

DAYS OF RECKONING

With Holy Week and Easter soon upon us, how can we prepare our hearts and minds and wills for this week that changed the world? In Luke 18:31-34, Jesus told His disciples, "*we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise.*" Luke says they understood none of this, only afterward when the Holy Spirit revealed the meaning. Crossway.org provides a very helpful, free, brief video series "Walk with Jesus during His last days on earth." Let's take a look, day by day.

PALM SUNDAY - On this day we cry "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.*" Jesus enters the holy city of Jerusalem for the Passover feast, intent on becoming the promised Paschal lamb, to take away the sins of the world. His earthly ministry the past three years presents Him as the Son of God, the miraculous fully human and fully divine God-man who would fulfill all the ancient prophecies. His impeccable life, amazing miracles, practical authoritative teachings, charismatic character, all combined in the popular mind to acclaim Him as Christ, the promised Messiah-Savior-Servant-Conquering-King. Greeting Him with "*Hosanna*" save us now "*Son of David,*" they waved palm branches and spread their cloaks, as recognizing a conquering King. A preview of this scene happened about 970 years before, as Solomon rode in peace on a donkey to receive the kingdom from his father King David.

MONDAY - Jesus makes a barren fig tree an object lesson of Israel, which should have been bearing the fruit of repentance. He cleanses the temple in preparation for the sacrifice of Himself. The temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations, for worship in spirit and in truth. The Israelites allowed it to become defiled by buying and selling money and animals for sacrifice, not discerning the consequences. Jesus acts out a dramatic illustration, even as the prophet Jeremiah warned that the mere presence of the temple was no guarantee of God's blessing. God's people are to trust and obey God's holy Word.

TUESDAY - Jesus teaches in the temple, and defends His authority as speaking God's words of truth. His parables about two sons and tenants and a wedding feast show the reality of the disobedience and disbelief of the people. Discussion of the "*great commandment*" clearly shows the nature of saving faith, to believe with all of one's heart and mind and will. Your whole being trusting in all that God is. To be right with God will result in right relationships with people. Jesus also corrects wrong thinking about the resurrection, as a foreshadowing of what is to come, as He will be the firstfruit of resurrection. And Jesus makes predictions about the future, including the impending destruction of Jerusalem, because the New Covenant will supercede the Old, and God's judgment is coming on this unbelieving generation.

WEDNESDAY - The plot to kill Jesus takes fuller shape, according to God's definite plan. Jesus tells His disciples "*the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.*" The expense of the anointing of Jesus in Bethany helps explain part of the disillusionment of Judas Iscariot, who met with the religious leaders about betraying Jesus to them. He yielded to Satan's influence, yet even this evil was part of God's orchestration of events. Acts 2:23 explains, "*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*" At heart, are you more like Judas (willing to betray) than like the other disciples (willing to be clueless and overconfident)? Without God's initiative of grace, you could never be saved. It is only because of God's lovingkindness that His mercy and grace are extended to you. Mercy, in not giving you what you deserve (eternal judgment), and grace, in giving you what you do not deserve, the righteousness of Christ and eternal new life in Him.

MAUNDY THURSDAY - Christians gather in fellowship tonight because of all Jesus did that day. At their Passover feast, Jesus washes the disciples' feet, showing them how to be servant-leaders. He reminds them of His most important teachings, commanding them to love one another. "Maundy" relates to the Latin for commands. Jesus speaks of His coming death and resurrection. He institutes "The Lord's Supper" as He uses the tangible elements of bread and cup to portray His body and blood, given for the remission of sins, in fulfillment of the New Covenant. Believers receive new hearts, circumcised by the Holy Spirit, who regenerates them to faith and empowers them to repentance and obedience. But before the evening ends, Jesus predicts their denial. He earnestly prays for them. In Gethsemane, He submits to God the Father as the obedient Son, graciously giving His perfect life to pay the penalty for sin.

TODAY - Dyson Hague notes, "Centuries before Christ was born, His birth and career, His sufferings and glory, were all described in outline and detail in the Old Testament. Christ is the only Person ever born into this world whose ancestry, birthtime, forerunner, birthplace, birth-manner, infancy, manhood, teaching, character, career, preaching, reception, rejection, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension were all prewritten in the most marvelous manner centuries before He was born." Will you submit your life to Jesus, trusting the totality of your being to the fullness of His grace? Read your Bible! ☐