

**What happened during the
Passion week?**

Sunday, Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 11: 1 - 12:19

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem perched upon a donkey, it was the first time that he had entered the city since raising Lazarus from the dead. Prior to entering the city as he and his followers approached Bethphage (on the Mount of Olives), Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead to look for a donkey and its unbroken colt. The LORD instructed his disciples to untie both animals and bring them to him.

Jesus then sat atop the young donkey and slowly, humbly made his way into Jerusalem fulfilling the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9:

“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

As Jesus entered the city he was hailed by the people; the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead had circulated widely and made Jesus a celebrity. Everyone wanted to see Jesus; even to simply catch a glimpse of him. Thus, the people went out to receive him like a king waiving palm branches as a sign of honour and respect. They shouted:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!”

Jesus said that Lazarus’ death would result in the faith of many and it would end in “God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” (John 11:4). What he had in mind, however, was even more glorious than his triumphal entry into the city. He wasn’t referring to the glory that he would receive from these people waiving palm branches, no, he was referring to his death.

When Lazarus was raised from the dead it had hardened the resolve of the religious leaders. They plotted to kill not only Jesus, but Lazarus as well because he himself had become a living example of Jesus’ claim of deity. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the people cried out, “Your King is coming!” They praised his victory over Lazarus’ death. The irony, however, was that he wasn’t coming to claim his crown based on Lazarus being raised from the dead. Rather, it was on an account of his own.

That night Jesus and his disciples spent the night in Bethany where Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived.

Questions to Consider:

What kind of kingship was Jesus coming to claim?

Do you view Jesus as a powerful, yet humble and kind King? Or rather, do you view that as being a thin veneer and underneath he is waiting for you to slip up? At best you should stay out of his way and maybe, if you keep the rules enough, you can stay on his good side?

Read Luke 12:32 - This verse is meant to take away the fear that we may have that God is always angry with us.

Do you believe that Jesus (being King) has the intention to give you the kingdom? Why or why not?

Do you believe that it is God's joy through Jesus to give the kingdom to his flock?

Monday – Matthew 21:12-22; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-43

Someone once said that if Jerusalem was a beehive, Jesus had just hit it with a big stick. The buzz within the city was palpable. The anger from the religious leaders was at its climax. The morning after the triumphal entry Jesus wished to return with his disciples to Jerusalem. Much of what the Gospels tell us about Monday centre on Jesus' authority - over both the created world and over his right to judge it. When Jesus awoke that morning and declared to his disciples that he wished to return to Jerusalem, it wouldn't have been surprising. Something was stirring, and Jesus was a marked man.

Along the way to the city, Jesus spotted a fig tree in leaf. Being hungry he went to see if it had any figs. When he reached the tree, he found nothing but leaves because it was not the season for figs, and so he cursed the tree. This seems like an odd event. It almost seems as if Jesus was acting unreasonably; being that it was not the season for figs, what did he expect?

The truth of this story, however, is found in the fact that before a fig tree was in leaf, it would produce an early fruit: a green bud about the size of an almond. It was an edible fruit that one could eat early (many poor people did). In late March the fig tree would always produce little green figs that a person could eat, before it would produce leaves. If a tree had leaves but no little fruit, then it was a tree that was giving all the appearance of being a useful fruit bearing tree, when in fact it wasn't. Because of this, Jesus then cursed the tree and they moved onward toward Jerusalem.

As Jesus and his disciple approached the city, Jesus began to weep. He wept for the people, the leaders and for the lack of faith that was found within. He knew the coming judgment of God that would rain upon the city within decades and his heart broke for the people. Upon reaching the city, Jesus entered the temple and for the second time in his ministry he found the temple courts full of corrupt money changers. He overturned their tables and declared, "My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" (Luke 19:46).

Scripture tells us that as Jesus taught at the temple the chief priests and teachers tried to kill him but could not find any way to do it because all the people hung on his words. When the day was over, later that evening Jesus and his disciples travelled back to Bethany to spend the night once-again.

Questions to Consider:

What is the meaning of Jesus cursing the fig tree? Is this applicable in your life in any way?

Jesus knew that he was going to die. He entered Jerusalem on Monday knowing by the end of the week he would be executed. This was God's plan and it was not an afterthought:

Read Luke 9:51. Does this change your view of Jesus entering Jerusalem on Monday?

Do you think it was easier for Jesus to face death than it would be for you or me? Why or why not?

Remember, Jesus was fully human as we are; he felt pain. He had friends and family that he loved. He pleaded that if there was any other way to accomplish God's will, that it be done. Yet despite all this, he marched forward into Jerusalem that week and faced death. It was not easy, it was hard.

How do you suppose Jesus endured that week knowing that he was going to die?

Tuesday – Matthew 21:23-26; Mark 11:27 – 14:2; Luke 20:1-22 – 22:2; John 12:25-50

Tuesday morning Jesus and his disciples travelled back to Jerusalem, and on their way passed by the fig tree once again. His disciples saw that it was the same tree that he had cursed the day prior, and it was now withered and dead. They asked, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" Jesus replied with a teaching moment on the importance of faith saying, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Jesus continued toward Jerusalem and he entered a direct, verbal confrontation with the religious leaders. They were upset that he had set himself up as a spiritual authority. He declared that they have no authority over him, and he spent the rest of the day teaching in the temple, much to the chagrin of the chief priests. Tuesday afternoon is the last time that Jesus taught publicly in the temple as a free man. His words here are essentially his manifesto. He taught on many things that day: paying taxes, marriage at the resurrection, the greatest commandment and woes to his enemies.

When he left the temple later in the day, the chief priests and scribes were "scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him." They knew, however, that they couldn't do it during the Festival of Unleavened Bread lest the people riot. So, they waited. It should be noted that the religious leaders could not have taken the life of Jesus solely on the phony charges they would lay against him - not if he defended himself. But he didn't defend himself; in his silence he willingly offered up his life for a world filled with blasphemers, traitors and murderers. That was what he had come to do and as he exited the temple late that Tuesday afternoon, he knew that he would do it soon.

Upon leaving the temple Jesus and his disciples journeyed to the Mount of Olives; it sits east of the temple and overlooks Jerusalem. Here, Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse: an elaborate prophecy about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age. He spoke in parables and symbolic language about end time events, including his Second Coming and the final judgment.

Once again, Jesus and his disciples travelled to Bethany and spent the night there.

Questions to Consider:

The authority of Jesus was questioned many times on Tuesday. Are there times that you doubt his authority in your own life? If not his authority, then perhaps his power or his willingness to look favorably toward you?

Read Matthew 21:23-26:5. These chapters contain the last public teachings of Jesus. Which of these passages speaks to your heart? What passage challenges you? Do any verses frighten you?

Are there things taught in these verses that showcase the very authority of Jesus that was questioned?

How is the power of Jesus on display in the recorded teachings of these passages?

Reading all this, do you truly believe that God loves you, that you are justified before him and can stand confidently before him on judgment day? Why or why not?

Wednesday - Matthew 26:6-16; Mark 14:3-11; Luke 22:1-6

The past few days were filled with tension and anger for Jesus' opponents. Jesus, however, is still on this day. There is not much recorded in the Gospels for the Wednesday of Passion week. What we do see is that Jesus is in the home of Simon the Leper. Mary of Bethany- Lazarus' sister-comes to Jesus with an alabaster jar filled with perfume, worth a year's wages. She begins to pour the perfume on his head and feet. This, of course, would require that she break open the container - it was a deliberate act of worship that was extremely costly in an earthly sense. She had offered Jesus everything that she had in acknowledgment that he was about to give himself up for her.

While Mary does this beautiful thing - preparing Jesus for burial -Judas had done a reprehensible act. He met with the chief priests to betray Jesus. Luke 22:3-6 states:

"Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present."

Keep in mind that the chief priests and teachers had been looking for a way to kill Jesus, and their opportunity had finally presented itself. However, what Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20 applies here: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Despite Judas' actions, God had a plan that included the betrayal of his Son. As awful as the circumstances and events that were coming, our LORD used it all for the good of his children and for his glory!

Questions to Consider:

Read Mark 14:3-9. Why was the act of Mary such a beautiful thing?

Do you suppose that she understood what was going to happen the next day?

Mary had given up what was likely her most precious possession to bless Jesus. This is not an easy thing to do. What are some of your most treasured possessions? Being honest with yourself, would you be willing to give them up if Jesus asked you to? Why or why not?

How do you suppose Judas, who knew Jesus face to face, could come to a place where he would betray him for money?

What contrasts do you see in how Mary viewed material possessions with how Judas viewed them?

What can we learn about the kingdom of heaven from these two individuals?

Thursday – Matthew 26:17-75; Mark 14:12-72; John 13:1 – 18:27

The Passion week took a somber turn on Thursday. The betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus takes up many pages of Scripture. It begins with Jesus sending Peter and John to secure the upper room in Jerusalem. It is there that Jesus washed his disciples' feet as an act of humility and servanthood. Rather than coming as the rightful king and ruler of all creation, God chose to clothe himself in humility and serve those who despised him. It is with this act of foot washing that Jesus explained how his mission was to make these men clean.

As they began to eat, Jesus announced that one of the twelve will betray him. These men, who spent the last three years together were astonished. Each wondered who he was referring to; Jesus then dispatched Judas to do what he intended.

It is during this final meal, this last supper, that Jesus set apart the Passover bread and cup and perfected their meaning. The bread is his body. The cup is his blood. The meal will no longer remind his followers of deliverance from only the external tyranny of Pharaoh, but also from the internal tyranny of their own guilt and sin. Jesus was to become the Passover Lamb by giving up his body and by shedding his blood. They then concluded the meal by singing a hymn and then departed for the Mount of Olives.

Here, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for all those who had come to know him and those who would know him in the future – that his Father would make them one. However, Jesus wasn't there only to pray; he was there also to wait. Soon, a line of torches made their way through the darkness led by the betrayer. It was for that moment that Jesus had been waiting. It was for that moment that he had come. To give up his life as a ransom for many. Judas identified which man was Jesus by giving him a kiss, sparking Jesus to respond, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Jesus was taken to the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the whole council had gathered to make their case against Jesus. The Son of Man ended Thursday being betrayed by one disciple, and abandoned by the others, with death staring him in the face.

Questions to Consider:

Read Exodus 11:1-12:30. Next, read Mark 14:12-26. How is the Last Supper connected to the Passover recorded in Exodus? In what ways did Jesus perfect the meaning of Passover?

How do you view the humanity of Jesus? Do you think things were easier for him because he was also fully God?

Read Luke 22:39-46. What do you think of verse 42? Does Jesus not wanting to suffer challenge how you view him? Was Jesus afraid of dying?

Read Hebrews 5:7-10. Does this change your view, or does it affirm it?

Read John 10:18. Do you believe that Jesus willingly gave up his life for you? Know that Jesus willingly offered himself up for you; it was his joy in redeeming you and gathering for himself a holy, praising people. This is why tomorrow, when he died, is indeed Good Friday.

Friday – Matthew 27:1-61; Mark 15:1-47; Luke 23:1-56; John 18:28 – 19:42

On Thursday night Jesus had been betrayed by one of his disciples and abandoned by the others. The chief priests and the Sanhedrin had called for secret trials in the dead of night, and so through the early hours of Friday morning Jesus was put on trial (if we could call it that). First, Jesus was brought before the former High Priest Annas who was looking for an accusation; he was also, however, biding time until the Sanhedrin could be gathered at the High Priestly villa.

Jesus was put on trial a second time before the Sanhedrin where he was condemned, spat upon and beaten. A third trial ensued immediately at dawn before the current High Priest, Caiaphas. When asked if he was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One, Jesus responded by saying "I AM." He was condemned to death for blasphemy once more and then brought before the Roman authorities, despite the religious leaders breaking many of their own customs regarding a fair trial.

The trials before the Roman authorities began with Pilate and the charges brought against him were quite different than during the religious trials. He was charged with inciting people to riot, forbidding people to pay taxes and claiming to be King. Pilate found no reason to have Jesus executed so he sent him to Herod (who was the governing authority over the Galilee region where Jesus was from Herod ridiculed Jesus but didn't want political repercussions so he sent him back to Pilate. Here, during this final trial, Pilate tried to appease the mob by having Jesus scourged. The Roman scourge was a terrible punishment that was meant to remove the flesh from the back of the victim, Afterward, in a final effort to have Jesus released he offered the crowd a choice between releasing Barabbas, or Jesus. The crowd chose the former and called for Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus was led up Golgotha Hill carrying the very crossbeam that he would be nailed to. Crucifixion was Roman capital punishment for criminals that was meant to be humiliating. After being stripped naked, Jesus was nailed to a cross where he remained for six hours until he died. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body down from the cross and then laid it in a tomb.

Questions to Ponder:

The trials of Jesus are the ultimate mockery of justice. The most innocent man in history was found guilty of crimes and sentenced to death. How could this happen? What had to happen in the hearts of the religious leaders for this to occur?

Read John 19:1-42. There seems to be nothing good about these events. Why do we label it Good Friday?

Take some time to ponder/discuss how Jesus must have felt when his closest friends betrayed and abandoned him.

If Jesus died for our sins to set us free from the bondage of sin, then why do we still struggle with sin?

What is something from the text that challenges your perspective of God's love for you?