



FAITH matters

March 30, 2026

Yesterday, Palm Sunday, is another of the significant events of the Christian calendar, when believers throughout the world commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Historically, it marks the beginning of Holy Week, the remembrance and observance of the final days leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. In places where religious freedom is honored, worshipers can openly gather to exercise their expressions of faith. Yet, in certain countries, the same practices are dangerous; even forbidden. The faithful living under those restraints are subject to severe suppression, arrest, and murder.

Human nature hasn't changed much throughout history. The conflict between good and evil has been recognized and documented since the Garden of Eden. Separated from God, the free will of humankind is inclined to fall into dark places. Greed, jealousy, ignorance, and arrogance most often lead to deep rooted beliefs that have left millennia of bloodshed, suffering, and unresolved intolerance. It continues around the world to the present day. Rulers at many levels wield great power over religious

practices, even when wrong. The same was true during Biblical times.

Since infancy, Jesus was no stranger to treachery intended for him. From his early years, as his ministry and popularity increased, so did the resistance against him. The religious leaders in Jerusalem openly hated him. The rabbinical court overseeing Jewish law in Judea, the Sanhedrin, was comprised of 71 elite members from both the Sadducees and Pharisees; a select group of priests, scribes, and elders elevated to the lofty position, Caiaphas was the appointed high priest of this august group. The council had the authority to arrest, prosecute unlawful acts, and impose the death penalty by stoning for anyone who opposed their rulings.

Jesus of Nazareth fit that description. He had become too much of a disruptor, too independent of their teachings. He wasn't following the law, *their* law. He was a nobody, a charismatic blasphemer, the son of an obscure carpenter. The leaders persistently tried to entrap the young upstart, to publicly confront and invalidate his ministry, but each of their manipulative attempts had failed. They were becoming desperate. When Judas Iscariot offered to help them, for a fee, of course, they seized the unexpected opportunity.

All along, Jesus was fully aware of their hardened hearts and evil plots. The seven woes were strong words of rebuke because of their spiritual blindness. He called them "...whitewashed tombs...filled with dead people's bones...filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness...Snakes! Sons of vipers." (Matt. 23). He knew what lay ahead for him, all of it, but that was also why he came. The spotless Lamb of God was willing to sacrifice his life in order to open the way to the Father for all believers. "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that...he might make atonement for the sins of the people." (Heb. 2:16-17).

After sharing his final Passover meal with those whom he loved, the events of Good Friday are well recorded and familiar. After a staged arrest, Peter's denial, and the contrived trial before an outraged Caiaphas and late-night assembled council, he was mocked and beaten, then taken to the palace of Pilate the governor. By then, the Jewish leaders, along with the rabble gathered outside, were stirred to frenzy demanding death by crucifixion, a brutal punishment reserved for use only by the Roman government. Against his own better judgement, and a warning from his wife, Pilate agreed to the severity of the sentence.

For hours, Jesus endured the agony, humiliation, and abandonment of the cross; for his family and followers all hope of his earthly reign seemed lost. But this no ordinary death: the sun turned dark, the earth shook, rocks split apart, graves were opened, and the temple curtain tore in two from the top down when Jesus gave up his spirit. The seasoned centurion and other soldiers guarding Jesus trembled with fear. "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54).

What came next depicts a more humane side of the story. At great risk of their own reputations, two wealthy men, Joseph of Arimathea, a Sadducee, and Nicodemus, a Pharisee, both members of the Sanhedrin and secret believers who opposed the decisions of the full council, requested possession of Jesus when removed from the cross. Nicodemus brought 75 pounds of expensive myrrh and aloes, while Joseph provided new woven linens and his personal unused tomb carved out of rock. Together, they tended to the proper care of the Messiah's ravaged body before he was laid to rest. The sad women watched from a distance as their beloved Jesus was given a burial fit for royalty.

Even the gruesome death they witnessed wasn't enough assurance for the other religious leaders. Afraid that Jesus' prediction to rise again after three days might happen, or that his disciples would cleverly remove his body, the chief

priests again bothered Pilate for his help. Permission was granted to additionally secure the opening of the tomb, and trained guards were assigned to keep it monitored. However, as Scripture so often reveals, the perfect will of the Almighty God of the universe reigns supreme over the most elaborate of human intentions. Holy Week ends well.

Shattering the silence of the early morning, another great earthquake shook the unsuspecting guards to the ground when an angel of the Lord, radiant with glory, made short work of their efforts. The message they were given was clear; they were wasting their time. The tomb, with the linens folded neatly to the side, was no longer occupied. The remains of the crucified Christ had miraculously vanished; proof that sinister schemes, armed watchmen, and a massive sealed stone, were no match for the true Power of Heaven over sin, death, and the grave. The price for redemption had been paid in full for all generations. Reason for hearts to rejoice. Jesus was risen, risen indeed!

~Written by Char Kamper

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