

“Was Jesus Crucified on Thursday?”
Subtitle: “The Lamb of God”
Mark 11:1-11
(Preached at Trinity, July 24, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In preaching classes they often stress the importance of the introduction. The preacher must stir the interest of the congregation. So let me stir your interest. The title of tonight's sermon is, “Was Jesus Crucified on Thursday?”
Hold on to that thought for a few minutes while I put this text in context.
2. Last time we saw Jesus and a large crowd traveling towards Jerusalem. On their way they traveled through Jericho and as they were departing a certain blind man by the name of Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus and he received his sight and became a follower of Jesus.
3. Now we find them continuing their journey towards Jerusalem. It was now difficult going. Although now only a day's journey it was a steep climb. Jericho was about fifteen miles from Jerusalem but Jerusalem was about 3300 feet higher in altitude than Jericho.
4. Comparing the Gospels we also know something else took place before He continued His journey. He saw a man, short of stature, sitting in a sycamore tree. A man by the name of Zacchaeus. Jesus became a guest in his home before He left. This might also be the reason Luke says the blind beggars were healed as Jesus entered the city while Mark records it took place as Jesus was departing. He was returning to go to Zacchaeus's house.
5. Upon leaving the house of Zacchaeus Jesus continued His journey towards Jerusalem. As they were nearing Bethphage Jesus sent two of His disciples ahead to acquire a donkey. In Mark's account we are told only of the colt but in Matthew's account we are told that it is the colt of a donkey.
Matthew 21:2 NAS - "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie *them*, and bring *them* to Me."
6. Bethphage was a small village on the Mount of Olives Northwest of Bethany the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus which was about two miles southeast of Jerusalem. According to John's gospel, Jesus would spend the Sabbath (Saturday) at their home before entering into Jerusalem.
7. The week of the Passion which was followed by the Resurrection begins here.
The chronology goes something like this:
 - Friday evening - Jesus arrived in Bethany before sunset prior to the beginning of the Sabbath. Bethany was the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. He probably spent the Sabbath rest with these friends.
 - Sunday morning As He departs from Bethany He sends two of His disciples ahead to Bethphage to fetch a young donkey.
8. Upon returning with the donkey Jesus sits upon it and begins what we call His Triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
9. You can imagine the dramatic scene
 - A. Jesus rides toward Jerusalem upon the lowly donkey

- B. Great crowds began to gather – Probably over 2.5 million were in Jerusalem for the Passover.
Some cut branches from the palm trees to line the way; others spread their outer garments along the way
- C. With great excitement the people begin shouting - "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; ¹⁰ Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!" (**Verses 9-10**).
10. Before we look at the issue of chronology I want to focus for a moment on Jesus as the Lamb of God.
This may seem strange since the word lamb doesn't appear in our text. Allow me to take you on a brief journey tonight.
- A. When Abraham was going to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac a wonderful dialogue occurred:
Genesis 22:7-8 NAU - "Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together."
- B. Abraham called that place Jehovah-Jireh.
- C. But the Lamb did not come that day. Almost 2000 years later a prophet entered the scene proclaiming the coming of God's Lamb.
John 1:29 NAU - "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
11. What does this have to do with our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem?
First, remember that Abraham went to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah.
Genesis 22:2 NAU - "He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."
- A. God told him to make the three day journey to this particular place.
- B. This is the very place upon which the temple in Jerusalem would be built
2 Chronicles 3:1 NAU - "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where *the LORD* had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite."
- C. On this Sunday Jesus arrived at Jerusalem—at Mount Moriah, the place where God had promised to provide for Himself a Lamb
12. There is another great point of significance here – the matter of chronology.
The Triumphal Entry took place on Sunday. Today we call it Palm Sunday.
The customary view says that Jesus was crucified five days later—that He died on Good Friday.
- A. I'd like to offer a different scenario—that instead of Jesus being crucified on Friday He was actually crucified on Thursday.
- B. Obviously there isn't universal agreement on this. In fact, Good Friday has long been the traditional day of observation – tradition doesn't die easily.
- C. But a Thursday crucifixion solves many of the problems that exist with the traditional position and, as we will see, it gives us a beautiful picture of Jesus as the Lamb of God.

13. There is actually some very strong evidence for this position.
- A. First, it is consistent with Scripture. The Bible must always be the chief authority in every theological dispute.
- LBC, Chapter 1, paragraph 10 – “The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith finally resolved.”
1. Jesus stated the duration of the period between His crucifixion and Resurrection—three days.
Matthew 12:40 NAS - "for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
 2. Traditionally we explain the three days by using the Jewish custom of counting days by including any part of a day as a whole day. In other words, He was in the grave part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday.
 - a. We concluded that this is three days, even though it is only about 40 hours which is less than two traditional days.
 - b. Actually **John 20:1** states that Jesus rose from the grave before daylight.
 This means you really have a difficult time getting three days from the text.
John 20:1 NAU - "Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb."
 3. The problem becomes especially tricky when we consider the nights – “three days and three nights.” If Jesus died on Friday He was only in the grave two nights, not three. There is no way to get three out of it.
 4. A Thursday Crucifixion is much more consistent with the text. Sunday minus three days is Thursday.
 Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night make three nights.
- B. Further evidence from Scripture
1. The Jews celebrated festival sabbaths that could occur any day of the week. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was one of these sabbaths
Leviticus 23:5-7 NAU - "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. ⁶ Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ⁷ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work."
 2. This would have made Friday a Jewish sabbath day
 They could not leave the bodies on the cross on the Sabbath.
 3. John's Gospel which gives us greater clarity here
John 19:31 NAS - "The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high *day*), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away."

4. John refers to this Sabbath as a high Sabbath day – *A holy convocation*
 - a. There would have been little reason for John to state this if the was a normal Saturday Sabbath. Jesus could not have remained on the cross on any Sabbath day but John specifies that this was a high Sabbath because it fell on a day other than the normal Sabbath – it was the *Holy Convocation* associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - b. Jesus was removed from the cross before the Passover Sabbath, which was on Friday
 - B. Second, modern computer science helps with the timing of the crucifixion. This is where it becomes a bit more complicated. Jesus died on Passover. Scholars can now calculate which Jewish Passovers fell in any given year during the lifetime of Christ.
 1. The only years that the Passover occurred on Thursday were A.D. 26 which is too early and A.D. 33 which is too late. Most believe that Jesus was crucified on A.D. 30. On that year the day the Passover was on Thursday.
 2. With the Feast of Unleavened Bread being on Friday there would have been two Sabbaths during this Passover week—the regular Saturday Sabbath and the special Passover Sabbath. **Matthew 28:1** recognizes this although most translations do not reflect it. The word for Sabbath is plural although it is true that the word for Sabbath is sometimes used in the plural.
Matthew 28:1 NAS - "Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave."
- Ὅψε δὲ σαββάτων τῆ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων ἦλθεν Μαριὰμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον
14. Let's go back to further argument from the Biblical text. In the Biblical account of the week of Christ's Crucifixion there are details of each day except one.
 - A. We've seen the events of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
 - B. On Monday Jesus curses the fig tree and cleanses the Temple.
 - C. On Tuesday the find the fig tree withered and Jesus teaches on faith & prayer. We also have the Olivet discourse. And Judas makes his agreement of betrayal
 - D. But following the traditional Friday crucifixion there was no activity recorded on Wednesday which would be strange on this busy week. But if the crucifixion took place on Thursday Wednesday would have been bustling with activity. Peter and John were sent to make preparations for the Passover meal. Jesus and His disciples share the Last Supper. Judas betrays Christ and He is arrested.
 15. You might ask, what difference does it make? Granted it doesn't make any important doctrinal difference. It doesn't effect the important Sunday resurrection. But it does have great meaning as we look at Jesus as the Lamb of God.
 - A. The crucifixion occurred on the fourteenth of Nisan. If this happened on Thursday then counting backward this made Palm Sunday the tenth of Nisan. This is important because it was on this day that thousands of sheep that were to be sacrificed for the Passover were to be taken up to Jerusalem to be kept in people's homes for the three days stipulated in the Law of Moses.

Exodus 12:3 NAS - "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household."

Exodus 12:6 NAS - "And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight."

- B. Josephus, the Jewish historian wrote that when a census of the number of sheep killed for this Passover was taken the figure numbered 256,500. With the magnitude of this number of sheep they would have been herded into the city the entire day.
- C. When Jesus entered into the city on this Palm Sunday He must have been surrounded by lambs. The true Lamb of God standing forth among the lambs to be slain. Four days later at the very time the lambs were killed Jesus Himself was killed thus becoming the true Passover Lamb.
- 1 Corinthians 5:7 NAS** - " Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed."
- John 1:29 NAS** - "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Conclusion:

1. It is most significant that Jesus was crucified at the Passover.
2. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He is the Lamb of God who shed His blood as our substitute.
3. On that first Passover night in Egypt multitudes died because they were not covered. But for those under the blood of the lamb they were spared the death of the Destroyer.
Exodus 12:23 NAS - "For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite *you*."
4. Will you believe and trust the Lamb of God? He alone can provide a covering for you.