

Holy Week
SCRIPTURE READINGS
by Anne Graham Lotz



Every year I read through the Gospel accounts of what took place from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday as I seek to wrap my heart and mind around those days. This year I'm inviting you to join me each day for a brief reading of Scripture that helps give us a meaningful grasp of what took place in the life of our Lord Jesus during Holy Week.

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MAUNDY THURSDAY

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This is Thursday. If Wednesday was a time of rest in Bethany for Jesus, Thursday was the opposite. It was an intense time as the Cross drew nearer. On Thursday, Jesus celebrated Passover; He taught His disciples, He prayed in Gethsemane, then allowed Himself to be betrayed by one of His own disciples and arrested by soldiers sent by the religious leaders. Let's enter into Thursday.

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. [1]

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. [2]

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." [3]

Jesus dismissed Judas and then He must have settled down with the disciples reclining around the table, and He began to teach them; first of all, about Heaven.

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“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” [4]

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” [5]

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.” [6]

“...But now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” [7]

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” [8]

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. [9]

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He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.” [10]

Luke tells us that while He prayed, an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. [11]

Returning to the account in Matthew:

Then He returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them:

“The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.”

Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. [12]

What would it have been like for the disciples to go from the celebration of the Passover meal and the rich, full teaching of Jesus in the upper room, to the shadows of Gethsemane and the horror of seeing Jesus betrayed, arrested, and led off by an armed mob? Although Jesus had told them multiple times this would happen, the disciples had never understood. So...on Thursday night, their nightmare began.

Are you, too, living at the beginning of a nightmare? Thursday teaches us that sometimes God allows us to experience unimaginable circumstances because He is working out a greater purpose for His glory. Trust Him when you don't understand.

[1] Mark 14:12-17

[2] John 13:1-5

[3] John 13:12-14

[4] John 14:1-6

[5] John 15:1-5

[6] John 15:18-20

[7] John 16:5-7

[8] John 17:1-5

[9] John 18:1

[10] Matthew 26:37-39

[11] Luke 22:43-44

[12] Matthew 26:45-50

Thank you

for taking the time to reflect on Jesus and prepare your heart for Easter.
We pray these Scripture Readings were a blessing to you.



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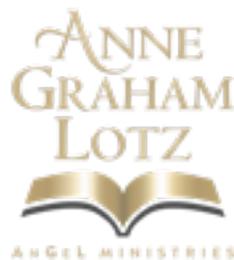
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