

The Most Important Week in the History of Mankind¹

Sunday: The Triumphal Entry (Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19.)

On the Sunday before his death, Jesus began his trip to Jerusalem, knowing that soon he would lay down his life for the sins of the world. Nearing the village of Bethphage, he sent two of his disciples ahead to look for a donkey with its unbroken colt. Jesus instructed the disciples to untie the animals and bring them to him.

Then Jesus sat on the young donkey and slowly, humbly, made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, fulfilling the ancient prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The crowds welcomed him by waving palm branches in the air and shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

On Palm Sunday, Jesus and his disciples spent the night in Bethany, a town about two miles east of Jerusalem. In all likelihood, Jesus stayed in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

Monday: The Clearing of the Temple (Matthew 21:12–22, Mark 11:15–19, Luke 19:45-48, and John 2:13-17)

Monday morning he returned with his disciples to Jerusalem. Along the way, Jesus cursed a fig tree because it had failed to bear fruit. Some scholars believe this cursing of the fig tree represented God's judgment on the spiritually dead religious leaders of Israel. Others believe the symbolism extended to all believers, demonstrating that genuine, living faith is more than just outward religiosity. True faith must bear spiritual fruit in a person's life.

When Jesus arrived at the Temple he found the courts full of corrupt money changers. He began overturning their tables and clearing the Temple, saying, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves." (Luke 19:46)

On Monday evening Jesus stayed in Bethany again, probably in the home of his friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Tuesday: The Temple, The Mount of Olives, The Plot (Matthew 21:23–24:51, Mark 11:20–13:37, Luke 20:1–21:36, and John 12:20–38)

On Tuesday morning, Jesus and his disciples returned to Jerusalem. They passed the withered fig tree on their way, and Jesus taught them about faith.

At the Temple, the religious leaders aggressively challenged Jesus' authority, attempting to ambush him and create an opportunity for his arrest. But Jesus evaded their traps and pronounced harsh judgment on them: "Blind

¹ Taken from <http://christianity.about.com/od/easter/ss/Holy-Week-Timeline.htm>. This website contains excellent supplemental material on the entire Passion Week.

guides! ... For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness...Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?" (Matthew 23:24-33)

Tuesday afternoon Jesus left the city and went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, which overlooks Jerusalem due east of the Temple. Here Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse, an elaborate prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age. He taught in parables using symbolic language about end times events, including his Second Coming and the final judgment.

Scripture indicates that Tuesday was the day Judas Iscariot negotiated with the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16).

After a tiring day of confrontation and warnings about the future, once again, Jesus and the disciples stayed the night in Bethany.

Wednesday: Silent Wednesday

The Bible doesn't say what the Lord did on Wednesday of Passion Week. Scholars speculate that after two exhausting days in Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples spent this day resting in Bethany in anticipation of the Passover.

Bethany was about two miles east of Jerusalem. Here Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha lived. They were close friends of Jesus, and probably hosted him and the disciples during these final days in Jerusalem.

Just a short time previously, Jesus had revealed to the disciples, and the world, that he had power over death by raising Lazarus from the grave. After seeing this incredible miracle, many people in Bethany believed that Jesus was the Son of God and put their faith in him. Also in Bethany just a few nights earlier, Lazarus' sister Mary had lovingly anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume.

While we can only speculate, it's fascinating to consider how our Lord Jesus spent this final quiet day with his dearest friends and followers.

Thursday: The Passover; The Lord's Supper; The Garden; The Betrayal; The Arrest; The Sanhedrin; The Denial (Matthew 26:17–75, Mark 14:12-72, Luke 22:7-62, and John 13:1-38)

From Bethany Jesus sent Peter and John ahead to the Upper Room in Jerusalem to make the preparations for the Passover Feast. That evening after sunset, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as they prepared to share in the Passover. By performing this humble act of service, Jesus demonstrated by example how they were to love one another. Today, many churches practice foot-washing ceremonies as a part of their Maundy Thursday services.

Then Jesus shared the feast of Passover with his disciples saying, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering

begins. For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16, NLT)

As the Lamb of God, Jesus was about to fulfill the meaning of the Passover by giving his body to be broken and his blood to be shed in sacrifice, freeing us from sin and death. During this Last Supper, Jesus established the Lord's Supper, or Communion, instructing his followers to continually remember his sacrifice by sharing in the elements of bread and wine:

"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.' " (Luke 22:19-20, ESV)

Later Jesus and the disciples left the Upper Room and went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in agony to God the Father. Luke's Gospel says "his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44, ESV)

Late that evening in Gethsemane, Jesus was betrayed with a kiss by Judas Iscariot 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.

Meanwhile, in the early morning hours as Jesus' trial was getting underway, Peter denied knowing his Master three times before the rooster crowed.

Friday: The Trial; the Crucifixion; The Death; The Burial (Matthew 27:1-62, Mark 15:1-47, Luke 22:63-23:56, and John 18:28-19:37)

According to Scripture, Judas Iscariot, the disciple who had betrayed Jesus, was overcome with remorse and hanged himself early Friday morning.

Meanwhile, before the third hour (9 a.m.), Jesus endured the shame of false accusations, condemnation, mockery, beatings, and abandonment. After multiple unlawful trials, he was sentenced to death by crucifixion, one of the most horrible and disgraceful methods of capital punishment.

Before Christ was led away, soldiers spit on him, tormented and mocked him, and pierced him with a crown of thorns. Then Jesus carried his own cross to Calvary where, again, he was mocked and insulted as Roman soldiers nailed him to the wooden cross.

Jesus spoke seven final statements from the cross. His first words were, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34, NIV). His last were, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46, NIV)

Then, about the ninth hour (3 p.m.), Jesus breathed his last and died.

By 6 p.m. Friday evening, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, took Jesus' body down from the cross and lay it in a tomb.

Saturday: The Guarded Tomb, The Preparation of the Body (Matthew 27:62-66, Mark 16:1, Luke 23:56, and John 19:40)

Jesus' body lay in the tomb where it was guarded by Roman soldiers throughout the day on 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:

"He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth." (John 19: 39-40, NLT)

Nicodemus, like Joseph of Arimathea, was a member of the Sanhedrin, the court which had condemned Jesus Christ to death. For a time, both men had lived as secret followers of Jesus, afraid to make a public profession of faith because of their prominent positions in the Jewish community.

Similarly, both were deeply affected by Christ's death. They boldly came out of hiding, risking their reputations and their lives because they now realized Jesus was, indeed, the long-awaited Messiah. Together they cared for Jesus' body and prepared it for burial.

While his physical body lay in the tomb, Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin by offering the perfect, spotless sacrifice. He conquered death, both spiritually and physically, securing our eternal salvation:

"For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God." (1 Peter 1:18-19, NLT)

Sunday: The Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-13, Mark 16:1-14, Luke 24:1-49, and John 20:1-23)

On Resurrection Sunday we reach the culmination of Passion Week. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event, the crux, you might say, of the Christian faith. The very foundation of all Christian doctrine hinges on the truth of this account.

Early Sunday morning several women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome are all mentioned in the Gospel accounts) went to the tomb and discovered that the large stone covering the tomb's entrance had been rolled away. An angel announced, "Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen." (Matthew 28:5-6, NLT)

On the day of his resurrection, Jesus Christ made at least five appearances. Mark's Gospel says 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.

The eyewitness accounts in the Gospels provide undeniable evidence that the resurrection of Jesus Christ happened. 2,000 years after his death, followers of Christ still flock to see the empty tomb, one of the strongest proofs that Jesus Christ actually did rise from the dead.

Matthew 21:1-11 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’ ” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Mark 11:1-11 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’ ” ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Luke 19:28-44 And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’ ” ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ And they said, “The Lord has need of it.”

³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

John 12:12-19 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

Picking the sacrifice was on the Sunday before Passover.

Palm Sunday – Hosanna in the highest! Friday – Crucify Him! They wanted him to save them their way, and when He didn’t, they were outraged!