

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 18th**

*The Curse*

### **READ:**

Genesis 3:13-15

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Who do you think the serpent represents? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who is the offspring that will bruise the head of the serpent? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Sin completely separates us from God. God is holy and just and we are not. This has been the truth since the first sin in Genesis 3. But from the first sin, we get a hint of what God was planning to do to bring us back to Him.

The serpent represents Satan, the fallen angel who seeks to deceive the world into trusting in anything but God. The offspring mentioned here points to Jesus. The serpent, Satan, will bruise Jesus' heel. Jesus' death on the cross was that bruising.

But Jesus bruising the serpent's head, Jesus' death and resurrection is the death blow to Satan. It is the blow that will ultimately see him cast away forever into the lake of fire. When we were hopelessly separated from God, Jesus came to us to offer Himself as the sacrifice to restore our relationship!

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You that when I was far from You, You sent Jesus to rescue me. From the beginning, You desired to have a people of Your own that would follow You. Even though I continually rebel against You, You continue to pursue me. Help me to remember Jesus' sacrifice, and that without it, I had no hope. Let me live as someone worthy of the sacrifice of Jesus, and when I fail, help me quickly come back to You!! In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 19th**

*A Family of Hope*

### **READ:**

Genesis 12:1-3

### **ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Would you be able to follow God's call, even if you didn't know where He was taking you? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did Abram's obedience eventually bring a blessing to the entire earth? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

For thousands of years, the promise that God would send someone to restore the relationship between He and humanity that was broken by sin, lay relatively quiet. There was no sign, or path, for the redeemer to come.

Then, God speaks to a man named Abram. Abram was in a culture that worshiped many gods. He was in a place that didn't recognize the one true creator God, but God still called him out. God tells him He will give him land, make him a nation, and bless him. But God doesn't just want to bless Abram. He wants to bless the entire world through Abram.

What greater blessing could humanity have, than to have it's relationship restored with its creator? That blessing was coming through Abram. Jesus, God in the flesh, would come through the line of Abram, to be a blessing to you and I and all the world.

### **PRAYER:**

God thank You that when there seems to be no hope, You offer hope. When we are utterly lost, You give us what we need to find our way. Thank You that when the world was hopeless, You called out Abram. Thank You that when I was dead in my sin, Jesus came and sacrificed Himself for me and for the entire world. Help me to live as someone who has the hope of Jesus living in me!! In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 20th**

*The King Forever*

### **READ:**

2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16

### **ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

What do you know that lasts forever? What doesn't last forever? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How can this prophecy be fulfilled? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

David had been king of Israel for 40 years when he died. His son Solomon reigned for 40 years. After Solomon, the nation of Israel gets broken into two parts. Within a few hundred years after that, the northern part of the kingdom, Israel, is destroyed, and the southern part, Judah, is in exile. After the exile, they come back, but are eventually removed again. It wasn't until May 14th, 1948 that the nation of Israel was reestablished.

Looking at this history, how can God promise a forever kingdom and to forever have a king on the throne? It's because this promise is more than an earthly promise. This is a promise that will be fulfilled beyond an earthly kingdom. If we look back on the Old Testament, God wanted to be the King of His people. His desire was for them to not have an earthly king, but trust Him as King.

That desire of God, and promise from God, are fulfilled in Jesus! Jesus comes to the earth to establish His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. He comes to not just save us, but also to establish Himself as King (LORD) of those who will choose to follow Him.

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank you that when You promise, You always fulfill. You promised an eternal kingdom and that kingdom only finds its fulfillment in Jesus. Thank You that He is not only Savior, but also King. Help me to live under the reign and rule of Jesus. Thank You that He is the one that fulfills all the promises. Thank You that I can trust in You because you never fail!!!! In Jesus, our King's name I pray, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 21st**

*A Child is Born*

### **READ:**

Isaiah 9:2-7

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

What darkness have you had in your life that you have needed the LORD to shine light on? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who is the child to be born? How can He fulfill all these promises of God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Isaiah lived 700 years before Jesus. He lived in a time when the nation was on the verge of collapse. When he says “the people who walked in darkness”, it is as bleak of a time as almost any other in history. The depravity of the nation was at an all time high and they had little hope. Yet, Isaiah begins to talk about the nation seeing a great light, the nation enlarging, and there being rejoicing.

Vs. 6 says, “For...”, Isaiah is saying that all this hope is before them (even in the darkest of times), because there will be a child born. This child will fulfill the promise of a King from 2 Samuel 7. He will be Wonderful Counselor, *Mighty God*, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah proclaims that this child born will be God. This is a blasphemous statement...unless it's true.

Jesus is the King, but that King is God Himself. God comes in the flesh, born as a baby, to bring an eternal kingdom. This government and peace will have no end. When we place our faith in Jesus, it is in the one who is King, but more than that, He is God Himself.

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You that You sent Jesus!! Thank You that when we were at our darkest moment, You, God of all creation, came in the flesh. Thank You that You came to go through what we went through, but live without sin. Thank You that because You were sinless, You became the perfect sacrifice on the cross. Help me to also remember that the King I serve is God Himself!!! In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 22nd**

*A Donkey?*

### **READ:**

Zechariah 9:9-13

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Have you ever known someone who commanded respect, but was humble? How did they do this?

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Why is the King humble in this depiction? What does this show us? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **THOUGHTS:**

Imagine a king who, to your knowledge, has won no battle, has no real army, but comes in on a donkey proclaiming his reign of peace.

That's the picture Zechariah gives. The king comes, not on a war horse proclaiming His greatness, but on a donkey speaking about peace. This picture, in human thought, would be laughed at. The empires of that day brought "peace" by ruling with an iron fist. Zechariah tells us that God has a different way.

The LORD comes speaking and bringing peace. Peace comes when someone with great power doesn't lord that power over people, but gives them a chance to sit under that peace. True peace is not brought by the strength of arms but by the benevolence of someone whom no one can defeat. That's the God we serve. For those who submit to Him, He gives all of Himself, His love, grace, mercy, joy, holiness, righteousness, for us to live in. For those who don't submit, He will rid the earth of them.

He has all the power to destroy and to dominate, but He offers Himself, through Jesus, and if we follow Him, we are accepted into His family.

### **PRAYER:**

God, thank You for humbly accepting us. You showed humility to us by coming and joining us on earth. You could have destroyed us, but You brought us peace. Thank You that Your reign of peace will last for eternity. Help me to live as a person of peace, just as Jesus did. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 23rd**

*Despised/Rejected*

### **READ:**

Isaiah 53:2-6

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

When you picture someone that is successful, who do you picture? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe someone you would think was rejected (stricken) by God. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

The picture in yesterday's reading was of a humble king, not what the original reader would imagine a king to be, and it's not what most of us would first picture either. Today, it is of someone coming who will save God's people from their sins. It is a picture of a hero, someone who is on a rescue mission and will give His life to save others.

But, the passage starts off talking about his appearance being nothing, someone that others cross the street to get away from. He was the outcast. Think about that. He is like each of us. If we are honest with ourselves, most of us are harder on ourselves than anyone else. We look in the mirror and don't like what we see. We think we should be better than we are. We continually look down on ourselves.

That is what happened to Jesus, He was the one others looked down on. His own people rejected and killed Him. He took up our grief, sorrow, and sin by being the one that was despised. God uses the things the world calls foolish, lowly, and unworthy to shame the wise. Because Jesus became lowly for us, by faith in Him we are lifted to princes and princesses. We go from trash to treasure. We go from being dead to being alive, because He became lowly for us.

### **PRAYER:**

Thank You that Jesus came, not as the best looking or the most 'successful' in the world's eyes, but He came to be for us what we couldn't be for ourselves. Thank You for taking the foolish things of the world and shaming the wise. Thank You that You don't look at the outward appearance, but at the heart. Help my heart to be solely devoted to You. Let me not seek to be successful in anyone's eyes, but Yours. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 24th**

*Here He Comes*

### **READ:**

John 12:12-16

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Describe how you would have felt seeing Jesus come into Jerusalem on a donkey. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think the people reacted like they did? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

The crowds are pro-Jesus. Jesus had done many miracles. He had a following of people that viewed Him as the Messiah. They shout "Hosanna" - this means "God save us." They proclaim that He is coming in the name of God Himself. They state that He is the long awaited King that will sit on the throne of David forever.

The disciples do not realize what is happening. They do not realize that Jesus is fulfilling prophecies. We read about the prophecy of the King (2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16). We read about the prophecy of the humble King riding in on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9-13). We read about the one who would save His people (Isaiah 53:2-6).

It is not until after Jesus is raised from the dead, until He opens their eyes, that they see He has fulfilled every prophecy about the coming Messiah. God must open our eyes to see Him, to recognize what He has done for us. We cannot see what God has done with human eyes or a human mind. The LORD is gracious to open our eyes, so that we can see the truth and follow Him.

### **PRAYER:**

Thank You Father that Jesus fulfilled every prophecy about the one who would bring Your people back to You. Thank You that through Jesus we are adopted into Your family. Thank You that even though we turn our backs on You repeatedly, just like the crowds will, You offer us forgiveness and a clean slate. Help me to live remembering that You are the only one that saves!! In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 25th**

*Not in My House*

### **READ:**

Mark 11:15-19

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why do you think the selling of things in the temple bothered Jesus so much? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think the crowd was astonished by/marveled at what Jesus said? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Have you ever heard something for the first time and you don't know why, but it resonated with you and were almost certain it was true? (When you feel this way, don't go off your gut, but make sure you investigate its legitimacy).

That's what happened with those who heard Jesus teach. They had heard the law and prophets taught for their entire lives, but this was different. There was conviction. There was passion, but more than that, Jesus' life mirrored what He taught. The teachers of the law did not live out what they said. They had an outward religion that was not backed up by their heart. Jesus was completely different!!

Jesus was real, so why did He get so mad at those in the temple? The religious leaders were selling sacrifices to people. They were extorting people for the forgiveness of sin. They were overcharging for the price of the required sacrifices. This is what some religions do today - 'pay this amount and God will forgive you.'

They may also have even been making people purchase their way in. Jesus said the temple should be, 'a house of prayer for all nations'. He speaks to the temple being a place where not only Jews could meet with God, but all people could. It is possible they were extorting non-Jews to give them access to the LORD.

What we know now is that we are the temple of God. We are the place God's Spirit dwells, if we know Jesus. It is through Jesus' death that we have forgiveness. He was THE sacrifice for *all* sins for *all* time!

### **PRAYER:**

God, thank You that we no longer need to go to the temple to offer sacrifices. Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins (ALL OF THEM). We don't have to be extorted by religion anymore, because Jesus was enough. Help me to live a life that allows everyone to come to Jesus! In Jesus' name, AMEN.



## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 26th**

*The Plan*

### **READ:**

Luke 22:1-6

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why do you think the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think Satan convinced Judas of to get him to betray Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Jealousy is a powerful force the enemy uses. He will convince us that someone else is going to steal our limelight. He will convince us that they are out to get us. Satan will destroy good things, even great things, with jealousy.

The religious leaders feared the people. They may have feared they would follow Jesus and rebel against their religious system. They may have feared the people because someone else may try to copy cat Jesus. We don't fully know why, but their fear was driving them because they had a system they didn't want destroyed.

What about Judas? Satan entered Judas. We are not exactly sure what this means. Did Satan possess him and he had no control over what happened? Did he, maybe even for a long time, keep whispering in his ear causing discontentment until he couldn't follow Jesus anymore? While we don't know the how, we do know that each of us are susceptible to this temptation.

Our enemy, Satan, is working to destroy us. He is whispering in our ear that Jesus is not enough. He is trying to convince us that there is a better life than what Jesus offers. He is trying to destroy us. Will you be like Judas? If we know the truth, then we should live by it no matter what our emotions tell us. We must continue to follow Jesus, even when the enemy is whispering it's not the way!

### **PRAYER:**

God, thank You that you have provided The Way in Jesus. Thank You that even though the enemy continually whispers in our ear, the truth has not and will not change. Help me to not live by my emotions, but by the truth of who You are! In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 27th**

*The Last Supper*

### **READ:**

Luke 22:14-23, 39-46

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why did Jesus give us the sign of the bread (body) and the cup (blood)? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus talks about the cup in the last supper and in His prayer in the garden. What is their connection?

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Jesus gives us a symbol to remember His sacrifice. His body is represented by the bread and His blood is represented by the cup. These signs help us to remember that our salvation is not from us, but from God. It reminds us that He was the sacrifice for our sins, He was the one that could take that punishment.

When the Old Testament talks about the cup, it is the cup of God's wrath, poured out on those who have forsaken Him. Jesus prays for the cup to be taken from Him right after He offers the cup as a remembrance. The cup we drink for the LORD's Supper reminds us that only Jesus could absorb the cup of God's wrath. The cup of God's wrath would destroy us, but the fact that Jesus was fully God and fully human, while also perfectly fulfilling the law, allowed Him to take the cup of wrath as He offered His blood (the cup) to offer us a new covenant.

As Jesus prays in the garden, it shows that He did not want to go to the cross. The physical, emotional, and spiritual torture was going to be something almost impossible to bear. It was the most gruesome death imaginable, but add in the fact He was taking all the sin of the world on at one time, and it would have been too much for anyone, but Him, to bear.

And He not only did it, but Hebrews tells us He did it for the joy set before Him. Jesus knew the torture, but the outcome was worth it. He brought honor to the Father and ultimately to Himself. He allowed humanity access to God through Himself. This was worth the cost for Him!

### **PRAYER:**

Father, we cannot imagine the torture Jesus went through. Thank You that your plan from the beginning was to sacrifice Jesus. Thank You that the only one that could do it was Jesus and that He was willing. Thank You LORD! Help me to live as a daily symbol of who you are to those around me. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 28th**

*The Trial*

### **READ:**

Luke 22:47-53; 23:13-25

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why did Jesus not fight back against those who arrested Him? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus? Why did he finally give in? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Jesus could have fought. Jesus could have taken out all those who stood against Him with a simple word. Jesus had created the heavens and the earth. This would have been nothing for Him to do. But... He didn't. He, as Isaiah told us, went as a sheep to His shearers. He didn't fight back. He knew what the mission was. While He had every right to take everyone out, He knew that the salvation of the world rested on His shoulders.

Pilate also had the physical power to stop the crucifixion. He could have halted the whole process. Whether he was peer pressured by the crowd, or whether he was being used to accomplish the purposes of God through the cross, Pilate relented and sent Jesus to His death.

When we think about the mock trial that sent Jesus to the cross, we see that it was the will of God for Jesus to die in this way. We see that all the power was still in the hands of Jesus. This did not happen by the hands of men, but at the will of God!!

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You that no plans of men will ever overtake Your will. Thank You that while the trial of Jesus was unjust and unfair, it was part of Your plan to redeem the world. Help me to live according to Your will. Help me to be someone that brings people to You, not someone who fights against Your will. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 29th**

*Jesus' Death*

### **READ:**

Luke 23:26-56

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why did Jesus save the thief on the cross? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What made the centurion believe Jesus was innocent? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

The cross holds so much meaning for us as Christians. Jesus took His cross after the mock trial. He willingly went to be a sacrifice. That sacrifice was enough to take away the sins of the world. Jesus took on our sin and offered us His righteousness. The thief on the cross recognized Jesus had done nothing wrong. The centurion realized Jesus was innocent. These two men, who were not “good” people saw that Jesus was doing something incredible.

Jesus took His innocence and His righteousness, and offered it to those who would believe in Him. While still on the cross, while still going through the torture, He offers the words, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Even in His most tortured moment, He offers forgiveness to all of us who would come to Him.

Joseph, who was a “good” man in the world’s eyes, shows us that regardless of our background, good or bad, when we follow Jesus, He becomes our salvation. Joseph did not follow the power play of the religious leaders to kill Jesus, and he risked his neck to give Jesus an honorable burial. Are we willing to forsake our status to follow Jesus?

Jesus offers everything because He offers Himself. Jesus held nothing back so that we could be saved.

### **PRAYER:**

Jesus, thank You for Your sacrifice. Thank You that at Your most grueling moment on earth, You offer forgiveness. There is nothing I can offer You, nothing I can bring that is worthy of Your forgiveness. Thank You that even though I can’t earn it, You offer it anyway. Help me to live as someone who has been forgiven and lives my life for the One who has given me forgiveness. In Jesus’ name, AMEN.

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 30th**

*What it Means*

### **READ:**

Hebrews 4:14-16

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why does it matter that Jesus has experienced our weakness as humans? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why does it matter that Jesus did not sin? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

The High Priest would go into the Holy of Holies once a year to offer sacrifice for his sins and the people's sin. This had to happen every year, because the High Priest would continue to sin (he was not sinless) and the blood offered, while spotless, was not perfect. This made the sacrifice not able to last.

Jesus was fully human and experienced all the temptations and weaknesses we do. He went through all the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional hardships we do. Yet, He did not sin. So when He offers His blood as the sacrifice, it was perfect blood. He did not need to offer another sacrifice, because His blood was forever enough.

He also did not have to offer sacrifice for His own sin because He was perfect. So while the High Priest needed to continually offer sacrifice for His sin as well, Jesus did not. When He made the sacrifice of Himself, it was enough forever, because it was perfect in every way.

Because Jesus is the perfect High Priest, because the curtain in the temple was torn (see yesterday's reading), we now have access to God. The Holy of Holies is no longer the place where God's presence dwells. His presence dwells in us, because we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We can approach God the Father, through Jesus the Son, by the Spirit that dwells in us.

He died for us, so that we can have access to Him. We are invited in to be part of His family!

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You! Thank You that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. I no longer need any more sacrifice for my sin, because Jesus is enough. Thank You that I can be part of Your family, through Jesus the Great High Priest. Help me to live with confidence in this life, because I know You and what You have done. In Jesus' name, AMEN!!

## **Easter Reading Plan**

**March 31st**

*The Plan Fulfilled*

### **READ:**

Luke 24:1-12

**ANSWER** (try and answer the questions before reading the thoughts below):

Why does it matter that Jesus rose from the dead? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why was it so hard for them to believe that Jesus was alive? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

### **THOUGHTS:**

Jesus had done everything to prepare His disciples. He had taught them the way of the Kingdom of God. He had shared with them how to live in a world that is corrupt. He had told them how to be salt and light. He had also told them what would happen to Him. He told them that He would be crucified and that He would rise from the grave 3 days later, but they struggled to believe.

When something is out of the realm of our understanding, we often dismiss it. We don't often engage the things that our minds can't comprehend. But that is exactly the business our God is in. He takes the things that seem foolish and makes them wisdom. It is foolish to think a simple Jewish carpenter with little education can speak words that change the course of history. It is foolish to think a man can go His entire life and never sin once. It is foolish to think that a man can sacrifice His life and it be enough to bring salvation to the whole world (for those who will accept it). It is foolish to think a man that has been dead in a sealed tomb for 3 days will walk out.

These foolish things are what brought salvation. This is how God chose to save the world. This is the truth. We see normal men changed by it. We see history revolving around this event. We see people who witnessed it giving their life for it. Jesus changed everything! His resurrection validates His sacrifice on the cross. His resurrection proves that death does not have power over those who would follow Him.

Jesus changed everything!!

### **PRAYER:**

Jesus, thank You for being willing to die. Thank You for sacrificing Yourself. Thank You that You did not stay in that grave. Father, thank You that You validated the sacrifice of Jesus by Him walking out of the grave. Thank You that I do not need to trust in my sinful self, but can trust in my sinless Savior. Help me to live like Jesus lived, to sacrifice how He sacrificed, and to point others to salvation in Him. In Jesus' name, AMEN.