

The Passion Week



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 11:1-11, John 13:1-17, 15:9-17.*

Memory Text: “Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (*John 13:31*).

A museum in Rome displays what might be the earliest picture of the Crucifixion. Unfortunately, it is a caricature, graffiti sketched on a wall. It's a drawing of a man, with a donkey's head, stretched out on a cross. Before the cross another man stands, his arms lifted in adoration. Below the picture these words, in Latin, were scribbled: “Alexander worships God.”

Though both Jews and Christians had been accused of donkey worship (the exact origins of that accusation is unknown), the derogatory nature of the picture should help us understand the shame associated with the Cross, something not easy for us to appreciate. After all, we adore the Cross, we sing songs about it, we place it on our churches, and we write books extolling it. Yet, how much sense does it make to worship a Man executed as a criminal in the most shameful and barbaric manner?

The answer, of course, is that it makes a lot of sense, once you understand who that Man was and what His death meant for the world.

The Week at a Glance: Why did Jesus not stop the outpouring of support for Him during the triumphal entry? What was the attitude of a majority of Jews toward Jesus? What was the significance of the foot-washing ceremony?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 5.*

Outline of the Final Passover Week

About one-third of the material in the four Gospels deals explicitly with the final Passover week leading up to Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection. This material includes some parables of the kingdom and of future judgment.

Today's study presents a brief outline of the period often termed the Passion Week—from the Sunday or Monday prior to Christ's crucifixion to the following Sunday, when He was resurrected. In accordance with the Lord's original instructions, the Passover lamb was slain in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month (originally called *Abib* in Hebrew and later *Nisan*, which came in the early spring). (See *Exod. 12:1-6, 34:18, Esther 3:7*.)

Below is a quick outline of the high points:

Sunday (Nisan 9). The triumphal entry; Jesus' silent visit to the temple; and His return to Bethany.

Monday (Nisan 10). The fruitless fig tree cursed; second cleansing of the temple; Jesus heals the afflicted there; He returns to Bethany in the evening.

Tuesday (Nisan 11). Last day in the temple (Greek believers meet with Jesus in outer court); Jesus' last day of public teaching; woes against religious elite; retirement to Mount of Olives and discourse there on the Second Coming; Judas clinches betrayal bargain with priests that night.

Wednesday (Nisan 12). Jesus in quiet retirement with disciples.

Thursday (Nisan 13). Preparation for the Passover; the Lord's Supper; Judas's betrayal; Jesus' farewell discourse for disciples and high-priestly prayer; Gethsemane; His arrest. The events following the Lord's Supper were at sundown and afterwards; consequently, the day was now the fourteenth of Nisan, or Thursday night.

Friday (Nisan 14). Jesus led to Annas, then to Caiaphas, and then to Sanhedrin; Peter's denial; Jesus is brought to Pilate, then to Herod's palace, and back to Pilate. He is scourged, condemned, and crucified.

Carefully read John 15:9-17. Against the background of the Passion Week, Jesus focuses here on one point. What is it, why is it so appropriate (especially in light of the Cross), and what is the message for us? How can you make that point real in your own life?

Triumphal Entry; the Temple Cleansed

(Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-48).

Read the story of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem in **Matthew 21:1-11** (see also *Mark 11:7-11, Luke 19:29-40*). **What was so different about how He interacted with the people here as opposed to when He multiplied the fish and the loaves?** (*John 6:15*).

Throughout most of His ministry, Jesus kept a fairly low profile. He didn't encourage large demonstrations of fealty and loyalty. Knowing, as He did, the hatred and animosity of the leaders, He worked in a way that allowed Him to complete His work of healing, teaching, and preaching.

Now, however, He allowed this demonstration, knowing that it would lead Him to the cross. Plus, with such crowds mounting and the interest in Him growing into a fervor, many more would know of His death and resurrection than would have had He kept a low profile.

What did Jesus do the next day and with what results? *Matt. 21:12-16.*

During the triumphal entry, some in the crowds had shouted, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (*Luke 19:38*). Christ's response to the Pharisees in the next few verses showed that not only did He acknowledge these acclamations and praises, He affirmed them. Then, as the Davidic king, the son of David, He cleanses the temple, calling it "My house" (*Matt. 21:13*), and as its rightful owner, He exercised His divine authority over it.

Thus, between the triumphal entry, the cleansing of the temple, and His final return to the temple, where He is challenged by the leaders (*Matt. 21:23-27*), Jesus, in an undeniable manner, has openly shown His own authority before the people and the religious teachers. In His own merciful way, He has given them even more evidence of who He was (*see Matt. 21:15*). The question now for them is, How would they respond?

Some leaders rejected Jesus because His claims threatened their power, prestige, and authority. In what ways do the claims of Jesus threaten your own power, prestige, and authority? How do you respond to those threats?

Jesus and the Jews

Immediately after putting the religious leaders in a bind (*Matt. 21:23-27*), Jesus told a few parables about the fate of those who would reject Him (*vss. 28-46*). Interestingly enough, in Matthew 21:45, the chief priests and Pharisees believed that Jesus had spoken about them; that is, the chief priests and the Pharisees themselves as opposed to a majority of the Jewish people, who, themselves, seemed supportive of Jesus.

Look up the following texts. What do they say was the attitude of most of the people about Jesus during His ministry? *Matt. 26:3-5; Mark 14:1, 2; Luke 22:2; Luke 23:27, 28; John 11:48.*

According to these texts, many of the people supported Jesus, which is why the chief priests and rabbis were so fearful of Him. If Jesus were just some inconsequential preacher who had no following, the leaders wouldn't have had the attitude they had, so powerfully expressed in John 11:48, in which they said that if they let Jesus alone, "all men will believe on him." Obviously, there were many Jews who believed in Jesus already, and unless Jesus were stopped, many more would become believers.

Scholars have noted gross irregularities in the trial of Jesus. First, it was held at night, which, according to traditional Jewish practice, should not have happened, especially in a case involving a capital offense. The fact is that the leaders had to hold the trial as they did in order to keep it from the people.

Of course, there was a rabble that promoted His death, but because this was during the Passover, when many Jews had come from other countries, it's likely that these had never heard of Jesus or seen what He was like or what He had done. In Matthew 21:10, 11, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, some people asked, Who is this? The crowd answered them that it was Jesus. How could those people have not known? Possibly they were Jews who—coming from abroad (and were thus unaware of Jesus)—followed their leaders and called for His death. Once the truth about Jesus was known, many Jews became followers (*Acts 2:41; 21:20, 21*).

Clean Feet

After a day's interlude of quiet reflection with Jesus, the disciples made preparations for the Passover. Fully aware that He was the true Paschal Lamb who was to be sacrificed, Jesus wished to spend the few remaining peaceful hours with His disciples for their benefit. How moving are His words: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (*Luke 22:15*).

Read John 13:1-17. What was one of Christ's last acts before His atoning death? What was the significance of that act? What does it tell us about the character of God?

Just before the shame, the suffering, and the pain of the Cross, Jesus washes the feet of His own disciples! Here He is, God Himself, the One who made the worlds, washing the feet of His disciples? Only as we grasp who Jesus really is can we even begin to realize what an incredible act this was, what an incredible revelation of the character of our God. And, in its own indirect way, this act is a revelation about ourselves—we who, by nature, want to be served by others rather than to serve others. Christ's act wasn't a rebuke just to His disciples; it's a rebuke to us every time we're arrogant, proud, and selfish.

Besides giving His disciples a needed lesson in humility and servanthood, what theological lesson was Jesus teaching through the foot washing? *John 13:10*.

By saying that he or she who has been bathed doesn't need another full bath but merely needs his or her feet cleansed, Jesus was talking about what might be called postbaptismal sin. That is, those who have been baptized (bathed) don't need to be rebaptized after each sin. Foot washing itself can be a symbol of repentance, cleansing, and forgiveness.

Most people don't find foot washing pleasant (*which is why many churches don't practice it, despite Christ's command in John 13:14, 15*). Yet, it wasn't meant to be pleasant. Why not? What other unpleasant thing does God admonish us to do?

Gethsemane

Jesus entered Gethsemane with His three most intimate disciples and bade them pray and watch, lest they enter into temptation. What petition did He then plead before the Father three times? What did the cup signify? What paramount principle brought resolution to Christ's heart? *Matt. 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-44.*

Even as Christ was pleading for strength to save lost and guilty humanity, a maelstrom of treason and treachery against Him was gathering momentum. Satan strove with all his cunning to discourage Him, Judas was leading a band of religious mobsters to arrest the Savior, and the disciples slumbered.

Christ's heart was so deeply pierced with grief that He was already shedding His blood for the sins of humanity, even before the spikes of Golgotha bit into His flesh. He drank the gall of our guilt and shame that He might give us the nectar of His innocence and mercy. For us He drained the cup of wrath to offer in its place the cup of reconciliation.

What made Christ's suffering in Gethsemane almost unendurable? *2 Cor. 5:21 (see also Isa. 53:10, Zech. 13:7).*

"As the Son of God bowed in the attitude of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, the agony of His spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law. Here was the scene of temptation. The divine light of God was receding from His vision, and He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. In His soul anguish He lay prostrate on the cold earth. He was realizing His Father's frown. He had taken the cup of suffering from the lips of guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and in its place give to man the cup of blessing. The wrath that would have fallen upon man was now falling upon Christ. It was here that the mysterious cup trembled in His hand."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 203.

Why do you think that Jesus, who knew all along that He had to die this death (John 12:27), would, nevertheless, ask that the cup be taken from Him? What does this tell us about His human nature? What comfort can we draw from the fact that even the Lord Himself, in His humanity, had such battles?

Further Study: See also Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685–694; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 200–205.

“Never before in His earthly life had Jesus permitted such a demonstration. He clearly foresaw the result. It would bring Him to the cross. But it was His purpose . . . to call attention to the sacrifice that was to crown His mission to a fallen world. While the people were assembling at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, He, the anti-typical Lamb, by a voluntary act set Himself apart as an oblation. It would be needful for His church in all succeeding ages to make His death for the sins of the world a subject of deep thought and study. Every fact connected with it should be verified beyond a doubt. It was necessary, then, that the eyes of all people should now be directed to Him; the events which preceded His great sacrifice must be such as to call attention to the sacrifice itself. After such a demonstration as that attending His entry into Jerusalem, all eyes would follow His rapid progress to the final scene.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 571.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why do the Gospels focus so much on the last week of Christ’s life? Why is that so important for our understanding of the plan of salvation?
- 2 Read the quote from Ellen G. White taken from Thursday’s study. Write, in your own words, what she is saying. In class on Sabbath, let different people read what they wrote. What is her essential message, and why is that so crucial to all that we believe as Seventh-day Adventists? In what ways do these words catch the essence of the gospel?
- 3 If the disciples had imbibed more of Christ’s sacrificial spirit while He was with them, how would that have affected their ministry, their influence, and their capacity to appreciate His character and mission? What is the application for us today?

The Six-Week Journey

by Carlos Sebit Abraham

Carlos is a lay evangelist in southern Sudan. He and fellow evangelists work amid incredible challenges in a region that has been wracked by war for 40 years. In spite of the difficulties, Carlos loves teaching eager people about God. But with no ordained pastors in the area where Carlos works, believers must wait months—even years—to be baptized.

Some of Carlos's converts had waited five years for baptism. Carlos decided to take those who could walk on a seven-day journey to the border of Sudan, where they could be baptized. Seven believers joined Carlos on the journey to the border. The trip was filled with dangers, from snakes and soldiers. They ate what they could find along the way and often went hours without water. At night they slept in the bush.

The group stopped to rest in a village where some fellow believers lived. They stayed three weeks, visiting the people and inviting them to accept Jesus. Some 50 people accepted Jesus and began preparing for baptism. Seven believers in the village who had been waiting for baptism joined Carlos on his journey to the border.

After walking a total of seven days, the group arrived at the town on the border where a pastor lived. They found the pastor and arranged for the baptism. It was a joyful day.

The group remained with the pastor just one day before starting toward home. They stopped for a week in another village, where they held a week-long evangelistic series and helped the new believers build a hut-church. In all, Carlos and his pilgrims had been gone six weeks.

Today lay evangelists such as Carlos can baptize their converts, so the believers do not have to wait months or years to be baptized. But lay workers and pastors in Sudan continue to face many challenges in their

work—they lack basic tools and supplies to assist their work. Pray for the faithful believers and their spiritual leaders in southern Sudan.



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AD



The Voice of Hope to an Entire Nation

During the recent political turmoil in Haiti, the Adventist radio station stayed on the air. Located in the capital city, the station could have been shut down. But unlike the other stations in the city, the Voice of Hope continued to broadcast its message of hope and peace to a troubled nation.

Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help replace broken or outmoded equipment and add transmitters and repeaters that will enable "the Voice of Hope" to broadcast across the country, to everyone who wants to hear it.

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on March 26 supports projects in the Inter-American Division.