

**HE IS RISEN INDEED!**  
A Passion Season Companion



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David W. Hegg





# **Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	7–8
<b>Week 1: Monday – Friday</b>	9–19
<b>Week 2: Monday – Friday</b>	21–31
<b>Week 3: Monday – Friday</b>	33–43
<b>Resurrection Sunday</b>	45–49
<b>Notes</b>	50–51



# Introduction

*<sup>1</sup>Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." <sup>8</sup>So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."*

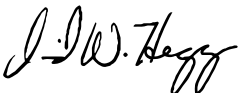
— Matthew 28:1–10

For the Christian, this story never grows old. And yet, as we celebrate year after year, Jesus' resurrection can become commonplace rather than a season of awe and wonder at the miracle of the empty tomb.

Down through the centuries, Christians have spent the days leading up to Passion week reflecting on the biblical promises and examples of resurrection in order to arrive with prepared hearts, minds, and voices to celebrate Resurrection Sunday. This Passion Season Companion is meant to help you do just that.

Each weekday, you will find a text from the Bible along with some commentary, thoughts for reflection, additional biblical texts to turn to and read, and a prayer. It offers you an excuse to stop, sit quietly, read God's Word, reflect on his faithfulness and wondrous love, and respond in joyous prayer to him for his unspeakable gift of the crucified and risen Savior.

May the Lord use these daily studies to once again fill your heart and mind with the glories of new life in Jesus Christ! He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!



David W. Hegg  
Senior Pastor

## **Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to Heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

This creed is called the Apostles' Creed not because it was produced by the apostles themselves, but because it contains a brief summary of their teachings. It dates to the 4th century and has been described as setting forth the apostolic truth "in sublime simplicity, in unsurpassable brevity, in beautiful order, and with liturgical solemnity." It is provided here in order that you might join with the church of the ages in confessing belief in God and in the majesty of the incarnation.





## WEEK 1

*“The Lord over death set out to abolish death. Being Lord, he accomplished his aim. We therefore have passed from death to life. The concept that the Jews and those who think like them held about the Lord was wrong. Things did not turn out at all according to their expectations, because the opposite was true. In fact, ‘he who sits in heaven shall laugh at them: the Lord shall have them in derision.’*

*“That is the reason our Savior restrained the women from weeping when he was being led to death. He said ‘Do not weep for me.’ He wished to show that his death was not an event for us to mourn about but rather to be joyful about, since he who died for us is alive!”*

— Augustine

## WEEK 1 • MONDAY

*<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." <sup>11</sup> He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." <sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

— Genesis 3:8–15

The story of resurrection, of life after death, has always been connected to God's promise in Genesis 3:15 that one day, a man would arise — the "he" of verse 15 — to somehow remedy the destruction brought about by sin. Simply put, God promised that sin would not win the day.

In creating mankind, God gave Adam and Eve three tasks. First, he instructed them to worship him by obeying his one command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Second, he commanded them to care for his creation. And third, he told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with offspring who would worship him in obedience, care for his creation, and continue to produce offspring who would worship him and care for his creation.

When the first couple ate the forbidden fruit, they effectively failed in all three areas bringing the radical consequences of sin's corruption down on creation. Their sin brought death into our world.

From that point on, and down through history, the only hope for mankind was found in the promise of God to send the "he." Who would he be? How would he deliver mankind from the curse of sin and death?

## WEEK 1

The story of the empty tomb began in the Garden of Eden, and from the beginning it was guaranteed by the promise of God himself.

As we begin our walk to Resurrection Sunday, let us pause to thank the Lord for both making and keeping his promise!

### **Prayer**

*Gracious Lord, you are the maker of all things and you sustain all things by the word of your power. And you are the only true promise-keeper! Help me, O Lord, to prepare my heart during this season so that I may fully understand your gracious plan of redemption, centered on God the Son Incarnate – Jesus of Nazareth. Keep me from distractions and help me focus on the progressive unfolding of the resurrection promise fulfilled that Sunday morning outside Jerusalem, so that I too may exult in the new life I have now through Jesus Christ the Lord, in whose Name I pray, Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • TUESDAY

*7“Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good. 8 The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more; while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone. 9 As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; 10 he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore.*

— Job 7:7–10

The concept of life after death and the reality of resurrection from the dead, were not fully developed in Old Testament times. The ancient cultures surrounding the people of God were filled with pagan beliefs about the body as seen in the practice of necromancy (1 Sam. 28:8,9).

The idea of an afterlife was most often connected with the shadowy underworld known as Sheol. This Hebrew word — Sheol — is understood simply as the place where those who die go (Ps. 88:3–5). In the text from Job 7 above, we hear Job speaking about Sheol in this way. It is the grave, or sometimes referred to as the pit, into which the dead are placed.

As Israel grew in its knowledge of their God, so also did their understanding of the afterlife. As the prophets began to proclaim the beauty of relationship with God, it was understood that God’s universal sovereignty included his jurisdiction over Sheol and led to a better understanding of the afterlife (Ps. 16:8–11). Since a shadowy existence could not sustain an eternal relationship with God himself, it became progressively clear that those who were faithful could have the hope of life with God beyond Sheol, beyond the grave (Ps. 49:14,15).

And finally, in the Servant Song of Isaiah 53, we see a light of hope that, through Messiah, his faithful “offspring” will be accounted righteous, leading to the hope that life after death will not only be a reality but will mean eternal relationship — indeed fellowship! — with Messiah himself (Is. 53:10,11).

As we mark the days until Resurrection Sunday, take some time to consider how great is the hope that we have today. No longer are we in the dark as to who is the “he” of Genesis 3:15 or about how our sin will be forgiven and eternal fellowship with God himself guaranteed. We know the answer. It is all because God the Father sent God the Son to die in our place and conquer death, so that we might live with joy and hope in every circumstance.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father, I am so thankful that I have a hope that is steadfast and sure, a hope that is not built on shadows, but on the reality of Jesus Christ. I am still mindful of our Advent reflections which reminded me deeply of the love behind the Incarnation, when the Word became flesh and actually lived among us. He became like us in order to redeem us, humbling himself as a servant, giving up what he had every right to hang on to in order to serve us, and rescue us, to redeem and forgive us, to justify, sanctify, and one day glorify us, so that we may live in perfect peace with you and all who are yours, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • WEDNESDAY

*<sup>9</sup>Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. <sup>10</sup>Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.*

— Ecclesiastes 9:9–10

In this exhortation from the pen of Solomon, we see the way the Old Testament era considered Sheol. It was a place of forgetfulness, hopelessness, without knowledge or relationship. It was known about, but largely unknown in terms of what “the grave” really meant. We find this kind of despair a constant element in much of the Old Testament (see for example: 2 Sam. 12:19–23; Job 10:20–22).

Yet, set against this bleak understanding of the afterlife was the truth that humanity was made “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26,27). This important truth was progressively understood by God’s people to mean that man was an embodied spirit, a unity of body and soul. This led to the practice among God’s people of honoring the body, even at death.

Burial became an important cultural element as it was proper to care for what God had created to image himself. There are many examples, but perhaps the best demonstration of the importance of honoring the body through burial is the story of David’s honoring of Saul after his death.

In 1 Samuel 31, we read that both Saul and Jonathan his son were slain by the Philistines, who then took their bodies and fastened them on the walls of Bethshan. When the men of Jabesh-Gilead heard what the Philistines had done, they traveled all night, removed the bodies, and brought them back to Jabesh where they burned them. That could have been the end of the story, but much later in 2 Samuel 2, we find that David went and gathered up the burned bones of Saul and Jonathan and returned them to their tribal land of Benjamin and buried them there in the tomb of Kish, Saul’s father.

In David’s act, we see how respect for the “image of God” was making burial a significant way of honoring what God created and also played into the progressive Old Testament understanding that death was not the end. Rather, it was a prerequisite for the resurrection that one day would come.

## Prayer

*“Almighty God, you are my creator. You have made me, and even more amazing, you have made me to image you. That is, your expectation is that I will represent you before a watching world. Help me to “present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is my reasonable service of worship.” O Father, remind me over and over that my body is not my own, but as your child, as a follower of Christ, my body belongs to you. Help me to glorify you with everything I am so that the world will see that I belong to you, through Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior, Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • THURSDAY

*<sup>1</sup>“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup>And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup>And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. <sup>4</sup>But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”*

— Daniel 12:1–4

It must have been startling to Daniel when God, in revealing what would take place in the future, stated that “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel was chosen to hear that resurrection, so long hinted at, was to be a reality and a significant element in God’s plan.

David had already written that God’s presence would be knowable even in Sheol (Ps. 139:7,8) suggesting that death would not end his relationship with the Almighty. Asaph also believed that he would one day be received into glory and that God would be his portion “forever” (Ps. 73:23–26). Hosea, as well, prophesied that God’s faithful would be “ransomed from the power of Sheol” and be “redeemed from the Death” (Hos. 6:2; 13:4).

But it was to Daniel that the message was given in the clearest form: “many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life.”

Dear friend, perhaps this does not excite you that much since you and I have always lived with the empty tomb’s reality of resurrection. Yet, as we look forward to Resurrection Sunday, to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ — reflecting on the progressive understanding of burial and resurrection to eternal life through the Old Testament can help us realize just what a miraculous thing resurrection is!

So, let us think deeply upon this truth: Death, the consequence of sin, will not end God’s love for us or Christ’s relationship with us! The truth is, “flesh and



blood cannot inherit the Kingdom.” Death is a certainty, but Jesus has overcome it. The same power that raised Jesus from the grave will one day raise us to walk in eternal life. So, be faithful until the end, and receive the reward that awaits all those who have denied self, taken up the cross, and are following Jesus.

## **Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, I confess I have not thought often enough about your promise that death is no longer an enemy I need to fear. Rather, it will be for me the opening of the door to eternal joy as I am face to face with Jesus, fully glorified and fit for eternal joy, peace, and fellowship with all those who have believed. O Father, while being with you is my greatest hope, I still have life to live. Help me Lord Jesus, to be useful to you, to serve your church, and winsomely testify to your gospel before a watching world, through the power of God the Spirit who dwells in me, Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • FRIDAY

*<sup>23</sup>The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, <sup>24</sup>saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’<sup>25</sup> Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. <sup>26</sup>So too the second and third, down to the seventh. <sup>27</sup>After them all, the woman died. <sup>28</sup>In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”<sup>29</sup> But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. <sup>30</sup>For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. <sup>31</sup>And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: <sup>32</sup>‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”<sup>33</sup> And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.*

— Matthew 22:23–33

As we have seen, the full understanding of the afterlife, the reality of resurrection, and the experience of eternal fellowship with God was not clearly seen in the history of Israel. While there are instances of resurrection hope, for the most part, the whole doctrine of life after death is greatly nuanced in the pages of the Old Testament.

But when we open the New Testament, we find that the idea of resurrection is already fully represented. Already in the reading above the doctrine of resurrection is not only understood but has become a controversial subject. It is clear that the coming of God the Son in flesh is the first step in the redemptive action that will break the power of sin and death.

The teaching of Jesus was filled with declarations of life after death. We see it in his exhortations to faithfulness as necessary to being rewarded “at the resurrection of the just” (Lk. 14:14) as well as his announcement that “many will come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 8:11). Both the ideas of reward and table fellowship in the afterlife are presented by Jesus as very real experiential components of the life after death that he has promised us.

As we close out the first week of our journey to the empty tomb, take time to reflect on the grandeur of Jesus’ words above proclaiming that God “is not God

of the dead, but of the living.” To be “in Christ” is to have the hope that nothing — not even death — can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. To be a member of the household of God is to be assured that this life we now are living is merely the prelude to the next. And to be faithful in this life is to understand the privilege of living in ways that magnify the glory of our loving, gracious, and eternal life-giving heavenly Father.

## **Prayer**

*Loving Lord, you truly are a gracious, redeeming, and forgiving God. I confess that I do not reflect deeply and often enough on the majesty of the gospel, on the love that reached out to me through it, or on the life that I now live in the Spirit. O Father, forgive me for too often taking my eternal life for granted instead of realizing the privilege that is mine to make much of Jesus, to model his love, compassion, and character, and to make it my aim to be a useful servant in your hands. May the Spirit of God do the Work of God in my heart today, in the Name of Jesus, Amen.*





## WEEK 2

*“All the Evangelists take great care to mention the death of Christ, and most properly; for we obtain from it our confident hope of life, and we likewise obtain from it a fearless triumph over death, because the Son of God has endured it in our room, and, in his contest with it, has been victorious. But we must attend to the phraseology which John employs, and which teaches us, that all believers, who die with Christ, peacefully commit their souls to the guardianship of God, who is faithful, and will not suffer to perish what he hath undertaken to preserve. The children of God, as well as the reprobate, die; but there is this difference between them, that the reprobate give up the soul, without knowing where it goes, or what becomes of it; while the children of God commit it, as a precious trust, to the protection of God, who will faithfully guard it till the day of resurrection.”*

— John Calvin

## WEEK 2 • MONDAY

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup> And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup> And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ <sup>30</sup> And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

— Luke 16:19–31

In Jesus’ story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we are given a clear picture of how the Jewish world of that day thought about resurrection. Here we see a rich man, but not a man whose riches are ill gotten. That he is rich may simply set him out as a successful Jew who doubtlessly had a form of religion and even allowed poor, sick Lazarus to eat his leftovers. Yet, at his death, the rich man was judged as unfaithful and was consigned to Hades, the Greek term for the underworld, the place of the dead. His request for relief at the hand of Lazarus whom he sees resting comfortably with Abraham is denied due to the great chasm between their two final destinations.

What is interesting for us as we think about resurrection is how this story assumes life after death, either in a place of torment or a place of comfort. Both of the men who are now dead are still alive. They are cognizant, able to reason, and as well, able to experience either the anguish or comfort of their environment.

The rich man's request that Lazarus be commissioned to speak to his brothers also assumes that once dead, a man can return to life on earth and converse with those not yet dead.

This story makes the idea of life after death a reality for which we must all be prepared. It forces us to recognize that the anguish of the rich man is compounded by the fear that those he loves are still living in disregard of the truth and are destined to join him in Hades.

But the story also makes this sober point. Abraham is very clear: The message of redemption in Christ has been boldly proclaimed by the Old Testament writers. The fact that the rich man's brothers are unbelieving is not due to a lack of information. Rather, all the information they need is available to them just as it was to Lazarus. Their problem is not that they are uninformed, but that their eyes are blinded by their unrighteousness, their hearts hardened by their sin.

During this Passion season, let us reflect often on the fact that once our eyes were blind, and our hearts hard to the truth of Christ. Yet, through the grace of Christ and the power of the gospel, we were awakened to new life, enabled to see and believe the truth, and brought to repentance and faith in Jesus. In a very real way, the resurrection to life has already been inaugurated in all those who entrust their lives and eternal wellbeing to Almighty God because of the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus.

## **Prayer**

*Gracious Father, fill my heart today with the wonder of your saving grace which reached all the way to my sinful, hard heart by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remind me often that I was once far from you but now have been drawn near. Remind me often that I once was lost, but now you have found me. And remind me often that my life will be the most meaningful when it is most useful to you, through Jesus Christ the Lord, Amen.*

## WEEK 2 • TUESDAY

*<sup>11</sup>Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. <sup>12</sup>As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup>And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."<sup>14</sup> Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."<sup>15</sup> And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. <sup>16</sup>Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"<sup>17</sup> And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.*

— Luke 7:11–17

Today we begin our reflection on the three resurrections Jesus brought about miraculously — beginning with his raising of the son of a widow in the small Galilean village of Nain located at the foot of the Hill of Moreh.

It is helpful to ask the simple question: Why did Jesus bring the dead back to life during his earthly ministry? The answer comes out of the larger question: Why did Jesus perform any miracles?

When we take a step back and view the entire redemptive mission, we realize that, while it began in Eden with the promise of the "he", and was progressively predicted through God's dealings with Israel, it entered our world incarnationally in the God-man, Jesus Christ our Lord. His death and resurrection "secured eternal redemption" (Heb.9:12). Yet, as the author of Hebrews reminds us "at present we do not yet see everything in subjection to him" (Heb. 2:8). It is evident that our world and humanity itself is still plagued by the presence and pollution of sin.

In part, Jesus' miracles were demonstrations that, as God, he possesses all the power necessary to utterly destroy sin and reverse the effects of sin on all creation. As we know, the greatest effect of sin on mankind is the certainty of death. And, it is safe to say that disease is actually a reminder, a foretaste, that the human body is not immortal. Death is certain, and disease is the ever-present reminder that we are already dying.



When Jesus raised the widow's son with a word (as he did for Jairus' daughter and his friend Lazarus), he was demonstrating the power necessary to reverse the curse of sin and bring about life after death. As Paul so eloquently put it, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

## **Prayer**

*Mighty God of All, maker of heaven and earth, by your hand all things are held together and brought to your appointed conclusions according to your gracious providence. Yet, all around me I see the power of disease and death. They are the raging consequences of the virus of sin that entered into our world's operating system back in Eden, and they continue to replicate and ravage all those in the human race. And so, in reflecting on the power you, O Lord Jesus, demonstrated while you walked this earth, the power to reverse and heal diseases, and replace death with life with a word, my heart is filled with joy and awe that you would shower your life-giving grace and forgiveness on me. Help me Father, to live a resurrected life, a "new creation" life, so that I may honor you with my words and ways, and so prove to be your faithful servant, through the power of God the Spirit who dwells in me, Amen.*

## WEEK 2 • WEDNESDAY

*<sup>40</sup>Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. <sup>41</sup>And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, <sup>42</sup>for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying... <sup>49</sup>While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." <sup>50</sup>But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." <sup>51</sup>And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. <sup>52</sup>And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." <sup>53</sup>And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. <sup>54</sup>But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." <sup>55</sup>And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. <sup>56</sup>And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.*

— Luke 8:40–42, 49–56

Luke tells the story of Jesus' second miraculous resurrection. Again, as in the case of the Widow of Nain, we see the event through the eyes of a parent. This time, a father who was a leader in the local synagogue sought out Jesus' help imploring him to come and attend to his ailing 12 year-old daughter.

But as he is speaking, he is informed that his daughter had died. Apparently, this is just the opportunity the providence of God had ordered. Jesus travels to the man's home, takes the girl by the hand, and with a word, drives out death replacing it with the vibrance and vitality of life.

If we pause and reflect on the physical aspects of this resurrection from death to life, we can immediately recognize that once again the physical speaks powerfully to the spiritual. Two areas bear considering deeply.

First, we learn from the crowd who are incredulous when Jesus suggests that the girl is "sleeping." They have witnessed her death, almost certainly had attempted to revive her and failed. They now are laughing at Jesus' suggestion — which is not so much about the girl's state, but about Jesus' inference that "waking" her will be easy. What the crowd knows is impossible, they soon will witness is

simple for the one who will proclaim “I am the bread of life” (Jn. 6:48), “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25), and “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6).

Second, we learn from the daughter’s desperate condition. Like her, we all came into this world spiritually dead in sin (Eph. 2:1–3) and our spiritually dead condition was without human remedy. If we were ever to regain spiritual life and with it right standing before Almighty God, the remedy would have to come from outside ourselves and, in fact, from a source not itself polluted by sin.

And God so loved his creation that he determined sin would not have the last say. So he sent his son, wrapped in humanity, to rescue us from death by granting us new life. And as we continue our journey to the empty tomb of Jesus, we pause in humility and great gratitude to thank the Lord Jesus for his life-giving touch on our lives.

## Prayer

*My Father in heaven, blessed be your Name! For sending the Savior, I thank you. For bringing me under the influence of the gospel, I thank you. And for sending your Spirit into my life and opening my blind eyes to see my sin, and the free offer of forgiveness in Christ, I thank you again and again. And while I know you can accomplish all your will without me, I so desire to be used by you, in whatever capacity you choose, so that you will be glorified through me. Lord, from now on I refuse to foolishly place any restrictions on what you can ask of me, for you have given me life, and it will be my privilege to use it for you, in the Name of Jesus my Lord, Amen.*

## WEEK 2 • THURSDAY

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

— John 5:25

*<sup>1</sup>Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha ... <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ... <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ... <sup>17</sup> Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days ... <sup>34</sup> And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept ... <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb ... <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*

— John 11:1, 5–7, 14, 15, 17, 34, 35, 38–44

Today we read the story of the third resurrection brought about by Jesus. But of the three, Jesus intended the raising of Lazarus to be much more than the physical renewal of life in a dead human body.

In John 5, we find the Savior in Jerusalem healing many of their diseases. He takes the opportunity to speak about the reality to which every disease points: death! His shocking statement that an hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live must have left those within hearing distance quite confused. How can those who are dead, whose ears can no longer function at all, hear a man’s voice?

Readers of John’s gospel were left wondering ... until the page turned to John 11.

The story of Lazarus is laced with poignancy. Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary. He often stopped at their home in Bethany and would spend several nights there during the last week before the cross. This close connection makes it even more strange that Jesus, upon hearing of Lazarus' death, would purposefully stay away for two more days. Of course, we know that this was all intentional in order to arrive after Lazarus was dead in order to demonstrate the reality of "the dead" hearing the voice of the Son of God" and being led from death to life.

The story of Lazarus is beautiful for so many reasons, but the point is really that, once again, the physical serves as an illustration of the far greater spiritual reality. Physically dead ears don't hear, just as spiritually every unbeliever has no ability to comprehend the gospel. It is foolish to them unless and until God the Spirit opens the ears of their mind to "hear" the voice of Christ.

Just as physical life had to precede Lazarus' physical ears' ability to hear, so also spiritual life is first granted to us through the gospel granting us ears to hear, enabling repentance and saving faith, and drawing us to Christ. The hour at which the spiritually dead will hear the very voice of Christ in the gospel is still with us! Ours is the privilege to proclaim the gospel in hopes that the voice of Christ will be heard. What joy!

One last word about the three resurrections brought about by the Lord Jesus: Yes, all were raised from death to life, but the reality is that they all died again. As we continue our walk to the empty tomb, we do so in awe and wonder knowing that Jesus Christ died in our place and for our benefit and triumphed over death as the first fruits of the life we have inherited ... never to die again!

## Prayer

*Dear Lord, my heart is filled with joy that I have heard your voice and you have given me new life, forgiven my sin, and adopted me into the family of God. You have granted me the Spirit to live in me, the Word to teach and grow me, and the Church to walk the path of life with me. Forgive me, O Lord, for failing too often to appreciate deeply all that you are and are to me. Forgive me for foolishly thinking my desires are more important than your commands. Help me Lord Jesus, to walk in righteousness instead of sin, to walk in humility rather than pride, and to walk worthy of the gospel so that others may see my life and want to know my Jesus, in whose Name I pray, Amen.*

## WEEK 2 • FRIDAY

*31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

— Mark 8:31–33

We end this second week of the Passion Companion with some reflection on how Jesus himself taught about his own death and resurrection.

Mark's gospel of 16 chapters can nicely be divided in half for purposes of understanding. The purpose Mark had in mind as he wrote was two-fold. The first eight chapters speak powerfully to who Jesus is, while the last eight chapters detail what Jesus came to do.

The events described in the first half of the book are meant to push the reader to answer the question of Jesus' identity. That is, who is this man? One example is the story of the storm in Mark 4:35–41. After Jesus calmly stills the storm, Mark ends the story with a question from the lips of the awe struck disciples: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Answer: He is the creator whose power made and still controls all of creation.

In Mark 8, we hear Peter robustly give the answer to Jesus' question about his identity: "You are the Christ, the Messiah." It is clear that Peter aced Mark's mid-term. But then Jesus began teaching his disciples about what he was about to suffer and accomplish on the cross and then rise again. Peter got the first part but was completely unprepared for the cross.

The Jewish understanding of Messiah had missed the fact that, according to Isaiah 53, he would come as the Suffering Servant, intent on taking the sin of the world on himself as the sacrificial lamb. They, like Peter, had no category for a dying Messiah. It was not until the resurrected Jesus met his disciples behind locked doors that they came to understand all the Old Testament witnesses that proclaimed Messiah would come to give his life a ransom, that he would indeed be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

## Prayer

*Father, when I read Peter's reaction to Jesus' prediction of the cross and the grave, it causes me to shudder. I can't help but think that too often what I think you should do is actually shaped by my selfish desires rather than by a desire for you to be glorified through my words and ways. O Lord Jesus, move in my life through your Spirit in ways that calm my fears and show me that your ways are always best, and that following your commands is always my best option, for you are God and you will always lead me in the paths of righteousness because you love me and know what is best for me. Thank you, Father, for loving me with everlasting, never diminished love, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen.*







## WEEK 3

*“The resurrection is the revelation to chosen witnesses of the fact that Jesus who died on the cross is indeed king - conqueror of death and sin, Lord and Savior of all. The resurrection is not the reversal of a defeat but the proclamation of a victory. The King reigns from the tree. The reign of God has indeed come upon us, and its sign is not a golden throne but a wooden cross.”*

— Lesslie Newbigin

*“Imagine the presence of one who deeply loves you and is powerful enough to deal with the things you fear. It turns fear into confidence. But, like all spiritual growth, this change only comes with practice. It comes when you say, “Amen - I believe” when you hear or read the promises of God. It comes through meditation on God’s words. It comes when the cross of Jesus Christ assures you that God is faithful. These words to the fearful are so important that Jesus makes them his final words on earth: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt. 28:20). The resurrection is God’s answer to fear. Jesus is alive.”*

— Edward T. Welch



## WEEK 3 • MONDAY

*<sup>1</sup>Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup>“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” <sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup>They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>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!” <sup>10</sup>And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup>And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

— Matthew 21:1–10

This last week of our journey to the empty tomb will find us reflecting on Jesus’ last week before the cross. Often known as “Holy Week,” it begins on Sunday with what has come to be known as the Triumphal Entry.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the news spread to Jerusalem quickly. John records that Jesus spent Saturday night in Bethany and when it was known that he was there, a large crowd came to see him. The next day, some of those traveled with him to Jerusalem where he was met by another group who had come out from the city.

In the world of that day, it was customary for townspeople to go out of the city to meet dignitaries who were coming to visit. They would then escort them back into the city. In Jesus’ case, those who were with him and those who came out to greet him “spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 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!’” (Mt. 21:8-10).

But Jesus did not arrive like any other celebrity. He did not enter the city on a stallion but rather on a donkey as prophesied by Zechariah (9:9). Jesus, the

Suffering Servant of Isaiah's Servant Songs, came as a servant, as the one who would give his life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45).

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Sunday, it was a rugged cross that awaited him, not a ruler's crown. Even as the crowd shouted "Hosanna" they were cheering for a man they hoped would be a political and military leader. But Jesus' had a greater mission. He came to be the Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).

## **Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, blessed be your Name in all the earth. Today may your love and truth be seen in the way I think, speak and act. Keep me close to you and give me opportunities to make much of Jesus, my Lord and Savior. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you O Lord, and may I be a pure vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to you and ready for every good work, through Jesus Christ my Savior, Amen.*

## WEEK 3 • TUESDAY

<sup>12</sup>On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. <sup>13</sup>And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup>And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

— Mark 11:12–14

<sup>41</sup>And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup>saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup>and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

— Luke 19:41–44

<sup>15</sup>And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. <sup>16</sup>And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. <sup>17</sup>And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” <sup>18</sup>And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. <sup>19</sup>And when evening came they went out of the city.

— Mark 11:15–19

On Monday morning, Jesus and his disciples left Bethany and walked down the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem. Along the way he saw a fig tree “in leaf.” Though it was early in the season Jesus knew that early foliage often meant early fruit. But he found no fruit. Like the city of Jerusalem with all of its religiosity, rituals, and spiritual arrogance, the fig tree appeared to be much more than it actually was. Jesus’ curse on the tree was a preview of God’s dealing with those who “honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Mk. 7:6).

As Jesus drew near to the city, his emotions overflowed. Here was the place God had made his name to dwell. Here was the city of David, the Temple of Solomon, and the people God himself had chosen to be his own. Yet, they were about to reject the promised Messiah. Like the fig tree, judgment had already been decreed on them and would be fulfilled in 70AD when Rome would demolish the city.

While the episode with the fig tree and Jesus' lament and prediction of Jerusalem's destruction were about the future, the activity in the Temple demonstrated that the religious leaders of Jesus' day had already perverted godly worship in Israel. What was meant to be a place dedicated to Almighty God had become a bazaar dedicated to profit taking. Filled with righteous zeal, Jesus cleansed the Temple for the second time.

These three episodes from Monday of Passion Week remind us that true religion is centered in a heart of love for God and obedience to Christ. Where the heart is not aligned with God, all external religiosity is simply hypocrisy in fine dress.

## Prayer

*Gracious Father, the story of the fig tree is so powerful. Help me Lord, to be fruitful, not just full of leaves. Bind my heart to yours, and let me see where hypocrisy may be flourishing in my life. O God, drive my roots down deep into your truth so that I may keep my motives pure and my heart aligned with yours, by your grace and for your glory, Amen.*

## WEEK 3 • WEDNESDAY

*37“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 38 See, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*

— Matthew 23:37–39

Tuesday of Passion Week was the busiest day of the week for Jesus. Having once again spent the night in Bethany, he and his disciples left early in the morning to once again spend the day in Jerusalem. Along the way they found the cursed fig tree withered (Mt. 21:20–22).

In Jerusalem, Jesus began teaching and was soon questioned as to his authority (Mt. 21:23–27) leading him to speak in a series of three parables: Two Sons (Mt. 21:28–32), The Wicked Husbandman (Mt. 21:33–46), and The Great Supper (Mt. 22:1–14). He continued dialoguing with the religious leaders on paying taxes to Caesar (Mt. 22:15–22), the reality of resurrection (Mt. 22:23–33), the great commandment (Mt. 22:34–40), and their question about David’s son (Mt. 22:41–46).

Following his conversations with the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus pronounced a series of woes on those leaders who were leading the people astray (Mt. 23:1–36) followed by his second lament over the disobedience and hardheartedness of the people of Jerusalem. Jesus ended his time in the city at the Temple instructing his disciples about the ruthlessness of the religious leaders as they preyed on the poor and week epitomized in the widow who gave all that she had (Mk. 12:41–44).

As Jesus and his disciples made their way out of the city and up the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave one of his longest and most important lectures. Known as the Olivet Discourse, this teaching continued the theme of the destruction of Jerusalem and transitioned seamlessly into Jesus’ warning about the future and the coming of the Son of Man in glory at the end of the age (Mt. 24:29–31). Jesus’ primary call was to faithfulness despite the coming persecutions (Mt. 24:9–14, 24) and the rise of false priests and false christs (Mt. 24:23–28). He concluded his lecture with a series of parables that emphasized wisdom in staying faithful

and being prepared for the return of Christ: Fig Tree (Mt. 24:32–36), The Flood (Mt. 24:37–44), The Servants (Mt. 24:45–51), The Ten Virgins (Mt. 25:1–13), The Talents (Mt. 25:14–30), and The Sheep and Goats (Mt. 25:31–46).

So, what are we to take away from Jesus' activity and teaching on Tuesday of Passion Week? Just this. Strive for faithfulness, and be ready always for Jesus to return!

A favorite saying among those who are privileged to pastor the church of Jesus says, "Be ready to preach, pray, or die at any moment."

As we continue preparing our hearts to celebrate anew the resurrection of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, may we renew our commitment to live faithfully, to live ready to stand before our God with great joy!

## Prayer

*Almighty God, I lift my prayer to you realizing anew that you alone are worthy of my praise and devotion. You alone are the anchor of my soul, and in you I find my truest rest and refuge. You are so good to me! Your love never fails. Your truth never changes, and the reality that you desire to make your glory known through me is the greatest privilege of my life. O Lord, forgive me for taking that privilege too lightly, for too often living selfishly rather than in serving you, and your church, and those in my world. Father, use me today in whatever ways you choose so that tonight, as I put my head on my pillow, I will have only joy at having been useful to you, through your Spirit who dwells in me, Amen.*

## WEEK 3 • THURSDAY

<sup>1</sup>Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end ... <sup>3</sup> Jesus ... <sup>4</sup> rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him ... <sup>12</sup> When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?" <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

— John 13:1, 3, 4, 12–17

<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> 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 22:15–20

<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

— John 13:34–35

On Wednesday of Passion Week the plot to arrest and execute Jesus was put into action (Mt. 26:1–5) and Judas agreed to betray the Lord (Mt. 26:14–16).

Thursday of Passion Week is often referred to as Maundy Thursday. The term Maundy is from the Latin word "mandatum" which means "command" and refers to the various commands and instructions Jesus gave to his disciples during the Passover meal.



While they were together in the upper room, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a "living parable" of how they were to both love and serve one another. It is clear that Judas was still in the room. Jesus, knowing Judas would betray him, nevertheless washed his feet as well.

After Judas left (Jn. 13:21–30), Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper which changed the "remembrance" aspect of the Passover meal. For centuries Passover had looked back to Israel's "exodus" from slavery in Egypt accomplished by God through the plagues and accomplished under the leadership of Moses. But that Thursday night it all changed. Now the meal would forever look back to the "exodus" Jesus would accomplish as his death as the true Passover Lamb would free his people from slavery to sin.

After supper, Jesus gave a lecture known as the Upper Room discourse (Jn. 13:31–16:33). In it, he told his disciples that he would soon be leaving them, but he would send the Holy Spirit to "guide them into all truth" (Jn.16:13). He also exhorted them three times to love one another, no longer as they loved themselves, but as he had loved them (Jn. 13:34; 15:12, 17).

After supper had ended, Jesus continued his lecture as he and the disciples walked across the Kidron Valley and entered the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:30–46). There, after a lengthy time of prayer, Jesus was taken into custody and led off to Caiaphas' house where he spent the night in a dungeon awaiting his crucifixion.

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father, remembering that Jesus washed Judas' feet, despite knowing his treachery, certainly illustrates just what it means to love your enemies. Father, help me to love as you love, to see others through the lens of Jesus, and to see myself as your servant and an instrument of your grace, so that all will know that you are my Lord, the one to whom I have entrusted my life, by your grace, for your glory, and for my good, through the indwelling power of your Spirit, Amen.*

## WEEK 3 • FRIDAY

*<sup>1</sup>When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.*

— Matthew 27:1

*<sup>24</sup>And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take ... <sup>26</sup>And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” <sup>27</sup>And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup>And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!” <sup>31</sup>So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup>Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. <sup>33</sup>And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup>And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” <sup>35</sup>And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” <sup>36</sup>And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” <sup>37</sup>And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup>And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup>And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” <sup>40</sup>There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup>When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. <sup>42</sup>And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, <sup>43</sup>Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>44</sup>Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. <sup>45</sup>And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. <sup>46</sup>And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*

— Mark 15:24, 26–46

On Friday, traditionally called “Good Friday”, what Satan meant as the greatest evil turned out to have been planned from all eternity by God to accomplish the greatest good. The Apostle Paul, reflecting on the death of Jesus of Nazareth, God the Son Incarnate, would write “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus, fully God and fully man, died a death he didn’t deserve so that all who will believe in him might receive a life they could never deserve, never earn, and never know apart from God’s sovereign work of grace. Hallelujah ... what a Savior!

*O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,  
 Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;  
 O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!  
 Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.  
     What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered, was all for sinners’ gain;  
     Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.  
     Lo, here I fall, my Savior! ’Tis I deserve Thy place;  
     Look on me with Thy favor, vouchsafe to me Thy grace.  
 What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,  
 For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?  
 O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,  
 Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.  
     Be Thou my consolation, my shield when I must die;  
     Remind me of Thy passion when my last hour draws nigh.  
     Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, upon Thy cross shall dwell,  
     My heart by faith enfolds Thee. Who dieth thus dies well.*

— Bernard of Clairvaux, 1153

## Prayer

*Mighty God, Heavenly Father ... to you I bow in praise and adoration, in awe and wonder ... and admit that the love you have shown in granting me a saving interest in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is beyond my comprehension. And yet, I rejoice in that love! I rejoice in the grace with which you have covered me, and I rejoice in the rest I have found from my guilt and shame in the gospel through which your righteousness has been accounted as mine, even as my sin has been accounted as Christ’s. O gracious Father ... you have made me yours, and I beseech you to do whatever is necessary to make me useful to you, a loving and obedient servant through whom your glory can shine, so that others may see my good works and turn from their sin to find forgiveness and eternal life in you, through Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, and soon to return Savior of souls, Amen!*





## RESURRECTION SUNDAY

*“St. Paul writes in Romans 4:25 as follows: ‘Christ was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification.’ Paul is indeed the man who extols Christ in a masterly manner, telling us exactly why and for what purpose he suffered and how we should conform ourselves to his sufferings, namely, that he died for our sins. This is a correct interpretation of the sufferings of Christ, by which we may profit. And as it is not sufficient to know and believe that Christ has died, so it will not suffice to know and believe that he rose with a transfigured body and is now in a state of joy and blessedness, no longer subject to mortality, for all this would profit me nothing or very little. But when I come to understand the fact that all the works God does in Christ are done for me, nay, they are bestowed upon and given to me, the effect of his resurrection being that I also will arise and live with him; that will cause me to rejoice. This must be brought home to our hearts, and we must not merely hear it with the ears of our body nor merely confess it with our mouth.”*

— Martin Luther

## RESURRECTION SUNDAY

*<sup>1</sup>But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup>And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” <sup>8</sup>And they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup>and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup>but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup>But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.*

— Luke 24:1–12

On that first Resurrection Sunday morning, the greatest miracle ever known greeted the women who had come to renew the spices surrounding their Lord’s dead body. “He is not here, but has risen” were the words that would forever change their lives and the whole world.

Later (Lk. 24:36–53), the disciples would have their own experience with the risen Christ as he showed them his hands and side and commissioned them to carry the gospel into all the world.

And they did! In fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ became the primary element in the apostolic gospel:

*<sup>22</sup>“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup>this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. <sup>24</sup>God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. <sup>25</sup>For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; <sup>26</sup>therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. <sup>27</sup>For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. <sup>28</sup>You have*

## RESURRECTION SUNDAY

*made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.<sup>29</sup> “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.<sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,<sup>31</sup> he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.<sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.<sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.<sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,<sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies your footstool.”<sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

— Peter | Acts 2:22–36

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,<sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,<sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.<sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.<sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me ...<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?<sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.<sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.<sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.<sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.<sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.<sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.<sup>19</sup> If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

— Paul | 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 12–20

And so, it is only fitting, as we have prepared our hearts to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we also pray with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who in 13:20, 21 wrote:

## **Prayer**

*“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*





## HE IS RISEN... HE IS RISEN INDEED!

*“To be “in Christ” is to place one’s trust in Him for salvation from sin. To be “in Christ” is to trust His goodness, not our own; to trust that His sacrificial death on the cross paid the complete debt of death we owe for our sin; to trust that His resurrection gives us eternal life instead of relying upon our own ability to please God. To be “in Christ” is to claim, by faith, the free gift of salvation. To be “in Christ” is to enjoy a completely restored relationship with our Father in heaven by virtue of His Son’s righteous standing.”*

— Charles R. Swindoll







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