



A Week to Change the World

A Holy Week Devotional Guide

compiled by Pastor Sean Christensen

What does it mean to be a Christian? Ask ten people and you're likely to get ten different answers. The word "Christian" was first coined in the late 40's AD, less than 20 years after the first Easter, as a title given to those people who believed that Jesus had risen from the dead and, after appearing to hundreds of people over a span of 40 days, ascended into heaven. They called themselves believers, or disciples of Jesus Christ. A *disciple* is a student and follower of a master teacher, and that is still today what best describes a Christian—a person who has committed his or herself to Jesus Christ, and therefore bears his name. And as Jesus, himself, said, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). And so as Christians we are being "fully trained" so we not only bear his *name*, but also his *character*.

This devotional guide is meant to help you trace Jesus' life over the time period traditionally called "Holy Week"—from Palm Sunday to Easter. The two most significant events in his life occurred during this week: his death (Good Friday), and his resurrection (Easter), which are the two most significant events in human history.

Take extra time this week to follow, in your mind and in your heart, in the footsteps of Jesus.

As Christians we are called to do just that. The specific application varies with each person in each unique circumstance, but the principles of his life, his stalwart passion to do the Father's will at any cost, and his sacrificial love for others, are absolute and timeless priorities by which to order your life.

If you have not yet committed your life to Christ, use this guide to help you explore the last days of the man who cut time in half with his birthday and in three short years of public ministry changed the course of history for all mankind. It may be that after your investigation he will have changed the course of your life as well.

Make time to read the Scriptures. Let your thoughts return to the events of Jesus' life over this week. What was he doing today, at this time in the afternoon? What was he thinking and feeling? What were his disciples thinking? his enemies? the crowds? Try to imagine yourself there along with them. Let the significance of this one week grab your focus and attention and see what a week walking in Jesus' footsteps can do in your heart!

Events Leading Up to Holy Week

In the town of Bethany, just a few miles from Jerusalem, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (see John 11:1-44). The notoriety he gained through this miracle so close to the religious and political center of Judea brought the chief priests, who were both religious and political leaders, into the plot to have Jesus killed.

Read John 11:45 – 12:11 to trace his movements just prior to his final approach to Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday—The Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-17

Luke 19:39-48 supplies some other details.

Israel's rejection of their King would bring judgment on them, but also provide salvation for the world through Christ's death. The procession quotes Psalm 118:25-26 and is a clear proclamation of Jesus' kingship. Hosanna means "O, Save!" and is an exclamation of praise that Jesus is the Savior. Jesus riding a donkey's foal into Jerusalem instead of a mighty steed fulfills the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9-10 (made 500 years earlier) and shows that, though he is King, he is humble. He would wear a crown of thorns five days later.

Monday—Jesus, the Light of the World

John 12:16-50

Although Jesus doesn't answer the Greek seekers directly, he refers to them in v.32. Being "lifted up" was a euphemism for being crucified. Through his death people from every nation could be reconciled to God. Notice that as the leaders' resolve to kill Jesus grows, so his resolve to allow them becomes all the clearer.

Tuesday—Day of Questioning and Teaching

Matthew 21:18-46...morning

Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22-23, the same Psalm the procession sang to hail him as King two days earlier. Notice it is not the multitudes who are stubbornly rejecting Jesus, but rather the jealous religious and political leaders.

Matthew 22...(if time permits)

Matthew 23...early afternoon

Again Jesus knows his fate is to be rejected as King and be crucified and the fate of the city which rejected him is to be leveled by Rome 40 years later. In v.39 he refers to his Second Coming when the Jewish people en masse *will* receive him as their Messiah. This has yet to occur.

Mark 13...late afternoon into evening

Overlooking Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus prepares his disciples for his impending death by teaching about the events surrounding his Second Coming.

Wednesday—Day of Betrayal

Luke 21:37 – 22:6

Judas' betrayal allowed the Jewish authorities to arrest Jesus privately the very next night rather than having to wait until the Passover festival was over because they feared his popularity. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was to be sacrificed on Passover (read Exodus 12:1-13 for background on Passover).

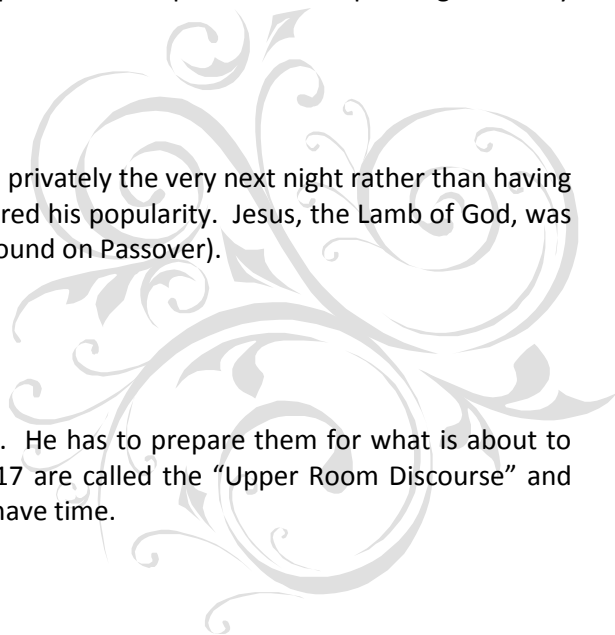
Thursday—The First Communion

Luke 22:7-38...afternoon into evening. "The Lord's Supper"

John 13 and 17...evening

This is Jesus' final teaching to his disciples before his arrest. He has to prepare them for what is about to take place. They are very significant words. Chapters 13-17 are called the "Upper Room Discourse" and take place right after the Passover supper. Read it all if you have time.

Matthew 26:30-56...late evening. Jesus' prayer vigil



Good Friday—Day of Crucifixion

Matthew 26:57-75...very early morning (still night)

Take note today of how outwardly pious the religious leaders act. Their concern to be ceremonially clean in order to eat the Passover meal that night is overshadowed by the fact that they have just condemned the Son of God to an illegal death sentence. It is easy to go through the motions of religious ritual; however, if our hearts are not right with God, it is ridiculous.

Matthew 27:1-10...at dawn (about 6:00 am)

John 18:28-38 picking up where Matthew left off.

Luke 23:6-22...about 7:00 am. Trial before Herod.

John 18:39 – 19:16...about 8:00 am

Matthew 27:27-30 Jesus mocked

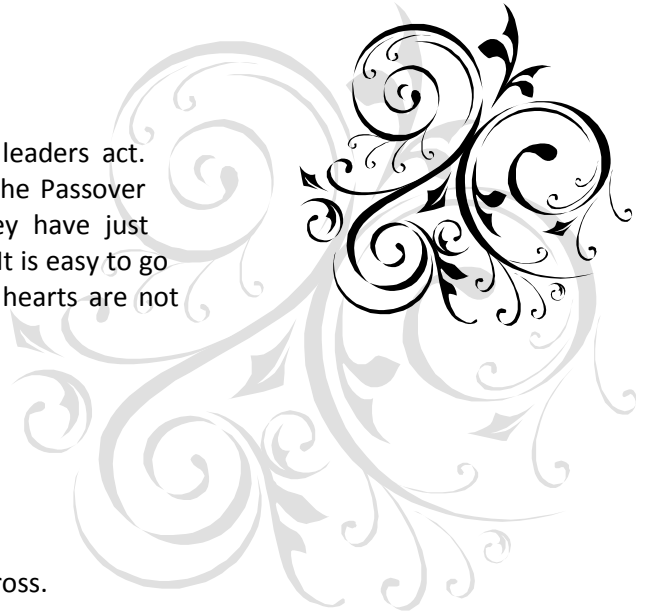
Matthew 27:31-34...about 8:30 am. Led to Golgotha

Matthew 27:35-44...from 9 am – noon. First 3 hours on the cross.

Matthew 27:45-56...noon – 3 p.m. Last 3 hours on the cross.

John 19:31-42...from 3 pm – before dusk. Certification of his death; burial.

Luke 23:54-56...just before dusk. Women knew what tomb he was laid in.



Saturday—The Sabbath Day

Matthew 27:61-66

It is odd that the disciples hadn't expected Jesus to rise even though he told them plainly, but the religious leaders remembered Jesus' figurative words predicting his resurrection and made plans against such a claim.

Easter Sunday—Resurrection Day!

Matthew 28:1-8...at dawn. Mary Magdalene and some other women visit the tomb.

John 20:1-18...morning.

Matthew 28:9-15...mid-morning.

Note the absurdity of the story. It is unlikely that the disciples could roll away the huge stone and steal the body without waking any of the guards, who knew the penalty for falling asleep while on duty was death. But if they did pull it off, how would any of the guards have known it since they were all asleep? For 20 centuries equally absurd explanations have been given to try to explain away the resurrection.

Luke 24:13-35...later afternoon to early evening

John 20:19-25...late evening

That's Not the End of the Story!

John 20:26-31; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-12...over a period of 40 days.

You have read the testimony, even from Jesus' dull and doubting disciples. Can you now say with Thomas that Jesus is *your* Lord and *your* God? Have you so believed that your life shows you follow Jesus? Are you obeying his final command to be his witness to all peoples? We have His mission to fulfill before His return!

Interesting facts about Easter:

- The Thursday before Easter is Maundy Thursday. This is when the last supper took place and Jesus was betrayed by Judas. Maundy means “mandate” and relates to Jesus giving the disciples a new command in John 13:34, to “Love one another.”
- The day that Jesus died is called “Good Friday.” Though it brought Him much pain, it was for our greatest good.
- The English word “Easter” is derived from Ēostre (or Ishtar)- the name of an Anglo-Saxon goddess that is no longer worshipped. The name comes more from a month on the Germanic calendar than from pagan worship.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane, it says that Jesus sweat was as drops of blood. Though rare, a well-documented condition called *hematohidrosis* does occur in people under great stress. Due to anxiety, blood vessels rupture allowing blood into the sweat glands.
- The nails in Jesus’ hands did not actually go into his palms, but into his wrists. Otherwise, the weight of His body would have torn through the wound.
- The Jews had a lunar calendar and Passover always takes place on a full moon. Therefore, the darkness that was experienced during Jesus’ death must be supernatural and not a solar eclipse.
- A Roman astronomer named Phlegon recorded that in the 18th year of the reign of emperor Tiberius (c. 32 A.D.), the day became so dark from the 6th hour to the 9th hour that the stars were visible in the sky.
- Eusebius also notes the darkness (prophesied in Amos 8:9) and time and notes an earthquake that shook in the region of Bithynia and buildings were toppled in Nicea (some 600 miles away from Jerusalem).
- The wine mixed with myrrh drink that Jesus was offered on the cross was a pain-relieving drink offered by a merciful group of women.
- The curtain that was torn separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple and was about 60 feet tall and around 4 inches thick and weighed several tons.
- Eggs are a symbol of new life; specifically relating to the resurrection of Christ and the new life that we can have through Him. People have been decorating eggs for over 2,500 years- long before Christians applied the decorations to Easter.
- There is some speculation about the shape of the cross, which could have been a tree, or like a capital “T,” or like the traditional understanding of a lower case “t.” The Romans used all of these formats. The shape of the cross isn’t as important as what happened there.
- Isaiah 53:9 foretells of Jesus being buried in a rich man’s tomb. This is fulfilled in Matthew 27:57-59 when Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus’ body in a new tomb hewn in rock, which was a costly form of burial. Isaiah was written around 700 B.C.!
- Isaiah 53 also says that Jesus would be an average looking guy, despised by men, took our sin upon Himself, did not sin, would be raised again, and so “made intercession for the transgressors.”
- Also see Psalm 22:1,7-8, 16-18; Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12 for more prophecies fulfilled in the Gospels.

