

# The Eclipse<sup>1</sup> of the Son: The Daily Progression of Darkness during Holy Week

This is a daily devotional guide to be read on the days of Holy Week



*“When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land... Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.” Mark 15:33...37*

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<sup>1</sup>**Eclipse:** the total or partial obscuring of one heavenly body by another.”

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. <https://eclipse.aas.org/eclipse-america/how-why>



## Daily Scripture Selections

### SUNDAY:

Mark 11:1-11 - Palm Sunday: Pilgrims and Passion

### MONDAY:

Mark 11:12-25. - Temple/Fig Tree

### TUESDAY

Mark 11:27-12:44; Temple Controversies;  
Mark 13:1-37; Olivet Discourse

### WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY

Plotting, Matthew 26:1-2; Anointing Matthew 26:6-13; Betraying  
Matthew 26:14-16 (see also John 12:6; Luke 22:3; Matthew 16:23)

### MAUNDY THURSDAY

The Passover and Gethsemane  
Mark 14:12-17; John 13:1-5; John 13:12-14; John 14:1-6; John  
15:1-5; John 15:18-20; John 16:5-7; John 17:1-5; John 18:1; Matthew  
26:37-39; Luke 22:43-44; Matthew 26:45-50

### FRIDAY/SATURDAY

Jewish Trials: John 18:12-14,19-24; Lk. 22:54, 63-65; Lk.  
22:66-71  
Roman Trials: Lk. 23:1-5; Lk. 23:6-12; Lk. 23:13-25; Lk.  
23:26-49; Lk. 23:50-54

### SUNDAY The Son is Risen

John 20:1-21:2 The Early morning Son-Rise &  
The Son-Light Appearances Luke 24:1-12

## Introduction



My earliest memory of being afraid of the dark was when I was three years old and living in the coal mining town of Central City, PA. We lived in an apartment above Bowden's hardware store on Sunset Avenue. It was during the days of WWII and there were regular blackout drills that took place when all the electric in the town was cut so no lights could be seen from enemy airplanes in the skies. When the siren sounded we would all go to the living room. I was always quick to sit next to my grandmother on the couch, because she carried a flashlight that she hid under her apron. She would turn it on and off to keep me from being afraid. It doesn't take much light to dispel the darkness as many people know by using a 7w light bulb for a nightlight, or cracking a Venetian blind to allow the outside lights to shine into a dark room.

Light and darkness are twin theme throughout all of scripture beginning with the third verse of the first chapter of Genesis. At the very center of Christianity is the key 'I am' statement by Jesus, "*I am the light of the world.*" The Gospel of John has many teachings regarding the theme of light and darkness. In John 1:4-5 we read, "*4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness **did not overcome it.***" That is an important belief when it comes to understanding Jesus' death on the cross. Our theme verse Mark 15:33...37 on the cover, "*When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land... then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.*" Jesus died, and the power of light which he created in the beginning, was revealed as a cosmic grief covering the land with darkness.

But we who know the rest of the story, know that the darkness over Calvary's hillside was not the end, but more like an eclipse. It was a darkness that was a threat throughout his three years of teaching, and the days of Holy Week illustrate the progression of that darkness as it slowly eclipsed his life on the cross.

During Holy Week we will walk where Jesus walked and examine each of those days of his Passion, and allow them to speak to our own lives.

Because the Gospel writer's timelines are not identical we have chosen those which illustrate our theme. Their differences do not reflect theological disagreement anymore than the two accounts of creation in Genesis 1&2. The authors chose their order to reflect their purpose for writing, and the same is true for the order in this study.

*William H. Griffith*



## **Palm/Passion Sunday**

### **Mark 11:1-11 - An Unforgettable Parade**

Parallel Scriptures Matthew 21:1-11 ; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-18

We are so familiar with the Palm Sunday story that we would assume everyone reading this devotional could describe the event of that day. Many of us will even be able to recall the flannel-graph board cutout pictures the teacher used when we were children. We heard it as a happy story of a parade where crowds of people were cheering for Jesus.

You have surely been to a parade? When you go to a parade, there is excitement in the air. Crowds of people bunch together to see the parade. People shout and wave when they are at a parade. Children climb on parents' shoulders to get a better glimpse of the people in the parade. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, people honored him by putting clothes and big palm leaves on the ground. They praised God and welcomed him by shouting "Hosanna," which means "save us." They believed that God sent Jesus to help them. They believed that Jesus was the king for whom they had been waiting. The crowd knew who Jesus was, and they went wild. They yelled and waved their branches and threw their coats on the ground. It was a time to honor and praise Jesus. It was a time to be glad, for God's servant, Jesus, had come.

Have you ever imagined what may have been going through the minds of the Disciples and Jesus? What thoughts and emotions might we imagine were experienced by the twelve Disciples? Did the images of the Palm waving Passover Pilgrims and the joyful emotions of the day, create bittersweet conflicting thoughts for the Disciples? Would they have wondered about Jesus' words of warning Luke records in 9:44, "*Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.*" It is this warning given to the disciples that defines the importance of the day, also as a day of Passion. The day is also called Passion Sunday because the Church begins, on this day, to make the sufferings of Jesus her primary focus. Beginning today we focus intensely on his last days, his execution, his burial, and finally, with the Great Vigil, his resurrection.

Each day as we walk with him, we can imagine the slow movement of darkness that overshadows the events that took place.

**Prayer:** 'Gracious God, we are thankful for this day which fulfills the long promised Messiah's arrival spoken of by the prophets. We are aware of where the week is heading and prayer for a deeper appreciation of what Jesus accomplish for us. Amen



## **MONDAY: Fig Tree and Temple - Mark 11:12-25**

Parallel Scriptures Matthew 21:20-22; Luke 19:45-46

We may view the scriptures for today as a textural sandwich which has the first and last emphasis on the Fig tree, with the 'meat of the matter' the Temple, in the middle. The Temple was always the center of Jewish life, and what Jesus saw going on in the Temple was related to the fig tree.

Bible scholars think this incident happened at Solomon's Porch, the outermost part of the East side of the Temple. Archaeologists have found a Greek inscription dated to 20 B.C. from the Court of the Gentiles, which warns non-Jews not to go any further into the Temple, on fear of death. It was in this Court where the moneychangers and sellers of doves were providing a needed service, but they were stealing by extracting unlawful interest and excessive prices for items sold to the poor. Jesus is quoting Jeremiah 7:11, "*Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?*"

In Mark 11:13, Mark mentions that the figs are out of season which appears to be Micah's point regarding God's condemnation of Israel in Micah 7:1 with what Jesus was doing. In the Micah passage God can scarcely find any righteous men anywhere in the land; this was what Jesus was facing as well. A connection between Jesus and Micah 7:1 makes Jesus' actions more understandable. We may rightly assume Jesus was acting in a way that draws a parallel between his own judgment in the Temple and God's judgment on Jerusalem. The point becomes more about the fact that Jesus is judging Israel. The Jewish leaders are like those Micah describes who 'all lie in wait for blood.' This is not the only time Jesus used the fig tree to teach a lesson. Luke 13:6-9 includes his parable on the fig tree. The parable is the story about God planting a fig tree in his vineyard, which is Israel, and Jesus is the vineyard keeper. Three years pass and God wanted to lay the axe to the tree because it has not been bearing fruit. Messiah Jesus had provided all that the tree needed for three years, but Israel's leaders were not bearing fruit, and Jesus wanted more time but God wanted it cut done.

When Jesus saw that his father's house was no longer being a house of prayer for the nations he too knew it was time to act. His cleansing of the Temple was his response, and his experience with the fig tree became the action parable for the disciples to begin to see what was taking place. It was this bold action and judgment on Israel's leaders that angered them. That anger became part of the growing darkness and their determination to kill him.

Jesus, like so many, came to the temple place looking for nourishment, to replenish himself and finds that it has produced no fruit. As we enter into Holy Week let this be a reminder to us, to inspect our own hearts and minds. Are we living out the life that God has called us? Or will those who come to us looking to be nourished and replenished find that we have no fruit to give to those who are hungry.

**Prayer:** Help me Lord, to grow in grace and in a knowledge of the Lord Jesus, so that the graces that were seen throughout His life may develop within me. Amen



## **TUESDAY Temple Controversies; Olivet Discourse** Mark 11:27-12:44; Mark 13:1-37

Parallel Scriptures Matthew 21:23-23:39; Luke 20:1-21:4

Parallel Scriptures Matthew 24:1-25:46; Luke 21:5-36

We have all had exceptionally busy days. I recall when I was a pastor certain days of my daytime calendar were jammed packed with multiple demands upon my time. A 6:30 am hospital visit to St. Vincent's hospital for an open heart surgery on a church member; a 10 am funeral & dinner with the family; a drive back to Indianapolis for a denominational committee meeting; stopping on the way back to see persons in the Columbus hospital; then dinner at home with the family; a 7 pm church council meeting followed by a marriage counseling session.

When I read what Jesus' schedule was on the Tuesday of Holy Week, I'm embarrassed to have ever thought, or complained about a busy schedule. The bulk of the material is so great that I will not attempt any detailed comments of each event, but will try to connect the dots.

It appears that on Tuesday morning there was an investigation counsel appointed to begin the vetting process regarding Jesus' assault on the Temple. The committee members were the top brass 'oversight' committee of Temple activities; the Chief Priest, Pharisees, and Scribes. Jesus had obviously not applied for a permit to carry out his demonstration, and they wanted to know where he got his authority. Jesus confounded their thinking by giving them a power-point visual of the Old Testament vineyard where Israel's leadership kept killing the prophets God had chosen.

Their response was to pass the buck to another committee including the Herodians who were good at winning debates, and had the support of King Herod. They didn't issue subpoenas for Jesus to appear for questioning, they went to him using their arrival as a surprise to trap him. Jesus addressed their complaints based on their positions of power. Jesus was very direct in telling them they were 'barking up the wrong tree'. Then they debated concerning the genealogy of the Messiah to David which they misunderstood, while the crowds, were very understanding. Jesus told the crowds you can't trust what the scribes tell you, because they don't practice what they preach. Then Jesus opened a can of worms by talking about the destruction of the Temple. That may have been the final evidence they needed in their files that encouraged bringing charges against him.

We can see by Tuesday the forecast of darkness coming on the Eclipse radar.

**Prayer** Gracious God, we thank you for Messiah-Jesus who daily endured hostility by being obedient. Help us to be persons whose word can be trusted and who are faithful and obedient followers. Amen



### **WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY Plotting, Anointing, Betraying**

**Plotting**, Matthew 26:1-2; **Anointing** Matthew 26:6-13; **Betraying** Matthew 26:14-16  
(see also John 12:6; Luke 22:3; Matthew 16:23)

Scripture Parallels Matthew 26:3-5; Mark 14:1-2

Scripture Parallels Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-8

Attempting to discern the events for Wednesday is not as clear as the other days. Identifying the connections of both Wednesday/Thursday in our header for this session recognizes this difficulty. The Bible doesn't say what the Lord did on the Wednesday of Passion Week. Scholars speculate that after two exhausting days in Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples spent this day resting in Bethany in anticipation of Passover.

However, we may have some clues by comparing the stories in the Gospel. It is possible to assume certain events took place **prior to Thursday**, and came **after Tuesday**, where we concluded our last devotional. Luke 21:37-38, *"Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called."* The following verse (38) would be referring to Wednesday morning *"38 And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple."* Matthew 26:1-2 provide us a clue as to what he was teaching in the Temple every morning. *"When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, 2 You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."* Jesus appears to be summarizing his major concern that his followers would be prepared for what was about to happen. The necessity for being watchful is evident in the Parable of the Faithful or Unfaithful slave...The parable of the Ten Bridesmaids and their oil lamps...The parable of the buried Talent...The judgment of the "sheep and goat" nations. (See Matthew 25)

Jesus was aware of the gathering storm, and he was trying to have the disciples wrap their minds around what he was going to experience. He continually repeats the warning of being arrested and crucified. Maybe he did this because the disciples were not showing signs that they understood it. Like the parent who tells the child for the third time; "the school bus will be here in five minutes, you'd better get ready now." The select committee of chief priests and elders, those in charge of the temple, had a meeting in the office of Caiaphas the High Priest who was their boss. Caiaphas had 18 years of experience of knowing and doing what the Roman leadership expected of him as leader of the Jews. He knew Jesus was a problem by what he was teaching and his actions regarding the Temple.

Add to this the anointing at Bethany and the introduction of Judas and we recognize the forecast of what was ahead.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, Slow us down and let us appreciate the daily holy week suffering Jesus endured, as he faced the opposition of fulfilling his calling. Amen



## MAUNDY THURSDAY

**Session 5** Mark 14:12-17; John 13:1-5; John 13:12-14; John 14:1-6; John 15:1-5; John 15:18-20; John 16:5-7; John 17:1-5; John 18:1; Matthew 26:37-39; Luke 22:43-44; Matthew 26:45-50

Note regarding the scriptures selected - Our scriptures for this devotional are organized in the order above so you can read the Scripture accounts of Maundy Thursday from the different gospels as one story. When you compare the Synoptic Gospels to John's gospel there is a difference as to the day Jesus and the disciples celebrated the passover. The Synoptics emphasize it was the day before the passover, while John's focus was on Friday. John's emphasis on Jesus as the sacrificial lamb provided a parallel to the lambs that would have been sacrificed for the passover meal. It is not their differences that are important, but the theological intent of both.

Jesus washed the disciples feet. That is the major image of Maundy Thursday. The story is so well known and the humility of Jesus is emphasized. The humility of him being the Rabbi and Lord was apparent as he became their slave. What may easily be overlooked is that Jesus was loving all of them to the end. He knew Judas would betray him; but he washed his feet. He knew Peter would deny him three times; but he washed his feet. He knew they would ALL forsake him; but he washed their feet. This visual would be more powerful and memorable than any verbal lesson or parable story. Days before they saw a woman stoop and wash Jesus' feet and they got angry and upset; in the upper room, Jesus performs the same action, not with perfume, but with water and love that they would never forget.

In anticipation of their coming grief he offered comforting words of assurance that they should '*not let their hearts be troubled*.' He confirmed their faith in 'trusting God' and wanted them to do the same regarding him. Yet as you read these scriptures the dialog with the disciples convinces us they were hearing but not understanding.

The confused disciples followed him to Gethsemane, seemingly unaware of the depth of his emotional needs. Three of them went with him to a place of prayer. The emotional state that he confessed was one of overwhelming grief and depression. It must have shocked the three because they declared they would go with him to the end. Psalm 42:5, 11, & 43:5 are all the same words which may have been on the mind of Jesus as he went to be alone and pray "5 *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*" Jesus eventually said, "NEVERTHELESS not what I want but what you want." Then Judas arrived with the Temple guards and Jesus was arrested.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, provide us in our hour of trial and testing with the assurance you gave to Jesus; help us get to 'nevertheless'. Amen





## **FRIDAY/SATURDAY The Eclipse of the Son's Trials**

**Jewish Trials:** John 18:12-14,19-24; Lk. 22:54, 63-65; Lk. 22:66-71

**Roman Trials:** Lk. 23:1-5; Lk. 23:6-12; Lk. 23:13-25; Lk. 23:26-49 Lk. 23:50-54

We live at a time when we are bombarded with news about persons being on trial. Persons who attacked the Capital building in Washington, DC are being tried and convicted and sentenced. None of these individual trials will ever be as famous as the "Monkey Trial" in 1925 when a young school teacher was convicted of teaching evolution in violation of the Tennessee State law.

What would become the trial of the centuries is if a President of the United States was put on trial. If you can imagine what the emotions of the nation would be like if that happened, then you might be getting a feeling for the emotions of Friday of Holy Week when Jesus was on trial by the Jewish courts and the Roman court. The Jewish leaders were so fearful that the mob might respond, that they held their meetings in the middle of the night.

Jesus refused to cooperate in answering their questions and he was held in contempt and Caiaphas acting as judge and jury said, "*It's better for one to die for the people.*" Little did Caiaphas know that his words were true, Jesus did die for all people. The trial appears to have been called to have the leadership 'rubber stamp' of the desire of the Jewish leaders, who politically were in bed with Roman authorities. That shows in their next move of 'passing the buck' taking Jesus to Pilate because they did not have the power within their law to kill a man. Pilate discovered Jesus was from Galilee and saw a way to 'pass the buck' sending him to Herod because that was his jurisdiction. Herod went through the motions needed and reversed the 'buck passing' sending him back to Pilate. Pilate then confirmed that neither he nor Herod saw the man as guilty but had to make a decision that would not cause him to lose his job. He 'passed the buck' to the people with the offer for them to choose the annual pardon given to one of the criminals at every Passover. They chose to free Barabbas, and crucify Jesus.

We have seen the days of Holy Week through the lens of the eclipse of the Son. The events of each day increased the movement of the darkening clouds that bring us to our scripture for today. It was an event that would have been embedded in the memory of persons, like our memory of where we were when we heard about the airplanes flying into the twin towers on 9/11. At that time we felt a darkness covering our land.

*"When it was noon, **darkness came over the whole land...** Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last."*

**Saturday:** The silence of the Sabbath

**Prayer:** Gracious God, we are awed at the mystery of Christ's death and all that He accomplished for us on the cross. We are humbled at such amazing love that gives all so that we might live. Amen



## **SUNDAY Son-Rise & Son-Light Appearances**

**John 20:1-21:2 The Early morning Son-Rise**

**Luke 24:1-12 The Son-Light Appearances**

John's use of 'dark' when "*Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw it empty,*" may represent not only the lack of light before dawn, but the darkness in Mary and the disciples lives, following the crucifixion. The Son may have risen from the tomb defeating "*the darkness that could not overcome him,*" but the disciples of Jesus were living in the darkness of grief that overcame them and destroyed all the hope they had in Jesus. Today's verses focus on the transformation the disciples experienced as they move from darkness into light.

The discovery of the tomb being empty, and Mary's assumption that the authorities had removed the body would have made her angry. When Peter and the other disciple arrived to confirm what Mary had told them, they too would have been angry. The anger would've intensified their already deep grief over Jesus' death. They were being robbed of providing the burial rites that were not preformed when he was buried. Since the authorities sealed the tomb, they had to be the ones who removed the body. Peter and John raced to the tomb and also found it empty. "*They saw the tomb empty and "Believed" what they had been told, someone has taken the body out of the tomb.*" The men go home, but Mary stays at the tomb. She needs another look...she can't believe what she has seen. Through her tear filled eyes she sees a man and assumes he is the gardener. She pleads that her Lord's body has been taken away and doesn't know where to find it. The voice responds "Mary". Just as the sheep know the shepherd's voice so Mary recognizes it is Jesus. She of course goes and tells the disciples but they still are in hiding behind lock doors.

Jesus appears through locked doors on two occasions and says "Shalom' Peace be with you. It's what he promised them at an earlier time when he said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*" Jesus showed them his hands and his side and they were no longer afraid. "*They rejoiced when they saw Jesus*" is their statement of belief that The "Light of the world" had returned.

The Emmaus story of two men illustrate there were many who had not seen the resurrected Jesus, until a stranger walked with them and heard their story of hope and despair, and felt their deep grief. They invited him into their home and in the 'breaking of the bread' together they recognized him. The darkness and hopelessness experienced on their seven mile walk home was dispelled, and hope had returned. They had to share it with the others in Jerusalem so they immediately hurried back those seven miles to tell the disciples.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for opening our eyes to the light of the risen Son. Help us to be as eager to share it like those early disciples.