



Pietro Perugino, *The Resurrection*, 1497–1507, tempera on wood, 27 x 45.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

# EASTER

FROM JESUS'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY TO HIS RESURRECTION

---

LYNNE HILTON WILSON

This Easter week, we step out of the New Testament order sequence to study the main events recorded in the last week of Jesus's life. Each Gospel differs on the order of events, so I will use John's Gospel, which likely has the most accurate chronology, for the timing of the last week of Jesus's mortal life.<sup>1</sup>

**Sunday: Jesus's Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem—Zech 9:9–13; Mt 21:1–11; Mk 11:1–11; Lk 19–28–40; Jn 12:12–19**

*Setting*

Jesus's long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem was nearly over.<sup>2</sup> Just five days before Passover, on Sunday morning, Jesus traveled the familiar three-mile road from Bethany up the back side of the Mount of

Table 1. Events leading up to and following Jesus's death

	Day count	Day	Events
Days before Passover	5	Sunday	Jesus's triumphal entry (Jn 12:12)
	4	Monday	Jesus teaches in the temple (John places the cleansing of the temple at the first Passover in Jesus's ministry)
	3	Tuesday	Jesus teaches in the temple, gives Olivet sermon on the Second Coming
	2	Wednesday	Preparing for Passover, the Last Supper, and Gethsemane (Jn 13:1)
	1	Thursday	Jesus's arrest, trial, Crucifixion, and burial all before Passover begins at sunset (Thursday late afternoon counted as the first day in the tomb as Jewish days begin at sunset.)
Days in Tomb	1	Thursday	After sunset, Passover begins (fourteenth day of Nisan; Ex 12:6–20)
	2	Friday	Passover and a Sabbath or holy day (Lev 23:5); while Jesus's body is in the tomb, He organizes missionary work in the spirit world (D&C 138)
	3	Saturday	Sabbath, third night in tomb (first or second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; Lev 23:6)
		Sunday (before sunrise)	Jesus's Resurrection

Olives to the crest at Bethphage.<sup>3</sup> As He stood at the top of the Mount of Olives, He had an amazing view of what lay before Him—physically and spiritually—in the week ahead.

Directly in front of Him to the west, He saw Mount Moriah, topped by Herod's massive temple and courtyards. It was Herod's goal to create the most beautiful building in the world. He expanded the temple lot to cover thirty-five acres and the sanctuary itself to soar 150 feet high (or 46 meters) on top of Mount Moriah. As Jesus gazed at the temple that Sunday morning, Herod's additions would still have been under construction.<sup>4</sup> Jesus had watched its progress since childhood when He came to Jerusalem for the annual Passover and other pilgrimage feasts (Lk 2:41). Now, the whole landscape of Jerusalem came into view.

From the crest of the Mount of Olives, Jesus and His group of Galilean disciples saw to the left or south the despised Valley of Hinnom (2 Chr 33:6; Jer 7:31). At the time of the Lord, the south side of the mountain was a burial ground.<sup>5</sup> To His right, Jesus saw a portion of the busy Roman road known in Greek and Hebrew as Calvary and Golgotha, or "place of the skull," which was lined with crucifixion poles. Near the crucifixion sight was a beautiful garden where Jesus's followers would soon bury His body.

At the base of the mountain where He stood, Jesus could also see the beautiful olive orchards that grew near the Kidron River, which flowed in winter. Even during a wet spring, the Kidron was usually little more than a creek and could be forded. During a dry spring, the empty creek bed created a walking path along the lowest point between the Mount of Olives and Mount Moriah. After Jesus's Last Supper, He and eleven of His Apostles would cross the Kidron and spend the night among the olive trees in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. That night, as the Apostles slept on spring grasses, Jesus would descend "below all things" and suffer the pains and sicknesses of the world (D&C 88:6).

Jesus would come back to stand again on the Mount of Olives as a resurrected being and, after His forty-day ministry, would leave from the same spot (Act 1:3–12). And at a future date, He will return to the mount as King of Kings to open the Millennium (Mt 24:3–31). But at that moment on that Sunday, from His vantage point on top of the Mount of Olives, He saw a glimpse of His upcoming week—and the eternal history of the universe.

*Triumphal entry—Mt 21:2–7; Mk 11:2–7; Lk 19:29–35 JST, Jn 12:14*

***Lk 19:29–30 (Mt 21:1–2; Mk 11:1–2). "he sent two of his disciples . . . find a colt."*** All three Synoptic Gospels include the detail that the Lord sent two men to find the proper mount for Jesus's triumphal entry to Jerusalem. Prophecies were about to be fulfilled.

***Mt 21:5. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass."*** Matthew and John mention Jesus's fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecies. The "day of the Lord," when the messianic King would come to Jerusalem riding on a donkey, having a spirit of grace and prayer, to cleanse Jerusalem and be the source of Living Water, was happening.<sup>6</sup> Matthew understood the prophecy differently or remembered the event with two animals.<sup>7</sup>

***Mk 11:7 (Mt 21:7; Lk 19:35; Jn 12:14). "they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him."*** Jesus rode a donkey as King Solomon did (1 Kgs 1:33). Significantly, Jesus did not ride on a horse. In the Roman world, horses were war animals. Jesus knew that He was not coming to conquer Jerusalem at this time, but many disciples did not. They draped their cloaks on the young donkey and on Jesus's path in an honorary fashion. Little did they know that this arrival was essential to their eternal salvation.

***Mk 11:8 (Mt 21:8; Lk 19:36; Jn 12:12–13). "many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches."*** The news that Jesus was coming spread quickly, and many people gathered to join those traveling with Him into the city (John described crowds from different areas converging to greet Him; Jn 12:9, 12, 17–18, 20). They picked branches of the new spring growth along the hillsides to wave in celebration of Jesus's arrival for Passover. Jn 12:13 records that the crowd waved palm fronds as well.<sup>8</sup> The crowds that gathered from different directions (Jn 12) and joined Jesus's descent from the Mount of Olives by either walking down the hillside through the olive groves near Gethsemane or crossing the expansive bridge built to connect the two mountains to the Court of the Gentiles.

Table 2. The triumphal entry in the four Gospels

Mt 21:1–11 BLB	Mk 11:1–11 BSB	Lk 19:28–40 BSB	Jn 12:12–16 BSB
<p>And when they drew near to <b>Jerusalem</b> and</p> <p>came to <b>Bethphage</b> on the <b>Mount of Olives</b>, then Jesus sent <b>two disciples</b>, saying to them, “<b>Go into the village</b> in front of you, and immediately <b>you will find</b> a donkey having been <b>tied</b>, and a <b>colt</b> with her. Having <b>untied</b> them, <b>bring</b> them to Me, and <b>if anyone</b> says anything to you, you will say that <b>the Lord</b> has <b>need</b> of them, and he will send them immediately.” And this came to pass, that it might be fulfilled that having been spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King comes to you, gentle and mounted on a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”</p> <p>And the disciples having gone and having done as Jesus commanded them, brought the donkey and <b>the colt</b> and put</p>	<p>As they approached <b>Jerusalem</b> and came to</p> <p><b>Bethphage</b> and Bethany at the <b>Mount of Olives</b>, Jesus sent out <b>two of His disciples</b> and said to them, “<b>Go into the village</b> ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it, <b>you will find a colt tied</b> there, on which no one has ever sat. <b>Untie</b> it and <b>bring</b> it here. <b>If anyone</b> asks, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘<b>The Lord needs</b> it and will return it shortly.’”</p> <p>So they went and found the colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. They untied it, and some who were standing there asked, “Why are you untying the colt?” The disciples answered as Jesus had instructed them, and the people gave them permission. Then they led <b>the colt</b> to Jesus and threw</p>	<p>After Jesus had said this, He went on ahead, going up to <b>Jerusalem</b>. As He approached <b>Bethphage</b> and Bethany at the <b>Mount of Olives</b>, He sent out <b>two of His disciples</b>, saying, “<b>Go into the village</b> ahead of you, and as you enter it, <b>you will find a colt tied</b> there, on which no one has ever sat. <b>Untie</b> it and <b>bring</b> it here. <b>If anyone</b> asks, ‘Why you are untying it?’ tell him “<b>The Lord needs</b> it.”</p> <p>So those who were sent went out and found it just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked, “Why are you untying the colt?” “The Lord needs it,” they answered. Then they led <b>the colt</b> to Jesus, threw</p>	

Table 2 (continued)

Mt 21:1–11 BLB	Mk 11:1–11 BSB	Lk 19:28–40 BSB	Jn 12:12–16 BSB
<p><b>their cloaks</b> upon them, and He sat on them. And the very <b>great crowd spread their cloaks on the road</b>, and others were cutting down <b>branches</b> from the trees and were spreading them on the road. And the crowds going before Him and those following were crying out, saying:</p> <p>“<b>Hosanna</b> to the Son of David!” “<b>Blessed is the One coming in the name of the Lord!</b>”</p> <p>“Hosanna in the highest!” And of Him having entered into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet, Jesus, the One from Nazareth of Galilee.”</p>	<p><b>their cloaks</b> over it, and He sat on it. Many in <b>the crowd spread their cloaks on the road</b>, while others spread <b>branches</b> they had cut from the fields. The ones who went ahead and those who followed were shouting:</p> <p>“<b>Hosanna!</b>” “<b>Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!</b>”</p> <p>“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest!” Then Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve.</p>	<p><b>their cloaks</b> over it, and put Jesus on it. As He rode along, the people <b>spread their cloaks on the road</b>. And as He approached the descent from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of disciples began to praise God joyfully in a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen:</p> <p>“<b>Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!</b>”</p> <p>“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” But some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!” “I tell you,” He answered, “if they remain silent, the very stones will cry out.”</p>	<p>The next day <b>the great crowd</b> that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to <b>Jerusalem</b>. They took palm <b>branches</b> and went out to meet Him, shouting:</p> <p>“<b>Hosanna!</b>” “<b>Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!</b>”</p> <p>“Blessed is the King of Israel!” Finding a young donkey, Jesus sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion. See, your King is coming, seated on the colt of a donkey.” At first His disciples did not understand these things.</p>

**Mt 21:9 (Mk 11:9–10; Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13).** “*Hosanna . . . Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*” All four Gospels include the crowds singing or chanting Ps 118:26 to praise the Lord. Originally *hosanna* was a call for help, but over time it became a call of rejoicing. Undoubtedly, heavenly hosts also joined in the throng praising the Lord that morning (see 2 Kng 6:16).

**Jn 12:19.** “*the world is gone after him.*” Jesus’s arrival created a commotion in Jerusalem. The news of His signs and miracles—especially of His most recent and shocking miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead—had spread far and wide. The crowd had great expectations of Jesus’s abilities, and all wanted to see for themselves. The reception that Jesus received raised enough concern among the Jewish leaders that they hastened their plans to kill Him.<sup>9</sup>

## Monday

**Mk 11:12. “on the morrow.”** Passover lambs were selected four days before their sacrifice, a tradition kept from the time of Moses: “In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them . . . [a lamb] without blemish, a male of the first year” (Ex 12:3, 5). As the Jewish days begin at sunset, this day of selecting lambs may include the evening of Jesus’s triumphal entry. According to Mark’s Gospel, the day coincides with the first day Jesus spends in Jerusalem. He would become *the* Passover Lamb by the end of the week.

*Record of the temple cleansing—Mt 21:12–16; Mk 11:15–18; Lk 19:45–48; Jn 2:13–25*  
All four Gospels include Jesus cleansing the temple once.<sup>10</sup> As the Synoptic Gospels put most of Jesus’s Jerusalem ministry into the last week of His life, they place this event here too. However, John’s Gospel—which is organized more chronologically and has Jesus making three Passover pilgrimages to Jerusalem—places the cleansing at the beginning of the Lord’s ministry (Jn 2:13–17). With the biblical information now available, we know it is more likely that the temple cleansing happened only at the beginning of Jesus’s ministry as John describes. This is more likely in part because doing something so radical and raucous would have called the attention of the temple police and inhibited Jesus’s ability to enter the temple to teach the rest of the week. Also, the Jewish leaders actively sought to kill Jesus (Jn 11:55–57). The timing of this event is less significant, though, than the fact that it happened and the message it taught.

**Mt 21:12 (BSB; also Mk 11:15; Lk 19:45; Jn 2:14). “Jesus entered the temple courts.”** The temple courtyards covered about thirty-five acres of Mount Moriah, most of which was the Court of the Gentiles (like Salt Lake City’s Temple Square). Israelites from around the Roman Empire came there to change their money for the temple coin, which was a Tyrian half-shekel. All financial transactions in the temple had to be in the Tyrian currency—including the annual temple tax, sin offerings, and so forth.

**Mt 21:12. (Mk 11:15–16; Lk 19:45; Jn 2:15). “cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple.”** The Gospel of John mentions that Jesus made a scourge or whip out of cords to cast out the crowd. Jesus must have been extremely strong and powerfully determined to clear the crowd of irreligious people and their furniture, containers, and money, which all took up *acres* within the temple courtyards. Jesus’s strength perhaps came in part from His profession as a builder.<sup>11</sup> We are not told whether Jesus’s disciples helped or He single-handedly purged the profanity that defiled His Father’s house.

Several scriptural prophecies or signs of the messianic time are associated with a temple cleansing, including Jer 7:10–12; Zech 14:20–21; Isa 56:7; Dan 8:12–14; and Mal 3:1–2. Each scripture is associated with God cleansing His temple or other sacred spaces.

We assume that the chief priests and the multitude knew the prophecies or at least understood that combining merchandising with the temple was out of line. Allowing Jesus to cleanse the temple lot required some level of submission to Him by the Jewish and Roman leaders who patrolled the area. We know the temple police were quick to stop a far less disruptive offense a few years later by Paul (see Act 21:30). This suggests they knew that the greedy money changing should not be used in conjunction with

Table 3. The cleansing of the temple in the four Gospels (BSB translation)

Mt 12:12–17	Mk 11:15–19	Lk 19:45–47	Jn 2:13–21
<p>Then Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves.</p> <p>And He declared to them, “It is written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer.’ But you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”</p> <p>The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them. But the chief priests and scribes were indignant when they saw the wonders He performed and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Do you hear what these children</p>	<p>When they arrived in <b>Jerusalem</b>, Jesus entered the <b>temple courts</b> and began to drive out those who were buying and <b>selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. And He</b> would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.</p> <p>Then Jesus began to teach them, and He declared, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’” When the chief priests and scribes heard this, they looked for a way to kill Him. For they were afraid of Him, because the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.</p>	<p>Then Jesus entered <b>the temple courts</b> and began to drive out those who were <b>selling there.</b></p> <p>He declared to them, “<b>It is written: ‘My house will be a house of prayer.’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’</b>” Jesus was teaching at the temple every day, but the chief priests, scribes, and leaders of the people were intent on <b>killing Him.</b> Yet they could not find a way to do so, because all the people hung on His words.</p>	<p>When the Jewish Passover was near, Jesus went up to <b>Jerusalem.</b> In the <b>temple courts</b> He found men <b>selling</b> cattle, sheep, and doves, and <b>money changers</b> seated at their tables. So He made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle. He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To <b>those selling doves</b> He said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn My Father’s house into a marketplace!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for Your house will consume Me.”</p>

Table 3 (continued)

Mt 12:12–17	Mk 11:15–19	Lk 19:45–47	Jn 2:13–21
<p>are saying?” they asked.                      “Yes,” Jesus answered.                      “Have you never read:                      ‘From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise?’”                      Then He left them and went out of the <b>city</b> to Bethany, where He spent the night.</p>	<p>And when evening came, Jesus and His disciples went out of the <b>city</b>.</p>		

the temple. When materialism is mingled with God’s work in the Book of Mormon, it is called priestcraft. God attacked priestcraft in Alma 1:12, 16.

**Mt 21:13 (Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46).** *“house of prayer . . . den of thieves.”* All three Synoptic Gospels use prophetic warnings relating to Jesus’s cleansing of the temple. They all cite Jer 7:11, which is about robbers infiltrating the temple, as well as the charge from Isa 56:7: “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

**Jn 2:17.** *“The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”* The disciples saw Jesus fulfilling Ps 69:9. The temple was the very center of Jewish worship. But at the time, the atoning sacrifices were no longer as important as obedience to the law—including the thousands of oral laws added to their traditions. The once-sacred space had lost its meaning.

**Jn 2:18 (BSB).** *“What sign can You show us to prove Your authority to do these things?”* We have no record that Jewish authorities condemned Jesus for destroying an entire business associated with the temple. Instead, they questioned whether this was a sign of the Messiah. Jesus answered them by equating His body to the temple, but they stubbornly missed the meaning and lost the chance to hear His witness.

## Tuesday: Teaching at the Temple—Mt 21–23

*Disciples return from Bethany and learn the power of faith—Mt 21:17; Mk 11:19; Lk 21:37*

**Lk 21:37.** *“at night he went out, and abode.”* The Gospel of Luke states that Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives, Mark says Jesus left the city, and Matthew’s account says Jesus went back to Bethany for the night. Bethany was one and a half miles outside of Jerusalem to the east, down the back side of the Mount of Olives. In Bethany, Jesus could have lodged with His dear friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.



**Mk 11:20 (Mt 21:18–19).** “*in the morning . . . they saw the fig tree.*” Two Gospels record the cursed fig tree, but with slight differences. Mark spreads the cursing and withering incident over two days; Matthew has it happening all at once. The withered tree may symbolize the Jewish nation or other hypocrisy. The fig tree also represents the last days.<sup>12</sup> Its usage as an eschatological sign continues into this dispensation: “And they shall learn the parable of the fig tree, for even now already summer is nigh.”<sup>13</sup>

**Mt 21:22 (Mk 11:24).** “*whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*” Jesus encouraged His disciples, saying that they can do more than curse a fig tree with faith; they can move mountains (and many of those mountains are emotional and spiritual). The Apostles’ learned faith is more powerful than natural laws. Jesus taught a similar message to the Nephites. To that audience He added a qualifier: “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you” (Moro 7:26). It must be good from the Lord’s perspective. There are many scriptures with the same promise.<sup>14</sup> God will give if we ask what is best and listen in faith.

*Jesus’s authority challenged—Mt 21:23–34; Mk 11:27; Lk 20:1*

**Mt 21:23 (Mk 11:28; Lk 20:2).** “*who gave thee this authority?*” On the morning of the second day in Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples walked up to the temple lot again. Hostile questioners greeted Him. The chief priests and elders devised a scheme to discredit Him. They asked Jesus a twofold question: What authority do you have? who gave it to you?

They are specifically questioning His authority to cleanse the temple but also possibly His authority to heal and teach new doctrines more generally. *Authoritative* teaching was firmly established among the Jews. All teaching had to be in complete alignment with the law of Moses or the oral laws and handed down from an authoritative teacher to a disciple. The ultimate appeal in cases of discussion was always to some great teacher or Sanhedrin decree. To become a rabbi, elder, or judge, a man needed an ordination. Jewish hierarchy included offices of *authority*, complete with “letters of orders.”<sup>15</sup>

**Mt 21:24 (Mk 11:29; Lk 20:3).** “*I also will ask you one thing.*” The tables were completely turned on the chief priests and elders. Instead of answering their questions, Jesus questioned them. He asked them about John the Baptist’s authority and then, according to Matthew, answered their question with three parables. His examiners will learn in the future He is the ultimate Judge with authority from His Father. He will be our Judge too.

**Mk 11:33 (Mt 21:27; Lk 20:8).** “*Neither do I tell you.*” Jesus would not answer the leaders’ question because of their doubting and prideful hearts. As the great teacher, Jesus knew learners need faith and softened hearts. God continues to teach those who are ready through inspiration of the Spirit. But if we are not meek, we will have to distinguish right from wrong by our own experiences (see Moro 7:16).

### *The parable of the two sons—Mt 21:28–32*

**Mt 21:28.** “*go work to day in my vineyard.*” This parable is usually understood as acknowledging that lip service alone is insufficient; we must do what God asks. In fact, lip service is probably worse than not committing ourselves at all. We often see this as Jesus looking for action, as He has said before: “Come follow me,” or “Sell all that thou hast.”

There is another way to read this parable dealing more specifically with the question asked—“Where did you get your authority?” John W. Welch sees Jesus in the Greek text answering the question by referring to the Council in Heaven that took place in the premortal life. Then, Heavenly Father asked both Jehovah and Lucifer for help to carry out His plan, but only one son submitted to the Father’s will (Mose 4:1–2). In the parable, the first son’s answer, “I will not” (KJV), can rather be read in the Greek text as, “Not my will,” or “Not as I will,” and thus represents the first son reconciling himself. The second son’s response in the KJV, “go,” is not in the Greek text. Rather it originally states, “*ego*,” meaning “I,” as in “my way” (not “I go” as in Mt 21:30 KJV). The English translation hides this important premortal perspective and explanation of Jesus’s authority.

**Mt 21:32 (JST).** “*John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and bore record of me, and ye believed him not.*” Jesus returned to His question about the leaders’ acceptance of John the Baptist and his heaven-sent authority. He confronted them with the fact that they also rejected John the Baptist and his authority. Consequently, they also rejected their Messiah and His message of salvation. The Book of Mormon also prophesied that the people would reject their prophets and Messiah.<sup>16</sup> The words of the prophets represent their authority to speak for God.<sup>17</sup>

### *The parable of the marriage of the king’s son—Mt 22:1–14*

The third parable, answering the question about Jesus’s authority, describes a king’s wedding feast that no one attends. The banquet represents the joys of God’s kingdom, but the parable describes some listeners as rejecting God’s kingdom. When all are invited, some do not understand they must dress or go through the required rite and decorum to be with the king. Some appear to accept Jesus in part but are not willing to completely follow His teachings to enter His presence. The king gives his guests appropriate clothing (described elsewhere in scripture as the robes of righteousness).<sup>18</sup> The parable warns those who reject Jesus’s invitation to come unto Him and those who come but do not come His way.

### *The parable of the wicked husbandmen—Mt 21:33; Mk 12:1–12; Lk 20:9–19<sup>19</sup>*

The second parable that explains Jesus’s authority includes the familiar story from Isa 5:2–7 about a good farmer who carefully planted a vineyard (it also sounds like Jacob 5:3). God’s servants include His prophets. But they are abused and murdered. Jesus speaks of His authority by introducing the heir.

*Olivet sermon: Judgment and Second Coming—Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21*

On the third day before Passover, Jesus left the temple and walked to the Mount of Olives, where He answered His disciples’ questions. The Olivet sermon must have been a total shock for the disciples since they anticipated Jesus fulfilling the prophecies of both His First and Second Coming. The disciples generally saw these two comings as one, but Jesus would clarify that in this sermon. Even Jesus’s closest disciples still anticipated a political victory. They were beginning to understand the spiritual freedom that Jesus offered them. They were, however, reluctant give up their hope for an immediate political or military victory as well. In this discourse, Jesus plainly lays out what is going to happen when and how.

The Olivet sermon is rearranged in Joseph Smith—Matthew (as found in the Pearl of Great Price), which moves the verses around to separate the destruction that occurred in Jerusalem between AD 68–70 from the future destruction that is prophesied at Jesus’s Second Coming. Much of this sermon is repeated in D&C 45:16–45 (approximately thirteen verses).<sup>20</sup>

The JST changes to Mt 24 increase its length by 50 percent. There is only one verse (Mt 24:33) that had no corrections made to it. Mark’s record of this discourse also includes many JST changes. Matthew’s JST reordering of the verses is diagramed in table 4.

**Mt 24:1 (JST; also Mk 13:1; Lk 21:5). “Master, show us concerning the buildings of the temple.”** A discussion began with the disciples trying to understand what Jesus meant when He said that “not one stone” would be left on the temple. It would have seemed impossible as some of the stones were over forty-four feet long and weighed five hundred tons.

**Mt 24:3 (Mk 13:4). “what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”** The disciples asked for more information to clarify their expectations of the Messiah conquering the world. The JST adds much to both Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts. Jesus warned the disciples to not be deceived by the many false prophets and leaders who will come and try to convince people to follow their plans.

**Mt 24:14. “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.”** From our vantage point in the present day, we read this

Table 4. Verse order of JS—Mt 1 compared to that of Mt 24 KJV

	JS—Mt 1	Mt 24 KJV
<b>Past</b> <i>Jerusalem’s destruction</i>	1	23:39
	2–6	1–5
	7–11	9–13
	12–18	15–21
	19	8
	20–21	22
<b>Future</b> <i>Jesus’s Second Coming</i>	21–22	23–24
	23, 28	6
	24–27	25–28
	29	7
	30	12
	31–32	14–15
	33	29
	34–35	34–35
	36–39	30–33
	40–54	36–51
55	36–51	

verse as our call to spread God’s word. Yet the early Christians expected the end of the world in their lives and felt instructed by Jesus to watch until then.<sup>21</sup>

**Mt 24:24 (Mk 13:22).** “*there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets.*” The Apostles also wrote of the Saints falling away in 2 Thes 2:1–3; Heb 9:26–28; Act 20:29; 2 Pe 3:3–9 and of the intrusion of anti-Christ in 1 Jn 2:18. The early disciples learned that it was not Jesus’s Second Coming that was imminent but apostasy. The Apostles restrained the false prophets, but iniquity was already at work in the apostolic church. It was neither passive nor gradual. Jesus foretold this. The JST adds information on Satan’s efforts to stop God’s plan: “*And he it is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way*” (JST, 2 Thes 2:7).

**Mt 24:29 (Mk 13:24; Lk 21:25).** “*the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.*” Jesus gave His disciples several signs of the last days,<sup>22</sup> but we have been given even more as recorded in D&C 29:14; 88:87; and elsewhere.

## **Wednesday: Preparing for Passover, the Last Supper, and Gethsemane—Mt 26**

*Preparing for the Passover—Mt 26:17–20; Mk 14:12–17; Lk 12:7–14; Jn 13:1*

Passover is arguably the most important feast for the Israelites. The Feast of Unleavened Bread follows for the next seven days,<sup>23</sup> and preparations for these eight holy days start a month in advance. Passover commemorates God’s redemption of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. On their last night in Egypt, the Lord sent a scourge and killed all the first-born children in every home whose doorway was not covered with blood from the Passover lambs. The feast night evokes many symbols from the story in Ex 12—unleavened bread, a roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and wine. But this feast also looked forward symbolically to Jesus as the unblemished lamb whose blood would cover and save, prefiguring the great and last sacrifice of Jesus as the Lamb of God who would redeem the world from sin (1 Cor 5:7).

John placed the Last Supper the night before the traditional Passover feast.<sup>24</sup> This seems appropriate since Jesus was crucified when the lambs were being slaughtered on the temple altar (Mk 15:25). John, in his usual careful dating, is the only Gospel author to record that the Last Supper occurred the night before Passover.<sup>25</sup> The Passover did not start until the next evening at sundown and lasted for twenty-four hours, followed by the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex 23:15; 34:18).

Preparing the Passover meal was an involved process. The Latter-day Saint scholar S. Kent Brown assumes that the women who had traveled with Jesus from Galilee and were with Him at the cross and tomb also helped prepare Jesus’s Last Supper.<sup>26</sup> The meal shares many symbols of the Passover Seder, especially as Jesus introduces the sacrament.

Table 5. Timing of the Passover in the four Gospels (Nestle-Aland translation)

<b>Mt 26:17–18</b>	<b>Mk 14:12–13</b>	<b>Lk 22:7–14</b>	<b>Jn 13:1</b>
Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying, “Where will you have us Prepare for you to eat the passover?” He said, “Go.”	And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the passover?” And he sent two of his disciples, and said to them “Go.”	Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying “Go and prepare the passover for us, that we may eat it.”	Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own

*The sacrament of the Lord’s Last Supper—Mt 26:26–29; Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:15–20*

The Lord introduced the symbols of the sacrament during His meal, according to the Synoptic Gospels (John’s Gospel introduces the symbols earlier in Jesus’s bread of life sermon in Jn 6). The meal included breaking the unleavened bread. At some point the Jews began hiding a portion of the bread (called the *afikomen*), and one analysis claims that it represented the hidden Messiah.<sup>27</sup> But Jesus did not hide the bread. He held it up and said, “This is my body.”<sup>28</sup> The cup at the end of the meal is called the “cup of redemption,” and Jesus chose to use this as the symbol for His blood (Lk 22:20). Jesus’s blood became the source of our redemption. The Passover symbols point us to what is about to happen.

*Washing the disciples’ feet—Jn 13:1–20*

Because of the dusty roads in the area, social etiquette required hosts to supply the means to wash people’s feet upon entering a house. Often the host assigned a servant or child to do this menial task. (Disciples could do many of the tasks of a servant for their master, but washing their feet was forbidden as it was demeaning.)<sup>29</sup> On this special night, Jesus took on the role of a servant and washed His Apostles’ feet. He turned the social ladder upside down, and Peter could not bear to see His beloved master acting as His slave (Jn 13:8). Throughout His ministry Jesus tried to teach masters how to serve. Jesus corrected Peter, and Peter submitted. Jesus had previously taught, “[I] came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” and “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant,” and similar humble expressions on the value of serving others.<sup>30</sup> The addition of this story and many others throughout John’s Gospel gives evidence that the events were recorded by an eyewitness. Washing of feet was restored in Kirtland at the School of the Prophets and became a higher ordinance in the restored Church.<sup>31</sup>

*Gethsemane—Mt 26:36–46; Mk 14:32–42; Lk 22:39–46; Jn 18:1*

Jesus spent the night before His death “as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives,” across the Kidron River in an olive orchard or “garden” named Gethsemane.<sup>32</sup> The name Gethsemane comes from two Hebrew

roots: *gath*, meaning “press,” and *shemen*, meaning “oil,” together referring to an oil press. Extreme pressure is required to extract oil from an olive; so, too, the Son of God was crushed under the weight of the sins of the world, which caused Him to bleed from every pore. “These tiny drops of golden liquid can be seen as symbolizing the At-one-ment and its power to heal.”<sup>33</sup> As His Apostles slept, Jesus suffered alone, drinking the bitter cup and thus enabling mercy and justice to eternally meet.

**Mt 26:38 (Mk 14:34).** “***My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.***” Each of the four Gospels shares a different perspective of Jesus in Gethsemane. Mark is the most descriptive of His human nature, showing Him falling to the ground in pain. Luke emphasizes Jesus earnestly praying for divine help and His Father answering that prayer with angelic aid. Luke alone describes Jesus’s bleeding from every pore and then praying more earnestly. All three Synoptic Gospels include Jesus submitting: “Not my will, but thine” (Lk 22:42; Mk 14:36; Mt 26:39). John is the only Gospel to not mention Jesus’s suffering in Gethsemane. Instead, John’s storyline jumps to Judas’s betrayal.

## **Thursday: Trial, Crucifixion, and Burial—Mt 27:1–6; Mk 14–15; Lk 22–23; Jn 18–19**

### *Arrest*

**Mt 26:48 (Mk 14:44; Lk 22:48).** “***Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he.***” Jesus’s betrayal is especially painful as it is carried out by one of His chosen Apostles, Judas Iscariot, the counterspy. With Satan’s coaxing, Judas devised a plan to arrest the Lord by using a counterfeit allegiance. Satan has used counterfeits to usurp Jesus’s position since the time of the Garden of Eden.<sup>34</sup> In the middle of the night, Judas led the chief priests and elders to an olive orchard where Jesus often went.

In that culture, disciples waited for their master teacher or rabbi to greet them first. If disciples greeted the rabbi first, it wrongly implied equality.<sup>35</sup> When Judas feigned friendship, he insulted the Lord by treacherously greeting Him first and calling Him “master,” then kissing Him (Mt 26:49; Mk 14:45).

**Mt 26:49.** “***Hail, master.***” Ironically, Judas has run away from his Good Master and sold himself as a slave to Satan. Judas’s hypocrisy is contrasted with Jesus’s sincere response: “Friend you are here” (Mt 26:50 BYUNTC). Even with the pain of exquisite suffering throughout the night and the treachery of Judas’s rejection, Jesus maintained charity for His enemy.

**Jn 18:6.** “***I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.***” John does not have Judas initiating the action, nor does he mention a kiss, but in this record Jesus greets the mob and speaks so powerfully that they all fall to the ground.

**Lk 22:50 (Mt 26:51; Mk 14:47; Jn 18:10).** “***cut off his right ear.***” Just a few hours before Jesus’s arrest, the Lord encouraged His eleven Apostles in Lk 22:36 and 38 to take two swords with them as they left the upper room: “Look, Lord, here are two swords,” and Jesus replied, “That is enough” (Lk 22:38 BSB). I presume this is, in part, why Peter defended Jesus and attacked Malchus, the servant of

the high priest, with his sword (Jn 18:10). As the Lord healed the bleeding wound, He taught, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” (Mt 26:52; JST, Mk 14:47). Jesus added an aside that He could ask for 24,000 angels if He wanted. Since his name was known to the author of John, the healed Malchus likely became a Christian (see Jn 18:10).

### *Trials*

**Jn 18:38 (Mt 27:24; Mk 14:55; Lk 23:4).** “*I find in him no fault.*” If we combine the four Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus may have endured six illegal trials—three religious and three civil. The soldiers took Jesus to the high priest’s palace before Annas (who had served as a previous high priest), then to Caiaphas the current high priest, to the Sanhedrin (or Jewish ruling council), to Pilate the Roman Governor, to King Herod Antipas, and back to Pilate again. During all these proceedings, false witnesses testified against Jesus for blasphemy and insurrection. Jesus meekly submitted to the harassment as a mute lamb before the slaughter (Isa 53:7; Act 8:32). In a tragic contradiction, Jesus was crucified for blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of man who will sit beside God (Mk 14:62–64).

### *Soldiers scourge Jesus*

**Jn 19:1 (Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15).** “*Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.*” Scourging, or flogging, was an ancient practice for discipline. In the law of Moses, it was limited to less than forty lashes (Deu 25:3). The Romans used leather cords of different lengths with bones, rocks, and metal attached to cut into the skin and muscle. The victim was tied to a pole, then one or two soldiers whipped the victim’s bare back, buttocks, and legs. Because flogging was especially common as discipline for enslaved people, “the trademark of slaves, was a back scarred from whippings.”<sup>36</sup> Jesus took the role of a slave throughout His ministry, and now He bore the sign of a slave on His back.<sup>37</sup>

### *Crucifixion—Mt 27:31–56; Mk 15:20–41; Lk 23:26–49; Jn 19:16–37*

**Lk 23:33 (NIV).** “*When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him.*” Jesus carried His own crossbeam through the city, but in His weakened state, He collapsed. Simon, a foreigner from Cyrene, was forced to carry the heavy crossbeam for Jesus. I believe Simon and his family also became Christians because Mk 15:21 describes them as friends. Once outside the city, they came to a section of the main road where the crucifixion poles stood permanently in the ground. It was called Calvary in Greek and Golgotha in Hebrew, meaning “place of the skull.”

**Mk 15:25.** “*it was the third hour, and they crucified him.*” Mark records that it was nine o’clock in the morning when Jesus’s hands were nailed to the crossbeam and He was lifted up to be tortured to death. The Synoptic Gospels describe that from noon to three o’clock in the afternoon, the sun gave no light, leaving blackness to cover the sky as Jesus died.<sup>38</sup> That time coincided with the sacrifice of the pascal lambs, and three o’clock was the traditional hour of the evening sacrifice and time of prayer at the temple.<sup>39</sup>

**Mt 27:55.** *“many women were there beholding afar off.”* Several women had been at the cross and are listed in differently in the four Gospels. They are those who had traveled with Jesus and the Apostles on multiple missions (see Lk 8:2–3). I have organized their names into a table (see table 6), with each row representing one named woman and the various ways she is listed in the Crucifixion account of the four Gospels.

**Jn 19:27.** *“Behold thy mother!”* As Jesus hung in excruciating pain, He saw the need of His mother, Mary. He comforted her by asking the only Apostle there, John the Beloved (who was possibly the Lord’s first cousin), to take care of her.<sup>40</sup> Mary had other children, but at that time they did not believe Jesus was the Messiah as she and John did.

**Mt 27:46 (Mk 15:34).** *“My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”* Each Gospel author recorded different angles of Jesus’s experience on the cross. Jesus’s final words demonstrate the spectrum of perspectives. Matthew starts with the very human cry, and Luke shows a more divine focus: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). John records Jesus with the most control of the situation: “It is finished” (Jn 19:30).

### *Parting the veil*

**Mt 27:51 (Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45).** *“the veil of the temple was rent.”* Symbolically, the parting of the temple veil unblocked the way to the presence of God. The way to the Holy of Holies was accessible. Rather than just one high priest being allowed to enter the sacred space once a year (Lev 16), all may now come through Jesus, the Great High Priest, to the throne of God. Since the time of Adam and Eve’s Fall, the door was closed. But Jesus made it possible for humankind to eat the fruit of the tree of life and return to the presence of God free of sin if we repent and embrace His gospel.

*Table 6. Women mentioned at Jesus’s cross (and tomb) in the four Gospels*

<b>Mt 27:56</b>	<b>Mk 15:40; 16:1</b>	<b>Lk 24:10</b>	<b>Jn 19:25</b>
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
Mary, mother of James and Joses	Mary, mother of James and Joses	Mary, mother of James	Mary, wife of Cleopas
			Jesus’s mother
		Joanna wife of Chuza	
Mother of Zebedee’s children	Salome		Jesus’s mother’s sister
		Other unnamed women	



### *Additional piercing*

**Jn 19:34. “a spear pierced his side.”** Jesus’s body received one more piercing when a soldier came to break Jesus legs and confirm His death (breaking the legs sped up the suffocation process during crucifixion). John may have included the piercing in Jesus’s side to create a parallel with Eden, where Adam’s side was opened for Eve (and subsequently, for all humanity to arrive on earth). Jesus, as the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45) or only other mortal man begotten of God, will open the way for the descendants of Adam and Eve to receive immortality and eternal life.

*Jesus’s burial and first day and night in tomb; Passover starts at sunset—Mt 27:57; Mk 15:42; Lk 23:50; Jn 19:38*

**Mt 27:58 (Mk 15:43; Lk 23:52; Jn 19:38).** “*went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.*” Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had been secret disciples of Jesus while still maintaining their membership in the Jewish leadership of Jerusalem. Their positions as members of the council (or Sanhedrin) allowed them to ask Pilate for permission to take the body of Jesus. While Joseph arranged for his servants to move the body to his own tomb, Nicodemus bought oils, linens, and spices to wrap Jesus’s body.

**Jn 19:41 (Mt 27:60; Mk 15:46; Lk 23:53).** “*in the place where he was crucified there was a garden.*” Joseph of Arimathea’s garden was not far from Calvary, and his servants were able to carry the body from the main road to his garden where he had recently prepared a new tomb for himself. As the men transported the wounded body, the women followed so they would know where to find Jesus’s body three days later, after their double Sabbath (Passover and Saturday).

**Mt 27:63.** “*After three days I will rise again.*” Remembering Jesus’s claims that He would rise again, the chief priest and Pharisees asked Pilate for a watch of Roman guards to ensure no one could steal Jesus’s body and claim He had resurrected. Pilate agreed to send soldiers to make the “sure . . . seal” (Mt 27:65, 66).

### **Friday and Saturday: Preaching in the Spirit World—D&C 138**

**1 Pe 3:19; 4:6.** “[Jesus] went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” Our understanding of Easter and what happened during the three days and nights following Jesus’s entombment was revealed on October 3, 1918. That fall, as World War I was ending, an influenza epidemic struck the United States. The prophet at the time, Joseph F. Smith, was filled with deep sorrow at the passing of loved ones and spent much time pondering death and the state of his departed friends and family. During his meditation of 1 Peter’s verses about Jesus preaching among the dead, President Smith received a vision of Jesus’s work among the spirits immediately following His death.

In his vision the righteous dead knew of Jesus’s atoning sacrifice and eagerly anticipated His arrival to the spirit world (D&C 138:15). Jesus was the first to be resurrected, or “the first fruits of them that slept” (1 Cor 15:20); thus, all the posterity of Adam had remained as spirits without their bodies—which was a bondage to them. A vision opened to the prophet, and he saw the valiant gathered in heaven to meet the Lord after His death:

And the saints rejoiced in their redemption and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell. . . . I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them; but behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead. (D&C 138:23, 29–30)

Millions joyously anticipated the Lord in order that they too may receive His redeeming sacrifice and resurrection. Adam, Eve, their faithful daughters and sons, and all the great prophets and their wives and righteous family members were gathered to greet the Lord in heaven (D&C 138:38–40). When Jesus arrived, He organized these valiant spirit women and men into missionary forces to teach Christ’s gospel of repentance and the plan of salvation.

President Joseph F. Smith reported his vision the next day in general conference. Before the month was out, it was canonized as the next section of revelations collected in the Doctrine and Covenants.

### **Easter Sunday: Jesus’s Resurrection and Women at Jesus’s Tomb—Mt 28:1–10; Mk 16:1–11; Lk 23:56–24:12; Jn 20:1–18**

**Mt 28:1 (Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1).** “*the first day of the week*” would be Sunday. From this point on, Sunday becomes the Christian Sabbath. It is a day to remember the Resurrection as the most memorable day in the history of the world. The Resurrection is the reason why Christians worship on Sunday rather than the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday (adopted as the day of worship because of the story of the Creation).

As upright Jews, Jesus’s female disciples rested on their double Sabbath and did not return to the tomb. For three nights and two full days the women probably stayed indoors. The Sabbath laws restricted walking, carrying, and anointing, but they allowed one to prepare ointments at home to use for the dead.

Before sunrise on the third day, the women ventured out. After waiting, obediently keeping the oral laws of the Sabbath, the women courageously made their way through the dark city streets. They would have retraced their steps back to the main road and Golgotha again—with its horrific memories of Jesus’s Crucifixion. I presume that though it was still dark they may have smelled the remains of the feasts or perhaps the blood from sacrificial animals and the human crucifixions.

**Mk 28:1. “came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.”** In both the birth and death narratives, God called women as the first witnesses. Each Gospel account differs in the details it emphasizes in its retelling of Easter morning. For this Easter study guide, I will focus on Matthew’s account; we will study the other Gospels’ accounts in late June when we return to Resurrection morning.

**Mt 28:2. “earthquake . . . angel . . . rolled back the stone.”** Fortunately, God prepared the way to open the entrance to Jesus’s tomb with an earthquake. He used earthquakes to speak to humankind many times in scripture (for example, to Elijah, Alma the Younger, Saul, and so forth). The miracle of God’s intervention is in the timing. Earthquakes are not uncommon in this area, but the timing corresponded with the angelic arrival and rolling away the stone to open the tomb. This is the first time in Matthew’s Gospel since the Nativity narrative that “the angel of the Lord” is mentioned. It is one of the many parallels between Jesus’s birth and death accounts in Matthew and Luke (as they are the only two who give us an account of Jesus’s Nativity).<sup>41</sup>

**Mt 28:3 (JST). “their countenance was like lightening.”** Most angels are described during visitations as having dazzling, shining clothes and faces. The description of the Roman guards as “[becoming] as dead men” can also translated as being “paralyzed with fright” (Anchor Bible Translation).

**Mt 28:5. “Fear not”** is the standard greeting used by angels. We find the two words together in the KJV forty-eight times in the Old Testament and fifteen times in the New Testament. It is often used by angels or prophets. The women had two witnesses testifying to them: the angels and the physical evidence. The angels used the same phrase, “Come, see,” as when Jesus invited His first disciples to follow Him.

**Mt 28:7. “go quickly, and tell.”** The angels asked the women to become the first witnesses of the empty tomb and to share the news of the resurrected Christ with the Apostles. Remember, women were not allowed to bear witness in a Jewish court of law. Under the rabbinic oral traditions, they were even discouraged from speaking to men in general.<sup>42</sup> (This cultural habit had saturated the Apostles’ thinking initially, as Mk 16:8 records that the women did not speak at all.) The women obeyed the angelic command. Even though they were fearful, they ran to find the disciples to share the news.

Following the angels request and Savior’s example caused a dramatic cultural change in Christianity. The Lord and the apostolic church made a radical departure from other ancient world religions in asking women to bear their witness and work together with male church leaders. Christ brought a new dimension to worship that empowered women. Initially, the men did not believe the women’s report, but by the time the authors recorded their Gospels the women’s witnesses were accepted as valid.

### *Jesus’s visit to the women—Mt 28:9–15*

**Mt 28:9. “Jesus met them.”** The women were obedient and were blessed by a visit from Jesus. Matthew alone mentions this visitation of the resurrected Lord to all the Galilean women. We see this was a separate visitation from the one to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb because she was not allowed to embrace the Lord, but the group of women are allowed to hold His feet in worship. (Note that Matthew is

also the only one to mention that women and children joined the miraculous feeding of the five thousand and four thousand).

**Mt 28:10. “go tell my brethren.”** Jesus’s visit to the Galilean women is the only eyewitness event in Matthew’s Gospel on Easter. More experiences are added in the other Gospels. In Jn 20:11, 18, the risen Lord appears to Mary Magdalene when she returned to the garden. In Lk 24:13, 34–35, we read of the Lord appearing to Peter alone and then appearing a little later to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Three Gospels record the Lord’s visit to His Apostles that night.<sup>43</sup>

*The guard told the chief priests—Mt 28:11–15*

**Mt 28:11 (NIV). “the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything.”** The watch of guards placed to protect the tomb from robbers were probably Roman soldiers. Even the enemies of Jesus (the chief priests) were witnesses of His Resurrection by covering up the witness of the Roman soldiers.

**Mt 28:12 (ESV). “they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers.”** It is hard to believe that the soldiers were offered a bribe to keep silent. If a Roman guard slept on duty or lost the item he was to protect (like the body of Jesus), it was a capital offense—earning a penalty of death.<sup>44</sup> The chief priests promised to stand up for the guard if Pilate heard about it. It is odd to have the Roman soldiers preferring Jewish protection, but that is how Matthew recorded it (and we only have his record of this detail).

## **Easter Connections in the Book of Mormon**

The Book of Mormon adds a beautiful dimension to our understanding of Easter. It is filled with clarifying teachings on the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Starting off with the books of Nephi, Jacob, Mosiah, and Alma, we find great teachings that augment our understanding of the Savior’s “great and last sacrifice.”<sup>45</sup>

While the events of Jesus’s last week are not related in the Book of Mormon, the doctrines underlying the experiences of His suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross are clarified in the Book of Mormon. When I compare the doctrine of Christ’s Atonement in the biblical canon with that found in the Book of Mormon (a volume one third the size), I have found more than double the amount of information. In addition to their quantity, the teachings in the Book of Mormon provide a beautiful quality that brings new dimensions to our understanding of Christ’s Atonement.

The Book of Mormon also enhances our understanding of Easter by providing a new witness from another corner of the earth. Those Israelites living in the New World experienced even more violent signs and natural disasters at the death of the Messiah. Those horrific natural disasters occurred for three full days (versus the three hours of darkness described in the New Testament) from the time of the Lord’s Crucifixion until His Resurrection:

There arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land. And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder. (3 Ne 8:5–6)

Descriptions of the calamities continue for another twenty verses.

The Book of Mormon also expands our understanding of the importance of the sacrament as an ordinance introduced at Lord's Last Supper. In each of Jesus's first two days with the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, the ordinance played an important role (3 Ne 18:1–6; 20:3–8). Then we learn summarily that He "did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them" (3 Ne 26:13).

The Easter stories are beautiful in the biblical accounts, but with the addition of the teachings found in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, our understanding of the ramifications of Easter become more exquisite and thrilling.

## Notes

1 Jn 12:1 placed Jesus in Bethany "six days before Passover." The week continues to unfold. In the Jewish world the day begins at sunset, just as the Creation began with darkness before light. The sunrise was generally understood as occurring at 6:00 a.m.

2 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1242. Luke describes a long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. This section begins the fifth section in Luke's Gospel (starting in Lk 19:28). It is mainly devoted to Jesus's ministry at the temple in Jerusalem and closely follows Matthew's account or older source material. John's Gospel has the Lord west of the Jordan River in Perea for the past few months

3 Mt 21:1; Mk 11:1; Lk 19:29; Jn 12:1, 12.

4 Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 6.1.3. Herod began his architectural masterpiece in 20 BC, and it was finished during his grandson's reign around AD 63. It stood for only a few years before the Roman general Titus destroyed it in August of AD 70.

5 Lloyd R. Bailey, "Gehenna: The Topography of Hell," *Biblical Archeologist* 49, no. 3 (1986): 189. Rabbi David Kimhi in 1200 perpetuated the assumptions that during the late second temple era, the garbage dumped into the Hinnom Valley was continually burning and referred to the valley as Gehenna, or hell. Bailey finds no archeological evidence of burning a in that area during the Roman era.

6 Zech 9:9; 12:10; 13:1; 14:8.

7 It appears that at some point in the creation of Matthew's text, a writer misunderstood Zechariah's prophecy to include two donkeys. Mt 21:2 has two donkeys, while the other Gospels and the JST of Matthew mention just one.

8 Palm trees grew closer to the two seas (that is, near Jericho or the Mediterranean) but were imported to Jerusalem as needed for feasts. Jesus's triumphal entry echoed the traditions associated with the Jewish Feast of

Tabernacles as well. At that feast, a procession of priests carried water to the temple altar (Lev 23:34–43). They were accompanied by a procession of people reciting Ps 118:25 and waving branches of willow, myrtle, or palm in their right hands.

9 See Mt 12:14; Mk 11:18; Lk 19:47; Jn 12:10.

10 The timing of the cleansing of the temple was discussed in my commentary for Jn 2. In short, the Gospel of John is more trustworthy chronologically. It records Jesus traveling to Jerusalem for at least three Passovers as well as other events.

11 The KJV says Joseph and Jesus were “carpenters” (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). The Greek word is more correctly translated as “builder” and often refers to a stonemason.

12 See Jer 8:13; Isa 34:4; and JS—Mt 1:38.

13 D&C 35:16. I love the story about Alfred Edersheim trying to figure out this story. He went to Israel and looked around for a fig tree. After he found one, he pulled from its branches gray objects that looked like lozenges as well as leaves from the previous year. He learned from the locals that the gray objects were edible and that travelers often ate them between stops at inns. The locals also told him that if a tree did not bear those objects in spring, it would not bear fruit in the summer. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971).

14 Enos 1:15; D&C 4:7; 8:1; 11:14; 14:8; 18:18; and so on.

15 Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 381.

16 2 Ne 25:18–19; Jac 4:16; Hel 6:2; Eth 11:22.

17 1 Ne 3:18; 7:14; Jac 6:8; and so forth.

18 Isa 61:10; 2 Ne 9:14; D&C 29:12; 109:76; and so forth.

19 The JST adds substantial portions to Mt 21:33, 46. The text transitions from one parable to another in the JST by defending John the Baptist again and explaining that the audience is receiving parables because of their unbelief.

20 The Second Coming or Millennium was a favorite topic in early nineteenth-century America. The Saints were part of this culture, and their questions led to many revelations on the subject, including D&C 1, 29, 38, 43, 101, 116, and 133.

21 See Mt 28:19–20; Lk 21:32; Act 2:16.

22 See also Isa 13:9; Jn 11; Rev 6:12, 18.

23 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 2.15.1, 311–317.

24 Jn 13:1; James Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1916), 617–618. In the endnotes to chapter 33, Talmage suggests that due to the large crowds in Jerusalem, Jews had two days to celebrate the Passover: “Two nights were devoted yearly to the paschal observance.” I have not found this anywhere else in firsthand sources dating to the second temple era.

25 The Synoptic Gospels describe preparing for the feast and the feast. The week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at sundown with the feast of the Passover. All four Gospels have Jesus in Jerusalem four days before the feast. This means the Last Supper would have been on a Wednesday night. We will discuss this in more detail in June when we look at these chapters again.

26 S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 982.

27 Whether the tradition of breaking the bread and hiding it as the *afikoman* was practiced at the time of Jesus is debated. Many of the traditions recorded from the second temple era may have started at a later date.

28 Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19.

29 Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 313.

30 Mt 20:28; 23:11; compare Mk 10:45; Lk 22:26.

31 “Minutes, 30 March 1836,” p. 187, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-30-march-1836/1>.

32 Lk 22:39; Jn 18:1; Mt 26:36.

33 Spencer J. Condie, *In Perfect Balance* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1993), 46.

34 Satan uses counterfeits to interrupt the Lord’s timing, starting with tempting Adam and Eve to take the fruit from his hand rather than from God’s hand and on God’s timing.

35 W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 329.

36 Beryl Rawson, ed., *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 161.

37 The Greek word *doulos* can mean both “slave” and “servant.” So even though the KJV uses “servant,” the word can also mean “slave” (see, for example, Mt 23:11; Mk 9:35; Lk 1:38; and so on).

38 Mt 27:45–46; Mk 15:34; Lk 23:44.

39 Lk 1:10; Act 10:30; Dan 9:21; Alec Garrard, *The Splendor of the Temple* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2000), 34.

40 All four Gospels document that devoted women stayed beside Jesus at Golgotha and then came to tomb. See table 6 or Mt 27:55–56, 61; 28:1; Mk 15:40–41; 16:1; Lk 23:55–56; 24:1–10; Jn 19:25; 20:1. Jesus’s siblings did not believe that He was the Messiah at this point. As we do not hear mention of Joseph during Jesus’s ministry, we assume that Mary is a widow. In that era, poor widows needed a relative to provide for them (as women were not permitted to work except in a few limited areas). Perhaps Mary’s closest *believing* male relative was John the Beloved disciple. One can assume that John is Jesus’s first cousin by lining up all the women at the tomb by name and finding that “Mary’s sister” lines up with the wife of Zebedee (James and John’s father). Otherwise, Jesus’s aunt may fit into the place of “other women”; both seem possible. See table 6.

41 Lynne Hilton Wilson, “Jesus’s Atonement Foretold through His Birth,” in *To Save the Lost*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 103–126.

42 Mishnah, Avoth 1:6: “Talk not much with womankind . . . they said this of a man’s own wife: how much more of his fellow’s wife!” In 1963 Philip Blackman translated the same passage, “Engage not in much gossip with womankind.” A century before Jesus’s birth, Ben Sira recorded, “A silent wife is a gift from the Lord; her restraint is more than money can buy” (*Ecclesiasticus* 26:14; Jn 15). More extreme, a renowned rabbi Joshua claimed that any girl or woman found speaking to a man in the street was guilty of breaking the law of chastity unless there was evidence to the contrary. Mishnah, Ketuboth 1:8. For more, see Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ’s Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing, 2015), chapter 2.

43 Mk 16:14; Lk 24:36–48; Jn 20:19–23.

44 Kent Jackson and Robert Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures*, vol. 5, *The Gospels* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 454.

45 Alm 34:10–14; see 2 Ne 9:7, 25–26; Jac 4:11–12; Mosi 3:15–19; 4:6–7; 13:28; Alm 7; 21:9; 30:17; 34:9–14; 42:15, 23; and so on.