

The Crucifixion of Jesus

The Bible tells the story of how God’s good creation, disfigured by sin, is restored through the return of God himself as King. And as we read the gospels, we see the King is Jesus—the Son of God. And the gospels tell us Jesus died on a cross. Why? The question of the meaning of Jesus’s death has echoed through the centuries. Why the terrible ordeal of the cross?

It’s as though Jesus came the way he did, as a baby born in a distant outpost of the Roman Empire, to be snuck behind enemy lines. He entered a dysfunctional world and as he emerged preaching and performing miracles, he awakened opposition. Every form of human sin and darkness came at him as though drawing it out by his own goodness. And he is overwhelmed and crushed by the evil of the world for you and me.

He took it all on, and in death swallows up the sin of the world. In his death, he swallows up death itself. Now all that sin and dysfunction has been swallowed up and conquered by the ever-greater forgiveness and love of God. The cross of Jesus was necessary because, on it, hung the salvation of the world.

The Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in me you will never die, and when you physically die—it is not the end. In me you are alive forever.” Resurrection means the love of God is stronger than death. Death could not hold Jesus and it cannot hold you either. You are alive in Jesus forever.

Resurrection means you do not face extinction. You do not move into non-existence. It means alive forever. Jesus came to give you real and eternal, more and better life than you could ever imagine (John 10:10, MSG). Resurrection means you have the hope of heaven, and you will always have that strong hope.

The ancient world had only a vague, uneasy thought about “life after death.” They had no hope and no confidence. Jesus died so you might live. Death has lost its sting. The grave has lost its victory. Your physical life will come to an end for a time, but your spirit is alive forever, and one day you will have the resurrected body as well. That is why we celebrate on Easter— Christ the Lord is risen today! Hallelujah!

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL RESOURCE

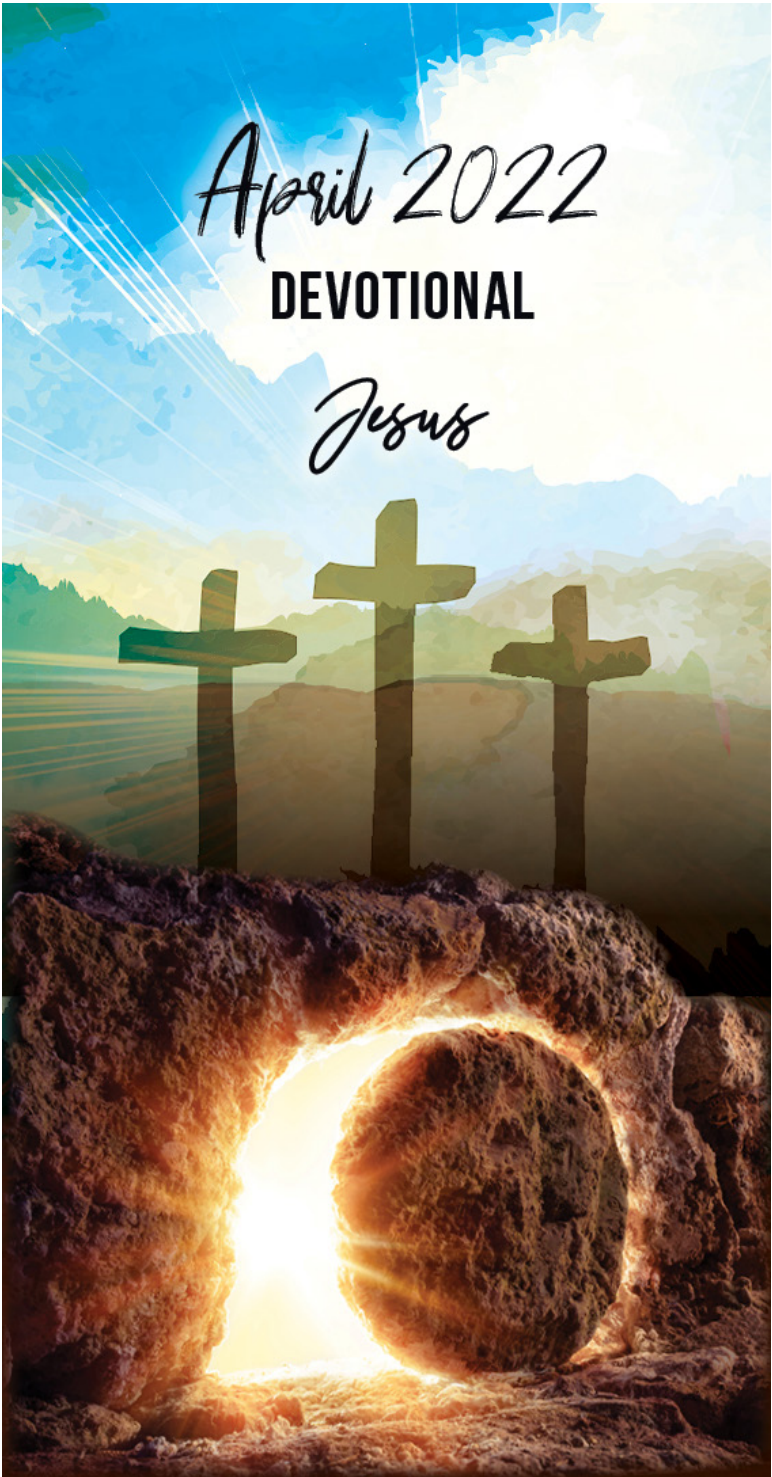
For your devotional focus in April 2022, you will read, reflect, and pray through the gospel story of Jesus’ final days (weeks) before his death and resurrection. Along with the incarnation (birth of Jesus), the cross and the empty tomb are the two most important events of Jesus’ life and ministry. The cross and resurrection change everything.

There are four gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels. Synoptic means having the same or common view. These three gospels are similar, even though each writer has some different emphases, as well as some variation in the stories. The fourth gospel, John, is different, although the events of the cross and resurrection are similar.

For three weeks, you will read the stories from Matthew and John. Both gospels contain the primary teaching Jesus gave right before his final days. These teachings are important. Jesus is letting his followers know what is to come. He is providing insights about the coming judgment of God on the people of God for their hard hearts. Jesus is also alluding to what will happen to him, even though the disciples do not yet truly understand what he is saying. They will understand after the cross and resurrection.

For each day, you will have a chapter to read. Begin with a quiet moment of prayer before you read. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your reading and reflection. Look for a most important word in each chapter that speaks to you. Discern why that verse or short section gets your attention. There is room in the devotional for you to jot down a main idea. Watch what emerges as you do this day after day.

Ask Jesus for the grace to enter into the full meaning and reality of his death and resurrection. This is the heart of your faith. It is why you are a Christian.



1

WEEK ONE

April 4: John 14 & 15

Jesus comforts his disciples, promises the Holy Spirit, tells them they will bear much fruit that lasts, and warns them about opposition from the world.

April 5: John 16

Jesus teaches his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the joy they will have after they have grieved.

April 6: John 17

The priestly prayer of Jesus. He prays for himself, for his disciples, and for all future believers.

April 7: Matthew 21

The Triumphal Entry, Jesus cleansing the Temple, and words of judgment against the enemies of Jesus.

April 8: Matthew 22

Parables of coming judgment and Jesus showing that he is wiser than the attempts of his enemies to trick him.

2

WEEK TWO

April 11: Matthew 23

The famous Seven Woes chapter, where Jesus gives the strongest condemnation of legalistic religion.

April 12: Matthew 24

The signs of the end of the age. For Jesus, it is the coming destruction of the Jewish temple and the city of Jerusalem. All this is the result of their hard hearts against the work of God.

April 13: Matthew 25

Three more important parables that teach on being alert, faithful, ready, and also the coming judgment.

April 14: Matthew 26

Now the action speeds up. This chapter has the plot, betrayal, Lord’s supper, Peter’s denial predicted, Gethsemane, arrest, first trial, and Peter’s denial.

April 15: John 18

John’s account of the arrest, first trial, Peter’s denial, and then Jesus before Pilate.

3

WEEK THREE

April 18: Matthew 27

Judas hangs himself, Jesus stands before Pilate, and the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus.

April 19: John 19

Jesus sentenced, crucified, died, and buried.

April 20: Matthew 28

The resurrection and the Great Commission by the risen Jesus.

April 21: John 20

The resurrection and the appearances of Jesus.

April 22: John 21 & Acts 1:1-11

The ministry and teaching of Jesus after his resurrection and before he ascended into heaven.