

March 22, 2015 ~ **An Overview of Passion Week, from the Gospels.**

Next Sunday begins what is known as Passion Week, the day our Lord entered Jerusalem while all the people praised Him; but five days later, they were demanding His death, after which, He was laid in a tomb, but on Sunday morning, He came out alive, just like He said He would!

There is much written in Scripture about Jesus' last week in Jerusalem (Matthew 21-28, Mark 11-18, Luke 19-24, John 12-20 = 29 chapters). Out of a total of 89 chapters that comprise all four Gospels, almost 1/3 are devoted to this one week at the end of Jesus' earthly life!

In 2007-08, teaching through Mark, I prepared 20 sermons on this one-week period of Jesus' life; and in 2012-13, teaching through Matthew, I prepared 22 sermons on this same one-week period.

Passion Week is highly charged and extremely important, because it contains Christ's death and resurrection. Apart from God's original act of creation, when everything was made that has been made, the crucifixion and resurrection are by far the most marvelous, majestic, and miraculous events to ever occur. Next Sunday, we'll consider Christ's death; the following Sunday we'll celebrate His resurrection, and then, perhaps one more Sunday to contemplate His post resurrection appearances before returning to heaven.

OT prophecies of Christ fulfilled during Passion Week:

Zechariah 9:9, He will enter Jerusalem on a colt. (500 BC)

Zechariah 11:12, He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver [Exodus 21:32, the price of a slave].

Isaiah 53:1-12, He would bear our sins, receiving God's just penalty upon Himself, in our place. (700 BC)

Psalms 22:16, He would be pierced on the Cross. (1000 BC)

Psalms 16:8-11, He would rise from the dead.

Christ enters Passover week (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:1, 12-15).

In Exodus 12:1-13, God gives instruction to all of Israel concerning their participation in the first Passover.

The people are told to acquire a year-old male lamb [kid] without defect, it is to be taken from either sheep or goats. Each family was to bring one home on Nisan 10; they were to treat it as a "pet" and care for it until Nisan 14, when, at twilight (before sundown), it was to be slaughtered, and its blood spread on the doorpost of the house (this provided God's protection from His wrath, which would soon come (the death angel would pass over all of Egypt). The lamb was to be cooked and eaten at each home, any leftovers were to be burned.

At the beginning of that first Passover, recorded in Exodus 12, on Nisan 10 a lamb was selected and brought home for four days. Guess what? Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Nisan 10 (equivalent to our Sunday, March 29), and for four days Jesus (*the Lamb of God*, John 1:29) enjoyed the favor of the people, loving them and being praised by them.

On Nisan 14 (equivalent to our Thursday, April 2), just after sunset, God's Lamb celebrated Passover with His disciples; at the close of the meal, He changed Passover's meaning and message forever (Matthew 26:26-29).

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

The cup of wine (cup of blessing), symbolizes the fulfillment of God's covenant requirement through the blood of a sacrifice, which up to this time was the shed blood of a yearling lamb/kid; for it was the blood that sealed or ratified the covenant with God.

But notice (Matthew 26:28), it is not the blood of an animal sacrifice Jesus is talking about which is to be poured out in order to cover the penalty for sins and grant forgiveness— He says, "My blood," this is Christ's blood which will be shed in order to provide forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22), "for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness," in fact 1Peter 1:19 says we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

Jesus forever changed the manner and message of the Feast of Passover, but He did so much more (Luke 22:20), "In the same way, after the supper He [Jesus] took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.'"

Sunday of passion week Jesus rode into town on a donkey's colt, He was praised and honored by the people.

Jesus exhausted Himself, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, sharing God's love and message with all who would listen.

Come Wednesday the narrative goes silent, it seems Jesus stayed away from the city, He needed to rest .

Thursday was Passover, when Jesus forever changed the manner in which we approach and relate to God.

Jesus encouraged, equipped and exhorted His disciples throughout that very long night, pouring Himself out like a drink offering to these men who had been by His side for three years; for they would soon be the ones who would carry the message of God's love throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Very early Friday morning, long before sunrise (before 0300) Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His disciples run away. Jesus is taken before the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and then back to Pilate who, although he finds Jesus innocent of any crime, turns Him over to be flogged and then crucified.

On Friday, the blood of God's Lamb was shed on the cross for all who trust Him (Romans 10:9-10), confessing Him as Lord, believing God raised Him from the dead, for only then do we receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Jesus was nailed to the cross (Mark 15:25) at the third hour of the day (9 am), from the sixth to the ninth hour (noon-3 pm, Luke 23:44-46) darkness covered the land, until Jesus finally cried out to the Father, then breathing His last breath, He gave up His spirit and died.

During Passion Week, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, took upon Himself the punishment that belongs to sinners like you and me.

He did this to set us free from sin's penalty, and to offer us God's gracious, merciful, and eternal Love.

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."