

# ReGroup 4/2/23

## Passion Week: Footsteps of Jesus

We all know the details of Good Friday and Easter Sunday, but perhaps you've wondered about the build-up to that most important weekend in all of history. Thankfully, we have the very detailed Gospels that chronicle the years that Jesus spent in ministry. While, they cover His three years of ministry well, they really only give us the key events and high-watermark moments. However, when they come to the last week of Jesus' life, it's almost like time stands still and their accounts are quite exhaustive.

### **Consider the following breakdown of all four Gospels:**

- Matthew covers the birth of Jesus in the first 2 chapters, and then from chapters 3-20, He tells stories from Jesus' three year ministry. **Contrast that to Chapters 21-28, which take place across a *single week*.**
- Mark 1-10 summarizes three years, **while 11-16 details the last week.**
- Similar to Matthew, Luke gives us Jesus' birth narrative in the first 2 chapters and then from 3-19 he highlights His ministry. **Then, he gives us the lengthy chapters 20-24, all about Passion Week.**
- John's Gospel is probably the greatest example of how the Gospels are slanted towards Passion Week. The first half of his book covers Jesus' three-year ministry, **while he dedicates the last half to a week-long period.** We get 11 chapters on three years and then **we get 10 chapters on *nine days*.**

We probably understand why the Gospels lean into Passion Week so much, but have you ever thought about how they are laid out this way? Doesn't that make you interested to see what all happened across *this most-important week*? Of course Good Friday and Easter Sunday are important, but Palm Sunday through Thursday are *just as* important, and offer us so many amazing stories that help explain what follows.

In this lesson, we will look across the different Gospel accounts for insight about the happenings of each day. We will also read passages from the Old Testament which either predicted or speak to what Jesus was saying and doing on the respective days. So let's get started...

## **Palm Sunday - March 29, 33 AD**

Key Gospel Account: **John 12:12-19**

Hundreds of thousands poured into Jerusalem for the annual Passover festival. However, people were arriving earlier than ever for this celebration because of all the buzz around Jesus. Everyone believed that *if* Jesus was set to make Himself king, it would be during one of the Holy Festivals. There wouldn't be a better than than Passover...

We know that Jesus hadn't come to build a kingdom, but rather save the world. He would create a different kind of kingdom through the people He would save and transform for generations to come. Obviously this wasn't what the crowds expected, and is what ultimately led to them rejecting Jesus. They thought their greatest threat was Rome, yet it was *actually* Sin and Death.

Jesus came not to conquer a worldly foe, but *these spiritual enemies*. His generation was mostly unwilling to accept a king who could suffer and die. Palm Sunday reminds us that Jesus is indeed our king, but also that He is certainly a different kind of king. Do you see where they went wrong? Do you understand the message that Jesus sends to us through Palm Sunday?

Key Old Testament Passages: **Psalms 118:19-29, Zechariah 9:9-12, 16-17**

Palm Sunday lifts up Jesus as king, but it's important we let God teach us about His rule. Christ is our Cornerstone and in Him we find direction on how to build up our lives. We need Him to save us from how we naturally see the world.

Jesus came into Jerusalem humbly, yet fiercely focused on bringing salvation. The double portion that Zechariah mentions speaks of His one-two punch against our enemies. When we cry for God to save us, He releases us from the prison of sin and death.

## **Monday - March 30, 33 AD**

Key Gospel Account: **Mark 11:15-19**

Jesus spent Monday bringing an indictment against the Jewish religion, that had drifted so far from God's intentions. Rather than pointing people to His grace and future provision, the religious leaders were extorting people and *selling* salvation. The Temple was *widening* the gap between people and God, not narrowing it. Does this help bringing insight as to why Jesus reacted this way?

Key Old Testament Passages: **Psalm 69:9, Isaiah 56:5-8, Jeremiah 7:1-8**

Jesus was frustrated that the Temple had fallen from its intended use. He was consumed by a zeal to bring true salvation to Israel. Likewise, we learn how important it is to keep the message pure. We cannot hide behind religion, lest we become as corrupt and condemned as the Jewish people were.

### **Tuesday - March 31, 33 AD**

Key Gospel Account: **Matthew 21:18-12**

Israel ultimately rejected Jesus, because He didn't fit into their predetermined template of God was like and what He should do for them. Rather than allowing God's revelation to them throughout the ages to shape and steer them, they had taken God's Word and interpreted it through their *own* beliefs. They were looking for a God who would prop them up and establish their wills. God would turn from Israel to the Gentiles as a result... Jesus' sermons on this day (found in Matthew 22-25) reflect His disappointment in the Jews but also reveal their growing indignation towards Him.

The New Testament gives us insight about how this was *always* God's plan, to extend salvation to the whole world. See **Acts 13:46-50, Romans 11:11-18**

Does this help make sense out of why the people rejected Jesus like they did? Doesn't it also remind us to not become arrogant either, but always remain humble and dependent on Jesus.

### **Wednesday - April 1, 33 AD**

Key Gospel Account: **Matthew 26:1-16**

Jesus leaves Jerusalem and visits with His friends at Bethany. It's there that Judas' growing dissatisfaction for Jesus hits its peak and he chooses to unfollow. He turns right into the arms of the Religious Leaders who are deep into their plot to arrest Jesus. What are your thoughts on how Judas and these men became unexpected allies?

Key Old Testament Passage: **Psalm 55:19-23**

This passage foreshadows Judas' betrayal and the Religious Leaders refusal to humble themselves to Jesus.

## Thursday - April 2, 33 AD

Key Gospel Account: **Luke 22:14-23, 39-46, 63-65**

At the Passover Meal, Jesus' disciples knew something wasn't right. Jesus was acting different - troubled in His Spirit but also resolved and determined like never before. When He broke the bread, He shocked them all by completely rewriting history. No longer were they to remember the Passover Lamb and the Exodus story with this meal, but they were to think of Jesus as the True Lamb of God. What follows is His path as this Lamb, as He surrenders to God's Will and is held in custody until the Day of Slaughter arrives...

Key Old Testament Passages: **Psalms 116:12-14, Jeremiah 31:31-34**

Jesus wasn't about to budge on His mission. He would lift up the cup set before Him, *even if* it would cost Him. He knew that He had come to install a better covenant with the nation of Israel, and the whole world.

What are your thoughts on this New Covenant and the way in which it was introduced to us?

## Good Friday - April 3, 33 AD

Key Gospel Accounts: **John 18:33-38, Mark 15:33-39**

Jesus went through the various trials and didn't fight back or resist. He testified that He came to reveal the Kingdom of God and open its gates to the world. He would bear His cross and bleed out like a lamb, so that our sins could be forgiven and our debt paid in full.

What do the *words* of Jesus immediately bring to mind? Notice the contrast from how He spoke with authority to Pilate and then His desperate cry on the cross.

Key Old Testament Passage: **Isaiah 53:4-7**

Can you imagine that Jesus would accept all of our sin and shame in order to bring us back into favor with God? This is why the Cross both emphasizes God's wrath against sin and God's love for sinners - and *ultimately* shows how God's love is greater and endures to all of us, forever.

## Saturday - April 3, 33 AD

Key Gospel Account: **Matthew 27:57-66**

The Sabbath law prevented a proper burial for Jesus, with sundown approaching so soon after His death (Sabbath began on Friday evening at 6 PM and lasted through Sunday morning at 6 AM).

The guard placed at the Tomb symbolizes the power that the Sabbath had over the people. They were frozen in place for that day, every week - which was itself a picture of sin and death's grip over all of us. However, we know the story does not end here...

Key Old Testament Passage: **Psalms 16:9-11**

Looking at this Saturday in hindsight gives us a great and everlasting hope. The Old Testament Jews didn't have a lot of confidence in life after death. To them, the grave was pretty much the end of their story. David prophesied that *one day* things would change, and we know that Easter did that and much more...

## Easter Sunday - April 4, 33 AD

Key Gospel Account: **Matthew 28:1-10**

Jesus had lived (and died) for this moment in time to come. His Resurrection literally changed *everything*. Even more remarkable, He had predicted it all along. Everything happened *just like He said* it would.

Consider this - If Jesus was right about His death and resurrection, then what else was He right about? Suddenly, everything He ever said was validated and punctuated and His rightful place as Lord of our life becomes even more emphasized.

Key Old Testament Passage: **Hosea 6:1-3**

As we journey towards Easter, we are reminded that Jesus' resurrection allows for our own resurrection. We can come to life in His Spirit and be healed of our sin and shame. May we spend this week reflecting on these amazing promises and preparing our hearts to receive all that He has for us! As you share any closing thoughts, consider what does Easter mean to you. If you can't answer this question, make a point to take hold of its promises this year!