

Jesus went on the offensive by asking his own question, *"Since David himself called the Messiah my Lord, how can the Messiah be his son?"* This is a confusing question at face value. To make sense of it, you need to know that Jesus was attacking the religious leaders' assumption that the Messiah would only be a human, from the line of David. Although, this was true, it wasn't all of the truth. The Messiah

would be both human and divine. And to make this point, Jesus quoted Psalm 110, "*The Lord said to my Lord...*", which highlights the divinity of the Messiah. **Jesus blew their minds by expanding their expectation of the Messiah from being merely human, to being both human and divine.** The religious leaders had nothing to say in response to Jesus, and "the crowd was delighted."

38 Jesus also taught: "Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces. 39 And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the head table at banquets. 40 Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished." Mark 12:38-40 NLT

Jesus then went on to publicly shame the religious leaders, specifically, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. He called them out for being arrogant, seeking honor and respect, cheating widows, pretending to be holy and being hypocritical. (For more see Matthew 23.)

In three days, Jesus publicly shamed and judged the religious leaders by riding a donkey into Jerusalem, turning over the money changers tables and dismantling their questions. **There was no turning back for Jesus, it was only a matter of time before he would be arrested and crucified.**

What can we learn from this story that is relevant to our lives today? There are so many things, but the theme that sticks out to me the most is the question of authority. The main problem with the religious leaders was that they refused to accept Jesus' authority as the Messiah, even though it was clearly evident that he was. On this side of history, it's easy to give the religious leaders a hard time for not believing Jesus was the Messiah. But I can imagine it being difficult to believe Him, after he had dismantled everything I had learned and experienced over my whole life. We need to make sure we don't do the same thing as the religious leaders.

Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? I'm not simply talking about becoming a Christian, of course that is the first step of giving up authority. What I am talking about is, have you surrendered all of your life, all the details of your daily life to Jesus? If you're honest, you probably have some areas of your life that you are holding on to. We all do. Maybe you are holding on to your marriage, or the way you date, or your parenting, work or finances? Ask yourself why are you holding on to these things. Do you trust God with your dreams?

The good news for you is that you can give God authority over your life, you can trust Him with the details of your life. God is good, and has the best plan for your life. He loves you and wants to see you thrive, even though he allows you to go through difficult circumstances.

- Take a step of faith today by surrendering any part of your life that you are holding on to to God. Tell Him what you're afraid of and what you want to happen, and trust Him to respond in the way that He sees fit.

WEDNESDAY

Jesus Talks About The End

Wednesday during Holy Week is sometimes referred to as “silent Wednesday,” because The Gospels are strangely silent about what happened on that day. One assumption is that the religious leaders were plotting “behind closed doors” about how they would kill Jesus. (Kostenberger)

So, instead of focusing on Wednesday, we are going to look at a conversation Jesus had on Tuesday evening with his closest disciples as they were leaving the Temple. It was an intense conversation about the destruction of the Temple and his return at the end of the world. Let’s read the story.

“1As Jesus was leaving the Temple that day, one of his disciples said, “Teacher, look at these magnificent buildings! Look at the impressive stones in the walls.” 2Jesus replied, “Yes, look at these great buildings. But they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!”
Mark 13:1-2 NLT

As Jesus and his disciples were leaving the Temple, one of the disciples was taken aback by the size and beauty of the magnificent Temple complex. The Temple had been expanded by Herod the Great to almost “double the size.” (ESV Study) It took Herod “forty six years” to complete (John 2:20), and it was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world. (Kent Hughes) No wonder the disciple was impressed.

Jesus affirmed his disciple’s awe, but quickly let him know about the future destruction of the Temple. He said, “Not one stone will be left on top of another!” Jesus was prophesying total destruction! And this came true in the year 70 AD when Rome seized Jerusalem. The historian Josephus recorded that the Roman soldiers pulled the stones apart in an attempt to recover the melted gold off the Temple walls. (Kent Hughes) The Temple was completely destroyed, just like Jesus said it would be.

“3Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives across the valley from the Temple. Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to him privately and asked him, 4“Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to be fulfilled?” Mark 13:3-4 NLT

Jesus’ closest disciples came to him privately to ask for more details about when these things would happen. Their first question was about when the Temple would be destroyed. Matthew helps us understand that their second question was about when “Jesus would return at the end of the world,” Matthew 24:3 NLT.

These are big questions, and Jesus answered them in his typical teaching style, by being very clear about some details and intentionally vague about others. In some parts of his teaching, it’s hard to distinguish whether Jesus was talking about the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, or his final return at the end of the world. Scholars have generally agreed that Jesus was speaking to both events, but they have fiercely debated the specifics about which event Jesus was referring to at different points in his teaching.

I personally think it's impossible to get the specifics exactly right on this topic. Jesus even said, "No one knows when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven, or the Son himself," Mark 13:32 NLT. And I believe that Jesus' teaching was equally relevant to his disciples back then, before the destruction of the Temple, as it is to us today, before Jesus has returned.

I imagine you may have some strong opinions on this topic as well. Regardless, of what you believe on the matter, I encourage you to approach this topic with humility, knowing that "We don't see things clearly, and we're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist," 1Corinthians 13:13. And to focus on what we know, the things that Jesus has told us to do in light of his future return.

How did Jesus answer his disciples' questions?

"5Jesus replied, "Don't let anyone mislead you, 6for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. 7And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. 8Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, as well as famines. But this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come." Mark 13:5-8 NLT

Jesus begins by talking about the things that would happen in the world. He said, there will be false messiahs, wars, earthquakes and famines. And the fact is, many of Jesus' disciples lived to see or at least hear that these things happened within the first century. There was a large earthquake that flattened the entire city of Laodicea in 60AD. Mount Vesuvius erupted and buried the city of Pompeii in 79AD. The historian Josephus described a famine in Jerusalem during the Jewish Roman War from 66-70AD. (Kent Hughes) And at the end of the war in 70AD, Rome breached the walls of Jerusalem and completely destroyed the Temple. So we can understand why Jesus' disciples might have thought that the end of the world was near.

But Jesus went on to say these things are like "the first part of birth pains, with more to come," meaning there will be more false messiahs, wars, earthquakes and famines until Jesus returns at the end of the world. We know this is true because this has been the case throughout the last two thousand years of history. Will Durant said, "War is one of the constants of history...in the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war." (Kent Hughes)

9 "When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. 10For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. 11But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit. 12 "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. 13And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. Mark 13:9-13 NLT

Next, Jesus talked about the things that would happen to his followers. He said, "you will be hated, betrayed by family, arrested, stand trial and beaten, because you are my followers." And it happened: Jesus' followers experienced these things first hand. The book of Acts tells stories of Paul and many other disciples being beaten multiple times, arrested and eventually standing trial before the Jewish

Sanhedrin Council, Felix the governor of Judea, and the stand-in Jewish King Agrippa II. (ESV Study) So again, we can understand why Jesus' followers at that time might have thought the end of the world was near.

Jesus went on to say, "the one who endures to the end will be saved." So we know that persecution was not limited to the disciples in Jesus' time, because the end has not yet come. This means that persecution against followers of Jesus will continue to increase more and more until Jesus returns.

Jesus encouraged his disciples, then and now, to see the persecution as an opportunity to share the Good News. Some of the best and most effective evangelism over history, has happened during some of the greatest persecution. Christianity spread like wildfire during its first 300 years because of Roman persecution. (Bruce Shelley) Communism has also contributed to mass evangelism in Russian and China. We can expect there to be many more waves of persecution, evangelism and mass conversions as we get closer to the end of the world. And when you do face persecution, Jesus said, "do not worry about what you will say," or what you will do, "because the Holy Spirit" will guide you.

14 "The day is coming when you will see the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing where he should not be." (Reader, pay attention!) "Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. 15A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. 16A person out in the field must not return even to get a coat. 17How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. 18And pray that your flight will not be in winter. 19For there will be greater anguish in those days than at any time since God created the world. And it will never be so great again. 20In fact, unless the Lord shortens that time of calamity, not a single person will survive. But for the sake of his chosen ones he has shortened those days. 21 "Then if anyone tells you, 'Look, here is the Messiah,' or 'There he is,' don't believe it. 22For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. 23Watch out! I have warned you about this ahead of time!
Mark 13:14-22

"Several times in Jewish history it was thought that Daniel's prophecy of 'the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing where he should not be,' was being fulfilled—most notably during the days of the Maccabees when Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, ordered that an altar to the Greek god Zeus be constructed in the temple (167 B.C.). He also decreed that swine and other unclean animals be sacrificed there...**But Jesus clarified that the complete fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy would be found in (1) the Roman destruction of the temple in AD 70, and (2) the image of the Antichrist being set up in the last days.**" (ESV Study)

Jesus goes on to say that those in Judea must leave without packing, and that it would be particularly hard for pregnant women and nursing mothers during this time. "The ancient church historian Eusebius reports that, during the Jewish revolt (AD 67), Jesus' warning was fulfilled when Christians fled to the mountains of Pella (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5.3). (ESV Study) After Rome eventually succeeded in sacking Jerusalem in 70 AD, Christians and Jews fled to Africa, Asia and Europe, further fulfilling Jesus' words about leaving Judea. The historian Josephus described the horrible scene after the destruction of the Temple, saying, starved women and children "roamed like phantoms through the market-places and collapsed wherever their doom overtook them." (Kent Hughes)

Jesus seems to have switched gears from describing the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD to the days leading up to his return, when he said, “there will be greater anguish in those days, than any other time since God created the world, and it will never be so great again.” As bad as the destruction of the Temple was, Jesus was saying that things would be worse in the future. So bad, that if he didn’t shorten the time, no one would survive.

Then Jesus said to “watch out” for false messiahs and false prophets who perform signs and wonders to deceive God’s people. There have been so many people throughout history who have claimed to be the messiah, but they just ended up being liars. Jesus makes it clear in the next few verses that his return will be unmistakable.

24 “At that time, after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send out his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

Some people think the sun, the moon and stars are metaphors for political judgment on the nations, while others think these things will literally happen when Jesus returns. (ESV Study) Regardless, what you believe about this, Jesus’ return will be unmistakable, he will arrive in “great power and glory,” and the heavens will be shaken forever.

28 “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 29 In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that his return is very near, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear. Mark 13:28-31 NLT

I love this image of the fig tree, because the fig trees in my yard are beginning to bloom, which means warmer weather is right around the corner! In the same way, we know that the more we see and hear about wars, earthquakes, famines and increasing persecution, the closer we are getting to Jesus’ return.

What does Jesus mean when he said “this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take place?” This is a difficult verse that has been highly debated. The ESV Study Bible offers up to five different interpretations. The CSB Study Bible simplifies the meaning to only two interpretations, this generation either represents the disciples living at the time of Jesus who witnessed the destruction of the Temple, or the disciples living when Jesus returns at the end of the world.

32 “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. 33 And since you don’t know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert! Mark 13:32-33 NLT

I think this is the most important thing Jesus said in this whole conversation, “No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen.” The angels don’t know, and even Jesus himself said he didn’t know. Although, I think he probably knows now that he is with the Father. But the point is that if they

don't know, we definitely don't know, so we should be humble and do what Jesus said: "Be on guard! Stay alert!"

34 "The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. 35You, too, must keep watch! For you don't know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. 36Don't let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. 37I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!"

In his classic style, Jesus summarizes his teaching about his return with a story about a man who went on a long trip. Just like the slaves in the story were given work to do, Jesus has given us work to do until his return, "Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others," 1Thessalonians 4:11-12 NLT. And like the man told his slaves to watch for his return, Jesus said, we must keep watch and not to be found sleeping when he returns.

To sum all of this up-- We should expect to see more wars, earthquakes, famines and persecution as the day of The Lord draws near. And we need to be on guard, stay alert and keep watch since we don't know when Jesus will actually return!

What would it look like for you to be ready for Jesus to return today or 80 years from now?

I don't think the answer is to purchase the former televangelist-crook Jim Bakker's end times survival food bucket for \$134, or his Peace Of Mind Final Countdown survival food package for \$4,500!

A better and simple vision of being ready for Jesus to return is watching and working for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus modeled watching for his return by praying daily for God's Kingdom to come with The Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," Matthew 6. If you did this daily, you would be fully alert to God's presence in your life, ready for him to return at any time.

Working for the kingdom of God in your daily life. The easiest way to do this is by simply living your "everyday ordinary life," as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Paul says, "Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others" 1Thessalonians 4:11-12 NLT. If you focus on living a life of humility, respect and good work, people will get a glimpse of life in the kingdom of God.

- Do you actually believe that Jesus is coming back one day, and that he could return at any moment?
- What do you need to do to be ready for Jesus to come back today?
- What would it look like for you to stay ready for Jesus to come back over the course of your whole life?

THURSDAY Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

It's Thursday evening during Holy Week, the day before Jesus was crucified. Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover meal together, in the private upper room of a guest home. This was a relatively quiet moment compared to the previous days when Jesus made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey, turned over the tables in the Temple and silenced the religious leaders. Let's read the story.

"1Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. 2It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God." John 13:1-3 NLT

Jesus knew what was about to happen. He knew that "his hour was at hand" and "the devil had already prompted Judas to betray him." He knew he was about to be betrayed, arrested, tried and crucified. This wasn't a surprise to Jesus. All of these things were under God's control, and part of his sovereign plan to save humanity.

Jesus also knew who He was. He knew "that he had come from God, had been given authority over everything and would soon return to God." Think about that! Jesus was fully aware that he was the Son of God, and he chose to humble himself. Paul said it this way, "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead he gave up his divine privileges, humbling himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross," Philippians 2:6-8 NLT. Jesus is the ultimate picture of humility!

4So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, 5and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. 6When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will." 8"No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." 9Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" 10Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." 11For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." John 13:4-11 NLT

Take a moment to imagine Jesus and his disciples sitting around the table, about to share a meal. Then all of a sudden, Jesus stood up, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water into a bowl, then washed each of the disciples' dirty feet. This must have been incredibly humbling for the disciples to watch their teacher, who they think might be the Messiah, wash each of their feet, without saying a word.

Peter broke the awkward silence when Jesus came to him by saying, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?...No, you will never ever wash my feet!" I think Peter was embarrassed because he realized that Jesus was doing a servant's job; a job that none of the disciples were willing to do.

Jesus went on to tell Peter that, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." **Jesus washed the disciples' feet to teach them that he would make them spiritually clean by washing away their sins through his death on the cross.** And this was something that they could not do for themselves.

Peter overreacted again by asking Jesus to wash his whole body. Jesus assured Peter that washing his whole body wasn't necessary, just his feet, because he had already taken a bath. I think Jesus was speaking to the physical and spiritual reality of foot washing. To the physical reality he was saying, "you need to wash your feet before dinner because you've been walking in the dust." And to the spiritual reality he was making the point that although their sins had been washed away, they will still need to cleanse themselves from sin on a daily basis. Jesus taught this in his prayer, "Forgive us for our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us," Matthew 6.

Then Jesus said something interesting, "You disciples are clean, but not all of you." What did he mean? Jesus was talking about Judas. Jesus had washed Judas' feet, but he was letting Judas and the other disciples know that Judas still wasn't clean. Jesus was calling Judas out because he knew Judas was about to betray him. After Jesus served Judas bread, He said, "hurry up and do what you are going to do," and Judas left the room.

12After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? 13You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. 14And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. 15I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. 16I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. 17Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them...34So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 13:12-35 NLT

Jesus asked his disciples if they understood why he had washed their feet. He probably assumed that they didn't get the picture, because he went on to explain. We already know one reason Jesus washed the disciples' feet was to illustrate that he would make his disciples spiritually clean by washing their sin away through his physical death on the cross. Here he told them **the second reason he washed their feet was "to give an example to follow."** Jesus was their Teacher and Lord, yet he humbled himself to serve them in love. This is even more amazing knowing what we know on this side of history. Jesus was the Son of God, yet he humbled himself to the point of death for the sake of those he loves.

Jesus summarized his foot washing illustration by giving his disciples a simple command, "Love each other, just as I have loved you." The word Jesus used for love is the Greek word agape. **Agape love is a decision to do what is best for another person (Ken Boa).** It's a decision of your will, not of your emotions, which means you don't have to feel it to do it. Agape love is unconditional. Your decision to love isn't a response to how you are treated, it's a response to how Jesus has treated you. John said, "We love because He first loved us." 1John 4:19 ESV. This means you can love people who are difficult to love, even your enemies.

But to be clear, this doesn't mean you should stay in a harmful relationship, sometimes it's best to love someone from a distance. Agape love is a decision to do what is best for another person, not what is best for you. Paul said, *"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too,"* Philippians 2:3-4 NLT. This means you don't love someone to get something from them, you love them for their benefit alone, and this usually comes with a cost. This kind of love cost Jesus his life.

Jesus told his disciples, "Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them." **Jesus didn't say God will bless you for knowing and talking about love. He said God will bless you for loving others.** I think the blessing might be experiencing God's presence in a special way, or the natural benefits that happen when you love someone well. Remember, your motivation isn't to get something from someone, but many times people love back in response to being loved. It's like when you smile at someone, and they smile back.

Jesus also said, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." **Love is the greatest way to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world.** Unfortunately, the church hasn't always had the best reputation in the world. But it's never too late to change that. If you want to let the world know about Jesus, the best way is to love one another, beginning with those closest to you. If you want the world to know about Jesus, serve your spouse or your roommates, be patient with your kids, be kind to your coworkers, be generous with your neighbors and show respect to difficult people.

The command to love one another sounds simple enough, but in reality it's not that easy to live out in daily life. Loving others may look beautiful on Instagram with people smiling and enjoying a good meal together, but we all know in real life community is messy. Your spouse gets on your nerves sometimes, your kids wear out your patience, your roommate doesn't always do their part, your coworkers can be hard to deal with. This is all the more reason why you must make the decision to love, not in response to how you are treated, but in response to Jesus' love for you. And the truth is, you will struggle to do this, and sometimes flat out fail.

But there is good news for you! **On the other side of struggle and failure is God's grace.** When you fail to love others, God always gives you a way to make the situation right. And that way is admitting your fault and asking forgiveness from the person you failed to love. Listen, God knew it would be hard for his children to love one another unconditionally. This is why He said, "Make allowance for each other's faults—bear with one another, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others," Colossians 3:13 NLT.

God doesn't expect perfection, He expects participation in the way of Jesus. I believe we grow in grace through the process of practicing, struggling, failing, confessing, forgiving and then repeating the process over and over again. Paul agrees, "we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him." 2Corinthians 3:18 The Message.

After dinner Jesus and his disciples went to the garden to pray.

"After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. 2 Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. 3 The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove. 4 Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked.

5 "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. "I Am he," Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) 6 As Jesus said "I Am he," they all drew back and fell to the ground! 7 Once more he asked them, "Who are you looking for?" And again they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene." 8 "I told you that I Am he," Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." 9 He did this to fulfill his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me." 10 Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave.

11 But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?" 12 So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up. 13 First they took him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time. 14 Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people." John 18:1-14 NLT

FRIDAY The Death Of Jesus

It's early on Friday morning of Holy Week, the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Take your time to slowly read the story to help you appreciate the gravity of the situation at hand. Jesus, the Son of God, King of Kings, freely gave His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world!

Peter's Denial and Jesus Before the High Priest

"15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. 16 Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. 17 The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not." 18 Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

19 Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. 20 Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret. 21 Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said." 22 Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded.

23 Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?" 24 Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest. 25 Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not." 26 But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" 27 Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed." John 18:15-27 NLT

Jesus Before Pilate

"28 Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. 29 So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?" 30 "We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

31 "Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them. "Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. 32 (This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die. 33 Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him. 34 Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?" 35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"

36 Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." 37 Pilate said,

"So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true." 38 "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. 39 But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?" 40 But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.) John 18:28-40 NLT

Jesus Sentenced to Death

"Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. 2 The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. 3 "Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face. 4 Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." 5 Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!"

6 When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" "Take him yourselves and crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty." 7 The Jewish leaders replied, "By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God." 8 When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. 9 He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. 10 "Why don't you talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?"

11 Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." 12 Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.' Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar." 13 When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement. 14 It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, "Look, here is your king!" 15 "Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!" "What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back. 16 Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus away." John 19:1-16

Jesus' Crucifixion

"17 Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha). 18 There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20 The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it.

21 Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, "Change it from 'The King of the Jews' to 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"

22 Pilate replied, "No, what I have written, I have written." 23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 So they said, "Rather than tearing it apart, let's throw dice for it." This fulfilled the Scripture that says, "They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my

clothing." So that is what they did. 25 Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." 27 And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home." John 19:17-27 NLT

The Death of Jesus

"28 Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. 30 When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. 31 It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was Passover week). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down.

32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. 33 But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. 34 One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. 35 (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe. 36 These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken," 37 and "They will look on the one they pierced." John 19:28-37 NLT

The Burial of Jesus

"38 Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, who had been a secret disciple of Jesus (because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate for permission to take down Jesus' body. When Pilate gave permission, Joseph came and took the body away. 39 With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes.

40 Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth. 41 The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb, never used before. 42 And so, because it was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover and since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there." John 19:38-42

Why did Jesus have to die for our sins?

The Bible says, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." Romans 3:23 NLT
We are utterly incapable of living the beautiful life God created us for, because of sin. We are all in the same sinking boat!

As a result of sin, we are all slaves to sin, we face physical death as the end, and eternal separation from God the source of life. Paul says, "the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23

This is very bad news! But the good news of the Gospel is that sin and death don't have the last word in our lives. The story isn't over.

The Bible says, *"Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood."* Romans 3:24-25 NLT

Jesus sacrificed his perfect life as the payment for the sins of humanity, he paid the penalty for your sins. Someone had to pay because God couldn't just ignore sin. Romans 3:25-26 says, *"25 This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus."*

The big theological word that is used in older translations is propitiation, which mean to satisfy the wrath of God. This is an important word because it shows the intensity of what Jesus did for us on the cross. He took the punishment that we deserved!

As a result, when you believe in Christ, your sins are forgiven and you are made right with God. *"You are holy and blameless in His sight."* Colossians 1:22 NLT

This means *"we can now—without hesitation—walk right up to God, into "the Holy Place." Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of his sacrifice, acting as our priest before God. The "curtain" into God's presence is his body. So let's do it— full of belief, confident that we're presentable inside and out. Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching."* Hebrews 10:19-23 MSG

SATURDAY

The Saddest Day In History

Saturday during Holy Week; the day after Jesus was publicly crucified for all to see, is the strangest day in history; the moment between death as the end and life eternal.

The Bible is silent about what happened on Saturday during Holy Week. All we know is that Jesus had been laid to rest in the tomb.

Can you imagine how the disciples of Jesus must have felt on this day? They had given up the last three years of their lives to follow Jesus, the Messiah and future King of the Kingdom of God. And now, Jesus was buried in the tomb, along with all their hope for a better future!

Saturday was silent. A day of loss, mourning and sadness.

Have you experienced the silence between being lost and found; suffering and recovery; death and resurrection? If you have, you know this can be a deafening experience that can cause you to doubt and even lose hope.

But it's in these moments that we have to remember our faith in God, our refuge and strength. *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2For by it the people of old received their commendation. 3By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."* Hebrews 11:1-3 ESV

We have to remember that even though we can't see it yet, Sunday is coming. Resurrection is on the way!

SUNDAY He Is Risen

Sunday morning of Holy Week was the greatest day in history. The disciples were in complete shock after witnessing the arrest, torture and crucifixion of Jesus. He was not only their friend, but they believed he was the promised Messiah that would establish a new kingdom on earth. All the adventure and anticipation of the last three years came to an abrupt halt two days earlier, and now they were lost and confused. Let's read the story.

"1Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. 2She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. 4They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5He stopped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. 6Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, 7while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. 8Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—9for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. 10Then they went home.

11Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stopped and looked in. 12She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. 13"Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her " Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. 15"Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." 16"Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher"). 17"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message. John 20:11-18 NLT

What is the Good News of Easter Sunday?

JESUS IS ALIVE, HE IS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE!

On Good Friday we remember that Jesus paid the penalty of sin by his death on the cross. As a result, when you believe in Christ, your sins are forgiven and you are made right with God. *"You are holy and blameless in His sight."* Colossians 1:22 NLT

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the historical fact that Jesus was resurrected from the grave and that He is alive! As a result, when you believe in Christ, death no longer has the last word, and you can experience real and eternal life today and forever. John 3:16 says, "This is how much God loved the

world, He gave His one and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."

What is real and eternal life?

The Bible says, "*Real & eternal life is to know you, the one and only true God, and Jesus Christ who you sent.*" John 17:3 This means real and eternal life is being in a never ending, always expanding relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And it begins the moment you believe in Christ as your Lord and Savior.

The Apostle Paul helps us understand what it means to experience real and eternal life in your daily life. He says, "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23 NLT

You cannot produce these qualities on your own or find them in the world. We know this is true because we've tried to find them in self improvement projects, hobbies and vacations, and these things have only left us wanting more!

King Solomon said, "God has placed eternity in the human heart." Ecclesiastes 3:11

Saint Augustine said, "You made us for yourself and we are restless until our hearts rest in you."

Real and eternal life in Christ is the answer we are looking for.

How can you experience the real and eternal life that Jesus invites you into?

Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News." and "Come, follow me." Mark 1:15, 17 NLT

The Apostle Paul said, "9If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved." Romans 10:9-10 NLT

The starting point of eternal life is entering into a relationship with God by turning from your sins (repentance), believing in the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and committing your life to follow Him.

Once you've established a relationship with Jesus, the key to actually experiencing real and eternal life, is to follow Him and His way of life. You must practice your faith. Paul said, "Now that you have accepted Jesus as Lord, you must continue to follow Him." Colossians 2:6 NLT

- Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
- Have you committed to follow Jesus by practicing your faith in the details of your life?
- Are you growing in your experience of real and eternal life each day?