

MONDAY 11 April 2022 "Holy Week" John 13:1-17

Good Monday morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

This is a very special week all around the world. Three significant world religions have 'holy days' during this season, did you know that? For more than 1 billion **Muslims**, their annual month of Ramadan began the evening of April 2nd, last Saturday, and will last 30 days. During this month Muslims will pray more earnestly; fast both faithfully and carefully; give more generously to the poor; and seek the favor of 'Allah' through all their efforts. For **Jews** around the world, their annual Passover festival begins at sundown on Friday April 15 and lasts until sundown April 23. During this Passover week Jews will celebrate their uniqueness as a '*people of God*' as recorded in Exodus, including their Passover Seder celebration meal. They will pray earnestly, both thanking God and requesting that God send their "Messiah". And for **Christians** worldwide, yesterday "Palm Sunday" began a week of honoring the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which, of course, culminates with Easter weekend, this year April 15,16,17.

In view of this, and more than 2.5 BILLION people around the world impacted by these spiritual festivities, I have an important question: *How do you think Almighty God views the religious activities of these three groups of people during these special days?*

Each of these groups has their 'holy books' which guide their attitudes and their actions. For **Muslims**, that book is the Quran. For **Jews** their book is the Old Testament of the Bible, and during Passover with special focus on the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. For **Christians**, our special focus during this time is the New Testament of the Bible and the four "Gospel" books of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John which each give us their account of Jesus' activities and teachings during this special week. Specifically, the sections of the four Gospels which pertain to this week in the life of Jesus are: Matthew 21-28; Mark 11-16; Luke 19-24 and John 12-21. While you'll find many similarities in these four distinct accounts, you'll also find many unique things in each so when we *put all four accounts together, we are then able to see a clear and remarkable picture of this week for Jesus which in fact changed the world and the eternal destiny POTENTIAL for every living person.*

I'd like to spend this week with you, my 'Walking with Jesus' friends, focusing on the events of Thursday, Passover evening; Friday, crucifixion day; dark Saturday; and of course, over the weekend we'll look at Easter Sunday. First, however, may I point out several significant things which occurred during this week as Jesus completed His journey toward what I've called 'His Easter'?

* *The intensity of confrontations between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem increased each day* as His teachings more and more focused on the failure of those religious leaders to faithfully teach the Scriptures accurately or lead the Jewish people to know God and recognize Jesus as their Messiah. (Matt. 23)

* Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples, *made a betrayal contract with the religious leaders, to hand Jesus over to them.* (Luke 22:1-6)

* Jesus engaged in some detailed teaching with His disciple regarding the kingdom of God, the end of time, God's judgement of all mankind, and His future return. (Luke 21; Matt. 24, 25)

* And finally, Jesus sent two of His disciples into Jerusalem to make preparations for their final evening together. (Luke 22:7-13)

John the disciple of Jesus who wrote the Gospel of John, gives us remarkable detail of that Thursday Passover evening which Jesus spent with His disciples in an 'upper room'. Let's join them there my friends. John writes: ***"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, Jesus now showed them the full extent of His love."*** (John 13:1) You may recall several months before when Jesus was attending a wedding in Cana, His mother Mary informed Him they had run out of wine. His response in that moment was ***"My time has not yet come."*** (John 2:4) Jesus' journey was very calculated, following carefully the leading of His Father, in accomplishing the Redemption mission for which He had come to earth. Now in this upper room, on Thursday evening of Passover week, John tells us *Jesus knew His time had come!* What time? *The time for Jesus to accomplish His Redemption assignment which would require His atonement death for the sins of the world, and then three days later, His resurrection, and then 40 days later, His ascension return back to heaven!*

Do you see John's focus on God's love? Remember Jesus had told Nicodemus that He, the Son of God, had come to earth sent by God's love for sin-condemned humanity! (John 3:16) *God's love required the ultimate sacrifice of His Son Jesus to pay the sin-condemnation price of death so humanity could be rescued from Satan's bondage!* (1 John 4:9,10) It was going to be Jesus' love for His Father and His love for humanity, which would give Jesus the strength to go through the horrificness of these next 24 hours. (Hebrews 12:2) By the way friends, no other author in the Bible focuses more on the love of God than John!

John's account of that Thursday evening continues: ***"The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas 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 Jesus got up from the meal, took off His outer garment and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that Jesus poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel."*** (John 13:2-5) Do you see again John's emphasis that *Jesus knew something very important that no one else knew that evening? Do you see the contrast of power?* Jesus had all power, and He knew the devil had prompted Judas to enter into a contract to betray Him. Yet, Jesus took up the water basin and towel to humble Himself in the action of a slave, washing the dirty feet of His disciples, including Judas who would betray Him and Peter who would deny he even knew Jesus!!

What spiritual power do you see on display in this my friends? What great outpouring of unconditional love do you see here?

This opening scene in the upper room with Jesus and His disciples is a picture of the entire Easter weekend. While opposition by religious leaders, indifference to Him by many people, and skepticism of His intentions by His followers all continued to escalate, *Jesus kept His heart focused on His love for His heavenly Father, His love for our sin enslaved humanity, and His passion to accomplish His Redemption mission.* Did you get that my friends?

While Jesus had unlimited power, which He had proved in His miracles, and Jesus was fully aware of Satan's evil schemes to oppose His accomplishment of His Redemption mission, *Jesus refrained from blocking Satan's strategies*, even allowing two of His own disciples to be drawn away from Him into sedition. I invite us to pause right here, remaining in this upper room in this private, intimate dinner, watching and listening closely. *What Jesus taught and did here was as much for you and me, 2000 years later, as it was for His disciples in that room that night.*

I urge you to listen to the dramatic, audio Bible reading of John 13:1-17, the link is at the conclusion of our reflection today. And here's a short but powerful song to help us reflect on this powerful moment in Jerusalem that Thursday evening which launched a remarkable 24 hours of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

Today's Scripture is John 13:1-17.