

## The Easter Story in brief

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**

Jesus sent two disciples to find a colt of a donkey. They brought it to Jesus and laid their cloaks on its backs and Jesus sat on them. He then set out to enter Jerusalem and great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road while others were cutting palm branches from trees and spreading them in his path. The crowds who were in front of him and those who followed were all shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens! And when Jesus entered Jerusalem the whole city was in turmoil. "Who is this?" people asked and the crowds answered "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Jesus then went into the Temple and drove out all those who were selling and buying there. He upset the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those who were selling pigeons for sacrifice. He said "According to scripture my house will be called a house of prayer, but you have turned it into a den of thieves." There were also blind and lame people who came to the Temple and Jesus cured them. At the sight of the wonderful things he did children shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David". The chief priests and scribes in the Temple were indignant. They said to Jesus "Do you hear what they are saying?" He answered "Yes have you never read this "By the mouths of children, babes in arms, you have made sure of praise?" With that he left them and went out of the city to Bethany with the 12.

**See Matthew 21: 1 to 17, Mark 11: 1 to 11, Luke 19: 28 to 46 and John 12: 13 to 19**

### **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March Holy Monday**

After Palm Sunday, Jesus had spent the night in Bethany. When he returned to Jerusalem in the early morning, he felt hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road he went up to it and found nothing on it but leaves. Annoyed he said to it "May you never bear fruit again". At that instant the fig tree withered. The disciples were amazed and said "What happened to the tree?" Jesus answered "I tell you solemnly, if you have faith and do not doubt at all, not only will you do what I have done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain "Get up and throw yourself into the sea", it will be done. If you have faith, everything you ask in prayer you will receive. And when you pray forgive whatever you have against anybody so that your Father in heaven may forgive your failings too"..

Jesus then went into the Temple and was teaching when the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said "What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus replied "And I will ask you a question, only one; if you tell me the answer to it, I will then tell you my authority for acting like this. John's baptism: where did it come from: heaven or man?" The chief priests and elders argued it out among themselves in this way: "If we say from heaven, he will reply "Then why did you refuse to believe him?" But if we say from man, we have the people to fear for they all hold that John was a prophet". So they replied to Jesus "We do not know". So Jesus replied "Nor will I tell you my authority for teaching in the Temple".

Jesus then went on to relate the parable of the "Wicked Husbandmen". The chief priests realised that the parable was aimed at them. Afraid of the crowds they left him alone and went away.

After teaching in the Temple, Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives.

**See Matthew 21: 17 to 46, Mark 11: 20 to 33 and 12: 1 to 12 and Luke 20: 1 to 19**

### **Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March Holy Tuesday**

The conspiracies to trap Jesus escalated. The Jewish religious leaders had just one aim – to get rid of Jesus of Nazareth as he was a threat to their power. If this meant cooperating with Romans, their lifelong enemy, any means was justified. So the Pharisees, who opposed Rome, its occupation and its intrusion on the Jewish way of life, and the Herodians, supporters of Herod the Great, joined forces. Even the Sadducees, the religious liberals who had their own ideas concerning life after death, angels and spirits, attempted to discredit Jesus.

From early morning Jesus was back in the Temple where a crowd of people had gathered around him to listen to him. The Pharisees were a group of scribes and elders who had a conservative outlook and only accepted the written Law of Moses or "traditions of the Fathers". They joined with Herodians to try to trap Jesus by asking "Master we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an

honest way and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied "You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with". They handed him a denarius and he said "Whose head is this? Whose name?" "Caesar's" they replied. He then said to them "Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God". The reply took them by surprise and they left him alone and left.

Then some Sadducees put a question to Jesus to try to catch him out. "Master, Moses said that if a man dies childless, his brother is to marry the widow, his sister-in-law, to raise children for his brother. Now we had a case involving 7 brothers; the first married the widow and then died without children, leaving his wife to his next brother; the same thing happened with the second and third and so on to the seventh; and then the woman herself died. Now at the resurrection to which of those seven will she be wife since she had been married to them all?" Now the Sadducees thought this was a brilliant question as they had their doubts about the resurrection in an afterlife so it seemed to have a double trap for Jesus. He answered them "You are wrong because you understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For at the resurrection men and women do not marry; no they are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead have you not read what God himself said to you. "I am the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". God is God, not of the dead, but of the living. His teaching made a deep impression on the people who heard it.

When the Pharisees heard Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and to disconcert him, one of them put a question to him. "Master which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus said "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it. You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets also."

Then Jesus addressed the people and his disciples in the Temple by saying "The scribes and Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say. However do not be guided by what they do. Everything they do is done to attract attention like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels. They take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues and being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi. Alas for you scribes and Pharisees, you are hypocrites!"

**See Matthew 22: 15 to 46 and 23: 1 to 39, Mark 12: 13 to 44 and Luke 20: 20 to 47**

### **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April Spy Wednesday**

The term "Spy" is used to mean "ambush" and refers to the moment Judas Iscariot sought his opportunity to betray Jesus and to help organise his capture and arrest. It is thought by some scholars that Judas had joined Jesus as a disciple as he thought he would lead a revolution in the Jews to release them from the Roman occupation. Judas should have discovered very soon after joining Jesus this was never in his mind or ever a possibility. He went to the Sanhedrin and offered to deliver Jesus to them in exchange for money, 30 pieces of silver. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish court of 71 judges made up of chief priests, scribes and elders, were plotting to kill Jesus before the feast of Passover, a major Jewish feast and celebration. Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper. As he sat at the supper table with his disciples Mary Magdala anointed the head and feet of Jesus with an expensive oil of spikenard. Spikenard, also called nard, nardin or muskroot, is a class of aromatic amber-coloured concentrated oil derived from the *nardostachys jatamansi*, a flowering plant of the valerian family which grows in the Himalayas of Nepal, China and India. The oil has been used over the centuries as a perfume, a traditional medicine or in religious ceremonies. As the oil was so rare and costly, the disciples were indignant, asking why the oil was not instead sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus replied "Leave her alone. Why are you upsetting her? What she has done for me is one of good works indeed! You have the poor with you always and you can be kind to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me. She has done what was in her power to do; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. I tell you solemnly, wherever throughout all the world the Good News is proclaimed, what she has done will be told also, in remembrance of her"

**See Matthew 26: 6 to 16 and Mark 14: 3 to 11**

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April Maundy Thursday**

Now this was the first day of "Unleavened Bread" when the Passover lamb was sacrificed so the disciples went to Jesus and said "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to celebrate the Passover". Jesus sent Peter and John saying "As you go into the city you will meet a man with a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house he enters and tell him "The Master says: Where is my dining room in which I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples? He will show you a large upper room furnished with couches all prepared. Make the preparations for us there". The two disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he told them and they prepared the upper room for the Last Supper.

**As this story should be well known so please consult your Bible to read the details on:**

The Last Supper and Jesus washes his disciples feet under protests from Peter

Treachery of Judas Iscariot is foretold by Jesus. "I tell you most solemnly, one of you will betray me".

The institution of the Eucharist in the form of bread and wine

The dispute between the apostles about who is the greatest and Jesus' promise of a reward

A time of crisis and the scripture prophesy "He let himself be taken as a criminal".

After singing psalms they go to the Mount of Olives where Peter's denial of Jesus is foretold

Jesus takes his disciples to a small garden called Gethsemane where Jesus wants to pray

He asks his disciples to stay awake while he prays to the Father but they fall asleep three times

Agony in the Garden. Jesus then says "Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is close at hand already".

The arrest of Jesus has a factor which is not always emphasised. St James the Less, son of Alphaeus, whose mother was Mary Cleophas, sister of the Virgin Mary, as the cousin of Jesus had a very similar appearance. It is claimed that the Virgin Mary sometimes had difficulty telling them apart when they were adults. Consequently, at the arrest, Judas had to pick out Jesus so that they do not take James who was so similar in appearance. Peter, typical to character, drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants

Jesus appears before Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.

Jesus is brought before the high priest and Sanhedrin, 71 judges of chief priests, scribes and elders

In the courtyard Peter denies he is associated with Jesus three times as Jesus had forecast.

**See Matthew 26: 17 to 56, Mark 14: 12 to 72, Luke 22: 1 to 65, John 13: 1 to 18: 27**

### **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April Good Friday**

First thing in the morning the whole Sanhedrin had their plan ready. They had Jesus bound and took him away and handed him over to Pontius Pilate, the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea serving under the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Pilate asked Jesus "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered "It is you who say it". Then the Sanhedrin brought many accusations against him.

**Again this story should be well known so consult your Bible to read the details**

Pilate discovers Jesus has come from Galilee and is under Herod the Great's jurisdiction

Herod ! was appointed by the Romans as king of Judea and was delighted to eventually see Jesus

Herod questioned Jesus without reply. Showing him contempt he dresses him in a rich purple cloak

Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate and the two, who had been enemies, were reconciled

Pilate asks the crowd to choose between Jesus and Barabbas and Barabbas is released

To placate the crowd Pilate sentences Jesus to be scourged and crucified

Judas returns the 30 pieces of silver and then went and hanged himself

Jesus is mocked by being given a crown of thorns to go with his purple cloak

The way of the Cross (Stations of the Cross) and the enlisting of the help of Simon of Cyrene

The crucifixion on a hill outside the walls of Jerusalem called Golgotha, "the place of the skull"

Jesus is crucified with two robbers (St Dismas the good thief) and mocked by the crowd

Above him on the cross is written "This is Jesus the king of the Jews"

The death of Jesus who cried out in a loud voice "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"

The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle and darkness fell as the sun was eclipsed

Joseph, a disciple from the Jewish town of Arimathaea, asks Pilate for the body of Jesus

He wraps Jesus in a shroud and puts him in his own new tomb which was hewn out of a rock face

He then rolled a large stone across the entrance watched by the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdala

**See Matthew 26: 57 - 61, Mark 15: 1 - 47, Luke 22: 66 - 71, 23: 1 - 56, John 18: 28 - 40, 19: 1 - 42**

### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April Black Saturday**

Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath and a day of rest. However the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and said to him "Your Excellency, we recall that this imposter said, while he was alive, "After three days I shall rise again". Therefore please give the order to have the sepulchre kept secure until the third day for fear of his disciples come and steal him away and tell the people "He has risen from the dead". This last piece of fraud would be worse than what went before. Pilate replied "You may have your guard. Go and make all as secure as you know how". So they made the sepulchre secure putting seals on the stone and mounting a guard.

**See Matthew 27: 62 to 66**

### **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord**

It was very early in the morning and still dark when Mary Magdala and other women went to the tomb with spices they had prepared. They found that the stone had been moved and the tomb empty. Two men in brilliant clothes suddenly appeared at their side and said to them "Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here, he has risen. Remember what he told you when he was still in Galilee. "That the Son of Man had to be handed over into the power of sinful men and be crucified and rise again on the third day". They then all remembered the words of Jesus.

**Again the story should be well known so consult your Bible to read the details**

The apostles refuse to believe the women until they visit the tomb themselves

Jesus appears to Mary Magdala who first thinks he is the gardener.

Jesus appears to the two disciples who had left Jerusalem and were on their way to Emmaus

Jesus appears to the apostles who are locked in a room in fear of the Jews except Thomas

Eight days later he appears again to all the apostles including Thomas who had not believed

Jesus appears to the disciples a third time on the shores of Lake Tiberias while they were fishing

He instructs them to cast their nets out to starboard and they get catch an enormous haul of fish

Simon Peter then recognises it is Jesus and runs across the water to greet him

Jesus instructs the disciples on their mission and makes Simon Peter their leader

**See Matthew 28: 1 to 15, Mark 16: 1 to 20, Luke 24: 1 to 53, John 20: 1 to 29 and 21: 1 to 25**