

# MONDAY

## *Day of Restoration*

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### INTRODUCTION: “PASSION WEEK”

The week starting with Palm Sunday and running until Resurrection Sunday is called “Holy Week” or “Passion Week”. It records the last week that Jesus spent alive before his crucifixion and his resurrection.

The word “Passion” comes from the noun translation of the verb “pascho” which appears in Acts 1:3, where Jesus showed “himself alive after his “passion” by many infallible proofs.” The word passion means “to suffer,” so the “Passion” refers to Christ’s sufferings and death. Mel Gibson produced a film with the title, *The Passion*. The film focussed on the events surrounding Jesus last hours leading up to his crucifixion.

“Passion Week” is also traditionally known as “Holy Week”, “Greater Week” (in reference to God’s mighty acts during the week), or “Paschal Week” (with focus on the Resurrection). Initially, only the last two days of the week, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, were observed. Later, Maundy Thursday along with Wednesday were added, as were the other days of the week, by mid-fourth century. Passion Week is full of symbolism. Many of the prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament were all fulfilled by one person – Jesus Christ in this week.

It is called “Holy Week” also because believers around the world take time to reflect upon their walk with God. It’s a time to change pace and our schedules and to free up time to spend with God. These readings have been put together to help believers “Journey with Jesus” in the events of the week.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY WEEK

If we assume that Jesus lived to be around 33 years old, that’s about 12045 days, and that Holy Week is just 8 days (if we include Palm Sunday), that would mean that on average 30% of all that the gospel material is dedicate to just a half of a half of one percentage in the timeline of the life of Jesus. For so much of each gospel to be dedicated to just 8 days shows how significant this week’s events are. Here is a list of the amount of material in each gospel that is dedicated to just this week:

- In Matthew’s Gospel, Chapters 21-28, almost one-third.
- In Mark’s Gospel, Chapters 11-16, more than one third
- In Luke’s Gospel, from Chapter 19:28 – 24, almost 20%
- In John’s Gospel, from Chapter 11:55-20:30, just over 40%

Jesus said that the hour had now come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:23). Everything in his life was leading up to this week’s events.

## **MONDAY – 4 DAYS TO HIS CRUCIFIXION - DAY OF RESTORATION OF PRAYER & PRAISE & WORSHIP**

The Monday following Palm Sunday can be considered to be The Day of Restoration of Prayer & Worship because when Jesus cleared the temple, people could then go pray there, and worship could take place the way that it was intended to. It was now 4 days to Jesus crucifixion.

### **THE EVENING OF PALM SUNDAY**

Palm Sunday ended with Jesus leaving Jerusalem to return to Bethany.

- Mark 11:11 “ ...since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Monday starts with Jesus travelling out early from Bethany back to Jerusalem. The whole day was spent in Jerusalem, particularly in the temple area.

### **JESUS CURSE A FIG TREE (MARK 11:12-14)**

Early the next morning, Jesus headed out for Jerusalem. Note that he was hungry. We assume that he and the disciples did not have breakfast. We know that it was Jesus' habit to spend long hours in prayer, especially during important events in his life. It may be that he skipped breakfast to pray that day.

- Mar 11:12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Mar 11:13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Mar 11:14 Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree if it was not the right season for figs? The answer to this question can be determined by studying the characteristics of fig trees. The fruit of the fig tree generally appears before the leaves, and, because the fruit is green it blends in with the leaves right up until it is almost ripe. Therefore, when Jesus and His disciples saw from a distance that the tree had leaves, they would have expected it to also have fruit on it even though it was earlier in the season than what would be normal for a fig tree to be bearing fruit. Also, each tree would often produce two to three crops of figs each season. There would be an early crop in the spring followed by one or two later crops. In some parts of Israel, depending on climate and conditions, it was also possible that a tree might produce fruit ten out of twelve months.

This also explains why Jesus and His disciples would be looking for fruit on the fig tree even if it was not in the main growing season. The fact that the tree already had leaves on it even though it was at a higher elevation around Jerusalem, and therefore would have been outside the normal season for figs, would have seemed to be a good indication that there would also be fruit on it. To a hungry person the sign of those green leaves would have been a welcome sight – it would have meant that there was fruit to be had. However, as Jesus approached the tree, there were only leaves, but no fruit.

Was there any significance to this event, or was Jesus just “hangry” (angry because he was hungry)? This event was important and there is a lot more symbolism in this simple event than meets the eye. The presence of a fruitful fig tree was considered to be a symbol of blessing and prosperity for the nation of Israel. Likewise, the absence or death of a fig tree would symbolize judgment and rejection.

Symbolically, the unfruitful fig tree represented the spiritual deadness of Israel, who while very religious outwardly with all the sacrifices and ceremonies, were spiritually barren because of their sins. By cursing the fig tree, causing it to wither and die, Jesus was pronouncing His coming judgment of Israel and demonstrating His power to carry it out.

It also teaches the principle that religious profession and observance are not enough to guarantee salvation, unless there is the fruit of genuine salvation evidenced in the life of the person. James would later echo this truth when he wrote that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). The lesson of the fig tree is that we should bear spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23), not just give an appearance of religiosity. God judges fruitlessness, and expects that those who have a relationship with Him will “bear much fruit” (John 15:5-8). With the cursing of the fig tree, He was symbolically denouncing Israel as a nation and, in a sense, even denouncing unfruitful “Christians” (that is, people who profess to be Christian but have no evidence of a relationship with Christ).

John the Baptist refused to baptise anyone who claimed they wanted to follow God, but who did not actually produce the “fruit of repentance” in their lives (Matthew 3:8). Jesus warned the Jews that the custodianship of the Kingdom of God was going to be taken away from the them and given to people “who would produce its fruit” (Matthew 21:43). In Matthew’s account, Jesus makes this pronouncement on the same day that he curses the fig tree!

## **MANY WHO CLAIM TO BE CHRISTIANS HAVE LEAVES BUT NO FRUIT**

The bearing of fruit is the real test as to whether a person has truly handed their lives over to God. If the Holy Spirit is in control of a person’s life, he will naturally flow through that person’s life. The fruits of the Holy Spirit will be produced in his or her life (Galatians 5:22-23).

People who claim to be Christians but who have not actually changed their ways have been described as being like that fig tree - they have leaves and from the outside they look like a healthy tree, but in their lives there is no fruit. They look like Christians, but their lives don’t show any evidence of having turned from their sins to Jesus. The apostle Paul warned that people would be like this in the last days:

- “But mark this ... in the last days. ... people will have a form of godliness but deny its power. Have nothing to do with them” 2 Timothy 3:1-5

## **THE KEY TO BEARING ABUNDANT FRUIT IS REGULAR PRUNING (JOHN 15:1-8)**

In John 15:1-8 Jesus taught that the only way to keep producing fruit was to allow God to regular prune our lives. This means that we should allow God to remove sin in our lives on a regular basis. Our part is to repent – to change our lifestyle. A lot of that “pruning” takes place when we spend time in God’s word each day and his word shows us right from wrong. As we make those changes, the Holy Spirit empowers us to keep those commitments to

obey God. Then instead of bearing the fruit of disobedience, we start to produce a good crop of good deeds.

- Joh 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Joh 15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. Joh 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Joh 15:4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. Joh 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. Joh 15:6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. Joh 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. Joh 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. – John 15:1-8

## **JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE – MATTHEW 21:12-13**

The next major significant event of the day is Jesus cleaning the temple.

- Mar 11:15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, Mar 11:16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Mar 11:17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"
- Matthew 21:12-17 Matthew's account of the clearing of the temple

Why was Jesus so concerned with the temple? There was little in his ministry that moved the normally self-controlled Jesus to 'holy anger' than what he saw in the temple. This was the second time that Jesus overturned the money-changers tables. The first time was in his first year of ministry (John 2:13-17).

The Jewish law required people who would observe the Passover to sacrifice animals on the eve of the Passover. However, since many people lived far away, instead of trying to travel all the way to Jerusalem with their animals, they were allowed to take money along instead. Then they would use the money to buy an animal in Jerusalem. That's why there were moneychangers. People would exchange their money for the animals they needed for the sacrifice. The problem was that the moneychangers charged far more for the animals than they were worth. In this way they were actually making a large profit and taking advantage of the pilgrims in Jerusalem. What was worse, was that people were using the temple courts as stables to store the animals! That why Jesus said they were turning God's temple into a den of robbers. They were robbing people by making large profits, and they were doing it in God's temple. So, Jesus overthrew the tables and cleared the temple area.

## **THE TEMPLE RESTORED TO ITS PURPOSES – PRAISE, PRAYER & HEALING COULD TAKE PLACE**

Once the temple was cleared, people returned. The children started the worship session and many who needed healing returned to the temple and Jesus started to heal them.

- Mat 21:14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. Mat 21:15 But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. Mat 21:16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"

The prophet Isaiah tells that the temple was supposed to be a place where people could meet with God.

- Isa 56:6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—Isa 56:7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." Isa 56:8 The Sovereign LORD declares— he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

Even non-Jews (foreigners) would be able to approach God at the temple. The temple was divided into separate areas. One such area was 'the court of the Gentiles'. This place was designated for non-Jews who had converted to Judaism. But the religious leaders allowed it to be used to store the animals that were being sold. The poor non-Jews had no say in the matter. Many of them would also have travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover, but instead of being able to meet with God at the temple, they were kicked out and their section of the temple was used to house animals.

### **GOD'S NEW "TEMPLE" – EVERY BELIEVER'S BODY & LIFESTYLE**

We know that the temple of the Jews was permanently destroyed in 70AD. It has never been rebuilt. The main reason for this is that God has changed the location of the temple. Under the New Covenant, the temple of God is our bodies. The dwelling place of the presence of God (the Holy Spirit) is the body of every born-again believer:

- 1Co 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 1Co 3:17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

We don't need to go to a temple to meet with God. We don't limit our worship or prayer to a geographical location. Because God lives within us, we can pray to him and worship him any place and at any time.

However, the same principles that applied to the physical temple in Jerusalem apply to our lives too. Jesus first had to cleanse the temple so that it could serve its purpose. Similarly, if we are going to pray to God and worship him, there will probably be things in our lives that we will need to remove first.

In Jesus day the temple was being used to make money under the guise of helping people worship by supplying them the animals they would need. Sometimes we can pursue our careers and studies to such an extent that there is very little time and energy left to pray, let alone worship. We seem to get distracted so easily by things that seem to be legitimate responsibilities. But the same effect happens to our lives that happened to the temple: prayer and worship seldom takes place.

I wonder if we allowed Jesus to come and cleanse his temple – our bodies and our lives – what he would remove that is currently stopping us from praying and worshipping as we should. There is always something that competes with prayer and worship – have you found that? This week being Holy Week, it's a good time to slow down and even stop our busyness. Let's take time to put everything on hold and then focus on worship and prayer again. Then when these things have been put back into their rightful places, we can carry on with the other issues of life.

The temple was supposed to be a holy place. It had been specially consecrated to God to be used for spiritual purposes. Our **lives** too are supposed to be holy. We're supposed to be set apart to do that which non-believers do not do. We are a people called to worship God; people who spend time in his presence. Our **time** is holy and supposed to be used for holy purposes. Let's allow Jesus to come and clear his temple so that worship and time in God's presence in prayer can be restored.

## **WHEN WORSHIP AND PRAYER IS RESTORED, THEN POWER WILL RETURN**

We note also that once the temple had been cleansed that the lame and blind were brought to Jesus and he healed them. Miracles took place when worship and prayer were restored. Lack of prayer and lack of worship in our lives means a lack of power too. As we start the restoration of prayer and worship in our lives, we will also find that God's Holy Spirit returns and then there will be power for His miracles in and through our lives. When we remove busyness & distractions, and restore prayer and praise & worship, then our faith is reignited. With strong faith, our spiritual gifts can also be activated and we can accomplish supernatural things in God's power.

## **JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES RETURN TO BETHANY (MARK 11:19)**

After the events of the day, Jesus and the disciples returned to Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Bethany was about two miles east of Jerusalem. During the eventful week, he seems to have spent his nights there, until Thursday

- “When evening came, they went out of the city. – Mark 11:19

Day 2 of Holy Week was finished.