

The Passion Of The Christ

Long Beach Alliance Church • Palm Sunday, April 5th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

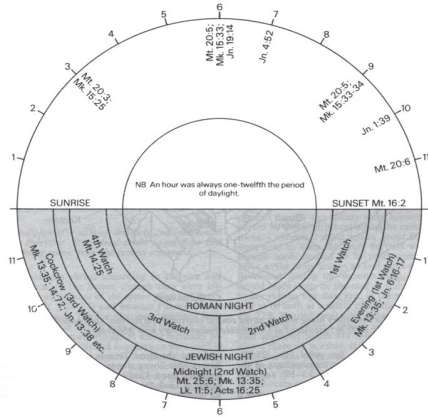
**FOR I DELIVERED TO YOU AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE WHAT I ALSO RECEIVED, THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, AND THAT HE WAS BURIED, AND THAT HE WAS RAISED ON THE THIRD DAY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES...
~ 1ST CORINTHIANS 15:3-4 (NASB)**

1) The Passion Week Of The Christ

- A) It has been noted that the accounts of the life of Jesus the Christ (the Gospels) are "passion narratives with extended introductions." The statistics bear out this estimation:
- Matthew ~ Chapters 21-28 (28.5%)
 - Mark ~ Chapters 11-16 (37.5%)
 - Luke ~ Chapters 19-24 (25%)
 - John ~ Chapters 12-21 (47.6%)
- B) Clearly, the Gospel writers were inspired to place a special emphasis on this singular week of Christ's life which led to his crucifixion and resurrection! There is no more important week for the Christian than "the Passion Week of the Christ!"
- C) With this in mind, I invite you to join with Christians all over the world this week in observing "Passion Week," by walking with Jesus Christ through this climactic week.

2) Helpful Background For The Passion Week

- A) It is important to note that the times with which we deal in Scripture are very different than that with which we are accustomed in modern day America. For the Hebrews, the day was split into 24 divisions (or hours), of which there were 12 in the day, and 12 in the night. There were always 12 hours a day, and always 12 hours a night. In other words, "an hour" simply meant 1/12 of either the day or night.



- B) The "Hebrew Day" was 24 "hours" long, but began at sunset and ran through the next sunset. For our purposes here, I will use "Western days" (midnight to midnight, to which we are all accustomed), but if you study the text closely, you might note slight divergence on how the days are identified. And now you know why...
- C) It is also important to note that Jesus and His disciples spent the entire "Passion" week staying in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany (John 12:1). Bethany is located just two miles away from Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives is located in-between Bethany and Jerusalem.
- D) The reason Jesus and His disciples have come to Bethany and will be travelling into Jerusalem each day is for the Passover feast, which will occur at the end of the week (John 12:1). The Passover was a memorial feast of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and protection by God from the 10th plague (death of firstborn son) through the application of blood on the doorposts of the family home (Exodus 12:23).

3) Saturday - Sunday, Beginning Of Passion Week

- A) Jesus and His disciples arrive at the home of Mary, Martha & Lazarus in Bethany, six days before the Passover feast is to begin in Jerusalem (John 12:1).

- B) That evening at supper, Mary anoints Jesus with "costly perfume" (John 12:2-8). The perfume is truly costly (one year's wages), and reveals Mary's devotion and humility.

- C) Judas Iscariot, noting the value of the perfume, criticizes Mary's generosity, instead voicing that the perfume could be used to support the poor (12:4-5). However, it is noted that Judas was a thief (and the treasurer for the disciples), and it seems this moment contributes to his disillusionment with Jesus and his sense of loss as Christ heads toward the cross.

- D) The contrast between Judas the betrayer and Mary are dramatic. Judas couldn't figure out Jesus, and was becoming increasingly more selfish. On the other hand, Mary (who also didn't always grasp what Jesus was doing, cf. John 11:31-33) chose to worship Jesus.

- E) Following Jesus can be one of the most unnerving and confusing experiences in life. Trusting Christ with our whole lives is a choice, it does not come naturally. As you begin this journey with Jesus through the Passion Week, consider your own relationship with Him, is it one of sacrificial worship or one of selfish wants?

- F) The next day, Jesus and His disciples leave Bethany and head into Jerusalem (John 12:12). Word has gotten out that Jesus is coming into Jerusalem, and there is a crowd to welcome Jesus (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; John 12:12-18). Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling prophecy (Zechariah 9:9). His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Sunday is marked with "Hosanna" (God Save!) a well-known Messianic title (Psalm 118:25-26).

- G) Knowing that Jesus has already predicted his death (Mark 10:33-34), we know why He has come to Jerusalem. However, the people are welcoming Jesus because they think He will be a miraculous military deliverer, a terrible misconception leading to a different cry from the people.
- H) All of us come to Jesus with our own pre-conceived notions. Perhaps you come to Jesus for healing. Perhaps it is for financial relief. Perhaps it is to find a mate. Perhaps it is to be released from some sort of addiction. Will you take this day to trust Jesus, no matter your circumstances? Will you cry out "Hosanna" (Save me!) whether Jesus meets your expectations or not? Pray for deeper trust on this day.
- I) While Jesus is in Jerusalem, He surveys the Jewish Temple area (Mark 11:11). Jesus returns to Bethany with His disciples, as will be His daily habit through the Passion Week (Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:11).

4) Monday, Day Of Judgment

- A) On His way to Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus curses a barren fig tree (Mark 11:12-14; cf. Matthew 21:18-22). The disciples are amazed and perplexed by the cursing.
- B) Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and heads into the temple area (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17), and proceeds to clear out the temple of money changers and sellers.
- C) Once the temple was cleared, Jesus proceeds to perform healings and challenge the religious leaders (Matthew 21:14-16; Mark 11:18). Jesus then returns to Bethany (Matthew 21:7; Mark 11:19).
- D) On this day, allow Jesus to clean out the areas of your life (the temple, cf. 1st Corinthians 3:16) that might have become polluted with "pagan money" (values and ideas of the world). Allow Christ to bring healing to your temple!

5) Tuesday, The Olivet Discourse

- A) On His way to Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus explains the cursing of the fig tree to His disciples (Matthew 21:20-22; Mark 11:20-21; Luke).
- B) Almost immediately, Jesus enters the temple and begins to get into debates and teaching in the temple (Matthew 21:23-23:39; Mark 11:27-12:44).
- C) The connection between the cursing of the fig tree, and the cleansing of the temple, and the debates/challenges of the religious leaders is clear... Jesus' judgments are against the fruitless leaders of Israel (fig tree) who have sold-out being faithful for big profits (temple profiteering).
- D) The religious leaders are secure in their positions of influence (and fruitlessness/profits) through the burden of traditions which cannot be attained (cf. Matthew 23:1-39), which Jesus summarily dismantles through His teaching.
- E) This approach, as you can imagine, was not popular with the religious leaders of Jerusalem, particularly with the Sadducees and Pharisees (again cf. Matthew 23). Jesus heads out to Bethany, but stops to teach on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:1-3).
- F) Jesus teaches about "the end times" on the Mount of Olives, in a section of the Bible popularly known as the "Olivet Discourse" (Matthew 24:1-25:46; Mark 13:1-37).
- G) Jesus teaches about the tearing down and rebuilding of the temple, both a metaphor for His own life and a prediction of the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Rather than the temple being located in a single place (Jerusalem), the New Testament temple is located wherever God's Spirit reigns (1st Corinthians 3:16). Allow Jesus to "tear down" and "rebuild" your own temple through His Word on this day!

6) Wednesday, "Silent Wednesday"

- A) There is nothing recorded in Scripture which we can (for sure) say occurs on Wednesday. Popularly called "silent Wednesday," this day represents the "calm before the storm."
- B) Jesus and His disciples remained in Bethany on this day, no doubt a significant time for Jesus with the men with whom He had shared so much in the previous three years.
- C) It is possible that this was the day that Judas returned to Jerusalem on his own to make arrangements with the religious leaders of Israel for the betrayal of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6).

7) Thursday, Passover (At Sundown)

- A) The disciples proceed into Jerusalem from Bethany to make preparations for the Passover (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13). They secure the "upper room" for their Passover meal, and make the necessary preparations.
- B) After sundown (remember, for the Hebrew this would mark the beginning of Friday, and as such, the beginning of Passover), Jesus and His disciples observe the Passover meal (Matthew 26:20-35; Mark 12:17-25; Luke 22:14-38).
- C) During this "Last Supper," Jesus teaches His disciples in what is popularly known as the "Upper Room Discourses" (John 13-17). During this time, Jesus institutes communion (the Lord's Supper) for a continual remembrance of Christ's Passion Week.
- D) Jesus also taught a great deal about servanthood and Spirit filled living, by washing His disciples feet during their time in the Upper Room. This powerful scene of love is remembered in the church (commemorating Jesus' "new commandment" in John 13:34-35) on "Maundy Thursday."

- E) On the way back to Bethany, Jesus and His disciples stop to pray at the base of the Mount of Olives at a location known as the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; John 18:1-11).

- F) Jesus prays to the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane three times, begging for "this cup to pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:36ff). While He prays, His disciples sleep. Jesus' prayers are so intense, he sweats blood. The picture is of Jesus, all alone, realizing that His Father will not hold back the cup of wrath from His own Son.

- G) On this day, I encourage you to spend time in prayer to Jesus for those things which are breaking you. Take time to remember Jesus in the midst of your day and circumstances.

- H) Finally, in living out the Passion Week of the Christ, take time on this day to serve those who are close to you. We often forget those who are closest to us, and choosing to serve them is an active "living out" of John 13:34-35. This will serve as a reminder to both you and them of your love.

8) Good Friday, The Darkest Day In History

- A) Very late that night (probably after midnight), Jesus is betrayed by Judas Iscariot with a kiss, and then arrested (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50). Jesus' disciples, afraid of being arrested themselves, flee the scene.

- B) This begins a long night and morning of trials for Jesus, which have two phases, the Jewish Trials (3 parts), and then the Roman Trials (3 parts).

- C) During the Jewish trials, Jesus first appears in front of Annas, the recognized High Priest (John 18:13-24) to face the charge of blasphemy, "claiming equality with God." Jesus is punched by an officer of the High Priest in this trial (John 18:22).

- D) Jesus then is taken to the acting High Priest, Caiaphas and the partial Sanhedrin (also called the "Council," the Supreme Court of the Jews) (Matthew 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-65). During this trial, Jesus' head is covered with a bag and a circle of guards beat Him asking Him to prophecy.
- E) At dawn the full Sanhedrin passed a judgment of guilty against Jesus for blasphemy, which carried the penalty of death (Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1). The Jews couldn't enforce the death penalty, so Jesus is sent to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. The Jews seek the death penalty for Jesus, accusing Him of sedition against Rome.
- F) Jesus appears before Pilate (Matthew 27:2-14; Mark 15:2-5), but is quickly shipped to Herod Antipas (the local governor in Galilee), who had jurisdiction over Jesus of Nazareth.
- G) Herod Antipas only wanted Jesus to do miracles for him (Luke 23:6-12), but bores of Christ and ships Him back to Pilate for judgment.
- H) Pilate, attempting to placate the Jews, tries to release Jesus as an act of kindness, but instead releases Barabbas, a known murderer (Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-14). Jesus is taken away and brutally scourged with a "cat of nine tails," and then is taken away to be crucified.
- I) Jesus' crucifixion takes place between 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM, at Golgotha (Matthew 27:27-66; Mark 15:16-39). Jesus is nailed to the cross, and cries out as the sins of mankind are poured out on Him as He dies (Matthew 27:50).
- J) That evening, Jesus was removed from the cross and laid in the private tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47). Mary Magdalene and others began preparing Jesus body in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, but had to wait to finish the treatment of the body because of the Sabbath. But when they returned on Sunday...