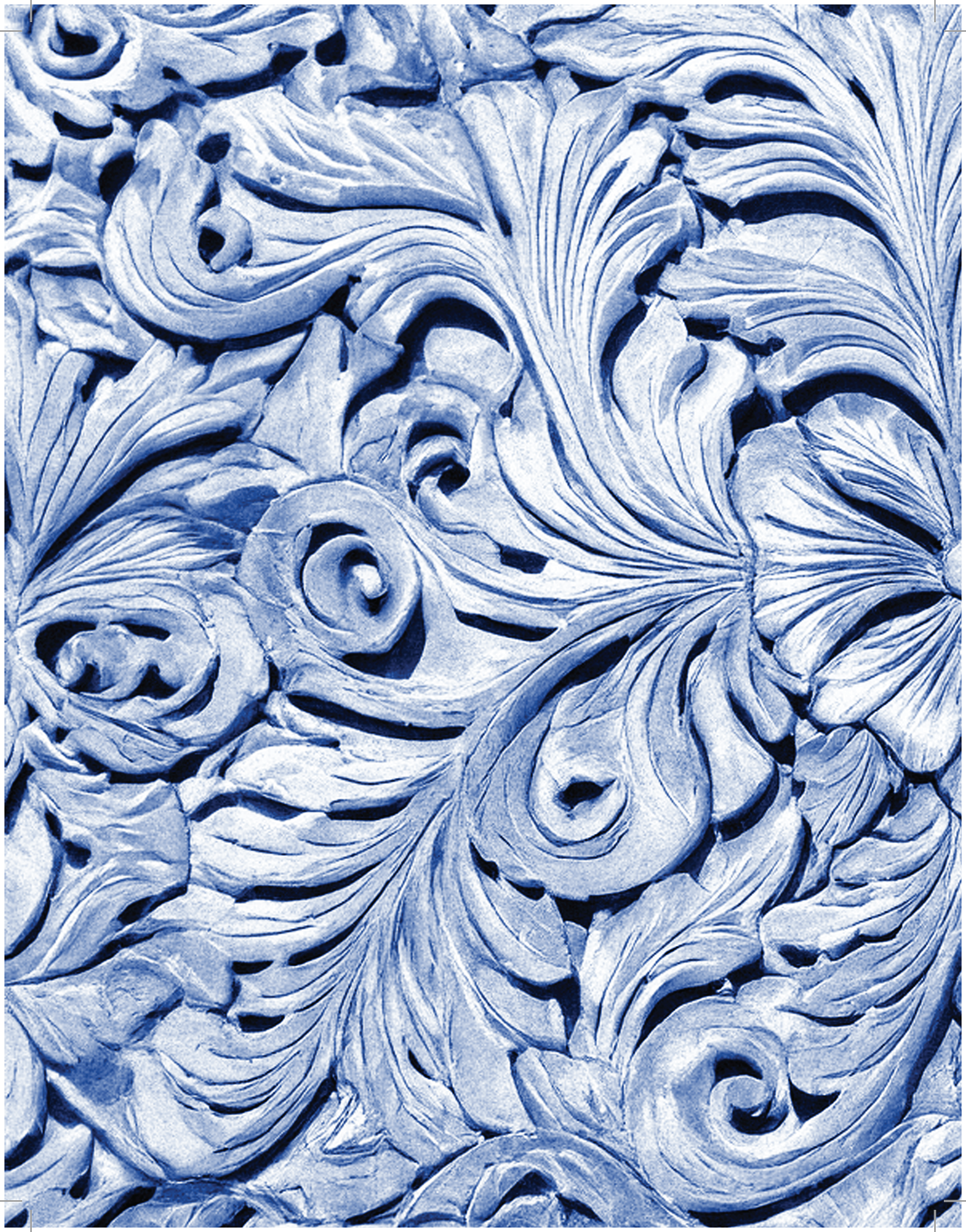


Tom Davis, EdD



Introduction to Fourteen Devotionals on the Last Two Weeks of Christ's Public Ministry

Amazingly, for how important Jesus was/is, we have very few hard dates associated with the various aspects of His life. Factors that complicate the discussion:

1. We can't be sure that December 25 is the best date for His birth. It could be the date of His conception since there are good reasons for believing He was born in the Fall of the year around the Day of Atonement.
2. Herod the Great had to be alive when Jesus was born, and 4 BC is the standard death year for Herod the Great. However, a 1 BC death date for Herod is possible.
3. While some argue for a Thursday crucifixion, those living closest to the time held to a Friday crucifixion. Therefore, the crucifixion has to be in a year when the Passover meal in Jerusalem was eaten Friday night. AD 33 is the best candidate.
4. Luke says that Jesus was "about 30 years-of-age" when he began his public ministry. His public ministry was definitely 3.5 years long. So, do we insist that Jesus was only 33.5 years old when he died, or can we do the 5BC to AD 33 span that would make Him about 36.5 years old? (There is no year between 1 BC and AD 1).
5. None of these date complications affect the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth.

Accepting a December 25 birth date for the sake of this study, here are the only dates that we can be somewhat sure about. Some scholars prefer to use the calendar dates of the First Century which would have been the Julian Calendar. In Jesus' day the Julian calendar dates are two days ahead of our current Gregorian calendar dates. (Therefore, Jesus was crucified either on April 1, AD 33 or April 3, AD 33 depending on which calendar is being used.). I am using the Gregorian Calendar dates.

1. Elizabeth conceives John the Baptist six months before Mary conceives Jesus: September, 6 BC.
2. Mary visits Elizabeth nine months before Jesus' birth: March, 5 BC.
3. Jesus is born: December 25, 5 BC.
4. Jesus is circumcised and presented in the Temple: January 2, 4 BC.
5. Magi visit: January, 4 BC.
6. Jesus in Egypt: 4 BC.
7. Jesus at 12 years-of-age in Jerusalem: AD 9.
8. Jesus baptized by John the Baptist: August AD 29.
 - a. Luke 3:1-2 "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness."
 - b. This is definitely AD 29
9. Jesus cleanses the Temple during His First Public Ministry Passover: April 7, AD 30.
10. Jesus heals the man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5): Oct 21-28, AD 31.
 - a. John 4 mentions a harvest coming in four months. John 5 says this happened during a festival.
 - b. Tabernacles ("Succot") is the Fall harvest home festival lasting 8 days.
11. The Seventy Sent out: September, AD 32.

- 12.** Jesus visits Jerusalem during Tabernacles (John 7 & 8): October, AD 32.
- 13.** Jesus visits Jerusalem during Hanukkah ("Feast of Dedication" John 10): December, AD 32.
- 14.** Palm Sunday: March 27, AD 33.
- 15.** Good Friday: April 1, AD 33.
- 16.** Resurrection Sunday: April 3, AD 33.
- 17.** Ascension Thursday: May 12, AD 33.
- 18.** Pentecost Sunday: May 22, AD 33.

Another interesting detail about the Bible's statements about the life of Christ is that, unlike other authors of the time period, the authors in the Bible do not describe the physical features of Jesus. For comparison, here is how the Roman historian Suetonius describes Cesar Augustus: "Bright eyes, teeth wide apart, small, and ill-kept. Hair was slightly curly and inclined to golden. His eyebrows met. His ears were of moderate size, and his nose projected a little at the top and then bent ever so slightly inward. His complexion was between dark and fair. He was 5 ft. 7 inches. His shoes were designed to make him look taller than he really was."

What can we say about Christ's personal appearance?

- 1.** He was male.
- 2.** He was physically rugged (based on His carpentry work from a young age to 30 years-of-age).
- 3.** He had a beard (as would all Jewish men and the OT prophesizes that the Messiah's beard would be plucked out -- Isaiah 50:6).
- 4.** He was "average" in looks since He did not stand out in a crowd until He spoke (also a prophecy in Isaiah 53:2 "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.").
 - a. Average Mediterranean hair: brown and not straight.
 - b. Average Mediterranean skin tone.
 - c. Most likely brown eyes.
 - d. Average height: 5' 5" based on an average of skeletal remains of the day.
- 5.** Probably clothed in quality clothing since the Roman soldiers at His crucifixion were anxious to have His clothes.

So, while interesting and something humans naturally are curious about, the Biblical record does not lead us to a day-by-day understanding of a mental image of Jesus but rather to meditate upon His teachings and what He did for us on the cross and in His burial and in His resurrection.

We feel that Jesus spent less than 12 months of His ministry time in Jerusalem, due to the resistance He received while there. That means that 2.5 years was spent ministering in the Galilee region and other areas of Israel outside of Judea. Probably from Hanukkah of AD 32 in John 10, Jesus spent the next three months close to Jerusalem. In a straight reading through the Four Gospels, this would start from Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 9, and John 10 onward through His death and resurrection.

Here is a map of Israel in Jesus' day. In general, we talk about Jesus "in Galilee" and "in Judea" but we need to realize that many times in those two areas, He tends to steer away from the concentration of Pharisaic Jewish people due to their opposition. He then stays on the perimeter and comes into contact with the people of Phoenicia, Caesarea Philippi, Decapolis, and Perea.



Devotional for Monday April 7, 2025, about Events on Monday March 21, AD 33

Jesus Predicts His Death in Jerusalem a Third Time
(Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34)

For comparison, here are the first two times Jesus warned of His coming death:

1. Matthew 16:21–23, Mark 8:31–32, and Luke 9:21–22. Jesus had just fed the 4,000 Gentile plus their wives and children. Matthew says “From then on Jesus began to point out to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, ‘Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You!’ But He turned and told Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns, but man’s.’”
2. Matthew 17:22–23, Mark 9:30–32, and Luke 9:43–45. Jesus predicted His death a second time shortly after revealing His glory to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. Mark and Luke indicate that in their confusion, the disciples were afraid to ask for clarification. Maybe they could not reconcile the appearance of His glory with defeat at the hands of His enemies and death.

In today’s third warning, Jesus told His disciples that He would be **mocked, scourged, crucified, and then rise again**. It should be noted that while there are Old Testament prophecies predicting the death and resurrection of the Messiah (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12), Jesus did not emphasize this in the early years of His time with the disciples. Only in the last few months does He tell them explicitly that He had to die, and it is not until the Last Supper that He connects His life blood to their spiritual salvation. Matthew 26:27-28 “Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them and said, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood [that establishes] the covenant; it is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” The only exception to this timeline of developing theological understanding of how the mechanics of salvation work is John the Baptist’s statement in John 1:29: “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

It appears that the concept of “**substitutionary sacrifice**” (that one living creature would shed its blood that another might live) started right after Adam and Eve’s fall with the killing of the animals to provide clothing to cover their nakedness. That Abel knew to offer animal sacrifices in worship continues this idea. In Leviticus, God tells Moses, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement.” Leviticus 17:11.

Clearly the Old Testament saint (which would include the 12 disciples during Christ’s 3.5 years of public ministry) could have understood that the dying substitute was bearing away the guilt and sin of the one for whom it was dying. However, Luke makes it clear that none of the 12 disciples could make the transition to Christ Himself being that substitute when Jesus told them: “Then He took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem. Everything that is written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and He will be mocked, insulted, spit on; and after they flog Him, they will kill Him, and He will rise on the third day.’ They understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.” Luke 18:31-34.

“In my place condemned He stood. Sealed my pardon with his blood!”

**Devotional for Tuesday April 8, 2025,
about Events on Tuesday March 22, AD 33**
James and John Vie for Positions in the Kingdom of Heaven
(Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45)

Aren't mothers grand!??! Matthew indicates that it was the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John, who approached Jesus and asked that they sit upon the right and left hands of His throne in the kingdom. Mark indicates that the boys approved of the request and in Matthew the focus shifts from the mother to the two men who were with her as Jesus replies to her request.

Matthew 20:20-22 “Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons approached Him with her sons. She knelt down to ask Him for something. ‘What do you want?’ He asked her. ‘Promise,’ she said to Him, ‘that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom.’”

Jesus questions whether they were ready for the sacrifice required to be worthy of that honor. They claim that they are. Jesus admits that they will indeed face persecution. According to Acts 12:1-3, James was the first apostle to be martyred: “About that time King Herod cruelly attacked some who belonged to the church, and he killed James, John’s brother, with the sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too, during the days of Unleavened Bread.”

What motivated the Zebedee family to think this way? Well in Luke Jesus talks about the potential roles of the disciples in His future kingdom: “And you will sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:30). While this is after the Zebedee family’s request, earlier parables hinted at similar reward in the Kingdom. In the parable of the talents, the men were rewarded with authority over a certain number of cities in the kingdom based on their faithfulness in this life (Luke 19:17 “Well done, good slave!’ he told him. ‘Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, have authority over 10 towns.’”).

We can drive ourselves crazy trying to figure out why God has different plans for each person. Of the 12 disciples, Peter, James, and John were the “inner circle.” They were the three invited to join Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. There they met Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17). John was the “one Jesus loved” and did indeed sit on his right hand at the last supper (since he could recline to ask Jesus a private question, John 13:23-25.). Peter was “Rock Johnson” (“Peter” means “Rock” and he is called “Bar Jonas” which is Aramaic for “Son of John.”). Amazingly, the three had extremely different ministry experiences. James was killed within a few years of Jesus’ resurrection. Peter lived longer but was crucified in his middle years. John was still functioning 60 years after the resurrection of Christ, the last of the disciples to die.

So, who will sit on the right and left hands of Christ in the kingdom. James? John? Peter? We don’t know yet for Jesus was not willing to say. Life has to be lived out first. In the process, candidates must follow the example of the master, as in Mark, Jesus concludes with the famous observation:

**“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give
His life-a ransom for many.”** Mark 10:45.

Devotional for Wednesday April 9, 2025, about Events on Wednesday March 23, AD 33

Jesus Heals a Blind Man Bartimaeus
Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43

Jesus is about 25 miles from Jerusalem and about 3000 feet lower in elevation than Jerusalem in the town of Jericho near the Dead Sea. A blind beggar hears the crowd coming down the street and asks who it is. He is told, "Jesus the Nazarene" which refers to Jesus' hometown of Nazareth in the Galilee region about 90 miles north of Jericho. Interestingly enough, the blindman seeks help from Jesus by calling out to Him, "Son of David!" Where did that come from?

If you do a concordance search for **"Son of David,"** no one else addresses Him by that name in the Old Testament. In the New Testament He is described as being the "son of David" a few times but only people with dire needs, like this blindman, address Him by the title "Son of David." The phrase only occurs 22 times in the Bible. Here they are in order of occurrence:

1. Proverbs 1:1, Ecclesiastes 1:1, 2 Chronicles 1:1, 2 Chronicles 13:6, 2 Chronicles 30:26, 2 Chronicles 35:3 "Solomon son of David."
2. Matthew 1:20 "Joseph son of David."
3. In the two genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, Jesus is said to be the "son of David."
4. Matthew 9:27 "As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, shouting, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!'"
5. Matthew 12:23 "And all the crowds were astounded and said, 'Perhaps this is the Son of David!'"
6. Matthew 15:22 "Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came and kept crying out, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is cruelly tormented by a demon.'"
7. Six times the phrase occurs in the three passages in today's devotional.
8. In Mark 12:35 and Luke 20:41 Jesus asks: "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the Son of David?"
9. Twice the crowds call Jesus "Son of David" on Palm Sunday.

So, it would seem that blind people and a Gentile woman are most likely to address Jesus as "Son of David" in the New Testament!

Jesus' lineage is predicted in the Old Testament:

1. He will be human: Genesis 3:15 "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."
2. He will be Jewish: Genesis 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
3. He will be from the Tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10-12 "The scepter will not depart from Judah, or the staff from between his feet, until He whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples be longs to Him. He ties his donkey to a vine, and the colt of his donkey to the choice vine. He washes his clothes in wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk."
4. He will be from David's line: 2 Samuel 7:12-13 "I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

5. He will be the Son of God: Isaiah 9:6 & 7 "For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will accomplish this.
6. He will be born in the city of David: Micah 5:2 "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for Me. His origin is from antiquity, from eternity."
7. He is affirmed by Peter as the living descendant of the dead David: Acts 2:29-32 "Brothers, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing this in advance, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: 'He was not left in Hades, and His flesh did not experience decay.' God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this."
8. He is affirmed by Paul as a descendant of David: Acts 13:22 "After removing him, He raised up David as their king, of whom He testified: 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will carry out all My will.'" And Romans 15:12 "And again, Isaiah says: The root of Jesse will appear, the One who rises to rule the Gentiles; in Him the Gentiles will hope."

No one is so blind as he who refuses to see. Jesus came to be a great light to those in spiritual darkness.

Devotional for Thursday April 10, 2025, about Events on Thursday March 24, AD 33

Jesus Meets a Future Disciple Zacchaeus
Luke 19:1-10

"Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he. He climbed up in a Sycamore Tree for the Lord he wanted to see." That was completely from memory (my youngest child is 38). When did I hear this? How did it stick?? You'll have to Google the whole song to see if my memory was accurate.

Christ is still in Jericho, less than 10 days from His crucifixion, and He is doing one-on-one ministry that leads a selfish man into life everlasting. Luke 19:5 "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, because today I must stay at your house.'"

Notice that Jesus miraculously calls him by name, and no one asks, "How did you know his name?", not even Zacchaeus. What his local fellow Jews did do is badmouth Zacchaeus for being both a traitor and a cheat. Traitor because the taxes he collected were for the hated Roman government and a cheat because that was why someone would want to be a tax collector.

The Bible doesn't say what content of Jesus' teachings Zacchaeus might have already heard. There is no discussion of repentance or any details about how a person could get saved in this story. The encounter with the Lord brings conviction and Zacchaeus repents, promising to help the poor and pay back with compensation to those he had cheated.

One possible explanation is that the Jewish people of that day had content from God going back 2,000 years to Abraham. That content was passed on by oral tradition until God led Moses to record it in the first five books of the Old Testament, 1400 years earlier. One of the reasons why Christ's preaching to Jewish people was so abrupt and demanding (**"Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"**) is because they had 39 books of inspired scripture explaining to them the way of salvation. They should have been ready. And, despite his carnality, maybe Zacchaeus was aware of what his scriptures taught.

Jesus makes a theological statement, "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham." (verse 9). He was not making an ethnic statement. Of course, biologically Zacchaeus was a "son of Abraham," but that is not what Jesus means. He is stating that Zacchaeus was displaying the faith of Father Abraham and that led to his salvation.

In Genesis 15:6 we are told that "Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." This is the first of many powerful statements in scripture that salvation comes "by faith," not "by human effort." Habakkuk elaborates in 2:4 "But the righteous one will live by his faith." There are three New Testament books that quote Habakkuk 2:4, each with a slightly different emphasis:

1. Galatians emphasizes "The righteous" (Galatians 3:11).
2. Romans emphasizes "shall live" (Romans 1:17).
3. Hebrews emphasizes "by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).

In fact, there is a progression in understanding of how to worship God in the Old Testament:

1. What Moses presents as 613 precepts for pleasing God (in the Law of Moses),
2. David condenses to 11 in Psalms 15:2-5,
3. Isaiah to 6 in Isaiah 11:2,
4. Micah to 3 in Micah 6:8,
5. Habakkuk to but one: "But the righteous one will live by his faith."

Even the “Sycamore Tree” fits the story. This would be the same as a “Fig Tree.” Now, there were many such trees, so it was not unusual that there would be one for him to climb. It was the leaves of a Fig Tree that Adam and Eve used to “cover their nakedness.” Fig leaves are large, so that would make sense. However, Fig sap is an irritant like Poison Ivy. How very “human” for Adam and Eve to choose “Poison Ivy” to hide their shame! The Fig Tree also is a symbol of the Nation of Israel (the “descendants of Father Abraham”) as we will see in a later story this week.

We know little else about this “wee little man.” His name means “Pure.” Only one man with a similar name occurs in the Old Testament, one of the men to return from the Babylonian Captivity in Ezra and Nehemiah. Church tradition (which cannot be proven) states that he eventually became the leader of the church in Caesarea.

What we do know from this story in Luke 19 is:

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.” (verse 10).

*Run, John, run! The Law commands!
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Far grander news the Gospel (grace) brings:
It bids me fly and gives me wings!
— John Bunyan (1628-88)*

Devotional for Friday April 11, 2025, about Events on Friday March 25, AD 33

Jesus Delivers the Parable of the 10 Servants

Luke 19:11-28

Jesus is just two days away from His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on what we now call “Palm Sunday.” He has already spoken to His disciples about the importance of servitude. Now He will address the topic of faithfulness in service, which will have a direct effect on a believer’s role in the coming kingdom.

Jesus introduces His story with that understanding, “He went on to tell a parable because He was near Jerusalem, and they thought the kingdom of God was going to appear right away.” (Luke 19:11). Jesus apparently had been in Perea and was making His way up to Jerusalem, passing through Jericho where He interacted with Zacchaeus. The word “Perea” does not occur in the Bible, but it is the name for the area on the East side of the Jordan River. Earlier Jesus and the disciples had been up north on Mt. Hermon for the Transfiguration. Due to tensions with the Samaritans, it would have been normal for Jewish people traveling from Galilee down to Jerusalem to walk down the east side of the Jordan River. John also mentions that Jesus visited the place where He had been baptized, “beyond the Jordan” (John 10:40-42). While this visit in John 10 would have been several months earlier, it indicates that Jesus was comfortable visiting Perea.

Luke refers to the “story” as a “parable.” The word means “to lay two things alongside of each other.” The point is to note a parallelism or comparison. It is fine to use the standard definition of “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Do not be disturbed when people refer to Bible occurrences as “stories.” The word “story” is not being used to imply that it didn’t happen, just that the information is being shared to teach a lesson. In the case of Zacchaeus, we would conclude that the “story” actually happened while here, this “parable story” was made up to teach a lesson. C. S. Lewis captures this in his famous observation: “Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God’s myth where the others are men’s myths ... Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call ‘real things’.”

The employees of the Nobleman are called “slaves.” The Greek word is often translated “servant” or “bond-servant.” Unfortunately, there is not enough detail to know whether “slave” or “servant” would be more accurate. In the Jewish culture a “servant” could be in forced employment for six years to work off a debt and then released in the seventh year (Exodus 21:2). A “slave” would never be released. An interesting wrinkle is that after working for six years, if a Jewish servant wanted to continue in servitude, he could have an ear pierced to make that pledge and be referred to as a “bond-servant.” (Exodus 21:6). It seems that this designation is more respectable than “slave” and as a result many of our English translations refer to Paul and other followers of Christ as “bond-servants” where “slaves” would be an equally valid option.

The Nobleman (“good birth”) gives away “minas.” The mina was a significant sum of money. It was worth 100 drachmas. One drachma was a daily wage for a laborer. So, if we start with an hourly wage of \$15 today, that is \$120 for a day’s work times 100 equals \$12,000. Also, for comparison, in Matthew 17:24 Jesus was expected to pay the two-drachma Temple tax.

The story has four interesting details:

1. His fellow countrymen didn’t want the Nobleman to be elevated to be king over them.
2. The first servant is praised and called a “Good Slave.”
3. The second servant is rewarded but is not told that he was a “Good Slave.”
4. It would appear that the story is foreshadowing Christ’s own rejection by His fellow Jews, a rejection that led to the destruction of Jerusalem within the next 40 years resulting in the death of 1.2 million Jews, almost half of the total population of Israel at that time.

The crowd in the story seems puzzled that the Nobleman/King would give the one piece of money to the slave who already had 10. (Is this a somewhat “socialistic attitude?”) Actually, the decision is not based on what would be fair to the two successful slaves but on what would be best for the master. The first slave had earned a 1,000% increase (1 to 10) while the second slave had only multiplied his money five times (500%). So, the master can expect greater profit from the first slave.

The conclusion to the story is reminiscent of the management adage: **“80% of all productive work is done by 20% of the workforce.”** This is a product of human laziness and self-protection but in this parable, it becomes a reminder that in the Lord’s work, He will advance those who are diligent in using whatever the Lord has already given them.

Luke 19:26 “I tell you, that to everyone who has, more will be given; and from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away.”

Devotional for Saturday April 12, 2025, about Events on Saturday March 26, AD 33

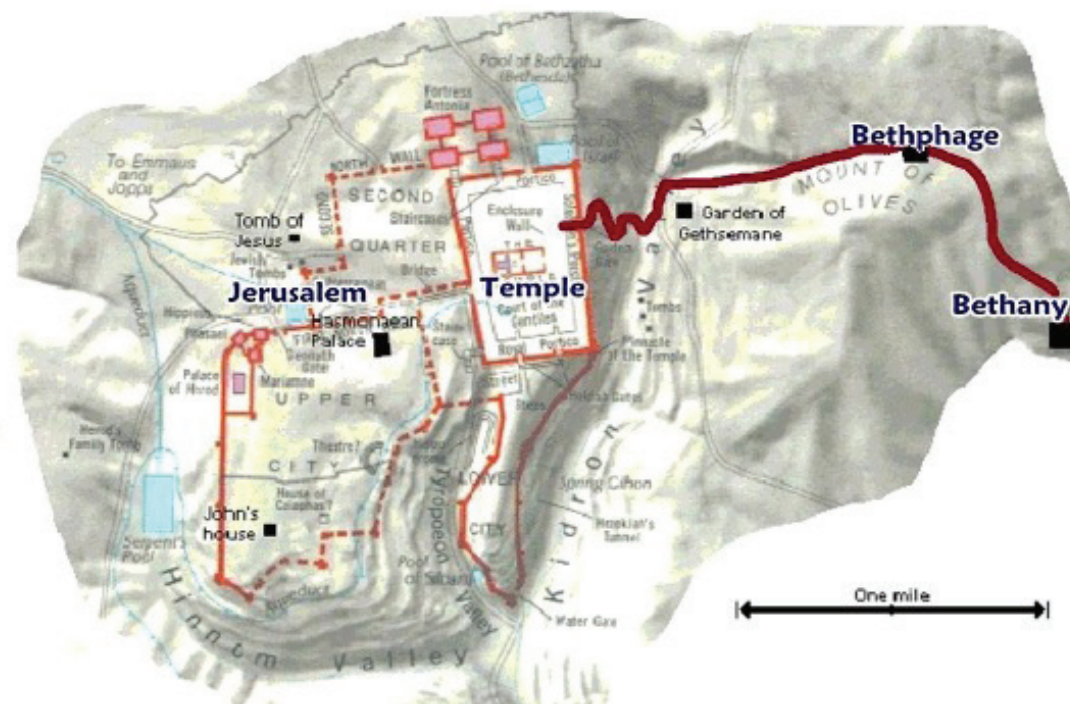
Jesus is Anointed

Matthew 26:6-13 Mark 14:3-9 John 12:1-11

Since we are convinced of a Friday Passover/crucifixion, the first verse in this story (“six days before”) makes this the Saturday before the Passover. Please understand that when the Jewish holidays were established in Leviticus 23-25, “Passover” was one day followed by seven days of “Unleavened Bread.” Since both the Passover lamb and the unleavened bread are related to the Exodus from Egypt, eventually Jewish people merged them into “The Week of Passover.”

In John 12 this episode seems to have occurred in Mary, Martha, and Lazarus’ house. In Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9, the house is in the same village, but is said to be Simon’s house. As a result, some argue that there were two anointings for Christ’s burial and that the one in Matthew 26 and Mark 14 happened on Wednesday. In John the feet are the focal point of the anointing while in Matthew and Mark it is Christ’s head. The thing that makes me think that there was just one anointing is the complaint that the expensive ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. Since the events would only be three days apart if separate events, it is hard to imagine the need for the second rebuke. For one account to mention the head and the other the feet is not a contradiction as it could have been both at the same time. And finally, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus could have been neighbors to Simon, and this was a shared banquet. John 12 does not say that it was Martha’s house, just that she was serving. Please also note that there is another anointing much earlier in Christ’s ministry (Luke 7:36-50) that was also at “Simon’s House” but this was a) in the Galilee, b) Simon was not a Leper, c) there was no mention of Christ’s death, d) there was not mention of wasting money. In the Bible, we are introduced to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in an earlier story where Martha was frustrated that Mary was not helping prepare the meal (see Luke 10:41). In the previous chapter of John (chapter 11), we have the famous story of Jesus resurrecting Lazarus from the dead. Now in chapter 12, the family is hosting Jesus once again and Mary anoints Jesus with expensive perfume. Interestingly enough, in John 11 John refers to Mary as the one who did so even before telling the story in chapter 12. This indicates that his readers probably knew the story already from another source.

Lazarus’ name means **“Who God Aids.”** Mary’s name means “Bitter,” and Martha means “Lady.” They lived in the village of Bethany (“House of Dates”) which is less than two miles from the Temple Mount on the backside of the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem. Apparently, Jesus frequently stayed at their home.



As John 12 opens, once again Martha is busy preparing the meal while Mary is worshipping Jesus. We could conclude that the siblings had these different reactions to Jesus:

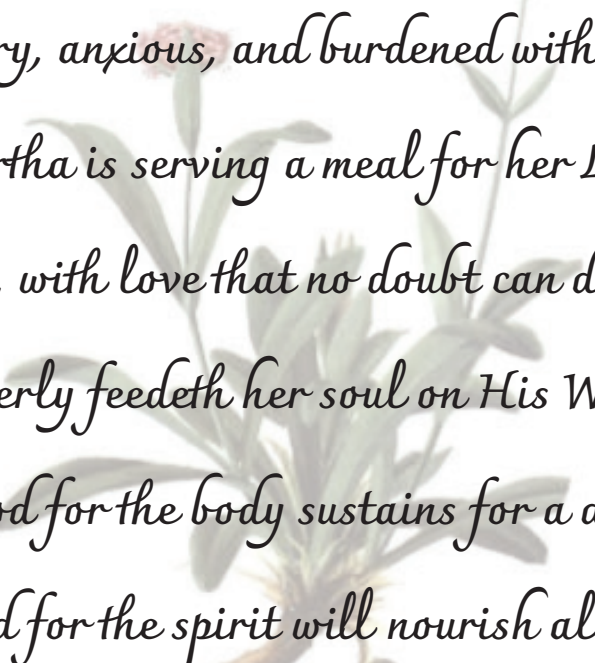
1. Martha: Service
2. Lazarus: Fellowship
3. Mary: Worship

In her worship, Mary sacrifices a very expensive ointment perfume called “Nard” or “Spikenard.” Today it is called an “essential oil” and is brown in color. Nard came from the mountains of northern India and Nepal. In the earlier Luke 10 episode, Martha was “distracted” which is literally, “two-tracked.” In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, man in general, and Christians in particular have lost their thoughts and conscious adoration of the Supreme Being, they being drowned out in the clatter of this worldly mechanism called “life.”

Like Elijah of old, we must realize once again that God is not found in the mighty wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but rather in the still small voice which says, “Be still and know that I am God.” Here in John 12, Judas Iscariot complains that the expensive ointment should have been sold, and the money given to the poor. John provides an editorial note that eventually the disciples discovered that Judas was a thief, hence his interest in the money as the group’s treasurer. Jesus rebukes Judas explaining that Mary was unknowingly preparing His body for proper burial. He then adds this brutal observation, in effect, “If you are so concerned about the poor, don’t worry, there will always be poor people you can help!”

One of the challenges that Christianity receives is that our guidebook is full of claims that supposedly cannot be checked in a laboratory experiment. This is not true. Here Jesus makes a statement, almost 2,000 years ago, that there will always be poor people on the planet. We can check today and say, “Yes, that is still true.” Likewise, the implications in scripture are that God blesses and protects the descendants of Abraham and has a future for His Jewish people. Therefore, in the way of an “experiment,” if there ever comes a day when there are no poor people or no Jewish people left on the planet, we will then have “proof” that the Bible and/or God is wrong.

The Mary/Martha Syndrome *Luke 10*



*Weary, anxious, and burdened with toil;
Martha is serving a meal for her Lord.
Mary, with love that no doubt can despoil;
Eagerly feedeth her soul on His Word.
Food for the body sustains for a day;
Food for the spirit will nourish alway.*

Devotional for Sunday April 13, 2025, about Events on Sunday March 27, AD 33

Palm Sunday Jesus enters Jerusalem Triumphantly
Matthew 21:1-16 Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:28-44 John 12:12-19

Today we view two significant events on "Palm Sunday":

- 1.** Jesus enters Jerusalem Triumphantly
- 2.** Gentiles announce "Sirs, We Would See Jesus!"

In yesterday's map you can trace Jesus' route on Palm Sunday from Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' home in Bethany through the village of Bethphage ("House of Unripe Figs") where he borrowed the donkey, down into the Kidron Valley and up entering the city and Temple Mount through the Eastern Gate.

Large crowds were already gathering in Jerusalem for the Passover Meal at sundown on the coming Friday. In Jesus' day, Jerusalem had a population of about 50,000 people. During the three pilgrim holidays, this number would swell to a quarter of a million people.

John 12:13 says, "They took palm branches and went out to meet Him. They kept shouting: 'Hosanna ! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord -the King of Israel!'"

Palm Branches are called "Lulav" in Hebrew or "Palm Fronds" in English. Both Jewish custom and Roman custom used them in excited celebrations. The word "Hosanna" is Hebrew for "Save Now." It is a quote from Psalm 118: 22-26. Jesus then rides an unbroken donkey. This is a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, even mentioning the two animals (a female donkey and its colt.). Donkeys were ridden by Middle Eastern Royalty during times of peace. The fact that Jesus could ride it unbroken indicates that He is the Creator, and the creature will obey Him. It is interesting throughout scripture that animals rebel against man to the degree that man rebels against God. Conversely, notice that godly and righteous people have no trouble or fear of animals:

- 1.** Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- 2.** Noah and his family in the Ark.
- 3.** Daniel in the Lion's den.
- 4.** Jesus with the unbroken donkey.
- 5.** Believers during the kingdom when the "wolf and the lamb will graze together." (Isaiah 11:6-9, 65:25)

Greeks come to Jesus through Phillip

John 12:20-50

After the main event of Palm Sunday, John 12 indicates that Jesus has sparked the interest of some visiting Gentiles. These were "God-Fearers" like the Roman Centurian in Acts 10. They were attracted to the monotheism and high moral code of Judaism but had not become a proselyte Jew because that involved the painful operation of circumcision. John says that these men approached Philip. That was natural since "Philip" is a Greek name meaning "Lover of Horses." Philip got Andrew and the two disciples went to tell Jesus that these Gentiles wanted to meet with Him. Andrew was Peter's brother and the first to follow Jesus and the one who introduced Peter to Jesus. Jesus' response foreshadows the Gospel going to the Gentiles after His imminent crucifixion. He illustrates the significance of His death with the concept of "The Law of the Harvest." "Jesus replied to them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop.'" (John 12:23-24).

In response, God the Father honors Him from heaven with the words: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!" This is the third time a voice from heaven has honored the son.

The first time was at His baptism (Matthew 3:17)
and the second time at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5).

Then in verse 32 Christ describes the kind of death He would die: "As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all [people] to Myself." "Lifted up" normally means "exalted." The cross is a triumph, not a defeat! The crowd understood that He was referring to death and then asks, doesn't the prophets say that the Messiah will live forever? Jesus responds by referring to Himself as the "Son of Man." No one else uses that title for Jesus in the Bible, only Jesus referring to Himself. He uses it 83 times. For comparison, "Son of God" only occurs 40 times in the New Testament and less than 10 times is used of Jesus to refer to Himself. "Son of ____" means "characterized by ____." The reason why Jesus preferred the term **"Son of Man"** is because as God He wanted to identify with man.

Devotional for Monday April 14, 2025, about Events on Monday March 28, AD 33

Jesus Cleanses the Temple a Second Time
Matthew 21:12-17 Mark 11:12-19 Luke 19:45-48

Jesus was already annoying the religious authorities with His **Triumphal Entry**. In two passages (Matthew 21:15-17 & Luke 19:40) they ask Him to quiet His followers, and He explains that if they did not shout praises, the very stones of Jerusalem would cry out in honor of Him! These religious authorities were already plotting to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 19:10), whose recent resurrection had galvanized public admiration. They now scold each other with accusations that the situation was only getting worse (John 12:19).

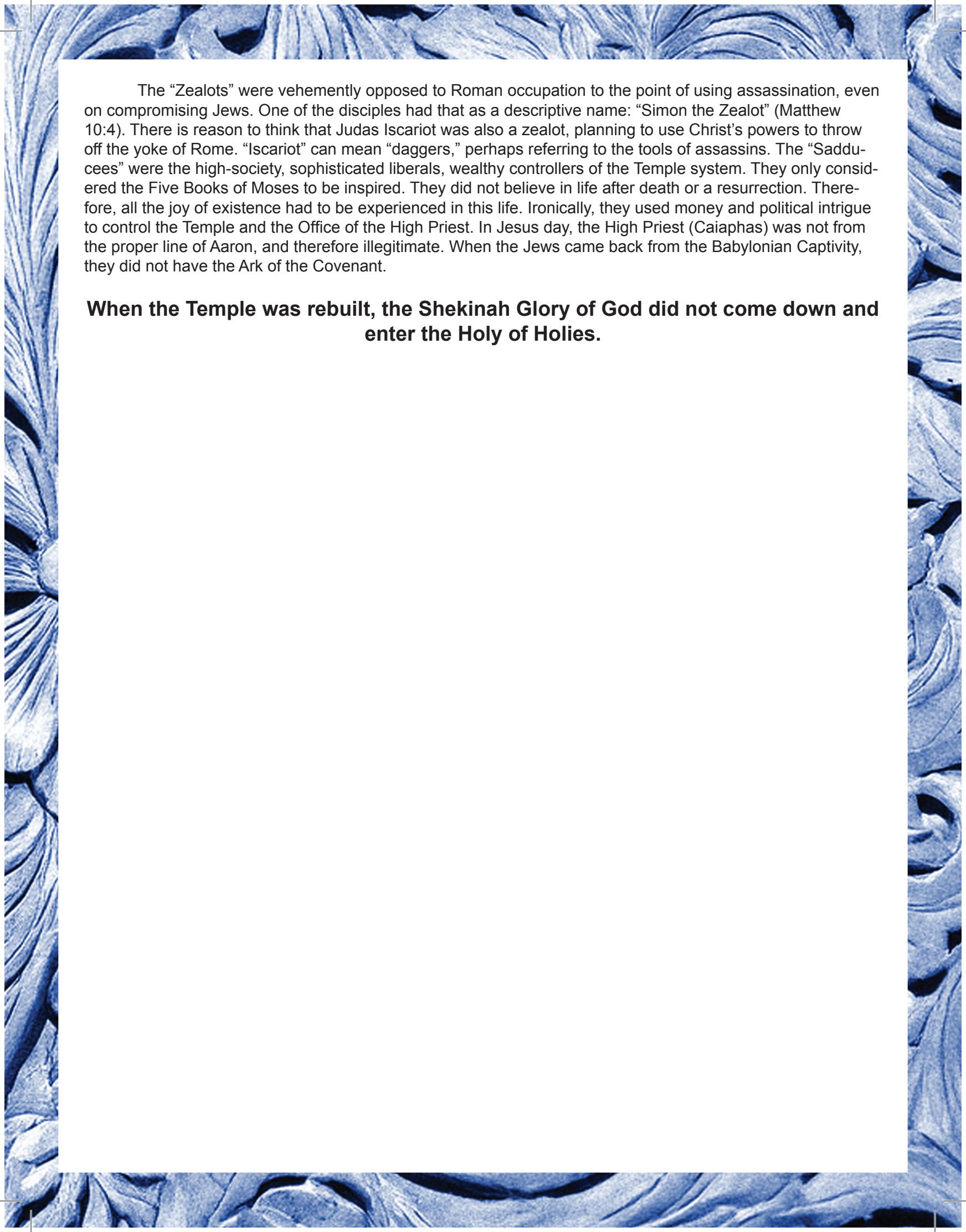
At some point after the Triumphal Entry, Jesus proceeded to cleanse the Temple for the second time in His public career. The first time was at the beginning of His 3.5-year ministry after His first miracle, turning the water into wine, in John 2. Both times He accuses the money changers and sellers of making His Father's House a den of thieves. This would further infuriate the religious authorities. The Pharisees would object to Him calling God "my Father" since they interpret this (correctly!) as a claim to deity (see John 10:30-39). The Sadducees would be irate because they received profit from the selling of the animals and the money changing (at huge mark-ups) to the captive worshippers.

Matthew and Luke seem to imply that He cleansed the Temple yet that Sunday but in Mark 11:11 it says that after the Triumphal Entry, "He went into Jerusalem and into the temple complex. After looking around at everything, since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve." Then the next day Mark says that He cleansed the Temple.

The resolution to this apparent contradiction is that neither Matthew nor Luke state specifically that "on Sunday" Jesus cleansed the Temple, just that it occurred sometime "after" the Triumphal Entry. There are also hints that Mark and Luke are summarizing the activity of several days with these concluding comments:

- 1.** Mark 11:19 "And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city."
- 2.** Luke 19:47 "Every day He was teaching in the temple complex."

There were many religious/political factions among the Jews in Christ's day. The "Herodians" favored Rome and sought protection and benefit from supporting the Roman bureaucracy in Israel. The "Hasidim" were pious and probably the closest to Jesus' teachings, with heavy emphasis on prayer and respect for women. The word "Hasid/Hasidim" means "Pious One(s)." This First Century group is not the same as the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish People of today, just the same descriptive word. The "Pharisees" were conservative appliers of the Law of Moses. They were the "pastors" of the people running the synagogues around the country. Their name probably comes from the Hebrew word "Peres" which occurs in Daniel 5 as one of the words written on the wall at Belshazzar's blasphemous party: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin" which Daniel interpreted as: "Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, and Divided." The "divided" meant for Belshazzar that he was going to be "divided" from his kingdom that night. For the religious party, it means that they "split hairs" over the interpretation of the Law of Moses.



The "Zealots" were vehemently opposed to Roman occupation to the point of using assassination, even on compromising Jews. One of the disciples had that as a descriptive name: "Simon the Zealot" (Matthew 10:4). There is reason to think that Judas Iscariot was also a zealot, planning to use Christ's powers to throw off the yoke of Rome. "Iscariot" can mean "daggers," perhaps referring to the tools of assassins. The "Sadducees" were the high-society, sophisticated liberals, wealthy controllers of the Temple system. They only considered the Five Books of Moses to be inspired. They did not believe in life after death or a resurrection. Therefore, all the joy of existence had to be experienced in this life. Ironically, they used money and political intrigue to control the Temple and the Office of the High Priest. In Jesus day, the High Priest (Caiaphas) was not from the proper line of Aaron, and therefore illegitimate. When the Jews came back from the Babylonian Captivity, they did not have the Ark of the Covenant.

When the Temple was rebuilt, the Shekinah Glory of God did not come down and enter the Holy of Holies.

Devotional for Tuesday April 15, 2025, about Events on Tuesday March 29, AD 33

Jesus does a stunning amount of teaching and activity on this day. Notice that John jumps right from Palm Sunday (John 12) to the Last Supper on Thursday (John 13), although John 12:37-50 is unique teaching not found in the other three gospels and could have been said at any time during the week.

- 1. Jesus Delivers the Parable of the Fig Tree, Matthew 21:18-22 Mark 11:20-26**
The Fig Tree becomes a symbol of Israel (it was very common in Israel.). Lack of fruit indicates the imminent rejection of their Messiah. The withering of Israel took place over the next 40 years with the climax at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.
The authoritative comment about faith and answered prayer was for the apostles, not us today since later scripture indicates that prayers are only answered in accordance with God's will (1 John 5:14-15) not our sincere desires or confident demands.
- 2. Jesus Comments on His Authority and the Connection to the Ministry of John the Baptist, Matthew 21:23-27 Mark 11:27-33 Luke 20:1-8**
As with other questions the religious leaders asked Jesus just to trip Him up (such as who should receive our money, Caesar or God? And Should this adulterous woman be stoned?)
Jesus short circuits their trap.
- 3. Jesus Delivers the Parable of the Two Sons, Matthew 21:28-32**
Jesus explains why gross but repentant sinners will enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the hypocritical religious leaders.
- 4. Jesus Delivers the Parable of the Vineyard, Matthew 21:33-46 Mark 12:1-12 Luke 20:9-19**
This parable speaks of the destruction of the religious leaders for disrespecting the Son of God. Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22 in Mark 12:10 "Haven't you read this Scripture: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."
- 5. Jesus Delivers the Parable of the Banquet, Matthew 22:1-14**
This one is very obvious. Not just the Jews but you and I also get invited into the kingdom (salvation). We need to be careful with the conclusion, "For many are invited, but few are chosen." This is not saying that God sovereignly rejects some humans. It is saying that only faith in Christ is adequate "Wedding clothing" to attend the celebration.
- 6. Jesus Comments on Payment of Taxes to Caesar, Matthew 22:15-22 Mark 12:13-17 Luke 20:20-26**
This is a classic "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Normally the Herodians and Pharisees despised each other!
- 7. Jesus Comments on the Afterlife, Matthew 22:23-33 Mark 12:18-27 Luke 20:27-40**
I think most people dislike the details of grammar. But here, Jesus makes a point about the truthfulness of the Bible's resurrection teachings on the basis of the present tense ("God is") versus the past tense ("God was"). In effect He says, "Abraham is dead, but the Bible considers him to still exist because it states that "God is the God of Abraham."
- 8. Jesus Comments on the Greatest Commandment, Matthew 22:34-40 Mark 12:28-34**
- 9. Jesus Comments on David's Son and David's Lord, Matthew 22:41-46 Mark 12:35-37 Luke 20:40-44**
Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 "The Lord declared to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" The first occurrence of "Lord" is the Hebrew word "Jehovah" referring to God the Father. The second ("my Lord") is the Hebrew word "Adonai" which can even be used of humans ("Adon" in modern Hebrew is the word for "Mr.") but note that both Jesus and the religious leaders thought it significant that David called "his son" (the Messiah) "my Lord."
- 10. Jesus Condemns the Pharisees, Matthew 23:1-39 Mark 12:38-40 Luke 20:45-47**
- 11. Jesus Comments on the Widow's Mite, Mark 12:41-44 Luke 21:1-4**
- 12. Jesus Delivers the Olivet Discourse to His Disciples, Matthew 24:1-25:30 Mark 13:1-37 Luke 21:5-38**

This last topic is the longest from that day and perhaps the most interesting to us as we watch world events unfold, particularly in the Middle East. Just one observation. Please remember that in the Old Testament, and in the Gospels, the Church has not yet begun or even been revealed (that is what the Apostle Paul was commissioned to do in his epistles.). So, there has not yet been any teaching that believers will be removed from the planet prior to the "70th Week of Daniel" (Daniel 9, the "Tribulation Period"). This fact continues in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus envisions believers on the planet throughout the seven years. So, in the famous statement, "One will be taken, the other left," this is not referring to a "Rapture" but rather that those "taken" are taken in the judgments that fall on the sinful earth. Even the word "taken" in Greek is used for judgment in other passages of scripture.

"Even so come Lord Jesus!"

Maybe 2025 will be our last Easter on Earth!

Devotional for Wednesday April 16, 2025, about Events on Wednesday March 30, AD 33

Jesus' Opponents Finalize Their Plot to Kill Jesus

Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16 Mark 14:1-2, 10-11 Luke 22:1-6

A few days earlier when Christ resurrected Lazarus, the High Priest Caiaphas had made the observation that it would be better for the one man Jesus to die than for the Jews of Israel to lose their kingdom (John 11:50). Since the Jews were already under Roman domination this is better understood as "we religious leaders would lose our precarious place of influence and power."

Now after multiple public humiliations, the religious leaders are committed to killing Jesus. They also wanted to kill Lazarus, but God protected Lazarus from their murderous intent. Judas goes to them with an offer. He is given 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus to them. Several times in the various accounts we are told that the religious authorities were afraid of the people so they needed Judas to get them to Jesus in a secluded location with no crowds around that could interfere (Matthew 21:46, 25:5, Mark 11:18, 12:12, 14:2, Luke 19:48, 20:6, 19; 22:6).

Thirty pieces of silver is not much money. In Deuteronomy 31:6 it is the price of one slave. This specific amount, however, is predicted 500 years earlier in Zechariah 11:13. In that passage it also indicates that it was a small sum. Now, John has informed us that Judas was the treasurer of the group and was eventually discovered to be a thief. However, Judas was playing for a much larger reward. The Gospels record 37 amazing miracles that Christ performed and John 21 indicates that there were many not recorded. Judas apparently felt that he could use Christ's powers and popularity with the people to spark a revolt against Rome. Jesus had told the disciples that they would one day sit on twelve thrones ruling the twelve tribes of Israel and this sounded very good to the power-hungry Judas Iscariot. We know the word "gladiator." It refers to a fighting man who uses a "gladius." Gladius is the word for "sword." A "scarii" is a dagger and "Iscariot" is thought to be a reference to the assassins the Zealots used to try to fight Rome. This would explain why Judas so quickly felt remorse when Jesus was arrested, did not use His powers, and was tried and executed. Judas never intended to have Jesus killed. And, with Jesus dead, he saw the hopes of victory that he had nourished over the previous 3.5 years vanish.

Zechariah 13:12 even predicts what would happen to the 30 pieces of silver: "'Throw it to the potter,' the Lord said to me—'this magnificent price I was valued by them.' So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw it into the house of the Lord, to the potter." We know that Judas took the money back and tried to give it to the religious authorities. They said that it was improper to take money into the Temple Treasury that had been used to kill someone, so Judas threw the silver to the ground (Matthew 27:1-10). They then used the money to buy a potter's field for poor people's graves. The potters had dug out the clay, making the land full of holes and not good for much else.

In Matthew 27 we are told that Judas hung himself. In Acts 1 Peter adds this detail about Judas: "Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages; and falling headfirst, he burst open in the middle, and all his insides spilled out. This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field is called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood." (verses 18 & 19). Apparently Judas hung himself in a location where he would not soon be found. His dead body decayed and bloated in the hot spring sun and either the rope or the tree limb broke causing the damage to his body. Interestingly enough, in Dante's famous tour through hell, he has Satan trapped in the lowest level while he gnaws on Judas in his mouth! Peter also was convinced that Judas deserved eternal damnation: "To take the place in this apostolic service that Judas left to go to his own place." (Acts 1:25) "His own place" refers to hell. Jesus calls Judas the "son of destruction." "While I was with them, I was protecting them by Your name that You have given Me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled." (John 17:12). He also said about Judas, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." (Matthew 26:24) Three and one-half years. Thousands of hours of teaching and conversations. Judas must have preached and performed miracles, otherwise, if not, you would think the other disciples would have suspected him. When the presence of the betrayer is announced, none of the other 11 points the finger at Judas!

Devotional for Thursday April 17, 2025, about Events on Thursday March 31, AD 33

Last Supper, Jesus Celebrates the Last Supper
Matthew 26:17-35 Mark 14:12-31 Luke 22:7-38 John 13:1-17:26

Jesus asks Peter and John to secure a place and prepare for the Passover meal. Since we know that Jesus was hanging on the cross while other families prepared their Passover meal Friday night, either Jesus was celebrating the Passover one day early, or, more likely, was using a different calendar than the religious authorities in Jerusalem. We know that this is true for Jews living in the Galilee. More significant is that it was also true for the Essene community down at the Dead Sea in the place called Qumran.

Jesus tells the men to enter the city, they will see a man carrying a water jar, and they should follow him to his destination. Carrying water was a woman's task. The Essenes, however, were a monastic group – men only. We know that they had a section of the city in the southwestern corner because the gate there was called the "Essene Gate." Another connection is that the Bible says that Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, lived a modest life in the wilderness eating "locust and honey." It could be that he spent time living with the Essene Community at Qumran.

As the men gathered, they would have reclined for the meal around tables arranged in a "U" called a "triclinium." Servants would serve the meal from the inside of the U and the guests were on the outside. On the right-hand table, the second seat was for the host of the meal, Jesus. In front, on His "right hand" and able to lean back to ask a private question was the "bodyguard." In this case, John. The host of the meal exposed his back to the one behind him on the left. This indicated trust and was the place of the "guest of honor." Since Jesus dipped into the common dish with Judas and fed him the "sop" (a choice piece of meat as a favor), that was Judas' place that night. Knowing that Judas had already arranged to betray Him, Jesus was still reaching out to Judas.

You can imagine Peter's thoughts when Jesus asked John to sit on the right. He probably assumed that he would be the guest of honor. When Judas was summoned, it appears that Peter went all the way to the last seat. At least when Jesus was washing the disciples' feet in John 13, He deals with Peter last. This would explain Peter's heightened embarrassment because the last seat was where the designated foot washer would sit! Across the front of the U would also give Peter the chance to quietly motion for John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was.



In a typical Passover meal, four symbolic cups of wine are drunk, each at a different point in the meal. This is based on Exodus 6:6 & 7 "I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians; I will deliver you from their bondage; I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for my people and I will be your God and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

1. Cup of Blessing

2. Cup of Deliverance: Ten drops of wine are dripped on the leader's plate to represent the ten plagues.

3. Cup of Redemption:

- a. Drunk at the end of the main course.
- b. Drunk along with a piece of matzo cracker that earlier had been wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden in the house.
 - i. Children get a prize if they can find it.
 - ii. Today in a modern Passover the broken cracker is from the middle one of three in a "Unity Bag" on the Passover Table.
 - iii. It is called the "Afikomen" which is Greek, not Hebrew, and means either "I have come" or "He has come."
- c. This is the cup and "resurrected" broken cracker that Jesus used to institute what we call "The Lord's Supper."
- d. Jesus says that He will not drink of the fruit of the vine until He drinks it new with them in the kingdom. That means that He has been waiting 1,992 years to drink the fourth cup, the "Cup of Praise" with us in His kingdom!

4. Cup of Praise

You will notice that the John passage for this night is very long as Jesus explains that He must go away. His logic is, "I by choice am localized in a human body. I must go away and send the Holy Spirit who does not have that limitation. He can indwell bodies around the globe to build my Church."

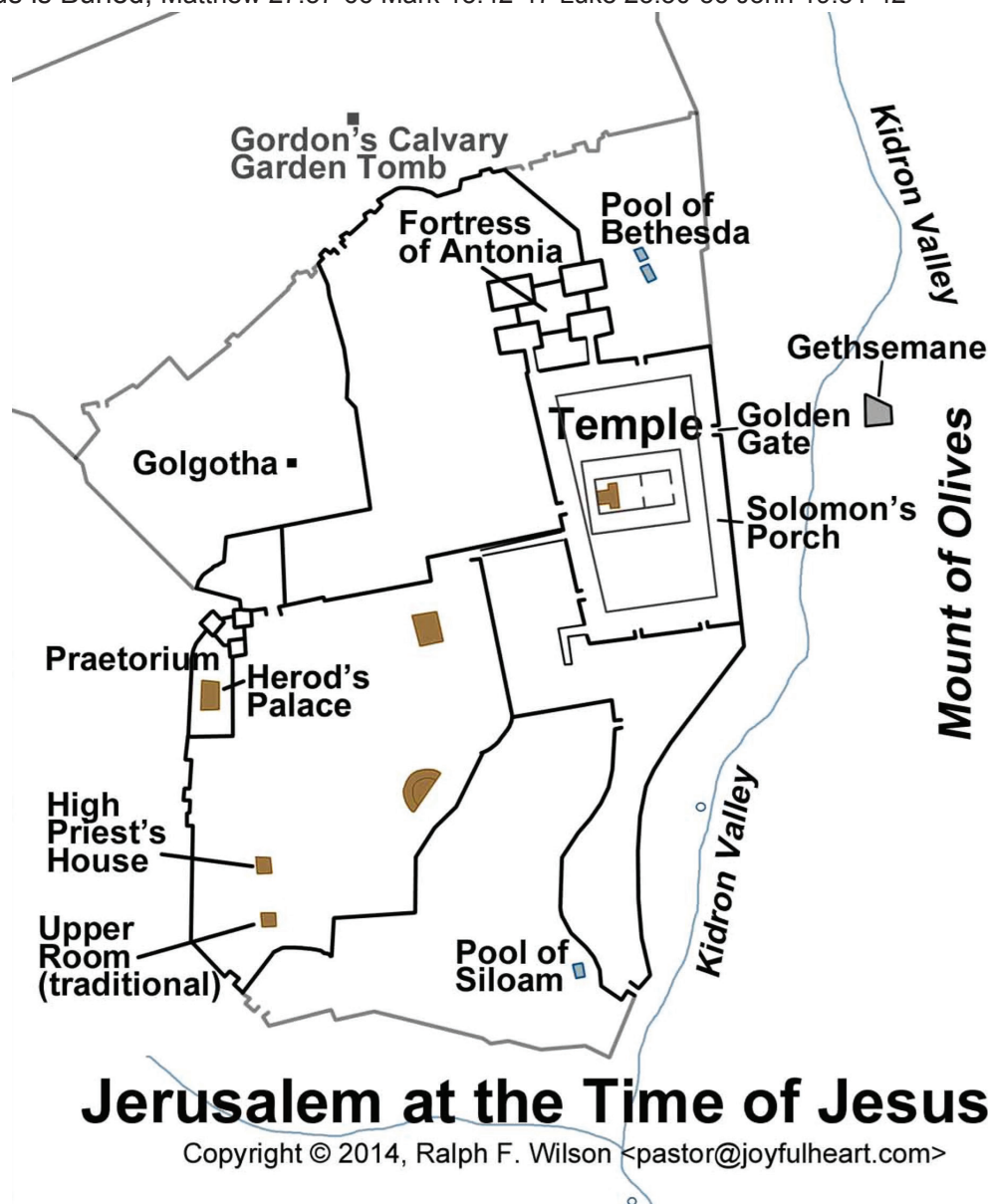
Jesus is Arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane Matthew 26:36-56 Mark 14:32-52 Luke 22:39-53 John 18:1-12

Jesus and the remaining 11 disciples walk about a mile to the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas brings a large number of Jewish Temple Guards and Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus. Nine men flee and are not heard of again until Sunday. John and Peter stay close by until Peter denies knowing Jesus three times as Jesus predicted. Only John is with Jesus at the crucifixion.

Devotional for Friday April 18, 2025, about Events on Friday April 1, AD 33

Another very busy day. Here are the events.

1. Jesus' Jewish Trial Before Caiaphas. Matthew 26:57-27:2 Mark 14:53-64 Luke 22:54-71 John 18:13-24
2. Judas Regrets, Matthew 27:3-10
3. Jesus' Roman Trial Before Pilate, Matthew 27:2,11-31 Mark 15:1-20 Luke 23:1-25 John 18:28-19:16
4. Jesus is Executed by Crucifixion, Matthew 27:31-56 Mark 15:21-41 Luke 23:26-49 John 19:16-30
5. Jesus is Buried, Matthew 27:57-66 Mark 15:42-47 Luke 23:50-56 John 19:31-42



Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus

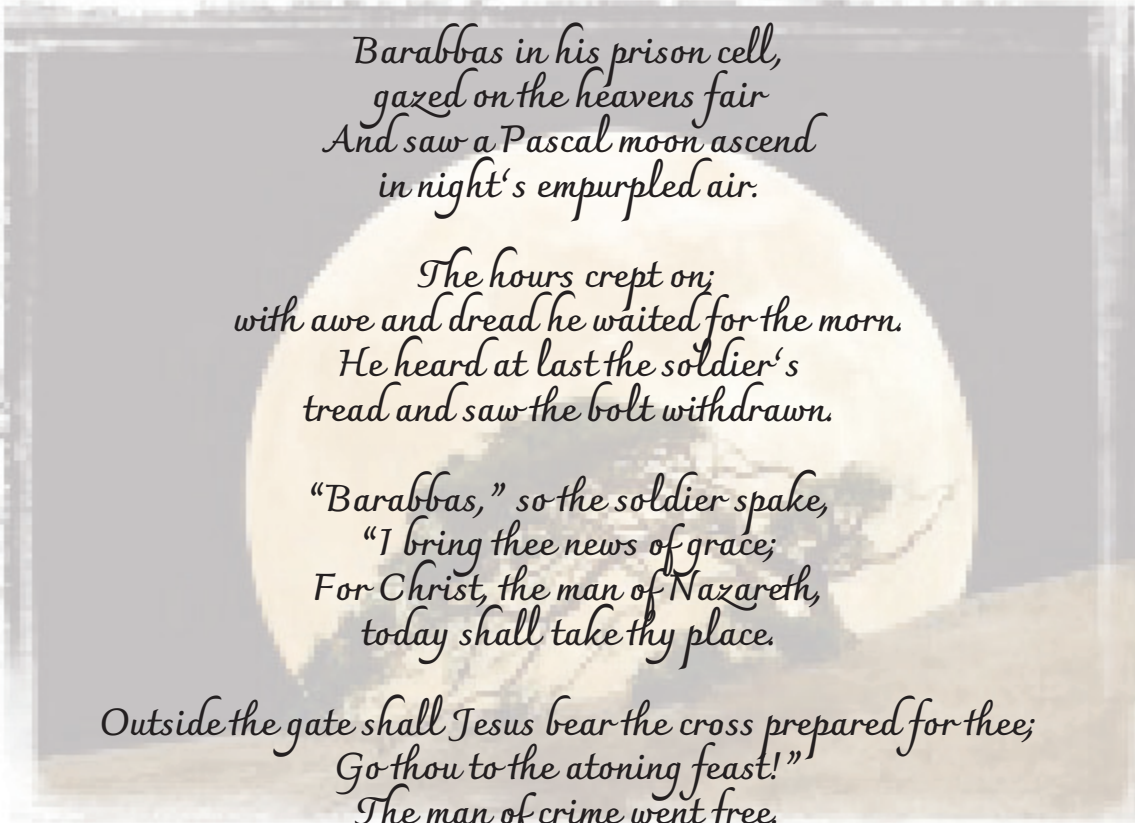
Copyright © 2014, Ralph F. Wilson <pastor@joyfulheart.com>

It was illegal for both Jewish and Roman courts to try people during the night. However, the situation is so desperate for the Jewish authorities that they force three Jewish trials and the Romans, trying to maintain civil order, interview Jesus three times concluding with Pilate's decision to appease the Jewish authorities and authorize the crucifixion. Jesus is placed on the cross by 9 am. God covers the sky in darkness from noon to 3 pm. Christ claims victory and dismisses His own spirit at 3 pm.

Most of the Jewish families in Jerusalem would be preparing for the Passover Meal to be celebrated that night. Hypocritically the Jewish religious authorities refuse to enter one of the Roman trials lest they be ceremonially unclean for the meal that night. This was also a reason to get the three men off of the crosses and buried before sundown. (It was both the start of the weekly Sabbath and a Holiday.).

For the Passover, the lamb was a sacrifice and therefore had to be slain at the Temple. The meat was then taken home to be cooked. By tradition, the Passover Lamb was selected and put on display for 3 ½ days to demonstrate that it was a “perfect, spotless lamb.” Jesus was on public display, not for 3 ½ days but for 3 ½ years. It was kept in the home so the family would be sad when it died. Exodus 12:46 says that no bones of the Passover Lamb were to be broken. Likewise, God protected Jesus’ bones. Passover and the next seven days of unleavened bread were both based on the Exodus. The blood of the lamb was placed on the lintel and doorposts of the home, making the sign of the cross. Paul tells us, “Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Yeast or leaven was a symbol of sin in the Bible. Jesus was sinless. Kosher matzo for Passover is pierced through (like a saltine cracker). So was Jesus. Kosher matzo is baked on racks that leave dark stripes. Jesus was whipped for us. Kosher matzo is baked until the surface blisters. Not only was Jesus physically afflicted, but when the sin of all the world was laid on His back and His Father turned away, that was the ultimate furnace of affliction for Jesus.

Pilate was a military man and therefore certainly harsh. His wife tried to deter him by relating her dream. He wrongly thought that washing his hands absolved him. He did try to substitute Barabbas for Jesus on the cross (giving the people the choice of which one could go free as a goodwill gesture at Passover.). Jesus was “The Son of the Father.” The name “Barabbas” in Aramaic means “A son of a father.” The fickle crowd was induced to call for the murderer Barabbas to go free!



*Barabbas in his prison cell,
gazed on the heavens fair
And saw a Pascal moon ascend
in night's empurpled air.*

*The hours crept on;
with awe and dread he waited for the morn.
He heard at last the soldier's
tread and saw the bolt withdrawn.*

*“Barabbas,” so the soldier spake,
“I bring thee news of grace;
For Christ, the man of Nazareth,
today shall take thy place.*

*Outside the gate shall Jesus bear the cross prepared for thee;
Go thou to the atoning feast!”
The man of crime went free.*

Perhaps the most significant interchange in the trials was Pilate’s question, “Why are you being tried?” Jesus answering, “For the sake of the truth.” And Pilate retorting, “Truth! What is truth!?!?”

Do you remember Jesus’ answer? He made none. He just stood there looking at Pilate, in effect saying, “It is me who stands before you.” (In Greek, the difference between “what is truth” and “who is truth” is only the letter “s” – ti versus tis.).

We can’t prove this, but strong Early Church Tradition indicates that Pilate eventually converted and became a leader in the early Church even writing about his experiences. (Others refer to the book but the book itself is lost.).

Devotional for Saturday April 19, 2025, about Events on Saturday April 2, AD 33 Burial

Nothing! Nothing recorded in the Bible happened on this Saturday!! So, we can just meditate on this verse:

John 12:24

"I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop."

Or, I can fill in some details from yesterday. Jesus's Seven Sayings on the Cross:

1. "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) This is a prayer of forgiveness for those who were crucifying him.
2. "I assure you: Today you will be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:43) Jesus says this to one of the criminals crucified beside him who asked Jesus to remember him.
3. "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." (John 19:26-27) Jesus entrusts the care of his mother Mary to the disciple John.
4. "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni ?" that is, " My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34) This is a quote from Psalm 22:1, expressing Jesus' anguish at having the sin of humanity laid on Him and the Father turning His back on His Son for the first and last time ever.
5. "I'm thirsty!" (John 19:28) This statement fulfills a prophecy from Psalm 69:21 and John says that Jesus purposely said this to fulfill the prophecy.
6. "It is finished." (John 19:30) This declares the completion of Jesus' earthly mission.
7. "Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit." (Luke 23:46) Jesus' final words before his death, quoting Psalm 31:5.

Unusual Events:

1. Darkness from noon to 3 pm: Thallus, a Gentile historian who wrote around AD 52, acknowledged this darkening of the sun as a factual event, but attempted to explain it away as an eclipse. This is recorded by Julius Africanus.
2. The Gospel of Peter, and The Acts of Pilate record similar references to the darkening of the sun during Jesus' crucifixion.
3. Earthquakes are mentioned both for the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ.
 - a. Matthew 27: 51-53 "Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was split in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had gone to their rest were raised. And they came out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many."
 - b. Why would God resurrect some other believes? Could it be because Resurrection Sunday was the Feast of Firstfruits? This is when a handful of newly harvested barley grain was given to the Lord as a thanksgiving for the full harvest to come. The word "Fruits" is plural, so, to fit the analogy, God raises multiple people! In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul calls Jesus the "Firstfruits from the dead."
 - c. The ripped curtain indicates that now we have full access into the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God Himself because our sins have been paid for.
 - d. The Talmud explains that there was an earthquake that caused a building stone to fall from the top of the Temple ripping the curtain.
4. Jesus was buried with a large amount of spices, such as would be used in a royal burial (2 Chron. 16:14).

5. Parallels between the original Jewish Holidays given in Leviticus 23-25 and the Life of Jesus:

- a. Sabbath: Jesus was the Lord of the Sabbath.
- b. Passover: Jesus was the Passover Lamb, dying on that very day in the calendar.
- c. Unleavened Bread: Jesus was buried the first day of this holiday. He was sinless.
- d. Firstfruits: Jesus resurrected on the very day of this holiday as a promise of the full resurrection harvest to come.
- e. Pentecost: It comes 50 days after Passover and celebrates the wheat harvest. Jewish people believe that God gave the Law of Moses on this day in the calendar and that David was born and died on this day in the calendar.
 - i. Wheat is the physical Staff of Life, and the Bible is the spiritual Staff of Life.
 - ii. The Law was replaced by the indwelling empowerment of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 at Pentecost.
 - iii. In Peter's sermon in Acts 2 he mentions King David and the greater son of David, Jesus Christ the Messiah.
- f. Feasts of Trumpets: Celebrates the Jewish New Year. Trumpets speak of gathering and moving out. Maybe speaks of the rapture of the Church and the plan to gather Israel once again during the Tribulation Period?
- g. Day of Atonement:
 - i. Actual birthday of Christ, He having been conceived on December 25?
 - ii. Start of the Tribulation Period.
 - iii. End of the Tribulation Period with the Second Coming of Christ (specifically so stated in Zechariah 12).
- h. Tabernacles: The harvest home festival like our Thanksgiving, only eight days long. Speaks of the joy and blessings of the Millennial Reign of Christ.
- i. Sabbatical Year: Let the land rest every seven years. Speaks of environmental care during the Millennial Reign of Christ.
- j. Jubilee: Farmland that has been sold (actually "leased") in the previous 50 years returned to the original families. Speaks of economic care during the Millennial reign of Christ.
- k. Hanukkah: This was added around 164 BC and is the "Feast of Dedication" mentioned in John 10. Celebrates the rededication of the Temple that had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - i. Daniel 12 says that at the end of the 70th Week of Daniel (The Tribulation Period) the person who makes it to an extra 30 days and then an additional 45 days will be blessed.
 - ii. What are these extra 75 days for?
 - 1. Sheep and Goats Judgment of Matthew 25 to have only the saved ("sheep") enter the kingdom?
 - 2. Quick clean-up and preparations for the Inauguration of Jesus as the King of the Millennial Kingdom?
 - iii. Of all the spans between any two holidays in the Jewish religious calendar, guess which two are exactly 75 days apart? The Day of Atonement to Hanukkah!

Devotional for Sunday April 20, 2025, about Events on Sunday April 3, AD 33

Key events:

1. Resurrection, Various Women, Peter and John at the Empty Tomb And Jesus Appears, Matthew 28:1-15 Mark 16:1-11 Luke 24:1-12 John 20:1-2
2. Jesus Appears to Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, Mark 16:12-13 Luke 24:13-35
3. Jesus Appears to the Disciples in Jerusalem Absent Thomas, Mark 16:14-18 Luke 24:36-49 John 20:19-23

One of the challenges with a Friday crucifixion is that the Bible says that Jesus will be “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40). So, it is argued that Friday/Saturday/Sunday are “three days” but Friday Night/Saturday Night are only two nights, so we need a Thursday crucifixion. But then that creates “four days” (Thursday/Friday/Saturday/Sunday) and “three nights” (Thursday/Friday/Saturday).

The resolution is in two grammatical practices in Hebrew.

1. A “day” = “Evening and Morning” (See creation week: Genesis 1:5 “God called the light ‘day,’ and He called the darkness ‘night.’ Evening came, and then morning: the first day.”)
2. Any part of a day is considered to be “one day.”
3. So, Jesus was in the heart of the earth for three days: a few hours on Friday, 24 hours on Saturday, a few hours on Sunday. That is called “three days,” and “three days” can also be referred to as “three days and three nights” based on Hebrew usage.

In the resurrection accounts it is a woman, Mary Magdalene, who is the first to discover that the tomb is empty. This makes sense because we have already witnessed the disciples’ cowardly behavior and the devotion of women in the last days of Jesus’ life. It also is a great testimony to the historical accuracy of the event. If this was an invented story there is no way that a Jewish author in the First Century would have a woman as the “testimony in the court of law” to give witness to the resurrection. In the Jewish legal system of the day, only men were trusted to testify to the truthfulness of matters.

There are many “Marys” in the Bible. Sometimes we do not have enough detail in the passage to know which one it is. In this case she is qualified as “Magdalene.” This was a place in Galilee. Here’s what we know about her:

1. John 19:25 “Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”

2. Luke 8:2 “And also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary, called Magdalene (seven demons had come out of her).”

Also note that in John 20 only Mary Magdalene is mentioned whereas in Matthew a second woman is mentioned and in Luke 24 and Mark 16:1 three women: “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so they could go and anoint Him.” This is not a contradiction. John (and all reporters and historians) leave details out to save space. It would only be a contradiction if John had said, “Only one woman came to the tomb.”

John tells the somewhat amusing story of the foot race between the younger John and the older Peter. John gets there first but is too timid to go into the tomb. Peter hustles right in and confirms that the grave clothes are there and empty. John then also enters and believes in the resurrection, admitting that despite Jesus’ teachings, none of the disciples understood about the death and resurrection of the Messiah. In recent years an unfortunate story has circulated about John 20:7 “The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself.”

It is claimed that in Jewish dinner customs if you were not done eating and were coming back to the table you would fold your napkin when leaving to indicate this. Since the King James Version refers to the head cloth as a “napkin” the claim then is that **“Jesus is coming back!”**

Please note:

a) a tomb is not a dinner table, and b) “napkin” is a poor 21st Century English word for “head cloth.”!!

In John it then relates how Mary Magdalene was also the first to meet Jesus. She falls at His feet and hangs on for dear life. Jesus says, “Don’t cling to Me,” Jesus told her, “for I have not yet ascended to the Father.” (John 20:17). Some have thought this meant that Jesus needed to make a trip to heaven immediately to place His shed blood in heaven or at least announce to the Father that the sacrifice had been made. This is not necessary. The physical blood of Jesus did not need to be stored for any reason. God the Father knows everything, so He did not need a special visit immediately. The Greek verb can be translated, “Do not keep on clinging to me” and is probably Jesus’ way of warning Mary that He cannot stay on the earth. For the next phase of God’s program, He had to go back to heaven and send the Holy Spirit in his place.

Next Jesus appears to the “Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus.” They were probably husband and wife since they invite Jesus into “their house” in Emmaus for a meal. Jesus approaches them from behind on the road and then, according to the dramatic Greek verb, asks them, “What are these words that you are flinging back and forth?” (Luke 24:17). They explain their heartbreak over the crucifixion. Jesus then starts with Moses and all the prophets explaining how these things had been predicted. Notice that Jewish people have always considered Moses to be a “prophet” as well as the “law giver.” Later the two disciples comment over the “heart burn” they received while hearing the words of Jesus! Soberingly, Jesus rebukes them for not believing their Bibles: “He said to them, ‘How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken!’” (Luke 24:25).

There is an important note in Luke 24:34 **“The Lord has certainly been raised, and has appeared to Simon!”** This is not mentioned anywhere else but appears to indicate that on resurrection day Jesus first talked to Mary Magdalene and then had a private audience with Peter, probably to give Peter a chance to apologize for his denial. Then that night, he appears to all except Thomas who then indicates he won’t believe until he can place his hands into Jesus’ wounds. Jesus gives Thomas that opportunity eight days later.

The “Ironical Tragedy” of the Life of Christ, which is resolved in the resurrection:
“Although virtuous, He suffered all possible indignities; majestic, **He died in disgrace; powerful, He expired in weakness**. He claimed to possess the water of life but died thirsty; to be the light of the world, but died in darkness; to be the good shepherd, but died in the fangs of wolves; to be the truth, but executed as an imposter; to be life itself, but He died quicker than the average crucifixion victim.

The greatest example of righteousness the world had ever seen became a helpless victim of evil!” Merrill Tenney, John, p. 52.

“And then came Sunday.” And the world has never and will never recover!



Bibliography

1. American Bible Society Maps
2. Merrill Tenney, John
3. A Harmony of the Four Gospels by Robert M. Sutherland
 - a. Free but with Greek and English verses: <https://ebible.org/eng-web/helps/ParallelGospels.pdf>
 - b. Pay with just English: A Four-column Parallel and Chronological Harmony of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John: Sutherland, Robert M.: 9781698701745: Amazon.com: Books

