

# 9 The Passion

This is the ninth talk outline in The God Story Sermon Series. The related chapters in The God Story book are Chapter 9, *The Passion*. The books in the Bible this chapter corresponds with are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

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## Teaching Outline

### Key aims

To explore the final week of Jesus life and in particular the implications of his death and resurrection.

### The God Story storytelling method

The God Story Storyteller understands that to teach The God Story effectively a dual teaching method is required. This is the art of teaching in a way that both **unfolds the eternal purposes of God through history and also releases them into personal encounter**. Practically this will mean prayerfully considering in each talk outline what parts you want to 'go deeper' in and what parts you want to mention at a headline level. We trust the Spirit will inspire and guide you to find the right cadence as you aim to give a passionate sweep of the unfolding narrative while also narrowing the focus in certain places to emphasise personal application and encounter.

### Key Bible passages

You may want to read a short passage of scripture before you begin your talk. The passages below are the ones we believe are most relevant to this particular talk.

We recommend you choose one of these:

Matthew 21-28

Mark 11-16

Luke 19:28 - 24

John 12-21

## Teaching notes

The notes provided will equip you to understand more of the context and more of the story as you prepare your talk. Generally speaking the talk outline follows the structure of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book. We feel the key sections in the Talk Outline below relate to the main flow of the unfolding scriptural narrative and so we have included key Biblical passages and quotes from The God Story to assist you in this. We recommend using these sections to shape your talk but please choose the parts which you feel are most helpful for your context.

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[Continue to the sermon](#) ✓

# Introduction

## Recap of previous session(s)

All the themes of The God Story and hundreds of Old Testament prophecies began to be fulfilled in the birth and life of Jesus. God's Eternal Son had come in the flesh. After 30 years of life on planet earth Jesus was baptised and began to reveal Himself as God's Chosen Servant, the Anointed One who had come to proclaim the good news. For 3 years Jesus went around announcing, describing and demonstrating the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus chose to do this surrounded by a team of disciples, whom He called friends. Jesus not only taught the disciples the characteristics of the kingdom of God, He formed them together into a family to show the world that at the heart of the kingdom of God was a loving community, reflecting nothing less than the Eternal Family on the earth. The disciples were equally enthralled and confused by Jesus. They had never seen a Rabbi teach like Jesus, perform miracles like Jesus did or be moved with compassion like Jesus was. Yet when Jesus talked about the type of throne He would have and the way He was going to come to His 'crowning glory' He described a level of suffering the disciples would never have associated with Israel's prophesied Messiah. They had never really combined Israel's great hope of deliverance with the Suffering-Servant Israel's prophets had foretold.

## Talk Overview

Jesus' three years of ministry crescendos in one dramatic week. As Jesus made his way into Jerusalem on a donkey, the atmosphere was fever pitch as the people hailed their king. As the week unfolded many of the rich themes we have discovered throughout The God Story so far were knit together and fulfilled in vividly symbolic ways. In the end the longing love of God which has carried The God Story forward from the beginning of time will be revealed in the most shocking ways. This is the passion of Christ. Seven days which changed the world. Forever.

# Talk Outline

## Key Teaching Sections

### 1 Setting the Scene

Reminder - 30 years of maturing in sonship; 3 years unveiling the Kingdom of God, now 7 days that would change history.

#### » Application opportunity

*If you knew you had only seven days left to live, what would you do? What would you want to say? Whom would you want to be with?*

- + Explain why Jesus' final week is called 'The Passion.' In Latin the root of the word 'passion' means 'to suffer.' The final chapters of the Gospels reveal the degree of suffering God will endure to have what he passionately loves.
- + Pay attention to how the themes we have discovered so far throughout the Biblical narrative are knit together dramatically in Jesus' final week.

### 2 On Sunday a King (Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-44)

Describe Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey as the people wave palm branches and shout 'Hosanna'. Explain how the imagery was both provocative to Israelite prophetic consciousness and subversive to Roman imperial rule because Zechariah had prophesied how Israel's King would come riding on a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9) Emphasise this act was therefore both the fulfilment of prophecy and Jesus' reframing of power.

### 3 On Monday a priest (Matt 21:12-13; Mark:11-15-18; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-24)

Describe Jesus' entrance into the temple, the heart of the religious establishment, flipping over tables, driving out money lenders and rebuking them with the words "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers'" (Matt 21:13).

- + Explain the levels of corruption and injustice which characterised the temple at this point and contrast with how Jesus represented a new kind of priest and a *living* temple. Jesus embodied the eternal place of forgiveness, radical inclusion, healing justice and loving mercy for all.

### 4 On Tuesday a prophet (Matt 21:23-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:1-19)

Describe how Jesus had to deal with the fallout of the temple incident the day before from the religious elite but did not back down. Reference the parable of the vineyard owner with wicked tenants who killed the owner's servants and eventually his own son.

### 5 On Wednesday a lover (Matt 26:6-12; Mark 14:1-11)

Explain how the Wednesday of Jesus' final week appears to be a moment of calm when Jesus chose to go to one of his favourite places, Bethany.

- + Describe the scene that unfolded - a woman carrying an alabaster jar entered the room and began to anoint Jesus, pouring her expensive oil over his head. Imagine the scene as the sweetest of fragrances replaced the room's arid smell.
- + Describe how those present were indignant and how for Judas this was the final straw. But emphasise Jesus' defence of the woman.

#### ≡ Key quote

*"For Jesus this was a beautiful waste. She had ministered to the weary apprehension weighing upon him in this final week. 'She has done a beautiful thing to me,' Jesus said, deeply touched by this woman's love. The sweet aroma of this woman's perfume would remain on Jesus' body for the rest of his life and the testimony of her worship throughout all time."*<sup>1</sup>

## 6

### On Thursday a friend

(Matt 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:7-39; John 13-17)

Emphasise Jesus' desire to share The Passover Meal with his disciples. *"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you."* (Luke 22:15)

- + Imagine the scene as Jesus took off his robe, lifted a basin of water and a towel and began to wash his friends' feet. Explain how Jesus' foot-washing act was the perfect foretaste of what the next 24 hours would be all about – Jesus fully revealing his glory as the servant king. Love to the uttermost (*"He loved them to the end."* (John 13:1))
- Describe how in this intimate environment of heartfelt trust, Jesus began to share more of the treasures of his heart around the Passover table with his friends. (John 14-16) The main thing Jesus shared with his friends in this discourse was he was going to leave them but crucially promised, *"I will not leave them as orphans."* (John 14:18). In some mysterious way the Holy Spirit - the Paraclete – a Helper and Comforter would inhabit them in a new way.
- Highlight the prayer of Jesus (John 17) which expressed the longing love of God to be one with humankind. (vs 22-23)
- Describe how Jesus then redefined the centuries-old Passover meal when he lifted some bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. He then lifted a cup and declared, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."* (Luke 22:19-20)

## 7

### Another garden

(Matt 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-51; Luke 22:39-65)

Explain how the intimate scene of Jesus sharing the Passover meal with his closest friends was quickly replaced with Jesus alone in a garden suffering unthinkable torment.

- + Describe the vulnerability Jesus would have experienced and the torment he endured as he sweated great drops of blood. Focus on Jesus' breathtaking prayer to the Father, highlighting both his humanity and his ultimate obedience, *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* (Luke 22:42)

## ≡ Key quote

*"Adam and Eve had disobeyed in a garden of Eden, bringing a curse on all humanity. Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane chose obedience liberating all of creation."*<sup>2</sup>

- + Highlight how events quickly unfold - Judas betrays Jesus and he is arrested; all of the disciples disperse, Peter follows at a distance but ends up denying Jesus three times.

## 8 On Friday a lamb (Matt 26:57-27:61; Mark 14:53-15:47; Luke 22:65-23:56; John 18-19)

Continue to unfold the events as Thursday night bleeds into Friday morning.

- Jesus was passed between Pilate and Herod, neither of whom were able to condemn Jesus for breaching the law
  - Pilate offers to release the criminal Barabbas and asks the crowd to choose between Jesus and Barabbas. *"Give us Barabbas"* the crowd shouted.
  - Jesus was taken to be flogged, mocked, punched and spat upon by Roman soldiers. The Jewish crowds continue to cry out, *"Crucify him."*
  - Pilate presents the beaten Jesus before the people and declares "Here is your king!" which is met with an astonishing response from the Jewish leaders, "We have no king but Caesar."
  - In the end, Pilate ultimately plays to the crowd. He literally washes his hands of the whole affair and submits to the shouts of the mob.
- + Read the crucifixion account in *The God Story* p.163-164
  - + Take some time to focus on the seven sentences Jesus spoke from the cross
    - *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* (Luke 23:34) Highlight how Jesus would rather forgive his enemies than kill them.
    - *"Today you will be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:43) Highlight Jesus' interaction with the thief on the cross revealing the essence of the gospel message.
    - *"Woman, behold your son; son, behold your mother."* (John 19:26): Highlight how this instruction reveals God's desire for a kingdom family shining through, even from the cross.

- **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** (Matt 27:46) Highlight how Jesus’ in the fullness of his humanity experienced the agony of forsakenness, as he entered the chasm sin created between the Father and humankind.

### » Application opportunity

*Emphasise how this emphatically confirms what The God Story has already revealed about God’s co-suffering nature. God, in Jesus, can identify with our darkest and most painful moments. (see Is 53:4)*

- + Yet also strongly emphasise the fact that while Jesus felt this forsakenness he was not alone. In some mysterious way the whole Trinity was present at the cross.

### ≡ Key quote

*“The Father, the Son and the Spirit endured these extreme moments of desolation together for our sakes. The Father was not operating over and against Jesus on the cross but through and in Jesus, upholding him on the cross by the power of the Spirit. ‘All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.’”<sup>3</sup>*

- + **“I am thirsty.”** (John 19:28) Highlight how Jesus was not only expressing his physical thirst in this moment but was identifying with the aching cry of the human spirit for the only thing that can satisfy it: the unfailing love of the Father.
- + **“Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit.”** (Luke 23:46) Highlight how in the final moments of Jesus’ life he will end his ministry just like he started it. In perfect submission Jesus entrusts his life to the Father.
- + **“It is finished.”** (John 19:30): Highlight the ‘once and for all’ nature of Jesus’ perfect sacrifice. Nothing would ever be the same again.

### ≡ Key quote

*“The temple curtains could now be ripped open to welcome everyone into the presence of God. No longer would the presence of God be restricted to one person, in a physical building, only to be accessed once a year. Now the presence of God was on the loose, moving beyond the building into all the dislocated, forgotten and fractured parts of the world, pursuing lost sons and daughters in relentless love.”<sup>4</sup>*



## 9 The paradox of the cross

After describing Jesus' death, take some time to reflect on the paradoxical nature of the cross-event. Emphasise how the cross was the place where we are exposed to the worst of humanity and the best of God.

### ≡ Key quote

*"Hans Urs von Balthasar powerfully concludes, 'Being disguised under the disfigurement of an ugly crucifixion and death, Christ upon the cross is paradoxically the clearest revelation of who God is.' God has progressively unfolded himself in covenant vulnerability to the point where he has not only taken on flesh but he has allowed himself to be lifted up, naked and bleeding, on a cross. Now there is no longer any question who God is – pierced and crushed, God is Love!"*<sup>5</sup>

## 10 On Saturday a grave (Matt 27:62–66)

Holy Saturday is the day when Love endured the silence and mystery of unanswered questions and broken dreams. God's Son had died and His corpse was buried in a tomb.

- + Highlight the significance of Holy Saturday and the silence this day is shrouded in. Emphasise how God is able to identify with the days in our lives when everything hurts like hell and it seems 'no ray of light' exists. (c/f Psalm 88).

## 11 Sunday: The first day of new creation (Matt: 28:1–11; Mark 16:1–14; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

### ≡ Key quote

*"Most of the world was still sleeping when the greatest miracle in history surreptitiously began to take place. Something unique and unprecedented was happening in the very soul of creation and no one even knew it was happening. As the first specks of light punched through the darkness of Saturday night awakening creation to another Sunday, the birdsong was different. The orb of the sun slowly pushed its way above the Earth's horizon, accompanied in the skies by a chirping chorus of delight, the trees of the field clapped their hands and the seas resounded with praise. A cacophony of joy was welcoming hope's eternal spring. This was the first day of a new creation."*<sup>6</sup>

+ Take some time to briefly highlight the different responses to the Resurrected Lord.

- Heartbroken Mary (John 20:11-18)
- Disillusioned and Fearful Disciples (John 20:19-23)
- Doubting Thomas (John 20:24-29)
- Defeated Peter (John 21)

### » Application opportunity

*Emphasise how the post-resurrection encounters reveal to us that the resurrected Jesus comes asking us questions – deeply personal questions.*

- Why are you weeping?
- Who are you looking for?
- Do you love me?

### ≡ Key quote

*“These intimate encounters speak powerfully to our own souls. Like Mary, Thomas, Peter and the disciples, who witnessed the scars in Jesus’ resurrected body, we can now recognize there is no dark or broken place we can get to that Jesus has not already been on our behalf! He has been to hell and back for us and he has come back victorious. Now we know nothing can separate us from his love, for the Passion of God could not be held in the tomb. Love is stronger than death. Heartbroken Mary would love again. Doubting Thomas would believe again. The disillusioned disciples full of fear and confusion would have peace again. Defeated Peter would be restored in love and recommissioned to live with courage again.”<sup>7</sup>*

## 12 Jesus' final words

Highlight how Jesus' final words had ushered in all sorts of new possibilities. A whole new creation was just beginning. And the ones Jesus loved would be at the forefront of it.

- + Read Matthew 28:20-22: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

### Questions for Reflection or Further Application

How does it make you feel to know Jesus died to bring you into the glorious presence of the Eternal Family? How empowering is it to think that the same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us?

### Three Sacred Themes

The closing page of each chapter in The God Story book includes a summary shaped around three sacred themes which we believe helps knit the overarching storyline together. Feel free to use this as an extra resource to The God Story Sermon Series if you feel this would be helpful to summarise each talk. You will find this for *The Passion* on p.174.

### End of sermon

<sup>1</sup> Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, *The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture*; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.158

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.161

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.165

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.166

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.167-168

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.167-168

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.172

\*All Bible passages quoted are taken from NIV unless stated.