

A Lake Murray Devotional Guide





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The Purpose of This Guide

Jesus Christ is the central figure of all human history. No one before or after him has ever come close to duplicating his importance to humanity or his influence on the world. This is because Jesus is "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14), the Creator God clothed in human form. The writer of Hebrews identifies Jesus as "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" and informs us that "he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is fully God and fully man, come to reconcile the Father to his wayward children.

Because Jesus is the central figure of human history, he is also the glorious focal point of all the Scriptures. The Old Testament points towards him, the Gospels tell us about him, and the New Testament points us back to him. Jesus himself says that the Scriptures, "bear witness about me" (John 5:39) and John reminds his readers, "these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Jesus is the central figure of history and the Scriptures. No week is more important in the life of Jesus than the last week of his earthly ministry. Beginning on Palm Sunday with his triumphant ride into Jerusalem, the final week of Jesus' life are the most dramatic, hope-filled, important days in history. Included in the final days of Jesus are the accounts of his final teachings to his closest friends, his brutal crucifixion at the hands of the Roman Empire, and his victorious resurrection from the dead on the first day of the new week.

This devotional guide has been written as a helpful resource for you to walk with Jesus in the Scriptures through the final days of his earthly ministry. We have chosen to use the Gospel of Mark to guide the events of the week. Each daily devotion will come from Mark's Gospel and will correspond to an event that occurs during Holy Week. Each day will have a reading from the text, a corresponding devotional, and three personal questions for reflection.

It is our recommendation that you read Mark, Chapters 11-16, in its entirety throughout the week, as this devotional guide is intended as a supplemental resource to your personal time in the God's Word.

A full reading of Jesus' final week will help draw out, in greater detail, much of what this guide intends to show. It is our sincere hope that this study will draw your eyes, mind, and heart to the beauty in the brutality of the cross and hope in the glory of the resurrection. May our hearts be refreshed as we reflect upon the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord while we eagerly await the day of his return.

In Christ,

The Pastors of Lake Murray Baptist Church

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The Week that Changed the World The Last Days of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark Passion Week 2017

Palm Sunday: It All Started with a Parade			
The Triumphal Entry (Mark 11:1-11)			
Monday: The Tree & The Temple Pt. I			
Jesus Curses the Fig Tree			
& Cleanses the Temple (Mark 11:12-18)			
Tuesday: The Tree & The Temple Pt. II			
A Lesson about the Fig Tree			
& Controversy in the Temple (Mark 11:20-33)			
Wednesday: The Sobering Story of Judas Iscariot (Who Betrayed Him)			
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Friday: The Tree & The Temple Revisited			
The Trial, Crucifixion, and Burial of Jesus (Mark 15:33-41)			
Saturday:			
Where did Jesus go on Saturday?			
Easter Sunday: (Mark 16:1-8)			
"He is not here, He is Risen."			

"It All Started with a Parade"



When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover he declared his Messianic identity. Jesus' ride down the Mount of Olives into the Holy City on the back of a colt fulfilled the words spoken by the prophet Zechariah that the future King of Israel would enter Jerusalem in this manner: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech 9:9). Throughout the gospel of Mark, Jesus repeatedly commanded his disciples to keep quiet about his identity as the Christ (Mark 1:43,3:12,5:43,7:36,8:30). But now, in this act of prophetic fulfillment, Jesus publicly identified himself as Israel's long awaited Messiah.

The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem took place at the beginning of the Passover week. The Passover was the annual Jewish feast celebrating the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. Jews from all over the country (and surrounding nations) gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. The crowd that gathered around Jesus recognized the significance of this moment and rightly interpreted what his actions were meant to convey. The response of the crowd was one of joyful expectancy. The crowd lined the road with their cloaks and palm branches as a sign of the kingship of Jesus (see 2 Kings 9:13) and in their exuberance, they cried out 'Hosanna!' (which translated means "Save!" or "Please Save!"). This small band of Galilean Jews celebrated Jesus the King, who they believed had come to overthrow the Roman oppression and establish a new kingdom of God in Israel.

The crowds believed the long-awaited Messiah would be a political and military ruler who would again deliver God's people from the hand of a foreign power. But the purpose of the coming of Jesus was far greater. Jesus, the true Messiah, had come not to conquer, but to suffer. Because of sin, there would be no Savior without suffering and no Christ without a cross. Indeed, Jesus had come to deliver his people, but from a far more insidious enemy than the Romans. Jesus had come to Jerusalem to deliver God's people from sin and death. This work of redemption could only be accomplished through his own suffering and death, which were awaiting him in Jerusalem.

Jesus' ride into the city was a direct challenge to the rulers and authorities of this world. His triumphal entry in Jerusalem set the stage for the week that would change the world. The cries of 'Hosanna!' would soon be drowned out by shouts of 'Crucify!' and by weeks end the Son of God would lay dead in a borrowed tomb, slain for the sins of the world. This was no ordinary parade because this was no ordinary King. No parade before or since has ever witnessed the coronation of a greater King and no King has ever sacrificed more of himself for the sake of His people.

As we begin this week, may our eyes be drawn afresh to the beauty of our suffering Savior, and may our hearts joyfully cry out "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Questions for Reflection:		
1.	What is one truth that stood out to you in the verses?	
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2.	The Jews celebrating Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem mistakenly believed his arrival signified a coming kingdom of political and military might. How was the actual mission of Jesus much more important than political or military power?	
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3.	We are often guilty of making undue assumptions about God's purpose in his workings. What steps can you take today to clarify the mission of God in your own heart and mind? What resources has God made available to us to understand who he is and what he is doing?	
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"The Tree & The Temple Pt. 1"



On Monday, Jesus and his disciples set out from Bethany bound for Jerusalem. Bethany was only a short distance from the city and while in Bethany it is likely that Jesus stayed in the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. On their way to Jerusalem, Jesus saw a fig tree in the distance and approached it with the intention of eating from its fruit. Upon closer inspection however, the fig tree had no figs. John recorded the reason for the barren tree was that it was not the season for figs, which made Jesus' response somewhat confusing. Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree and said "May no one eat of your fruit ever again." This response seemed odd. Why was Jesus cursing the fig tree?

A clue to the answer is found in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. The Lord sent Jeremiah to the nation of Judah with a word of indictment against her people. The people of Judah had been living deceitfully, breaking the commands of God, and rejecting God's word. However, in the midst of all their sin, they continued to "worship" God by going to the Temple and performing the rituals. Jeremiah pleaded with the people to amend their ways before the Lord rose up against them in judgment. In Jeremiah chapter eight, the Lord gave perhaps his most stinging indictment of the people's empty faith when he compared the people to fruitless trees, "When I would gather them,' declares the Lord, 'there were no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, even the leaves have withered, and what I gave them passed away from them'" (Jeremiah 8:13). The Lord compared Judah to a tree that bore no fruit, and eventually allowed the nation to be carried away into exile by the nation of Babylon.

It seemed as if the same fate had befallen the people of God in the time of Jesus. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree had little to do with the tree itself, and everything to do with what the tree represented. In his book, *The Final Days of Jesus*, Andreas Kostenberger helps us to understand this point. He writes, "Jesus's cursing of the fig tree symbolizes the judgment of God upon a nation that has the outward appearance of life but fails to bear fruit." (Pg. 35) Jesus is pronouncing God's coming judgment against the nation of Israel for her failure to bear fruit in keeping with righteousness.

In the very next passage, Mark gave an example of this reality, as Jesus cleared the temple of

the money-changers who preyed on those coming to worship. Here, in the temple, men profited on the poor and pious who had come to offer sacrifices to God. The clearing of the temple by Jesus was a direct challenge to the leadership of the temple and the wickedness being condoned within by the priests and Pharisees.

Jesus reminded the people that the Lord was not impressed by external acts of piety if they were not matched by an internal motivation for His glory. "For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Questions for Reflection:
1. What is one truth that stood out to you in the verses?
2. Read Matthew 7:15-20 & Galatians 5:16-25. How does Jesus say his followers will be recognized? Using the passage in Galatians as a guide, compare and contrast good and bad fruit.
3. At the foundation of a good tree that bears much fruit is a healthy root system. How does whether or not we are 'rooted in Christ' affect our ability to bear good fruit? Can someone who is not in Christ bear good fruit? Why or why not?

"The Tree & The Temple Pt. 2"



On Tuesday, Jesus and his disciples set out again from their lodging in Bethany with the temple in Jerusalem as their destination. As they passed the fig tree from the day before, the disciples were astounded to see the tree had withered and died. Peter called out to Jesus, reminding him of his cursing the fig tree some twenty-four hours earlier, and Jesus took the opportunity to teach his disciples about faith, prayer, and power of God.

Jesus first response to his disciples was a command to, "have faith in God." The faith that comes from God is a faith that results in fruitfulness, and is a direct contrast to the "faith" of the Pharisees and religious leaders which resulted in fruitlessness. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree was an indictment against the empty faith of the religious rulers in Jerusalem. This command to "have faith in God" was intended to remind his disciples of both the true source and sole object of their faith.

Jesus went on to teach the disciples about the connection between faith and prayer. The words of Jesus seem particularly stunning, "Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24). We have to be careful to not misinterpret Jesus' words. Is Jesus telling his disciples that if they just pray and believe they can receive whatever they want? Many people have interpreted this verse as a "name it and claim it" theology, to the detriment of their faith. So what is Jesus saying?

The *ESV Bible Commentary* is particularly helpful here: God delights to "give good things to those who ask him" (Matt 7:11) and is capable of granting any prayer, though we must ask with godly motives (James 4:3) and according to God's will (1 John 5:14). Those who trust God for the right things in the right way can have confidence that God "will supply every need...according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19) knowing that he will work "all things together for good" and will "graciously give us all things" (Rom 8:28,32)... We must always have the same perspective that Jesus had – that is, confidence in God's power but also submission to his will: "Father all things are possible for you...yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36) (ESV Study Bible pg. 1919)

Our prayers to God are an outworking of our faith in God. As we pray we both petition the Father to work in our lives while submitting to his will for our lives. Jesus perfectly embodied and exemplified this for us, as he prayed in faith and power for the will of God to be done, he commanded his followers to do likewise. In doing so, they "bear much fruit and so prove to be [Jesus'] disciples" (John 15:8).

uestions for Reflection:
1. What is one truth that stood out to you in the verses?
2. How might one misinterpret Jesus' words "whatever you ask in prayer, believe the you have received it, and it will be yours"? Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, ho do we correctly interpret these words?
3. How does faith inform our prayers? Is the consistent practice of prayer a necessa
component to a strong faith? Why or why not?

"The Sobering Story of Judas Iscariot (Who Betrayed Him)"



Mark ominously opened Chapter 14 with his description of the hidden plot by the chief priests and scribes to arrest and kill Jesus. Mark wrote that the leaders feared an uproar from the people, with whom Jesus was quite popular, so they kept their plans a secret and waited for an opportunity to present itself. The opportunity came in the person of Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples, who had access to the movements and whereabouts of Jesus. Judas agreed to betray Jesus, his friend and teacher, into the hands of the chief priests for a moderate sum of thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26:15).

What led Judas to this act of betrayal? How could someone who had walked with, listened to, and witnessed the work of Jesus for the last three years so callously betray him? Judas betrayed Jesus because, although he had witnessed the miracles of Jesus and heard his teachings, his heart had never been changed by his relationship to the Messiah. Judas "heard but did not understand" he had "seen but did not perceive" and his "heart had grown dull" (Matt 13:14-15). What can we learn from Judas' betrayal that would help us in our own walk with Jesus?

First, we see that proximity to Jesus does not equal faithfulness to Jesus. Judas was one of the twelve disciples. There are few people on earth who had Judas's front-row seat to everything Jesus ever said or did. Despite Judas's eyewitness experiences, he did not believe. On the surface, Judas seemed to be a faithful follower of Jesus, but underneath his heart had never been changed. He had not truly been "born again" (John 3:3) and his act of betrayal only goes to prove his fraudulence. As followers of Jesus, we must ask ourselves whether our hearts have ever been truly changed by the gospel. Just because you read the Bible, attend a church, or go on a mission trip does not mean that you have a real, personal, saving relationship with Jesus. The story of Judas ought to cause us to pause and evaluate whether or not our hearts have truly been changed.

Second, we see the dangerous consequences of dissatisfaction. Although the root of Judas's betrayal was unbelief, the causes of his betrayal were perhaps varied. For instance, Judas, like the crowd on Sunday, may have come to realize that Jesus' mission was not to establish a new

kingdom for Israel but instead to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin. This realization may have acted as fuel for Judas's disappointment or dissatisfaction with Jesus as the Messiah, which may have led him to betray Jesus. The Gospel writers do not record exactly what reason(s) led Judas to betray Jesus, (Luke records in Acts 1:20 that Judas's betrayal was a prophetic ful-fillment of Psalm 69:25) but we can perhaps speculate, with a degree of certainty, that Judas had grown dissatisfied in some regard with his teacher. Dissatisfaction with God is a dangerous place to be. Certainly there will be times in the life of a believer where he or she may wrestle with disappointment or confusion over what God has allowed to transpire, but we must be careful never to allow disappointment in our hearts to grow into bitterness, entitlement, or dissatisfaction in our heavenly Father. Judas's disappointment led to disbelief which resulted in disaster (Acts 1:18-19).

Finally, we are reminded that only the one "who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt 24:13). Judas started out well, but his "faith" did not endure, thereby proving that his "faith" was no faith at all. Judas was not the only disciple to betray Jesus, all of the disciples fled at his arrest, but all the other disciples repented and returned to the Lord after their failures. Judas showed some worldly remorse for his actions (Matt 27:3-5) but nowhere do we see that he repented of his sin and believed. Judas would have done well to listen to the parable of the sower, for in the life of Judas we see a heart which "hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for awhile and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matt 13:20-21).

Questions for Reflection:

1. What is one truth that stood out to you in the verses?

2. What are some of the dangers of a growing disappointment with God? Although there will undoubtedly be times where we are frustrated or confused, what might a consistently disappointed heart reveal about our relationship with the Father?

3. Why is the example of Judas a sober warning to those who call themselves Christians? How can we know for certain that our hearts have truly been transformed by the gospel?

"The Bread of Affliction & The Fruit of the Vine"



Jesus and his disciples gathered on Thursday evening in Jerusalem to partake of the Passover meal together. Jesus knew that the chief priests and scribes were seeking to arrest him, so he quietly sent two of his disciples into the city to make preparations for the meal (Mark 11:12-16). The Passover meal commemorated the work of the Lord in delivering and redeeming the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt.

In Exodus chapters eleven and twelve, God came to Moses, promising one final plague of judgment against Pharaoh and Egypt. The Lord told Moses that he would move throughout Egypt and "every firstborn of the land of Egypt will die" (Ex 11:5). In his goodness, the Lord provided a way of salvation from His judgment for the people of Israel. The people of Israel were to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and paint the blood of the lamb on the door-posts of their homes. If they obeyed this command, the judgment of God would 'pass over' the homes whose doorposts were painted with blood. On the night of the first Passover in Egypt, the people were given specific instructions on how to prepare and partake of the Passover meal. Later that night, the Lord passed through Egypt, taking the life of all the firstborn, and sparing the lives of those covered by the blood of the Lamb. This act of God compelled Pharaoh to release the nation of Israel from their bondage of slavery in Egypt.

This is the act of God that Jesus and his disciples gathered together to celebrate on Thursday evening. As they ate the meal, Jesus took the bread on the table and blessed it. He then broke it and gave some to each disciple saying "Take; this is my body" (Mark 14:22). In doing so, Jesus was foreshadowing the suffering he was about to endure at his crucifixion. The body of Jesus would literally be broken as he was crushed under the weight of sin. Then Jesus took the cup and said to his disciples, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:24-25). Tim Keller helps us to understand the gravity of Jesus' words:

"Jesus' words mean that as a result of his substitutionary sacrifice there is now a new covenant between God and us. And the basis of this relationship is Jesus' own blood: 'my blood of the covenant.' When he announces he will not eat or drink until he meets us in the kingdom of God, Jesus is promising that he is unconditionally committed to us: 'I am going to bring you into the Father's arms. I'm going to bring you to the feast of the King'... With these simple gestures of holding up the bread and the wine, with the simple words 'This is my body...this is my blood,' Jesus is saying that all the earlier deliverances, the earlier sacrifices, the lambs at Passover, were pointing to himself." (Kings Cross, pgs. 166-167)

Jesus is the true Lamb of God. Unlike the lambs sacrificed at Passover year after year, Jesus' sacrifice was once and for all time. If anyone will be saved from the judgment of God against sin, they must first come under the shed blood of the crucified Messiah. Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty of our sin so that we might be free from our enslavement to sin. Jesus fulfills the law for us, by bearing the penalty the law demanded of our sin. We can now walk in obedience to the commands of God, not so that we will be accepted by God, but because through Christ we are adopted into the family of God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What is one truth that stood out to you in the verses?

 Read Exodus 11 & 12. How does the Passover Lamb operate as a foreshadowing of Jesus' work on the cross? Can you identify other places in the Old Testament that point to the coming salvation through the death of Christ? (Hint: Genesis 3:14-15, Exodus 14, Numbers 21:4-9)

3. The old covenant of God was established and upheld by the law. Who establishes and upholds the New Covenant? In the New Covenant, what happens to the law?

"The Tree & The Temple Revisited"



The crucifixion of Jesus is the greatest miscarriage of justice the world has ever experienced. The sinless Son of God was falsely tried, savagely beaten, and publicly executed for crimes he had not committed. Throughout the entire ordeal, Jesus did not seek to defend his innocence or deliver himself from the hands of his oppressors. When he was delivered over to Pilate, who had the authority to free him, he remained largely silent, only affirming a claim Pilate made of him. Jesus could have saved himself from the hands of the Chief Priests and Romans with one word from his mouth (Matt 26:53), yet he remained quiet, "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth" (Isa 53:7). Why? Because Jesus knew that this was the Father's will of salvation for those who would believe (John 1:12).

At the sixth hour (approximately 12:00PM), Mark recorded that a deep darkness fell over the entire nation of Israel until the ninth hour (3:00PM). At the time when the sun ought to shine most brightly in the sky, darkness covered the land. "At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabacthani?' which means, 'My God, My God, why have you for-saken me" (Mark 15:34)? Jesus was quoting the opening line of Psalm 22, a psalm of lament for the servant of God suffering unjustly at the hands of the wicked. Those around the cross mistakenly believed he was calling for Elijah (in Aramaic, the word for God ('Eli) and the name Elijah ('Eliyahu) sound very similar). However, Jesus was not calling for the prophet, he was crying out to his Father, who for the only time in all of eternity had forsaken his Son. Jesus bore the penalty of our sin and in the process was cut off from the Father's presence. For Jesus, all of the physical torment of the cross paled in comparison to the agony of being disconnected from the Father. In his most desperate hour, why would the Father choose to forsake his Son? The answer is profound. On the cross, Jesus bore the judgment of God for our sin.

Commenting on this, Tim Keller writes: "Jesus, the Maker of the world was being unmade. Why? Jesus was experiencing our judgment day 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' It wasn't a rhetorical question. And the answer is: For you, for me, for us. Jesus was forsaken by God so that we would never have to be. The judgment that should have fallen on us fell instead on Jesus." (Kings Cross, pg. 202) When Jesus breathed his last, Mark recorded a miraculous occurrence in the temple complex. Separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was a massive curtain, some sixty feet high and thirty feet wide. The purpose of the curtain was to separate the people from the presence of God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would go behind the curtain to offer a sacrifice for sin. When Jesus died, the curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom, as a supernatural symbol of the access the people of God now had to the presence of God through Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross established our standing before the Father. "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:19-20). He had secured for us an eternal hope and ushered us into the presence of God.

At the cross we see the total submission of Jesus to the will of the Father clearly displayed. Although Jesus was fully God, he "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:6-8). Jesus bore the full wrath of God against sin on the cross, taking the judgment and punishment for our sin upon himself. Through this act of love and obedience, he tore down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14) "in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him" (Col 1:22).

Questions for Reflection:

1. What is one truth that stood out to you in the verses?

2. Why was Jesus forsaken by the Father on the cross? What response should this truth illicit from our hearts and lives?

3. What was the significance of the tearing of the curtain in the temple? What does this tell us about the accomplishment of Jesus' death? Read Ephesians 2:8-9. How do we receive this gift of salvation offered to us in Christ?

"The Day the Earth Stood Still (Intermission)"

Question: Where did Jesus go on Saturday?

The Gospel writers have little to say regarding the events of the Saturday of Holy Week. Matthew records that on Saturday, the Chief Priests and Pharisee's went to Pilate asking that he take greater security measures to guard the tomb in case the disciples sought to steal the body, but Mark, Luke, and John leave the events of the day untouched. Much speculation has arisen throughout church history regarding the events of Saturday, particularly surrounding the notion that Jesus descended into hell. With his body laying still in the tomb, where did Jesus go on Saturday?

The idea that Jesus 'descended into hell' does not originate in the Bible. Instead it finds its origin in the Apostle's Creed. The Apostle's Creed developed around the beginning of the third century and continued to develop until the middle of the eighth century. Unlike other Creeds and Confessions of the church, the Apostle's Creed was not written or approved by any one church council at any specific time. The name 'Apostle's Creed' was given to it sometime in the sixth century, based on what is most certainly legend not truth, that each of the twelve Apostle's crucifixion. This was widely believed by the Catholic Church, who in the early centuries taught that Christ had descended into hell to preach the gospel to Old Testament Patriarchs and other virtuous characters. Some of the early Church fathers also taught that Jesus descended into hell on Saturday to complete his suffering for sin. Although this idea has some historical support, the question is whether or not the Scriptures support this idea.

Those who have sought to make a biblical case for Jesus' descent into hell have primarily turned to five passages of scripture: Acts 2:27, Romans 10:6-7, Ephesians 4:8-9, 1 Peter 3:18-20, and 1 Peter 4:6. All of these texts seem to indicate, somewhat loosely, that Jesus spent time preaching in hell on the day between his crucifixion and resurrection. Unfortunately, we do not have the space to unpack each passage here, but for a further exposition of these passages, Wayne Grudem's article "*He Did Not Descend Into Hell: A Plea for Following the Scripture rather than the Apostles' Creed*" is exceptionally helpful. Grudem summarizes, "people on all sides of the question of whether Christ actually descended into hell should be able to agree at least that the idea of Christ's 'descent into hell' is not taught clearly or explicitly in any passage of Scripture." (Pg. 10)

On the contrary, there seems to be a great deal of evidence from the Scriptures to support the belief that Jesus' spirit did not descend into hell but rather ascended to the presence of the Father. In Luke 24, Jesus tells the the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 24:43). Likewise, both statements Jesus makes from the cross "It is finished" (John 19:30) and "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46) indicate an end to the sufferings of Jesus. Again, Grudem is helpful with these passages: "These texts indicate, then, that Christ in his death experienced the same thing believers in this present age experience when they die: his dead body remained on earth and was buried (as ours will be), but his spirit (or soul) passed immediately into the presence of God in heaven (just as ours will). Then on the first Easter morning, Christ's spirit was reunited with his body and he was raised from the dead – just as Christians who have died will (when Christ returns) be reunited to their bodies and raised in their perfect resurrection bodies to new life" (Grudem, Systematic Theology, pg. 593).

Although there are believers in Christ on both sides of the question "Where did Jesus go on Saturday?" it seems that there is more scriptural support for the notion that he ascended to the Father until his resurrection. The reality that Jesus has gone before us in death and resurrection should work to assuage our fear of death and to welcome the day that we are made like him in our resurrection.

Questions for Reflection:		
1. Based on the readings, what happened to Jesus on Saturday?		
2. Where does the notion that Jesus descended into hell come from? Why is it important for us to test all claims against the Scriptures?		
3. What encouragement can we draw from Jesus' death and resurrection?		

"The Return of the King"



Early in the morning on Sunday, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, went to the tomb of Jesus. They had with them spices prepared to anoint the body of Jesus. As they walked they discussed how they would roll away the stone at the entrance of the tomb to gain access to the body. However, upon their arrival at the tomb, they found that the stone had already been rolled away. Entering the tomb, they were met by two angels who delivered to them the news that we still celebrate this morning, "He has risen; he is not here" (Mark 16:6).

The resurrection of Jesus is the hope of the individual believer. The resurrection of Jesus brings life - eternal life, to those who believe.

"For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Romans 5:6-10).

The resurrection of Jesus is also the foundation of the Church. The Church is founded and built upon the bodily resurrection of our Savior.

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Finally, the resurrection of Jesus is the only way of salvation for the world. Jesus' death is the only way for sin to be forgiven and his resurrection is the only way for life to be found.

"For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:16-22).

The resurrection of Jesus is the most glorious truth in all the world. The truth of the resurrection holds the hope of the believer, establishes the foundation of the church, and provides the way of salvation to the world. On Easter, we celebrate the redemption of God's creation, through the life, death, and resurrection of God's Son, for the glory of God's name among the nations. Let us celebrate today that though we were once far off, we have now been "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13), "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

Appendix & Helpful Resources

This guide would not be possible without the help of some significant resources on the last week of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. Particularly helpful was Timothy Keller's book *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (Dutton Publishers, 2011) which was recently re-released under the title *Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* (Penguin Books, 2013). Keller walks through the Gospel of Mark and shows how Jesus is the true King who has come to save his people. We could not more highly recommend that you pick up this book.

Other helpful resources to this guide included:

Akin, Daniel L, David Platt, Daniel L Akin, and Tony Merida. 2014. Exalting Jesus in Mark.

Grudem, Wayne A. 1994. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

Holcomb, Justin S. 2014. Know the Creeds and Councils.

Keller, Timothy. 2013. Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God. New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. 2014. The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Week of the Most Important Person Who Ever Lived.

Sproul, R. C. 2011. Mark: St. Andrews Expositional Commentary. First Edition. Orlando, Fla: Reformation Trust Publishing.

Wiersbe, Warren W. 1987. Be Diligent. Reprint edition. Wheaton, Ill: David C. Cook.



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