

FROM
PALMS
— TO —
PASSION

Devotions for Holy Week

CAROL GEISLER

In the synagogue in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, explaining “that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead.” Many people believed, but others rejected the good news, and mob violence broke out in the city. The angry crowd shouted, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also” (Acts 17:3, 6).

It was true. The astonishing events that Paul proclaimed took place during just one week—the week we now call Holy Week. The Son of God was offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He died and was buried, but the dawn of the first day of the new week would reveal his empty tomb. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world was turned upside down—or better said, right side up—and now in Christ, we have the hope of life and resurrection.

PALM SUNDAY

Sunday Morning

Glory!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! *Luke 19:38*

ON THE NIGHT THE KING OF KINGS WAS BORN, THE HILLS AROUND BETHLEHEM ECHOED WITH THE PRAISE OF ANGELS: “GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE AMONG THOSE WITH WHOM HE IS PLEASED!” (LUKE 2:14). Some thirty-three years later, similar words of praise echoed through the streets of Jerusalem: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Jesus, acclaimed as king, rode into Jerusalem to receive a crown. By the end of the week, the streets of Jerusalem would echo to a different shout: “Crucify him!” Jesus, crowned with thorns, was nailed to a cross. Through the death of his Son, God reconciled us to himself, “making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20). Through faith in our crucified and risen Lord, our sins are forgiven. We have peace with God, peace that makes the angels rejoice.

**Glory to you, O God, for the peace
that is ours in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

Sunday Evening

His Words

... the people were hanging on his words. *Luke 19:48*

AFTER JESUS ENTERED JERUSALEM, HE WENT TO THE TEMPLE AND CHASED OUT THE MONEY-CHANGERS AND THOSE WHO SOLD SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS, PEOPLE WHO TURNED HIS FATHER'S HOUSE INTO "A DEN OF ROBBERS." Then, in the newly cleansed temple, Jesus taught the eagerly listening crowds. Jesus' enemies wanted to arrest and destroy him, but they were unable to act against him because they feared the people, who were hanging on Jesus' every word. Soon it would be time for the Savior to die, but not yet.

We may be spending more time than usual in our Father's house as we attend the many special worship services offered during this Holy Week. With hearts cleansed from sin by the blood of our Savior and nourished in faith by his holy Supper, we will have many opportunities to hear the Word of the Lord. Like those earliest followers who so gladly heard the Savior, we too will hang on his every word.

**Lord, cleanse our hearts of sin
and lead us to cling to your Word. Amen.**

Monday Morning

Cornerstone

**The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.** *Luke 20:17*

TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE, JESUS TOLD A PARABLE ABOUT A LANDOWNER AND A VINEYARD, A VINEYARD THAT WAS ISRAEL (ISAIAH 5:7). God, the landowner, planted his people in the promised land, expecting them to bear fruit to his glory. He sent his prophets to gather this fruit of faith, but unfaithful tenants, the religious leaders who were to manage the property of the Lord, mistreated his servants and sent them away emptyhanded. Finally, the divine landowner said, "I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him." The Son came, and was met with rejection, not respect.

By the end of the week, the unfaithful tenants would succeed in their plan to murder the landowner's beloved Son. But the Son, thrown out like a broken stone from a vineyard wall, would be raised up as the cornerstone and foundation of our hope. Now by faith in the Son of God, we who are the landowner's vineyard bear fruit to his glory.

**Jesus our Cornerstone, our hope rests firmly
and securely on you alone. Amen.**

Monday Evening

The Image of God

**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,
and to God the things that are God's.** *Luke 20:25*

THE SCRIBES AND CHIEF PRIESTS RECOGNIZED THEMSELVES AS THE UNFAITHFUL TENANTS OF JESUS' PARABLE, BUT THEY STILL REJECTED THE SON. They sent spies to trap Jesus into speaking against the rule of Rome, an offense deserving death. In pretended innocence, the spies asked, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar?" Jesus was ready for them. The coin for the tax bore the image of Caesar, so the coin belonged to Caesar. All things, including the people who bear his image, belong to God the Creator. The astonished spies had no response.

The image of God in us, an image of holiness and righteousness, was lost to sinful pride in our rebellion against our Creator. But we are created anew through faith and "conformed to the image of [God's] Son" (Romans 8:29), who is himself "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

**Lord Jesus, we are created anew in your image.
We are yours, bought with your precious blood. Amen.**

Tuesday Morning

Living

**He is not God of the dead, but of the living,
for all live to him. *Luke 20:38***

THE SADDUCEES ASKED JESUS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD ON JUDGMENT DAY, EVEN THOUGH THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WOULD ACTUALLY BE A RESURRECTION. They quoted Moses, and Jesus quoted Moses right back to them. Moses testified that the God who spoke from the burning bush called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even the Sadducees had to admit that these great men of faith lived in God's presence. God is the God of the living.

Jesus knew all about the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day, because he himself is the source of life and resurrection (John 11:25). Soon he would die and be buried. On the first day of the new week, he would be the first to rise from the dead—but not the last. The God of the living will one day raise us up just as he raised his Son.

**Lord, you are the foundation of our hope
of life and resurrection. Amen.**

Tuesday Evening

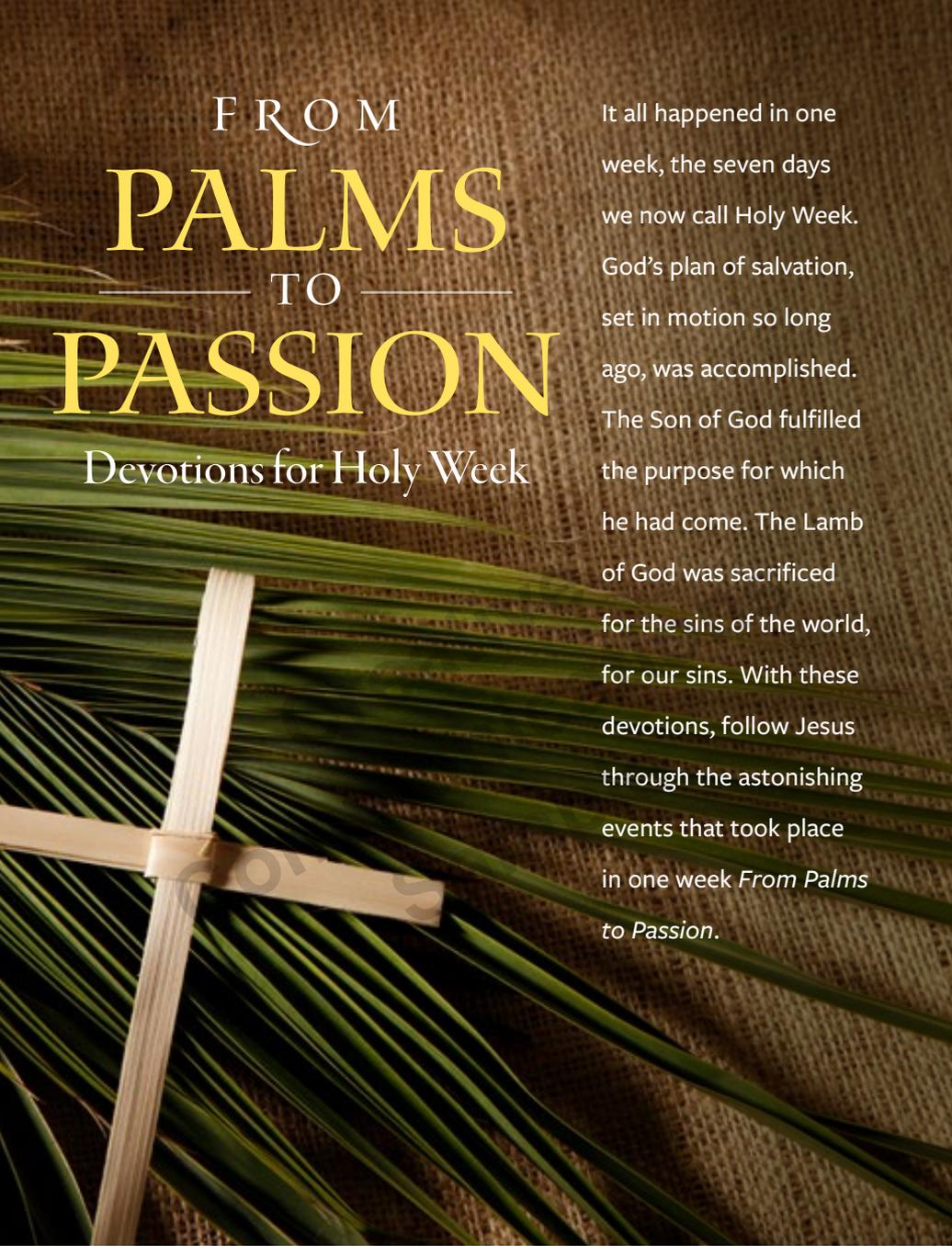
More Than All

**... she out of her poverty put in
all she had to live on. *Luke 21:4***

IN THE TEMPLE, JESUS WATCHED PEOPLE PUTTING THEIR GIFTS IN THE OFFERING BOX. He saw wealthy people put in large amounts of money, and he looked on as a poor widow contributed only two small copper coins. Yet she, Jesus said, gave more than all of them. The wealthy gave only a portion of all they owned. The widow “out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Soon Jesus, too, would give more than all. The eternal Son of God, rich in divine majesty and power, laid aside his glory to be born among us. He carried our sins in his body to the cross, suffering the penalty of death in our place. His blood purchased for us the overflowing wealth of forgiveness and eternal life. “For your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

**Lord Jesus, you gave more than all,
laying down your life for our salvation. Amen.**



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It all happened in one week, the seven days we now call Holy Week. God's plan of salvation, set in motion so long ago, was accomplished. The Son of God fulfilled the purpose for which he had come. The Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sins of the world, for our sins. With these devotions, follow Jesus through the astonishing events that took place in one week *From Palms to Passion*.

By Carol Geisler. Design by Jeff McCall. Cover image: [iStock.com/duckycards](https://www.istock.com/duckycards)

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