



HOLY WEEK

AN 8-DAY GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE
POWER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY WEEK



WELCOME

This guide will lead you through a daily experience with King Jesus as you walk alongside Him on His journey into Jerusalem to His divine destiny on a cross, and His defeat of Satan, sin, and death through His resurrection. This last week in Jesus' life was the escalation of the meta-narrative of God's Word. It is through Jesus that Yahweh is restoring Eden and creating family. All the Law, Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms point to this defining moment of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Luke 24:44, John 1:29).

God has prescribed patterns for us to follow through the Jewish feasts and Kingdom calendar. There is power in these patterns. The Jewish feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits are the structure for Holy Week. Jesus was crucified on the eve of Passover, and He was resurrected on First Fruits. As you enter Holy Week, our prayer is that you will encounter Jesus our King in fresh, miraculous, and life-giving ways.

PALM SUNDAY

DAY ONE

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Matthew 21:1-11 (ESV)

BACKGROUND:

Jewish people are pouring into Jerusalem for the annual observance of Passover. It is a time of remembrance of God's liberation of His people from their slavery in Egypt. In the Exodus event, a perfect lamb without blemish or defect was selected and sacrificed (Exodus 12:5). The blood of the lamb was applied to the doorframes of the houses so that the destroyer would pass over each home. The judgement of God fell upon all the homes that had not applied the blood of the lamb. Centuries later, the selection of a perfect lamb remained at the center of the ongoing Passover celebration of the people of God.

All over Israel, travelers trekked to the city to make preparation for Passover. Jesus triumphantly enters into Jerusalem on the Sunday known as Palm Sunday. This is the first day of the Holy Week. Up until this moment, Jesus had encouraged His followers to keep His messianic identity a secret (Matthew 16:20). Jesus knew it was time to let the whole world know, especially Jerusalem, that their long-awaited Messiah was here. Jesus didn't sneak quietly into Jerusalem, but he also didn't arrive in the usual way that a king would enter a city. A conquering king would typically come riding in on a horse.

Jesus rode into the city on a donkey fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, that their king would come "gentle and riding on a donkey."

Riding in on a donkey was a symbol of peace. As God's people streamed into Jerusalem from Galilee to celebrate Passover, they were singing the pilgrim Psalms, Psalm 113-118. They were shouting and singing the Hebrew term "hoshiya na" which in English is translated "hosanna". They were singing and shouting "save now" from Psalm 118:25-26. The crowds laying down clothes were reminiscent of how King Jehu was received in 2 Kings 9:13. In a scene rich in symbolism, the Messiah, the son of David, enters Jerusalem to bring salvation to His people. Jesus is the king of Israel, and the kingdom He is inaugurating will bring peace to all the nations and spread from sea to sea. The book of Revelation pictures the final fulfillment of Palm Sunday in the age to come like this:

I looked and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"
(Revelation 7:9,10)

REFLECTION:

Praise God for the triumph of the cross! Jesus defeated Satan, sin, and death on the cross. Because of the cross, we can walk in victory. 2 Corinthians 2:14 reminds us,

"But thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ."

Where in your life do you need to see God triumph? Believe God for victory in this area of your life.

PRAYER:

Jesus, we worship You as the perfect Lamb of God that was slain so that our sins could be forgiven. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. We praise You! Because You won the victory, we can walk in victory every day of our lives.

HOLY MONDAY

DAY TWO

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it. 15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 And when evening came they went out of the city.

Mark 11:12-19 (ESV)

BACKGROUND:

On the Monday of Holy Week, the following events occur:

- Jesus curses the fig tree on the way to Jerusalem from Bethany.
- Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.
- Jesus cleanses the temple.

Jesus had frequent conflicts with the Pharisees, but the wealthy, aristocratic Sadducees who controlled the temple did not view this rural religious figure as a threat that merited much of their attention. However, this changed dramatically when Jesus impacted their business by cleansing the temple. He directly attacked their business, shutting it down and claiming the temple for God. Specifically for the Gentiles, there was an outer court of the temple that surrounded the inner sacred courts of the temple. Many Jews from all over Israel and the world made pilgrimages to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and pay their temple taxes (Exodus 30:12-16). These pilgrims would need to purchase animals for sacrifice, and exchange their Roman or Greek forms of money for the accepted Jewish currency for the temple tax. The outer court of the Gentiles had become a market where exorbitant fees were being charged for purchasing animals and for currency exchange. Jesus escalates the conflict with the religious leaders by directly challenging the abuses and abomination taking place in the temple. He confronts their sin by bringing to their remembrance Jeremiah 7:11 and Isaiah 56:7, that the temple is to be a place of prayer. Jesus claims authority over the temple and the Sadducees are threatened.

REFLECTION:

Thank God for the fact that He doesn't dwell in a temple any more. He dwells in you. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. He wants to reign and rule in your life. Just as Jesus had to cleanse the temple, so we have to do some house cleaning in our life so that God can reign and rule in us. Is there anything in your heart that needs to be cleaned out or kicked out so that God can have first place? Anything that blocks the reign and rule of God in our lives must go!

PRAYER:

Holy Spirit, have your way in my life. I step off the throne and invite You to take your rightful place on the throne of my heart. If there is anything blocking my relationship with You, reveal it to me, and I will repent.



HOLY TUESDAY

DAY THREE

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” 24 Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” 27 So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.”

And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things... 33 “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country. 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants[a] to the tenants to get his fruit. 35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ 39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” 41 They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.” 42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. 46 And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

BACKGROUND:

On Tuesday, the following events took place:

- Jesus finds the fig tree withered and teaches on faith.
- Jesus teaches in the temple and its precincts, and He confounds and pronounces woes on the religious leaders.
- Jesus leaves Jerusalem giving the Olivet Discourse on the way back to Bethany.
- Judas bargains with the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus.

After His showdown with the Sadducees on Monday, you might expect Jesus to lay low on Tuesday to let the storm blow over; but instead, Jesus shows back up at the temple on Tuesday and continues His confrontation with the religious leaders. Tangle with these dudes, and you could find yourself dead in days.

REFLECTION:

Who has the final word? Jesus does. He is saying, “I am Lord of all.” This day is about surrender and submission to the One who has the final say.

PRAYER:

Jesus, I surrender my life to You as the Sovereign King of my life. You just say the word, and I’ll do what You say. Help me to be sensitive to Your voice and to hear the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

DAY FOUR

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Matthew 26:14-16

BACKGROUND:

On Wednesday, the following events took place:

- There is no record of Jesus' activity on Wednesday in the Gospels, but there was much activity as Jesus prepares for the Last Supper, and Judas and the Sanhedrin prepare for Jesus' arrest.
- Jesus remains in Bethany throughout the day and night.

What appears to be a relatively quiet day during Holy Week was really very action packed. Kingdoms were in conflict, and spiritual wars were being waged in the heavenly places. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve and a close follower of

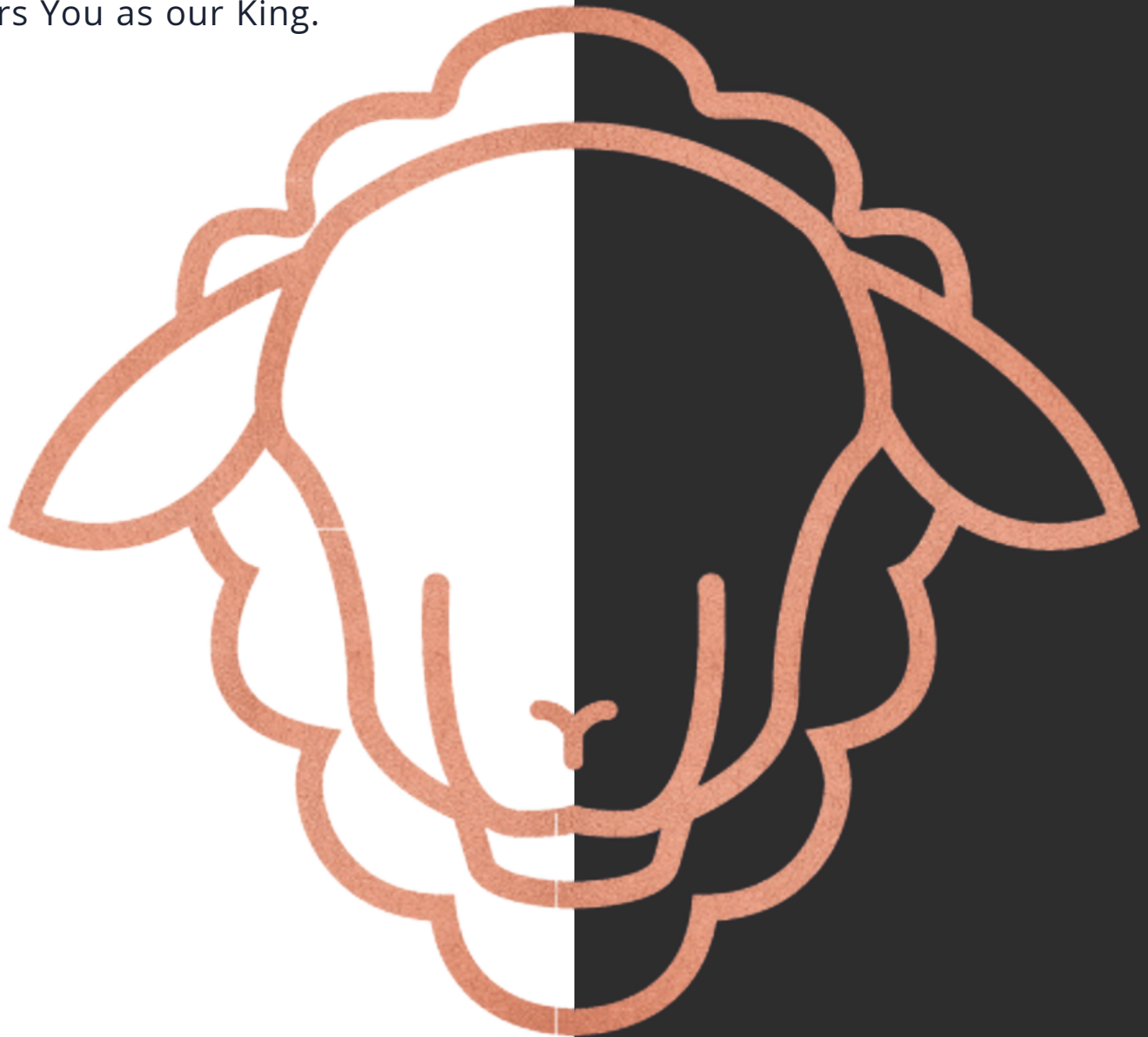
Jesus, was at the center of the conflict. According to Matthew 26:4, the religious leaders were plotting to arrest and kill Jesus. Jesus was viewed as a threat and a problem that had to be solved, but they had a dilemma. Passover was approaching, and Jesus was popular and gathering a larger and larger following. They knew it would be next to impossible to arrest Jesus quietly without creating a commotion and an uproar in the crowds. Jesus knew what was brewing. He was well aware of Judas' deception. He was not caught off guard for one moment and was a willing sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Judas became a willing accomplice in an evil plot to kill Jesus. Up until this point in the story, Judas had been mostly a non-factor. He lurked in the shadows. Now he steps front and center into the spotlight, yet he is no hero. He is a betrayer. Judas cuts a deal with Jesus' enemies. For a few dollars, Judas was unfaithful; essentially, Judas betrayed Jesus over money. Judas was fed up and took his future into his own hands. Judas was a sellout, and he cashed out on Christ. Here we see a prime example that you can't serve both God and money at the same time (Matthew 6:24).

REFLECTION:

Why would a disciple who had given up so much to follow Jesus later bail out on Jesus and betray Him? Things probably had not worked out the way Judas had hoped. He was probably disappointed and discouraged that the kingdom wasn't coming fast enough for him, and reigning and ruling didn't look like a reality for him (Matthew 19:28-29). We are most vulnerable when our worlds are falling apart or not working like we want. It is in those times that we can either choose to lean in and trust God or turn away from Him. This also includes trusting God with our money. We can't serve both God and money. Unlike Judas, we have to choose to put God first and allow Him to be the Lord of our finances.

PRAYER:

Give us strength to be faithful to You, Lord Jesus, in all areas, including our finances. Even when times are tough and our faith grows weak and weary, help us to hold tight to You. You are faithful Jesus, even when we are faithless. You will never betray us. Forgive us for the times we have betrayed You. Forgive us for the times that we have chosen to love money over You. Help us to prioritize our lives and our finances in the order that You have created; the order that honors You as our King.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

DAY FIVE

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,[a] but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,[d] ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ 19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” 21 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. 23 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side,[e] 24 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus[f] of whom he was speaking. 25 So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” 26 Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So, when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” 28 Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 29 Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. 30 So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

John 13:1-30

BACKGROUND:

On the Thursday of Holy Week, the following events occur:

- Peter and John are sent to make preparation for a Passover meal.
- After sunset, Jesus eats a meal with the twelve disciples and washes their feet.
- Judas departs to betray Jesus. The Lord's Supper is instituted.
- Jesus goes to the garden of Gethsemane to pray.
- Judas betrays Jesus.
- The Sanhedrin arrests Jesus.
- Jesus is taken to the house of the High Priest as the Sanhedrin is convened.
- Peter betrays Jesus.

The term Maundy comes from the Latin term "mandatum" from which we get our English term "mandate." Jesus gave His disciples a mandate or a command to follow His example in washing feet (John 13:14-15). He not only mandated service, but also gave them a new mandate to love one another as He loved them (John 13:34-35). Love for Jesus is a verb, an action. Actions speak louder than words. As Bob Goff says, "Love does!"

REFLECTION:

Remembering is important. God gave His people the Passover feast to remember how God saved them, delivered them from Egypt, and liberated them from slavery. Through His last supper with His disciples, Jesus reinterprets Passover. Dr. Rodney Reeves says, "Jesus used food to make his point" about the meaning of His death. He ate His last dinner with those who would deny and disown Him. That's what love does. It forgives, and it serves, and it sacrifices.

PRAYER:

Jesus, thank You for being my passover lamb and forgiving my sins. I see what You did for me, and I am so thankful for Your love poured out on a cross. I am a servant called to serve others just as You have served me.

GOOD FRIDAY

DAY SIX

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 42 "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many . 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” 55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Matthew 27:32-56



BACKGROUND:

On Good Friday the following events occurred:

- Jesus is put on trial six times: before Annas, before Caiaphas, before the Sanhedrin, before Herod, and before Pilate.
- Judas hangs himself.
- Jesus bears His cross to the gate north of the city of Jerusalem and is crucified on a hill called Golgotha around 9:00 a.m.
- Jesus dies around 3:00 p.m.
- The Veil in the temple is torn.
- Passover lambs are slain in the temple.
- Jesus is buried by sundown.

It is important to remember that Passover/Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday. The Jewish leaders didn't want Jesus crucified on Passover/Sabbath or his body to be on the cross on Passover/Sabbath. Jesus was crucified on a hill called Golgotha, which in Aramaic means "the Place of the Skull." This was not a place of skulls, a cemetery, or a place of execution but a hill outside the walls of Jerusalem that in some way resembled a skull. The Romans mocked Jesus by hanging a sign above Him that read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Romans used crucifixion as a deterrent to rebellion. It was an excruciating, horrific form of death.

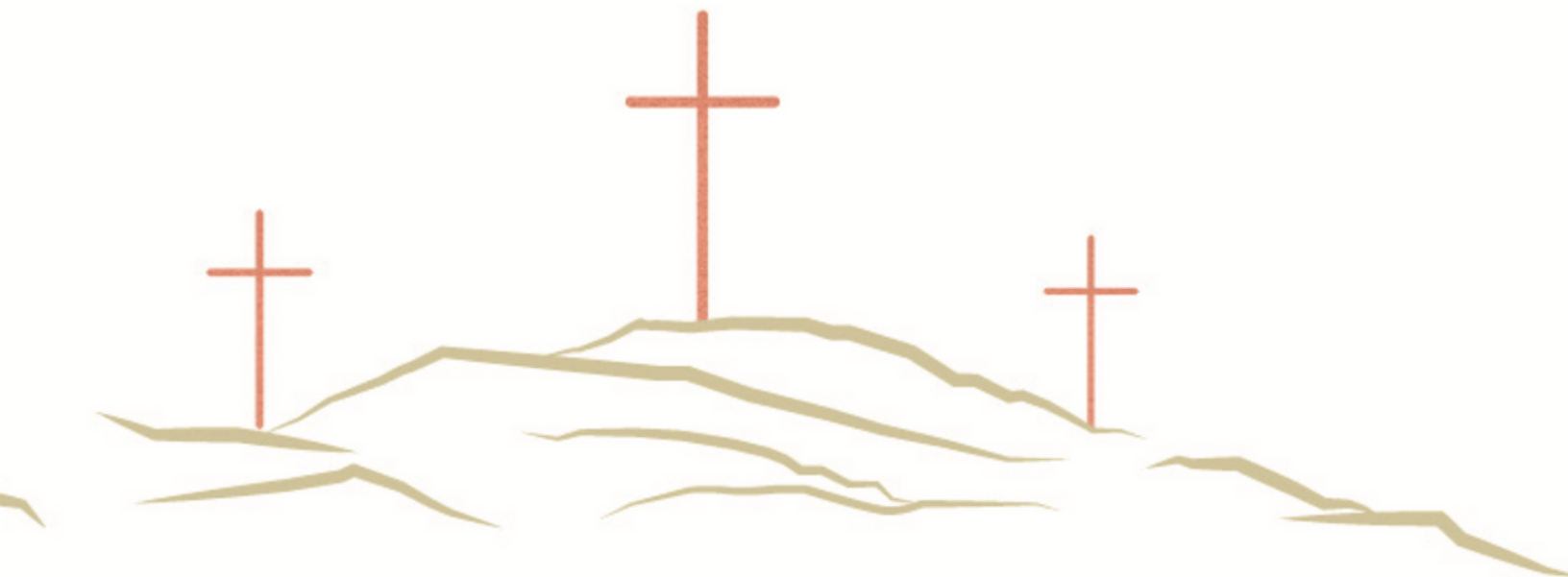
During crucifixion, the lungs fill up with water, and the person is asphyxiated. In order to further humiliate Jesus, He was crucified next to two common criminals. Jesus was taunted on the cross, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." He did not lack the power to accomplish His deliverance, but He submitted to the will of the Father out of His love for us. We learn from Mark's account that darkness fell over the land in the middle of the day from the sixth to the ninth hour (12-3pm). Some of the saddest and most upsetting words ever spoken are the Son saying to His Father, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" For the first time in all eternity, the Son was separated from His Father. No one took Jesus' life. He was in complete control of His life, and He determined when He would give up His spirit (John 10:18).

REFLECTION:

Have you ever thought about what is so good about “Good Friday”? Wouldn’t it be “Bad Friday” when a good person, the best person who has ever lived and has done nothing wrong, is brutally beaten, abused, and killed? As dark and brutal as the day was, it was a “Good Friday” for mankind because Jesus’ sacrifice redeemed us and made it possible for us to be restored to our Heavenly Father. God the Father sent His Son, the perfect Lamb of God to satisfy the justice and judgment of God (John 3:36).

PRAYER:

Jesus, our hearts are heavy. We remember Your pain and suffering. You paid a heavy price. Thank You for Your sacrifice. Thank You for willingly paying the price for our sin and shame. By Your wounds, we have been healed. Through Your sacrifice, we have been set free from sin. Lamb of God slain for us, we love and worship You.



HOLY SATURDAY

DAY SEVEN

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. 62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ 64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard[a] of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

Matthew 27:57-66

BACKGROUND:

On Saturday of holy week, the following events occurred:

- At the request of Jewish leaders, Pilate sets a seal on the tomb of Jesus and stations Roman guards around the tomb.

Just as Jesus predicted, His disciples were scattered like scared children. Those He had spent the most time preparing failed when put under pressure. Every single disciple fell away and failed this critical exam given by their teacher, their mentor, and their master. Yet, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph took a huge risk to claim Jesus' body. If he claimed the body, would he be accused of being one of Jesus' followers and meet the same fate as Jesus? A few of the women who followed Jesus stayed with Him caring for His body.

The religious leaders remembered that Jesus said He would rise again. They were concerned that His disciples might try to steal His body to make it look like He had resurrected just as He had foretold. This would be a nightmare for these religious leaders. The people might believe the hoax, so they took precautions to prevent this fraud from being perpetrated. They placed guards in front of the tomb to make sure no one stole the body. There would be no fake resurrections on their watch.

They would put this "would be" Messiah in His place and make sure He stayed in the grave. The placing of the guards in front of the tomb is one of the greatest proofs of the resurrection's validity. The Jews and the Romans would have produced a body if they could have. They guarded the body closely, but they could not prevent His resurrection.

REFLECTION:

On the Saturday of Holy Week, it appeared as if Jesus had lost. It looked like a dark day of defeat. The disciples deserted Him. Jesus was dead and buried in the grave. We all have moments in our lives when it looks like all hope is gone. Our hope should never be in our circumstances but in the One who overcame all of the obstacles that Satan, sin, and death could throw at Him. What looks like a "setback" may just be a "setup" for God to do something great. We can learn a lot from the unbelievers on this Saturday. Always remember the promises of God!

PRAYER:

Jesus, You are my hope. I trust in Your promises despite what my circumstances may say or look like! The grave can't hold You, and I won't let my circumstances or situation hold me down either.



EASTER SUNDAY

DAY EIGHT

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Matthew 28:1-10

REFLECTION:

To understand the resurrection of Jesus, we need to see how His resurrection is connected to the feasts in Israel. There is power in the patterns established by God. In Leviticus 23:4-14, the nation of Israel is given specific instructions on when and how they are to observe Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits, which all take place during Holy Week. The First Fruits offering is to take place on the day after the sabbath of Passover. Therefore, during Holy Week, the Passover and Sabbath were the same day from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. Jesus is resurrected on Sunday, which is the first day after the Sabbath of Holy Week. Jesus' resurrection takes place on the Feast of First Fruits.

At this festival, the Israelites offered the very first sheaf of the harvest and were not allowed to eat anything from the crop until they gave its initial portion to the Lord. This required a great deal of faith on the part of the Israelites as they would be giving the offering of first fruits at a time when not much was ready to be harvested. They had to trust that God would indeed provide the fullness of grain that had yet to come forth, something that from a human perspective was far from certain given the people's utter dependence on the right amount of rainfall and so forth to provide the best crop.

The Apostle Paul sees the connection between the Feast of First Fruits and Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 Paul observes, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

His resurrection fulfilled the Feast of First Fruits. Just as the first fruits offered to God under the old covenant anticipated the fuller harvest to come, the resurrection of Jesus anticipates the bodily resurrection of His people first promised under the old covenant (Job 19:25-27).

REFLECTION:

Resurrection is proof of the power and promises of God. Jesus did exactly what He said He would do. There is nothing too difficult for our God. Resurrection Sunday is all about new beginnings and fresh starts. Because the tomb is empty, sin and death have been conquered. We are forgiven, washed by the blood of the Lamb, and pure and white as snow. We are whole and complete, lacking nothing. We have resurrection life. Today is a day of hope and renewal because the same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in us.

PRAYER:

Jesus, we celebrate Your greatness. The grave could not hold You. You paid the price for my sin and set me free from the powers of sin and darkness. You have been so good and so generous to me, Jesus. Help me to be generous. Give me the eyes to see You, the humility to receive You, and the strength to follow You every day of my life with purpose and passion worthy of your love and sacrifice. I want to live in the light of Your incredible love and forgiveness. Show me how to share Your love and good news with others.

HOLY WEEK

**AN 8-DAY GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE
POWER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY WEEK**