

Preface

This short booklet is an attempt to weave together the Gospel accounts of our Lord's final week, day-by-day, starting from the Sunday before His death (Palm Sunday) and ending with the Sunday of His resurrection from the dead, with the greatest accuracy I could manage.

Many Christians, from as early as the second century, have attempted to do the same thing. They will be far more thorough, and I am sure, more accurate. I would recommend the following;

- *"Diatessaron"* (meaning 'out of four') by Tatian (2nd century AD).
- *"A Harmony of the Three Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke"* by John Calvin (1509-1564).
- *"The Harmony of the Gospels"* by Loraine Boettner (1901-1990).
- *"The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah"* by Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889).
- Or, more recently, *"The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Week of the Most Important Person Who Ever Lived"* by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

For a discussion, and arguments in favour of the case that our Lord was crucified on Friday, April 3, AD 33, see *"The date of Jesus' Crucifixion,"* in the ESV Study Bible.

The Apostle Paul's words echo through every age:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- 1 Cor. 1:18

My prayer is that in reading this booklet, God would bless you with a true, saving knowledge of His Son. May you know the power of God for salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

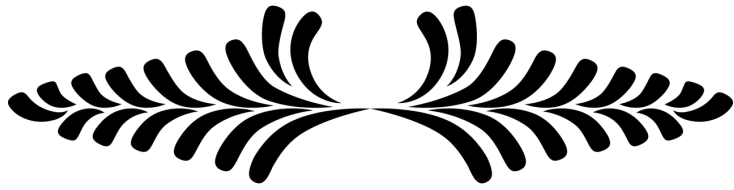
God bless,
Graham Barnes

*I take, O cross, thy shadow
for my abiding place:
I ask no other sunshine than
the sunshine of His face;
content to let the world go by,
to know no gain nor loss;
my sinful self my only shame,
my glory all the cross.*

- Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane (1830-1869)

Contents Page

Day	Chapter		Page No.
Sunday	1	The King arrives in Jerusalem	5
Monday	2	The King cleanses the temple	14
Tuesday	3	The King teaches in the temple	19
Wednesday	4	Plotting against the King	28
<i>People in the Gospels: Mary of Bethany</i>			31
Thursday – part 1	5	The King is a servant	34
Thursday – part 2	6	The King is betrayed	40
<i>People in the Gospels: Judas Iscariot</i>			46
Thursday – part 3	7	The King with His disciples	49
Thursday – part 4	8	The King submits to death	55
Friday – part 1	9	The King on trial before the Jewish authorities	61
<i>People in the Gospels: Simon Peter</i>			68
Friday – part 2	10	The King on trial before the Roman authorities	71
Friday – part 3	11	The King walks to His death	81
<i>People in the Gospels: Pontius Pilate</i>			86
Friday – part 4	12	The King dies	89
Friday – part 5	13	The King is buried	99
Saturday	14	The day of rest	106
Sunday – part 1	15	The King is risen forever	111
<i>People in the Gospels: Mary Magdalene</i>			123
Sunday – part 2	16	The King proves Himself	126
Postscript			135



1.

Sunday – The King arrives in Jerusalem

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
drawn from Emanuel's veins,
and sinners plunged beneath that flood,
lose all their guilty stains.*

– William Cowper

The message of the cross tells of Christ glorified (John 12:23). A Christian must confess with the Apostle Paul: *"far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation (Gal. 6:14)."*

The Lord Jesus remains risen today; alive forevermore! He ever lives to intercede on behalf of His people at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34), and all our hope is in Him. In God's plan of redemption, it was necessary for the Son to first become man, live a sinless life, then die in the place of sinners. The resurrection only makes sense in light of His death. The following recounts His entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His death.

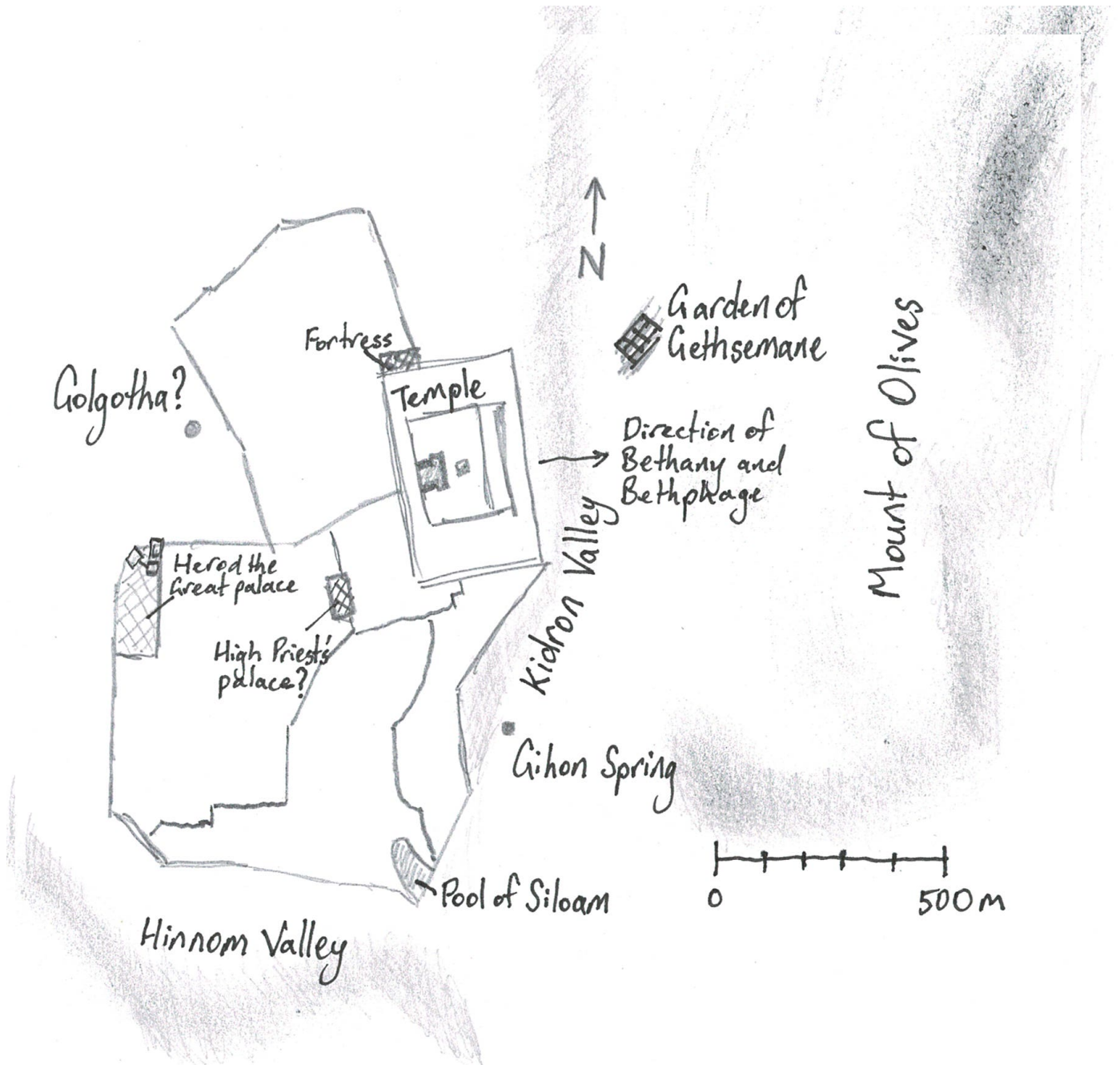
Preparing the Donkeys

(Matthew 21:1-7; Mark 11:1-7; Luke 19:28-36)

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 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.

- Matthew 21:1-2

In Jesus' time, there were at least five main roads leading into the city of Jerusalem. Jesus approached the city from the east, having just been in Jericho (see Luke 19:1), 25km east of the city. Jericho is 258 metres below sea level. The road to Jerusalem rises to an altitude of over 800 metres above sea level in the Mount of Olives, and then descends to Jerusalem, which sits at an altitude of 740 metres above sea level.



A sketch of Jerusalem at the time of the Lord Jesus. Jesus approached Jerusalem from Mount Olives, descending the Kidron Valley, into the city.

Bethphage ("house of unripe figs") and Bethany ("house of figs"; see Mark 11:1). Bethany was on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives,

whilst Bethphage was possibly on the ridge of the mountain. From here, thousands of pilgrims would begin their final decent into Jerusalem for the annual Jewish feast of Passover. The ancient historian Josephus says that 3 million people gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover in AD 65 (*Jewish War 2.14.3*).

Everything shows that Jesus Christ is in control of the coming events. As they approached Bethphage, Jesus asked two of His disciples to go ahead of them into the village. He told them exactly what they would find: a donkey and her colt. If anyone asked them what they were doing, they were simply to say, "*the Lord needs them* (Matt. 21:3)." The donkeys would be used for His entry into Jerusalem. He would ride the young colt, and presumably, its mother would help calm the young animal. The disciples obeyed, bringing the donkeys to our Lord (Matt. 21:6).

The King enters Jerusalem

(Matthew 21:8-11; Mark 11:8-10; Luke 19:37-38; John 12:12-16)

And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

- Mark 11:7-10

Riding an unriden colt into Jerusalem was a symbolic way for Jesus to announce that He was God's king. The Scriptures anticipated this: "*Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey* (Zech. 9:9; see Matt. 21:5)."

As Jesus descended the Mount of Olives towards Jerusalem, some people lay their cloaks on the road as a sign of their submission to Jesus as their king. In the days of Jehu, the people had done a similar thing,

laying their garments under him when he was made king of Israel (see 2 Kings 9:13). The people also laid palm branches before Jesus as a symbol of victory.

The people cried out, "*Hosanna*," which means, "O save! (Matt. 21:9; see Psalm 118:25)" The crowd understood that Jesus is the promised Messiah of King David's family line. The royal pathway was now prepared for God's king. Caesar is not King; Christ Jesus is!

Opposition and weeping over the city

(Luke 19:39-44; John 12:17-19)

And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

- Luke 19:39-42

The crowd that gathered around Jesus was not an ignorant mob. Rather, they had heard from eyewitnesses how Jesus had raised Lazarus to life (John 12:17-18). Yet, not everyone welcomed Him. Having observed all that was happening – and knowing its symbolic meaning – the hostility of some of the Pharisees began to grow.

The Pharisees were a group who arose in the centuries before Christ Jesus. They specialized in teaching and applying religious law to all aspects of life, including their own traditions. They confronted Jesus for not silencing the crowd. But this was His coronation and Jesus said that it was impossible to stop this moment from happening, for if the disciples were silent, the stones would sing for their Creator and King!

As Jesus approached Jerusalem as God's king, His thoughts turned to the city. Jerusalem was the city that the LORD loved. The Psalms said,

*Glorious things of you are spoken,
O city of God.*

- Psalm 87:3

Yet, the sight of Jerusalem in the distance caused a stirring of emotion within Jesus, and He wept over her. *What caused His tears?* Jerusalem – *the city of peace* – had rejected Him, and therefore, they had rejected peace and salvation. Their hard hearts meant that God hid the truth from them (Luke 19:42; see Rom. 1:28). In addition, Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed: “*your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you* (Luke 19:43-44).” This happened when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. It was God’s judgment upon Jerusalem for rejecting His king. If only they had hearts of flesh instead of stone.

Greeks seeking Jesus and Jesus predicts His death (John 12:20-28)

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

- John 12:20-24

At this point, whether Jesus was inside the city gates or still outside the gates, some visiting Greeks came with a request to see Him. It is significant that these Greeks seek Jesus, whilst the Pharisees opposed Him. Probably, they were “God-fearing” Gentiles, like Cornelius (see Acts 10:1-22). They had come to worship the God of Israel during Passover, who, in truth, is God of the world.

In response to their request to “see” Him, Jesus speaks to them about His death. They will “see” Him only when they understand the cross. There, the “*Son of Man*” would be glorified (John 12:23). *How was Jesus glorified in His death?* To a dying world, death seems empty and pointless, but Christ’s death would result in much fruit for God: sinners

rescued by His blood (John 12:23-24). The grain of wheat must fall to the earth if others are to live. Jesus then promises: *"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life (John 12:25)."*

A Voice from Heaven **(John 12:29-36)**

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

- John 12:27-30

There are three times recorded in the Gospels when God the Father spoke audibly from heaven;

- First, at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22).
- Second, at Jesus' transfiguration (Luke 9:35).
- Third, as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time (John 12:28).

On the first two occasions, the Father affirmed Christ Jesus as His Son. Now on the eve of His death, the Father affirmed Jesus' glory both now and in the future. We must never forget that the cross troubled Jesus – *"now is my soul troubled (John 12:27)."* Yet, the Father guaranteed the outcome – *glory* - and this must have strengthened Jesus the Son for what He was about to face.

Jesus goes to the Temple **(Matthew 21:14-17; Mark 11:11)**

And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

It was neither palaces nor governors that brought Christ Jesus to Jerusalem, but His Father's house: the temple. The temple was the centre of worship for the True and Living God. It was the place of daily sacrifice, where sin was forgiven by the blood of atonement. In the past, God's glory had filled the temple, so much so that the priests could not stand to minister (1 Kings 8:10-11). Yet, God's glory had also departed from the temple in the days of Ezekiel (Ez. 10:15-19).

What did Jesus think as He watched people at the temple that Sunday evening?

Did Jesus think about how He is the true Temple (John 2:19)?

Did He think about how His sacrifice on the cross would fulfil all the Old Testament sacrifices (Heb. 10:11-14)?

Typically, the Jewish date of Nisan 10 (i.e. the tenth day of the first month, Nisan, of the Jewish calendar) was the day when each family in Jerusalem would select a lamb or goat to be eaten (see Ex. 12:3). Therefore, as Jesus entered Jerusalem on the Sunday, we can assume that at some point an animal was chosen. The animal would be kept until it was slaughtered four days later, Nisan 14, during Passover. The sacrifice was to be a male, one-year old and without blemish (Ex. 12:5). How appropriate that as Jesus looked around the temple on that Sunday evening, the Passover lamb was being chosen.

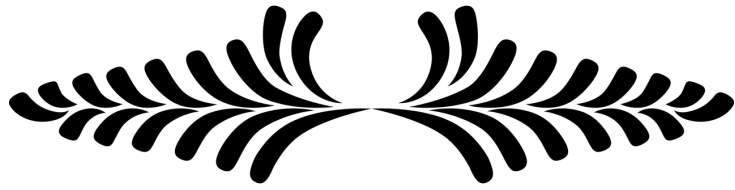
Peter reminds us that we have been ransomed from futile living, through the precious blood of Christ, "*a lamb without blemish or spot* (1 Peter 1:19)." Nothing in Christ is futile. Our sinfulness took Him to old Jerusalem, but His sinlessness will take us to the New Jerusalem.

Each evening of the Passion Week, Jesus seems to have stayed at Bethany, about 3 kilometres from Jerusalem. It was the hometown of his friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Therefore, having observed the temple on the Sunday, Jesus and His disciples returned to Bethany. Surely, in His mind, He was preparing for the next day's encounters.

Have you ever thought about what a difficult journey it must have been for our Lord as He descended the mountain towards Jerusalem? He rightly receives the people's praise, knowing that they did not understand the kind of king that He was. He is a king whose kingdom is spiritual and eternal. He is a king who came not to dominate the political realm, but to bear our griefs, carry our sorrows and give His life to pay the penalty that our sin deserves (Is. 53:4-5). Well may we say, "Hosanna!"

*Ride on, ride on in majesty
as all the crowds 'Hosanna' cry:
through waving branches slowly ride,
O Saviour, to be crucified.*

- Henry Milman (1791-1868)



2.

Monday – The King cleanses the temple

*I praise You Lord for cleansing me from sin.
Fulfil Your Word and make me pure within.
Fill me with fire where once I burned with shame;
Grant my desire to magnify Your Name.*

- J. Edwin Orr

Having spent the night at Bethany, the Lord Jesus again entered Jerusalem. The focus this day will be on exposing the rotten core of so much of the city's religion. He will do this by cursing the fig tree and forcefully cleaning the temple.

In many ways, Jerusalem in Jesus' day was similar to Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day;

*"my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water."*

- Jeremiah 2:13

The wells of religion held no water - let that be a warning to us.

The King curses the fruitless fig tree (Matthew 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14)

On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 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. And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

- Mark 11:12-14

In the Old Testament, Israel was commonly pictured as being figs, or a fig tree (see Jer. 8:13; 24:1-10; Hos. 9:10,16; Joel 1:7). The saying, *"to sit under your own vine and fig tree,"* meant to live in safety and prosperity (e.g. 1 Kings 4:25).

On the Monday, the Lord Jesus left Bethany and walked to Jerusalem. On the way, He went to see what should have been a fruitful fig tree. At the time of year when Passover was celebrated, small figs grow from the sprouts of the previous year's branches, appearing in March and ripening in May or June. This tree was in leaf, yet Jesus searched unsuccessfully for fruit. He cursed the fruitless tree.

The disciples *heard* Jesus curse the tree, but on the Tuesday they will see the tree withered (see Mark 11:20; note that Matthew deals with the fig tree cursing as one event, whereas Mark reveals that it occurred over two days).

Why did He curse the tree? It was a miracle, and as with all of Jesus' miracles it was performed for a specific purpose. Here, the curse was symbolic of the people. Just as the fig tree should have borne fruit to eat, so too there were many in old Israel who should have borne fruit to God, but they were empty of fruit. Thus, the tree represented all that is hypocritical; all appearance, no fruit.

Later, Jesus would say, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5)."* The only way to bear fruit to God is to stay *in* Christ. John Owen said, *"We must take a steady look at the glory of Christ in His special character, in His grace and work, as shown to us in the Scripture."* Then the fruit of faith, obedience, prayer, holiness, righteousness, worship and all that is good in God will show, to the glory of God.

The King cleanses the temple

(Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48)

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them,

"It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

"'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?"

– Matthew 21:12-16

There is nothing more important than the true worship of God. The temple was the focus of worship to the LORD, but under the control of the chief priests, the Pharisees and the council, worship at the temple had become muddied and corrupted.

The Lord Jesus knew that it was time to dig away the muck so that the clear waters of God could rush in. His desire is purity of worship. Significantly, at the start of His ministry Jesus had likewise cleansed the temple (John 2:13-22).

In Mark's Gospel, the quote from Isaiah 56:7 is in full: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations."* The temple complex included a large courtyard where Gentiles could hear God's word and worship Him. But it seems that a marketplace had been set up in the Gentile's courtyard. People were buying and selling for their own gain. Thus, they were not worshiping God for the sake of God. It grieved our Lord. If ever we turn the worship of God into something for our own gain, may He likewise rebuke us. The Apostle Paul warned the church in Corinth that there are many who are *"peddlers of God's word (2 Cor. 2:17)."* The sight of these *profiteers* of God's worship so distressed Jesus, that He overturned their tables (Matt. 21:12).

Despite the worship of the temple being corrupted, nonetheless the praise of Jesus can never be held back! After He healed the blind and

lame who came to Him, the children praised Him, crying out, "*Hosanna to the Son of David* (Matt. 21:15)." We wish that we could join those children in praising the Lord Jesus! Theirs was a pure worship, good and honouring to Him.

**Jesus returns to Bethany
(Mark 11:19)**

And when evening came they went out of the city.

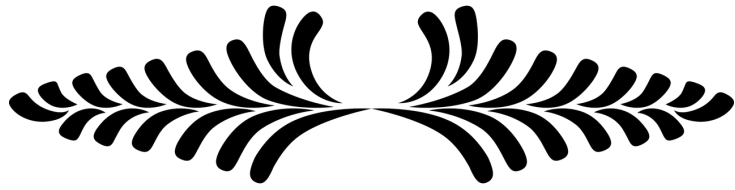
- Mark 11:19

Once again, Jesus left the city of Jerusalem and spent the night at Bethany (see Matt. 21:17).

We are all familiar with the feeling of being repulsed by something or some situation. *How much more must the Lord Jesus have been repulsed by the crass profiteering and twisted religion that He saw going on in much of the temple.* And yet, in the midst of all that was so wrong, there was also right, such as the children praising Him for who He is – God's king, the Son of David.

In the 'foolish' wisdom of God, not many believers are wise, powerful or noble by the world's standards. But "*God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong* (1 Cor. 2:26-27)."

May we thank God for the mystery of His ways!



3.

Tuesday – The King teaches in the temple

*'Jesus is Lord' – a shout of joy, a cry of anguish,
As He returns, and every knee bows low.
Then every eye and every heart will see His glory,
The Judge of all will take His children home.*

- Stuart Townend

The Bible closes with these solemn words: "'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:20)" Believers "groan inwardly (Rom. 8:23)" longing this time when Christ will return at the end of the age.

The Tuesday before our Lord's death was marked by two things:

- growing tension, and
- precious teaching to His disciples, especially about the end of the age.

The following events seemed to have occurred on that day;

The discovery of the withered fig tree (Matthew 21:20-22; Mark 11:20-25)

As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

- Mark 11:20-26

The whole of Jesus' life showed a calm control over all things, and none more so than in this final week before His death. On the Monday, as Jesus entered Jerusalem He cursed a fruitless fig tree. It was an "acted prophecy," because Mark's Gospel makes clear that the following day, the Tuesday, the disciples saw that the tree had, indeed, withered from its roots. They marvelled at this (Matt. 21:20). The tree was a warning about people who are all leaf and no fruit. Yet, the Lord Jesus also used this time as an opportunity to teach the disciples the following lessons;

- One, that faith in God is more powerful than anything on earth. *What force can move a mountain into the sea?* Faith in God (Matt. 21:21).
- Two, that true prayer is taking hold of God in humble confidence (Matt. 21:22).
- Three, that forgiveness must flow two ways: from God to us, and from us to others (Mark 11:25). A person who shows no forgiveness, receives no forgiveness.

Often we feel ashamed about how weak we are in prayer. Yet, at the fig tree, Jesus never cautions us about limiting the greatness of our prayers. The Apostle Paul knew this: *"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us (Eph. 3:20)."*

As John Newton wrote;

*Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with you bring,
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.*

In this way, Jesus presses upon us the heart of prayer: Trust in God and seek, above all, His glory. Corrie ten Boom understood this: *"The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something, and enter God's realm where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for His almighty power. Nothing is too small for His love."*

Tension at the Temple

(Matthew 21:23-23:39; Mark 11:27-12:40; Luke 20:1-47)

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority."

- Luke 20:1-2

Later on the Tuesday, the Lord Jesus arrived at the temple. It was His Father's house and there was surely no better place for Him to preach the gospel! Luke tells us that early each morning our Lord taught at the temple, and that "all the people" came to hear Him (Luke 21:38).

Yet, as He was teaching, those in authority - the chief priests, scribes and elders (Mark 11:27) - began to bristle. Controversy over Jesus' authority broke out. What followed was a series of conversations and parables where the Lord Jesus continued to show His authority. From Matthew's Gospel, we can summarise them this way;

- **Controversy 1: Authority** - Jesus turned the tables on those questioning His authority, by saying that if they didn't know - or if they would not admit - whether John the Baptist was from God or not, how could they judge whether He was from God or not? (Matt. 21:23-27). Then, He told them three parables about judgment and grace. The first is the "Parable of the Two Sons," where even "the tax collectors and the prostitutes... go into the kingdom of God" before the religious leaders (Matt. 21:28-32). The second is the "Parable of the Tenants," exposing the hard hearts of these same religious leaders. At the conclusion of this parable, they understood that He was speaking against them and they sought to arrest Him (Matt. 21:33-46). The third is the "Parable of the Wedding Banquet" where the king generously invites all that his servants could find, "good and bad," to come to his feast (Matt. 22:1-14). God is that generous king.

- **Controversy 2: Paying taxes to Caesar** - the Pharisees again tried to trap Jesus in regards to paying taxes. But Jesus' reply left them amazed: *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:15-22)."* The Pharisees left for a time.
- **Controversy 3: Resurrection** - next the Sadducees came to Jesus in order to trap Him with a question. They rejected any belief in a final resurrection. In response to their question, Jesus replied by exposing their ignorance of the Scriptures and God: *"He is not God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:23-24)."*
- **Controversy 4: the greatest commandment** - the Pharisee returned to question Jesus regarding the greatest commandment. Jesus replied by saying that the law and the Prophets are summed up in total love for God, and love for our neighbour as for ourselves (Matt. 22:34-40).

Jesus then turned the conversation around by asking the Pharisees a question: *"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? (Matt. 22:42)"* When they answer correctly by saying that the Christ is the son of David, Jesus directs them to Psalm 110, in order to show that the Christ was also greater than David;

He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

"The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet"?"

If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"

- Matt. 22:42-45; see Psalm 110:1

The lesson is that Jesus Christ is David's Lord, because He is the divine Son of God (see Matt. 3:17; 16:16; 17:5). In this way, we see that the Christian faith is dogmatic. There are certain things that the Bible insists on us believing. If we dare take anything away from what the Scriptures say, or if we add to them, then we inevitably end up with

something other than “*the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 1:3).” May God strengthen us to hold fast to the truth, as our Saviour did, even in the face of controversy.

Jesus called out the hypocrisy and proud hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. They loved to be recognised by others. They loved places of honour (Matt. 23:1-12). They serve as a warning to every true believer who calls upon the Name of the Lord. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the town of Vanity had fair that lasted all year in which all sorts of merchandise could be sort, including honours and titles. We must look to Christ Jesus and let the world’s applause fade.

Jesus went on to speak seven woes against the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:13-36). Although they taught about God, they did not love God. In particular, their seven sins were;

- **Woe 1** - they prevented people from entering the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 23:13-14).
- **Woe 2** - they converted people to their own dead religion (Matt. 23:15).
- **Woe 3** - they took oaths hypocritically, failing to see that God is God of all (Matt. 23:16-22).
- **Woe 4** - they could obey small matters of the law, but they neglected the most important matters of the law: justice, mercy and faithfulness. In this way, they worried about inadvertently drinking a gnat, not realising that they were swallowing a camel – the largest of unclean animals (Matt. 23:23-24).
- **Woe 5** - they were outwardly ‘clean,’ but inwardly full of filth. The inside must be made clean first, then the outside will follow (Matt. 23:25-26).
- **Woe 6** - they were hypocrites: appearing to be outwardly righteous, but inwardly spiritually dead (Matt. 23:27-28).
- **Woe 7** - they were ignorant to the fact that they stood opposed to God and His prophets (Matt. 23:29-32).

In contrast, Jesus says, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing (Matt. 23:37)."* Wickedness in the world, especially when clothed in spiritual garb, must arouse within a Christian sympathy for its innocent victims, and a strong conviction to stand for God's truth.

The widow at the temple (Mark 12:41-43 Luke 21:1-4)

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

- Mark 12:41-43

Jesus concludes this time in the temple in the most remarkable way: by praising a poor widow for her self-sacrificial trust in God. Our Saviour was a careful observer of people. On that Tuesday, out of all the people that He saw going about their activities in the temple, it was this poor widow who impressed Him the most.

Jesus was so moved by what He saw, that He called over His disciples and pointed her out to them. Jesus, the Son of God, was honouring her, although she seems oblivious to it! Jesus said that she gave out of her poverty, as opposed to others who gave out of their abundance.

In showing them this, the Lord Jesus was making clear to us the true path of discipleship. He was saying, "Trust God, like she does."

The signs of the end (Matthew 24:1-25:46; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36)

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet."

- Matthew 24:1-6

The final part of the Tuesday was a time of precious teaching by the Lord Jesus to His disciples. As they left the temple, the disciples commented on how impressive the buildings were. Jesus' response must have shocked the disciples. He said that not one stone would be left on another (Matt. 24:2). *Had they heard Him correctly?* The disciples seemed to have assumed that the destruction of the temple would coincide with the end of all time. They said, *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"* (Matt. 24:3). And so, when they arrived at the Mount of Olives, Jesus began to teach them privately.

Christians disagree about how to understand what Jesus taught at this time. In part, His words seem to have come true in AD 70 when the Roman Commander Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, after laying siege to the city for four years. The ancient historian Josephus said that 1.1 million Jewish people died at this time as a result of famine or the sword (*Jewish Wars*, 6.9.3).

And yet, surely, our Lord is looking beyond those events to the last days before Christ return in judgment. He says that, *"after that tribulation* (Mark 13:24)" the sun, moon and stars will be darkened and shaken. This is a reference to Isaiah 13:10, which is about the Day of the Lord.

What is certain is that;

- Many will be deceived, following after false Messiahs (Mark 13:6; 21-22).
- There will be suffering in Judea and throughout the world (Mark 13:7-8; 14-20).
- The gospel will be preached in the whole world (Mark 13:10).
- Christ Jesus will return (Mark 13:26-31).
- Only God the Father knows when the final day will be (Mark 13:32).

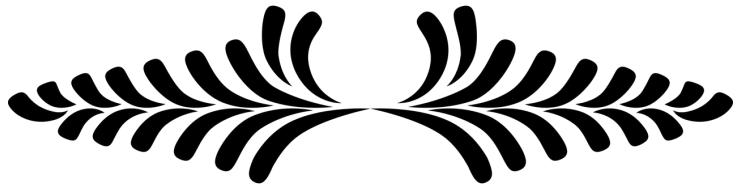
The clear lesson is that God is in control, even when it looks like things are out of control. *So be awake and stand firm to the end* (Mark 13:13)! In Mark's account, Jesus uses words such as *"be on your guard"* or *"stay awake"* six times (Mark 13:5; 9; 23; 33; 35; 37).

The remainder of Jesus' teaching to His disciples on that Tuesday focused on being ready for His return. He told the "Parable of the Ten Virgins" in order that we would, *"Watch... for you know neither the day nor the hour* (Matt. 25:13)." So too, the "Parable of the Talents" is about being prepared and teaches us that *"watching"* means faithfully using what God has given us to extend His worth (Matt. 25:14-30). Jesus finished by assuring us that He will judge fairly and generously reward those who are righteous (Matt. 25:31-46).

When He shall come with trumpet sound

Oh, may I then in Him be found.

- Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)



4.

Wednesday – Plotting against the King

*How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.
(Nun) Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.*

- Psalm 119:103-105

In some ways, the Wednesday before Jesus' death seemed quieter than the tumult of the previous days. On the Sunday Jesus had entered Jerusalem as King; on the Monday He had cleansed the temple and healed in the temple; on the Tuesday tension with the religious leaders had flared and He had taught His disciples about the signs of the end. By comparison, the Wednesday didn't seem to have the same intensity of the previous days. However, the storm clouds continued to gather as our Lord continued unwavering toward what was to come.

Teaching in the temple courts (Luke 21:37-38)

And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

- Luke 21:37-38

On Wednesday, Jesus continued His teaching in the courts of the temple. By the time of Jesus, Herod the Great had expanded the temple complex to an area covering 36 acres. There was a large outer wall, surrounding an expansive courtyard. Inside this wall was a portico. The portico on the South side of the temple was called the Royal Portico. It was 278m long and held up by rows of colonnades. Perhaps it was here

that our Lord taught, as it was in these colonnades that scribes taught and debates were held.

For the Lord Jesus, the time for healings and miracles had passed and the time for more teaching had come. God's Word tells us that the greatest famine we can face is a famine of His Word (Amos 8:11-12). *How appropriate that Jesus - the living Word of God - taught in His Father's house.* Like Josiah reading the newly re-discovered Book of the Covenant to the elders and people of Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:1-2), or like Ezra reading the Law of Moses to "all who could understand" from early morning until midday (Neh. 8:1-2), so here Jesus speaks the very words of God to the people gathered at the newly purified temple (Matt. 21:12-17).

The plot to kill the King

(Matthew 26:1-5; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:1-2)

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

- Mark 14:1-2

The Wednesday of Passover week is Nisan 13 on the Hebrew calendar. Immediately after Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread - a weeklong festival that ran from Nisan 15 to 21. It commemorated God delivering His people from slavery in Egypt. During this time people ate unleavened bread as a reminder that when their forefathers left Egypt it was in such haste that they could not let the bread rise. God gave these feasts, and so it is important to realise that the way in which the story of redemption was woven into the Jewish calendar (see Deut. 16:1).

How ironic, therefore, that the religious leaders were using this time not in reflection upon God's deliverance of them, but on stealthy ways to kill His Son? Mark says that the "chief priests and scribes" were involved in the plot (Mark 14:1). Matthew adds that they "gathered in the palace

of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas (Matt.26:3)." Their covertness is seen in the underhand way in which they go about things, denying natural justice. Their verdict of death was pronounced even before there was a trial (Luke 22:1)!

The only restraint the religious leaders felt was due to their fear of the crowds who held that Jesus was a prophet (Matt. 21:46). They feared an uprising. Their solution was to postpone killing Him until after Nisan 21, when the crowds that offered Jesus some protection would have gone home. Yet in God's sovereign plan, their timeline is brought forward and Jesus was killed only two days later.

May we be filled with humble praise, realising that God the Son willingly endured the hostility of the world and the disgrace of death for our sake;

*What You, my Lord, has suffered
was all for sinners' gain.
Mine, mine was the transgression,
but Yours the deadly pain.
Now, here I fall, my Saviour!
'Tis I deserve Your place.
Look on me with Your favour,
and grant to me Your grace.*

- Paul Gerhardt



PEOPLE IN THE GOSPELS: MARY OF BETHANY

It is helpful to note that the Gospel writers - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - did not always write in chronological order. An example of that is with the story of Mary of Bethany anointing Jesus' body (Matthew and Mark mention Jesus' head, whilst John mentions His feet). In Mark's Gospel, it looks as though this occurred on the Wednesday before Jesus' crucifixion, but in fact, John tells us that it occurred "six days before the Passover (John 12:1);" that is, on the Saturday evening. It seems fairly obvious that Mark included the story where he did in order to contrast the devotion of the 'outsider' Mary (whom he doesn't name) with the treachery of the 'insider' Judas.

Mary was the sibling of Martha and Lazarus. We first meet her as she sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus, listening to His teaching (Luke 10:38-41). Later, when Lazarus died, Mary accuses Jesus of not being there for Lazarus (John 11:32). Yet, at the same time, she truly trusted in Him.

What is remarkable about Mary is the way in which her devotion to the Lord comes spilling out. In Mark 14:3, she came whilst Jesus was enjoying the hospitality of Simon the leper (presumably a man that Jesus had healed of leprosy, and possibly a relative of Mary's) and she broke "an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly (Mark 14:3)," pouring the contents over Jesus' head. Some people suggest that this costly perfume was a family heirloom, and even part of her 'nest egg' for the future.

We must think, why would such a woman do such a costly, and in many ways, embarrassing thing? Especially, knowing that it would be so public. For Mary's part, this was a deliberate act. It took planning and prayer to do what she did. You can imagine her waiting for the right opportunity, before going to fetch the perfume from its safe place, wherever it was that she had kept it, and carefully carrying the valuable perfume to the home of Simon. Surely, she was praying earnestly the whole time.

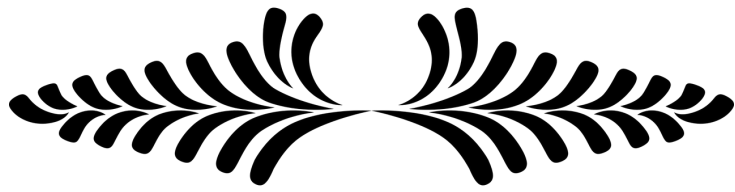
It is clear that those at table with Jesus felt uneasy about her. With a critical spirit, they attacked her: "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor (Mark 14:4-5)." In their eyes, they were right and she was wrong. So they scolded her.

But it was their response – which included the disciples – that raised the ire of the Lord Jesus. He will have none of it, and rebuking them. He said, "Leave her alone... She has done a beautiful thing to me (Mark 14:6)." If you continue reading in Mark's Gospel, you realise that it was this act – and Jesus' response – that drove Judas to betray Jesus (see Mark 14:10-11). He could stand Mary's action, or Jesus' rebuke.

Jesus went on to say that whatever Mary knew or didn't know, what she did was significant: "this perfume is to prepare Me for My burial (see Mark 14:8)." In the scheme of things, hers was not merely an act of devotion, but spoke of His coming death. She may not have known it, but her actions cast a shadow all the way to the cross.

Isn't it wonderful that today we are fulfilling the words of Jesus when He said about her: "Truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her (Mark 14:9)." He is saying, "Here is a woman of devotion that we must not forget." And, believer, do not our hearts burn within us for the same faith and devotion as Mary had!

Yet, as wonderful as her gift was, the greater gift was coming soon, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for sinners.



5.

Thursday (Part 1) – The King is a servant

You will notice that the Gospel story slows as we come closer to the moment of our Lord's death. In fact, if we were to divide each Gospel by verses, then we would discover that;

- In Matthew's Gospel, approximately 13% of the Gospel focuses on what happened from the Thursday to the Sunday.
- In Mark's Gospel it is approximately 18%.
- In Luke's Gospel, it is approximately 15% (Matthew, Mark and Luke are often called the Synoptic Gospels, because of their similarity).
- But in John's Gospel this increases to 30%.

On the Hebrew calendar, this day was the Thursday, Nisan 14.

Preparing for the final Passover

(Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13)

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ...The disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

- Mark 14:12-16

The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, ran into one another, celebrating God's salvation of His people (see Deut. 16:1-16; Lev. 23:4-8). Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary, celebrated Passover every year (Luke 2:41), and so the Lord Jesus was familiar with this festival.

Having arrived in Jerusalem, it was time for Jesus to make preparations for Passover. For many people who lived in Jerusalem, Passover was a joyful opportunity for them to open their homes to pilgrims. It was a time to rest from their labours. People would sew new garments, acquaintances would be reaffirmed and the tombs of family members were whitewashed. Rabbis would fill the more than three hundred synagogues and schools within Jerusalem and teach the people (see Acts 6:9).

Everything in these verses continues to speak of our Lord's control over what was to come. Just as He had sent two of His disciples ahead of Him to prepare donkeys for His arrival in the city (Luke 19:29-34), so now He sends His disciples Peter and John (Luke 22:8) to make preparations for this most important of meals: the Passover. Jesus' instructions to them must have seemed unusual, but His words came true just as He had said. Arriving in the city, they found a man carrying a water jar and following him to the house he entered, they asked the master of the house for a place where Jesus could eat the Passover with His disciples. By His control, Jesus was saying to His disciples, "You can trust Me."

On that Thursday, perhaps one of the disciples, or someone from the household who hosted them, would have led a spotless lamb to the temple at the height of the city where thousands of other people had gathered. Here, the lamb was slaughtered, probably by a priest. Each household was to have one lamb and not a bone of the animal was to be broken (see Ex. 12:46; John 19:36). Perhaps, the '*Pilgrim Psalms* (Psalm 120-134)' were sung, and we can only imagine the disciples joining in the singing. Perhaps too, the Levites in the temple courts sang the '*Hallelujah Psalms*' praising the LORD (Psalm 113-118).

The slaughtered lamb was then taken back to the home and prepared as part of the Passover meal, along with the other major parts of the meal: the bitter herbs, unleavened bread and cups of wine (see Ex. 12:8). The cups are commonly linked to the four statements of Exodus 6:6-7:

- "I will bring you out;"
- "I will deliver you from slavery;"

- *“I will redeem you,”* and
- *“I will take you to be my people.”*

At the time of the original Passover in Egypt, the LORD promised that He would “pass over” each home marked with the blood of a lamb. This does not mean that He avoided those homes, rather that He protected and covered those inside, so that the “destroyer” could not enter (Exodus 12:23). The lamb died for their protection.

After Jesus rose from the dead, the early Christians proclaimed that Jesus Himself was our Passover Lamb. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, *“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*

As our Passover Lamb, Christ Jesus satisfied the righteous judgment of God. He stands over us so that neither the demands of divine justice, nor the Accuser’s allegations will reach us. Romans 8:34 asks the question: *“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”* Our Passover Lamb ever lives as our Interceder. None can condemn all who are safe *in* Him.

In 1524, Martin Luther wrote a hymn that speaks of Christ as our “Paschal Lamb” (Paschal comes from the Hebrew word for Passover);

*Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,
Whom God so freely gave us;
He died on the accursed tree—
So strong His love! — to save us.
See, His blood does mark our door;
Faith points to it, death passes over,
And Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!*

- Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Jesus washes the disciples' feet (John 13:1-20)

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. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 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, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 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.

- John 13:1-5

The verses above tell us about what happened *before* and *during* the early part of the Passover Feast that Jesus celebrated with His disciples. With the shadow of the cross looming larger, He loved His own to the end, or He loved them completely, or to the full extent (John 13:1). Everything that unfolded tells us of His love for us!

Jesus began by washing His disciples' feet. In the dusty environment of Jerusalem, it was usual for a host to arrange to have the feet of their guests washed upon their arrival. This was a lowly task and in many cultures, feet are considered unclean. Yet, here is the wonder, God the Son, dressed like a servant and washed feet like a servant! Even Judas, the betrayer, had his feet washed by Jesus. Jesus told His disciples that there was a two-part lesson to learn from what He did;

- Firstly, the washing was a sign of being spiritually cleansed by Him. When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, Peter protested, "*You shall never wash my feet* (John 13:8)." Jesus' reply was that if he was not washed, then neither was he saved: "*If I do not wash you, you have no share with me* (John 13:8)." When Peter protested further by saying, "*Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!*" Jesus replied by saying, "*The one who has bathed does not need*

to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean (John 13:10)." We are completely washed clean, *"bathed,"* of our sin by Christ. In this way, the foot washing looked forward to the cross where this was achieved. Yet, we continue to battle with ongoing sin (see Rom. 7:13-20), and probably that is what Jesus means by saying washing is not needed, *"except for his feet."* Believer, in the battle with ongoing sin in your life, continue to turn back to God in repentance: *wash your feet.*

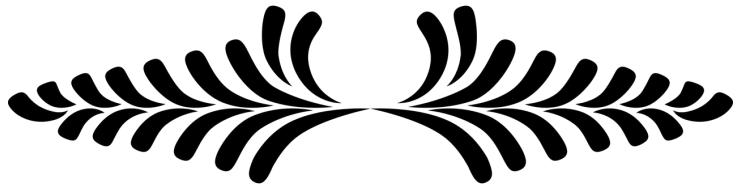
- Secondly, when Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He was giving us an example of how we are to serve one another. He said, *"Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you (John 13:12-15)."* If the Son of God, willingly and lovingly served in such a humble way, then surely we are to do the same.

If ever we balk at serving God, or others, then Elizabeth Elliot asks us a penetrating question: *"Does God ask us to do what is beneath us? This question will never trouble us again if we consider the Lord of heaven taking a towel and washing feet."*

If we dare call ourselves Christians – disciples of the Lord Jesus - then our Lord shows us the pattern that must mark out our life: humble service, following Him.

*And now this love of Christ,
shall flow like rivers.
Come wash your guilt away;
live again.
Amazing love, oh what sacrifice
The Son of God given for me
My debt He pays and my death He dies,
that I might live.*

- Graham Kendrick



6.

Thursday (part 2) – The King is betrayed

In Jewish reckoning a day runs from sunset to sunset, and so the events described here are the beginning of Nisan 15, the day of Passover. Having made preparations for the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples prepared to eat it. As a servant, He washed their feet as a sign that we must be spiritually cleansed before God, and as an example of humble service for us to follow (John 13:6-17).

Why was there greater importance around this Passover meal than those in previous years? Why greater earnestness? The answer lies in the significance of what was about to happen. Christ not only celebrated the Passover; Christ *is* the Passover. He will not eat of this celebratory meal again until all of God's promises are fulfilled (Luke 22:16). So too, the importance of this meal is seen in His pledge that He will share another, even greater, meal with them.

Passover – the betrayer exposed

(Matthew 26:20-25; Mark 14:17-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:18-29)

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of 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." Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

- Matt.26:20-25

In Jesus' time, people commonly ate by reclining on cushions at a low table. The cushions were likely arranged in a 'u-shape' with Jesus in the middle of the centre cushion, as the place of honour. John, the beloved disciple, was reclining next to Jesus (John 13:23), and possibly

Judas was on Jesus' other side, as Jesus was able to hand him the bread directly (John 13:26).

During the course of the meal, Jesus made a startling statement: one of them would betray Him! The disciples' response is interesting. Their concern was for their own innocence. They each asked Him, "*Is it I* (Mark 14:19)?" Jesus identified Judas as His betrayer in two ways: firstly, when Judas asked Him, "*Is it I, Rabbi?*" He replied, "*You have said so* (Matt.26:25)." Secondly, He said, "*He to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it* (John 13:26)" would betray Him, and He gave it to Judas.

John says that as Judas took the morsel of bread, Satan entered him (John 13:27). This is the only mention of Satan in John's Gospel. Luke also says that Satan entered Judas, but he links it to the time when Judas made the agreement with the religious leaders to hand over Jesus to them (see Luke 22:3). Not a moment earlier, Jesus had washed His betrayer's feet!

Judas' betrayal fulfilled the Psalms, which spoke beforehand (see Acts 1:20);

*"May their camp be a desolation;
let no one dwell in their tents."*

- Psalm 69:25

*"May his days be few;
may another take his office!"*

- Psalm 109:8

Although there is much mystery, these verses demonstrate that God was sovereign over Judas' treachery. Yet, Judas was responsible for his sin (Acts 1:25). In this way, God is freely sovereign, yet He is neither "*the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures* (WCF 3.1)."

Jesus' only request was that Judas do what he was to do quickly (John 13:27).

Passover – the first Lord’s Supper
(Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20)

And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

- Luke 22:14-20

This final Passover before Jesus’ death is also the basis for the first Lord’s Supper we celebrate today. Coming to the Passover meal, Jesus said to His disciples, *“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:15-16).”*

Luke also mentions that two cups were taken by Jesus: the first He shared with the Twelve, saying, *“I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes (Luke 22:17).”* Then, following the bread, He gave them the second cup, saying, *“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20).”*

A covenant is a *“witness word.”* The covenant bond is the cord that solemnly ties God to people. It is a living relationship, and forms the basis of our relationship to God. Jeremiah looked forward to the New Covenant;

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.”

- Jeremiah 31:31

Jeremiah went on to say that in this New Covenant, God promises four things;

- **Obedience that is internal** - *"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33)."*
- **Belonging to God** - *"I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jer. 31:33)."*
- **Knowing God** – *"They will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest (Jer. 31:34)."*
- **Forgiveness** – *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more (Jer. 31:34)."*

For Christians, this final Passover gives way to Jesus' command to celebrate the Lord's Supper. But when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, what are we recognising? What is its meaning and purpose? Below are three points to notice;

- **Declaring Christ's death until He comes** – in eating the bread and drinking the wine, we are proclaiming Christ's death, and it's meaning, until He comes. In this way, the Lord's Supper is faith declared in a physical way, and so should only be taken by professing believers.
- **Communion with Christ** – in the Lord's Supper we have 'participation,' in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17). That is, we have 'communion' or 'fellowship' with Him. Although He is unseen by us, yet in the Supper we join with Him and He with us!
- **Communion with one another** – the Lord's Supper is also a sign of our fellowship with other believers. This is why the Supper should not, without good reason, be taken individually, but as part of a local fellowship of believers. We eat from the same loaf and drink from the same cup as a sign that we are united together in Christ (1 Cor. 10:17).

It is these points that makes the Lord's Supper such a solemn, powerful and joyful time for Christians. Jesus commands us to partake of

the Supper (1 Cor. 11:25)! Yet we must do so only after examining ourselves before eating and drinking (1 Cor. 11:28-29).

**Judas goes out
(John 13:30)**

**So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out.
And it was night.**

- John 13:30

At some point after the Passover meal, Judas went out into the Jerusalem night with his plan to betray Jesus. Yet Jesus, knowing what was to happen, made no attempt to stop Judas. The other disciples were none the wiser as to what was unfolding. They merely thought that Jesus had told Judas to buy supplies for the feast or to give something to the poor (John 13:29).

In all this, our Lord continues to show His complete trust in the Scriptures for what was to happen (Matt.26:24). The Son of Man, who in Daniel's prophecy is given authority over all peoples and nations by the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14), is also the Son of Man who was betrayed and led like a lamb to the slaughter (Is. 53:7).

**Passover – a dispute over greatness
(Luke 22:24-30)**

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.... I am with you as one who serves."

- Luke 22:24-27

Luke alone records this dispute that arose amongst the disciples as to greatness. Pride is our great enemy and it is never far from us. Yet, Jesus, the Servant-King, used their dispute as an opportunity to teach us

about true Christian living. In many ways, the heart of the Christian life is summed up in Jesus' words here: "I am with you as one who serves (Luke 22:27)."

Amy Carmichael expressed it well in one of her poems,

*If the praise of man elates me
and his blame depresses me;
if I cannot rest under misunderstanding
without defending myself;
if I love to be loved more than to love,
to be served more than to serve,
then I know nothing of Calvary love.*



PEOPLE IN THE GOSPELS: JUDAS ISCARIOT

There are few people in the Bible who leave us with such a sense of unease as much as Judas Iscariot does. *Why did he betray Jesus? When did this darkness enter his mind? How could he have been so close to our Saviour and then turn against Him?*

Perhaps, even more mystifying, is the way in which John's Gospel tells us that Jesus "knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him (John 6:64)." Jesus even said to His disciples, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil (John 6:70)."

If Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, then why did He chose Him as a disciple in the first place? Why didn't He unmask his treachery earlier?

I don't know that we will receive the answers to these questions this side of heaven. Yet, what we do know is that God is sovereign, even over sin, and at the same time, Judas is accountable for his actions before God.

Reading the Gospels, we learn a little about who Judas was. We know that he was the keeper of the money-bag for the disciples (John 12:6). His name, Judas Iscariot, probably means that he came from a town called Kerioth, in Judea.

Judas was there when the Lord Jesus gave the Twelve authority over unclean spirits and to heal disease and affliction (Matt. 10:1). He

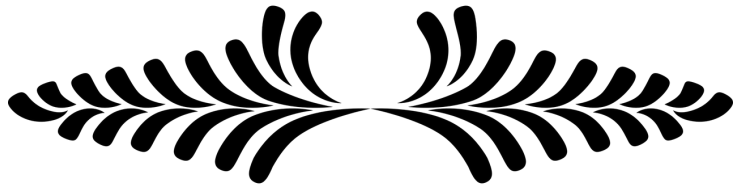
heard the preaching of Jesus about the kingdom (Matt. 5:1), and he was there when Jesus appointed them to preach (Mark 3:14). He was there when Jesus privately told the disciples that in Jerusalem He would be crucified, but then raised on the third day (Matt. 20:17-19). Judas was amongst those whose feet Jesus washed as a servant (John 13:5). Then, later, he would betray our Lord with a kiss (Mark 14:44).

Right from the earliest mentions of Judas in the Gospels, he is referred to as *the betrayer* (from the word “*to give over*,” see Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19). It is the blot for which he will forever be known. It is fascinating to think that though Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, the other disciples seemed to have no inkling of the treachery that lay in Judas’ heart (Matt. 26:21-22).

From an earthly perspective, Mark hints that the vital moment of Judas’ betrayal came *in response* to the incident when Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with the precious nard (Mark 14:3-8). The disciple scolded her, and in particular, Judas was most critical of her (John 12:4). *What a waste!* Mark’s Gospel then tells us that after Jesus defended Mary’s actions, Judas “went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them (Mark 14:10).” He couldn’t stand Mary’s action, nor Jesus’ rebuke. Resentment is a bitter poison.

Why do the Gospels include the story of a man such as Judas Iscariot? In part, he stands as a warning to us. Satan was able to work his way within Judas’ mind, poisoning it. Heed Richard Baxter’s words: “All the longer your delay, the more your sin gets strength and rooting. If you cannot bend a twig, how will you be able to bend it when it is a tree?” And yet, even though we all sin, there is a real sense in which it is not our sin that keeps us from God, but our failure to repent. May God give us the grace of repentance. Turn back to Him and confess your sin.

In spite of all of this, the tragic life of Judas also shows the depths of God’s ability to bring good out of another person’s evil. His betrayal led to the cross, which led to the resurrection and our salvation.



7.

Thursday (part 3) – The King with His disciples

This chapter focuses on John's account of the hours spent in the Upper Room on that Thursday night. John includes far more of Jesus' teaching and prayer than the other Gospels do.

John began his Gospel by declaring: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)."*

God's glory is *internal* to who He is – Father, Son, Spirit. His glory is connected to everything else that He is: holy, good, just, merciful, loving and more. It is then seen in everything that God does and in every way that He has chosen to reveal Himself, such as creation (see Psalm 19:1).

Glory, love and Peter's denials foretold (Luke 22:31-34; John 13:31-38)

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you... A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." ...Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

- John 13:31-38

After the Passover meal, and with Judas gone, Jesus focused His attention on the other disciples. He spoke about three things;

- **Glory** – in the humiliation of the cross God was glorified. The Son of Man is glorified in dying for His people. We can only imagine the angels looking on with dread as the spear pierced His side, and yet, with awesome wonder as they realise that this was the

only way for God to redeem sinful people. "Glory to God" is now the song of all who belong to Christ;

"Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

- Revelation 7:12

- **Love** – our Lord places the highest standard of love upon all who follow Him: *"Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another (John 13:34)."* A Christian must look at other Christians and pray, *"These are my people and I love them, because Christ loved them. Please help me, even today, to love Your people as You love them, Lord Jesus."* Christian love tells outsiders that we truly are Christ's disciples (John 13:35).
- **Denial** – this is the first time that Jesus foretells that Peter will deny Him three times. Jesus seems to repeat the prophecy later that evening when they go to the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31). *How astonished Peter must have been!* Peter had said that he was willing to die for Jesus (Matt. 26:35). We are not superior to Peter. But thank God for our faithful Saviour. After His resurrection, Jesus would forgive and restore Peter (John 21:15-22). May we too, know His forgiveness.

I am the way, the truth and the life.

(John 14:1-17:26)

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

- John 14:1-6

John chapters 14 to 17 are essentially all Jesus' words to His disciples. As the disciples grappled with His teaching, there were some interruptions;

- Question 1, from Thomas: *"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* (John 14:5)

- A request from Philip: *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us"* (John 14:8)
- Question 2 from Judas, not Iscariot: *"Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"* (John 14:22)

The way to the Father (John 14)

In answering their questions, Jesus says that He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6), that He reveals the Father (John 14:9), and that by praying in His Name for His glory we can be assured that our requests will be heard (John 14:14).

Three times He speaks of obedience as a sign of our love for Him: *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments* (John 14:15; 21; 23). For the first time He calls the Holy Spirit our "Helper" (or "Advocate" or "Counsellor"), who will teach the disciples and help them remember all that Jesus said (John 14:16; 26).

In all this, Jesus' purpose was to comfort His disciples by promising them His peace: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (John 14:27)." Every Christian can say that knowing Jesus' peace does more to soothe our troubles than any philosophy or therapy the world could offer us. At the end of John 14:31 Jesus says, *"Rise, let us go from here."* However, it is only in John 18:1, that they cross the Kidron Valley towards the Mount of Olives.

The True Vine (John 15)

Not far from the Upper Room, the entrance to the temple sanctuary was adorned with a beautiful golden vine. Josephus said that it's *"clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man's height* (Jewish Wars 5.5.4)." We can only wonder if that was on Jesus' mind as in John 15 He declares the last of His seven "I am" sayings: *"I am the true vine* (John 15:1)." In the Old Testament, just as Israel was often pictured as figs or a fig tree, so too she was pictured as a vine or vineyard (e.g. Is. 5:1-7; 27:2-6). Jesus used the picture of a vine, in order to teach us about our connection to Him and bearing fruit in our lives: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing* (John 15:5)."

From verse 9, Jesus once again speaks of love. In fact, from verse 9 to 17, nine times He uses the word "love" (v.9, 10, 12, 13, 17), ultimately speaking of His own death: *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13)."*

Conflict

Few things are more difficult for a Christian to face than conflict, whether from the world or family. But Jesus prepares His disciples for what they will face. He said, *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you (John 15:18)."* In the face of hostility, our weapons are not to be savage words or swords, but simply clear testimony to Christ (John 15:26).

The Holy Spirit

In chapter 16, Jesus continues to teach about the Holy Spirit. He will do four things:

- He will come to us (John 16:7);
- He will convict the world over sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11);
- He will guide the disciples in the truth (John 16:12), and
- He will glorify Christ Jesus (John 16:14).

Prayer (John 17)

With time running short, how would Jesus use the final moments with the disciples in the Upper Room? He used them in prayer! In chapter 17, Jesus prays what is called *The High Priestly Prayer*. He prays;

- For Himself: *"Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that your Son may glorify You (John 17:1)."*
- For His disciples: *"Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your Name (John 17:11)."*
- For us: *"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you (John 17:21)."*

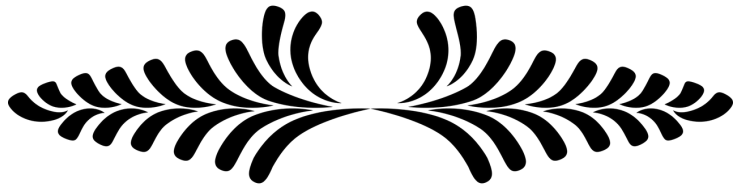
Departing to the Mount of Olives
(Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:35-39; John 18:1)

And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough." And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.

- Luke 22:35-39

In the Upper Room, Jesus spoke about needing a sword – *"let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one (Luke 22:36)."* He also spoke about how Scripture must be fulfilled: *"He was numbered with the transgressors (Luke 22:37; see Is. 53:12)."* The disciples must have remembered how on the road to Jerusalem, when Jesus had sent them out, they lacked nothing (see Luke 10:4-8). Now, however, the situation was more urgent. The disciples find two swords, which later were to play an important role in events at Gethsemane. Jesus says, *"It is enough (Luke 22:38)."* They seem to have misunderstood Him, because later He will rebuke their use of these swords (John 18:11).

Jesus' last act before leaving the Upper Room was to sing a hymn with His disciples. Possibly, it was one of the later *"Hallelujah Psalms (Psalm 115-118),"* which were sung during Passover. We can only marvel at what this meant for Jesus, the Son of God, to sing the praise of His Father knowing what was to come. Yet, praise Him He did!



8.

Thursday (part 4) – The King submits to death

In this chapter we see the Lord Jesus and the disciples, minus Judas for now, having departed from the Upper Room, go outside the city wall of Jerusalem, down the Kidron Valley and across a small brook, before arriving at the Mount of Olives. The Garden of Gethsemane (meaning “oil press”) is at the foot of the Mount of Olives and about 300 metres east of the city’s walls.

Peter’s denial foretold again

(Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31)

Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same.

- Matthew 26:33-35

Repetition has the effect of reinforcement. It makes us sit up and listen. Jesus had already told Peter that he would deny Him three times (Luke 22:31-34; John 13:31-34), and now, perhaps whilst they were walking to the Garden of Gethsemane, He tells Peter for a second time that he will deny Him (Matt. 26:34).

Peter’s response was to insist on his total loyalty to Jesus: “*Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away* (note, despite differing manuscripts, Mark says that this will happen before the rooster crows “twice” – see Mark 14:30. This was fulfilled later that night, when the rooster did, in fact, crow for a second time after Peter’s denials – see Mark 14:72).” The Bible teaches us these twin truths:

- **Overconfidence is our danger** - it is when we convince ourselves that we are strong, that we are most susceptible: “*let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall* (1 Corinthians 10:12).”

- **Yet, in Christ, we are stronger than we know** - earlier that evening, Jesus had said to Peter, *"Satan demanded to have you (note, it is plural), that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:31-32)."* It is Christ who keeps us, despite our failures. In the words of the Westminster Confession, saving faith may be weak, yet *"it gets the victory (WCF 14.3)."* In addition to this, the promise is that, *"God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13)."* Let us never think that sin is our only choice!

In all this, Jesus knew what the disciples couldn't comprehend: the Scriptures had to be fulfilled. That very evening, they would be unfolded in an awful, yet powerful way. Citing Zechariah 13:7, He said, *"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered (Matt. 26:31)."*

Praise our Shepherd for staying the course!

Agony in the Garden

(Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46)

And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow...

- Luke 22:40-45

Jesus had asked His disciples, in particular His closest disciples, Peter, James and John (see Matt. 26:37) to share this time of sorrow with Him. Then, withdrawing past them, He fell on His knees in prayer. So begins a time of intense agony as He, God the Son, submits to His

Father. His sweat became like blood falling to the ground (*Hematidrosis* is the medical term for people sweating blood due to one's capillary blood vessels dilating and bursting). Three times He asks for "*the cup*" to be taken from Him (Matt. 26:39; 42; 44). These were the most difficult prayers that have ever been uttered.

What was this cup that Jesus so dreaded? What did it represent?
Psalm 75:8 says,

*"For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup
with foaming wine, well mixed,
and he pours out from it,
and all the wicked of the earth
shall drain it down to the dregs."*

To drink from this cup would make you instinctively recoil. It was unpleasant foaming wine, mixed with bitter spices. The cup is the cup of suffering and, specifically, God's righteous wrath. At the cross, Jesus drank the cup of God's judgment for all sinners who turn to Him. *How we worship Him!*

We must think: if Jesus knew what was to come, then what was it that kept Him on this path of humiliation towards the cross? Why did He not at any point decide that He had had enough? It would have been fair of Him to say, "Enough! I do not need to go to the cross." Part of the answer is found in Hebrews 12:2, which says that, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." The joy of defeating death for Himself, and all in Him, gave Him strength to endure the cross. So too, He looked forward to the joy of returning to His Father.

An angel came to strengthen Jesus at this time (Luke 22:43), yet He essentially alone.

Betrayal and arrest

(Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-11)

Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground... Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

- John 18:5-11

Jesus may have seen the soldier's torches as they crossed the Kidron Valley coming to arrest Him, yet time suddenly moved very quickly. By the time He rouses His sleeping disciples, Judas had arrived *"with a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people (Matt. 26:47)"*

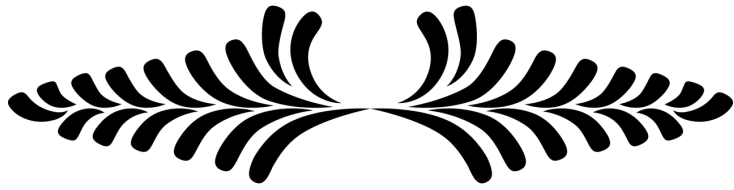
Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss. Jesus responded by calling him, *"friend (Matt. 26:50)."* Notice four things that happened at this time;

- Firstly, when Jesus said, *"I am he (John 18:6; literally "I am"),"* this armed, hostile group drew back and fell down. Surely, we are to see that He is the great *I AM* of the burning bush (Ex. 3:14) and that is why they withdraw from His presence, even if it is only for a moment.
- Secondly, Jesus' concern is that His disciples be safe. He said, *"let these men go (John 18:8)."* In doing so, He fulfilled His prayer from earlier in the night that none of them would be lost (John 17:12).
- Thirdly, Peter's attempt to save Jesus was misguided. Using one of the swords that they had in their possession, he struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. By naming Malchus, people could later investigate the truth of the story for themselves (John 18:10). Jesus heals the ear and rebukes Peter (Luke 22:51; John 18:11). *Jesus needed to save Peter, not Peter save Jesus!*
- Fourthly, Jesus submits to His arrest. Mark tells us that at this point the disciples fled, including *"a young man"* forced to flee naked (Mark 14:50-51). Presumably, this was Mark himself.

All creation was made through Jesus, the Word (John 1:3). Therefore, hands that He had formed, were now crudely seizing Him and preparing Him for His death.

*I want a single eye and a simple heart, to follow,
trust and obey the Lord, like a little child.*

- John Newton 1725-1807



9.

Friday (part 1) – The King on trial before the Jewish authorities

This chapter focuses on Jesus' trial before the Jewish authorities. Jesus said to those who arrested Him, *"this is your hour, and the power of darkness (Luke 22:53)."* If we were to peer into the spiritual realm at that moment, we would have seen the devils rejoicing, and an overwhelming darkness closing in. It is pictured well by C.S. Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as Aslan, the lion-king, is dragged to his death: *"had the Lion chosen, one of those paws could have been the death of them all. But he made no noise, even when the enemies, straining and tugging, pulled the cords so tight that they cut into his flesh. Then they began to drag him towards the Stone Table."* They thought that they had won, but their confidence was mistaken.

The events described below seem to have occurred in the early hours of the Friday morning, the day of our Lord's death. All four gospels record elements of Jesus' questioning and trials, as well as Peter's denials.

Part 1: Jesus Before Annas and the first of Peter's denials (John 18:12-24)

First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple... The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ... The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world."

- John 18:13-20

Probably, Annas was the mastermind behind Jesus' arrest, and that was why Jesus was led to him first. Annas was, in fact, a former high priest (from AD 6-15) and the father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas. Although the Romans governed Judea from AD 6, they allowed the priesthood to function with a degree of independence. Annas' family was one of several wealthy families amongst the priests that controlled the position of high priest. Despite the fact that he was not the current high priest, Anna still retained the title, similar to the way a judge retains the title, even if they do not currently hold the position of judge (see John 18:19).

Caiaphas was the longest serving high priest in the first century, serving for 18 years from AD 18-36. He was also a kind of blind prophet; earlier in John 11:49-50 he had said that it would be better that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish. John reminds us of this prophecy as Jesus' Jewish trial begins (John 18:14). The exact location of Annas' or Caiaphas' house within Jerusalem is not known, although possibly they shared a common courtyard, with rooms on each side. The remains of several spacious mansions have been found in Jerusalem's Old City.

With the scene set at the high priest's home, John then tells us about Peter. Following the arrest of Jesus and the disciples fleeing, Peter recovered enough of his courage to follow Jesus to the door, or outer gate, of the home. He was then allowed into the courtyard. If anyone reading John's Gospel questioned how it was that a simple fisherman from Galilee was allowed into the courtyard of the high priest, John tells us that Peter was with "*another disciple*" (perhaps John himself) who was known to the high priest. This disciple was able to get Peter inside the courtyard (John 18:15).

The servant girl at the door asked Peter – or maybe accused Peter – of being one of Jesus' disciples. Surely, we too know the sense of shame that would soon overwhelm Peter. Perhaps, he blocked out those feelings, in order to keep watching Annas question Jesus. John tells us that the night was cold and so, along with the servants and officers, Peter

warmed himself at the charcoal fire (John 18:18). This was as close to Jesus as Peter could get.

John is the only Gospel writer to include these preliminary questions by Annas, before the formal part of Jesus' trial began. Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and teachings (John 18:19). Jesus' answers show that He wondered why He was being questioned since everything He had taught had been in the open. He tells Annas to call for witnesses (John 18:21).

Immediately, one of the officers gives a sharp blow with his hand to Jesus, supposedly for disrespecting the high priest (John 18:22). Jesus stands by His innocence; He had nothing to apologise for. Then, Annas, probably sensing that the formal stage of the trial should begin, (especially as only the *current* high priest, Caiaphas, could bring charges before the Roman authorities), had Jesus sent to Caiaphas.

Part 2: The formal Jewish trial

(Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:63-71)

And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree... And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

- Mark 14:53-62

In the early hours of the morning, messages must have been quickly sent to the members who made up the ruling council. The council of the

Sanhedrin (literally, "*sitting together*") was the supreme Jewish council for political, religious, civil and criminal matters. The full council seems to have been made up of seventy-one members, although perhaps for Jesus' trial only a smaller quorum of members was assembled. Ordinarily, the Sanhedrin met in "the Hall of Hewn Stone," close by to the temple (the *Babylonian Talmud* suggests that it was built *into* the wall of the temple so that it was half in the sacred area and half out).

The council gathered at the high priests' home for this urgent matter. Yet, there is something unusual about these events. For example,

- Why was the council meeting at night? Even if the council reached their verdict after sunrise, it was nonetheless unusual to begin a trial so hastily, and at night.
- Why too, did the council meet in the restricted home of the high priest, instead of their usual meeting place?

They seem to want to keep private what should be open and public. Before God, a trial is a serious matter. The ninth commandment warns against bearing false witness (Ex. 20:16). So too, Deuteronomy 19:16-19 says that a malicious and false witness should have done to them what they intended to do to the innocent person.

Jesus' trial began with unreliable witnesses. Some claimed that He had said that He would destroy the temple and in three days build another, "*not made with hands* (Mark 14:58)." Of course, Jesus meant the temple of His body (John 2:19-21). Yet even here, their testimony didn't agree. Finally, the high priest himself began to question Jesus, but our Lord remained silent, giving no answer. Isaiah 53:7 had foretold of the Suffering Servant of the LORD;

*"... like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth."*

The critical moment came when Jesus was asked: "*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed* (Mark 14:61; note, Matthew's "*the Son of*

God," has the same meaning. See Matt. 26:63). The high priest even instructed Jesus to answer in the "name of the Living God (Matt. 26:63)." Jesus affirmed that He was. Furthermore, He said that they would see Him, the Son of Man, "seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62)." In answering this way, Jesus was claiming the eternal and universal authority of God to reign and (see Dan. 7:13-14; also Psalm 110:2). As the Apostle Paul said about Jesus;

God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- *Philippians 2:9-10*

Jesus' answer was enough to convict Him of blasphemy. In fact, they "all" condemned Him as deserving death (Mark 14:64). Then, some of the members of the Sanhedrin spat on Him, covered His face and struck Him, mockingly saying, "Prophecy! (Mark 14:65)" The next phase of His trial would soon begin. They would take Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, as only Pilate had the authority to put Jesus to death.

Peter's further denials of Jesus

(Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:25-27)

And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And

**Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him,
"Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."
And he went out and wept bitterly.**

- Luke 22:55-62

All four Gospels complete the story of Peter's denials. John tells us that Peter's first denial was when Jesus was being questioned by Annas, whilst his second and third denials were when Jesus was before Caiaphas (John 18:17; 25-27). Matthew, Mark and Luke place Peter's denials as one section, although they all mention that there was some time between the denials. Luke says "*a little while*" passed between the first two denials, whilst "*about an hour*" passed between the second and third denials (Luke 22:58-59).

Matthew tells us that Peter's second denial was in the "*entrance*" (Matt. 26:71; Mark says "*gateway*"; see Mark 14:68). This second denial was before "*another servant girl*" who was with bystanders (Matt. 26:71). Peter's Galilean accent or looks seem to have hinted to them that he was connection to Jesus (Mark 14:70). His third denial was likewise before the bystanders (Matt. 26:71-72), including a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, Malchus. This third accuser recognised Peter from the garden (John 18:26).

Terribly, Peter invoked a curse upon himself, swearing, "*I do not know the man* (Matt. 26:74)." Thank God that He did not take heed of Peter's curse!

When the rooster crowed, Peter remembered Jesus' words (Mark 14:72) and Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). Peter went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62).

Thank God that our standing before Him is not on the basis of our faithfulness, or none of us would stand. Thank God for the obedience of His Son, Christ Jesus, on our behalf. Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks: *How are you righteous before God?* Answer:

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God's

commandments, of never having kept any of them, and of still being inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without any merit of my own, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is accept this gift with a believing heart.



PEOPLE IN THE GOSPELS: SIMON PETER

Out of all the people that we meet in the Gospels, there are none that we get to know quite as well, as Peter. He was a fisherman from Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee (John 1:44). Wherever Jesus went, Peter was with Him, in the thick of things.

It was Peter who, when others had turned their backs on Jesus and walked away, said to Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (John 6:68).”

So too, Peter had been the first of the disciples to confess that Jesus was the Christ. When the people were guessing at the identity of Jesus *maybe He is John the Baptist, or Elijah, or another prophet* Peter confessed: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16).”

Yet, Peter also felt Jesus’ rebuke on more than one occasion. Perhaps, none had stung him so much as when Jesus had said to him, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man (Matt. 16:23).”

On the night that Jesus was arrested, Peter had boldly claimed: “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away... Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you! (Matt. 26:33-35) Later that night Peter denied Jesus three times by firelight.

Perhaps, the lesson is that we are never so weak as when we think

that we are strong. Sometimes we can be so sure of ourselves that we lose all sense of how weak we are.

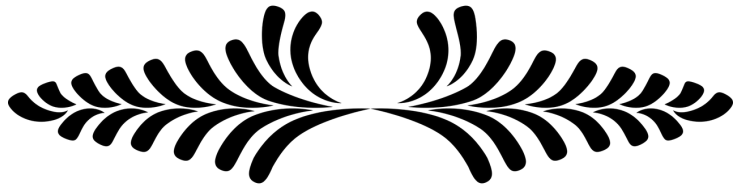
In fact, however bold we may feel to scold Peter, or think him foolish for making such a claim that he didn't keep, surely, every Christian knows the deep sense of shame that comes from denying our Lord. Luke says that at the moment of Peter's third denial, Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). We can only imagine the look of compassion in our Lord's eyes as they locked with Peter's. Finally, Peter broke. He went outside and wept bitterly.

In the joy of the resurrection that followed, three days later, I suppose that Peter still felt a sense of unease. There was unfinished business between him and the Lord Jesus: the issue of his denials had to be dealt with. *Is my failure final? Has He forgiven me?*

The moment of reconciliation came soon after. In John 21, the risen Lord Jesus prepares breakfast on the beach for His disciples, including another "charcoal fire (John 21:9)." By this fire's light, Jesus now gives Peter the opportunity to confess Him three times. He asks him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me? (John 21:16)" Three times Peter, though grieved, confesses: "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you (John 21:16)."

Any hints of resentment on our Lord's side are completely removed. In forgiving him, Jesus entrusted His most treasured possession to him: His people. He said, "Feed my sheep (John 21:17)." He was saying, "Peter, your denial of Me was wrong. But I forgive you, and more than that, I am giving you a position of responsibility in my church. I am entrusting my sheep, whom I died for, to you. Feed them."

If there are any lessons for you and I, surely it is that our Lord will do the same for us. May you confess your love for Him! May He forgive and restore, just as He has shown that He will.



10.

Friday (part 2) – The King on trial before the Roman authorities

In 1961, a stone inscription (82 x 65cm) was discovered in the ruins of the ancient coastal city of Caesarea with the writing, "*Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea.*"

Pilate was native to Italy, but he was appointed governor of Judea from 26 to 36 AD. Judea had become a Roman province in 6 AD. Pilate's primary residence was in Caesarea, approximately 90km from Jerusalem, however he was in Jerusalem for the Passover.

Pilate is often remembered for his violence and ruthlessness (see Luke 13:1-3). The ancient historian, Josephus, recounted when during the night, he sent "*images of Caesar that are called ensigns, into Jerusalem.*" Such disrespect of the holy city infuriated the Jews. A "*vast number*" protested before Pilate, laying prostrate on the ground for five days and nights and baring their necks at his threat to slaughter them. Although Pilate backed down, he was eventually recalled to Rome when he violently suppressed a Samaritan demonstration (see *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.4). He disappears from the historical record from this point onwards.

Herod Antipas was the other ruler to play a part in Jesus' trial. His father, Herod the Great had ten wives, one of whom gave birth to Antipas. Herod the Great (72 – 4 BC) had re-built the temple into the grand structure that it was at Jesus' time. He was also responsible for the slaughter of the innocents soon after Jesus' birth (Matt. 2:16).

Herod Antipas had John the Baptist bound and put him in prison, "*for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife*" - who was also his niece - "*because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her (Matthew 14:3-4)."*" Herod was called a *king* (Mark 6:14), but in reality, he had been demoted by his father and served as an administrator in the provinces of Galilee and Perea, east of the Jordan

River. He served from 4 BC to 39 AD. Eventually, he was banished by the Roman Emperor Caligula to Gaul.

Sent to Pilate

(Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28)

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

- Matthew 27:1-2

Under Roman rule, the Jewish court had lost the power to execute criminals, and so Jesus was sent to Pilate. This happened shortly after sunrise on the Friday (Mark 15:1). The location of Pilate's headquarters ("*praetorium*") is not known, but it is likely that it was either on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount (Antonia Fortress), or at Herod's palace near the western entrance to the city. Either way, John records that those accompanying Jesus "*did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover* (John 18:28)." For a Jew to go inside a covered Gentile residence not open to the sky would mean that they would become ceremonially unclean. Ritualistic cleansing would be required. It was more convenient for Pilate to come outside to them. As events unfold, it is clear that the chief priests and elders of the people had one outcome in mind for Jesus: death.

Can you imagine the courts of heaven watching on as Jesus, who gave life to all things in the beginning (John 1:3), and before whom every knee will bow (Phil. 2:10), submitting to trial before this Roman governor! It is no wonder that angels long to look into these things (1 Pet. 1:12).

Judas' death

(Matthew 27:3-10)

And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests,

taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.
- Matthew 27:5-8

Of the four Gospels, only Matthew records the death of Judas, saying that he hanged himself (Matt. 27:5). Further to this, the book of Acts says, *"this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood (Acts 1:18-19)."* Possibly, this field was in the notorious Hinnom Valley, where child sacrifices had occurred in the days of Jeremiah (see Jer. 32:35).

How are we to make sense of the two accounts of Judas' death? Both are true; Matthew is describing how Judas took his own life, whilst Acts focuses on the final state of Judas' body. One possibility is that after Judas hanged himself, his body was either cut from its position or fell naturally and ended up breaking open. Remember that under Jewish law, the land was defiled if a hanged criminal remained on a tree overnight (see Deut. 21:22-23).

It is also worth noting that the Acts account of Judas end fills in details that Matthew leaves out. A person reading Matthew's Gospel might ask why it was called "the Field of Blood," when Judas' death was by bloodless hanging? Acts explains that his blood was, in fact, spilt when his body fell.

Matthew tells us that Judas' death was anticipated by Scripture. He draws from both Jeremiah and Zechariah when he says;

"And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me (Matt. 27:10; see Jer. 19:1-13; Zech. 11:11-13)."

In Jeremiah 19, Jeremiah had broken an earthenware vessel as a sign of how the LORD would “*break this people and this city* (Jer. 19:11).” Judas’ end was just as tragic. His betrayal price was thirty pieces of silver; approximately four months’ wages. Afterward, his guilt let him broken, without hope.

Repentance results in restoration before God, and if possible, others (see Luke 19:1-10). Judas, in his crushing despair, never appears to have turned to God. In *Pilgrims Progress* we are warned about a man who was once “*fair and flourishing*” in his profession of faith, but who was now trapped in a cage. Christian asked him how he came to be trapped and why he couldn’t escape. His terrifying answer is that he has shut himself out of all the king’s promises – and repentance was too late for him.

In contrast to Judas, Peter was restored and given the opportunity to confess his love for Jesus three times (John 21:15-19).

Jesus’ trial before Pilate

(Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:2-5; John 18:29-38a)

And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.”

– Luke 23:2-4

Returning to Jesus’ trial before Pilate, Matthew tells us that He was silent before His accusers. Luke records the three charges that were made to Pilate against Jesus;

- One, that He was “*misleading our nation* (Luke 23:2).” The implication being that He was stirring up trouble in the people.

- Two, that He was *"forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar (Luke 23:2)."* This was false, as earlier Jesus had said, *"render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Luke 20:25)."*
- Three, that He was *"saying that he himself is Christ, a king (Luke 23:2)."*

Note that these three charges were of a political nature, unlike the earlier charges of blasphemy before the Jewish court. The only answer Jesus gave was to say, *"You have said so,"* in response to Pilate's question about whether He was the king of the Jews (Matt. 27:11). Pilate was amazed at Jesus' silence (Matt. 27:14). Probably, as governor, he had witnessed many accused criminals give passionate, or bitter, defences of themselves. Here was an accused man, silent.

After hearing the accusations, Pilate gave his response to the chief priests and the crowds: *"I find no guilt in this man (Luke 23:4)."* Luke records that three times Pilate declares Jesus to be not guilty, or not deserving of death (see Luke 23:4, 14, 22). However, this did not satisfy Jesus' accusers, leaving Pilate at a crossroads: Would he uphold justice or succumb to the crowd?

At some point during the trial, John records Jesus saying to Pilate, *"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world... For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice (John 18:36-37)."* To which Pilate replied, *"What is truth?"*

The lesson is clear: How we respond to Jesus shows where we stand in regards to truth. He *is* truth (John 14:6) – the Word of the True God, in flesh. Therefore, there is no more vital question to answer, but do we listen to His voice? To listen to His voice means we love, trust, obey, worship and revere Him as the Scriptures reveal Him.

Jesus' trial before Herod Antipas (Luke. 23:6-12)

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer... And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

– Luke 23:6-12

After hearing that Jesus came from Galilee, and being in a predicament, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas. Galilee was part of his jurisdiction. Herod Antipas had heard reports about Jesus, but he had never met Him. Yet surely, Herod had made the connection between Jesus and John the Baptist, who he had earlier executed. John the Baptist had said that he was merely a herald going before Jesus, preparing "*the way of the Lord* (Mark 1:3)." He had declared that Jesus was the "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29)." As great as John the Baptist was, he was nonetheless unworthy of untying Jesus' sandals (Mark 1:7).

Luke alone records the events with Jesus before Herod. Herod was only interested in seeing a miracle from Jesus. He begins by questioning Jesus "*at some length* (Luke 23:9)." Once again, Jesus remained silent and this clearly frustrated Herod. Nearby the chief priests and scribes continued to vehemently accuse Jesus (Luke 23:10).

Herod was a weak man. When he didn't get the response from Jesus that he wanted, he resorted to mocking Him, along with his soldiers. He dressed our Lord in "*splendid clothing*" and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11). Wickedness unites, and that day, those two political rivals became friends – united by their unjust treatment of Christ Jesus. Little do they realise that there was only one, true King that day – and Herod had the folly to laugh at Him.

Silence is sometimes a sign of trust in God. Peter tells us that Jesus is our example in life:

"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Pet. 2:21-23)."

After Jesus was sent back to Pilate, Pilate again tried to release Jesus, finding that He was not *"guilty of any of your charges against him (Luke 23:15)."* Pilate declares that Herod too, had found that Jesus had done *"nothing deserving of death (Luke 23:16)."* In an attempt to appease the crowd, Pilate said, *"I will therefore punish and release him (Luke 23:17)."*

Barabbas chosen, Jesus condemned

(Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:38b-40)

And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead... So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

– Mark 15:7-14

All four Gospels record that Barabbas was chosen for release, whilst Jesus was chosen for death. Ironically, Barabbas' name means "son of the father (*Bar = son and Abbas = father*). The True "Son of the Father" would suffer.

Matthew calls Barabbas *"a notorious prisoner (Matt. 27:16)."* Mark and Luke call him a murderer who was connected to an insurrection in

Jerusalem (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19). Possibly this was a Jewish freedom movement that had turned violent. John calls him "a robber (John 18:40)."

Three things are notable about Barabbas' release;

- One, it was custom that during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pilate would realise a prisoner at the people's request (Mark 15:6-8).
- Two, Pilate sensed envy behind the chief priests' actions (Mark 15:10). What did they envy about Jesus? Perhaps, it was His power and compassion for the crowds, which drew people to Him.
- Three, Pilate was reluctant to condemn Jesus, at least in part, because his wife had suffered in a dream on account of "*this righteous man* (Matt. 27:19)."

What was the source of the dream? Was it from God, as a sign of His Son's innocence? Surely it was! Yet in the sovereign plan of God, the dream was not enough to change the course of events.

The chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas, and not Jesus (Mark 10:11). They cried, "*Crucify, crucify him!* (Luke 23:21)" Pilate hoped for a compromise: punish Jesus, then release Him (Luke 23:16). But the people's will prevailed and by the end, in front of the crowd, Pilate washed his hands, saying, "*I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves* (Matt. 27:24)." It is never wise to go against conscience. Pilate's final act was to have Jesus scourged and handed over to them to be crucified. Chillingly, the people responded by saying, "*His blood be on us and our children!* (Matt. 27:24-25)"

The Gospels seem to show that Jesus was flogged twice. The first flogging was lighter than the later scourging, and it seems to have occurred after Barabbas was released. It is mentioned in Luke 23:16, where Pilate says, "*I will therefore punish and release him,*" and was carried out after Barabbas was released. John describes this flogging by saying, "*Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him* (John 19:1)." In Pilate's

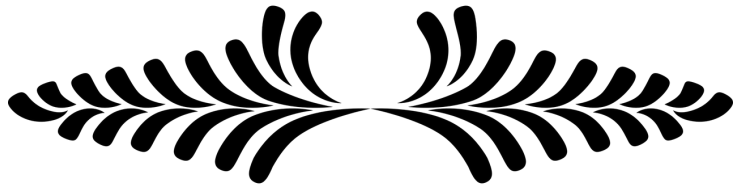
mind, he hoped that this lighter flogging would appease the crowd, so that he could release Jesus who he knew to be innocent.

We must ask, how did Barabbas live out the rest of his days, knowing that *Another* had taken his place in death? And what of us?

*Upon a Life I have not lived,
Upon a Death I did not die,
Another's Life; Another's Death:
I stake my whole eternity.*

*Not on the tears which I have shed;
Not on the sorrows I have known:
Another's tears; Another's griefs:
On them I rest, on them alone.*

- Horatius Bonar



11.

Friday (part 3) – The King walks to His death

*If a ruler listens to falsehood,
all his officials will be wicked.*

- Proverbs 29:12

This Proverb came true when Pontius Pilate listened to the falsehoods spoken against Jesus. Although he knew them to be wrong, he nonetheless gave in to the wishes of Jesus' accusers. Barabbas, the "notorious prisoner (Matt. 27:16)" was chosen for freedom, and Jesus was condemned to death.

Pilate attempts to pacify the crowd

(John 19:1-16)

Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"... So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

- John 19:4-11

John's Gospel includes some details not found in the other Gospels. Several things become clear at this point;

- **The crowd could not be placated** - the soldiers mocked Jesus, dressing Him as a King. Hoping that this would satisfy the crowd, Pilate went out again to the crowd and said that he found no guilt in Jesus. Jesus then appeared wearing the mock crown and robe. Pilate said, ironically, "*Behold the man!* (John 19:5)" He seems to be mocking the crowd by implying: "Is this the man

that you are so threatened by? Is this the man causing such anger in you? Look at Him now!" But this only further infuriated the crowd, who call, again, for His crucifixion. Again, Pilate declares that he finds no guilt in Jesus, but the crowd declare that Jesus was deserving of death for making himself *"the Son of God (John 19:7)."* Realising that he could not placate the crowd, Pilate *"was even more afraid (John 19:8)."* Fear undermines justice.

- **Pilate's bewilderment at Jesus' silence** - Returning inside, Pilate questioned Jesus once more. He seemed frustrated at Jesus' silence, eventually saying, *"Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? (John 19:10)"* Pilate wanted Jesus to know the power that he had. Jesus replies, *"You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above (John 19:11)."* Nonetheless, Jesus bears no personal resentment against Pilate, saying, *"he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin (John 19:11)."* Everything shows us that Jesus trusts God the Father.
- **The question of loyalty** - at this point Pilate clearly favoured Jesus' case, but the relentless calls of the crowd scared him. The crowd add to the fear-mongering by saying, *"If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend (John 19:12)."* This was an implied threat of disloyalty by Pilate to Caesar – a serious charge indeed – and the final straw for Pilate. Sitting down on the judgment seat, a place called *"The Stone Pavement"* or *"Gabbatha,"* he again said to the Jews, *"Behold you King! (John 19:13-15)"* The chief priests pledge their loyalty to Caesar: *"We have no king but Caesar (John 19:15)."*

After declaring Jesus' death sentence, Pilate had Jesus flogged (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15). This second flogging, or *"scourging,"* was far more severe than the earlier flogging. The dreaded Roman whip, the *flagellum*, was made of plaited leather with pieces of bone or lead woven into it. Jewish stripes were limited to forty lashes (see Deut. 25:3; 2 Cor. 11:24), but there was no such limitation for the Romans. Josephus describes one man who was *"whipped till every one of their inward parts*

appeared naked." This type of scourging could be so severe that people died as a result of their wounds. Probably one of Pilate's soldiers was given this grisly task. None of the Gospels describe the gory details other than to say that Pilate *"having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified (Matt. 27:26; also Mark 15:15)."*

**Jesus humiliated by the Roman soldiers
(Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20)**

And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ... And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

- Mark 15:16-20

Now bloodied and weak, Pilate's soldiers then took Jesus back *"into the governor's headquarters (Mark 15:16)."* Remember that the Jews themselves would not enter here, but they stayed outside in order to remain ceremonially clean for the Passover (John 18:28). At this time, *"the whole battalion"* gathered before Jesus (Matt. 27:27). At full strength, a battalion would number six hundred soldiers, but probably it simply means that all the soldiers present were involved in humiliating Jesus.

They stripped Jesus, put a robe on Him (Matthew describes it as "scarlet," Matt. 27:28; Mark as "purple," Mark 15:17), they made a crown of thorns and put it on His head and gave Him a staff. Then, mockingly, they paid homage to Him, saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews (Matt. 27:29)."* According to Suetonius *"Hail Caesar!"* was part of the greeting given by gladiators who entered the arena. Probably, these Roman soldiers were mocking the Jewish people in saying calling Jesus their king. Then, the humiliation turned violent, as they spat on Jesus and struck Him on the head with the staff. Finally, they re-dressed Him in His

clothes in preparation for the walk to Golgotha. Our Lord's humiliation was brutal.

Why did they mock Him? Couldn't even one soldier step forward and put an end to this pointless and inhumane humiliation? Surely, our human hearts are twisted and cruel. Jesus was no threat to them, and yet they make sport of Him. Whatever motives these soldiers had for mocking Jesus, it fulfilled Jesus' earlier prophecy that the chief priests and scribes would "deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged (Matt. 20:17)."

*Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.*

- Stuart Townend

**Simon of Cyrene carries the King's cross
(Matthew 27:32-33; Mark 15:21-22; Luke 23:26)**

And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull).

- Mark 15:21-22

Jesus began the walk to the place of His death: "The Place of a Skull", known locally in Aramaic as "Golgotha (John 19:17; in Latin *calvaria*)." It's exact location is unknown, except to say that it was somewhere "outside the gate (Heb. 13:12)," "near the city" of Jerusalem (John 19:20) and it had a garden with a new tomb in it (John 19:41).

Jesus, weakened from the scourging could not carry His cross. Simon of Cyrene is pressed into service by the Roman soldiers to carry it for Him. Cyrene was a region west of Egypt with a population of Jewish settlers. Probably, Simon had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. He seems to be an innocent passerby, simply "coming in from the country (Mark 15:21)."

Why do the Gospels mention Simon of Cyrene by name? Why too, are his sons, Alexander and Rufus, mentioned (Mark 15:21)? Surely it is so that later readers of the Gospels could authenticate the story with them. Alexander and Rufus could testify and say, "Yes, this is the story of our father carrying the cross of Christ Jesus. This is how it all happened." From this time forward, their lives were entangled with Jesus'. Surely too, they came to see the great meaning behind the Cross: God the Son – the Innocent – dying in their place.



This picture shows a model of the city of Jerusalem as it may have looked in 66 AD, looking from east to West (known as 'the Holyland Model of Jerusalem', scale 1:50). The traditional site of *Golgotha* is marked, approximately, with a red oval to the West of the city.



PEOPLE IN THE GOSPELS: PONTIUS PILATE

Have you ever thought about what it must have been like for Pontius Pilate to be put in a position where he had to choose between doing what the crowd wanted him to do, and doing what he knew to be right? Power can be a fearful thing! I suspect that few leaders would resist the crowd.

The sad truth was that Pilate was put into this position because of *envy*. Mark 15:10 says that Pilate “perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered” Jesus up to him. Envy, whether it takes root in us as an individual, or as a group of people, plays on our minds, subtly telling us that we are not getting what we think we deserve. Envy is the irrational sin of an ungrateful heart, and just as oil and water cannot mix, so too, the person with envy in their heart cannot love God, nor trust in Him. Envy keeps true faith at bay and strangles the true spiritual life.

The first mention in the Gospels of Pontius Pilate’s actions is in Luke 13. Pilate, as Roman governor of the province of Judea, had at some unknown time, mixed the blood of some Galileans with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1). In other words, Pilate had brutally killed some people as they came to worship God. His mission was to maintain stability in the Empire, even if that meant ensuring peace by the sword.

At the trial of the Lord Jesus, Pilate was bewildered at Jesus’ silence (John 19:10). So too, he must have been bewildered, even scared, when as he sat in judgment, his wife sent him a message

saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream (Matt. 27:19).”

Whatever her understanding of the situation, God revealed to her that Pilate should side with Jesus and not with the crowd.

Several times Pilate tried to persuade the crowd to let him realise Jesus. Yet, as the crowd grew more and more insistent that Jesus die *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!* – Pilate must have thought *what have I got to do with this Jewish dispute? How did I ever end up in this situation?*

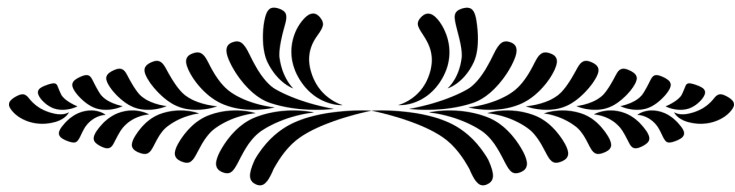
In an earthly sense, Pilate is the person who has the final word about Jesus’ fate. He was afraid of the situation getting out of control. In order to appease the crowd, he sacrificed justice. Amongst Pilate’s final words to Jesus, he said, “What is truth? (John 18:38)”

And so, Pilate’s story moves from envy, to mob pressure, to his uneasy knowledge that what he was doing was wrong, to finally trying to release himself from guilt. In front of the crowd, he washed his hands, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves (Matt. 27:24).” We know that that could never do.

History is silent as to Pilate’s life after this, except that he was recalled to Rome a few years later. But, we do know what happened to Jesus – and so we confess in the Apostles’ Creed:

*“I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
And born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again...”*

Pilate’s question of the crowd, is the same question asked of us today: “What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? (Matt. 27:22)” May we confess Him as our Saviour and submit to Him as our Lord.



12.

Friday (part 4) - The King dies

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee.
I lay in dust, life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red,
life that shall endless be.*

- George Mattheson (1842-1906)

Luke's Gospel includes more information than the other Gospels about Jesus' journey to Golgotha.

Walking to the Golgotha (Luke 23:27-31)

And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

- Luke 23:27-31

The sight of Jesus walking to His death drew a crowd. In addition to Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross (Mark 15:21), Luke tells us that following Him was, "*a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him* (Luke 23:27)." Yet, astoundingly, Jesus tells them to weep for themselves and their children;

"For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that

never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry? (Luke 23:28-31)"

Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. Josephus said of that time: "As soon as the [Roman] army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury, (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done,) Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple (Jewish Wars, 7.1.1)."

When Jesus spoke of them wanting the hills to fall on them, He is quoting the LORD's punishment on Israel in Hosea 10:8. The point is that if terrible things awaited the innocent Jesus, the "green wood," how much worse would it be for those who are guilty, such as the nation of Israel? As fire consumes dry timber more easily than green timber, so too the Roman army to destroy Jerusalem as a sign of God's judgment. This time would be so terrible that women would wish that they had never borne children to see such awful days.

As part of this, the destruction of the temple was God's judgment on the nation of Israel and a foretaste of the final judgment to come for all people (see Rev. 6:15-17). Even on His way to His death, Jesus warns of the seriousness of God's judgment upon sin - and it is He alone who saves us from this coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10).

The crucifixion of the King

(Matthew 27:34-44; Mark 15:23-32; Luke 23:32-38; John 19:17-27)

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfil the Scripture which says,

**"They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."**

- John 19:23-24

The site traditionally thought to have been where Jesus was crucified is on the western side of Jerusalem city, outside the city wall. All four Gospels say, as devastatingly as Mark: *"They crucified him (Mark 15:24)."* Yet, several other things happened at this time;

- **The sign on the cross:** Pilate put an inscription - *"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"* - on the cross. It was written in three languages: Aramaic (the language of Jerusalem), Latin (the language of the Romans) and Greek (the common language of the Empire). The sign indicated Jesus' crime. He was a political threat. In addition, the sign was probably also Pilate's way of mocking the Jews. The chief priests protested this, but Pilate refused to change the sign.

ישו ענצרתא מלך יהודיא

Aramaic

IESVS NAZARENVS REX IVDÆORVM

Latin

ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ

Greek

- **Wine and gall:** They offered Jesus wine mixed with gall to drink (Matt. 27:34; or *"myrrh"* according to Mark 15:23). Probably, although noxious, it was intended to numb physical pain, but Jesus refused it.
- **Gambling for His garments:** Jesus' garments were divided into four parts; one for each soldier (John 19:23). His tunic, which was worn under the cloak, was woven in one piece, and therefore the soldiers decided to cast lots for it. Thus, a game of chance fulfilled the prophecy of Scripture: *"They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots (John 19:24; see Psalm 22:18)."*

- **Mocked by all** - The sight of Jesus dying on the cross had become a spectacle. It caused people to mock Him when they thought about how He had saved others, but now He seemed helpless to save Himself. Jesus had restored the sight of blind men (Luke 18:43), healed lepers (Luke 17:14) and raised the dead to life (Luke 7:15; 8:55), but now He seemed to be weak. The mocking came from four groups of people;
 - Firstly, those who *"passed by"* derided Him for saying that He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (Matt. 27:40).
 - Secondly, the Jewish leaders mocked Him, saying, *"let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him (Matt. 27:42)."* Surely, if He is the Son of God then God would save Him.
 - Thirdly, the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus (Luke 23:36-37). Their guilt is not as strong as the Jewish leaders who should have known better. Psalm 69 is a song of lament by David, in which the faithful Israelite suffers for wrong. He says, *"for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink (Psalm 69:21)."* On the cross, Jesus fulfilled those words, saying, *"I thirst (John 19:28)."* The soldiers offered Him sour wine, probably a cheap wine, as a way of further humiliating Him.
 - The fourth group to mock Jesus were the criminals executed on either side of Him (Matt. 27:44). They reviled Jesus, that was until one of them repented (Luke 23:39-42)
- **Prayer for forgiveness** – Jesus prayed for the Roman soldiers who were to execute Him: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34)."*

Jesus was crucified at *"the third hour (9a.m.)"* according to Mark 15:25. However, according to John 19:14, He was delivered by Pilate to be crucified *"about the sixth hour,"* that is, noon. In the ancient world, before watches, time was approximated more than we are used to. The day was divided into four parts and generally called by the first hour of the part, i.e. first hour, third hour, sixth hour or ninth hour (e.g. Matt.

20:5, John 4:6, Acts 2:15, Acts 3:1). Probably, Mark's "third hour" means that Jesus was crucified *in* the third hour from 9a.m to noon, whilst John indicates that it was closer to midday.

Two criminals on either side of the King (Luke 23:39-43)

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- Luke 23:39-43

Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant prophesied by Isaiah (the four Servant Songs are Isaiah 42:1–9; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). He was, "numbered with the transgressors (see Is. 53:12 and Luke 22:37)." Whilst the other Gospels mention the criminals crucified alongside Jesus (Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27; John 19:18), Luke gives the most attention to them;

- **Two responses** - one of the criminals hardens to Jesus even as his life was ebbing away. But the other criminal was prepared for death. He recognized that they were deserving of death, but Jesus' was innocent (Luke 23:40-41).
- **A short prayer** – the repenting criminal prays one of the shortest prayers in the Bible: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom (Luke 23:42)." It was a request for salvation, which was the very thing that Christ Jesus was achieving at that moment on the cross.
- **A salvation promise** - Jesus graciously receives this criminal's request and promises to be with Him that day in paradise, where he will await the final and glorious resurrection from the dead (Rev. 21:1-4).

*The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away:
Wash all my sins away,
Wash all my sins away;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.*

- William Cowper (1731-1800)

The King's death

(Matthew 27:45-56; Mark 15:33-41; Luke 23:44-49; John 19:28-37)

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

- Mark 15:37-39

Crucifixion was commonly used by the Romans to execute criminals, especially those convicted of political crimes against the Roman Empire. Josephus says that thousands of Jewish people were crucified around Judea in the first century AD. During the siege of Jerusalem from 66-70 AD, he says that "every day five hundred" or more people were killed in this way (*Jewish Wars*, 5.11).

Crucifixion was intended to publicly humiliate the offender, in order to deter others from similar crimes. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion several extraordinary things happened;

- **Darkness over the land** – At the very moment when the sun should have been at its peak, it's light failed. From noon until 3pm the whole land was covered in darkness (Mark 15:33). This was not a solar eclipse as Passover occurs during a full moon. The darkness of the sky was an ominous sign of lament over what was happening. In the Old Testament, darkness was often a symbol of judgment (see Amos 8:10 and Joel 3:15). The evening sacrifice

was offered by the priests about the ninth hour (see *Jewish Antiquities* 14.4.3).

- **The Psalm of the cross** - Jesus cried out in Aramaic the opening line of Psalm 22: *"My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"* (Matt. 27:46). *We can only wonder, did Jesus continue reciting the Psalms to Himself on the cross? God cannot be split, yet at the cross the Son was forsaken by the Father. Some thought that He was calling for Elijah's help and so, mockingly, waited to see if Elijah would rescue Him* (Mark 15:36).
- **The curtain torn** – there seems to have been two curtains in the temple. Both curtains faced east - the direction from which Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden. The way back in to God's presence was appropriately from that direction. The first curtain was between the Holy Place and the Court of the Priests. This curtain could be seen by those in the temple area, and possibly by the Centurion guarding Jesus (Luke 23:46). Josephus says it was, *"fifty-five cubits altitude, and sixteen in breadth (25m x 8m)"* and made from *"Babylonian curtain, embroidered with blue, and fine linen, and scarlet, and purple, and of a contexture that was truly wonderful (Jewish Wars 5.5)."* The colours represented the cosmos. Further in, there was the second curtain that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. Probably, it was this curtain that was torn (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). The way into the presence of God was now open through Jesus' death.
- **The ground shaking and opened tombs** – the earth shook at the time of Jesus' death, resulting in rocks being split. Matthew says, *"The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many* (Matt. 27:52-53).*"* Later, at the time of His resurrection there would be another *"great"* earthquake (Matt. 28:2).
- **The Centurion's declaration** – when the Centurion keeping watch over Jesus saw all that had happened, Matthew records

him saying, *"Truly this was the Son of God!"* (Matt. 27:54)" Luke records him saying: *"Certainly this man was innocent!"* (Luke 23:47)" The irony is that this pagan soldier's testimony was true.

- **Witnesses of His death** – amongst those *"looking on from a distance"* was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, the mother of the sons of Zebedee and Salome (Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41).

John includes additional details in his account of Jesus' death, such as how Jesus cared for His mother's future by saying to her, *"Woman, behold, your son!"* and to the *"disciple whom he loved"* (probably John himself), *"Behold, your mother!"* (John 19:26-27)"

Jesus' final words were, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)." He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. John writes as an eyewitness of all these events (John 19:35). His purpose in writing is *"so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"* (John 20:31)."

The Jews did not want dead bodies publicly displayed on the Sabbath, as that would defile the land (see Deut. 21:22-23). Hence, they requested of Pilate that the criminal's legs be broken, in order to hasten their deaths. Realising that Jesus' body was lifeless, the soldiers did not need to do this, in accordance with Scripture: *"you shall not break any of its bones"* (Ex. 12:46)." The Passover lamb *must not to have any of its bones broken*. Instead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear and *"blood and water"* came out. Death was assured and Scripture again fulfilled: *"They will look on him whom they have pierced"* (John 19:37; see Zech. 12:10)."

What did Christ's death achieve?

It is hallowed ground that we stand upon. The deep waters of the cross show us the commitment of God towards His own glory, His loyal love for us and the necessity of satisfying justice. Bound from eternity past, the Father planned salvation motivated by love, the Son freely

achieved salvation by His death and the Spirit now writes these truths on our hearts and minds.

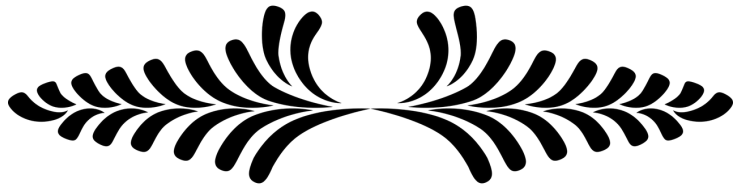
Often death seems meaningless and a waste. Yet, the death of Christ on the cross was both unique and meaningful. His death achieved something that could only be achieved by God. God's purity is such that He cannot look on sin, but at the cross, God the Son willingly bore the sin of those who trust in Him, upon Himself. Paul explains:

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

When Robert Murray McCheyne thought about the cross, he said:

"Not until I tread the holy grounds of the New Heavens and New Earth – only then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe..."



13.

Friday (part 5) - The King is buried

“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.”

- Deuteronomy 21:22-23

“...the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those that were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the going down of the sun.”

- Josephus, Jewish Wars 4.5.2 (written at the end of first century AD)

“When any person departeth this life, let the dead body, upon the day of burial, be decently attended from the house to the place appointed for publick burial, and there immediately interred, without any ceremony.”

- Westminster Directory of Publick Worship (1645)

The process of taking Jesus' body from the cross and placing it in the tomb is a vital part of the Gospel story, hence all four Gospels record it. Surely, this was the time when the devils rejoiced, thinking that theirs was the victory. Surely, it looks like the Second Adam has failed, just like the first Adam. Yet, in three days time, death would be “swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54).”

Asking for the body

(Matthew 27:57-58; Mark 15:42-45; Luke 23:50-52; John 19:38)

And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for

the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

- Mark 15:42-45

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each mention Joseph of Arimathea by name as the man responsible for Jesus' burial.

Arimathea was possibly the birthplace of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1), situated several kilometres north of Jerusalem. Luke tells us, specifically, that it was "*a Jewish town (Luke 23:50).*" In addition to this, we know that Joseph of Arimathea was;

- Rich (Matt. 27:57)
- A "*good and righteous man (Luke 23:50).*"
- A "*respected member of the council (Mark 15:42),*" called the Sanhedrin, but that he had nonetheless, "*not consented to their decision and action (Luke 23:51)*" to condemn Jesus.
- Looking for the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43).
- A disciples of Jesus', but "*secretly for fear of the Jews (John 19:38).*"

Yet, that Passover afternoon Joseph had an opportunity to show his faith and devotion by courageously asking Pilate for Jesus' lifeless body. His position as a member of the Sanhedrin probably gave him access to Pilate that others, including the disciples, would not have had.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he had already died (Mark 15:44). Often a crucified person could take days to die a painful, horrible death. But sending for "*the centurion*" Pilate learned that it was true (Mark 15:45).

The Gospels go to pains to ensure that we know that Jesus was truly dead. With Pilate's permission, Joseph took our Lord's body down from the cross. We can imagine that this was a gruesome and public task. Presumably, many people were still passing by, and surely they

scoffed at Joseph as he carried out this sacred task on a shameful criminal. *We can but wonder – and learn – how at this critical moment, when the disciples' courage failed them, this secret disciple became bolder.*

Surely, for later readers of the Gospels, Joseph would verify, again and again, the claim that he took the body of Jesus from the cross and placed it in the tomb. He could testify that the Lord Jesus was well and truly dead.

Preparing the body

(Matthew 27:59; John 19:39-40)

Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

- John 19:39-40

Joseph of Arimathea was helped by Nicodemus, who was also a member of the Sanhedrin (John 3:1). Together, they prepared Jesus' body for a hasty burial before the Sabbath began at sunset.

The Jewish people treated the burial of the dead with great importance. In the Old Testament, David blessed the men of Jabesh-gilead, because they were loyal to King Saul and buried him (2 Sam. 2:5). In fact, to have a dishonourable death with no burial was a sign of shame and even judgment (see Jezebel in 1 Kings 21:23).

Egyptian burial customs involved embalming, that is, removing the internal organs and filling the body with spices. In contrast, Jewish burial customs involved binding spices against the outside of the body with linen cloths. These spices helped to stifle the smell of the putrefying flesh. As well as that, they were a way of honouring the deceased person.

Myrrh was a fragrant resin, which was used for joyful occasions as well as burials (see Prov. 7:17). Mixed with aloes it gave a pleasant smell. Myrrh was, of course, amongst the gifts given by the wise men at Jesus' birth (see Matt. 2:11).

The weight of the spices was about 32kg. Their 'gift' to our Messiah surely cost Joseph and Nicodemus much in terms of money, as well as face before the people. And yet, it could never be enough for the One through whom all things were made (John 1:3).

Matthew, Mark and Luke mention that the body was wrapped in a "linen shroud (Matt. 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53)," which was likely a large, single piece of cloth. John uses a different word ("linen cloths" John 19:40)," sometimes thought to be more like bandages. However, the words appear to be interchangeable (see Luke 23:53 and 24:12).

What happened to the bodies of the other two criminals?

Presumably, they were still struggling for life as Jesus' lifeless body was taken down and prepared for burial (John 19:32). When they did eventually die, we don't know what happened to their bodies. Given the Jewish high regard for the body, possibly before sunset their lifeless bodies were claimed and buried, as Jesus' was. Another possibility, is that given that they were Roman criminals, they were thrown on the city rubbish heap. Usually, when a Jewish person came in contact with a corpse, they would become unclean and would have to go through purification rituals (see Num. 19:11-13). They were, however, still allowed to celebrate Passover (see Num. 9:6-14). Whatever the case, that day one of the criminals was with Jesus in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Placing the body in the tomb

(Matthew 27:60-61; Mark 15:46-47; Luke 23:53-56; John 19:41-42)

It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

- Luke 23:54-56

In recent decades, more than 800 tombs have been discovered around Jerusalem, dating from the first century AD. Usually, tombs belonged to a family, and had enough space for many people to be buried. The body of the deceased would be laid in the tomb on a bench,

or in a niche cut into the side walls. After one year, the bones would be placed in an *ossuary* box made of limestone and kept within the tomb.

Several things are known about the tomb in which Jesus' body was placed, including that;

- The tomb was in a garden in the place where Jesus had been crucified (John 19:41).
- It was a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid (John 19:41).
- The tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:60).
- It was not a natural cave, but Joseph had "*cut in the rock* (Matt. 27:60; Luke 23:53 says, "*cut in stone*")" to make a cave-like structure.

Joseph's final act that afternoon was to roll a "*great stone* (Matt. 27:60)" against the entrance to the tomb, thereby securing it. Grave robbing was a problem at this time and was punishable by death by the Romans.

All four gospels record that there were witnesses who saw where Jesus' body was laid. Amongst the witnesses were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus, who is presumably also called "*the other Mary* (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47)." These women were sitting opposite the tomb as Joseph and Nicodemus did their work (Matt. 27:61). In Luke's words: "*The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid* (Luke 23:55)." With the Sabbath approaching at sunset, all work had to cease and so the women "*returned and prepared spices and ointments* (Luke 23:56)." So too, Joseph and Nicodemus ceased their work for the Sabbath. For each of them, surely their grief was heart wrenching.

The physical death of Jesus Christ is vital to the gospel of salvation. He was not unconscious and revived in the tomb, but truly lifeless. When He rose He defeated death. His burial fulfilled the prophecy about the *Servant of the LORD* in Isaiah 53:9;

"And they made his grave with the wicked

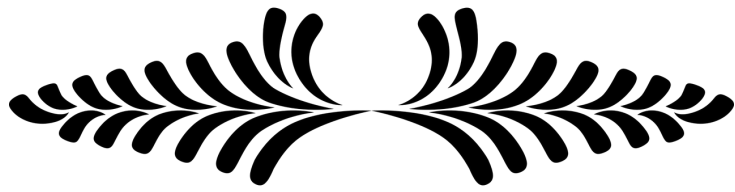
*and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.”*

For Joseph of Arimathea, that day he had opportunity to show that his devotion and love for Christ Jesus was indeed sincere.

*O happy day, that fixed my choice
On thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may this grateful heart rejoice,
And tell of Christ's redeeming blood.*

*Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away!*

- Phillip Dodderidge (1702-51)



14.

Saturday – The day of rest

"No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear."

- C.S Lewis

Grief reveals our dearest loves and treasures. It has as many outward expressions as human emotions allow. The Gospels are silent as to what the disciples did, and where they were, on the Saturday, the day after Jesus died. *Were they all staying in the same house? Were they in different houses? What did they say to one another as they tried to make sense of Judas' betrayal and demise, and Jesus' death?* Whatever the answers to these questions, surely, for the Eleven their grief was mixed with shame at their own cowardice.

Probably, on this Saturday the disciples were fearful that the Jewish leaders would also punish them (see John 20:19). And yet, perhaps somewhere in the back of their minds struck the thought that Jesus had said that He would rise from the dead (Matt. 12:40; 16:21, 17:23; 20:19; Mark 8:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:6-7; John 2:19; 10:18).

Resting on Sabbath (Luke 23:56b)

On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

- Luke 23:56b

The women, having seen the exact tomb in which Jesus' body had been laid (see Luke 23:55), rested on the Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown). God's Sabbath command for rest is grounded in His rest at creation (Ex. 20:11), and His salvation of His people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt (Deut. 5:15).

When Jesus rose from the dead, a new Lord's day would begin (Rev.1:10). We have a new Sabbath rest through Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:9).

Securing the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66)

The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' 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." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

- Matt. 27:62-66

The only activity recorded in the Gospels on that Saturday was by the chief priests and Pharisees. They still considered Jesus enough of a threat that they went to Pilate with a request to secure His tomb. They wanted to make sure that the dead Christ stayed dead!

They call Jesus an "*impostor*" (Matt. 27:63), and claim that He and His disciples were part of a "*fraud*" (Matt. 27:64)." An impostor is someone who deceives other people. How sad that Jesus, who *is* truth (John 14:6), is called such names! Peter, repeating Isaiah 53:9, says that no deceit was "*found in his mouth*" (1 Pet. 2:22)."

What was the threat that motivated the religious leaders to go to Pilate and request that Jesus' tomb be secured, especially on a Sabbath? No doubt, the darkness of the previous day from noon to 3p.m., as well as the temple curtain being torn in two and the other unusual signs made them insecure. However, in the end, they were afraid that Jesus' disciples might steal His body and proclaim that He was risen from the dead. Yet surely, the answer to such a claim would have been to simply demand that the disciples present Jesus alive!

It is ironic that at the exact moment when the disciples feared the Jewish leaders, the Jewish leaders also feared the disciples! From the Jewish leader's perspective, they were afraid that the whole situation would deteriorate. It was bad enough that Jesus said that He was the

Messiah. If people believed that He was risen, then the fraud would escalate. They would lose face and power in the eyes of the people and Rome. Whatever the case, they were clearly not anticipating that Jesus would rise to life, only that His body might be stolen.

In Matthew 27:65, Pilate's response to their request could be understood in one of two ways. He could mean, "*You have a guard (i.e. the temple guard) and you can use them to secure the tomb.*" Or he could mean, "*Take a guard (i.e. of Roman soldiers) and use them to secure the tomb.*" Probably, it was the later, because when the tomb was found empty, the Jewish leaders promised to keep the hapless guarders of the tomb out of trouble with Pilate (Matt. 28:11-15). This is unlikely to be a problem if the soldiers were Jewish temple guards, but it would be a problem if they were Roman soldiers. Pilate could have punished them with death.

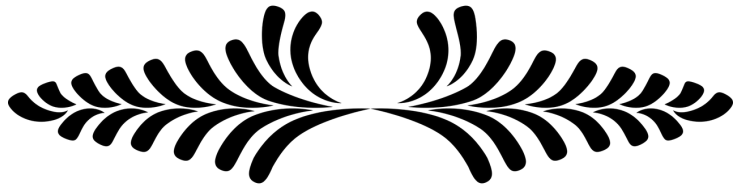
With Pilate's permission, the Jewish leaders secured the tomb in two ways;

- **They sealed the stone** (Matt. 27:66) – this means that a wax or clay seal was set on the tomb, probably between the tomb sides and the stone used to seal it. The seal may have been stamped with an official stamp from the Roman or Jewish authorities. The purpose of the seal was to deter thieves and to show if the tomb had been tampered with. The culprits, if caught, would face punishment and likely death.
- **They posted a guard** (Matt.27:66) - How many guards? Matthew 28:11, reports that the following morning, "*some of the guard*" reported what had happened to the chief priests. This implies that it was four guards (a Roman *quaternion*) at a minimum. However many guards were posted, the authority of the Roman Empire now stood watch over the tomb.

The soldiers' attempt to guard the tomb was the most futile act in the history of the world! Nobody could ever have made that tomb secure. They were doomed to failure from the beginning, because the following morning, death would be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54).

*It was a strange and dreadful strife
When life and death contended.
The victory remained with life;
The reign of death was ended.
Holy Scripture plainly says:
That death is swallowed up by death;
Its sting is lost forever.
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

- Martin Luther, 1524



15.

Sunday (part 1)– The King is risen forever

*“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.”*

- Psalm 16:10

Death is unnatural to God, and His “very good (Gen. 1:31)” creation. Therefore, it is right to grieve death (see John 11:35). We can only wonder at the ways in which Jesus’ death affected each of His disciples on the Saturday. On the day that Henry Muggerridge’s son died in an accident, he responded by saying to his son, Malcolm, “I’m very resilient.” When Nicholas Wolterstorff’s son, likewise, died tragically, he later lamented, “I’ve become an alien in the world, shyly touching it as if it’s not mine. I don’t belong any more. When someone loved leaves home, home becomes mere house.” Job’s three friends got much wrong (Job 42:7), but at least the first thing that they did was to sit with Job and mourn with him (Job 2:11-13).

In the book of Acts, Psalm 16:10, is twice said to be speaking about the Lord Jesus’ resurrection to life (Acts 2:27; 13:35). The Scriptures prophesied Jesus’ resurrection to life.

The Bible is nothing if not God’s word of *history* and *hope*. If Jesus is not risen, then the Christian faith is *not* noble or honourable. Rather, it is pitiable (see 1 Cor. 15:19). But if Jesus Christ be risen – *never to die again* - then all of life changes, both now and for eternity.

Acquiring spices**(Mark 16:1)**

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

- Mark 16:1

Grief can spread over us like the unrelenting sky. At the same time, it is impossible to grieve every moment of every day. As the sun set and the Sabbath ended that Saturday, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome went to buy spices for the purpose of anointing Jesus' lifeless body (Mark 16:1). Spices, of course, cannot undo death – *nothing of this world can* – but it was all that they could do to help mask the smell and honour a life ended.

In this case, of course, it was a waste of money!

Having acquired the spices, the women must have agreed to wait until sunrise before visiting the tomb.

The moment of Jesus' resurrection

(Matthew 28:1-4)

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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

- Matthew 28:2-4

Only Matthew records the moment of Jesus' resurrection (see Matt. 28:2-4). There was a "great earthquake" (Matt. 28:2, similar, although perhaps more violent, to when the "earth shook" at Jesus' death; Matt. 27:51), for an "angel of the Lord" rolled back the stone covering the entrance to the tomb and sat upon it (Matt. 28:3). The guards became "like dead men (Matt. 28:4)."

"He is risen"

(Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:2-7; Luke 24:1-7; John 20:1)

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the

ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

- Luke 24:1-7

All four Gospels tell of the women arriving at the tomb, although John focuses only on Mary Magdalene. It seems that the women left the place(s) where they were staying before dawn (see Matt. 28:1; John 20:1) and arrived at the tomb just as the sun had risen (Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1). They brought the spices with them. The women who went to the tomb that morning were;

- **Mary Magdalene** (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:10; John 20:1)
- **Mary the mother of James** (Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:10)
- **Salome** (Mark 16:1-2)
- **Joanna** (Luke 24:10) – she was the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod Antipas' household (Luke 8:3).

In addition, there seem to be other women with them who are not named. Luke says that as well as Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, there were at least two other unnamed women who were there (Luke 24:10). These women had come from Galilee (Luke 23:55).

Who will move the stone?

As the women made their way to the tomb, they wondered: "*Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?* (Mark 16:3)" They expected to find a sealed tomb with the body of the Lord Jesus inside. They needed to remove the stone in order to anoint Jesus' body with the spices that they had purchased the night before.

On arriving at the tomb, their problem was solved for them, as the stone had been "*rolled back* (Mark 16:4)."

Entering the tomb

When the women arrived at the tomb, they entered inside. Upon entering the tomb, *“they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed (Mark 16:4).”* This was the same angel that moments before had rolled back the stone and sat upon it (Matt. 28:5).

Luke says that there were two men (Luke 24:4). The difference in the number of angels is likely because Matthew and Mark simply focus on the one angel who did all the talking. The second angel was less prominent and so they did not mention him. The angel who spoke wore a white robe (Mark 16:5) and his appearance was like lightening (Matt. 28:3).

First instructions

The angel comforts the women in their fear (Matt. 28:5; Mark 16:6). He also questions them and declares: *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen (Luke 24:5-6).”* This is the great news that echoes throughout eternity!

The angel invited them to see the place where Jesus' body had laid (Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6). These women were the first people to examine the evidence for the resurrection. Jesus' body was now gone. The angel reminded them that Jesus had said that after He was crucified, He would rise on the third day (Luke 24:7). Then, the angel gave the women these instructions: *“go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you (Mark 16:7).”* It must have been an encouragement to Peter to hear that Jesus specifically wanted to see him in Galilee.

Galilee, three days journey north of Jerusalem, with its rural setting and myriad of people held a special place in the life of the Lord Jesus. It was there that He began His ministry and there that His disciples would again see, hear and touch His glorified body.

Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-2)

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been

taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

- John 20:1-2

It is difficult to know precisely how John's Gospel with its focus on Mary Magdalene, fits with the other Gospels at this point. Most likely, all the women went to the tomb, but when they saw the stone rolled away, they agreed that Mary Magdalene would go and tell "*Simon Peter and the other disciple* (John 20: 2; "*the other disciple*" is likely John himself)" that the tomb was empty. In the meantime, the other women entered the tomb and saw the angels.

Mary Magdalene's report to Peter and John shows that she hadn't heard the angel's instructions, for she says, "*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him* (John 20:2)." She had not heard that He was risen, nor that they were to meet Him in Galilee.

Telling the disciples

(Matthew 28:8-10; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:9-11)

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 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 28:9-10

Having been given instructions from the angels, the women left the tomb and with "*fear and great joy* (Matt. 28:8)" ran to find the disciples.

On the way, Jesus met them. His first words to them were, "*Greetings* (Matt. 28:9)." There is a sense that even Jesus didn't want to wait until Galilee to greet them! The women respond in the only way they could: "*they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him* (Matt. 28:9)." He was not a mirage, but was physically raised to life in a

glorified body. Jesus reinforces the angel's message not to fear and that they were to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee (Matt. 28:10).

It is humbling to realise that the Lord Jesus' first description of the cowardly disciples was to call them "*my brothers* (Matt. 28:10)." Whilst He must later address the issue of Peter's denials and lovingly restore him (John 21:14-19), He harbors no bitterness towards them. He wants them to know that the bonds of brotherhood unite them to Him. What encouragement that must have been to them!

Despite this, when the women find the disciples and report to them the angel's message, the disciples do not believe them. Their words "*seemed to them an idle tale* (Luke 24:11)." The disciples were not anticipating Jesus' resurrection.

**Peter and John race to the tomb
(Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10)**

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

- John 20:3-10

Out of the Eleven, Peter and John alone were stirred enough to investigate things. Having received Mary Magdalene's initial report and the further report from the women, they race to the tomb. John ("*the other disciple*") outran Peter and arrived first. Stooping to look inside, but not going inside, he saw the linen cloths. Then, having arrived, Peter entered the tomb before John.

Peter saw the burial cloths, including the face cloth in a separate place and folded up (John 20:7). Surely, if Jesus' body had been stolen by the disciples or grave robbers, they would not have folded up the cloths!

Finally, when John also entered the tomb "*he saw and believed* (John 20:8)." What, *exactly*, did John believe at that moment? Did he simply believe that Jesus' body was gone? Surely not! As John saw the empty tomb and the folded grave clothes, within his heart and mind he began to grasp the great truth, "*He has risen!* (Mark 16:7)," even though, as yet he did not understand from the Scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead. He knew that the women's report was true, and in time he would realise that this was just as God had spoken in His word (see Psalm 16:10; Isa. 53:10–12; Hos. 6:2).

A False Report (Matthew 28:11-15)

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

- Matthew 28:11-15

At the same time that the women reported to the disciples that Jesus was risen, another conflicting report was being spread. The guards, having regained their composure after seeing the angel, returned to the city and reported to the chief priests what had happened. At this point, their actions are honest, but the chief priests convince them, with the help of money, to change their story and say that the disciples stole Jesus' body whilst they slept (Matt. 28:11-15).

At first, the guards must have recoiled at this suggestion, because sleeping at their post and failing to fulfill their orders was a serious charge that could see them severely punished. But the chief priests promised to keep them from trouble if Pilate tried to punish them (Matt. 28:14). Hence, the false report about the disciples stealing Jesus' body persisted, even to the time of Matthew writing his gospel (commonly Matthew's Gospel is dated to the AD 50s or early AD 60s).

What price did the guards accept to change their story? What was the cost of truth? "A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers (Prov. 17:8)." And yet truth is eternal; dishonesty will perish (Prov. 12:19). The seventh commandment says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour (Deut. 5:20)."

Mary Magdalene meets Jesus

(John 20:11-18)

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

- John 20:11-18

Mark says that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). Probably that means that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, before the disciples. John alone records this interaction. Peter and John, having seen the empty tomb, returned to their homes, with Peter *“marveling at what had happened (Luke 24:12).”* But Mary remained at the tomb, weeping, and probably for the first time she looked inside the tomb (John 20:11).

She saw two angels sitting where Jesus’ feet and head had been. We can only wonder if these angels were real-life examples of the gold angels (cherubim) that overshadowed the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 25:10-20). In a sense, their task of overseeing atonement was completed with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The angels ask Mary why she is weeping (John 20:13). At this stage, she still does not believe that Jesus is risen, for she says, *“They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him (John 20:13).”* Perhaps, she thought that grave robbers, or the Roman and Jewish authorities had moved His body. After all, the chief priests and Pharisees were sufficiently worried that the disciples would steal the body that they requested a guard for the tomb (Matt. 27:64). Maybe Mary thought that they had gone a step further and moved His body.

Whatever the case, suddenly Mary meets the risen Lord Jesus, although she doesn’t recognize Him at first. Similarly, later that day, the two travellers on the road to Emmaus would not recognize Him either (Luke 24:16; 31). Mary thinks that Jesus is the gardener, and *maybe the gardener had taken Jesus’ body?*

At this point three things happen;

- Firstly, Jesus speaks Mary’s name and immediately she recognizes Him (John 20:16).
- Secondly, like the other women, she too clings to Him (John 20:17).
- Thirdly, Jesus tells her not to cling to Him, for He had not yet ascended to the Father. Instead, Mary was to tell the disciples (called *“my brothers”* again) that, *“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (John 20:17).”*

Jesus seems to mean: "Mary, do not hold on to me for now, because everything is not yet finished. I cannot remain here with you. I must to ascend to the Father. It is only after I have ascended to the Father that I will send the Holy Spirit. Then one day I will return to bring in the new heavens and new earth."

In God's plan for salvation, the necessary order is: Resurrection, Ascension then Return. Hence, Mary must not cling to Him. Mary went and announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord and what He had said to her. God's plan was unfolding perfectly.

The implications of Jesus' resurrection

In 1 Corinthians 15 (the greatest chapter in the Bible on the resurrection and its implications), the Apostle Paul says; *"If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (1 Cor. 15:32).'"*

The hope that we too will one day rise to eternal life is because Jesus Christ first rose to life. If Jesus Christ is not risen, then try to suck as much enjoyment out of this life as you can, because it is all that we have. If He didn't rise from the dead, then His teaching may be admirable, but ultimately, it would be futile and powerless.

But if Jesus is risen, as the Gospels clearly show, then that changes everything: life has meaning and purpose, and eternity awaits us. Hence, 'Jesus is alive' is our great hope!

Below are eight points that explain only some of what Christ's resurrection achieved;

- 1) The validation that God's promises are true** – David foresaw the resurrection of the Christ in Psalm 16: *"For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption (Psalm 16:10; see Acts 2:25-28; 13:35).*
- 2) Christ's validation that He is the Son of God** – a claim suspended in mid air holds little weight! The Scriptures say that Jesus Christ, *"was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4)."*

Sunday

- 3) The defeat of death** – His death was for sin, once and for all, but the life He lives, He lives to God. Acts 2:24 says, *“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it (Acts 2:24).”*
- 4) The sting of death is removed for believers** – this is what makes a believer’s funeral so *different* to all other funerals. Death is painful and sad, yet it is not without hope for a believer. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul addresses death itself, almost tauntingly, and says,
- ““O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).”*
- 5) The promise of a glorified body for believers** - however healthy our bodies are, or however miserable we feel, we will die. Yet one day we will be raised to immortality with a glorified body as Christ Jesus our Lord has. 1 Corinthians 15:52-53 tells us that in the twinkling of an eye *“the dead will be raised imperishable.”*
- 6) Our justification before God** – to be justified means to be put right with someone. Christ’s resurrection confirms that His sacrifice for our sin was accepted and we are now justified before God. Romans 4:25 says that Jesus our Lord was *“delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25).”*
- 7) The certainty of God’s coming judgment** – when Paul spoke to the intellectuals at Mars Hill, he focused on God as our creator and God’s coming judgment. He says that God has *“fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).”*
- 8) A whole new way of living today** – believers are so united to Christ that His resurrection impacts how we live here and now. Paul says that since we have *“been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that*

are on earth (Col. 3:1)."

*Up from the grave He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a Victor from the dark domain
And He lives forever with His saints to reign
He arose! (He arose)
He arose! (He arose)
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

- Robert Lowry



PEOPLE IN THE GOSPELS: MARY MAGDALENE

When a person is full of gratitude, it never stands alone, for they also radiate joy and grace. Gratitude is a response to the kindness of another.

Mary Magdalene came from the town of Magdala, on the North-West side of the Sea of Galilee. In Aramaic (*Migdal Nunya*), this means “Fish Tower (possibly it is the region called “Magdan” in Matt. 15:39, and “Dalmanutha” in Mark 8:10).”

The first time that we meet Mary is in Luke 8:2. As Jesus was going through cities and villages, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, one of those with Him was Mary, “from whom seven demons had gone out (Luke 8:2).” *In other words, Mary heard His voice.* She was amongst several women who followed Him, along with the disciples.

We are not told about Mary’s life prior to this, but we do know that this poor woman had been overcome by demons. Exactly *how* the demon possession was seen in her life, whether in illness or some other way, we don’t know, but I think that we can imagine the kind of misery that they made of her life. We must always remember that there is grief behind every door.

The Lord Jesus Christ freed Mary by His power and out of His kindness for her. What gratitude now filled her heart towards Jesus!

Mary’s journey of following Jesus led her to Jerusalem, to the

cross, and to the tomb. She saw our Lord's lifeless body placed in the tomb (Luke 23:55). Then, three days later, she meets Him risen although at first she did not know it was Him! Thinking that He was the gardener, it was only when He said her name that she realised that it was Jesus (John 20:15). One word was all that it took: "Mary (John 20:16)." *She heard, again, His voice!* In that moment, all fear and sorrow was swept away! He was risen, never to die again.

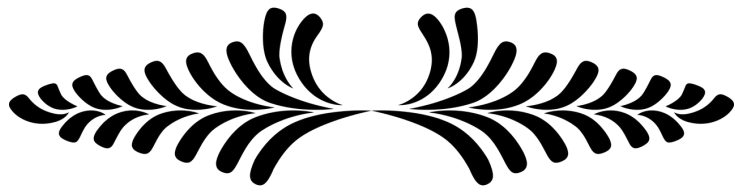
Sometimes when we get a shock, we go silent, or even turn away. But Mary calls to Him *Rabboni!* – and clings to Him (John 20:16-17). Any thought about the spices that they had brought to the tomb now vanished from her mind!

*See Mary weeping: 'Where is He laid?
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name:
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope,
Bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!*

- Stuart Townend & Keith Getty

In a way, Mary is living proof of what Jesus had earlier said about Himself - the Good Shepherd: "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice... And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice (John 10:3-4; 16)."

Do you remember when you first heard His voice? For some people, it was many, many years ago, but for others it was more recent. For some Christians it was sudden, but for others it took time to hear Him. Whatever the case, every Christian can say, "Jesus, my Shepherd, calls me by name. I know His voice – I hear it in His Word. And though I be a weak sheep, I rejoice that He knows me, and I Him."



16.

Sunday (part 2) - The King proves Himself

"No religion stands or falls with a claim about the resurrection of its founder in the way Christianity does."

- Craig Blomberg

*"Upon a life I did not live,
upon a death I did not die,
I risk my whole eternity on the resurrection."*

- Attributed to Charles Spurgeon, possibly based upon a hymn, 'Christ for us,' by Horatius Bonar

"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

- Corinthians 15:26

If Jesus had not risen, then death would have won the eternal day, not only over Him, but also over *all* creation. Rigor mortis reigns! Yet the Gospels show that His resurrection was real and therefore, we have eternal hope. Even creation eagerly awaits its release from its frustration (Rom. 8:22). All this is possible, because the Son of God rose to life.

It is humbling to realise that when Jesus rose from death, He didn't seek revenge upon the chief priests or Pilate for His suffering and humiliation. Instead, He chose to appear first to the women and Mary Magdalene at the tomb, and then to two lowly disciples on the road to Emmaus. *What a wonderful Saviour we serve!*

Many years later, the Apostle Peter wrote to believers, *exiles*, living several decades after Jesus' resurrection, he was addressing people who by that stage, like us, had not been eyewitnesses of Jesus and His life. Yet, he writes reassuring words:

"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is

inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

- 1 Peter 1:8-9

**The King on the road to Emmaus
(Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-27)**

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad... And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

- Luke 24:13-17; 25-27

Later on the Sunday, two travellers were making their way to Emmaus. As they set out, little did they realise how their journey would end. To begin with, their mood was one of disappointment and bewilderment, but it would soon change to astonished joy.

The exact location of the village of Emmaus is unknown, only that it was seven miles from Jerusalem (60 stadia; 1 stadia = 185m, although

possibly it was a *60 stadia* round journey from Jerusalem), and probably on the road that led west out of the city. Possibly, these two travellers lived in Emmaus.

The name of one of the travellers was Cleopas (Luke 24:18; "Cleopas" is a shortened version of Cleopatros, and different to the name Clopas, and so it was probably not the "Clopas" of John 19:25). The other traveller is not named. Possibly, it was Cleopas' wife.

As they walk, they discussed all that had happened with Jesus. Innocently enough, another traveller joins them in their discussion. It was the Risen Lord Jesus! But "*they their eyes were kept from recognizing him* (Luke 24:16)." Surely, it was God who kept them from recognizing Jesus, so that He could teach them about Himself without startling them.

Jesus asks them what they were discussing. Ironically, they reply to Him, "*Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?* (Luke 24:18)" How our Lord must have bit His tongue at this point!

Cleopas and his companion show that they knew the following about Jesus;

- He was from Nazareth (Luke 24:19).
- He was a prophet with a reputation before God and man as being strong in deed and word (Luke 24:19).
- They had hoped that He would be Israel's redeemer (Luke 24:21).

They also knew that He had been crucified at the instigation of the religious leaders. Interestingly, they knew that *something* was to happen on the third day, for they said: "*beside all this, it is now the third day since these things happened* (Luke 24:21)."

They knew too, about the reports from earlier that day. The women had reported Jesus' resurrection, including what the angels had said, and Peter and John had found the tomb empty without seeing Jesus. Their hope had been that Jesus was Israel's longed for redeemer, but now their hopes seemed dashed (Luke 24:21).

Jesus responds with a rebuke! If only they had believed the prophets (Luke 24:25). Slowness of heart is our problem too. How cautious we are in trusting God's Word. Jesus questions them: Didn't

they know from the Old Testament that the Christ had to suffer and enter His glory? Passages such as Psalm 22:1-8 and Isaiah 53:1-10 foretold His suffering, whilst passages such as Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14 foretold His glory. Imagine Jesus opening these Scriptures to them! Yet, even more than this, the whole fabric of the Old Testament pointed to Him: *“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27).”* The Westminster Confession of Faith says that the Old Testament promises, prophecies, priests, sacrifices and other *“types and ordinances”* were given to God’s people, *“all foreshadowing Christ to come (WCF 7.5).”*

Hearts warmed by the gospel
(Luke 24:28-35)

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

- Luke 24:28-32

As the three travellers approached Emmaus, Jesus (still veiled to them) gave the impression that He was continuing further, presumably to Galilee. However, Cleopas and his companion *“strongly urged”* Him to stay with them. It was, after all, nearly evening (Luke 24:29). Jesus agrees, knowing that now the moment of His unveiling had arrived. As He *“took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them,”* their eyes were opened and they realised who He was (Luke 24:30-31). Probably, *breaking bread* was more than an ordinary meal and refers to the Passover, which was to become the Lord’s Supper. When they took from His hand - *His body given for them* - they recognized Him.

As with the women and Mary, Jesus does not linger with them, but instead He “*vanished*” (Luke 24:31). All Cleopas and his companion can say is: “*Did not our hearts burn within us*” whilst Jesus explained the Scriptures to us (Luke 24:32)? What they mean is that their hearts were warmed, as they understood the Scripture’s teaching about the Messiah.

Despite the late hour, Cleopas and his companion return to Jerusalem. They had great news to share with the disciples: “*The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon* (Luke 24:35).” There are no details about this appearance to Peter, but it confirms Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:5 that “*he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*”

John Wesley felt the same ‘burning-heart’ feeling. On 24th May 1738, he wrote in his diary, “*I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.*”

**The King appears to the disciples, minus Thomas
(Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-20)**

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marvelling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

- Luke 24:36-43

The mounting reports about Jesus’ resurrection spark discussion amongst the Eleven. By this time it must have been after sunset.

Suddenly, Jesus stood amongst them. The Gospels make it clear that when Jesus rose from the dead, He had the same body as He previously had (John 20:27). But there was also something different about Him. He could appear in locked rooms (see John 20:19). On three occasions He was *not* recognized by people who should have recognized Him (see Luke 24:13-31; John 20:15; 21:4). Jesus' resurrection body is a foretaste of what our bodies will be like in the new heavens and new earth.

C.S. Lewis tried to sum it up in *The Last Battle* when he said,

"The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if ever you get there you will know what I mean."

Jesus' first words to the Eleven are not hostile, but kind: "Peace to you (Luke 24:36)!" They were terrified and thought that He was a spirit ("pneuma"). Jesus proves that He was indeed alive;

- He shows them His hands and feet (Luke 24:39), which only three days earlier they had seen pierced with nails.
- He allows them to touch Him, saying, "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have (Luke 24:39-40)."

The disciples *should* believe that Jesus was alive, yet at the same time it seemed too good to be true. They disbelieve for joy (Luke 24:41). And so, Jesus asks for something to eat, and He eats a piece of broiled fish before them (Luke 24:41-43). The proof was conclusive.

The King's message of forgiveness (Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-23)

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in

his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

- Luke 24:44-48

Having given proof to the Eleven of His resurrection, it was now time to "*open their minds*" to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Were they alarmed by His death? And astounded by His resurrection? They needn't be. It was all foretold in the Old Testament and so had to be fulfilled.

But the question still remained: What next? The next part of God's plan of salvation was that, "*forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Luke 24:47)." John includes, "*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld* (John 20:23)." The work of forgiveness had been finished at the cross; the work of proclaiming now began. As eyewitnesses of Jesus, crucified and risen, the Eleven had the task of preaching God's forgiveness, thereby opening or closing the gates of forgiveness as people respond to the gospel or remain closed off. If the greatest treasure a person can ever know is to *be a Christian*, then it is the greatest honour to then tell others of Him. It is one dying person finding living water and offering it to another dying person.

Who is capable of proclaiming such a message? How inadequate the disciples were! With us it is impossible, but Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit who would give them the power necessary (Luke 24:49). John says that at this time, Jesus breathed on His disciples (John 20:22). This foreshadowed the Day of Pentecost, which was soon to come, when "*a mighty rushing wind* (Acts 2:2)" blew over the disciples as the Holy Spirit came in power.

May we never look to our own inventions or skills, but may our attitude be Paul's when he said to the Christians at Corinth;

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible

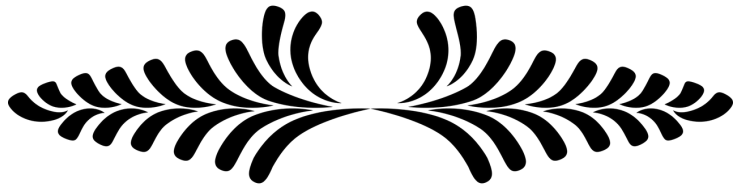
words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Jesus' resurrection and ours

Why would we want His resurrection to be true? For a Christian, the resurrection of Jesus is the lynch pin connecting us with all the wonderful promises of God. We all know frustrations in this life, because of brokenness and, often, direct sin. Even creation longs to be freed from its bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:22). There is a weariness in the world that longs for something better; something heavenly.

On that great day, when our lowly bodies are transformed to be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:21), God Himself will dwell with us. He will, *"wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21:4)."* That promise is enough to bring tears of joy and hope to every Christian, and all because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.



Postscript

We have attempted to follow the Passion Week of the Lord Jesus, from His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, to His death on the cross, and His glorious resurrection. This is now a short note about Doubting Thomas.

The motto of the European Enlightenment was summed up by Immanuel Kant in this way: *"Have the courage to use your own understanding!"* In 1739, David Hume wrote in *Treatise on Human Nature* that, *"as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation."* In short, a supernatural God is unbelievable!

Many people have pointed out the problems within Hume's way of thinking, but it is worth observing that there is a similarity between the empirical skepticism of Hume and that of the disciple Thomas.

The King proves Himself to Doubting Thomas (John 20:24-31)

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- John 20:24-31

On the Sunday night that Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples (John 20:19). He spoke to them, and showed them "*his hands and his side* (John 20:20)." For some unknown reason, Thomas was not with them. *What a meeting to miss!*

When the other disciples told him, "*We have seen the Lord!* (John 20:25)" he wagered a challenge: Nothing but visible, 'touch and feel' evidence would ever make him believe that Jesus was alive!

At heart, Doubting Thomas was anything but a gullible fool. A week later, the risen Lord Jesus again appeared to His disciples – again, though the doors were locked (John 20:26). It was time for Thomas to eat his words: "*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe* (John 20:27)."

Thomas responds in the only true way: "*My Lord and my God!* (John 20:28)" If Jesus was merely a human being, then Thomas' words would be blasphemy. But Jesus wouldn't correct him, because it is true: Jesus Christ is the Son of God; fully God and fully man.

The Apostle Paul says that after Jesus was resurrected to life, "*he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep* (1 Cor. 15:6)." In saying that, he was setting a challenge for any sceptical readers of his day to track down these near five hundred and to check that their testimony fitted with what Paul was preaching. As he says later on, if Christ is not risen then all hope for heaven is lost. We may as well enjoy life under the sun as best we can, for it is all that we have (Ecc. 9:9)! But Jesus is risen, as Thomas discovered, and therefore, His is the right to rule my life.

From Thomas and others, we learn something about the nature of faith (and *non-faith*) in Jesus Christ. Faith does not reject the senses, yet

neither does it appeal exclusively to them. Blaise Pascal warns that our senses have a limit: *"The last proceeding of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but feeble if it does not see so far as to know this."* Augustine said, *"Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe."*

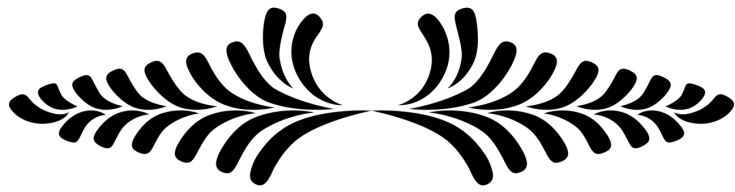
Yet, in saying that, unbelief is not due to a lack of testimony, so that nobody can say, *"I didn't have enough evidence."* Abraham said to the rich man, regarding his five brothers, *"If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead (Luke 16:31)."* Likewise, Jesus responded to Philip's request for more evidence by saying, *"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves (John 14:11)."*

In short, *"faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel (WSC, quest. 86)."* John says that he has written his Gospel – even to us who live 2000 years later – with this purpose in mind: *"so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)."*

It is important to understand that when believers experience doubt that it is different to unbelief. Unbelief is the unbeliever's great problem, but doubt is uniquely a believer's problem and battle. There are surely many, many believers who, like Thomas, are slow and dull to believe, but nonetheless their faith is authentic and genuine. We can thank God for the scepticism of Thomas. His scepticism is our buttress.

Mary Slessor was once mocked for her faith in Christ. She turned to those who mocked her and said, *"Jesus never quit for my sake, and so I see no reason why I should quit for Him."* May we keep holding fast to the gospel of Jesus Christ, for in the end, there are no truer words than those promised by Jesus Himself:

***"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed
(John 20:29)."***



Topic Index

A

Alexander and Rufus, 84, 85
 Andrew, disciple, 9
 Annas, former high priest, 61, 62,
 63, 66
 atonement, 11, 119

B

Barabbas, 77, 78, 79, 81
 Bethany, 3, 6, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 31,
 46
 Bethphage, 5, 6, 7
 Bethsaida, 9
 Blomberg, Craig, 126
 Bonar, Horatius, 79, 126

C

Caesar, 8, 22, 71, 74, 75, 82, 83, 90
 Caesarea, 71
 Caiaphas, high priest, 30, 61, 62,
 63, 66
 Caligula, Roman Emperor, 72
 Carmichael, Amy, 45
 Centurion, at the cross, 95
 Christ, 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 19,
 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 36, 38, 40,
 43, 50, 52, 56, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68,
 74, 75, 76, 77, 85, 86, 93, 96, 97,
 103, 104, 106, 107, 111, 119, 120,
 123, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132,
 133, 135, 136, 137
 Cleopas, 128, 129, 130
 Controversy, 21, 22
 Cornelius, 9
 covenant, 42
 Cowper, William, 94

criminals, 72, 75, 92, 93, 94, 102
 curtain, 94, 95, 107

D

David, 7, 8, 22, 92, 101, 120, 135
 Day of the Lord, 25
Diatessaron, 1
 Dodderidge, Philip, 104
 Donkey, 5

E

Edersheim, Alfred, 1
 Elliot, Elizabeth, 38
 Emmaus, 119, 126, 127, 129
 European Enlightenment, 135
 Ezekiel, 11
 Ezra, 29

F

Father, 5, 10, 11, 19, 21, 26, 29, 37,
 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 65, 77,
 82, 86, 92, 95, 96, 118, 119, 120,
 131, 137
 Feast of Unleavened Bread, 29, 34,
 78
 Field of Blood, 72, 73
 figs, 6, 14, 15, 51
 flagellum, 82
 forgiveness, 11, 20, 50, 68, 92, 131,
 132

G

Gabbatha, 82
 Galilee, 9, 62, 68, 71, 76, 102, 103,
 112, 113, 114, 115, 123, 129
 Gambling, 91
 Gerhardt, Paul, 30
 Gethsemane, 53, 55

Getty, Keith, 123
 glorify, 10, 49, 52
 glory, 5
 Golgotha, 84, 85, 89
 Greeks, 9

H

Hallelujah Psalms, 35
Heidelberg Catechism, 66
 Herod, 28, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 113
 Herod Antipas, 71, 75, 76, 113
 Herod the Great, 28, 71
 Holy Spirit, 51, 52, 86, 120, 132
 Hosanna, 7, 8, 12, 15, 17
 Hume, David, 135

J

Jericho, 6
 Jerusalem, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,
 12, 14, 15, 17, 20, 24, 25, 28, 29,
 35, 37, 44, 46, 53, 55, 62, 71, 73,
 75, 78, 84, 85, 89, 90, 91, 94, 100,
 102, 114, 123, 127, 128, 130, 131,
 132, 135
Jewish Wars, 25, 51, 90, 94, 95, 99
 Joanna, 113
 Jordan River, 72
 Joseph of Arimathea, 99, 100, 101,
 103, 104
 Josephus, ancient historian, 7, 25,
 51, 71, 82, 90, 94, 95, 99
 Josiah, 29
 Judas, Iscariot, 3, 31, 37, 40, 41, 44,
 46, 49, 51, 55, 57, 58, 72, 73, 74,
 106

K

Kidron Valley, 51, 55, 58
 Köstenberger, Andreas, 1, 5

L

Lazarus, 8, 11, 31
 Lewis, C.S. 61, 106, 131
 Lord's Supper, the, 42, 43, 129
 Luther, Martin, 36, 109

M

Magdalene, Mary, 3, 96, 103, 111,
 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118, 119,
 123, 126
 Martha, 11, 31
 Mary, 3, 11, 31, 34, 46, 86, 96, 103,
 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118,
 119, 120, 123, 126, 130, 137
 Mattheson, George, 89
 McCheyne, Robbery Murray, 97
 Messiah, 1, 8, 102, 108, 130
 Milman, Henry, 12
 Mount of Olives, 5, 6, 7, 24, 25, 50,
 51, 52, 55
 Muggeridge, Henry, 111
 myrrh, 91, 101

N

Nazareth, 91, 128
 Newton, John 20, 59
 Nicodemus, 101, 102, 103

O

Olivet, 28
 Owen, John 15

P

Passover, 7, 9, 11, 15, 29, 31, 34,
35, 36, 37, 40, 42, 43, 44, 49, 53,
71, 72, 83, 84, 94, 96, 100, 102,
129

Passover lamb, 11, 36

Paul, 1, 5, 16, 20, 30, 65, 97, 120,
130, 132, 136

Pentecost, 132

Peter, disciple, 3, 11, 19, 35, 37, 49,
50, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 65,
66, 68, 74, 77, 107, 114, 115, 116,
117, 119, 126, 127, 128, 130

Pharisee, 8, 9, 16, 22, 23, 107, 119

Philip, disciple, 9, 51, 71, 137

Pilate, Pontius, 3, 65, 71, 72, 74, 75,
76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 86, 91, 92,
96, 99, 100, 107, 108, 118, 126

Pilgrim's Progress, 23

portico, 28

R

resurrection, 1, 5, 22, 46, 50, 68, 93,
95, 111, 112, 114, 116, 119, 120,
126, 128, 130, 132, 133, 135

rooster, 49, 55, 65, 66

S

Sabbath, 96, 99, 101, 102, 103, 106,
107, 111, 112

sacrifice, 11, 38, 94, 120

Salome, 96, 111, 112, 113

Sanhedrin, 64, 65, 100, 101

Satan, 36, 41, 46, 56, 68

Simon of Cyrene, 84, 85, 89

Slessor, Mary, 137

Son of David, 15, 17

Son of God, 22, 24, 38, 53, 65, 82,
92, 94, 96, 120, 126, 135, 136,
137

Son of Man, 9, 40, 44, 49, 63, 65,
112

Suffering Servant, 64, 93

T

Tatian, 1

temple, 3, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19,
21, 24, 25, 28, 29, 35, 51, 64, 71,
72, 90, 92, 94, 95, 107, 108

ten Boom, Corrie, 20

the mother of James, 96, 111, 112,
113

Thomas, 50, 130, 135, 136, 137

Titus, 25

Toplady, Augustus, 26

Townend, Stuart, 19, 84, 123

U

Upper Room, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55

W

Westminster Confession of Faith,
41, 56, 129

Westminster Directory of Publick
Worship, 99

widow, 24

Wolterstorff, Nicholas, 111

Westminster Shorter Catechism,
137

Scripture Index

Genesis

1:31 111

Exodus

3:14 58
 6:6-7 35
 12:3 11
 12:5 11
 12:8 35
 12:23 36
 12:46 35, 96
 20:11 106
 20:16 64
 25:10-20 119

Leviticus

23:4-8 34

Numbers

9:6-14 102
 19:11-13 102

Deuteronomy

5:15 106
 5:20 118
 16:1 29
 16:1-16 34
 19:16-19 64
 21:22-23 73, 96, 99
 25:3 82

1 Samuel

1:1 100

2 Samuel

2:5 101

1 Kings

4:25 15
 8:10-11 11
 21:23 101

2 Kings

9:13 8
 23:1-2 29

Nehemiah

8:1-2 29

Job

2:11-13 111
 42:7 111

Psalms

16:10 111, 117, 120
 19:1 49
 22:1-8 129
 22:18 91
 69:21 92
 69:25 41
 75:8 57
 87:3 8
 109:8 41
 110:1 22, 129
 110:2 64
 118:25 8
 119:103-105 28

Proverbs

7:17 101
 12:19 118
 17:8 118
 29:12 81

		6:2	117
		9:10	15
Ecclesiastes		9:16	15
9:9	136	10:8	90
Isaiah		Joel	
5:1-7	51	1:7	15
13:10	25	3:15	94
27:2-6	51	Amos	
42:1-9	93	8:10	94
49:1-6	93	8:11-12	29
50:4-9	93	Zechariah	
52:13-53:12	93	9:9	7
53:1-10	129	11:11-13	73
53:4-5	12	12:10	96
53:7	44, 64	13:7	56
53:9	103, 107	Matthew	
53:12	93, 53	2:1	101
56:7	16	2:16	71
Jeremiah		3:17	22
2:13	14	5:1	47
8:13	15	10:1	46
19:1-13	73	10:4	47
19:11	74	11:28-30	106
24:1-10	15	12:40	106
31:31	42	15:39	123
31:33	43	16:16	22, 68
31:34	43	16:21	106
32:35	73	16:23	68
Ezekiel		17:5	22
10:15-19	11	17:23	106
Daniel		20:5	92-93
7:13-14	44, 65, 129	20:17-19	47
Hosea		20:17	84

20:19	106	25:31-46	26
21:1-7	5	26:3	30
21:3	7	26:21-22	47
21:5	7	26:24	44
21:6	7	26:25	41
21:9	8	26:30	52
21:12	16	26:31	56
21:12-17	29	26:31-35	50, 55
21:15	17	26:33-35	68
21:17	17	26:34	55
21:20	20	26:35	50
21:21	20	26:36-46	56
21:22	20	26:37	56
21:23-27	21	26:39	57
21:28-32	21	26:42	57
21:33-46	21	26:44	57
21:46	30	26:47	58
22:1-14	21	26:47-56	58
22:15-22	22	26:50	58
22:23-24	22	26:63	65
22:34-40	22	26:71	66
22:42	22	26:71-72	66
22:42-45	22	26:74	66
23:1-12	23	27:5	73
23:13-36	23	27:10	73
23:13-14	23	27:11	75
23:15	23	27:14	75
23:16-22	23	27:16	77, 81
23:23-24	23	27:19	78, 87
23:25-26	23	27:22	87
23:27-28	23	27:24	78, 87
23:29-32	23	27:24-25	78
23:37	24	27:26	82, 83
24:2	25	27:27	83
24:3	25	27:28	83
25:13	26	27:29	83
25:14-30	26	27:34	91

27:38	93	1:7	76
27:40	92	3:14	47
27:42	92	3:19	47
27:44	92	6:14	71
27:45-56	94	8:10	123
27:46	95	8:31	106
27:51	95, 112	10:11	78
27:52-53	95	10:34	106
27:54	96	11:1-7	5
27:55-56	96	11:1	6
27:57	100	11:8-10	7
27:59	102	11:11	10
27:60	103	11:12-14	14
27:61	103	11:20	15
27:63	107	11:15-18	15
27:64	107, 119	11:19	17
27:65	108	11:20-25	19
27:66	108	11:25	20
28:1-4	112	11:27-12:40	21
28:1	113	11:27	21
28:2-4	112	12:41-43	24
28:2	95, 112	13:1-37	24
28:3	112, 114	13:5	26
28:4	112	13:6	26
28:5-7	112	13:7-8	26
28:5	114	13:9	26
28:6	114	13:10	26
28:8-10	115	13:14-20	26
28:8	115	13:21-22	26
28:9	115	13:23	26
28:10	116	13:24	25
28:11-15	108, 117	13:26-31	26
28:11	108	13:32	26
28:14	118	13:35	26
		13:37	26
Mark		14:1-2	29
1:3	76	14:1	29

14:3-08	47	15:21-22	84
14:3	31	15:21	84, 85, 89
14:4-5	32	15:23-32	90
14:9	32	15:23	91
14:10	47	15:24	91
14:12-16	34	15:25	92
14:17-21	40	15:27	93
14:19	41	15:33-41	94
14:22-25	42	15:33	94
14:26	52	15:36	95
14:27-31	50, 55	15:38	95
14:30	55	15:40-41	96
14:44	47	15:42-45	99
14:72	55	15:42	100
14:32-42	56	15:43	100
14:43-52	58	15:44	100
14:50-51	58	15:45	100
14:53-65	63	15:46	102
14:58	64	15:46-47	102
14:61	64	15:47	103
14:62	65	16:1-2	113
14:64	65	16:1	111, 112
14:65	65	16:2-7	112
14:66-72	65	16:2	113
14:68	66	16:3	113
14:70	66	16:4	113, 114
14:72	66	16:5	114
15:1	72	16:6	114
15:2-5	74	16:7	114, 117
15:6-15	77	16:8	115
15:6-8	78	16:9	119
15:7	78	16:12-13	127
15:10	78, 86		
15:15	82, 83	Luke	
15:16-20	83	2:41	34
15:16	83	3:22	10
15:17	83	7:15	92

8:2	123	22:21-23	40
8:3	113	22:24-30	44
8:55	92	22:27	45
9:22	106	22:31-34	49, 55
9:35	10	22:31-32	56
10:4-8	53	22:35-39	52
10:38-41	31	22:36	53
13:1-3	71	22:37	53, 93
13:1	86	22:38	53
16:31	137	22:40-46	56
17:14	92	22:43	57
18:43	92	22:47-53	57
19:1-10	74	22:51	58
19:1	6	22:53	61
19:28-36	5	22:54-62	65
19:29-34	35	22:58-59	66
19:37-38	7	22:61	66, 69
19:39-44	8	22:62	66
19:42	9	22:63-71	63
19:43-44	9	23:1	72
19:45-48	15	23:2-5	74
20:1-47	21	23:2	74, 75
20:25	75	23:4	75
21:1-4	24	23:6-12	75
21:5-36	24	23:9	76
21:37-38	28	23:10	76
21:38	21	23:11	76
22:1-2	29	23:14	75
22:1	30	23:15	77
22:3	41	23:16	77, 78
22:7-13	34	23:17	77
22:8	35	23:19	78
22:14-20	42	23:21	78
22:15-16	42	23:22	75
22:17	42	23:13-25	77
22:16	40	23:26	84
22:20	42	23:27-31	89

23:27	89	24:27	129
23:28-31	90	24:28-35	129
23:32-38	90	24:29	129
23:34	92	24:30-31	129
23:36-37	92	24:31	119, 130
23:39-42	92	24:32	130
23:39-43	93	24:35	130
23:40-41	93	24:36-43	130
23:42	93	24:36	131
22:43	102	24:39	131
23:44-49	94	24:39-40	131
23:45	95	24:41-43	131
23:46	95	24:41	131
23:47	96	24:44-49	131
23:50-52	99	24:45	132
23:50	100	24:47	132
23:51	100	24:49	132
23:53-56	102		
23:53	102, 103	John	
23:55	103, 106, 124	1:3	59, 72, 102
23:56	103, 106	1:14	49
24:1-7	112	1:29	76
24:1	113	1:44	68
24:4	114	2:13-22	16
24:5-6	114	2:19-21	64
24:7	114	2:19	11, 106
24:9-11	115	3:1	101
24:10	113	4:6	93
24:11	116	6:64	46
24:12	102, 116, 119	6:68	68
24:13-27	127	6:70	46
24:13-31	131	10:3-4	124
24:16	119, 128	10:16	124
24:18	128	11:32	31
24:19	128	11:35	111
24:21	128	11:49-50	62
24:25	128	12:1	31

12:4	47	14:16	51
12:6	46	14:21	51
12:23	5	14:23	51
12:12-16	7	14:22	51
12:17-19	8	14:26	51
12:17-18	8	14:27	51
12:20-28	9	14:31	51
12:23	9	15:1	51
12:23-24	10	15:5	15, 51
12:25	10	15:13	52
12:27	10	15:18	52
12:28	10	15:26	52
12:29-36	10	16:7	52
13:1-20	37	16:8-11	52
13:1	37	16:12	52
13:5	47	16:14	52
13:6-17	40	17:1	52
13:8	37	17:2	52
13:10	38	17:12	58
13:12-15	38	18:1-11	57
13:18-29	40	18:1	51, 52
13:23	40	18:6	58
13:26	41	18:8	58
13:27	41	18:10	58
13:29	44	18:11	53, 58
13:30	44	18:12-24	61
13:31-34	55	18:15	62
13:31-38	49	18:17	66
13:34	50	18:18	62
13:35	50	18:19	62, 63
14:1-17:26	50	18:21	63
14:5	50	18:22	63
14:6	51, 75, 107	18:25-27	65, 66
14:8	51	18:26	66
14:9	51	18:28	72, 83
14:11	137	18:29-38	74
14:15	51	18:36-37	75

18:38-40	77	20:3-10	116
18:38	87	20:7	117
18:40	78	20:8	117
19:1-16	81	20:11-18	118
19:1	78	20:11	119
19:5	81	20:13	119
19:7	82	20:15	124, 131
19:8	82	20:16-17	124
19:10	82, 86	20:16	124
19:11	82	20:16	119
19:12	82	20:17	119
19:13-15	82	20:19-20	130
19:14	92	20:19	106, 131, 136
19:15	82	20:20	136
19:17-27	90	20:21-23	131
19:17	84	20:22	132
19:18	93	20:23	132
19:20	84	20:24-31	135
19:23	91	20:25	136
19:24	91	20:26	136
19:25	128	20:27	131, 136
19:26-27	96	20:28	136
19:30	96	20:29	137
19:32	102	20:31	96, 137
19:35	96	21:4	131
19:37	96	21:9	69
19:28-37	94	21:14-19	116
19:28	92	21:15-19	74
19:36	35	21:15-22	50
19:38	99, 100	21:16	69
19:39-40	101	21:17	69
19:40	102	21:19	69
19:41-42	102		
19:41	84, 103	Acts	
20:1-2	114	1:18-19	73
20:1	112, 113	1:20	41
20:2	115	1:25	41

2:2	132
2:15	93
2:24	121
2:25-28	120
2:27	111
3:1	93
6:9	35
10:1-22	9
13:35	111, 120
17:31	121

Romans

1:1-4	120
1:28	9
4:25	121
7:13-20	38
8:22	126, 133
8:23	19
8:34	5, 36

1 Corinthians

2:1-5	133
5:7	36
10:12	55
15:5	130
15:6	121
15:26	126
15:32	120
15:52-53	121
15:55-57	121

2 Corinthians

5:21	97
------	----

Galatians

6:14	5
------	---

Ephesians

3:20	20
------	----

Philippians

2:9-10	65
2:10	72
3:21	133

Colossians

3:1	122
-----	-----

1 Thessalonians

1:10	90
------	----

Hebrews

4:9	106
7:25	5
10:11-14	11
12:2	57
13:12	84

1 Peter

1:8-9	127
1:12	72
1:19	11
2:21-23	77
2:22	107

Revelation

1:10	106
6:15-17	90
7:12	50
21:1-4	93
21:4	133
22:20	19