

JESUS DIES ON A CROSS AS OUR KING

Monday

Matthew 26:47–27:66

When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, the soldiers took him to the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas. The high priest asked Jesus if he was the Son of God and the promised Savior. Jesus said that was true. Caiaphas did not think it was true, and he was upset that Jesus would make such a claim, so Caiaphas tore his robes in anger. Those assembled there spit on Jesus and hit him and made fun of him.

Early the next morning, the chief priests and the elders of the people tied up Jesus' hands and led him away to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, because they did not have the authority to sentence him to death. Pilate questioned Jesus, asking him whether he was the king of the Jews. Jesus answered by explaining that he is the king of the Jews, in fact he's king of all, but his kingdom is not of this world.

Pilate saw no reason that Jesus deserved to die. He came up with a plan. Pilate allowed the people to choose whether they wanted to free Jesus or a notorious criminal named Barabbas. But the people chose to free Barabbas instead of Jesus.

When Pilate asked the people what he should do with Jesus, they shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate took water and washed his hands in front of the people, explaining that he did not want the dirt of the sentencing of this innocent man on himself. Then he had Jesus whipped. The soldiers hurt and continued to make fun of Jesus by putting a crown of thorns on his head and placing a purple robe on him, dressing him up like a king, and laughing at him while they injured him. They spit on him and continued to beat him. Finally, they led Jesus away to be crucified.

They nailed him to a cross made from two pieces of wood. Here, Jesus died for your sins and mine. Here, Jesus achieved victory as our King over sin, death, and hell. Witnessing Jesus' crucifixion, a Roman soldier exclaimed, "Surely he is the Son of God!" After Jesus had died, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear to make sure he was dead. Then Jesus' friends got permission to take his body down from the cross. They buried Jesus in a tomb and sealed the doorway with a large stone. But the tomb could not hold Jesus for very long! Soon, Jesus would arise, proclaiming defeat over death, sin, and the devil for you and for me.

- **What do you think of when you see a cross?**

Lord Jesus, what a great and awesome Savior you are! You suffered and died the hell I should have died because of my sinfulness. Forgive me, Lord, for all I have done wrong. Help me to live in your victory. Amen.



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SAUL

Tuesday

1 Samuel 8–10

The Israelites wanted to be more like every other nation. They did not want one of God's appointed judges or prophets ruling over them. So they went to Samuel, a prophet and the last judge of Israel, and told him, "Appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." This news made Samuel sad. He didn't think it was a good idea for the people to have a king – after all, God was already their true King.

Samuel prayed and asked God what to do. God told Samuel to do as the people had said, and to appoint a king over the people. "They have not rejected you," God told Samuel, "but they have rejected me from being king over them." God told Samuel to warn the people about the bad things that would happen if they had a king to rule over them.

So Samuel told the people what God had said. He warned them that a king would take the best of their fields, some of all the crops they grew, and some of all their animals. A king would make their sons and daughters work for him. He would make them pay him money and serve in his army. If they had a king, the Israelites would have to obey him in everything. But the people didn't care. They insisted. They still demanded a king.

God told Samuel that he would send a man to him, and that Samuel was to anoint this man as king. The next day, a man named Saul came to Samuel with a question. When Samuel saw Saul, God told Samuel, "Here is the man!"

Samuel invited Saul to eat a special meal and to stay overnight at his house. Early the next morning, Samuel called for Saul to get up and come with him outside the city. There, Samuel told Saul that God had chosen him to be the king over God's people Israel. Samuel poured oil on Saul's head to anoint him as king. "You shall reign over the people of the Lord," Samuel told Saul, "and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies."

Later, Samuel gathered the people of Israel together. He told them how God had rescued them from their enemies and how he had taken care of them. He reminded them that they had rejected God as their true King, and that they wanted a human king instead. Even though the people of Israel were often unthankful and unfaithful to God, God still loved them. He answered their prayers, and he gave them Saul to be their king.

At first, Saul was a good king, but later he sinned, became corrupt and arrogant, and did many wrong things. But God continued to be the true King of Israel. Many years later, God sent the perfect King for his people, his own Son, Jesus Christ.

Even though we have a perfect King, we don't always obey him as we should. God still loves us. When we are truly his people, he always leads us to be sorry for our sins and he forgives us – because of our perfect King's death on the cross in our place.

- **Why did the people of Israel want a king?**
- **What are some ways in which Jesus is our perfect King?**

Close with prayer

KING DAVID

Wednesday

1 Samuel 16

The Israelites told God that they wanted a king to be in charge of their nation, because they wanted to look like everyone else. Their first king, Saul, looked good on the outside but became rebellious and disobedient toward God.

Saul came to love his power, authority, and popularity more than he loved God. So God told him that he had rejected him as king, he would not be king much longer, and his son would not become the next king after him. God found a man after his own heart to be the next leader over his people.

God chose a shepherd boy named David to be the next king. David was a faithful servant. When the prophet Samuel poured oil on David's head to show that he was the one God had chosen as the next king of Israel, this did not mean that David would take over the kingdom immediately but in God's timing David would be the next king.

David was faithful in the day to day tasks he was given and over time his reputation was known by many people. As a result of having a good reputation in his home town of Bethlehem he was recommended to serve King Saul as a personal musician to help calm down the king and make him feel better. David came and served King Saul by playing his harp for him. David knew God had chosen him to be king, but Saul didn't know that David was the one God had chosen. David still was faithful to do whatever he was asked to do until it was his time to be the king.

When David became king, he was the greatest king in the history of Israel, and his descendants became king after him. David was faithful to God, and God blessed the people of Israel while David was king. Jesus is from the family line of David, that's why his family was in Bethlehem when he was born. Jesus is the king of God's people, the most perfectly faithful king whom God promised would come to save us and bring us into his kingdom.

A person's character is more important than his/her outward beauty. When God chose David to be the next king, he didn't really look like much of a king. But God does not look at the things people look at. We tend to look at one's outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. When you choose friends what is more important to you? Is it more important that they look nice and wear fashionable clothes or do you look for character traits such as honesty, loyalty, kindness, etc.?

Close with prayer

JOSIAH

Thursday

2 Chronicles 34

Once a long time ago, a young boy named Josiah became king of Judah. Josiah tried to follow the ways of the Lord. He destroyed all the altars to false gods that other kings before him had built in Jerusalem. The Bible tells us that Josiah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord," and he walked in the right ways of King David, who reigned many years before him.

When he was a young man, Josiah ordered some men to repair the house of the Lord, which was known as the temple. Carpenters and builders bought stone and wood to fix beams and timbers, in order to rebuild the temple and make it beautiful again.

While the workers were fixing and cleaning some rooms, the high priest named Hilkiah found a book. He said, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." The Book of the Law was God's Word, the Bible that God through Moses had written down many years before. Hilkiah gave the book to a secretary named Shaphan, who read the book to King Josiah.

When the king heard the words of the Law, he was very sad. He even tore his clothes to show that he was terribly upset. This was the first time he had ever heard the words of this original Bible, the Book of the Law. The king listened to what God's Law said about what God's people must do. He knew that for years, God's people had disobeyed God. He knew that the people deserved God's judgment for all the sin and evil in their life.

Josiah did not want his people to forget God's Word again and live under judgment. So he sent messengers throughout the land to call the people to come to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. When all the people arrived, the king went to the temple, stood before the people, and read the Book of the Law to them. Then the king made a promise to God. He promised that he would seek to keep the Law and serve the Lord. He commanded the people to make the same promise. And they did.

The two kings before Josiah had led God's people into worshipping idols. As long as Josiah was king in Jerusalem, the people did not turn away from following the Lord. After Josiah died, the next kings went back to idol worship and led the people, once again, in sinning against the Lord.

Josiah was a good king, but he was king only for a while. God has given us a much better King in Jesus, who will be King forever. Jesus leads his people in loving and obeying God. But he lives forever, and his heavenly kingdom will have no end. You are a member of perfect kingdom now through your faith in Jesus. God's kingdom is established in your heart by faith. Faith in Jesus also changes our hearts, to help us always love and serve the Lord faithfully.

- **What did the priest Hilkiah find when the workers were repairing the temple?**
- **What did King Josiah do when he heard the words of God's Law for the first time?**
- **How can you avoid forgetting God's Word today?**

Close with a prayer asking God to help us never lose his Word and teachings.

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Friday

Mark 1:1–13

John the Baptist was the prophet and the messenger that God had promised would come and prepare the way for the Savior. John lived in the desert and wore clothing made of camel's hair. He ate locusts and wild honey. He told the crowds who came to hear him that someone was coming who was more powerful than he was. "I have baptized you with water," John said, "but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." John told people to repent of their sins. He told them to stop disobeying God and instead to fear, love, and trust God above all things. When people were baptized by John, they were showing that they were sorry for their sins and wanted to change.

One day, Jesus came from Nazareth to see John in the desert. Although Jesus had never sinned, John still baptized him in the Jordan River. After Jesus had been baptized, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." It was the voice of God the Father talking to his Son.

Then shortly after that, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert by himself, where he stayed for 40 days. The devil tried many times to tempt Jesus to disobey God while he was there, but Jesus did not sin. Wild animals lived in the desert. It was also a place where Jesus was hungry and weak. Even with all these troubles, Jesus obeyed God's commands, and God's angels took care of him.

Long before this, when Satan tempted Adam and Eve, they listened to him and disobeyed God. Because Adam sinned, everyone is born sinful. Jesus is the only person who never sinner, because he is the Son of God. Jesus resisted all of Satan's temptations for us. If he had sinned, even once, he would not have been able to save us from sin. At Jesus' baptism, he was anointed as our King. As water, instead of oil, was poured over his head, he was recognized as the King God sent for his people. As Jesus denied the temptations of the devil, he was fighting our battle for us against sin. As our King, Jesus won the victory over our worst enemies. Jesus is our Savior King.

- **Why is it important that Jesus never sinned?**

Close with prayer