

EYEWITNESSES TO EASTER



**DAILY BIBLE READINGS
KING OF KINGS
13TH APRIL TO 20TH APRIL 2014**

For many of us the Easter story is so familiar – each year we celebrate and read the same Scriptures. But this year I want us to look again in awe and wonder at the description of the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. To look at it through the eyes of people who were there, who took part, people who participated in those last days. I want us to see again and to live that week through the eyewitnesses, to put ourselves in their shoes, to imagine what that week was like.

Sunday 13th April

Through the Eyes of the Crowd

Read: John 12:1-19 & Matthew 21:1-11

What an amazing atmosphere there must have been when Jesus rode into Jerusalem! The crowd shouted for their King, they recognised Him as Saviour shouting 'Hosanna', which means 'save us'. Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem – the crowd's expectations were high. Jesus' reputation had gone before Him. John 12:17 says that the people had heard about the raising of Lazarus so people were expecting big things from Jesus. Imagine yourself in the crowd, imagine how it would feel to be there when the Saviour of the World rode into town. How do you respond to Easter – do you have the same excitement for the King of Kings, are you eager to tell people what He has done? As we start our Easter Week journey spend some time thanking Jesus for coming as our Saviour.

Monday 14th April

The view of the Religious Elite

Read: Matthew 21:12-27 & Matthew 26:1-5

Yesterday we caught some of the crowd's excitement about Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. Yet in the background there was a simmering, underlying tension with the religious authorities – they hated Jesus and wanted to silence Him. Everything that He taught undermined their authority and position – they were the religious elite, the top dogs and Jesus was a threat to their power. It may be hard for us to imagine ourselves into the Pharisees' and Sadducees' shoes but the question that we each need to ask is 'Who has the authority and power in your life'? Many people live in a power struggle with Jesus – they want Him to be Saviour yet they don't want to give up control. As you read about Jesus and the power struggles with the authorities, spend some time today looking at your own life – who has the ultimate power in your life?

Tuesday 15th April

The Confused Disciples

Read: Matthew 26:17-30 & John 13:1-30

The Disciples did not realise that this would become known as the Last Supper – the last meal they would eat with Jesus before He was crucified. Jesus tried to explain to them what would happen, but they could not get their heads around it. He explained that He came as a servant, that His body would be broken, that His blood would be shed. The Disciples could not conceive of it. While Jesus was explaining everything to them a traitor sat amongst them, one who had sold Jesus to the religious authorities. We cannot begin to understand Judas' motives. Was He disappointed that Jesus was not a political Messiah or maybe it was just the money? We have the wonderful benefit of knowing the ending to the story – the crucifixion for sins and the glorious resurrection. Praise God that Jesus submitted to the Father's plan.

Wednesday 16th April

Peter, Jesus' passionate follower

Read: John 13:31-38 & Matthew 26.47-56

Peter was Jesus' most gung ho supporter – he was an enthusiastic man who believed that he would support Jesus to the death. So when Jesus said that Peter would deny him, Peter was shocked. Yet Jesus knew His friend better than Peter knew himself. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane Peter was quick to defend Him with his sword. However just a few short hours later Peter is scared and denying he ever met Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75). Imagine yourself in Peter's position – Jesus has been arrested and things are looking bad, what would you do? Think about your life now – do you still stand by Jesus when the going gets tough? Pray that you will not deny the Lord in subtle or direct ways.

Thursday 17th April

Pilate the Middleman

Read: Matthew 26:27-68 & Matthew 27: 1-26

Jesus underwent trials by the Jewish religious authority, but as the Sanhedrin had no ultimate authority in Roman occupied Israel His final trial was before Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate seemed to be caught in the middle between the Jewish leaders and his wife's dream. So instead of making the decision of what to do with Jesus he passed the buck – he let the crowd and popular opinion make the choice. The crowd could choose between freeing a dangerous prisoner or freeing Jesus. Stirred by the chief priests and elders the crowd chose to release dangerous Barabbas. How terrible it would have been to be in amongst that crowd baying for Jesus' crucifixion. How confusing it was for Pilate – but he gave in to the pressure and ordered Jesus to be crucified. Can you imagine being there that day – how terrible to see Jesus so unjustly treated. Pray that you would walk justly and always seek to be merciful.

Friday 18th April

The Mocking Executioners

Read: Matthew 27: 27-56

Were the soldiers just doing their jobs? Why did they have to humiliate and beat Jesus? They mocked Him and spat on Him. Perhaps worried that the beating had been so hard on Jesus that He would die on the way they pulled a man from the crowd, Simon from Cyrene to carry the cross for Jesus. What a shocking scene to see the beaten Jesus pulled through the streets. Imagine yourself in that crowd. These same soldiers then took Jesus and nailed Him to the cross, all the time still mocking Him. Yet a few hours later, once Jesus had died and the earth had shook, one of them realised who this man was: **Surely he was the Son of God** (Matthew 27:54) What a terrible realisation when it was too late. Have you realised who Jesus is? Thank the Lord for carrying your sin on the cross and for paying its penalty. Praise Him for the gift of salvation.

Saturday 19th April

Joseph the Brave Follower

Read: Matthew 27:57-66

From amongst the followers of Jesus we see one man, Joseph of Arimathea, come forward to give Jesus a respectful burial. He lovingly washed Jesus' bruised and beaten body, wrapped Him in clean linens and placed Him in a new tomb. Unlike the other disciples Joseph was not ashamed to come forward and claim Jesus. By now the crowds of followers have disappeared – chants of 'Hosanna' and 'Crucify Him' are silenced. Jesus was dead and buried in a sealed tomb. The Disciples are stunned and scared, but they did not understand that death was not the end or the full stop. As you think today of Jesus lying in the tomb, understand the misery the disciples were in but also know with gladness and joy that tomorrow is Easter Sunday – the day of resurrection.

Sunday 20th April

The Ladies at the Tomb

Read: Matthew 28:1-10 & John 20:1-23

After a rollercoaster of a week we have reached Easter Sunday – the day when we proclaim ‘He is Risen’. What joy must have filled those ladies hearts when they realised that Jesus was alive. What a heart stopping moment! We are told that the disciples had been hiding out when the risen Jesus went to them. They had not had the courage of the ladies who had gone to tend to their friend Jesus. Their fear turned to immense joy – what a turn around. Everything that Jesus had tried to explain to them had come true. Sin’s penalty had been paid and death was defeated. Share their joy this morning – He is risen, He is risen indeed. Praise Him for new life and His power at work in you.

King of Kings Easter Services

Friday 18th April

- 09h00** **Good Friday
(Communion)**
- 15h00** **Outreach Drama
(Noordhoek Common)**

Sunday 20th April

- 06h45** **Sunrise Service
(St James Beach)**
- 09h00** **Easter Celebration**
- 18h00** **Worship Service**

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