

UPON THE ROCK

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One Week To Live

(An Examination of Jesus' Last Week)

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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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The Triumphant Entry

Phil Grear

“And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” (Matthew 21:1-11).

Christ’s last week before his crucifixion began with “The Triumphant Entry.” Jesus sent his disciples into the little village of Bethphage with instructions to bring him a donkey and her colt. They then spread their clothing on the donkey and Jesus began his journey into the city of Jerusalem. He was surrounded, both before and behind, by a crowd of people praising him as their deliverer. They spread their garments and large palm branches in the road in front of Jesus and began to shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21:19). This so disturbed the Pharisees that they demanded Jesus

destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8). He became flesh so “that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). All through the life of Christ on earth, Satan attempted to disrupt His mission and purpose of His coming. He used Herod to try and destroy Jesus when He was a child. He tried to get him to sin through a series of temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). He used the Jewish leaders to discredit Him and made many attempts to kill Him before God’s determined time. But when it was time the resurrection was the judgment of Satan. “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me” (John 14:30). No doubt Satan thought he was successful in bringing Jesus under the power of death. (The serpent bruised His heel). But when Jesus emerged from the tomb, He removed the sting of death forever! “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15). The risen Christ declares, “I am... the living One; and was dead, and behold, am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (Revelation 1:17-18).

How did all of this affect you and me? Because of Christ’s victory we can be victorious and live with Him in glory forevermore. His purpose of coming was to bring us life more abundantly. He lived and died so that we could have the hope of heaven. By His resurrection we too will be raised and the faithful will be with Him forever.

I want to encourage you to surrender your will to the will of God and repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Live your life faithful to the Lord and serve Him until death comes and takes you from this life to the life here after.

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also claimed to be sent by God (John 8:42), and that He was one with the Father (John 10:30). He also claimed to be king (John 18:37), to be Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8), and Lord of the angels (Matthew 24:31). All these claims were put on the line when Jesus was put to death. But when God raised Him from the dead, they were shown to be true. Jesus was indeed who he claimed to be. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). The risen Christ declared that he had been given all authority in heaven and on earth, (Matthew 28:18). This was the focus of the first gospel sermon in Acts 2, Jesus was raised to sit at the Father’s right hand. “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, And having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:32-36). The resurrection was at the heart of the apostles preaching in the first century. It was THE proof that Jesus was THE Lord. Notice Peter’s defense in Acts 4:10 “let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.” In verse 33 of this same chapter Peter says, “And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” Later in Acts 10:40,41 Peter would proclaim, “Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.”

The resurrection devastated the enemies of Jesus. It was the defining moment that claimed for Him victory over the ruler of this world. He won the battle over the ruler of darkness. God had prophesied in Genesis 3:15 that the Seed of woman would crush the head of the serpent who had lead her into sin, but that the serpent would bruise His heel in a great confrontation. This is the reason that Christ came to this earth and took on the form of flesh to set up a confrontation between God and Satan in order to bring Satan and his army to a crushing defeat. “The Son of God appeared for the purpose, to

rebuke his disciples for such praise, but Jesus refused to do so.

Sadly, His hero’s welcome would not last. The triumphant entry would soon give way to controversy and conflict. This wonderful event illustrates three things.

THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Matthew tells us this event was foreknown by God and foretold by the Old Testament prophets. “All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass (Matthew 21:4-5). Zechariah had predicted this event approximately five centuries earlier (Zechariah 9:9). How did Zechariah know that this would happen? Could he possibly have just guessed this event five hundred years in advance?

Some have counted more than three hundred distinct prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament. Such detailed foreknowledge can only be explained by divine inspiration. The skeptic must explain this amazing phenomenon. Prophecy, such as this one in the Triumphant Entry is absolute proof of the divine origin of the Bible.

THE FICKLENESS OF THE PEOPLE

Perhaps nothing in human nature is harder to explain than fickleness. *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* defines “fickleness” as “given to erratic changeableness”, and such certainly describes the action of the people on this occasion. One Sunday they were welcoming him to Jerusalem and praising him as the “Son of David” who “cometh in the name of the Lord.”, and then within a week were persuaded by their religious leaders to scream, “Crucify him, crucify him.” “Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?

They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified....Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made..." (Matthew 27:19-24). Those praising Him now demanded His death.

So why had they changed their minds? Simply stated, Jesus had not done what they wanted Him to do. The word, "Hosanna" means, "Lord, save us", but they were expecting a physical deliverance that had nothing to do with salvation from their sins. They believed that Jesus was bringing an earthly salvation in the form of independence from Roman occupation. They saw Jesus as a freedom fighter who would lead a revolt against the Roman army. They believed the "kingdom that cometh" (Mark 11:10) to be a literal Jewish kingdom that would take its place among the nations of the world. When Jesus didn't lead that revolt they turned on him. Sadly, many today turn on Jesus when He does not meet their expectations. They promise Him loyalty, but only so long as He suits their plans. If not, they will quickly abandon Him.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S PLAN

God had promised his people a kingdom for generations, but not one like they thought. Instead of a military kingdom spread by military might His would be a kingdom of peace that exists in the hearts of men and women. The very means by which He entered Jerusalem showed this. He did not come charging in on a mighty war horse, but instead came riding "upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Matthew 21:5). The donkey was symbol of peace.

God's kingdom is spread by peaceful means (Isaiah 2:1-4). It was to be a spiritual kingdom found within the human heart

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Larry G. Reynolds

Can we prove that Christianity is true? Is there a place where we can go to show that what we believe is true? Our faith is based on the evidence that is revealed from God in His Word (Hebrews 11:1). One of the great truths revealed to us is the empty tomb. It is proof of all that God promised and validates the claims that Jesus made while on this earth. We can point to the empty tomb and proclaim this is why we believe. The Bible says, "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" (Luke 24:1-6). The resurrection declared that everything God promised is fulfilled in the raising of His Son.

We shall discuss in this article that the claims of Jesus while on this earth were true and the resurrection validates His claim that He was the Son of God. Then we will discuss how the resurrection would destroy the works of the devil and Christ would be victorious.

While on this earth Jesus made several claims that seem outrageous coming from a simple carpenter's son: Jesus claimed to be the resurrection and the life, "I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this" (John 11:25,26)? This question was posed to Martha, who would confess that, "He was the Christ the Son of God". On another occasion Jesus would claim that if they would, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). This he spoke of His resurrection. He

held Him there suspended between earth and heaven! It was my sin that prompted Him to endure the inhumane treatment and forego His own rights of justice. In my rebellious state..., in my rebellious state... I hate that answer!

However, when I allow the love of Jesus to melt my hardened and calloused heart, my attitude changes toward that gift; when I see that He gave me that which I needed, even when I didn't want it, it is then that my heart sees another side of the cross. It was there in my hour of greatest need that He met me. I didn't ask Him to come there; He just met me there knowing that from that encounter He could give me something in anticipation of receiving something else of greater worth! But what do I have? What is it over which I have control that is of more worth than His own life? Painfully the answer resounds; "Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to your Cross I cling; Naked, come to you for dress; Helpless, look to you for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die." (quote from Augustus Toplady and adapted in the hymn, *Rock of Ages*). Pride, foolish alienating pride, speaks against me when it says, "Accept not the gift; you can for yourself provide!" Love responds, "All I want is your eternal happiness and joy; that is the thing that is worth more than my own life!"

Worthy not am I! But at that cross I MUST kneel, surrendering self His love to feel. Worthy not I cry in vain; He died for me My soul to gain!

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(Luke 17:20-21). It would not have the trappings of earthly power or prestige, and to expect such would only lead to disappointment. God's plan has always been for a kingdom that is "not of this world" (John 18:36). Those who are expecting a future literal kingdom on earth would do well to consider this.

CONCLUSION

The Triumphant Entry clearly illustrates the plan of God in this world. Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that demands undying loyalty from its citizens. Jesus will settle for nothing less.

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TWO BOOKS YOU NEED!

Because of the interest and financial support of several Christian business men two very good books are available to individuals and congregations FREE OF CHARGE. These are the updated 8th edition of *The Other Side of Evolution* and the updated 3rd edition of *The Book of Mormon - A Book of Error and Fraud*. These can be ordered in any quantity either by mail or email. To order contact Randall Standefer, PO Box 123, Dunlap, TN. 37327 or by email rstandefer@bledsoe.net.

I have read both of these books, and have made copies available to each member where I preach. I whole-heartedly recommend them to the readers of *Upon The Rock*.. Let me encourage you to contact them right away.— Mark Reynolds

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

A.J. Cox

One of the most thrilling and momentous occasions in all of human history must surely be the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into the city of Jerusalem. Centuries before, Zechariah had prophesied that Israel's King would enter humbly, riding upon a colt (Zechariah 9:9). In fulfillment of this prophecy Jesus entered Jerusalem riding upon a colt as those that followed Him cried "Hosanna!" (Mark 11:1-10). Given that Jesus was a King one might expect that, upon entering the holy city, He would make His way to the palace or some other location of political significance. Instead, He entered into the temple, which was the spiritual and religious center of the nation (Mark 11:11). This was yet another indication that Jesus would not be a King like other kings (John 18:36-37). As Jesus "looked round about upon all things" within the temple He was displeased with what He saw (Mark 11:11). This is evidenced by the fact that He returned the next day and "cleaned house" (Mark 11:15-17). This cleansing, also recorded in Matthew 21:12-13 and Luke 19:45-48, is not to be confused with the first cleansing of the temple that took place some three years before (John 2:13-17). The fact that Jesus cleansed the temple at both the beginning and end of His earthly ministry is a clear indication of the significance of the lessons connected to these events. What did Jesus see within the temple that so displeased Him? And, what might Jesus see within the church today that would similarly displease Him?

THE TEMPLE PROFANED AND CLEANSED

"And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not

for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again" (John 10.15-17). On the eve of the crucifixion Jesus said to a would-be combatant Simon Peter, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" (Matthew 26.52-54). So, the scriptures, those authored by the Spirit of Christ, spoke in advance of His own selfless sacrifice and it was His will that nothing stand in the way of that supreme gift! Jesus willingly gave His life because He knew that something would be gained of greater importance.

What did Jesus stand to gain by the crucifixion? Someone says, "He did it because of the exalted position that would be His afterward." Again, this is a legitimate thought but it fails the scripture test. As Paul pointed out in Philippians 2, Jesus gave up His exalted place in heaven to come to this lowland of sin and suffering; at His ascension to the right hand of the Father He only regained that which was rightfully His to begin with; so that was not His motive. What then did Jesus stand to gain by the crucifixion? What did He see as more important than His own comfort, His own place of power and authority, His own place of protection and security? What indeed!

The answer literally shouts off the pages of the Scripture! It was for me He died; for me! The answer is something that I as a rebellious soul do not want to hear. I abhor that answer! It is an answer that I, while rebelling against the law of love, absolutely detest. Nonetheless, that is the answer. Like it or not, Jesus died for me! He loved me so; He loved me so! Jesus died for me! It was my sin that

children! This is the spirit of giving that Jesus spoke of when He said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). This was the spirit of Jesus when He made a statement about His own purpose here; He said, "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

The rule is: One does not willingly give up that which He has unless he perceives that He will gain something of greater importance by the gift. Apply that rule to the cross and the things that Jesus willingly gave up when He "...gave His life a ransom for many." There is no passage which speaks more directly to this than Philippians 2:1-11. For purposes of space the reader is asked to refer to that text at this time; read it in its entirety and let the words sink deeply into your spirit; now let us continue. Paul spoke of the "mind of Christ" in verse 5, the mind that prompted Him to "look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others..." (Philippians 2:4). It was this mind that moved Him to make "...Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7-8). This mind, the mind of Christ, is the mind that prevailed when the nails were driven into His hands, when He suffered alone in unimaginable loneliness, when He endured the human indignities of mockery and human spittle, when He heard gross and despicable untruths hurled from the teeth of the very men whom He was dying to save; it was this mind, the mind of Christ, that Paul challenges believers to have!

But someone objects, "Jesus was crucified by others; He did not willingly give His life!" That certainly is a point to be considered but it fails the test of scripture. Of His impending death Jesus said, "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life

written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:15-17). What did Jesus see when He "looked round about upon all things?" The outer court, or court of the Gentiles, had become a marketplace of sorts where animals that were to be used in sacrifices were bought and sold. Additionally, moneychangers had set up booths where worshippers traveling from other nations could exchange their foreign money for local currency. Judging from the fact that Jesus likened the temple's present condition to a "den of thieves" it would seem that much of the business that was being conducted was unethical and dishonest. It also appears as though the spacious temple court had come to be used as a short cut by Jerusalem's pedestrians traveling from one part of the city to another. All of this had been done with the approval of the priests and the elders. It is also very likely that they themselves were profiting from the business that was being conducted in the outer court. It was this profaning of the temple that so stirred the righteous indignation of the Lord.

The indictment that Jesus brought against the people was a combination of Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. He said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?' But ye have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:17). In this statement Jesus gets to the very heart of their crime. In the scriptures God had specified the purpose, intent, and use of His house. It was to be a house of prayer, which is to say that it had a spiritual purpose. They, however, had altered its purpose and use, and had changed it into something that God had never intended it to be. Jesus was not displeased only because the temple was being used by people to enrich themselves through dishonest gain, although this was an egregious trespass, for when He first cleansed the temple he simply told the people not to make God's house a house of merchandise (John 2:16). Even if theft had not been taking

place Jesus still would have driven them from the court because they had taken that which God had intended to be sacred and holy and they had made it common. Herein is an important lesson. Buying or selling animals, exchanging currency, and carrying vessels were not inherently sinful. When, however, these things were done in God's house without His authorization, and contrary to His revealed purpose and design, they became sinful. Or, as one noted commentator observed, "Lawful things, ill timed and ill placed, may become unlawful things."

HOW MIGHT THE CHURCH BE PROFANED TODAY?

Whereas in Jesus' day the house of God was the Temple, today the house of God is the church (1 Timothy 3:15). Paul even referred to the church as the temple of God when he wrote, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). If Christ was displeased when the temple was profaned how much more will He be displeased when the church, which is His body, is profaned (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18)?

Much like the profaning of the temple, the church is profaned when men disregard God's purpose and intent for the church and change it into something else. This can be done, and sadly is being done, in many ways today. For example, when men determine to change the Lord's church into just another denomination they profane the church. It is little wonder that the church of Christ would be different when its members are called to be a peculiar people who recognize that following the multitude is not the Lord's way (Matthew 7:13-14; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). If Israel was not justified in asking for a king merely to be like all the nations why should any man think that he would be justified in changing the Lord's church just to be like

Jesus' Final Week—The Crucifixion

Jim Bullington

Truthfully now, did you find anything objectionable or questionable about the title of this article? Well technically there is something wrong with it, but we frequently use the terminology it contains because we "understand" that the phrase "Jesus' Final Week" is to be taken in a larger context; believers know that crucifixion week was not His final week any more than the date of His birth was the beginning of His life! Jesus was and is fully God; fully man and fully God; as such, He had no beginning or end and crucifixion week was not the end of His life!

Much has been written about the agony of the cross, the physical sufferings that were involved, even down to the point of analyzing the medical phenomena that were associated with the cross – and these things are all well and good; they truly help us to understand, in our limited capacities, the significance of the cross from a human standpoint. However, this article does not focus on the physical sufferings of Christ, but rather it focuses on the spiritual significance of the cross as it relates to God's great scheme of redemption; it looks at the cross as but a means to achieve God's will for humanity – the will that all men be saved (see 1 Timothy 2:3-4 & 2 Peter 3:9).

There is a basic rule of economics that is to be understood before we proceed; that rule is this: one does not willingly give up that which he has unless he perceives that He will gain something of greater importance by the gift. That simple law extends to every corner of the universe and is involved in all that we say or do. The only "exception," and it is not truly an exception, is when we find joy in giving something due to the sheer pleasure that the recipient enjoys as a result of the gift. That is the spirit of giving that loving parents enjoy as they give unselfishly to their children; they find joy in the joy of their

How often do we proclaim by our actions and our choices in life, “I know not the man?”

WILT THOU LAY DOWN THY LIFE FOR MY SAKE (John 13:36-38)

Peter was adamantly confident that He would not forsake the Lord, even to the point of giving his own life to follow Him. Jesus’ interrogating question to Peter rings loud in the minds of those who profess to be faithful followers of Christ even today. He asks, “wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?” Christianity requires of us nothing short of laying down our lives for Him. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). He laid down His life for you and me, will we in turn lay down our lives for Him?

The last week of Christ’s earthly life was an eventful period of time with consequences that will reach into eternity. Thursday was no exception and a recollection of the events of this day, even a few short statements made and questions asked by Jesus serve to provoke our minds to a deeper consideration of our responsibility to make adequate preparations, to never betray Him, to properly reflect on the sacrifice He has made for us, to learn and assume our place of servitude to Him, to never ever be offended by Him and His Word, and to without reservation, lay down our lives for Him.

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everyone else (1 Samuel 8:5, 20)? Similarly, when the Lord’s church is treated or regarded as a mere social club the house of God is profaned. Like the merchants and pedestrians of Jerusalem who treated the temple as a mere market place or thoroughfare, those who have such a view of the Lord’s church are guilty of making common that which the Lord intended to be sanctified and holy (Ephesians 5:25-27). Likewise, many today have exchanged the “house of prayer” for a house of entertainment. For some, worship that is patterned after the worship of the New Testament church has become “boring and out of date.” Feeling, perhaps, that modernizing worship and making it more entertaining will appeal to the masses, some congregations have completely rejected worship that pleases God for worship that pleases man. While there is nothing inherently wrong with entertainment it should be remembered, as was noted earlier, that “lawful things ill timed and ill placed may become unlawful things.” If God has not authorized it, it has no place in His house.

CONCLUSION

When Jesus “looks round about upon all things” within the church today what does He see, and is He pleased? When Jesus first cleansed the temple “his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:17). Jesus is just as zealous for the house of God today as He was then. Let His cleansing of the temple serve as a constant reminder to us of His severe displeasure with those who disregard and change God’s intended purpose and use for His house.

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Anointed For Burial

Brandon Britton

A few years back, country music artist Tim McGraw released a song titled "Live Like You Were Dying." If you are unfamiliar with the song, it tells the story of a man who finds out he has a terminal illness and is going to die. As a response he begins to do all sorts of things he did not and would not normally do. The main thrust of the song is that people should live each day of their lives as if it were their last, because in truth, it may be. While all of us desire to live this way, very few actually do, at least not consistently. However, there was a man who did live each day in view of His death. For over thirty years every decision, every word, every action was weighed against His purpose in coming. His parents did not always understand it. "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). His disciples frequently misunderstood it. "Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:33,34). The masses were often confused about the purpose of His coming. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Although His mission was misunderstood by many, He never lost sight of the purpose of His coming. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The thirty three years of His life have passed by quickly and now the final week of His life has arrived. On Tuesday, less than seventy-two hours before His crucifixion, He enjoys a meal with His closest friends in the home of Simon the leper. Surely we can understand why Jesus, knowing He was a mere three days from dying, would want to be surrounded by those He had come to know and love the most. His apostles were gathered there, but so also were Mary, Martha and Lazarus, a family He had grown very close to. Apparently a large crowd of curious

obligation to proclaim His death to the world through the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper.

I AM AMONG YOU AS HE THAT SERVETH

It was customary during this time for servants to wash the feet of guests. Who would kneel down to accomplish this menial task? The forgoing discussion among the disciples centered around "who should be the greatest in the kingdom." It was therefore unlikely that any of them were of the mind to assume such a role. Consequently, Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords who said, "I am among you as he that serveth" prepared Himself to wash the feet of His disciples. Guy N. Woods pointed out that "In the most effective manner He showed them the impropriety of their disposition and shamed them for their vainglory and self-seeking." This tremendous lesson is far reaching, even to you and me today, and so, we must ask ourselves "have we assumed a position of submission to the Christ or would we force Him to wash our feet instead?"

ALL YE SHALL BE OFFENDED BECAUSE OF ME

Jesus announces to His disciples the certainty of their impending denial of Him. Though Peter seems to introduce the rebuttal, all others chime in and consider the Lord's statement to be absurd. They boldly proclaimed, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Mark 14:31). Yet, nineteen verses later, "they all forsook Him, and fled" (Mark 14:50). Even Peter, who had "vehemently" denied that he would, chose the path of least resistance and said to His accusers, "I know not this man" (Mark 14:71).

We are quick to ridicule the disciples and especially Peter but how often are we "offended" because of Christ's demands upon our lives?

“one of you shall betray me.” Initially, He gives no indication as to the identity of the betrayer. The twelve began in succession to ask Him, “Lord, is it I?” Even Judas in cowardly fashion and in an effort to conceal his guilt puts forth the same question, all the while knowing his deadly plot had been set in motion. Peter continues his inquiry by asking the disciple “whom Jesus loved,” likely John, to inquire of the Lord as to the identity of the betrayer.

Jesus then says “he that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me” (Matthew 26:23). Although the revelation seems to have passed the other disciples acknowledgement, Jesus, in passing the sopped bread to Judas, demonstrated His knowledge that Judas was the one. The Lord then makes known to Judas the severity of the crime he was about to perpetrate, “it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” What right thinking person could happily identify with the actions taken by Judas? Yet great is the number of present day disciples who have and continue to betray Him none the less.

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Jesus instituted a memorial to the death that He would soon die. He took the unleavened bread, gave thanks for it, distributed it to the eleven, and said, “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” He then took the cup and said, “This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you.” The apostle Paul adds that the observance of this memorial serves as a proclamation of “the Lord’s death” until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26). According to Luke, first century Christians observed this memorial on the first day of the week as part of their worship to God (Acts 20:7). Seeing that the Lord has not returned, Christians are still under the

onlookers had gathered there as well. Some wanted to see the Lord, but others wanted to see Lazarus, a man He had recently raised from the dead (John 12:9).

INTRODUCTION

The only way to get the full account of the story is to read all three perspectives recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-9). Two of these writers (Matthew and John) were eyewitnesses to these events, while the third (John Mark, cousin of Barnabas and onetime co-worker/missionary with Paul, Colossians 4:10; Acts 13:5) was given the details by direct revelation from the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Simon the leper lived in Bethany, a village at the Mount of Olives, a mere two miles from Jerusalem (where He would die), on the road to Jericho. While Martha was busy serving, her sister Mary appeared carrying an alabaster box (a vase for carrying perfumes and scented lotions). It is described as a pound (twelve ounces by our standard of measurement) of "spikenard" (a spike or head of nard, a fragrant East Indian plant). Archaeology suggests that these boxes (more like a flask or vase) were made in such a way that they had no opening or lid, therefore they must be broken, and thereby ruined/rendered useless, to get the contents out. The value is placed above three hundred pence. A "pence" (penny, denarri) was a silver Roman coin, equal to about a day's wages (Matthew 20:2-13). If that be the case, what Mary breaks was worth nearly a year's salary!

SACRIFICE OR JUST SUFFICE?

A good question for us to ask ourselves after reading this, is, "What am I willing to sacrifice for the Lord?" Apparently for many Christians, the answer is, "not much." When was the last time you looked at the clothes closet or food pantry at your congregation? Most clothes

closets look like someone hijacked the wardrobe room from Saturday Night Fever. It seems than many brethren look in their closets for the things they would never wear, couldn't sell in a yard sale or even give away, so they donate them to the church for those who are in need. What about the food pantry? It may be full of food, but is it full of the canned hominy and generic peanut butter we kept on a shelf for two years before deciding we would never eat it? There was a time when another group of God's people were giving to the Lord that which was useless to them. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:6-8). In view of this, shouldn't the clothes closet look like our closet and food pantry, like our pantries, or are we only willing to give away what is fit to throw away, in the name of the Lord? Mary was willing to sacrifice the absolute best she had for the Lord.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? DO WHAT YOU CAN

Not surprisingly, some of His disciples had a problem with this act of sacrifice, tenderness and love that Mary bestowed upon Jesus. Judas was offended because he was a thief and was the treasurer for the apostles. Had this alabaster box been sold he stood to profit greatly from the extra income in the treasury (John 12:4-6). From other accounts it appears that Judas was not alone in the criticism of Mary (Matthew 26:8-9). Although their complaints were not rooted in robbery, they were no less shameful. Why is it often the case that

were to make the necessary preparations for the Passover feast. They had several responsibilities. To begin, they needed a place to partake of the feast. Moreover, they had to remove all leaven from the house (if such had not already been done by the householder). Additionally, they had to obtain other items needed for the meal such as unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine, and the paschal lamb (Exodus 12:8).

It was customary for the citizens of Jerusalem to open their homes to those from other places who had come for the purpose of observing this feast. The task before Peter and John of finding an appropriate place would not be difficult as Jesus had instructed them to follow a certain man who would meet them upon their arrival in the city. He would guide them to the right place. After securing a perfect lamb, Peter and John would have taken it to the temple where the priest would slaughter the animal, apply its blood to the altar, and burn the entrails and fat. The remaining portion of the lamb would be returned to the donor who would roast it and have the place and the meal prepared in a timely fashion. The Passover meal was to be eaten between 6:00 P.M. and midnight. Finally, at the appropriate hour, after sundown, Jesus and His disciples assembled in the upper room where the supper had been prepared.

ONE OF YOU SHALL BETRAY ME

During the meal, Jesus became "troubled in spirit." The foreknowledge of what lay ahead was very painful. However, the knowledge that one of His own disciples was presently plotting to deliver Him into the hands of His enemies was surely exceedingly grievous.

Jesus makes a startling and unanticipated pronouncement; that is,

Don't be a Judas! Far too many have betrayed our Lord for the fleeting pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25). He died for you (John 3:16). He lives for you (Hebrews 7:25). Will you not die to self and to sin (Romans 6:3-4) and live for Him (Galatians 2:20)? Mourn over your sins after a godly sort (Matthew 5:4), allowing that to turn you away from your sins. Obey the gospel even today. Hear the word (Romans 10:17). Believe that Jesus is God's Son (John 8:24). Repent of your sins (Luke 13:3). Confess Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37). Be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Live faithfully until death (Revelation 2:10). Tomorrow may be too late! Don't spend eternity regretting your disobedience!

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The Savior's Sayings At Supper

Joey Davis

The last week of Jesus' physical life was drawing to a close. It was now Thursday, the first day of unleavened bread, and the day on which the Passover was to be observed. This particular feast was a commemoration of God's deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. The Passover came on the fourteenth day of the first month and was to be observed throughout their generations as a memorial (Exodus 12:2, 17-18). On this occasion, there were several statements made by Jesus that serve well as an outline of the events of that notable day and we want to give consideration to some of them.

GO AND PREPARE THE PASSOVER

(Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13)

We began with Jesus sending Peter and John into Jerusalem. They

brethren want to criticize the good works of other brethren. Did they, and consequently, do we, not realize we are on the "same team?" Rather than judging her good deeds, they should have committed themselves to doing their own. The Lord quickly halted their murmuring of this sister by defending her. "Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" (John 12:7,8). As a side note, that is a pretty good lesson for us as to how to combat murmuring. Confront the one(s) doing the backbiting and defend the one being ridiculed. This simple act of sacrifice had a profound impact upon Christ and the church ever since. "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matthew 26:13). Nearly two thousand years removed from this event, performed in a private home, in a small village, we are still talking about and learning from Mary's act of sacrifice. The Lord said of Mary, "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying" (Mark 14:8). The Lord would say the same thing of us. Just do what you can. Others may do more, some may do nothing, but you do what you can. What would that be? Make a visit to the sick, shut-in or erring. Send a card or make a call to someone needing encouragement. Offer to help with a work or project that is neglected or not supported sufficiently. Invite someone to Bible study or to lunch. I doubt Mary imagined in her wildest dreams that this one moment in her life would be remembered throughout eternity, but it will be. Who knows what good deed we might do that would have eternal results.

BREAKING OUR OWN ALABASTER BOXES

Perhaps the most beneficial lesson we can learn from this account is the importance of bestowing praise, love and expressions of appreciation for those who deserve it, while there is time. Upon whom

should we "break the alabaster box?" We should break the alabaster box in the church. There are deacons, song leaders, elders, Bible class teachers, van drivers, preachers, nursery attendants and custodians who would be greatly encouraged by someone expressing appreciation for them and the work they are doing in the name of the Lord. Paul challenges us, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Romans 13:7). Most of the time the only feedback these folks get is negative. They may do many wonderful works, but let them make one mistake or fail one time and they get an earful. When this happens repeatedly, even the hardest working Christians can get discouraged. These simple words or acts of kindness may seem like little to the giver, but can be a much needed boost to the receiver. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). We should break the alabaster box in our homes. Too often the ones closest to us, who do the most for us, are the least appreciated. We take them for granted because they are always there for us. What we come to expect, actually requires sacrifice on their part. This is why we should never let our spouses wonder how much we love and appreciate their commitment to our happiness and that we are equally committed to theirs. Likewise children should be exhorted, loved and supported in the home by the parents. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Children should not be made to feel like "second class citizens" in their own homes, but like a vital part of the family. One way to do that is to express love and appreciation. Remember, you are God's child and He readily, frequently and abundantly expresses His love for you, are you passing on the same to your children?

Judas does not end in such a triumphant way. While Judas was sorry for betraying the Christ, and desired to be separated from the tokens of betrayal, his sorrow led him to a far different end than did Peter's. While we found one powerfully proclaiming the good news of salvation in Christ, we see the other swinging from the end of a rope. Judas' sorrow was of a worldly sort, and thus brought him death (2 Corinthians 7:10). Oh, that Judas would have truly repented and been used for the glory of God! But alas, his sorrow swallowed him up, and in an attempt to escape his guilt and shame, he followed the way of the coward, and took his own life. While many today may not go to the same lengths to rid themselves of the guilt and shame of their sins, the end is just as disastrous. Many are sorry for their sins, only because of the consequences they are being made to suffer, or the embarrassment of being caught. Many, like Pharaoh proclaim "I have sinned" (Exodus 9:27), and just like Pharaoh they never change their actions. This is not penitence. It is merely a proclamation of wrong. As one gospel preacher used to say, "Many report their sins when they need to repent of them." A public proclamation of wrong is not equivalent to repentance, which is a change of mind that results in a change of action. Worldly sorrow will cause many to feel shame, regret, sadness, etc., concerning their sins, but it will never lead one to truly repent and turn from his sins. Many alcoholics, drug-addicts, adulterers, thieves, and such like are ashamed of their current lifestyle, but take no steps to really change their ways. Godly sorrow brings feelings of remorse, regret, shame, embarrassment, and disappointment for sins one has committed. But godly sorrow will lead one to turn away from his sins, and strive to avoid repeating those same mistakes in the future. Godly sorrow that leads to true repentance will never be regretted. It is sad, indeed, that Judas did not allow his sorrow to bring him to repentance. He will have an eternity to regret it.

It is unfathomable that Judas would sell the Lord for only thirty pieces of silver. According to most sources I have consulted, thirty pieces of silver would have been the equivalent of about three to four month's salary. Even when thought of in these terms, how is it that he could so readily have betrayed the Lord? While we often look down our noses at Judas, many are guilty of selling the Lord for far less. How many today have sold the Lord for a moment's pleasure? I have known of some who have turned their backs to God because they wanted to involve themselves in fornication or adultery. I have known of some who have turned aside from faithfully serving the Lord for a few more dollars at a more demanding job. How many are even now selling Jesus for another drink of alcohol, or another drug-induced "high," or another round on the golf course? Fact is, we are many times just as guilty as Judas for selling our Lord to the highest bidder. The Proverbs writer declares, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). To that we might also add, "Buy Jesus, and sell him not." Like that pearl of great price, and the treasure hid in a field (Matthew 13:44-46), we should do everything within our abilities to secure that relationship with Him who gave His life for us. God forbid that we, having entered into every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3), would ever give that up for anything! It would not matter if the price were thirty, thirty thousand, or thirty million pieces of silver. In fact, one could be offered the whole world, and it still would not be worth giving up Jesus (Matthew 16:26)! Judas learned too late that no price is worth sacrificing one's relationship with the Master!

While betraying Jesus into the hands of a blood-thirsty and vengeful mob was terrible enough, Judas still had opportunity to repent and be a faithful and useful servant in the church for which Christ died. Peter had failed just as miserably in denying his Lord three times, but his sorrow was godly, and his repentance was genuine, to the extent that God would use him to open the doors of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Sadly, the account of the life of

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Plot Against Jesus

Patrick Morrison

The eternal plan of God was shortly to find its complete fulfillment in the giving of His Son on Calvary's cross. The shades were being drawn on the earthly sojourn of God's precious Lamb. With the prospect of an agonizing death before Him, and the greater part of His life behind Him, Jesus stood on the threshold of the darkest and loneliest hours He would ever know and the glorious jubilation of His triumph over death and an everlasting reunion with His heavenly Father. That which began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) was but moments away from its blessed culmination on Golgotha's hill. As Jesus faced the onset of Calvary, He did so surrounded by His closest earthly companions—His apostles. The events enshrouding the death of the Savior seemed to have been shared and shouldered by these friends, but in the end we find the Christ forsaken and alone (Matthew 26:56; 27:46). Peter denied the Lord thrice, even as the piercing eyes of the Son of Man looked upon him (Luke 22:60-61). James and John fled the scene as Jesus was taken from their midst (though John returned to be present at the crucifixion—John 19:26-27). Thomas, Matthew, Philip and the rest were nowhere to be found in the hours when Jesus needed his friends most. But perhaps none of these were as wounding and disappointing as was Jesus' betrayal at the hands of Judas Iscariot.

Shortly before the observance of the Passover and the institution of the memorial of our Lord, Judas plotted together with the chief priests to deliver Jesus into their hands (Matthew 26:14-16). For a paltry thirty pieces of silver, Judas revealed the sinless Savior by means of a kiss, leading to his arrest at the hands of the waiting mob (Matthew 27:47-50). As Judas reflected on the part he played in the betrayal of

his Lord, his guilt and shame grew ever greater, such that he returned the blood money to the chief priests, and went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-10). Much of what is revealed concerning Judas in the Scriptures seems to point to his greed as the primary motivation for betraying Jesus into the hands of the chief priests. On one occasion, Judas expressed disgust that Mary would use such expensive ointment to anoint the feet of Jesus (John 12:1-8). While appearing concerned for the welfare of the poor, and seemingly desirous of selling the valuable spikenard and distributing to the needy, Judas was really only concerned about what benefit he might derive from the sale of the ointment (John 12:6). His avarice may very well have been a major contributor to his decision to betray the Christ. However, it is my humble judgment that there was more involved in Judas' determination to deliver Jesus into the hands of the religious authorities. When they came to take Jesus, Judas responded, "take him, and lead him away safely" (Mark 14:44). From these words it would seem as though Judas had no idea that the authorities intended to put Jesus to death. Perhaps Judas was trying to force the hand of Jesus to establish his kingdom, which Judas (as well as the other apostles—see (Acts 1:6) – thought to be an earthly kingdom. It may well have been that Judas was merely attempting to "assist" God in bringing this kingdom to fruition. It is very likely the case that Judas wished this process to be expedited rapidly because of the windfall that he expected to receive from being one of the closest associates of the king of the new kingdom. Whatever the motivation(s) may have been, the deed was done, fulfilling numerous Old Testament prophecies (see Psalm 41:9; Psalm 109:8; Zechariah 11:12-13).

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Please note, just because God foreknew that Judas would be the betrayer did not override Judas' free will in carrying out the betrayal. Many have the mistaken notion that Judas was evil from the beginning, and that he was obligated to betray Jesus in order to fulfill God's will. Such makes God unjust, for He would condemn Judas for his disobedience, which God Himself had foreordained! This is not in harmony with the nature of God, nor the truth of His word. Had Judas not betrayed Jesus to the authorities, those same authorities would have found another who would do so. Judas became a pawn in Satan's service only because he allowed himself to be used in such a way.