



C O M P L E T I O N

P A L M S U N D A Y

WEEK SEVEN | PALM SUNDAY

*But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, He began to weep. "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground and they will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you." **Luke 19:41-44***

The scene is palpable. Jesus approaches Jerusalem riding on a donkey, joyous hands waving palm branches and placing them along the path, a symbol of triumph and victory. A multitude of voices shouting "Hosanna!," meaning "Save us!" and some whispering to bent ears, "Who is this man?"

When Jesus beheld the city, He wept over it. These were not just silent tears, but the verb used here indicates sobbing and sorrowful lament. He knew. He knew the suffering He would have to face. He knew of the coming betrayal of these very people who were expecting a saviour to deliver them from Rome. And He knew that in 40 years time, Jerusalem would be razed to the ground by the Romans (Luke 21:20-24) resulting in tremendous loss of life and destruction of a people he held dear.

The triumphal entry marks the final week of Jesus' life...Holy Week. There could have been nearly 300,000 Jews there at that time to celebrate this special Passover. A city vibrant with life and joy for the coming celebration. On this same day, priests would have been busy inspecting the Passover lambs in the temple for their sacrifice 4 days later.

Jesus' destination was the cross. The timing of everything was laid out perfectly. He entered the temple that day and presented himself as the Paschal lamb (Mark 11:11) - perfect and spotless; set apart for the greatest sacrificial act of all time. His destination was, in fact, you.

WEEK SEVEN READINGS

APRIL 16 | MATTHEW 21:1-19

Jesus cursed a fig tree that bore no fruits, and it withered. This fig tree was a picture of Israel - that it had proven itself to be a barren nation - lacking in the fruits of righteousness that the Lord expected from it. There was a deep level of corruption that infected the religious leaders of that time. Caiphas, the high priest, was responsible for the merchants and money-changers in the temple, prioritizing profit over pleasing God. Caiphas was only interested in the continuance of his office as high priest and maintenance of the temple in its current status - which brought in incredible amounts of money through the temple tax. The Levites, priests, and Pharisees that lived in the favor of Caiphas strove to prove that there was no Messiah. We see this in John 11:47, "If we allow Him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in Him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation...it's better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed."

APRIL 17 | JOHN 12:20-50

"Walk as ye have the Light; meaning, make progress in the understanding of self, of duty, of time, of eternity, and act accordingly." (Pulpit Commentary) At this time, there was a spiritual darkness that obscured the divine revelation of who Jesus was. The darkness that we see as a theme leading up to the cross isn't necessarily from mourning Christ's death. It is from the lack of spiritual light - there was no room for Christ in the inn or in people's hearts. Darkness, however, is the birthplace of light. From this place of the deepest dark, God's plan of light was coming "to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Luke 1:79)

APRIL 18 - MAUNDY THURSDAY | MATTHEW 26:1-46

The word "Maundy" comes to us as an Anglo-French word, which means "commandment." In the Upper Room during the last supper, Jesus said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." We see a deep love for his disciples and the ones that were entrusted in His care while He walked the earth. This is the love that drove Him to the Garden to pray to the Father. Here is where His love was truly tested as He felt the weight of what He was about to do. This is where his sweat poured out as blood. Medically, this is called haematidrosis. It occurs when fear is stacked on fear, when the pain of suffering is laid upon each other until the person can no longer stand the agony. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." Mark 14:34

The timeline between Jesus betrayal, arrest and crucifixion is striking in its expediency. From the time he was betrayed, to the time he was crucified, was less than 12 hours. The Sanhedrin, the Pharisees and other religious elite had two priorities - have Jesus be put to death long before twilight so they could sacrifice the Passover lamb, and remain clean for the holy festival of Passover and the upcoming Sabbath. They could not allow this holy time to be defiled by an execution, it had to be done swiftly. This was indeed the very hour, when darkness reigned. (Luke 22:53)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness." Matthew 23:27

Reading: Matthew 27

“Give us Barabbas!”, they cried. Barabbas was guilty of taking part in insurrection against the Roman government and murder - an enemy of Rome and a friend to the Jews. In many ways, Barabbas was one of them, a political compatriot. They traded a revolutionary of one kind for another. This is a profound glimpse into the utter contempt the present crowd had for Jesus. No amount of signs or sermons could convince them otherwise - He was useless to their cause and a threat to their way of life. After our spotless lamb was examined by the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod and Pilate again, Jesus’ fate ultimately rested in the hands of the Pharisees, who convinced the crowd to yell for his crucifixion. Pilate washes his hands, a symbolic Hebrew act (Deuteronomy 21), not a Roman one, and ordered for his scourging. He has a sign inscribed with his name, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth”, and his crime, “King of the Jews.”

“Roman scourging was called the ‘halfway death’ because it was supposed to stop this side of death. The custom in Palestine was to administer 40 lashes save one, according to Jewish law (Deut. 25:3). The scourging of Rome was more deadly. It was administered by a trained man, called a lictor. He used a short circular piece of wood, to which were attached several strips of leather. At the end of each strip, he sewed a chunk of bone or a small piece of iron chain. There was no set number of stripes to be administered.” (Excerpt from the book, *The Day Jesus Died*)

*But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5*



GOOD FRIDAY

IT IS FINISHED.

His journey to the cross was a long and brutal one. His agony on the cross was full of pain but also full of purpose. Here he was, the Messiah, bloody and beaten, feeling the weight of darkness and sin on his human frame. He had accomplished what He and the Father had set out to do. He had introduced a new and better covenant - the foundation of it was love. A perfect sacrifice bought redemption for the whole world. With his final breath, darkness descended across the earth, the earth shook, and the temple veil was torn in two. Hours later, the holy Sabbath was upon the faithful of the city in the greatest melodrama in history - in that moment Joseph of Arimathea was cradling the Lamb of God - as a multitude of men were cradling their lambs in the Temple, waiting for the call to sacrifice.

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open.
(from Luke 23)



E A S T E R

H E I S R I S E N

The joy of the resurrection has arrived like the soft glow and slow warmth of a sunrise. The early morning rays gradually spread over the empty tomb, dispensing the darkness. The women and the disciples that visited the tomb were filled with fear, wonder, and questions as they saw the linen wrappings, empty. The dark grave, now a light-filled opening in the earth, was empty. Their hearts, now full with the hope that what the angel was saying was really true. He had indeed risen.

Our journey has led us to this glorious moment of celebration. Our faith in this singular event in history has led us to receive this resurrection life in Christ. He has indeed risen in our hearts as our Saviour and King. This is what we believe - that Jesus gave it all so we could have this gift of love and so earth can be saturated with heaven through his Resurrection people. Amen and let it be so.

Isaiah 35 | JOY OF THE REDEEMED

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.