

The Last Week of Jesus

A Fireside given to the Snohomish stake

Thu, 29 May 2018

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Jewish calendar	Our calendar (A.D. 30)	Key events
7 Nisan	Fri, 30 Mar	Arrival at Bethany (Fri evening)
8 Nisan	Sat, 1 Apr	Dinner at Simon's house
9 Nisan	Sun, 2 Apr	Triumphal entry
10 Nisan	Mon, 3 Apr	Curses fig tree; cleanses the temple
11 Nisan	Tue, 4 Apr	Disciples see the fig tree withered; Olivet discourse
12 Nisan	Wed, 5 Apr	[No record]
13 Nisan	Thu, 6 Apr	Preparations for the Passover
14 Nisan	Fri, 7 Apr	Passover Feast (starts at sunset); Gethsemane; arrest; trial; crucifixion
15 Nisan	Sat, 8 Apr	In the tomb
16 Nisan	Sun, 9 Apr	Resurrection

The gospels have between 25% (Mark) to 48% (John) devoted just to this week. Too much for one evening—we'll just focus on a few key events. The gospels also don't each tell the exact same story, so to create a 'harmony' we have to overlook some things and make judgments on others. I have selected events that I believe best tell the story of Jesus' last week, though those who attend my New Testament class this year will know that we could do this for many hours. I will leave that up to each of you in your homes to study the last week accounts on your own.

Saturday – Mary Anoints Jesus

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him (**John 12:1-2**).

Coming up the steep road from Jericho, where Jesus had healed the blind man, Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-62) and dined with Zacchaeus the short publican (Luke 19:1-10), he arrived in Bethany on Friday evening (six days before Passover), just before sunset. He stayed at the home of Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, each night this week until his arrest. When dinner started, it was Saturday—the Sabbath—because the new day started at sunset in the Jewish calendar. Martha, the host, was acting as a "deacon" (*diakoneō*, meaning one who waits on tables). In John's previous chapter, she had been a female witness of Jesus' mission and identity (11:27); in this chapter, she is the model servant.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment (**John 12:3**).

spikenard – A perfume derived from the spike (hair stem) of the nard plant, which grows in the mountains of northern India. A "pound" is a *litra*, or today about twelve ounces in weight. Matthew and Mark add in their accounts of a similar anointing that the ointment was kept in an "alabaster box," emphasizing its value.

anointed the feet of Jesus – Matthew and Mark record that the woman anointed his head, John the feet. She probably did both with as much as she had. Anointing the head is symbolic of his kingship, while anointing his feet shows her

humility and worship. Wiping his feet with her hair is a double sign of her humility; she let down her hair in the presence of a man not her husband, violating their custom, and using her hair instead of a cloth shows unusual devotion.

Verse 5 says the spikenard was worth **three hundred pence** – Really, three hundred *denarius*, well over half a year's wages. Very costly, indeed!

Verse 6 notes that **he [Judas] was a thief, and had the bag** – Not a soft bag like a purse, but a money box, probably made of wood. Judas apparently had responsibility for keeping the finances of the group, replenished by faithful disciples as needed, including these and other women who traveled with him and supported his ministry.

One of the images we have of Jesus' travels is that it was him and the Twelve most of the time, but that comes from our own interpretation and is not supported by scripture. The NT mentions many disciples present with him, including women. Numbers are hard to pin down, but it may have been dozens of people.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this (**John 12:7**).

the day of my burying – This means, 'the day my body shall be prepared to be put in the tomb.' A dead body would be wrapped in linen soaked in perfumes such as this (though a lesser quantity). She has instead used it now, anticipating his coming death. The **JST** simplifies the language: "*for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial.*" However, we also see that Mary had "preserved" the perfume for some time in anticipation of this day. In other words, it was not just a spontaneous gesture; she probably saved, then purchased, then guarded it for this very moment, even if she didn't fully understand the symbolism until he said this.

Sunday – Triumphal Entry

Like much of the last week, no one account gives the full story, so you have to read verses out of the various gospels to get it. It also helps to read certain OT scriptures which pertain to this event. The map shows a likely path for Jesus to have taken, over the Mount of Olives and across the Kidron Valley up into the temple.

Luke 19:29-35 – It was Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath, now called Palm Sunday by many Christians in recognition of this event. Jesus left Bethany where he was staying, traveled on the Jericho road to Jerusalem and quickly passed through a small village called Bethphage ('house of unripe figs'). He sent two disciples to get "a colt" (a young but full-grown donkey) tied up near the road. When the owner asked who needed it, the disciples gave the answer Jesus had supplied. The unknown owner dropped all objections, just as Jesus predicted—and as he would if a king had requested it. The disciples brought the donkey back, then piled their outer garments on him, and Jesus sat on him. Matthew (**Matthew 21:2**) alone mentions also bringing the donkey's mother, which would serve to calm the animal as it was ridden for the first time and through great, noisy crowds. Riding the donkey is a symbol of humility and peace, showing Jesus did not come conquering.

From **1 Kings 1:32-40** we learn that it was traditional for kings of Judah to follow this pattern from the reign of Solomon and enter Jerusalem on a donkey, because it was a symbol of a peaceful coming (unlike riding a horse, which meant you came in battle). Jesus was thus claiming his kingship by this act. He also fulfilled the messianic prophecy of Zechariah:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. (**Zechariah 9:9**).

John 12:16-18 – In John's account, he clarifies why so many people were on the road anticipating Jesus' coming. The crowd from Lazarus being raised from the dead was running around testifying of what they had seen, and alerting people that Jesus was coming. The people wanted to see the man that could perform such a great miracle.

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 (**Matt 21:8-9**).

In the OT, as the king rode into town, people would throw their garments in the road as a symbol of submission. Palm branches (which John tells us are the ones the people used) symbolized righteousness (see Ps 92:12), Jewish nationalism, and victory.

Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord – 'Hosanna' is *hoshi ah na* in Hebrew, meaning 'O save' or 'save now' or 'save please' (Hebrew *na* has several meanings). It comes from Psalm 118:25-26, part of the *Hallel* recited at Passover, which has great Messianic significance. Calling Jesus the 'Son of David' recognizes his right to kingship. They are crying out to Jesus, who name means 'salvation,' to save them.

Speaking to each other, the Pharisees expressed their frustration at this turn of events:

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him (**John 12:19**).

Paraphrased: 'In spite of all of our efforts to discredit him, look what has happened! The whole city is following him—everyone is becoming his disciple!'

Monday – Last Day of Public Teaching

Monday was a busy day for Jesus. He left Bethany early with his disciples and headed to Jerusalem. On the way, Matthew (**Matt 21:18-19**) wrote that he went to get a fruit from a fig tree full of leaves, but it had no fruit. He cursed the tree, and it wilted. This was symbolic of the Jewish nation (according to Hosea 9:10), who were not bearing fruit, even though they looked like they should. It was also a demonstration of the power of faith, according to Mark's account (**Mark 11:12-14, 20-26**).

Arriving at the temple, he cleansed it. John portrays great patience on Jesus' part, carefully braiding a whip before proceeding (**John 2:15**), as well as care for the animals, telling them to take the caged animals away (**John 2:16**). Mark recounts how he overturned their tables and chairs and even blocked the entrance to the temple so no one could carry anything into it for a time (**Mark 11:15-16**).

Though it clearly did little to deter the activities there long-term, it made a statement to the Jewish leaders that he stood against their corrupt priesthood, and that the temple should be a house of prayer.

As a reaction to this public denunciation of their authority, the Jewish leaders confronted Jesus:

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? (**Matt 21:23**).

By what authority doest thou these things? – "These things" could mean any number of things that Jesus had done prior to this question, including healings and teachings, but especially his overturning the tables of the money changers. They were saying, in effect, 'You are not one of us. You have not been taught at the feet of the great rabbis. You are not schooled in the scriptures through us. We are the leaders and we have granted you no authority. So how can you claim any authority to do these things?' Notice that they no longer asked for a sign to show his authority, as they had requested earlier—he had given them many signs which had only served to fuel his support among the people! Their

question about his authority was answered by Jesus in multiple interactions and confrontations with the Jewish leaders on this day.

This hostile challenge from the Jewish leaders elicited a counter-challenge from Jesus:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? (**Matt 21:24-27**).

The elders admitted they could not answer, quietly recognizing that either answer would get them in trouble with the people, and Jesus responded with a rejoinder that he would therefore not declare his own authority (**Matt 21:25-27**; though he actually did, in his own way). This pattern is a typical rabbinic debate style, something they all would have used in teaching their own students. In other words, they challenged Jesus' authority because he was not trained through their schools, and he used their schools' methods to refute their challenge!

That business out of the way, Jesus was free to teach the people, which he did (Matthew 21:33 – 22:46). In the temple courtyards, he gave three parables of judgment directed at the Jewish leaders, followed by four interactions with them (three and four and seven being important numbers to the Jews, representing divinity, all-encompassing, and perfection or completeness).

Parables	Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two sons ('I won't go,' but does; 'I'll go,' but doesn't). • Wicked husbandmen (the Jews will kill the son of God) • Marriage of the king's son (invited guest rebel, others invited instead) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribute to Caesar (whose face was on the coin) • Marriage (one bride for seven brothers) • The great commandment (trying to trip him up on the law) • Who is Christ? (son of David or greater than David?)

Next came the famous "eight woes" where Jesus boldly and overtly condemned the Jewish leaders—"scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (**Matthew 23:1-36**).

Perhaps as they were leaving the temple for the day, Jesus observed a widow making an offering to the temple. It was only one *lepta* (1/64th of a day's wages), but she quietly gave it. Jesus knew her heart and her circumstances, and praised her for it (**Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4**).

On the way back to Bethany, the group paused at the summit of Olivet, and the disciples asked some questions that elicited the great sermon of Matthew 24. If you want to impress your friends, just call it the "eschatological discourse," which just means it's about the last days. We could spend the entire evening just talking about that, but we won't. Suffice it to say that no scripture was more closely studied by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and no chapter in the New Testament more worked over by him than this one in his new translation. You can read it in Joseph Smith-Matthew.

Because of the chapter break, we might not realize that Matthew 25 is a direct continuation of the message of Matthew 24. Here Jesus gave two parables that relate to his second coming—the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. The first teaches the message of preparedness and watchfulness, while the latter encourages doing good over a long period of time. Jesus ended the discussion with a teaching about judgment.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (**Matt 25:45**).

After the sermon, the group made their way back to Bethany for the night.

Tuesday – Judas' Betrayal

There is only one event recorded on Tuesday:

After two days was *the feast of the passover*, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put *him* to death. But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar of the people (**Mark 14:1-2**).

after two days – Meaning it was Tuesday, two days before the Passover feast. The Jewish leaders were ready to kill Jesus for his insults and confrontations. Other scriptures make it clear that they were not just angry but feared that Jesus would cause an uproar and riot and bring the wrath of Rome down upon them. What they needed was an insider. But all of his disciples were so loyal—how could they get one? He just happened to show up.

And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him (**Mark 14:10-11**).

At the end of verse 10, the JST adds some insight into why Judas decided to betray Jesus: "*for he [Judas] turned away from him [Jesus], and was offended because of his words.*" Luke says, "Then entered Satan into Judas" (**Luke 22:3**), and John echoes, ". . . the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (**John 13:2**). This event is on a truly cosmic scale: God versus Lucifer, through their chosen agents, Jesus and Judas. It is literally a battle to the death.

We don't know exactly what of Jesus' life or teachings offended Judas, but these accounts in Matthew and Mark immediately follow the anointing of Jesus at Simon's house, contrasting Judas' greed with the woman's generosity. John informs us that Judas was a thief who stole from the group's funds (John 12:6).

promised to give him money – Matthew tells us that the price was "thirty pieces of silver" (**Matt 26:15**). Though no coin is mentioned, it is probably the *stater*, equal to four *denarii*, totaling several months' wages. The amount was prophesied in **Zechariah 11:12**.

Wednesday – Quiet Day

Nothing is recorded in scripture about Wednesday. Perhaps Jesus spent the day in Bethany with his disciples, quietly preparing for the coming events.

Thursday – Last Supper Preparations

As we move to Thursday, the details provided by the gospel writers increase significantly. Luke starts his account of this day by saying:

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed (**Luke 22:7**).

Thursday was the day before the Passover meal, which marked the beginning of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jerusalem was packed with people—more than 200,000—speaking many different languages and staying in every available space, including camping all around the city.

The Romans were on high alert, because Passover was both a time of celebration and rebellion. Extra soldiers were brought to the city, and the governor himself, Pontius Pilate, had come from Caesarea for the holiday, staying at Fortress Antonia surrounded by soldiers. He had brought his wife, something he did not always do. Herod Antipas had also come down to the city, staying in the family palace on the western side of town.

Typically, one course of priests served in the temple for a two-week period. On this day, scores of Levites were helping all twenty-four courses of priests kill thousands of one-year-old lambs for the many people in Jerusalem for the Passover meal. This activity went on all day, right up to sunset, when families and friends gathered in homes, rooms, tents and fields surrounding the city to eat the meal that celebrated Israel's freedom from Egyptian bondage.

The upper room

And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in (**Luke 22:8-10**).

Evidently the group was still in Bethany, so Jesus instructed Peter and John to go to Jerusalem to find the place where they would eat Passover. Jesus' knowledge of the room and the method of contact could possibly have been prearranged, but more likely is a result of his divine foreknowledge.

there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water – While on the surface, this may sound like an impossible task in a city filled with tens of thousands of people. But carrying water was woman's work, so seeing a man carrying a pitcher of water would be an unusual sight. All they had to do was go to a pool like Siloam and watch for him, then follow him to his house. He was probably a household servant.

And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready (**Luke 22:11-12**).

The traditional site for this room (the same room where Jesus appeared to his apostles after his resurrection) is marked today by the Crusader Church of Saint Mary on Mount Zion. This site was revered since the first century as the location of the upper room. Many scholars think this was the home of John Mark, who wrote the gospel of Mark and who figures in Acts and Paul's letters. In Mark's gospel, in a detail that perhaps the host would know best, Jesus sent the disciples to ask for the *kataluma*, the small **guest room**, but was instead granted use of the *anōgeon*, the **upper room** or nicest place in the house to celebrate. Luke, writing after Mark, also makes that distinction, though Matthew does not. The upper room was not a room per se, but a semi-covered space on the roof of the house. Since the home was in the richer area of Jerusalem, it would have been a large space, able to hold a hundred people or more.

At least one scholar notes that Jesus may have used this method of securing the location so that Judas would not know beforehand where they would be, thereby requiring him to leave to make his betrayal.

The lamb

And they [Peter and John] went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover (**Luke 22:13**).

Luke states in few words a task that would have taken the two men the better part of the day. Having secured the room, **Peter** and **John** joined the throng at the temple, purchased a lamb (likely more than one), and took it to the inner courtyard of the priests. Waiting in the long line with thousands of people and their bleating sheep and goats, they finally approached the altar. To the north were several posts; they tied their lamb to one. The priest handed one of them a **knife** —probably Peter as the older of the two—which he used to slit the animal's throat while John held the animal still. The priest caught some of the **blood** in a bowl, which he then splashed against the bottom of the altar, representing the original wiping of lamb's blood on the doorposts in Egypt.

Peter and John then **hung** the dead animal in the butchering area there in the temple courtyard. Walking on the blood-soaked salt which had lost its savor, but placed there to make it less slippery, the two quickly **gutted and skinned** the lamb. Careful not to break any bones, they gave specific parts of the animal to the priests who burned them on the altar and took a small portion to help feed the many temple workers that week. Their task at the temple complete, Peter and John took the animal and returned to the upper room.

As Jesus and the rest of the disciples arrived at the upper room, they would have gone through the Passover rituals, such as cleansing the house of **leaven**—a game of hide and seek the children enjoyed. Soon all was ready and they settled in for their meal.

Friday – Last Supper

As the sun set, Friday began with the Jewish calendar.

The traditional image of Jesus and his twelve apostles sitting at a table is **not an accurate picture** of that evening, in spite of the many paintings and movies that depict it. People of that day did not sit to eat, but **reclined** on pillows on their left side, freeing the right hand for eating. Their feet pointed away from the low, U-shaped tables where the food was served. This night, Jesus reclined at the place of honor, placed there by the host of the meal. There was some **contention about the seating**, over which Jesus rebuked them, pointing out that the person eating is no better than the person serving. As a result, **John** ended up on Jesus' right, the place of second honor, and **Judas**, who likely started the commotion, on Jesus' left. **Peter**, perhaps responding to the rebuke but certainly in an act of humility, positioned himself at the **far end** of the table.

In addition, Passover was a family affair, and the inner group closest to Jesus would have been joined by wives, children, and friends. The area on the roof was large enough to hold up to a **hundred and twenty people**, and on this night (now Friday after sunset), with the city so crowded, it was likely at capacity.

Washing feet

The seating arrangements settled, Jesus immediately gave an example of what he had just tried to teach them. A servant arrived to **wash everyone's feet**. He first went to Jesus as the honored guest, but after his own feet were washed by the slave, Jesus rose, removed his outer coat, and took the basin from the servant.

Jesus girded himself with a **lention**, the long towel that a slave wrapped around his shoulders and body, leaving enough at the end to dry the feet. He then proceeded to wash everyone's feet, a task considered demeaning for so great a man—in fact, one even beneath Jewish slaves and only performed by Gentile slaves. Most disciples allowed him to perform this task in stunned silence, but when he finally came to Peter, the fisherman pulled his feet in: 'You don't need to wash my feet,' he said. He had too much love and respect for his Master to let him debase himself in this way. But Jesus persuaded him and finished the task. Returning to his place at the table, he asked them what they had just learned. Not waiting for a reply, he explained that he wanted them to serve each other with the same humility he had just shown.

Betrayal announced

The group started with a normal **Passover meal** consisting of eating the specific **foods in a certain order**, **four cups of wine** at key points in the ceremony, and **memorized phrases** spoken from years of repetition. But this was no ordinary Passover, and Jesus announced after his initial eating and drinking that this was the **last meal** he would share with them. He also announced that **one** among them was going to **betray** him. Judas, as we know, had already made his deal with the priests earlier in the week and was watching for the right time. (Mark 14:18-19)

Hearing Jesus say one would betray him, Mark explains:

And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, *Is it I?* and another *said, Is it I?* And he answered and said unto them, *It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.* (**Mark 14:19-20**).

We don't get a lot of direct statements that show there were many people in the room, but this is a good one. If Jesus and the apostles were the only ones there, what help would it be to say that the betrayer was one of the Twelve? He already said the person was in the room. Therefore, there had to be many more in the room than the thirteen of them.

From across the table, **Peter signaled to John**, who was next to Jesus, to ask the Master who it was. John leaned his head back toward Jesus' chest, and asked the question. The answer was, it was to whom Jesus ceremoniously gave the piece of bread dipped in gravy. Then he turned and gave it to Judas, telling him to go and do his deed quickly. (John 13:22-25)

John explains:

He [Judas] then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night (**John 13:30**).

Jesus is the light of the world, and Judas leaves him and goes out into the darkness of the night and his own soul.

The sacrament

With Judas gone, the meal continued, but Jesus did something unexpected. Early in the meal, the host would present to the group three pieces of unleavened bread. The **middle one**, today called the **afikoman**, would be removed from the other two, broken, and hidden, to be found later by children in the company. Jews argued over the symbolism of the three pieces, but it must be clear to us—it is the Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The middle piece, the Son, is removed, broken, and set aside, just as Jesus would be removed from the presence of the Father, broken, killed, and buried in a tomb. Then he would be found—resurrected.

It was very probably when this bread was 'found' and brought to Jesus that he took that bread, which represented him and his impending sacrifice, and distributed it among the disciples, saying, "Take it, and eat. Behold, this is for you to do in remembrance of my body; for as oft as ye do this you will remember this hour that I was with you" (**JST Mark 14:22**).

With the third cup of wine of the Seder, the company all recited a prayer that Elijah would soon come and usher in the coming of the Messiah, ending with, "May He who is most merciful, make us worthy to behold the day of the Messiah." This cup was known by the name, "**I Will Redeem You**." Like all Passover wine, it was **red** in color, symbolizing the blood of the lambs spread on the doorposts. Probably using this cup, Jesus applied it to himself, saying, "This is in remembrance of my blood which is shed for many, and the new testament [covenant] which I give unto you; for of me, ye shall bear record unto all the world. And as oft as ye do this ordinance, you will remember me in this hour that I was with you, and drank with you of this cup, even the last time in my ministry" (**JST Mark 14:24**).

The hymn

At the end of the meal, the group sang the customary **Hallel** hymns, Psalms 113-118, (which include phrases rich with Messianic meaning, such as:

'Who is like Jehovah our God, who is enthroned on high, who humbles himself to behold things in heaven, and in the earth!'

'The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me.'

'Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of His godly ones. O Jehovah, surely I am your servant, I am your servant, the son of your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds.'

'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is Jehovah's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which Jehovah has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. . . . Blessed is he who comes in the name of Jehovah; we have blessed you from the house of Jehovah. Jehovah is God, and He has given us light; bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I give thanks to you.'

To Gethsemane

The group then left the upper room. It was late at night and the streets of the city were relatively empty since most were either finishing up their meal or sleeping. The group moved through the city, north past Herod's lavish palace, then turned east and up toward the bridge spanning the Tyropean valley and leading into the temple courtyard. As they walked, Jesus **continued to teach** them.

Jesus told them some astounding news: not just one of them but *all* of them would **stumble** because of him this night, and they would **scatter** like sheep. (The word "offended" in the KJV means 'to trip over a rock in the path' or stumble.) Peter boldly answered, 'Although all men shall stumble because of you, yet I will never stumble.' Smiling kindly, Jesus told Peter he had **prayed for him**, that his faith wouldn't fail. Peter was saddened by these words, for they implied that his faith would fail without Jesus' prayers, and he declared that he would follow his Master even to death. Somber now, Jesus pointedly told his senior apostle that on that very night, Peter would **deny knowing him** three times—then would the rooster crow. Peter reemphasized his commitment and the other disciples jumped in, agreeing. Jesus said no more on the subject. (Mark 14:28-31)

Teachings

Jesus taught them many things while in the city and temple:

- **John 14:6** *I am the way, the truth, and the life* – This is the first time Jesus called himself "the way." Later in the book of Acts, his followers will call their whole movement "The Way," based on this statement.
- **John 14:16** – He and the Father would send another Comforter (*paracletos*, meaning helper, intercessor, aide, assistant).
- **John 15:12-17** – He told them to love one another.
- **John 15:18-27** – He said they would be persecuted.
- **John 16:33** – But he said, 'be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.'

Entering the vast enclosure of the temple courtyard, where earlier thousands had gathered to slaughter lambs in anticipation of the sacrifice of the Messiah, but which now stood deserted but for the ever-vigilant Roman soldiers patrolling the perimeter, he gathered them around, and lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven in a **high-priestly prayer** in John 17. The prayer was mostly about the disciples with him, and about us, as he prayed that we would be united with the Father as he was. That he could put so much emphasis on others in this prayer at such a critical moment in his own life, when surely he felt the weight of what was about to happen, shows the depth of his love for us.

Gethsemane

They exited the temple courtyard through the eastern **Susa Gate** and descended the stairs to the **Kidron** valley. Appropriately, the stream in the valley would be filled with **blood and water** on this night, the result of the priests washing out the temple courtyard after killing so many lambs. Crossing a bridge over the valley, they climbed partway up the **Mount of Olives**, walking by the light of the **full moon**. Passing through a gate in a stone fence, they entered a small, private garden or orchard owned by someone friendly to Jesus. The place was called '**Gethsemane**,' the olive oil press, an appropriate name for what was about to happen there as Jesus would be weighed down by the sins of the world. The disciples knew he often came here to escape the noise of the crowds, and to pray.

In the garden, Jesus instructed everyone to sit down and be comfortable while he prayed. The cool Spring-time air was perhaps refreshing after the crowded confines of the upper room, and the group settled in, soon asleep, perhaps in some of the shallow **caves** that offered protection from the night. Jesus, however, took **Peter, James, and John** a little distance away, telling them his soul was sorrowful even unto death, and asking them to stay awake with him, then he moved alone deeper into the garden. Luke's language tells us it was hard for Jesus to tear himself away from his friends and disciples.

As the burden of the sins of the world weighed down on him, he first knelt, but then **fell prostrate** on the ground, face down, in the most humble position of prayer, and cried out, 'Father, all things are possible unto thee; take this cup away from me!' A **cup** is a metaphor for a person's fate, what they are destined to suffer or to achieve. Then in his greatest act of submission, he surrendered everything to his Father with the words, 'Nevertheless, **not my will**, but Thine be done.'

Though we don't know for how long, this went on for quite a while. At some point he rose and went back to the three apostles whom he had left watching. Finding them **asleep**, he woke them up and rebuked them, especially Peter: 'What, could you not stay awake with me one hour?' We wonder, how could they sleep at a time like this? Perhaps it was the lateness of the hour after a long day; perhaps it was the Passover wine which they had earlier enjoyed. Luke and the Joseph Smith Translation make it clear, however, that they were weighed down with a similar **sorrow** to the Savior, and that physical and psychological burden exhausted them. Thus their reply that the **spirit** was **willing** but the **flesh weak** makes sense. Jesus admonished them to wakefulness and prayer so they might be strengthened for the challenges coming their way shortly.

Jesus then retreated a **second** time, but now having settled the question of submission, his prayer was different: 'If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.' At some point during this experience, Luke records that an **angel** came to strengthen him. Perhaps it was Gabriel who delivered the news of his birth to Mary, Joseph, and Zacharias, or perhaps it was Michael, the first Adam, offering comfort to the second Adam in his moment of greatest need. The burden became so great that Luke says he **sweated blood**, with "great drops . . . falling down to the ground."

After some additional prayer, he returned, only to find his key apostles once again **asleep**. He woke them but either through embarrassment or grogginess, they had no response to him. So he left them a **third** time, continuing his great and incomprehensible act of taking upon himself our sins, pains, burdens, illnesses, and more, and of paying a price to redeem us from a prison from which we could not possibly escape ourselves. He became the grace of God, the gift from the Father to mankind and the whole universe. But his suffering was not yet over.

A third time he returned to his closest mortal associates, and this time simply **let them continue sleeping**. The exhausted but triumphant Jesus, having defeated sin and Satan, **waited alone** in the dark and cool night air. He looked at his sleeping disciples, those who had not been able to stay awake while he labored for their benefit, but for whom he felt only love, letting them sleep while waiting for the next step in his atoning process. Finally, seeing torches in the distance, he woke them all up, saying, '**Arise**, and let us be going; behold, he who betrays me is at hand.'

The Arrest

Though scripture doesn't inform us of **Judas' actions** immediately after he left the upper room earlier that evening, he had no doubt gone to the home of **Caiaphas**, the high priest. Interrupting their Passover meal, he had probably asked to see the high priest in private, then delivered the news that he could lead them to Jesus that night. Caiaphas sent messengers to gather **temple police** (Levites trained in defense), a **tribune** ("captain" in John), and supporting **Roman soldiers**—what the King James Version calls "a band" but which in Greek says 'a **cohort**' meaning a tenth of a legion—showing Pilate was complicit with the whole plot from the beginning. Soon the large contingent of guards and soldiers

bearing lances and swords gathered, probably at the temple compound. There would be no chance of Jesus' small band of disciples successfully fighting back this night. Lighting torches, Judas led the troops to the place he knew Jesus liked to go—Gethsemane.

The captors led by Judas descended from the temple and crossed the Kidron bridge, their torches making them visible to Jesus and his followers through that whole area. The tension among the disciples must have been high. Perhaps they thought, as we might: '**Jesus, run!** The road to Bethany is before us, we can outpace them and get to safety in the hills. Quick, hide!' But Jesus majestically stood and watched them come up the hill and into the garden. **Five times** he had told his disciples that this was going to happen, but until this moment—indeed, even at this moment—they seem not to have understood.

When the group approached Jesus and his disciples, Judas approached the Master and **kissed** him lightly on the cheek. There were two symbolismisms associated with Judas' action. First, a disciple would kiss his master to indicate that they were in **full fellowship**, which Judas clearly wasn't. Second, a kiss was a symbol of **peace** between two people, and Judas ironically used it to start the violence that would lead to Jesus' death. So the sign the traitor used to betray Jesus was a double condemnation of his own treachery, as we hear in Jesus' question: "Judas, wherefore are you come to betray me with a kiss?"

Earlier that evening an inventory of the weaponry available among the disciples came up with two short **swords**—long knives, really. We don't know who had the other one, but Peter had one. Seeing now that the arresting party was determined to take away his Master, **Peter** stepped forward and slashed at one of the leaders of the group, a servant of the high priest Caiaphas named **Malchus**, cutting off his right **ear**. But before he could do any more damage, Jesus stopped him and told him to sheath his sword, noting that those who live by the sword shall die by it. Then he touched Malchus' ear and **healed** him. Turning to his apostles, he reminded them that he could surely call down **twelve legions** of **angels**—about 72,000—to save him, if that was the Father's will.

Jesus turned back to the arresting group and said, perhaps with some sadness in his voice, 'Have you come to arrest me like I am a **common thief**, with swords and lances? Yet **everyday** I sat openly in the **temple** teaching the people, and no one bothered me.'

Jesus asked the army again what they wanted and they replied, perhaps more meekly now, "Jesus of Nazareth." He repeated that he was the one and told them to let his other disciples go. Surely with some hesitation now, after witnessing Jesus' power in word and deed, someone nevertheless stepped forward and **bound Jesus**. In fear but perhaps with Jesus' gentle encouragement so their lives would be spared, the **disciples fled** the scene.

Before Annas and Caiaphas

The first place they took the bound Jesus was the large home near the temple of the former high priest, **Annas**. Though Annas had not been high priest for about 15 years, he still was referred to as "high priest" much as a bishop retains the title for life, and was a major power-broker in Jerusalem politics. Nearly all of the high priests after him until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were either a son, grandson, or son-in-law. The purpose of Annas' interview was not to put Jesus on trial, but to attempt to **establish the outcome** they already wanted—his death. Annas asked Jesus to explain his doctrine, but Jesus reminded him that he taught openly in the temple, so Annas should ask those who heard him. Thinking Jesus was being disrespectful, one of the temple guards **slapped** him on the face. Unperturbed, Jesus asked them to state what he had done to deserve such treatment. Frustrated, Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, his son-in-law and the current high priest.

At **Caiaphas'** house, others of the leaders of the Jews had gathered. They had also brought **witnesses**—**false** ones, it turned out, who couldn't agree with each other about what Jesus said or did. Losing patience, Caiaphas asked Jesus if he had any response to the witnesses, but Jesus didn't answer. He stood calmly, majestically, waiting for the right moment. Finally, Caiaphas blurted out, 'Are you the **Messiah**, the son of the Blessed?' How ironic that he showed respect to God by not using his name while attempting to trap God's son in his words and kill him. In response to this question, Jesus finally spoke: '**I am**, and you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' No clearer statement of his claim to be the Son of God could have been uttered to this learned audience. But they only heard the words they wanted. "**Blasphemy!**" they cried, and condemned him to death. The guards who held him now spit in his face, and mocked him. They **blindfolded** and **hit** him, then demanded that he **prophesy** who had done it. Jesus remained silent.

Peter's denials

In the meantime, **Peter** had secretly followed Jesus from the arrest on the Mount of Olives to Annas' and now Caiaphas' homes. Aided by another disciple who had access to the high priest's home—perhaps Nicodemus—Peter gained entrance **inside the gate** where he stood with others warming their hands on a small fire. He was downstairs and outside in the courtyard, while Jesus was being questioned upstairs in the residence. Surely fearful for his own safety, Peter did his best to watch but **stay unrecognized**. However, a **woman** did recognize him, and asked him if he wasn't one of Jesus' disciples. He **denied** it, saying, 'I don't know what you're talking about.' Soon another **woman** saw him and said, 'You are one of them also,' and Peter again **denied** being a disciple of Jesus. One of the high priest's **servants**, came and found Peter. He was the relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off in the arrest, and he had seen the whole incident. He said, 'Didn't I see you in the **garden** tonight with Jesus? Your **speech** shows that you are his follower.' And Peter **denied** his association with Jesus a **third time**. just as a **rooster** crowed. As this happened, Jesus must have been being moved to another room and passed through the courtyard, because he turned and caught Peter's eye. Immediately, Peter remembered the words spoken only a few hours before, that he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. Hadn't he declared that he would defend Jesus with his own life? Now here he was hiding and lying to save his own skin. Overcome with **grief**, Peter **fled** the courtyard, fell on his face, and **wept** bitterly. He would not see Jesus again as a mortal.

Meanwhile, **Judas** brought the silver he'd received for his betrayal back to the leaders of the Jews and said, "I have **betrayed** the innocent blood." But they mocked him, telling him his sins were on his own head. Judas **threw** down the **coins**, left Jerusalem, got a **rope**, and tied it to a **tree** hanging over a **cliff** and to his neck. Leaping off the cliff, he strangled himself, but either the rope or the tree branch **broke**, and he fell down the cliff, his guts coming out of his broken body when it landed. The Jewish leaders debated what to do with the thirty pieces of silver, seeing it was 'blood money.' In the end, they purchased a field to use to bury strangers and called it 'the field of blood.'

Jesus before Pilate and Herod

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of the province of Judea. He lived on the coast in Caesarea, and acted under the authority of the regional governor in Antioch, Syria. On this Passover, he had been in his position for about **four years**, ruling with an iron hand over what he regarded as obstinate Jews; he had killed many of them for insurrection, especially at the times of great feasts. That was why he was in Jerusalem at this time, taking up residence at the **Antonia Fortress** attached to the north end of the temple courtyard. He wanted to keep an eye on things and be **prepared** for any problems. One of those problems, according to the Jewish leaders, was Jesus. He had the opportunity to see Jesus early on Friday morning when the Jewish leaders brought him bound into the Praetorium, Pilate's residence in the Fortress. He was up anyway—he liked to rise before the sun so he could finish his official business by mid-day. Alerted to

their arrival as the eastern sky just started to brighten, he came out and faced them as they stood on the massive stones that made up the floor of the Antonia courtyard.

His first question was, ‘**What accusation** do you bring against this man?’ The Jewish leaders, knowing that Pilate would not try Jesus on the charge of blasphemy, changed their charges against him to three things: **provoking a riot**, **forbidding** to pay **taxes**, and **proclaiming himself** the Messiah, or Jewish **king**. Pilate knew all about men who claimed they were the messiah as they had caused him many problems during his years governing this province. He took Jesus into his judgment hall, sat on his seat, and asked him forthrightly: ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is **not of this world**.’ ‘Ah, but you are a king then?’ Pilate prodded. Jesus replied, ‘For this reason was I born, and for this cause did I come into the world, that I would bear witness of the truth.’ Pilate, who was a practical man, who successfully dealt with the politics of Judah and Rome, and who likely didn’t have many absolutes in his life, looked at Jesus, and asked rhetorically, ‘**What is truth?**’ Without waiting for an answer, he returned Jesus to the Jews, declaring he found **no fault** in him.

Before Herod

This was not the result the Jewish leaders sought. They began to accuse Jesus of many crimes. At one point Pilate heard them say he was from **Galilee**. Seeing a possible way out of this predicament, he sent Jesus to **Herod Antipas**, who had jurisdiction over Galilee. Like Pilate, Herod often came to Jerusalem for the great feasts. He had a spacious palace there, built by his father. So the soldiers marched Jesus from Antonia to the Hasmonean palace, again through the temple courtyard and over the Tyropean valley to the great building near the western outer wall. Herod was actually quite excited about Jesus coming to him—he had **wanted to see** this man for some time.

As Jesus stood before Herod, the earthly king of the Jews asked the eternal King of the Jews many questions. But **Jesus never opened his mouth**. He had so little respect for Herod that he would not give him the pleasure of even hearing his voice. The Jewish leaders again cried out against him but still Jesus said not a word. Herod’s soldiers hit and mocked him. Though annoyed, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate without any judgment against him.

Before Pilate again

Back at Antonia Fortress, Jesus stood before Pilate again, and the Jewish leaders hurled their accusations at him. But Pilate was clear: ‘I have questioned him on these crimes, and so has Herod. Neither of us believe he is guilty of death. Therefore, I will have him **whipped** and **release** him.’ Each great feast Pilate had a custom of releasing one prisoner, as a token of generosity to the people. Seeing this as a good compromise, he offered Jesus as the prisoner to be released this day.

But the Jews had anticipated this move, and planted people in the crowd who instead called for the release of **Barabbas**. Barabbas is not, of course, a name, but a title, meaning ‘son of the father.’ Some manuscripts of the New Testament give this man’s name as **Yeshua**, which we would translate into English as Jesus. So he was called Jesus, son of the father. He was a criminal, guilty of **insurrection** himself. How ironic that he was the one the Jews in the courtyard of Antonia supported against Jesus, the true Son of the Father. Pilate offered them a choice between the two Jesuses, and they cried out for Barabbas’ release. In their anger, they even told Pilate, ‘Deliver Jesus to us to be crucified!’ They were, in essence, **mocking Pilate**, saying, ‘If you’re too scared to do it, give him to us and we’ll crucify him.’ They couldn’t, of course, under Roman law. But the force of their statement seems to have taken Pilate by surprise.

Now Pilate was seeing the full extent of the hatred the Jewish leaders had against Jesus of Nazareth and their manipulation of the circumstances. He was being **out-politicked**. Crying out again that he did not find Jesus worthy of death, he repeated his sentence: Jesus would be whipped and released. Accordingly, he instructed his soldiers to take him away and do so.

Pre-crucifixion

The soldiers took Jesus into the area for the **punishment** of prisoners there at the fortress. They called together the whole **cohort**—500-600 men. This was to be a most public **humiliation**. They took off his outer clothing, leaving him standing in only his loincloth. Then they put a **purple robe** on him, to mock the charge of ‘king of the Jews.’ But they went much further. They made a **crown** of sharp thorns and pushed it onto his head, drawing blood in many places. They put a **reed** in his hand, representing the scepter of a king, then **bowed** down mockingly, saluting him as the king of the Jews. The soldiers then placed Jesus on a human-sized **game board** of sorts that they had fashioned in the open area. They would roll some dice and move him accordingly, performing different punishments on him depending on where he landed—hitting him, mocking him, spitting on him, or taking the reed in his hand and hitting him on the head with it, driving the thorns even deeper into his skull.

After this disdainful treatment, they removed the robe and **tied his hands** through two rings attached to a pole. Lifting the rings, Jesus was forced face-first next to the pole, immobilized with arms raised in the air. Then they whipped him using a Roman **scourge**—a leather whip with multiple strands, each of which had small pieces of metal or bone attached so as to rip flesh on contact. They whipped him on his back, shoulders, and sides. Many died from the scourging alone. Releasing him from the pole, they put the robe back on him and dragged him back to Pilate.

Walking the bleeding Jesus out before the crowd, Pilate gave them another chance. He had done what he said and was ready to release Jesus. “**Behold, the man!**” he cried. But the Jews only response was, “**Crucify him, crucify him!**”

Pilate made a final attempt to persuade the people waiting in the courtyard that he was finished with Jesus. Sensing they were about to lose their goal of killing Jesus, the Jewish leaders played their final card. ‘If you let this man go,’ they said, ‘**you are not Caesar’s friend**. Any man who makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.’ This was a very real threat to Pilate. Like most governors, he was guilty of abusing his office. Normally, though, a governor had strong supporters in Rome who could speak in his behalf. But Pilate’s supporter, **Sejanus**, had recently fallen from favor and been killed. This left Pilate **vulnerable**. In fact, in a few years’ time, complaints from the Jews will get Pilate removed from office and sent into exile, so this is **no idle threat**, and Pilate knew it. **Outmaneuvered**, he **pragmatically** released Barabbas, washed his hands before them of the whole affair, and sent Jesus off with the soldiers to be crucified.

Crucifixion

Two criminals were already scheduled to be crucified that day; the addition of Jesus made three. The soldiers took the purple robe off Jesus, **chained** his feet so he could only take small steps, and placed a heavy **wooden beam** across his shoulders, probably even tying his hands to it so he couldn’t drop it. Unlike in most movies (and the picture in the slide), he just carried the horizontal beam of his cross, the rest was fixed in place at the location of crucifixion.

Jesus and the other two men to be crucified were **led through town**, chained together and each carrying their crossbeam, pushed along by the soldiers who were impatient to get to the task. This public procession was quite intentional; like crucifixion itself, it was meant to deter others from the same crimes. Family and friends often followed them along, lamenting the whole proceeding. In Jesus’ case, the only ones bold enough to associate with him were the **women**. The men, perhaps still hiding after the events in the garden just a few hours previous, are not mentioned.

Weakened from Gethsemane and the many beatings he had received at the hands of the Jews and Romans, Jesus appears not to have been able to carry his cross, or perhaps he was just walking too slowly for the impatient soldiers. He was holding up the whole procession. They grabbed a man who was standing on the side of the road, **Simon of Cyrene**, and tied the crossbeam to his shoulders instead.

In Jerusalem, the place of public crucifixion had a name: **Golgotha**. In Hebrew and Aramaic, this means ‘a skull.’ We don’t know why it was called this; perhaps it was the shape of the place that somehow evoked the name; perhaps it was simply because of the deaths that happened here. The JST says it was because it was also a place of burial.

In the scriptures, it next says quite simply, “And they **crucified him**.” In their day, that’s all they needed to say because everyone knew what that meant. But since we have thankfully not witnessed it in our day, some additional explanation can be helpful. The soldiers first stripped the victims **naked** for total humiliation. Later they will divide the clothing among themselves. They laid Jesus and the other two men on the ground, armed stretched across the beams. They took rusty iron **nails** about 4-5 inches long, and carefully pounded them into their **hands** and **wrists** at precise locations that would inflict maximum **pain** but also sustain the weight of the body without damaging major blood vessels that would bring death more quickly. (Unlike many paintings and videos you see, the other two men crucified that day were certainly nailed to their crosses also. The concept that they were tied developed to make Jesus’ suffering appear greater, but has no basis in history.) With arms secured, the crossbeam was lifted and set into place. Again, the image we sometimes have of a single pole is not correct. There was typically a **scaffolding system** in place to support the crucifixion process, including beams and pulleys to lift and lower the men. Soldiers also used forked sticks to help lift the crossbeam into place. Crosses were also not tall, usually just big enough for the height of a man. Jesus’ **feet**, nailed through the side of each ankle into either side of the vertical pole, would have been just a few inches from the ground. The ankle nails were driven through the large bone in the ankle in order to give the victim the ability to push up and temporarily relieve the strain on the upper body, though in the process of doing so the **wounds** on their **backs** from the flogging would be torn open against the rough wood, with the accompanying bleeding and pain.

Crucifixion was an incredibly cruel form of capital punishment. Death occurred after a loss of **blood, exposure, and exhaustion**, which triggered **heart failure, brain damage, suffocation, and shock**. As the victim hung from his arms, his chest muscles tightened and had spasms, making breathing very difficult, so he **lifted** himself on his feet to relieve the pressure. But soon the pain in the legs became too great, and he would transfer his weight back to his arms, starting the cycle over again. It’s easy to understand that our English word “**excruciating**” comes the Latin term *excruciatius*, meaning ‘out of the cross.’

Jesus was placed in the **center** of the three men because, following the Roman custom, he was most the most **notorious** or well-known of the three.

To make sure everyone knew who he was, Pilate deviated from the normal practice of tying a **board** or *titulus* around the victim’s neck with his crimes inscribed. Instead, he had a board attached above Jesus’ head that read, in Greek, Latin, and Aramaic, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” The leaders of the Jews complained that it should read only that he *claimed* to be the king of the Jews, but Pilate had had enough. They got the crucifixion they wanted but what he wrote stood.

Jesus was placed on the cross at about **9:00 am**. He hung there for about six hours, being **mocked** by passers-by, Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers, and even one of the men crucified with him, who taunted him to come down from the cross if he were truly the Son of God. This was no idle challenge. The Law of Moses makes it clear that anyone hung on a tree is **cursed of God**. Thus the fact that he was crucified, in their minds, **proved** he was not the Messiah, because the Messiah would not be cursed of God. All he had to do was come down from the cross and not die, and everyone would acknowledge him as the true Messiah. Of course, he had the power to do exactly what they dared him to do, but do so would ironically rob him of his position at Messiah because he would be disobeying the Father. Later, **Paul** will teach that Jesus *was* cursed of God on the cross, just as the Law declares. The difference with Jesus was that he was not cursed for his own sins, but **for ours**. The Son of God took our curse upon him and bore it without hesitation.

During the time Jesus hung on the cross, he made **seven** recorded **statements**. No single author captures all seven—in fact, Matthew and Mark have one, Luke three, and John three. Three were quotes or paraphrases from Psalms. **Three** were for the benefit of **others**—forgiving the soldiers, teaching the thief, and requesting that John care for his mother. **Two** concerned **his situation**—feeling forsaken and thirsty. And **two concluded his earthly mission**—“It is finished” (or as the JST puts it, “Father, it is finished, thy will is done”) and “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” It was a quote from the 31st Psalm. Jesus uttered it in the position of prayer, arms raised, head lifted toward heaven. Saying this, he lowered his head and slumped on the cross as he released his eternal spirit from his mortal body.

Burial

Jewish law forbid men to hang on a cross overnight, and especially not on the Sabbath. So just before evening the Romans went to **break the legs** of the victims in order to hasten their deaths. Besides the pain from the broken bones and the potential for bleeding and clots, without the ability to push up with their legs and relieve the pressure on their arms and chest, they would quickly suffocate and die. They broke the legs of the two men beside Jesus, but noticed that he appeared to be already dead. This was unusual, so to be sure, they took a spear and **stabbed him** in the side. If he was still alive, he would react, but Jesus did not. So they took him down from the cross and prepared to put his body into a common grave reserved for criminals that were no longer worthy of a normal burial.

Anticipating this event, **Joseph of Arimathea**, a member of the Sanhedrin and a wealthy but secret disciple of Jesus, had gone to Pilate requesting his body. Granted his request, he and **Nicodemus**, another Sanhedrin leader and follower of Jesus now, directed their servants to carry Jesus’ bloody and broken body to a **private tomb** owned by Joseph. They wrapped it in the finest linen, and put spices on it that would preserve it for a time. They worked in haste because the Sabbath was about to begin. They placed Jesus’ body in the tomb, and rolled a great stone in front of the door. All of this was observed by certain Galilean women who were close to Jesus—indeed, they were some of his best disciples. They prepared all they needed to come back after the Sabbath and do properly what this evening had been done in haste. Thus Jesus’ body spent Saturday in the tomb.

The Jewish leaders, probably already upset because Pilate had allowed the body to be treated with respect instead of like most criminals, wanted to be sure that Jesus’ disciples couldn’t steal his body and claim that he had risen from the dead. They fully understood the prophecies that he had made concerning his own fate. So they went to Pilate and requested a **guard** be placed at the **tomb**. The Roman guards stationed there must have seen great irony in guarding the body of a dead man, but they did so both by their presence and by placing a rope across the stone and the wall above it, with wax melted at both ends to secure it. Any tampering with the stone would be indicated by the broken wax.

Resurrection

Early **Sunday morning**, even before sunrise, several **women**, including Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb carrying spices and more linen wrappings. They wanted to correctly **prepare Jesus’ body for burial** as a gesture of their love and respect for him. We can picture them quietly making their way through the city and out the gate to the place where they had watched Joseph and his men. They were dressed in mourning clothes—**sackcloth**, or a rough garment of goat hair—with their faces covered, **ashes** on their heads, **fasting**, and sleepy from ‘watching’ all night, fresh tears evident on their faces. Partway there, one of them remembered that a great stone had been rolled over the door. How would they move it without the men? They don’t seem to have known of the soldiers guarding the tomb.

Meanwhile, those soldiers were still standing guard over a dead man’s tomb. Suddenly, the ground began to **shake** and **two men** in glorious white descended from the sky. Approaching the tomb, these heavenly beings **rolled back the stone**. The Roman guards fell to the ground in **fear**, then **fled** the scene.

Thus when the women arrived at the tomb, they saw the stone already rolled away. No doubt puzzled but also grateful, they began to approach it when there appeared **two men** in white sitting on the stone. In fear, they didn't know what to think, but the angels said, 'Don't be afraid. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.' Then surely in a voice of triumph and praise, they said, '**He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.**' The women came with great grief to prepare his body for final burial. Instead they found glorious angels proclaiming him alive again. Disaster turned to delight; a curse became a blessing; a tragedy turned to triumph. No greater words have ever been spoken to calm the fears and still the heart of humankind.

The chronology of exactly what happens next is difficult to determine. A number of people are going to **see Jesus as a resurrected being**, but the precise order of events is unknown, because each of the gospels tells the story from a different perspective. It appears, however, that when the women heard this news, they ran back to tell the disciples, who were probably staying in the upper room where the last supper was held.

Though their first reaction was that the women were crazy, **Peter** and **John** both **ran** back to the tomb to see for themselves, and Mary Magdalene and perhaps other women followed them. **John** arrived **first** and saw the empty tomb but didn't enter. **Peter** came next and ran right into tomb. There is no record of the angels being present at this time. The men saw the linen clothes that had wrapped Jesus' body, including the 'napkin' or the cloth wrapped around the head and tied under the chin to keep the mouth closed, all **neatly folded** on the preparation shelf cut into the rock where the body had been. Grave robbers don't take a body and leave the clothing behind, and certainly wouldn't fold it all up. Peter and John were thus the first witnesses of the empty tomb. Shortly after, the women arrived for the second time. After some hasty discussion, the group dispersed each to the various places they were staying for Passover.

But **Mary Magdalene lingered** behind. She was confused. Was Jesus risen or his body stolen? She'd seen and heard the angels, but could it be real? Certainly dead people had been brought back—Jesus himself had done it several times. But no one had ever come back from the dead like this, without an authorized prophet doing it. Can a dead man raise himself?

As Mary pondered all of this and wept softly, she saw a **man** approaching. Whether due to the early hour, her tears, or another reason, she didn't recognize the man. He addressed her politely, asking, '**Woman, why are you crying?**' She inquired if he knew what has happened to the body of her Master. The man gave a one word reply that changed her life: "**Mary.**" She cried out in joy and hugged his legs. He gently had her release him, saying, '**Hold me not**, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say to them that I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.'" After Jesus left, Mary ran back to find Peter and the others, and told them—'I have seen him!' As the first witness of the risen Lord, Mary essentially became the first apostle, sent to witness to the apostles.

Sometime that morning Peter perhaps took a walk or otherwise found himself alone. We don't know the details because we only have a passing reference to his experience in scripture, but the resurrected Lord **came to Peter**. We can only imagine their conversation, and perhaps there was a brief discussion about Peter's denials, but more importantly they surely talked about the future of the Church. Jesus was, no doubt, giving Peter guidance and comfort relative to the task he had no taken on as leader of the disciples of Christ.

That evening as this group of disciples were sharing their meal, **Jesus appeared**, taught them, and let them touch his hands and feet. He joined them in their meal and **ate** with them, then he **taught** them the scriptures, and they understood the ancient writings as never before, both because Jesus was teaching them plainly and because they could now see how they were fulfilled in him.

There were **many other appearances** in the next **forty days** with many teachings and lessons. **Cloepas** and his companion—probably his wife—on the road to Emmaus; **Thomas**, the only member of the Eleven who was absent that first night; and Jesus’ brother, **James**, who prior to the resurrection had not been supportive of Jesus’ ministry, but soon became a church leader who wrote a letter that a young farm boy in New York would read almost 1800 years later, triggering a prayer and a vision that is one of the greatest of all time. Of course, Jesus also appeared to the **Nephites** at the temple in Bountiful, to the ten **lost tribes**, to **Saul** on the road to Damascus, and surely to many others not recorded in scripture. Over the next few days, including Easter Sunday, I hope you’ll take the opportunity to read several of these stories.

That is why we celebrate Easter: a host of witnesses that would stand up in any court of law have personally and in great detail testified that the tomb was not only empty, but that the man buried in it is risen and alive today. His body has been changed, perfected, and glorified, but it is permanently joined with his spirit, and he sits at the right hand of the Father, having done everything the Father asked him to do. He came the first time as the **suffering servant**, the Messiah who redeems us from death and hell. He will come again in our time as the **triumphant king**, the Messiah who delivers the world from all evil and institutes a glorious reign of worldwide peace.

This is the Messiah that we, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, worship, honor, and love. This is the Christ that we strive to emulate, our Savior, our Redeemer, our King. Of his atonement and resurrection, I bear testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.