

CHURCH SCHOOL LESSONS

APRIL 5, 2020

This week our Bible story will help us prepare for Easter by learning about the events of Jesus' life in the days leading up to his death and resurrection. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people were very excited and greeted him like royalty, waving palm branches and laying down their coats before him.

Let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew to read our Bible story. This week our story is found in 2 chapters in Matthew. The first part of the story starts in Matthew 21, verses 1-11 where we read about Jesus' triumphant arrival into Jerusalem.

Why do you think the crowds of people were so excited to see Jesus? Based on what we have read so far, what do you think will happen while Jesus is in Jerusalem?

Now we're going to skip ahead in our story past the parts that we have read about in the last few weeks, such as the Lord's Supper and Jesus' arrest and Peter's betrayal of Jesus. In Chapter 27 of Matthew, Jesus has already had his trial and is going to be put to death by hanging on a cross and then left there to die. This part of the story is not pleasant so we will read it in small pieces.

First, read Matthew 27:32-38.

Crucifixion is an extreme method of carrying out a death penalty for a person's crime. In the Roman Empire, people who caused political or religious trouble were typically punished this way. Crucifixion was ended by Constantine I in the year 337 after he had converted to Christianity.

Why do you think the guards hung a sign over Jesus's head that said "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews"?

Read Matthew 27:45-50 and then read verses 55-56.

We read that a woman witnessed Jesus' death, but where are the disciples? Why do you think they weren't there?

Now read Matthew 27:57-61.

Often, the bodies of people who were crucified were left on the cross. By taking Jesus' body and wrapping it up and placing it in a tomb, Joseph of Arimathea was showing respect for Jesus. He remained a follower of Jesus even after Jesus died.

This week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday is called Holy Week. For centuries Christians have set apart Holy Week as a time for praying and reading Scripture to help them grow closer to God and to appreciate the miracle of Easter. Here are some readings for each day this week to help us as we grow closer to God and appreciate the miracle of Easter.

Palm Sunday	John 12:12-15
Monday	John 13:2-5
Tuesday	John 15:9-13
Wednesday	John 18:5-12
Thursday	John 18:25-27
Friday	John 18:17-18 and 25-30
Saturday	John 19:38-42
Easter Sunday	John 20:11-16

Today, our Bible story ends on a sad note, but it is to be continued. This is only a part of the story, the best is yet to come.

We see the cross and that reminds us of how Jesus died. But we know that Jesus did not stay on the cross or in the tomb. Next week we will hear about when God made Jesus alive again. Jesus died, but he did not stay dead!

We have learned that the Gospels are the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible. In the Gospels we learn about the stories of Jesus' life. But sometimes they tell the stories a little different. We can compare the way they tell the stories by looking at a Gospel parallel, where the Gospels are shown side by side on the same page. Like this story.

<p>Matthew 27:57-61 That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus. He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate gave him permission to take it. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting in front of the tomb.</p>	<p>Mark 15:42-47 Since it was late in the afternoon on Preparation Day, just before the Sabbath, Joseph from Arimathea dared to approach Pilate and ask for Jesus' body. (Joseph was a prominent council member who also eagerly anticipated the coming of God's kingdom.) Pilate wondered if Jesus was already dead. He called the centurion and asked him whether Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate gave the dead body to Joseph. He bought a linen cloth, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been carved out of rock. He rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was buried</p>	<p>Luke 23:50-56 Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council. He was a good and righteous man. He hadn't agreed with the plan and actions of the council. He was from the Jewish city of Arimathea and eagerly anticipated God's kingdom. This man went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Taking it down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb carved out of the rock, in which no one had ever been buried. It was the Preparation Day for the Sabbath and the Sabbath was quickly approaching. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph. They saw the tomb and how Jesus' body was laid in it. Then they went away and prepared fragrant spices and perfumed oils. They rested on the Sabbath in keeping with the commandment.</p>	<p>John 19:38-42 After this Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take away the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one because he feared the Jewish authorities. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took the body away. Nicodemus, the one who at first had come to Jesus at night, was there too. He brought a mixture of Myrrh and aloe, nearly seventy-five pounds in all. Following Jewish burial customs, they took Jesus' body and wrapped it with the spices, in linen cloths. There was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified. In the garden was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish Preparation Day and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus in it.</p>
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What do you notice about these four versions? What do these things tell us about the writers of the different Gospels?

Let's close with a prayer. Dear Lord, be with us as we travel on our journey during this Holy Week. Help us remember that Jesus died but he did not stay dead? Help us use your scriptures to us mindful of the meaning of this very special time. Help us remember that God is with us wherever and however we travel. Keep us safe in these troubling times. Amen.