

**A GUIDE TO
HOLY
WEEK**

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WHAT IS HOLY WEEK?

Holy Week is the eight days from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday that represent Jesus' final days in Jerusalem before and through His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. Holy Week is sometimes referred to as Passion Week, meaning the week of Jesus' suffering in being tested, tried, tortured and put to death for the sins of all people for all time.

WHY OBSERVE HOLY WEEK?

Observing Holy Week gives followers of Jesus the opportunity to recall the events leading up to His death, burial and resurrection. In recalling these events, the true believer receives a fresh reminder and fuller revelation of the price that was paid for their redemption, and the power that was provided for them to be saved, sanctified, strengthened and sustained. Observing Holy Week reminds, refines, refreshes and releases the hearts and minds of those redeemed and raised up in Christ.

HOW DO WE OBSERVE HOLY WEEK?

In observing Holy Week, we walk through each day of Christ's journey that resulted in His suffering, death, burial and resurrection as recorded in the Scriptures. Through commentary and prayers of dedication and consecration, we prepare our hearts to commemorate and celebrate the victory of the Lord Jesus, our Savior and King. As observation leads to dedication and consecration, commemoration and celebration, we truly honor the life-changing events of Holy Week.



DAY ONE:

Sunday's Entrance and Exhultation

READ: MATTHEW 21:1-11

FOCUS: WELCOMING THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The people welcomed Him, echoing the words of Psalm 118:25-26: “Save now, I pray, O Lord; O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.” The word hosanna that they shouted, literally means, “save now!” The palm branches they waved and laid down in Jesus’ path represented divine triumph or victory. While their reception of Him as King would be temporary, this was a pivotal moment in human history, as the long-awaited Messiah and King had arrived. He was the One sent from God the Father to usher in a new age of salvation through a new covenant established by His death on the Cross.

While the throng in Jerusalem that day turned out to be fickle and weak, the same must not be said of us. We must steadfastly welcome the rule of King Jesus and the rules of His kingdom each and every day. We must shout His praise and show our passion for serving Him in all we say and all we do. We must lay down our lives before Him as we acknowledge Him as the Victor and the One who provides every victory.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, my Savior and King, I come to You with glad and glorious shouts of praise. I shout to You: ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna, in the highest heaven!’ You are my King, and I gladly welcome You to come and reign in my life every day. Without hesitation or reservation, I say, ‘Welcome, King Jesus, come and take Your rightful place on the throne of my life.’ In Your royal name I pray, Amen.”



DAY TWO:

Monday's Cleansing and Consecrating

READ: MATTHEW 21:12-17

FOCUS: CLEANSING THE TEMPLE OF OUR LIVES

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DAY THREE:

Tuesday's Teaching and Testing

READ: MATTHEW 21:23-27; 22:15-46

FOCUS: DECLARING, DEFINING AND DEFENDING TRUTH

On Tuesday, Jesus again entered the temple and began teaching. The chief priests, elders, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees and scribes confronted Him one by one, challenging His authority and His teachings. They sought to test Him and trap Him in His words. But they didn't stand a chance. Through His union with the Father, His being led by the Spirit and His knowledge of the Scriptures, He passed every test and escaped every trap. By the time He was finished, they were out of answers and out of attacks. They examined the Lamb of God from every angle, trying to find faults and flaws in Him. But He came through unblemished, undefiled and untouched.

Jesus was able to declare, define and defend the truth against every test and every trap of the religious leaders. We must follow in His steps and imitate His pattern of teaching truth unto triumph. We must be clear and compelling in our speaking the truth of God's Word. We must always be ready to show compassion and care to those who are genuine seekers of truth. And we must always be ready to resist those who are trying to keep others from knowing the truth that can set them free. This is what Jesus modeled, and it must be the model we follow.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, Living Word of Truth, I see how You declared, defined and defended God's eternal truth. I see how You passed every test and escaped every trap by the Word and the Spirit. My desire is to follow Your example and be a speaker of biblical truth in a clear and compelling way. Give me Your love to communicate with compassion and care to those who are humbly seeking the truth. And give me the courage to stand up against anyone or anything that seeks to keep precious people from hearing Your liberating truth. In Your true and trustworthy name, Amen.”

X DAY FOUR:

Wednesday's Plotting and Planning

READ: MATTHEW 26:3-5

FOCUS: TRUSTING THAT GOD SEES HIDDEN PLOTS

On Wednesday, sometimes called “Silent Wednesday,” many believe that this may have been the day when Jesus’ opponents plotted to kill Him. While the Bible doesn’t explicitly say this, it makes sense that this could have happened on the heels of Him defeating them roundly on Tuesday. The enemies of Christ were evil men—resisting God’s promptings and yielding to Satan’s power and plans. They thought their plotting and planning would lead to His utter destruction, when in fact it led to a dynamic deliverance for all who put faith in the crucified and resurrected Savior.

As for us, we are often unaware of the hidden plots of hell and schemes of man to discourage, defeat, discredit and destroy us. This can produce fear of the unknown and unrevealed. But while it might be hidden from us, it is not hidden from God. God sees it all. God knows it all. And God is working in all for our good. The enemies of Christ Jesus thought their plots would take Him out. But all it did was raise Him up in vindication and exaltation. And so it is for us. What the devil plots for evil, God will turn around for our good.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, my Refuge and Strength, I thank You that what is hidden from me is openly manifested before You. Thank You that I don’t need to fear the plots of hell and schemes of man. For You are working all things together for my good. You will bring everything into the light in the fullness of time. I trust that whatever the enemy of my soul has plotted for my demise, You will turn around for my deliverance. In Your sovereign name I pray, Amen.”



DAY FIVE:

Thursday's Communion and Commandment

READ: MATTHEW 26:17-35; JOHN 13:1-15, 34

FOCUS: FELLOWSHIPING WITH CHRIST AND FOLLOWING HIS EXAMPLE

On Thursday, Jesus shared His final Passover meal with His disciples and instituted what we call the Lord's Supper. Thursday is called Maundy Thursday, which comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, where we get the word "mandate," which also means a "royal command." This is a reference to Jesus' command to "wash one another's feet," following His example of serving sacrificially, and from John 13:34, to "love one another as I have loved you." This is also called the "New Commandment." During supper, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to His disciples. He told them that it represented His body—offered for them that they might have fellowship and oneness with Him. Then He took the cup of wine, representing the blood of the Passover lamb, and had them drink. He told them that it represented redemption's price that would be paid through His blood to forgive sins and open the door to reconciliation and fellowship with God. While they didn't fully understand His words on that Maundy Thursday, they would eventually both understand as well as live out these words in loving devotion.

As we who follow Jesus gather to partake of the Lord's Supper, we remind ourselves of His body and blood—the means by which we have fellowship with Christ and with one another. We remember His words and His works, which reveal the meaning of the Communion elements and remind us of the ministry He fulfilled in laying down His life in saving servanthood. We follow His example of humbly serving one another with the "basin and the towel," choosing to love one another as He has loved us. In this, we obey His royal command in rich communion with Christ and His Church.

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, my Passover Lamb, I come to You, acknowledging that by Your body and Your blood I have fellowship and forgiveness forever. I choose to receive Your means for cleansing, consecration and communion through Your life laid down in sacrifice and servanthood. And I choose to release Your ministry of "washing feet," as I love the people of God as You have loved me—fully and faithfully. In Your loving and living name, Amen."

† DAY SIX:

Friday's Dishonor and Death

READ: MATTHEW 27:32-61

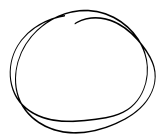
FOCUS: IDENTIFYING WITH CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE

On Friday, after a sham trial, Jesus was condemned to death and was crucified, a common means of execution by the Romans. Because the Sinless Son died in the place of sinful people, the Friday of Holy Week is an important time of remembering and reflecting on the incredible price that was paid to redeem lost and broken humanity. Christians have therefore traditionally referred to Friday as “holy” or “good.” On that day, Jesus was tortured by being scourged almost to death by the Romans. He was taunted by the soldiers and the crowds, and He was tempted to call on God and come down from the cross that He had been nailed to. Moreover, the sin of the entire world was placed upon Him. No man in history has ever suffered and sacrificed so much. But through it all, He paid it all. His dishonor became man’s dignity. His suffering became man’s salvation. His humiliation became man’s exaltation. His death became man’s deliverance. His blood became man’s birthright.

On this Good Friday, let us look to the Cross and marvel at the Man who made atonement to save mankind. Let us intently consider the price that was paid and the power that was provided to liberate bound and broken people. Let us rejoice in the work of the Son which qualified people to become adopted and accepted sons and daughters of God the Father. As we consider so great a salvation, let us identify with Christ’s suffering and sacrifice. Let us rejoice in the blessings He provides, while being responsible to follow His example, as we lay our lives down to suffer, sacrifice and serve for His glory. Let His cross become our crown—today and always.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, my Suffering Savior, I come to You on this Good Friday with a heart filled with gratitude for so great a salvation. Because of Your suffering and sacrifice on that day so many years ago, I have been approved, accepted and adopted into God’s forever family. I have stepped out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of the Son. I have spiritual fullness, fellowship and freedom because of You, my King. The penalty, power, guilt, shame and stain of sin are paid, broken and banished forever. Help me, this day, to identify with Your suffering and sacrifice as one who lays their life down for Your glory and for the good of others. In Your saving name, Amen.”



DAY SEVEN:

Saturday's Sabbath and Silence

READ: MATTHEW 27:62-66

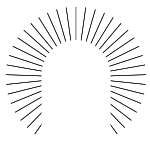
FOCUS: HANGING ONTO HOPE WHEN ALL SEEMS HOPELESS

On Saturday, the Sabbath Day, Jesus' body lay in a tomb. Because of previous remarks by Jesus that He would rise again, the religious leaders set a guard over the tomb. For Jesus' disciples, everything seemed silent and hopeless. Even though Jesus had promised that after three days He would rise from the dead, it just didn't seem possible. Their reason for hope had been nailed to a cross. Their rabbi and teacher had been killed. He had been taken down from the Cross and buried in a tomb. Their grief was great. Their hearts were broken. Their faith was dead. Their hope was gone. But what they didn't realize was that the spirit of Jesus had descended into the lower parts of earth. Out of their view, the Lord of Life was preaching good news to Old Testament saints. He was letting them know that He was the One they were hoping for. He was securing the keys to death, hell and the grave, removing from Satan every vestige of power and authority over mankind. Rather than weeping, they should have been waiting. Waiting for the reemergence of their Lord and King. They weren't. But the following day, their sorrow would be turned to joy and their depression to delight. They would learn to trust their Savior's words even when all seemed hopeless. And so should we.

So, what about us? Are we willing to hang on to hope when all seems hopeless? Because if we are, we are going to discover that silence for the moment is only a pause that leads to the fulfillment of God's promise. Even if we lose hope temporarily, if we will hang onto hope ultimately, we will be rewarded with resurrection life. We can be assured that Jesus is always coming back and coming forth for us. Don't lose hope. Jesus will be coming back and coming through for you.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, my Haven of Hope, I come to You when things seem silent and without the promise of possibilities for my tomorrows. I look to You and live for You, believing that what seems dead and done, is, in fact, awake and alive in You. I choose to live in faith, believing that what seems hopeless is always hopeful because of Your great power to bring life out of death and light out of darkness. In Your life-giving name, Amen.”



DAY EIGHT:

Sunday's Resurrection and Revelation

READ: MATTHEW 28:1-10

FOCUS: RECEIVING AND RECOGNIZING THE RISEN CHRIST

On Sunday, the greatest day in the history of mankind, Jesus emerged from the tomb alive and, other than the wounds in His hands and side, in a body that was supernaturally healed and whole. His resurrection proclaimed salvation and the forgiveness of sins. His resurrection proclaimed the eventual end of death for all who put their faith in Him. And His resurrection promised that everyone and everything found in Him would eventually be made eternally new.

Those who came to the tomb found it empty, and found Jesus alive and well. They received their risen Savior and recognized Him for who He was and what He had done. They knew Him and made Him known to all they encountered.

We must receive and recognize the risen Christ for all He is and all He has done. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the firm foundation of our faith. We must rejoice in the revelation of the Living Lord Jesus and reveal Him to a world that needs to have their eyes opened to see Him and seek Him. For when we reveal and release the resurrected Son and Savior, we show our fidelity and share our faith with a world that needs to be transformed from death to life.

Prayer

“Lord Jesus, my Living Lord, I celebrate Your resurrection as the foundation of my faith and the force of my witness of You in the earth. Because You live, I live in You. Because You live, all can live in You. Help me, I pray, to be a faithful witness of Your victory over the grave and Your provision of salvation for all people. My risen King, I love You and commit to live to reveal You to a world in need of Your love and life. In Your risen name, Amen.”

