

PROPHECIES

Pointing to Jesus

SCRIPTURAL FORESHADOWS
of the Messiah's mission during Holy Week



This devotional should be suitable for tweens and up, but we encourage parents to read through each day's Scriptures and reflections before you share them to make sure they're appropriate for your family.

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PALM SUNDAY

Humble King

SCRIPTURE:

Zechariah 9:9

Matthew 21:1-11



In the ancient world, victorious rulers would make a triumphal entry into the new cities they had conquered, seated on a powerful warhorse to symbolize their military might. Jesus, however, flipped this tradition on its head by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of humility and service.

This crucial event had been prophesied five centuries earlier, at a time when the first wave of Israelites was returning from exile in Babylon. The prophet Zechariah had encouraged the people with this vision of a coming King who would be righteous and victorious but also humble, riding on a donkey and bringing them salvation.

The crowds welcomed Jesus with palm branches strewn across the road and shouts of hosanna, to the chagrin of the Pharisees, who urged him to rebuke his followers. Nevertheless, he accepted the praise and messianic fervour of the crowd as an appropriate response to his arrival. Jesus was indeed the messianic ruler promised in the Old Testament. But he was not the kind of Messiah the people wanted, a warrior king who would free them from Roman oppression. Within a few days, the same crowd that was singing his praises would be shouting for his crucifixion.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Jesus was the unexpected Messiah, turning tradition on its head. Has there ever been a time when God unexpectedly answered your prayers? What did you learn from that experience?

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As a humble king, Jesus was different than every other ruler and authority in his time. Can you think of any examples of humble leaders today? Why is humility such an important trait of leadership?

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PRAYER:



King Jesus, you were not who the people of Jerusalem expected 2,000 years ago, but you are so much more. Forgive us for the times when we, too, want you to be different than who you are. Give us eyes to see the truth of your power and humility, your authority and your servant heart. Amen.

HOLY MONDAY

Passionate Teacher

SCRIPTURE:

Isaiah 56:6-7

Mark 11:15-18

Jeremiah 7:11



The day after arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple and confronted those who'd turned it from a house of worship into a marketplace. He flipped over their tables and chairs and physically threw them out of the building. It was a display of righteous anger, both human and divine, and it wasn't the first such incident. John's Gospel records a similar confrontation from earlier in Jesus' ministry, which reminded his disciples of David's words, "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Psalm 69:9).

Jesus was passionate about his Father's glory and kingdom, and about the well-being of his worshippers, both Jewish and Gentile. He expressed this passion not just through actions, but with his strident quotes from the prophets: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves!"

Jesus was also a passionate teacher, and the common people flocked to him at the temple, where he healed their diseases and taught them about the Kingdom of God. In contrast, the religious leaders began plotting how they might arrest and kill him but were afraid to do anything because the whole crowd was astonished and delighted by Jesus' teaching.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Why do you think so many common people ran to Jesus while so many religious leaders sought to kill him?

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Jesus was passionate about the unblemished truth of Scripture, but that passion ruffled feathers. What are some examples of when God's truth is misunderstood, distorted or even hated today?

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PRAYER:



Holy God, you are unchanging. When our world today feels confusing and disorienting, we know we can come to you, our lifeline, our rock. Thank you for standing firm so we too may have solid footing in an uncertain time. Give us courage to share your truth in love with those around us. Amen.

HOLY TUESDAY

Divine Sovereign

SCRIPTURE:



Psalm 110:1-2

Mark 12:35-37

Mark 14:60-62

During Jesus' final days teaching in the temple, the various religious factions came at him in waves, with questions designed to trap him so they might condemn him. But Jesus turned the tables on them with a question of his own, about David calling the Messiah Lord, thereby showing that the Messiah was not only a human descendant of David, but also the Son of God.

As his departure approached, Jesus continued to press this point with increasing clarity. He delivered a withering condemnation of the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites, blind fools and a brood of snakes. During his trial, when the high priest asked if he was the Messiah, he answered with a quote from Daniel: "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13).

On his daily commute between the temple and the Mount of Olives, Jesus taught his disciples through a series of parables about his Second Coming and the Day of Judgment, when he would determine the eternal fate of every person who has ever lived. He left his followers no doubt that he was the Divine Sovereign of all creation.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

In Mark 12, we see Jesus do something he often did: ask questions. Why can asking questions be a better way to get a point across than giving statements?

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In light of today's Scriptures, why were Jesus' proclamations that he was the Son of God and that he was the Son of Man both so controversial?

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PRAYER:



Sovereign Jesus, you are fully human and fully divine. You are the Creator of all and you lived as one of the created. You know what it's like to live with human weakness, but you also offer us the eternal gift of divine salvation. Thank you for your deep compassion and for the freedom you give us. Amen.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

Betrayed Friend

SCRIPTURE:



Zechariah 11:12-13

Matthew 27:3-10

Zechariah 13:7

Matthew 26: 31-32

As the Son of God, Jesus was omniscient, knowing every person's thoughts and motives, and seeing every event before it ever happened. As the Son of Man, he was the only perfect human, the kindest and most faithful friend anyone could ever have. Even so, when he chose his closest and most intimate circle of friends who would live with him and learn from him, he included Judas Iscariot, whom he knew would betray him in the end.

All of this had been foreshadowed centuries before the fact. A thousand years earlier, David prophesied about the trusted friend who would share his meal and break his heart (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:14-25). Fast forward five centuries, and Zechariah drew a mysterious picture of a betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, which were thrown into the temple and then to the potter. These shadowy prophecies were fulfilled in crisp detail through Judas' betrayal at the Last Supper and in the Garden.

Zechariah didn't stop there. He wrote of a Shepherd, God's close associate, who would be struck down and his sheep would be scattered. With his arrest imminent, Jesus told his followers that this prophecy would be fulfilled when they, too, would all abandon him and flee.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Have you ever been hurt by a friend or loved one? If so, you know how lonely it can feel. How do you feel knowing Jesus was also betrayed by his closest friends?

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When we remember this story, we often forget Judas wasn't the only one to betray Jesus. All his friends fell away. But we also know Jesus offered forgiveness after his resurrection. What does this say about his heart for others and for ourselves?

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PRAYER:



Lord Jesus, you walked through the pain of betrayal to show us the power of redemption. When we run to you with our hurts and pains, thank you for the incredible gift of being completely understood. Thank you for the healing that comes with forgiveness. Thank you for loving us this much. Amen.

HOLY THURSDAY

Covenant Mediator

SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

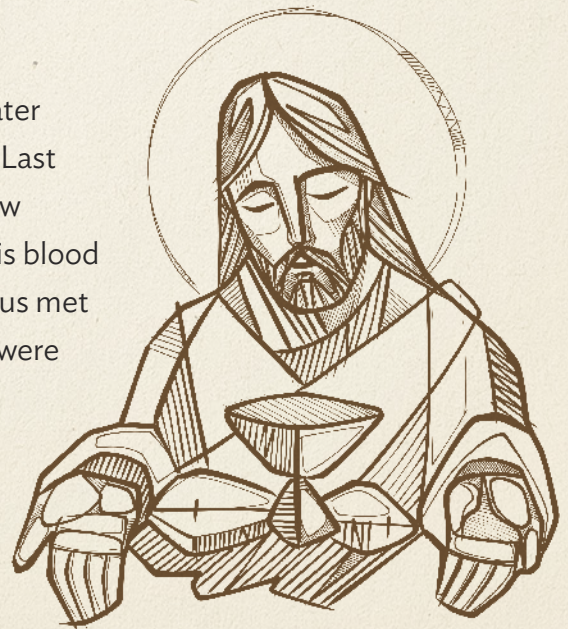
Matthew 26:26-30



Throughout Old Testament history, God established his relationship with his people through a series of covenants. These covenants were solemn commitments, most of them unconditional promises made by God. However, the covenant he made through Moses demanded obedience from the people. Honouring it would lead to blessings, while failure to do so would result in curses.

When God was about to exile his people to Babylon for their consistent failure to keep the Mosaic covenant, he promised to make one further covenant with them. This New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, would be radically different from the Old. God would write his Word on his peoples' hearts, forgive their sin once for all and be their God forever.

This New Covenant was inaugurated six centuries later by Jesus, through his death and resurrection. At the Last Supper, he made bread and wine symbols of this New Covenant, in which his body would be broken and his blood shed for the forgiveness of sinners. At the Cross, Jesus met all the terms of this covenant; the curses for our sin were placed on him, and the blessings for his obedience were counted to us – not because of anything we did, but by his grace alone.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

In the Old Testament, God's followers had to follow all the rules of the Mosaic Covenant. Do you think you could have kept all these rules and laws? Why or why not?

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When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we enter the New Covenant he has already fulfilled, and he lives in us through his Holy Spirit, leading us and guiding us. How is this different from the Old Covenant? Do you think it's better or worse? Why or why not?

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PRAYER:



Holy Jesus, thank you for this New Covenant. Thank you for the blessing that comes with your Holy Spirit, living in us. While we know we will still face trials on this earth, our eyes are now fixed on you, our Saviour and Messiah. Thank you for the hope of eternal life with you that sustains us today. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

Sacrificial Lamb

SCRIPTURE:



Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 16-18

Isaiah 53:1-6

John 19:23-24

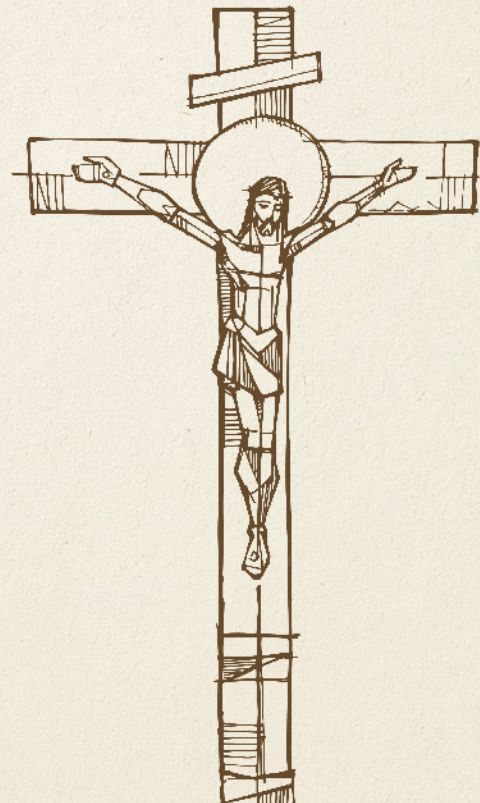
Matthew 27:38-46

Luke 23:39-46

Hours after Jesus celebrated the Passover and Last Supper with his friends, he was arrested and handed over to be crucified. This was no random series of events, but the sovereign plan of God. Jesus himself had connected the Passover with his coming crucifixion days earlier (Matthew 26:2: Luke 22:7-8). He was to be the ultimate Passover Lamb, sacrificed once for all for the sins of the world.

Seven hundred years earlier, the prophet Isaiah wrote in vivid language about the Suffering Servant who would be despised and rejected, bear our pains and sorrows, and be punished by God for our sins so that we might be healed. Three centuries before that, David offered remarkably specific details about the suffering and humiliation the future Messiah would endure for his people.

At the height of his suffering, Jesus shouted David's words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Although he knew he would rise on the third day, he was overwhelmed by the horrible thought of separation from his Father as he bore the full weight of God's judgment on the sins of the world. Once his redemptive mission was accomplished, he committed his spirit into the hands of his Father.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What do you know about the Passover? (Read Exodus 12 to learn more.) Why would Jesus as the Passover Lamb be especially impactful for his Jewish followers?

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Jesus' words on the cross point back to Psalm 22. If you didn't know this, it might be confusing why he calls out to God like that. Why is it important to look at the big picture of Scripture?

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PRAYER:



Lord God, you had a plan from the beginning, before people ever even knew they needed a Saviour. Thank you for making it clear, in passages like these, that there are no coincidences or mistakes. You orchestrate everything for your ultimate plan of redemption and restoration. Thank you. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY

Resting Saviour

SCRIPTURE:



Zechariah 12:10

Psalms 34:19-20

John 19:31-37

Isaiah 53:7-9

Luke 23:50-56

In the evening as the Sabbath approached, the Jewish authorities wanted the bodies of Jesus and the two criminals removed from the crosses and buried. When the soldiers discovered that Jesus was already dead, they didn't break his legs but pierced his side with a spear. Both details had been prophesied in the Old Testament, reinforcing the image of Jesus as the Passover Lamb slain for sin.

Afterward Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish ruling council and a secret disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate to release Jesus' body for burial. Pilate released the body and Joseph buried Jesus in his own new tomb, sealing it with a massive stone. This also had been prophesied by Isaiah, that they had intended to bury the Suffering Servant with criminals, but that he ended up in a rich man's tomb.

Meanwhile a group of prominent women, who had financially supported Jesus' ministry from Galilee to Jerusalem, and who had stayed with him while his disciples fled, observed his hasty burial. They returned home to prepare for a proper burial but rested on the Sabbath according to God's command – an echo of Jesus' own Sabbath rest in the tomb, before his glorious resurrection.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What can we learn from the devotion of Joseph of Arimathea or the women who remained faithful to Jesus?

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Sabbath is something that has been around since the beginning, when God rested on the seventh day after creating everything. Why do you think Sabbath is so important, especially after tragic or hard days like Good Friday?

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PRAYER:



Saviour Jesus, you faced the worst fate: an innocent man, falsely accused, given the punishment of a criminal's death. And yet even on the worst day of history, we see those faithful to you helping. Even in our darkest days, we can find moments of grace when we step back and rest in your presence. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

Risen Lord

SCRIPTURE:



Isaiah 53:10-12

Psalm 16:8-11

Psalm 68:18

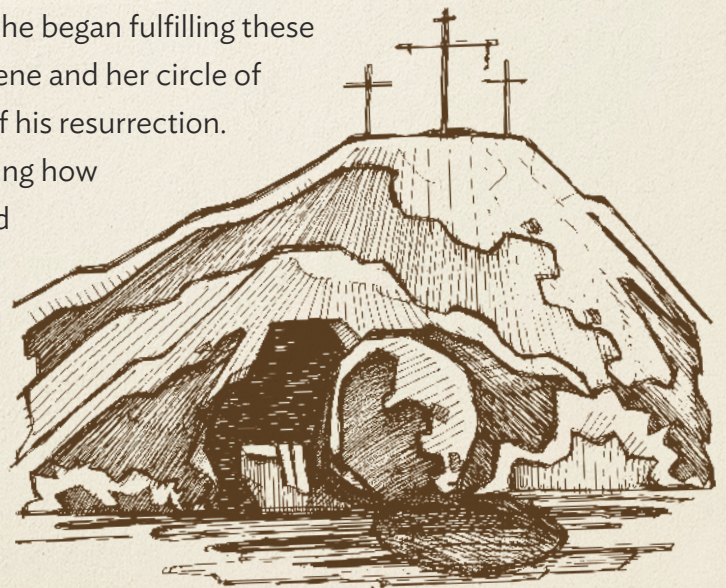
Isaiah 49:5-6

Luke 24:1-12, 36-53

Just as David and Isaiah foresaw the death of the Messiah, they also prophesied his resurrection and ascension. Even more astonishing, they wrote about the private thoughts and feelings he would experience. David spoke of the messianic king's joy and peace, knowing that God would not leave him in the grave. Isaiah foretold that after the Suffering Servant died as a guilt offering, he would revive and be satisfied, knowing the sons and daughters he'd redeemed for God.

Those daughters and sons would not be drawn only from the nation of Israel. In another prophecy, Isaiah stated it wasn't enough for God to redeem a remnant from the tribes of Jacob. He would make his Servant a light to the nations, so that God's salvation would reach the ends of the earth.

As soon as Jesus emerged from the tomb, he began fulfilling these prophecies. He appeared to Mary Magdalene and her circle of women, making them the first witnesses of his resurrection. Then he appeared to his disciples, explaining how the Scriptures foreshadowed his death and resurrection, and that forgiveness in his name would be proclaimed to all nations. Finally, as David foretold, Jesus ascended into heaven, from where he will return one day.





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What do you think about the inner thoughts of Jesus being prophesied about centuries before? What does that tell you about Scripture?

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From the beginning, God had a plan to redeem the whole world, offering his salvation to every person from every tribe. What does this reveal about God's heart?

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PRAYER:



Triune God, you are the embodiment of what it means to be in community. Your vast, rich, endless love reaches everyone. Through your death, resurrection and ultimate ascension, you have made a way for all of us – no matter where we come from or what we've done – to find salvation. Thank you! Amen.