

HOLY WEEK

8 DAYS

THAT CHANGED
THE *WORLD*

JENTEZEN FRANKLIN



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Assembled and Produced for Jentezen Franklin Media Ministries by
Breakfast for Seven
2150 E. Continental Blvd., Southlake, TX 76092
breakfastforseven.com

Printed and bound in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

THE PASSION WEEK

Welcome to one of the greatest weeks in history—eight days that changed the world forever and ever. Holy week, as it has come to be known, is eight days, beginning with the Sunday when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey and concluding on the following Sunday with the discovery of the empty tomb. So much of our history, our legacy, and our hope as believers is wrapped up in this eight-day period.

I invite you to commit to making these eight days a brief season where you set aside time each day to take this journey to the cross and out of the empty tomb. I have designed this teaching devotion

to help you understand more fully the many different aspects of the Holy Week; the main characters, places, and events that took place. I think you will quickly discover how intentional Jesus was in every aspect of the most important week of His earthly life.

My goal is that your faith will be strengthened as your knowledge and understanding is expanded. I believe, with all of my heart, that the Lord is in these pages ahead, just waiting for you to walk those eight days with Him and allow Him to show you sides of Him you have never seen.

The Lord WILL speak to you as you unpack each day. Make the commitment right now to set aside just ten to fifteen minutes each day to do the daily reading. An adventure awaits, as does a blessing and renewed hope.

MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HOLY WEEK

Q- What is the Holy Week?

A- Holy Week is the week Christians celebrate **eight days** that represent both the last week of Jesus' life, from His triumphal entry into Jerusalem to His death, burial, and resurrection. It is also called Passion Week or Easter Week. The first Sunday of the eight day commemoration is called Palm Sunday, and the second Sunday is called Easter Sunday or Resurrection Sunday.

Q- Why isn't Easter on the same day every year like Christmas or other holidays?

A- Easter always occurs between March 22 and April 25 and is celebrated the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring. This makes it align more accurately with the original Passover than a yearly calendar ever could.

It's really quite amazing that every year, Passover Friday, the day Jesus was crucified, is the same exact day the Passover lamb was sacrificed by the Hebrews under Moses' leadership thousands of years ago. The reason that the week of Easter is always different is because it is not based on our yearly calendar, but rather on the cycles of the moon, just like it was in the days of Moses.

Q- Why did they use palm branches in the triumphal entry parade?

A- There are a couple of reasons. First, the palm branch is a symbol of victory, triumph, peace, and eternal life originating in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world. Others suggest that the Romans honored champions of the games and the military with palm branches so it was a symbol of the highest honor.

Q- Why is Tuesday called Holy Tuesday?

A- Holy Tuesday is when Jesus was confronted and challenged by the Pharisees and Sadducees again and again as they felt their power and position slipping through their hands. It's also the day that Jesus commented on the widow's donation, which was insulting to those who liked to make their large gifts seen by all. Tuesday is also the day Jesus spoke His seven "woes" against the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13–36) and the evening on which He delivered the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21:5–36). The Olivet Discourse is an elaborate description of the last days.

Q- Why is Thursday of Easter week called Maundy Thursday?

A- Some people call it Holy Thursday; others call it Maundy Thursday. The consensus is that "Maundy" comes from the Latin word *Mandatum* which is translated "commandment." In the context of Holy Week, it refers to the commandment Jesus gave to His disciples while washing their feet, as recorded in John 13:34–35, NIV.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have

loved you,

*so you must love one another. By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples,*

if you love one another.”

As a reminder of this commandment, some churches hold foot washing ceremonies on the Thursday of Holy Week, commemorating Jesus washing the feet of the disciples in the upper room. If you’ve never been a part of a foot washing ceremony, it’s an incredibly humbling activity.

Q- Why do they call the day Jesus was crucified

Good Friday?

A- This has been a point of controversy in many parts of Christianity. Obviously, it was a horrific event. Jesus was brutally beaten, nailed to a cross, and left to die. Jesus was innocent of any crime and, from a human standpoint, He didn’t deserve to die. But the reason it is called “Good Friday” is because of all the good that was accomplished on that one single day.

This was the reason Jesus came into the world, and He knew it. He knew there was no other way. His love for you and

me was greater than His desire to escape any pain, which He could have. All our sins were transferred to Him in that moment, and many believe the sheer weight of the sins of all mankind was the greatest pain of all. And that includes your sins and mine. We should never take that for granted. He died in our place. We deserved to die on that cross, but Jesus took the punishment we deserved—and because He did, we can be forgiven and cleansed of all our sins. Powerful stuff! GOOD stuff, and thus, Good Friday.

Q- How did Easter eggs enter the picture?

A- The early church (13th century) prohibited the eating of eggs during Holy Week. To make sure everyone remembered they were off limits, the people would mark the eggs with paint. This is where the tradition of coloring eggs also began. Go figure!

Fun Fact: In the US alone, we consume more than 16 million jelly beans every Easter!

Q- Where was Jesus between the cross and the resurrection?

A- This is a tough one and there are many different theories and some very relevant scriptures. For starters, we know that as soon as He died, He was in paradise that same day because

that is what He said to the thief on the cross next to Him in Luke 23:43.

At some time between His death and resurrection, Jesus also visited a place where He delivered a message to spirit beings (see Jude 1:6 and 1 Peter 3:20). Peter does not tell us what Jesus proclaimed to the imprisoned spirits. Perhaps Jesus proclaimed His victory over Satan and his hosts (1 Peter 3:22; Colossians 2:15).

Another critical passage related to this time period can be found in Ephesians 4:8–10. Quoting Psalm 68:18, Paul says about Christ, *“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men”* (ESV). There are different theories about what this means.

The Bible isn’t specifically clear what exactly Christ did for the three days between His death and resurrection, but this much we do know. He did two things: He comforted the departed saints and brought them to their eternal home, and He proclaimed His victory over the fallen angels who are kept in prison.

This week is one of the most famous and meaningful for followers of Christ that there has ever been. All of eternity

hung in the balance for one week, and just when everything seemed the most uncertain, a miracle happened. When Jesus died, forgiveness became possible for all of us—Jew and gentile. When He rose from the dead, He conquered death and the grave, and the battle was won. Now, over two thousand years later, the effects of that event are the very source of our hope and our salvation.

This Easter season, take a moment with your family or by yourself and walk with me through each of the eight days that changed the world. I invite you to allow me to spend some time with you as we experience Easter in a whole new way. One day at a time.

Great link for resources to help you teach children about Easter:

<https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com>

[/teaching-kids-about-easter-5-great-ways/](https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/teaching-kids-about-easter-5-great-ways/)

DAY 1

PALM SUNDAY

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.

And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

*“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you,
lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ”*

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

*They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and
set Him on them.*

And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road;

*others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the
road.*

*Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried
out, saying:*

*“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name
of the LORD!*

Hosanna in the highest!” And when He had come into Jerusalem,

all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”

*So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of
Galilee.”*

SIZING UP THE BIG DAY

So many amazing things happened on this special Sunday over two thousand years ago. Imagine being one of the disciples Jesus asks to go into town to ask someone to just give you their donkey. Imagine their surprise when the owner of the donkey just handed it to them, no questions asked. I believe, in that moment, they sensed that something amazing was about to happen.

Picture in your mind a city full of people who had heard, for THREE years, about this man who turned the water to wine, cured the blind and the deaf, raised people from the dead, and healed men who had been crippled for life. How many people on this parade route had been in those crowds where he fed thousands with nothing more than a few fish and a few loaves of bread? Imagine being one of the hundreds who had heard Him teach with amazing accuracy in the Temple with wisdom far beyond His years. Even if you were any one of these people, that would only tell half the reason these people were so excited.

Imagine being under Roman rule and living in constant fear of a government and its army that despised and merely tolerated you.

Imagine the oppression and the humiliation the Jews suffered under Roman rule. Imagine being ruled internally by religious officials that make a legalist today look like a corrupt politician.

Imagine if a prophecy of a soon and coming Messiah was your great-

est hope. Imagine if you had been told your whole life that God was sending someone who would overthrow the government and restore your nation to its original and intended glory.

Imagine if you believed with all your heart that today was that day, and this JESUS was the man God had promised. Imagine the excitement to see that everything you ever hoped for and clung to was really about to happen. THAT is what that day felt like, and the emotions and excitement were at fever pitch as they lined the road where their Messiah would soon travel.

Imagine if you were seeing Him for the very first time.

THE GRAND ENTRY

It was common practice in that day to welcome home a king or war hero by laying out a path of branches for him to ride in on—very similar to rolling out the red carpet today. Even the Romans honored champions of the games and the famous military champions with palm branches. It was a symbol of the highest honor and reverence.

ONE MOMENT OF REFLECTION AND ANTICIPATION

Just before Jesus entered the city, coming down from the Mount of Olives, Luke records one of the most powerful moments in the New Testament. Imagine Jesus, looking down on the city He loved—filled

with the people He loved more than they could possibly know, knowing all the while that this same crowd would reject Him, and crucify Him just a few days later.

Bonus Reading: See John 12:1–8 which talks about the night before the Triumphal Entry to see just how much Jesus knew His time was at hand.

As Jesus sat atop that donkey, the scriptures tell us that there was a moment where He was overcome with emotion. Luke says it better than I ever could write it:

*Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even **you**, especially in this **your** day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”*

Luke 19:41–42, NKJV (emphasis added)

As Jesus rode into town, they waved the palms and laid them out on the ground. They also shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” The people believed they were welcoming a soon and future king. If only they knew how right they were. Sadly, most were looking only for an earthly king—and not a heavenly King.

A GUEST AT LAZARUS' HOUSE

Following His big day in Jerusalem, Jesus spent Sunday night in Bethany, a village that was a thirty minute walk from Jerusalem (Matthew 21:7). What an amazing day that must have been for those disciples. But what a sad day that had to be for Jesus. We've all felt betrayal, but few of us have felt what Jesus must have felt that day... feelings so strong, it made this mighty Savior cry.

What an amazing day that was, and this is just day 1 of 8.

Bonus Reading: Google a map of the Holy Land to see the proximity of the different events of the Holy Week.

Jesus' Triumphal Entry is recorded in Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–11, Luke 19:28–44, and John 12:12–19.

PALM SUNDAY PRAYER:

Lord Jesus—You say in Your Word that if we seek You, we will find You, and especially if we seek You with our whole heart. I come before You today and for the next seven days seeking You with all my heart. I can't imagine what this week must have felt like for You, and You did it for me. Words cannot express my gratitude. I want to know more about this week. I want to see what You saw, as much as that is

possible. I ask You to show me each day as I read through this devotion. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for coming to earth for me. In Jesus' name.

DAY 2

MONDAY

THE DAY AFTER

The day after the big parade with all the admiration and pledges of devotion, two other significant events took place: the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple. If the disciples thought asking for someone's donkey was a tall order, this day would be filled with head scratching and awkward moments for sure.

THE FIG TREE

After spending the night in Bethany with the disciples, Jesus returned to Jerusalem the next morning. As they were walking early in the

morning, Jesus noticed a fig tree that had produced leaves ahead of the season, but had no fruit. For anyone else this would have been no big deal because it wasn't fig season yet. But Jesus had something else in mind. Without warning, Jesus cursed the tree and declared that it would never bear fruit again. And it didn't. The disciples were surprised to see the tree wither so rapidly and had to be wondering why Jesus would do this. Better yet, pondering how Jesus COULD do this. It was here that Jesus took a moment to teach:

So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done.

And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Matthew 21:21–22, NKJV

The Book of Mark records this same event from a different perspective—not one that contradicts, but rather one that paints the entire picture the way the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were intended to do. After cursing the fig tree, Jesus taught:

"For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be re-

moved and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Mark 11:23–24, NKJV

Jesus used the disciples' surprise to teach on genuine faith in God. He taught them that there were no limits to what could be done, in an instant and in a moment, if they would simply have faith. Even a mustard-size faith is sufficient to move mountains when it aligns with God's will. The faith of Jesus' followers would be tested in the days prior to His resurrection and it was moments like these that they would never forget.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Moving on from there, Jesus went next to the temple, and what He found when He got there struck Him to the core as He saw His Father's holy temple used as a common marketplace. The Book of Matthew describes it like this:

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the

money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ ”

Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

Matthew 21:12–14, NKJV

The Book of Mark talks about a righteously angry Jesus, but also a caring Savior who also took the time to teach:

So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?’

But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ ”

Mark 11:15–17, NKJV

With all the commotion, word soon spread that Jesus was at the temple and those who were blind and lame came when they heard Jesus

was in the temple. As the children saw Jesus they began to shout again, *“Hosanna, Hosanna, to the Son of David.”* There was nothing the Pharisees could do to stop Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus replied,

“Have you never read: ‘from the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise’?”

Matthew 21:16, BSB

As day 2 ended, Jesus and His disciples made the thirty minute journey back to Bethany for the night. Imagine the conversations they had that night, the questions they had, and the boldness they felt building inside them.

Bonus Reading: Read Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 for a full overview of the first few days of the first Holy Week.

Monday’s events are recorded in Matthew 21:12–22, Mark 11:15–19, Luke 19:45–48, and John 2:13–17.

MONDAY’S PRAYER:

Dear Lord, thank You for today’s reading. Thank You for powerful lessons on reverence and appreciation and faith. I can’t imagine how You must have felt walking in and seeing people treating Your temple like that. I could almost feel Your anger and Your frustration as I

*read the account. Help me to NEVER take Your church, my church,
for granted. I pray I never lose my reverence and awe for You, Lord.
And I ask that every day You increase my faith. Give me mustard seed
faith. I want to trust You like that and I desire to KNOW You like that.
My life is Yours, LORD, and I can't wait to see what You do with me.
Not my will but Thine, oh, Lord. In Jesus' name I pray.*

DAY 3

HOLY TUESDAY

HOLY TUESDAY—ENDING JESUS

The significance of Holy Tuesday can never be underestimated. Jesus would continuously condemn the religious authorities while proclaiming His deity. Just for review from the introduction—this day is referred to as Holy Tuesday because His deity was challenged and defended with incredible accuracy and facts. It is also one of the days (along with Wednesday) where an enormous amount of teaching took place to the masses.

This, of course, infuriated the religious hierarchy partly because they

felt His teaching was blasphemous and partly because Jesus slipped every trap they set for them. It's tough to prove someone isn't the Son of God when He really is. Attempts were made to force Jesus to say things that would technically break their laws, but time after time Jesus was one step ahead.

The ultimate goal of the religious elite was to be able to charge Jesus with blasphemy so they could legally put Him to death and be done with it. It's tough to say you aren't divine when you really are. Jesus agreed to answer their questions, but they had to answer His too if He was going to grace them with a conversation. And the very traps they set for Jesus ensnared the questioners, many times publicly. This even more infuriated the religious leaders.

END HIM NOW

On Holy Tuesday, the conspiracies to trap Jesus escalated. Israel's religious leaders had one goal: to get rid of Jesus of Nazareth. To make matters worse, Jesus was slowly winning the hearts and minds of the people... at least for these few days. This infuriated the religious leaders even further. Jealousy blinded them to the Truth that stood before them.

Then, Jesus doubled down. He didn't just teach the people about the truths of the Kingdom, He told them about the hypocrisy, corruption,

and misguided leadership of their religious leaders. This was the final straw as the chief priests and elders began to gather privately to develop a plan to take Jesus out.

THE GREATEST QUESTION EVER ASKED

It is here that the greatest question ever asked was asked of Jesus. Those out to trip up Jesus were almost giddy with excitement because they thought they really had Jesus cornered. As time stood still and all of eternity looked on, the Pharisees asked their skillfully crafted question, believing that any answer Jesus gave was the wrong answer. Then came the question: Matthew records the exchange like this:

*But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together.*

*Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and
saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"*

*Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all
your heart,*

with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:34–40, NKJV

Silence. Crickets. In fact, the man that asked Jesus the question, a lawyer, gives the only recorded response. Even he had to admit that Jesus answered correctly. And I love Jesus' response. Because that lawyer responded in truth and sincerity, Jesus acknowledged that this young man was not that far off from God. Mark records it like this:

So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth,

for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength,

and to love one's neighbor as oneself,

is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely,

He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

But after that no one dared question Him.

Mark 12:32–34, NKJV

Jesus wasn't the one closed off to anyone willing to challenge the status quo and He saw something in this young man. Sometimes we have questions or what we see doesn't line up with what we are supposed to believe. We serve a God who doesn't mind our questions, our concerns, or our frustrations. In fact, that is why He gave you His Holy Spirit. You have a teacher, a comforter, and all the wise counsel you could ever ask for, living inside of you—walking with you all day, every day.

JESUS THE TEACHER

While there weren't as many significant events that took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, Jesus spent an incredible amount of time teaching during these midweek days. He took on the chief priests and elders and all their traps and questions for starters, and then came the hit parade of parables:

Matthew 21–25

- The Parable of the Two Sons
- The Parable of the Tenants

- The Parable of the Wedding Banquet
- Paying Taxes to Caesar
- Marriage at the Resurrection
- The Greatest Commandment
- The Son of David
- The Seven Woes
- The Signs of the End of the Age
- The Parable of the Ten Virgins
- The Parable of the Talents
- The Sheep and the Goats

Mark 12

- The Widow's Offering

John 12

- Jesus Predicts His Death
- Light of the World

As you can see, these days were filled with Jesus continually reaching out to people, teaching, and loving right up to the very end.

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Later that afternoon, Jesus left the city and went with His disciples to the Mount of Olives, which sits due east of where the temple would have stood, and overlooks Jerusalem, even to this day. Here Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse, titled appropriately because it was

a significant teaching given only to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. The Olivet Discourse is an elaborate and very specific prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age. While He spoke in parables and symbolic language about the end times, including His second coming and the final judgment, there was a sense of the prophetic that was undeniable and that has been studied by scholars and lay folk alike for centuries.

Bonus Reading: Read Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 for a full overview of the Olivet Discourse.

THE BETRAYAL BEGINS

Scripture indicates that Tuesday was also the day Judas Iscariot began negotiations with the Sanhedrin, the ruling court of ancient Israel, to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14–16). What they could not accomplish in the light took root in the quiet recesses of betrayal and deceit.

After a tiring day of confrontation and warnings about the future, once again, Jesus and the disciples returned to Bethany to stay the night (Mark 14:1–3).

The tumultuous events of Tuesday and the Olivet Discourse are recorded in Matthew 21:23–24:51, Mark 11:20–13:37, Luke 20:1–21:36, and John 12:20–38.

HOLY TUESDAY PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I had no idea so much happened in one day. How awful that while You were doing all You could to save people, men were conspiring to kill You just a short distance away. But even though You knew they would come for You eventually, You never let that change Your mission or Your love for people. Teach me to love the Lord my God with all my heart, my soul, and my strength. I want to love You like that. And Lord, I need You to help me love my neighbor as myself. Help me to see beyond my own needs and show me what You see when You see others. I desire the supernatural plan You have for me. Teach me, Lord. Show me how to love others the way You do, I pray in Jesus' name.

DAY 4

SPY WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, which is also referred to as “Spy Wednesday” in many parts of Christendom, is most famous for Judas’ actions as he starts the betrayal of Jesus. Although the betrayal will not come to fruition for another couple of days, the plan of betrayal is in full “go” mode. As we discussed in the Tuesday chapter, the plan to betray Jesus began with a secret meeting:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

As we go from Tuesday, when the deal is made between Judas and the chief priests, to Wednesday, we find Judas using his position as a disciple to be a spy for the high priests. Thus the name, “Spy Wednesday.”

While Judas is reviled and is the symbol for betrayal and deceit, there are still very valuable lessons we can learn from the life of Judas. Although Judas walked and talked with Jesus for three years, it wasn't enough to transform him. He saw it all, and yet, he never went fully all in.

PRICELESS LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JUDAS

- 1. Judas refused to change.** Judas saw absolute miracles, over and over and over, and yet it was not enough to achieve Judas' complete devotion and loyalty. He started out a devil and he finished a devil. Even after everything he saw and experienced, he was not convinced. He still was not transformed. Christianity is not about a better you; it's about complete transformation. It is about change. It's not enough to go to church and hear the word. It's about allowing the Lord to change you.
- 2. Judas wanted to give Jesus something, but not everything.** Judas got upset with the woman with the alabaster

box because she gave her everything. Too many want enough of Jesus to go to Heaven but not their whole life. Do you give your whole heart in worship? Do you give your whole heart in helping others? Do you read your Bible or simply have a Bible? **Judas called worship waste.** When she began to pour out that expensive perfume, she gave her most precious possession, but Judas saw it as wasteful. What Mary called worship Judas called waste. Too many do not worship in spirit OR truth—they just endure the worship time rather than giving their all in worship. We get loud at a sporting event but not at church. Give your all in worship.

3. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, but He loved Judas equally anyway. Jesus could have thrown Judas under the bus, but He didn't. He just kept giving grace, over and over and over.

4. Judas knew about Jesus but He didn't KNOW Jesus.

When is the last time you spent intimate time with Jesus? Judas said, "Rabbi, is it I?" But he didn't say, "Lord, is it I?" There is a difference.

5. Judas was impatient with God's timing. He had incorrect timing. We cannot give God deadlines and insist on our will on our timing. God does things in His timing and not ours. When we get impatient, we can miss the Lord's perfect will.

It's not about YOUR timing; it's about HIS timing.

6. If you ever get your hands on Jesus, don't let go. Hold Him fast. Don't loosen your grip on Jesus, EVER! Once you take hold of Jesus, don't let go. Don't let go of your joy, your freedom, your purity, your hope.

7. If you don't finish your assignment, somebody else will. God can raise someone else up to take your place if you give up or walk away from what God has told you to do. Not long after Judas committed suicide, the disciples cast lots and selected another whose name was Mathias. God doesn't have to have you. He can replace you in a moment. God doesn't have to have me; I have to have Him. Let no man take your crown.

JESUS ANOINTED BY A WOMAN

One of the main events on Wednesday during Holy Week was the anointing of Jesus by a woman. The account in Mark tells one of the most touching stories of love and devotion found in the Bible.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper; as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold

*for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And
they criticized her sharply.*

*But Jesus said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has
done a good work for Me.*

*For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you
may do them good;*

*but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She
has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say
to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what
this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”*

Mark 14:3–9, NKJV

The story of the woman with her alabaster box is one of the most told stories of the Easter season, and that has been true for over two thousand years. Songs are sung and sermons are preached proclaiming the power and magnitude of that moment with one goal in mind—to experience our own encounter with the living God. Moments like this transcend time and space—culture and race—Jew and gentile. What a powerful image of love and adoration and unadulterated worship. She grasped the truth of the hour they were in and will be remembered always for it.

This is the very essence of what the word “holy” is all about. It’s a reverence and an awe and an extravagant expression of surrender, love, and affection. It’s realizing, by your actions, that He is God and you are not. And, when truly in God’s presence, it is only pure and natural to want to give your BEST gift... your BEST worship... your most extravagant love. Our worship should take us to the foot of the cross and our prayers should usher us into the presence of the living God. Act appropriately.

Bonus Reading: There are different theories about how many times and how many different women anointed Jesus with oil or perfume. This is an argument that has been going on for hundreds of years. Some experts say it happened three times, while other equally qualified experts say there were only two occasions, concluding that the account in Mark 14 and the one in John 12 are really the same event, but are they? Then, when you add the entirely different account in Luke 7, you are left with a choice to make. Let me save you some time and remind you that the experts do not all agree, so how about prayerfully reading the passages for yourself and deciding. But, when all is said and done, the point isn’t really if there were two or three times, but rather that we realize that to be in God’s presence should inspire us and create a sense of awe.

The many events of Wednesday are recorded in Matthew 26, Mark 14, John 12, and Luke 7.

SPY WEDNESDAY PRAYER:

Oh Lord, how it hurts my heart to imagine someone so close to You conspiring to have You killed. Surely You had to know—and You loved him anyway, right up to the end. Your love is amazing. I pray that should I ever be betrayed by a trusted friend that I will be able to love them with a godly love. I pray for that kind of love, even if it hurts.

And Lord, I was amazed at the courage and the determination of the woman who poured her most expensive perfume on You. I seek that kind of courage and determination in my praise and worship. May I learn to worship You, in public and in private, in such a way that there is no fear or concern from what anyone thinks but You. You are my God—and I am so thankful that You took the time to be fully human too. When I go through things in this life, it gives me even greater comfort knowing You understand because You felt everything we feel. I love You, Lord. I thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name.

DAY 5

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday of Holy Week is known as Maundy Thursday. If you remember from the introduction, “Maundy” comes from the Latin word *Mandatum* which is translated “commandment.” In the context of Holy Week, it refers to the commandment Jesus gave to His disciples while washing their feet:

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you,
so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you
are my disciples,*

if you love one another.”

John 13:34–35, NIV

This was one of the most crucial and pivotal days in the history of the church. Every Christian church in the world participates in Holy Communion, some on a weekly basis. This tradition, called the Lord’s Supper, Communion, and other titles was birthed on THIS day. Foot washing is something else that happened in the upper room, and it took on an entirely different dimension and meaning because of when Jesus did it on THIS day. Paintings worth millions of dollars do the best they can to capture the essence of what happened on THIS day and that famous table. Jesus was betrayed by one of His own disciples on THIS day.

The events of this day, particularly the Last Supper, continue to be remembered and commemorated in Christian churches around the world. Jesus prayed in the garden, sweat drops of blood, and was betrayed and arrested, all on THIS day.

THE LAST SUPPER

Matthew captures the image of that last supper together like this:

When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they

were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

*And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say
to Him,*

"Lord, is it I?"

*He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish
will betray Me.*

The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him,

but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!

It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

*Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is
it I?"*

He said to him, "You have said it."

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it,

and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,

"Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant,

*which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you,
I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day
when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

Matthew 26:20–29, NKJV

JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

I love that the book of John adds a whole other layer to this story by telling about a very important demonstration of love Jesus gave during the supper in that upper room. Taking this final opportunity to teach His disciples before His imminent death, and sensing their desire to be the greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus creates an entirely new paradigm for each to consider as He humbly and lovingly washes their feet:

*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour
had come
that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved
His own
who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

And supper being ended, the devil having 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 to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now,

but you will know after this."

John 13:1-7, NKJV

And Jesus explains it even further:

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?

You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, 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 should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

John 13:12–17, NKJV

What a powerful image of Jesus, just hours before He is to be betrayed, tried, beaten, and crucified, fully focused on others. All that happened at dinner is recorded and told year after year in Good Friday and Easter services all over the world.

JESUS PROMISES THE HOLY SPIRIT

As if this night wasn't full enough of rich biblical history and church tradition, another powerful revelation was revealed when Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. John tells it like this:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

John 14:16–17, NKJV

And then later, in John 16 Jesus says this:

*“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me,
‘Where are You going?’*

*But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your
heart.*

*Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go
away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if
I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will
convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

John 16:5–8, NKJV

And finally, one last word from Jesus on the Holy Spirit:

*“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot
bear them now.*

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you
into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but what-
ever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He
will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to
you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that*

He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

John 16:12–15, NKJV

There it is—the promise of the Holy Spirit, on THIS night, the night of all nights. But THIS night was far from over.

IN THE GARDEN

The scripture in Matthew says that after they had spent time eating together and talking in the upper room, they sang a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives. The times of intimate fellowship in the safety of the upper room were over, and now, fully knowing what lay ahead in that garden, Jesus took His final steps as a free man. Matthew chapter 26 takes it from here:

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; neverthe-

less, not as I will, but as You will.”

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

Matthew 26:36–46, NKJV

What a powerful statement Jesus made: *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”* With this one statement, all doubt about whether He was in fact fully man is wiped

away. He grew up a Jew and had seen the cruel torture and death inflicted on criminals for thirty three years. Flogging and crucifixions were commonplace in the world Jesus knew, and now the horror He had witnessed on so many occasions was a fate He would soon call His own.

Luke said that, as Jesus was praying, His *sweat* became like great drops of *blood* falling down upon the ground. In a matter of moments, it would all begin—the betrayal, the arrest, the false accusations, and the mocking of the Roman soldiers, all while the chief priests and Pharisees would watch and cheer, only too glad to be rid of this nuisance.

THE FATAL KISS

Late that evening in Gethsemane, Jesus was betrayed with a kiss by Judas the disciple and arrested by the Sanhedrin. He was taken to the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the whole council had gathered to begin making their case against Jesus.

Bonus Reading: For a full description of everything that Jesus taught in the upper room the night of the Last Supper, read John chapters 13–16.

Thursday's events are recorded in Matthew 26:17–75, Mark 14:12–72, Luke 22:7–62, and John 13:1–38.

MAUNDY THURSDAY PRAYER:

Dear Lord, what a powerful command in John 13:34–35: “Love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (NKJV). To think that whether or not I am a disciple of Jesus is based on my love for others is sobering and something that I will take deep into my heart. Teach me to love like You do, Lord, and help me to forgive like You forgive. I do love You, Lord. Teach me to show my love for You by my actions toward others. What a powerful command, but what an appropriate reminder THIS week, as I remember how much You forgave me and loved me. I am always amazed at Your loving kindness toward me. I pray for more and more of Your heart, in Jesus’ name.

DAY 6

GOOD FRIDAY

THE CRUCIFIXION

Good Friday is the most difficult and most complex day of the Passion Week. Our day begins in the early morning hours. As Jesus' trial was getting underway, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before the rooster crowed, just like Jesus said he would—something Peter swore he would never do. Also early that morning, Judas Iscariot, the disciple who had betrayed Jesus, was so overcome with guilt that he hanged himself.

PETER: THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF FAILING FORWARD

There's just something about Simon Peter I love. He's the disciple I most identify with. He always had that comeback spirit. After Jesus was crucified and Peter denied Him three times, he began to lose hope of God ever using him in ministry again. From every indication, he went back to his fishing business. Jesus never stopped loving Peter, and He knew that there was much for Peter yet to do in the Kingdom.

The Bible says that when Peter recognized that Jesus was calling him from the shore, he immediately jumped out of the boat and swam for over 100 yards (John 21:8). When Peter got to Jesus, Jesus did not say, "Why did you run, Peter?" He did not say, "Why did you cuss?" He did not say, "Why did you deny me three times when I needed you the most?" Instead, Jesus simply asked one question three times. "Peter, do you love me?" All he cared about was if Peter still loved Him. Jesus never brought up his past.

I don't know how many times you've run from Jesus, and I don't know how many times you have failed. But through it all, Jesus has a question for you. He's not asking what you've done because He knows your past does not define you. He's asking one question, "Do you still love me?" Because if you still love Him, He's not here to condemn you.

Peter failed forward. It is better to fail with a higher aim than to suc-

ceed with a low aim. I really think Simon Peter meant well. When he cut off the man's ear in the garden, he meant well. He was just trying to defend Jesus. His motive was good. Even when Peter cursed and denied Jesus, he didn't mean to. He was warming his hands by the fire, but if you look more closely at the situation, everybody else fled. Peter was the only one who stayed close to where Jesus was. He came to that fire to get near Jesus. When challenged openly, He knew if someone recognized him then he too would be brought before the council.

God can see the heart of somebody who has sinned and messed up but whose heart is still devoted to Him. I'm not glorifying sin, but I'm telling you that when the devil whispers to you, "You're not worthy. You don't measure up. You're disqualified," just ask the devil, "Who DOES measure up? No one. But Jesus has me covered under His blood."

You have to constantly remind yourself that if you love Jesus and fail, that you are going to get up, stand up, and fail forward. Even in your failure, you meant well. And even in a weak moment of temptation, do not give up. Always fail forward. God knows your heart.

In some ways, Peter was a colossal failure, but he repented, and he was restored. And when you get to Heaven someday, one of the 12 foundations of the city, the New Jerusalem, will have Simon Peter's

name on it, the one who preached on the day of Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized.” Peter, the one who God used to walk on water, and Peter, the one who God used to reach the gentiles... the one who wrote two books of the Bible. You are going to experience failure in this life. Failing forward is a choice, but it is a temporary state. When you do fail, always choose to fail forward.

BACK TO OUR STORY

Meanwhile, a little later in the morning, Jesus endured the shame of false accusations, death threats, mockery, beatings, and betrayal. After more than one unlawful trial at the hands of corrupt rulers, Jesus, who had done no wrong, was sentenced to death by crucifixion, one of the most painful and shameful methods of capital punishment known at the time.

GIVE US BARABBAS!

Before Jesus was led away from the final trial, He was presented before the Jewish leaders and citizens in honor of a yearly tradition whereby they would pardon one condemned man. When presented to the very people who, just days before, were throwing Him a parade and shouting His praises, they chose the hardened criminal Barabbas over innocent Jesus. When the Roman official asked the people what

he should do with Jesus seeing that they could not find Him guilty of any crime, they yelled and screamed, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

As He was led away from that public spectacle, the soldiers spit on Him, beat Him in the head with reeds (similar to bamboo sticks), and mocked Him. Ultimately, as the final insult, they jammed a crown made of thorns into His scalp, and then hit Him on the head and even pulled out His beard to amplify the pain.

It is so important for us to know that, at any time, Jesus could have commanded the very angels that were encamped all about to rescue Him. But He didn't. That's how much He loved you and me. It's not just that He suffered immense torture and pain. It's that He didn't have to.

ON TO CALVARY

After the rigged trials, the beating, the insults, and more beatings, it was time for another parade... same people, same Jesus, but an entirely different response from the screaming crowd. Jesus carried His own cross down that rugged road to Calvary willingly, with every ounce of strength He had, until He could no longer physically bear the load. As He fell, a man was ordered to help Him.

Once atop that hill called Calvary and also called Golgotha, which means the place of “the skull,” they laid the cross on the ground, held

the back of Jesus' body to it, and began to nail down His hands and feet to the planks, stretching His arms out to the point of separating His shoulders from their sockets, as was the custom. This produced even more pain while making it harder to pull Himself up to breathe once the cross was raised.

And there hung our Champion, our Savior, and our closest Friend. He was guilty of nothing, but the same cannot be said for you or for me. And this is the hardest part of all, for you and for me. People didn't put Jesus on that cross that day. We did. He didn't just die to be a martyr; He came as the "once and for all" blood sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Had He not done that, you and I would be the ones who stand condemned, not just for our time on earth, but for eternity. Not even His closest companions, the disciples, were able to grasp that fact yet.

Calvary is God's divine reach. Calvary is God saying, "I still want you." Calvary is God saying to Satan that Hell cannot have you. Sin is like an infection that kills. Sin destroys marriages, homes, families, lives, futures, and destinies. When you see Calvary, you see the cross. You see what God hates, and you see what God loves. At the cross, you see God at war with what is at war with us. He took all sin and addiction and any form of bondage to Calvary for you. He became our substitute and finished the work of sacrifice for our sin. Because

of what Jesus did on the cross, death is just an incident now. It's not a final state.

JESUS' FINAL WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Jesus' final words were both powerful and telling. First, He pardons the sinner next to Him and promises paradise for that condemned criminal. And then He does something unprecedented. He asks His Father in Heaven to forgive all the people responsible for this whole spectacle by saying, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34, NKJV).

After He had suffered all He had to suffer and completed His cause, He uttered these unforgettable words, *"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."* (v. 46). And then He breathed His last breath and died.

THE VEIL TORN: A NEW HIGH PRIEST GIVEN

At the same moment those crooked Jewish leaders thought they had their final victory, they had no idea that just a ways away, everything was changing. The thick veil in their temple was ripped in two from top to bottom. This signified that the people no longer needed a human high priest to go to God on their behalf because Jesus had just become their High Priest and ANYONE could come to Jesus.

That evening, by 6 p.m., Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took

Jesus' body down from the cross and laid it in a tomb that had been cut in the rock. And the three-day countdown began.

GOOD FRIDAY

As discussed, Friday of Holy Week is called Good Friday because without the shedding of Jesus' blood, there could be no salvation. It is also Good Friday because it is the day that finished the most difficult race in history. You and I stood condemned, caught in our trespasses and sins, with a certain penalty of death and an eternity separated from God. All that changed on a hill in Jerusalem, by the blood of He who was innocent. THAT, my friend, is the best news we could ever receive.

*Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things,
like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct **received** by tradition
from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb
without blemish and without spot.*

1 Peter 1:18–19, NKJV

THE POWER AND NECESSITY OF THE BLOOD

It's not the things we can see that we should fear; it's the unseen things that we need to be concerned about. An unseen cell in your body can take your body out. Everybody has a defense system that fights for their good health. It's in your blood, and it is your immune system. Our body has white and red blood cells. Our red blood cells go all throughout the body looking for any foreign body that would try to harm us. It is your blood that fights for your life every day.

The Lord also gave us lymph nodes and bone marrow for our protection and to help ward off disease. God has these as defenses against everything that the enemy sends to attack you. In the same way, Jesus' blood covers all sin, and like the lymph nodes and bone marrow, His defense system in the Spirit operates in the same way.

POWERFUL TRUTHS ABOUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS

1. The blood of God Almighty flowed through Jesus Christ.

It's not just any blood that was shed for you. The body came through Mary, but the blood comes from the Father—the Father was God.

2. When satanic attacks come, the blood of Jesus comes

streaming through the same way it does in your physical

body when disease tries to take your life.

3. **The WORD of God will come to your mind with scriptures to go along with the blood.** Over and over Jesus said, “It is written.”
4. **The blood remembers what the mind can’t retain.** That is why it was recorded in Scripture... so we would not forget.
5. **The power of the blood will be what raises us up on that final day.** The blood of Jesus will be the reason we overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.
Death where is thy sting?! Grave, where is your victory?!

FINAL THOUGHTS:

There is a place called Heaven and the blood of Jesus will assure you get there! There IS a Heaven and there IS a Hell, and all that will matter on that great day of judgment will be whether or not you have surrendered your life to Jesus and accepted His free gift of salvation... bought with the precious blood of Jesus. What will you do with the blood of Jesus?

A FAMOUS TRADITION

Today, all over the world, Good Friday is recognized with services,

traditions, and rituals as a day of solemn acknowledgement of the horror of what happened to our Jesus, but also with great gratitude for the fact that He did it for us. And we also remember this solemn occasion, just like the disciples did in the upper room with the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup.

Bonus Reading: Take some time and examine the different views and memories of the journey to the cross found in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 22–23, and John 18–19.

Friday's events are recorded in Matthew 27:1–62, Mark 15:1–47, Luke 22:63–23:56, and John 18:28–19:37.

GOOD FRIDAY PRAYER:

Lord, when I think about You on that cross I am filled with anger for the senseless injustice of it all, but I am also filled with sadness when I consider the suffering You endured for me. Because of MY sin. But I am also filled with immense gratitude because without Your sacrifice, where would any of us be? What hope would there be without Your blood? I love You, Jesus. As I reflect on the price You paid I pause to pay tribute and to remember. In Jesus' name I pray.

DAY 7

SATURDAY

THE EMPTY CROSS—WHAT NOW?

Saturday, which would have been the Sabbath in Israel, was no ordinary Saturday. As you can imagine, the events of the week, and especially Friday, were no doubt talked about in every home and among the disciples. Imagine, for a moment, what Jesus' mother Mary had to be thinking. Had God been wrong? Had she heard Him incorrectly all those years ago? And this was no normal grief, if there is such a thing. She would never be able to unsee the horror her eyes saw the day before. She had to be numb with the deepest sorrow, without the comfort we know as believers, because Jesus had not been resurrected yet.

Sometimes, when we think something of very great value to us has died, God is actually developing a far greater plan just around the corner. If we will just have faith and keep believing and trusting, we will see the plan of God take shape. And that is exactly what was happening here.

WHERE WAS JESUS?

Our perspective of this day is very different than those who were there. We see the resurrection that would occur the next day. We can see the good that is coming, but we have the advantage of the Bible, historians, and 2,000 years of debate and scientific and archaeological findings. But one of the most often asked and debated questions since the day Jesus was resurrected is “Where was Jesus between the time He died and the time He was resurrected?” Scripture helps us to a certain degree, but there is just enough there to bring out the speculators and their myriad of theories. So let’s stick with what we know. First things first: If you remember the Jewish calendar of days we discussed in the previous chapter, we know that the day Jesus died (Friday) began at sundown on Thursday and ended at sundown on Friday. Jesus died during the day on Friday. If you recall the story of the thief on the cross, then you will also remember that Jesus’ words to the criminal were, *“Today you will be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43, NKJV).

So we know that first and foremost, on Friday after He died, Jesus was in paradise.

Second: A key passage for where Jesus was in between His death and resurrection is found in 1 Peter.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison...

1 Peter 3:18–19, NKJV

The word *spirit* refers to Christ's spirit. Christ's flesh died, but His spirit remained alive. Jesus' physical body was in the tomb, that much is clear, but His spirit, having departed at His death (Matthew 27:50), was elsewhere. According to Peter, sometime between His death and His resurrection, Jesus made a special proclamation to some imprisoned spirits.

The Bible says that Jesus went to "Hades" (Acts 2:31), but Hades is not hell. *Hades* is a term that refers, broadly, to the realm of the dead, a temporary place where the dead await. Some refer to it as a type of holding tank. Hell with the lake of fire is the permanent, final place of judgment for the lost. Hades is a temporary place, and who is there has been the subject of debate for centuries.

All of this is to say that the Bible isn't entirely clear about what exactly Christ did while He was in the grave between His death and resurrection. Most experts and Bible scholars appear to agree on this one point, taken from their interpretation of the passage in 1 Peter: He went in spirit to hell to proclaim His victory over evil and His conquering of the grave too.

Bonus Reading: For a deeper dive into this topic, read more at: <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/does-the-bible-tell-us-where-jesus-was-the-three-days-between-his-death-and-resurrection/#ixzz5j2k7UvPQ>

THE THREE DAYS QUESTION

Let's just come right out in the open and shed the light of truth on the time between the crucifixion and the empty tomb. For many years, some have used the biblical account of Jesus' death and resurrection as a "gotcha!" or an "aha!" moment, declaring that the day we celebrate as Easter Sunday could not possibly be accurate because the Bible says that Christ rose from the grave on the third day. Allow me to set your mind at ease and explain how celebrating Easter on Sunday is EXACTLY three days, just as the Bible says.

When we look at three days with our western mindset, we see Jesus crucified on Friday, and therefore Friday to Saturday is one day and Saturday to Sunday is one day, which equals two days. But Jesus wasn't crucified in the west, and the Bible was not written by western writers. It was written by Jews who understood their way of counting these days perfectly well.

By comparing the passages associated with the biblical account, in the minds of people in Bible times, “the third day” is the same as saying “after three days.” The way they counted was this: part of a day would be counted as one day. The following shows how the counting works.

DAY ONE		DAY TWO		DAY THREE	
FRI	FRI	SAT	SAT	SUN	SUN
<i>starts at sundown on Thursday</i>	<i>ends at sundown on Friday</i>	<i>starts at sundown on Friday</i>	<i>ends at sundown on Saturday</i>	<i>starts at sundown on Saturday</i>	<i>ends at sundown on Sunday</i>
NIGHT	DAY	NIGHT	DAY	NIGHT	DAY
CRUCIFIXION		SABBATH		RESURRECTION	

Different cultures use different methods for counting days. When you

use the Jewish way of counting, all the supposed biblical problems and so-called “contradictions” with counting the days disappear.

JESUS' BODY PREPARED

Another thing we know about Saturday of Holy Week comes from the book of John. Jesus' body was laid in its tomb and was guarded by Roman soldiers throughout the day Saturday, which was the Sabbath. When the Sabbath ended at 6 p.m., Christ's body was ceremonially treated for burial with spices purchased by Nicodemus.

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

Both Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were members of the Sanhedrin Council that had condemned Jesus Christ to death. But the Book of Luke tells us in chapter 23 that Joseph of Arimathea was a good and upright man and, according to Mark, he was a prominent member of the Council, and that he had not consented to the decision and actions of the Sanhedrin. I think it's safe to assume the same about Nicodemus. Both men had been living as followers of Jesus, but in secret for fear of punishment. Now, because they were deeply affected by Christ's death, they boldly came out of hiding and risked their reputations and their lives. They didn't care about their earthly lives nearly as much anymore. They realized that Jesus was, in fact, the long-awaited and prophesied Messiah, even after what they had seen the day before. They believed before they saw. Together they cared for Jesus' body and prepared it for burial.

THE STONE

Lastly, we know from the Gospel accounts that the Pharisees insisted that Pilate place a guard at the tomb because they remembered Jesus saying He would rise "after three days." Therefore, Pilate had the guards place a large stone and a seal over the entryway and ordered men to guard the tomb 24/7 as well.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This was no normal day, and certainly not a normal Sabbath. While we know precisely what was happening with Jesus' physical body, we only know parts of where His spirit was. But we do know He was active and that hell was about to pay for the slaughter of this innocent Lamb. Friday was tough, but Sunday was coming.

Saturday's events are recorded in Matthew 27:62–66, Mark 16:1, Luke 23:56, and John 19:40.

SILENT SATURDAY PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, when I think of this day, I can't help but think about those disciples, Your mother, and Your most devoted followers. To think that everything they believed about You and about God was changed in one day had to be overwhelming. What an incredibly sad and confusing day that had to be. When I think about the disciples, they had to think that they were next. When I think about Your mother, she had to be just devastated. What mother wouldn't be. And when I think about Your followers, I think of people who had to feel hopeless. What a dark day that had to be. But thank You that this day serves as a reminder to me and everyone else that even when things look darkest, God is at work on our behalf. Even when it seems like all is lost, the opposite is true. Thank You for that. In Jesus' name.

DAY 8

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

THE EMPTY TOMB

Although we celebrate Christmas for two to three months, culminating in the biggest gift-giving day of the year, Easter, far and away, is the most important day in the Christian faith. The very foundation of all Christian doctrine hinges on the truth of this account. On Easter Sunday, we reach the culmination of Holy Week.

Our story starts with Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, going to the tomb with hopes of anointing Jesus' body with spices.

The account in Matthew tells the story like this:

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn,

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

And behold, there was a great earthquake;

for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven,

and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

*His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white
as snow.*

And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

But the angel answered and said to the women,

“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

*He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where
the Lord lay.*

And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead,

and indeed He is going before you into Galilee;

there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy,

and ran to bring His disciples word.

Matthew 28:1–8

From there, we pick up the story in Luke:

*Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the
eleven and to all the rest.*

*It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James,
and the other women with them, who told these things to the
apostles.*

*And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not
believe them.*

*But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the
linen cloths
lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what
had happened.*

Luke 24: 9–12, NKJV

The story culminates in the upper room in the Book of John:

*Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,
when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled,
for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to*

them, “Peace be with you.”

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.

Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

*So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent
Me, I also send you.”*

And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them,

*“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are for-
given them;*

if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

John 20:19–23, NKJV

Even Thomas, famous for his skepticism, upon feeling the holes in Jesus’ hands, finally believed and proclaimed, “My Lord, and my God!” To which Jesus replied:

*Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have
believed.*

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John 20:29, NKJV

On the day of Jesus' resurrection, He made at least five appearances. Scripture records that the first person to see him was Mary Magdalene. Jesus also appeared to Peter, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and later that day to all of the disciples except Thomas, while they were gathered in a house for prayer. According to Luke's Gospel, He appeared to Thomas a week later (John 20:26).

The numerous eyewitness accounts in all four of the Gospels provide what Christians and a large swath of the secular historical community believe to be undeniable evidence, by any historical standard, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did indeed happen and that He was seen by many eyewitnesses that same day.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The real question isn't whether all of this is true. I believe that historical evidence declares that to any objective observer or scholar. No, the real question is: What will you do with Jesus? What role will He play in your life? How will He fit into the fabric of your home? Will you take Him to work or school with you?

Here is a secret you would do well to remember: You are as close to the Lord as you choose to be. Relationship is all the Lord asks, but He will never force it. If you have made Him the Lord of your life, then He is with you everywhere you go. But how much time you

spend with Him and how much time you take to get to know Him and His people is completely up to you. He is ALWAYS one prayer away. Anything you want to know about Him can be found in one book. And He loves you more than you could ever imagine.

You know what Jesus wants to do for you? He wants to remove your transgressions. He wants to never remember them, never bring them up, or allow them to be brought up to be used against you again. He wants to release you from your addictions, from the sinful tendencies, and from the weaknesses. He wants you to run to the mercy seat, and Jesus is the mercy seat. He wants you to know that He was wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities, and by His stripes you're healed. That includes your marriage, your family, your future, and your life. Will you invite Him to be Lord over all in your life?

When I gave my heart to Jesus, I did it for three reasons. I needed a friend, I needed forgiveness, and I needed a future, and Jesus gave me all three. He became my best friend, and He gave me total forgiveness. He gave me a future. I never would have dreamed when I was lost that one day God would use me to preach His glorious gospel, and He has a plan and a future for you too, according to Jeremiah 29.

Some of you have been missing it. But today, God is calling you home. Come home. Come back to the cross. Come running to the mercy seat. He's not here to judge you; He's here to give you mercy.

He's a resurrected man, and He has a message of mercy for you.

I pray your study of eight days that literally changed the world has changed your view of who God is and the profound sacrifice that was given for you and for me. I pray that each page has shown you just how specific and intentional our God is and has always been. Our God is amazing! And His plans for your life are just as amazing. And it all started with these famous two sentences that we shout from the rooftop every single Easter:

HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

We are living in a society in the midst of a world gone crazy. The rebellion, the fear, the anger, the hatred, and the strife can seem as though they are tearing our society apart—a world given over to drunkenness and drugs, sin and no remorse, depression and shame. But we can look to the cross today and, in the midst of it all, we are preserved when we say, “Jesus’ blood be on me and my children.”

God has you in the palm of His hand. Don't be afraid. His voice is not a voice of fear and dread. His voice is a voice of peace and strength, and that calm assurance that everything is going to be alright is the Holy Spirit who lives inside you. You're in His hands, and NOTHING can pluck you out. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Healing, peace, strength, help, and hope are your inheritance.

Bonus Reading: Read the different accounts about all that happened in the forty days that Jesus was on the earth after His resurrection and right up until his ascension to Heaven.

Sunday's events are recorded in Matthew 28:1–13, Mark 16:1–14, Luke 24:1–49, and John 20:1–23.

EASTER SUNDAY PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, what an amazing day and what an amazing Savior You are! You rose from the grave, and no one can ever say You didn't. I worship You because You are my God and I am Your child. I give myself wholly to You, Lord, and I have great hope for the future. You know Your plans for me, Lord, and I give myself fully to You, Lord. I'm all in. Thank You for a view to your last 8 days on earth leading up to the cross. What an amazing week You endured, and You did it for me. Thank You, Lord. I love that I can join my brothers and sisters all over the world today and say:

HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

References:

1. Friday Chapter Table, reproduced from the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM) website
2. Three Days and Nights by Paul F. Taylor, June 29, 2009



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