

# The Crucifixion<sup>1</sup> Foretold<sup>2</sup>



SABBATH—APRIL 30

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Mark 7:24–9:13.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples. He said, ‘If anyone wants to come after me, he must say no to himself. He must pick up his cross and follow me’ ” (Mark 8:34, NIV).

**BORN TO DIE.** People have argued about Jesus of Nazareth throughout history. But one fact remains. Both believers and doubters agree that Jesus died on a Roman cross. But Christians never try to deny or make excuses for the cross. They are not embarrassed by the cross. Rather, they have the attitude<sup>3</sup> of Paul: “I never want to brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through that cross the ways of the world have been crucified as far as I am concerned. And I have been crucified as far as the ways of the world are concerned” (Galatians 6:14, NIV).

For Paul and the other believers, the Cross is about more than Jesus being unfairly crucified. The Cross is part of God's plan to save the world. The Cross is necessary, and impossible to avoid. But it is His dying that will solve forever the problem of sin and evil.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Why did Jesus talk to the Syrophenician<sup>4</sup> woman the way He did? How did Jesus work to remove prejudice<sup>5</sup> from His disciples? How many choices does Jesus give us about who He really is? What does it mean to take up the cross?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 7.

<sup>1</sup>crucifixion—Jesus' death on the cross.

<sup>2</sup>foretold—to tell in advance; to announce before something happens.

<sup>3</sup>attitude—how you feel and think about something; the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of a person or group of people.

<sup>4</sup>Syrophenician—from Syrophenicia. Syrophenicia is a country north of Israel; its people were a mix of Syrian and Phoenician.

<sup>5</sup>prejudice—judgment based on feelings without knowing facts; prejudged feelings against a certain group of people because of their color or strange beliefs.

SUNDAY—MAY 1

### DOGS EAT THE CRUMBS (Mark 7:24-30).

The walk to Syrophenicia was one of the longest walks Jesus took. This walk brought Him to the farthest point northward. Even here, far from Capernaum and Galilee, Jesus' presence was not a secret. News about Him had reached into this place, where an unnamed Gentile<sup>6</sup> woman hoped Jesus could heal her demon-possessed daughter.

**Study the event<sup>7</sup> of the Syrophenician woman. Mark 7:24-30. Compare<sup>8</sup> Matthew 15:21-28. Why did Jesus speak to her the way He did? What shows that the woman did not think Jesus was insulting her?**



Jesus' words about the dogs seemed to slight<sup>9</sup> her. But the woman must have noticed something in His manner<sup>10</sup> and tone of voice. So she understood that Jesus did not mean to call her a dog. She knew He was doing what the Jews usually do to teach someone a lesson. Maybe the saddest part of this whole story in Matthew is the disciples' attitude. They should have been eager for everyone to have a blessing from Jesus. Instead, they worked against Jesus' purposes. They let their own prejudice of God, truth, and faith work against God, truth, and faith. In this way, what Jesus said to the woman probably was more for His disciples' profit than for hers.

**So many problems had been working against this woman. She had so many reasons to not have hope. But Jesus said to her: " 'Woman, you have great faith!' " (Matthew 15:28, NIV). As we look at this woman, she showed many great elements (important parts) of faith, even though so many things were working against her. What things were working against her? What elements of faith did she show anyway? How can we show these elements of faith in our own lives when we face discouraging things?**

<sup>6</sup>Gentile—a person who is not a Jew.

<sup>7</sup>event—thing that happened.

<sup>8</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

<sup>9</sup>slight—to treat a person as if that person had no value; insult.

<sup>10</sup>manner—way of doing something.

MONDAY—MAY 2

### JESUS FEEDS 4,000 PEOPLE (Mark 8:1-21).

Earlier, Jesus had fed 5,000 people in Galilee. Now He does almost the same thing in the Decapolis area. Decapolis is east of the Sea of Galilee. Notice the attitude of the disciples. They saw Jesus feed 5,000 people months before. But they again question His ability to care for these people.

“Again the disciples showed their unbelief. At Bethsaida (the first feeding) they had seen how, with Jesus’ blessing, their little food had fed the crowd. But they did not now bring forward all that they had. They did not trust His power to make it enough to feed the hungry crowd. The people He had fed at Bethsaida were Jews. But these people were Gentiles and heathen.<sup>11</sup> Jewish prejudice was still strong in the hearts of the disciples.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 405.

**The disciples were surprised Jesus could supply the bread. But they were more surprised that He would feed Gentiles and heathens. What does their reaction teach us about the power of prejudice to destroy the gospel’s influence in our lives? (Also see yesterday’s lesson.)**

Probably one of the saddest things in Christian history has been the

racial prejudice from people who claimed Jesus as their Lord and Master. We see how evil prejudice is when even churchgoers hate certain groups of people. Even worse, people have tried to use the Bible to support their prejudice. This is very harmful to the Christian faith. The Bible is really meant to remove prejudice from our hearts.

**Below are a few verses about prejudice. Using these verses, write a paragraph explaining the Bible’s message on prejudice. How well do you, or your church, measure up to what the Bible says about prejudice? What might you need to do to change? Genesis 18:18; Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11:17; Luke 6:27; Acts 10:28; Acts 17:26; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 3:11; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 14:6.**

TUESDAY—MAY 3

### THE GREATEST QUESTION (Mark 8:27-30).

“Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, ‘Who do people say I am?’

“They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Still others say one of the prophets.’

“‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’

“Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ.’

<sup>11</sup>heathen—nonbelievers.

“Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him” (Mark 8:27-30, NIV).

**Why is Jesus’ question, “ ‘Who do you say I am?’ ” (Mark 8:29) the most important question in the world? What is wrong with the following answers to this question? (1) Jesus was just a good man; (2) Jesus was just a wonderful teacher; (3) Jesus was just the greatest Person who ever lived. Read Matthew 18:20; Matthew 26:64; John 8:58; John 10:30; John 11:25, 26; John 14:6.**

Notice how C. S. Lewis deals with all these answers:

“I am trying here to stop anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus: ‘I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral<sup>12</sup> teacher. But I do not accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was just a man and who said the things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be crazy. . . . Or he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. This man was, and is, the Son of God. Or he is a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool. You can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon. Or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any foolishness about Jesus’ being just a great human

teacher. He has not left that for us to judge.”—Adapted from C. S. Lewis, *Mere [Simple] Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1996), p. 56.

In Mark 8:29, the word *you* is a strong word in the language the verse was first written in. The meaning: But you—who do you say I am? Jesus asked the question in such a way that the disciples were forced to give a personal answer. The same question comes to every person today with the same force. The question challenges us to search our hearts and to give an honest answer. Everyone’s eternal<sup>13</sup> future depends on the answer he or she gives. The same as Peter, if we accept Jesus as the Messiah, our lives cannot stay the same.

**Many people speak highly of Jesus and even agree that He was God in some way. But they argue that all religions are equal. They will argue with people who say that Jesus is the only way to salvation. How can we help such people wrestle with the question, Who do you say I am?**

WEDNESDAY—MAY 4

**THE CROSS OF JESUS AND OUR CROSS (MARK 8:31–9:1).**

**The idea of Jesus suffering and dying is still basic to our faith. But imagine you are Peter or one of the other disciples, who has a different**

<sup>12</sup>moral—having to do with knowing what is right and wrong.

<sup>13</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

**idea of what Jesus the Messiah should do. How did Peter and the disciples act toward the idea that Jesus must suffer? Mark 8:31-33. Why do you think they acted the way they did?**

“The disciples’ strong actions were not just a matter of the mind. They were not just a simple failure to understand what Jesus meant. The disciples did not want Jesus to suffer. That was because it is not popular thinking to follow a messiah who suffers instead of uses his power to gain victories. A messiah who suffers brings no praise and insults the pride of the natural person. From the human viewpoint, there seems no sense in the suffering and death of the Messiah. If it is God’s will that the Messiah should suffer, it might well be God’s will that the Messiah’s disciples should suffer in almost the same way. It is natural for people to avoid suffering. So the disciples’ strong actions toward Jesus’ prophecy show even more clearly the truth about themselves. Their minds and wills were influenced by the way of this world, of the natural human ‘they think as men think (Mark 8:33).’—Adapted from D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark* (England: Penguin Books, Ltd. 1963), p. 226.

**What does it mean to take up the cross and follow Jesus? What does Jesus mean when He says**

**we need to deny self and lose our lives? Why do most of us find these ideas unpleasant?**

**How have you been crucified with Christ? If someone were to look at your life, what examples would they see that you have been crucified with Christ? If they saw no examples, what would that tell you about your walk with Christ?**



**Have you been crucified with Christ?**

**THURSDAY—MAY 5**

**THE TRANSFIGURATION<sup>14</sup>**

**(Mark 9:2-13).**

**Read Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36. Who was involved in this wonderful event? Who profited from**

<sup>14</sup>transfiguration—showing Jesus’ glory; the change in the way Jesus looked while He was praying on the mountain.

**this event, and why? Why do you believe this event happened when it did?**



How wonderful that God said to the disciples, “This [Jesus] is my beloved Son: hear [listen to] him” (Mark 9:7). The disciples had so many reasons to believe in Jesus and His authority.<sup>15</sup> But they also had a hard time with Jesus saying people would leave Him and He was going to die (Mark 8:31-33). But God’s voice from heaven certainly gives the disciples more reason to really hear Jesus.

**Peter wrote about the Transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16-21. What point was Peter making by talking about the Transfiguration?**

The Transfiguration also was a blessing for Jesus. It showed Him how much God loved Him. He could think of God’s love for Him as He traveled to Jerusalem where He would

die. Three times God said Jesus was His Son (Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7; John 12:28). Each time was a time when Jesus, as a person, was to face a great test.

**No matter who we are, or where we are in our walk with Jesus, we all face moments of discouragement. What does it say to us that even Jesus was blessed by encouraging words? How have you profited from words of encouragement? If you know someone who is going through a hard time, what could you say to encourage him or her?**

#### FRIDAY—MAY 6

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, “Barriers [Walls] Broken Down,” “The True Sign,” “The Foreshadowing [Warning] of the Cross,” and “He Was Transfigured [Changed],” in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 399–403, 404–409, 410–418, 419–425.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The idea of belonging to a group is powerful. Human beings want to belong to groups. Unfortunately, it is natural to think that the group we belong to is better than all other groups. This thinking can lead to prejudice. Jesus’ earlier followers thought this way. We often think this way, too. What can we learn from Jesus that can help us not to be prejudiced against other groups?

<sup>15</sup>authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust; power.

2. Read from Tuesday's lesson the quote by C. S. Lewis. How can we use what Lewis said about Jesus to defend Ellen G. White's prophetic work? What claims did she make about herself? What are some of the wonderful things she claimed to have seen in vision? Why, then, would it be foolishness to say that she was just a good woman but had no prophetic gift?

**SUMMARY:** It is easier to believe in a messiah who will lead a victorious army and bring freedom and full stomachs than it is to believe in a messiah who is facing a cross. Jesus was not the messiah people were hoping for. His badge was a cross, not a crown.

He was God's Messiah for everybody, not just for the Jews. The disciples had much to learn. They also had to throw out many false ideas. We see Jesus patiently trying to help the disciples as the shadow of the Cross begins to appear.



His badge was a cross.