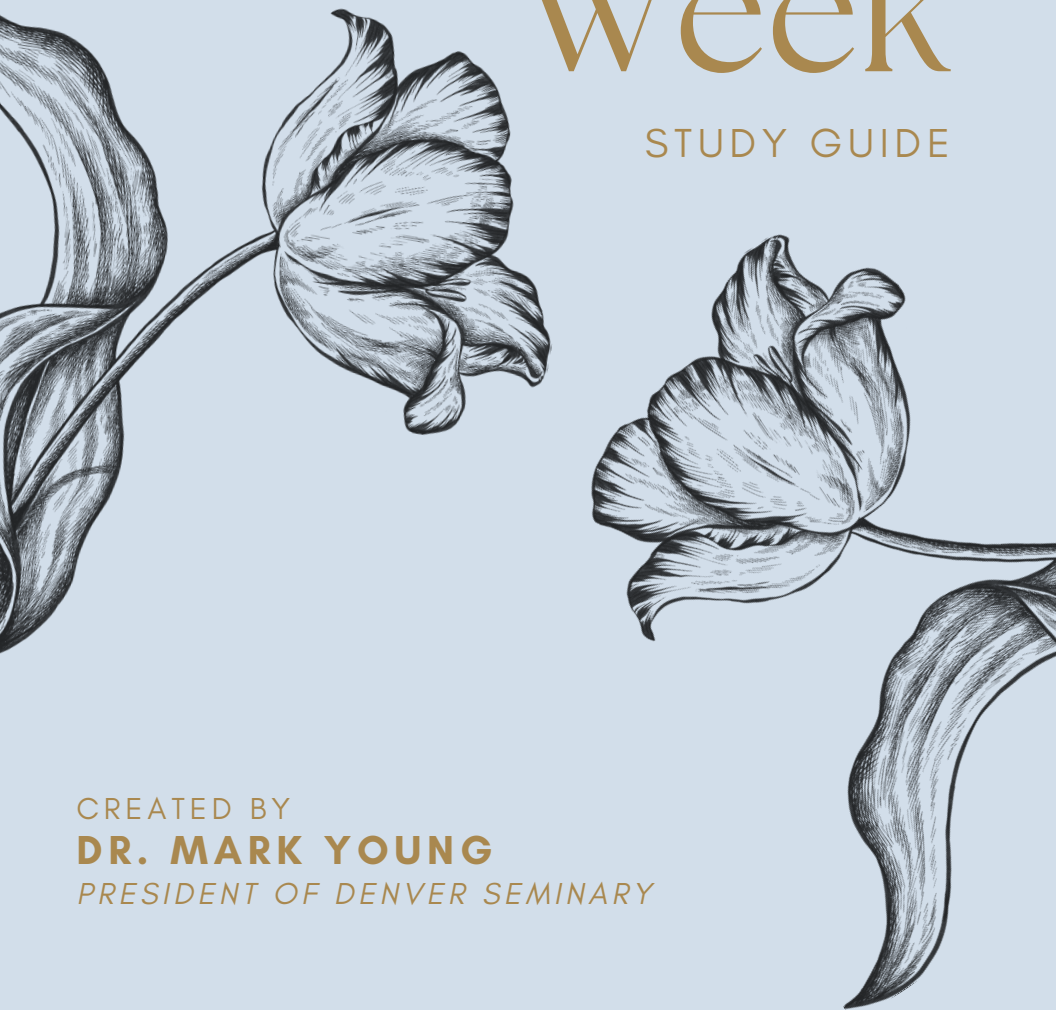


Preparing *for* Passion Week

STUDY GUIDE



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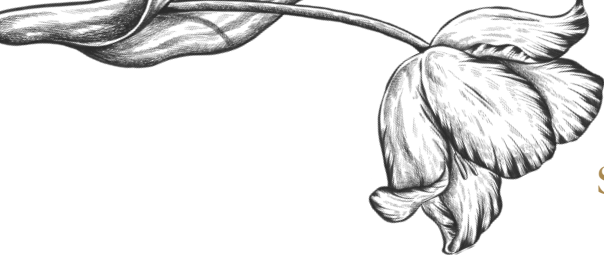
Taken together, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ create the most important event in human history. They form the centerpiece of God's redemptive engagement with humanity. Through His death on the cross, Jesus accomplishes what no other earthly or spiritual power could accomplish: He defeats sin, death, and evil. By paying the penalty for humanity's sin, we are assured that death is ultimately defeated and will not have the final word. And since death is defeated, evil will not have the final word. Its reign of terror will also end in utter defeat when Jesus returns to make all things new. The resurrection of Jesus Christ confirms that, indeed, His death on the cross has defeated sin, death, and evil.

The following guide is designed to help us walk through the events of Passion Week, the time when we focus our hearts and minds on the most important event in human history.

Because of God's great love for us,

Mark Young





Sunday, April 2, 2023
(March 29, AD 33)¹

Scripture: John 12:12–36 (Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–44)

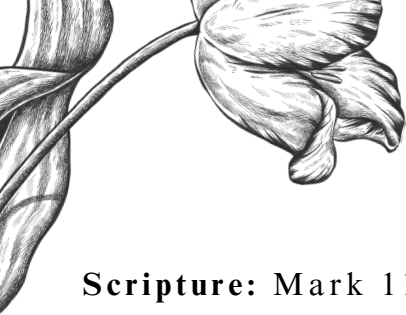
No Turning Back

Jesus enters Jerusalem as the Messianic King promised to the children of Abraham. Both Jews and Greeks recognize that Jesus' claim to kingship challenges both Jewish and Roman authority structures.

Reflection

Describe the three different responses to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem—His followers', Pharisees', Gentiles'—asking what each group sought to gain and feared to lose as they recognized His claim to kingship.

[1] This guide is based on *The Final Days of Jesus*, by Andreas Köstenberger and Justin Taylor. They believe that Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection occurred in AD 33. Other scholars date these events in AD 30.



Monday, April 3, 2023
(March 30, AD 33)

Scripture: Mark 11:12–18 (Matt. 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–48)

Indictment

After the dramatic entrance and declaration of His Messianic Kingship the previous day, people, including his disciples, wait expectantly to see and hear what Jesus will do next. This is a day of judgment on the corrupt Jewish leaders who have turned the temple, which was intended to be a house of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7), into a den of thieves where the rich exploit the devotion of the poor for their own profit.

Reflection

Why did Jesus act so aggressively toward those who had corrupted the service of the temple? How do his actions reflect His love toward them?





Tuesday, April 4, 2023
(March 31, AD 33)

Scripture: Mark 11:27–13:37 (Matt. 21:23–25:46;
Luke 20:1–21:36)

The Cost of Disbelief and Belief

Jesus' third day in Jerusalem is no less dramatic than the first two days. Most of the day is spent rebutting devious attempts by the Jewish religious leaders to discredit him in the eyes of his growing number of followers. All of their attempts fail spectacularly. Jesus knows, however, that the road ahead for those who think they want to follow him will challenge the depth of their faith. Opposition will only increase but they must persevere in their faith remaining vigilant to the end.

Reflection

What are the costs of disbelief? What are the costs of belief? What are the difficulties and obstacles we face to remain vigilant in faith to the end



Wednesday, April 5, 2023
(April 1, AD 33)

Scripture: Mark 14:1–11 (Matt. 26:1–5; Luke 21:37–22:2)

Opposition, Adoration, and Betrayal

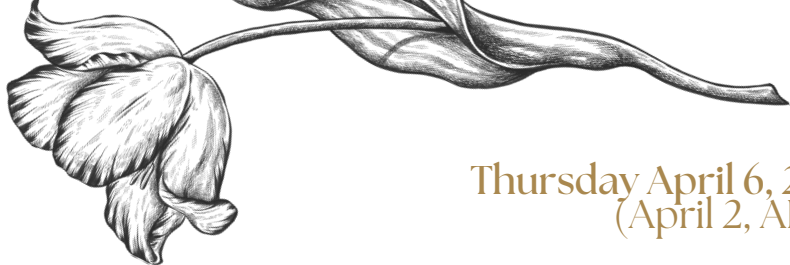
Jesus continues to teach in the temple complex, winning the allegiance of even more Jews who have come to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Realizing that they cannot discredit Him, the Jewish religious leaders plot to kill Jesus quietly, after the crowds have dispersed from Jerusalem when the Feast of Unleavened Bread has come to an end. At the end of this day, however, Jesus finds respite in the home of someone who has experienced his healing touch, Simon the Leper. While there, a woman who has also tasted the grace and mercy of Jesus anoints Him with an expensive oil, an act condemned by some but praised by Jesus Himself. This beautiful act of adoration is contrasted by Judas' act of betrayal.

Reflection

Note the contrast between those who have nothing to lose and everything to gain from the from following Jesus (the disciples, the poor, the sick, the outcast) and those who fear they have everything to lose and nothing to gain from him (the Pharisees, Sadducees, money changers). What do we fear losing in following Jesus? How does it compare to what we have gained in knowing Him?

This image shows a full-page decorative template. It features a central area with horizontal ruling lines, suitable for writing. The page is adorned with detailed black and white line drawings of tulips and their leaves. One tulip is in the top left corner, another in the top right, and a larger one is in the bottom right corner. The word "Continued" is written in a serif font in the top right corner. The entire page is framed by a thin black border.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.



Thursday April 6, 2023
(April 2, AD 33)

Scripture: Mark 14:12–42 (Matt. 26:17–46; Luke 22:7–46; John 13:1–17:26)

Final Exam

Jesus has one more day to prepare His followers for the most crushing day of their lives. What better setting than the Passover meal, a commemoration of the most significant act of redemption in the Old Testament, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt? So much occurs: washing the disciples' feet, the bread and the cup, the betrayal, Jesus' most beautiful discourse, agony in the garden, sleeping disciples, the arrest. Jesus has consistently told his disciples that He must die. His death is sure. But one question still hangs over these events. Will the disciples remain faithful to their calling through all that is about to happen?

Reflection

What tests your perseverance in faith? What might cause you to abandon your calling to follow Jesus?



Friday, April 7, 2023
(April 3, AD 33)

Scripture: Mark 14:43–15:47 (Matt. 26:47–27:16;
Luke 22:47–23:56; John 18:2–19:42)

Victory in Death

Theologian Fleming Rutledge declares that the crucifixion is, “the most important historical event that has ever happened.” She adds, “Without the cross at the center of the Christian proclamation, the Jesus story can be treated as just another story about a charismatic spiritual figure. It is the crucifixion that marks out Christianity as something definitively different in the history of religion. It is in the crucifixion that the nature of God is truly revealed.”²

The crucifixion forms the centerpiece of our faith, the point of reference by which we must test everything we believe about God. Everything in Scripture before the crucifixion points to it and everything that comes after flows from it.

Early Morning

Fearing the reaction of the crowds in Jerusalem who have become enthralled by Jesus’ teaching, the Sanhedrin orchestrates His arrest and initial trial in the dead of night. Although the testimony of the witnesses does not meet the standards required for proof, Jesus provides all the proof that the high priest needs to condemn Him and



[2] Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*, p. 44.



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bring Him to the Romans for execution—He claims to be the Son of God, the Messianic King who will establish God’s kingdom on earth. Through His every word and action, Jesus sovereignly directs the Jewish and Roman authorities to do all that He wills them to do. The true King rules over these earthly imposters.

Peter and John follow Jesus to the high priest’s mansion. John, who is somehow known to the high priest, is allowed to enter but Peter must remain in the courtyard. There Peter denies that he knows Jesus three times. Luke tells us (Luke 22:61) that after the third denial, “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.”

Reflection

As you begin your reflections today, ask this question, “What did Peter see in Jesus’ face when Jesus turned and looked at him?”

Morning

Because the Romans did not allow the Jews to execute prisoners, the verdict to crucify Jesus must be handed down by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine. The charge of



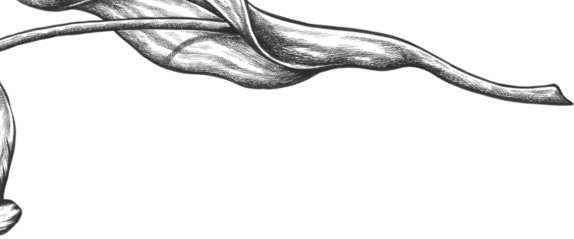
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blasphemy would not trigger a sentence of death, but a claim to be a rival king to Caesar demanded a death sentence. As the Jewish leaders repeat their accusations against Jesus and their rage increases, Pilate recognizes that, in spite of his own sense that Jesus does not deserve to die, something must be done to satisfy them. When he turns the question of what to do with Jesus back to the crowds who had gathered, they cry out, “Crucify him!” Pilate asks, “Shall I crucify your king?” And in their rage, the Jewish leaders shockingly respond, “We have no king but Caesar,” (John 19:15–16) a blasphemous denial of the Messianic promise. Blinded by rage and fear, they denied their own faith and condemned their own Messiah to death.

When faced with the threat of loss, Peter, Pilate, and the Jewish leaders all chose to deny what was true and just in order to protect themselves and their own interests.

Reflection

This morning, reflect on this question, “What is so valuable to me, that the fear of its loss shakes the very foundation of my faith?”




Continued

Noon

Following the trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, Jesus is scourged, a whipping that many condemned prisoners did not survive. Abandoned by His followers, mocked and scorned by both Romans and Jews, Jesus suffers physically, socially, and emotionally. The cruelty of crucifixion assaults our sensibilities. While on the cross His suffering—physically, socially, emotionally—intensifies. Hanging on the cross under the Messianic title, “the King of the Jews,” He asks the Father to forgive those who are executing Him (Luke 23:34), He promises another condemned man paradise (Luke 23:43), and He makes sure that His mother is cared for (John 19:26–27). At noon a supernatural darkness falls on Jerusalem.

Reflection

Even in the midst of His suffering, Jesus shows compassion for others. What does it take to show compassion to those who cause us to suffer? To those who have chosen a way of life that Scripture condemns?



Afternoon

As His suffering intensifies, Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). His anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before pales in comparison to what He experiences on the cross. He bears the guilt of the sin of all mankind, the shaming of jeering Jews and Romans, and the horrific physical pain of crucifixion. His suffering exceeds what any human could bear. Yet, He bears it as one who knows that the Father will receive His spirit when He breathes his last (Luke 23:46). Jesus dies knowing that He has accomplished all that the Father sent Him to do. “It is finished” (John 19:30).

When He dies, the curtain in the temple separating the Most Holy Place is torn in two from top to bottom and an earthquake powerful enough to split rocks shakes Jerusalem and opens tombs. As a result, the bodies of those who had believed in the One True God were resurrected (Matt. 27:56). These supernatural signs attest to the victory of Jesus over sin and death.

Fleming Rutledge beautifully summarizes what happened on Golgotha that Friday afternoon. She writes,





All the manifold biblical images with their richness, complexity, and depth come together as one to say this: the righteousness of God is revealed in the cross of Christ. The “precious blood” of the Son of God is the perfect sacrifice for sin; the ransom is paid to deliver the captives; the gates of hell are stormed; the Red Sea is crossed and the enemy drowned; God’s judgment has been executed upon Sin; the disobedience of Adam is recapitulated in the obedience of Christ; a new creation is coming into being; those who put their trust in Christ are incorporated into his life; the kingdoms of the “the present evil age” are passing away and the promised kingdom of God is manifest not in triumphalist crusades, but in the cruciform witness of the church. From within “Adam’s” (our) human flesh, the incarnate Son fought with and was victorious over Satan—on our behalf and in our place. Only this power, this transcendent victory won by the Son of God, is capable of reorienting the kosmos to its rightful Creator. This is what the righteousness of God has achieved through the cross and resurrection, is now accomplishing by the power of the Spirit, and will complete in the day of Christ Jesus.³





Reflection

Make a list of items you want to change because of the items you have personally?

Make a list of all that changed and all that will change because of Jesus' death on the cross. Which of the items on the list matter most to you personally?

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Saturday, April 8, 2023
(April 4, AD 33)

Scripture: Matt. 27:62–66

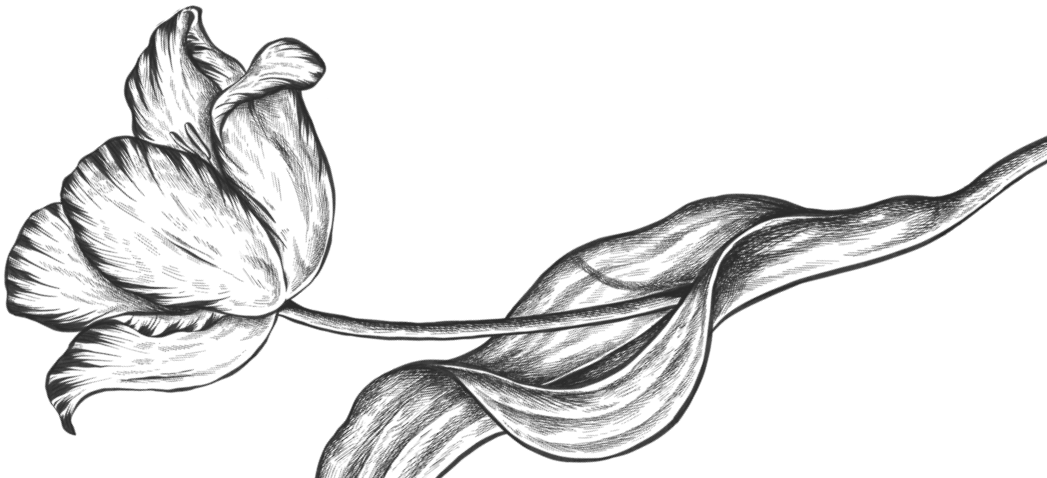
The Gospel writers do not record the disciples' activities the day after Jesus' death. Perhaps that speaks volumes in and of itself. Granted, it is the Sabbath day of rest. However, the previous day's events have likely taken a tremendous toll on the disciples physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. They are sleep deprived, confused, and reeling from the shocking brutality of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion. If the Jewish leaders and the Romans had the nerve to execute the most popular religious leader in Jerusalem, what would keep them from hunting down his disciples and doing the same to them? So, they hide in a locked room. The chief priests and Pharisees ask Pilate to secure the tomb with soldiers. Knowing Jesus' claim that He would rise from the dead "after three days," they fear that the disciples might steal Jesus' body and proclaim throughout the crowded city that He had been raised from the dead. After the supernatural events of the day before, that claim would have been given a lot of credence by the frightened populace of Jerusalem. Pilate agrees to their request; the tomb is sealed, and a guard is set.



Continued

Reflection

What are the challenges to our faith when we face circumstances that we would have never chosen for ourselves or for those we love? How do we deal with disappointment with God?

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Sunday, April 9, 2023
(April 5, AD 33)

Scripture: Mark 16:1–8 (Matt. 28:1–15; Luke 24:1–49; John 20:1–30)

He is risen!

None of the Gospels ends with the death of Jesus. That's because Jesus' death is not the end of the story! If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, He would be seen as just another religious fanatic who duped the masses into believing His miracles were true, His teaching was from God, and His life actually mattered. Just another deluded soul whose ruse failed miserably and whose penalty was deserved. But He was raised from the dead, spent time with his disciples, appeared to hundreds more, and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. The resurrection confirms that Jesus defeated sin, death, and evil. They will not have the final word!

The resurrection is a high-stakes reality. Paul reminds us that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, our faith is in vain, our gospel is empty, we are still in our sins, we have no hope, and we are to be pitied above all people for we have built our lives on a lie (1 Cor 15:12–19). But Paul adamantly and defiantly declares that Christ has been raised, our faith is efficacious, our sins are forgiven, we have hope, and victory over sin, death, and evil is guaranteed (1 Cor 15:20–28).

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