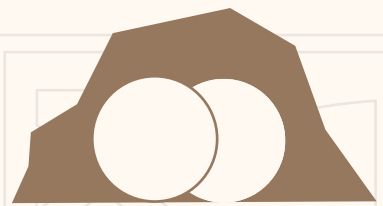


# HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

**CORAL RIDGE** PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



# HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL



EASTER 2022



# PALM SUNDAY

April 10 | MATTHEW 27:46

What Christians have called the “Old Testament” is much more than the historic backdrop to Christ’s ministry. The Old Testament is, in many ways, the biography of Jesus, written long before he came into the world. Israel’s story is Jesus’ story and his thirty-three years mark the climax of that story.

In his infancy, Christ was born into a new “Egypt” with a new Pharaoh—Herod the Great—on the throne. Herod took a page from Pharaoh’s playbook and began killing all the male children under the age of two, hoping to destroy his greatest rival, the promised eternal King. But, like Moses before him, Jesus is protected from the murderous plans of the king, returning once again to the people he was sent to redeem. Like Israel in the Red Sea, Christ passed through the waters of his baptism before entering the wilderness to be tempted. Like Joshua—Jesus’ namesake—Christ returns from the wilderness, entering into the land of promise prepared for holy conquest.

Jesus is the greater Moses; not merely a prophet, but *the* Prophet, and the subject of all prophecy before him. Jesus is the greater Joshua who casts out demons with a word and conquers with the sword from his mouth. Jesus is the greater David, the promised King whose reign will never come to an end. Jesus, the carpenter and stonemason, is the greater Solomon who declares that the Jerusalem temple—the house built upon sand—would be reduced to rubble. But now he builds the true and final temple: a living temple—Christ himself as the cornerstone—and his Spirit-filled people as “living stones [being] built into a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:4-5). Jesus is the greater Aaron, a sinless and eternal high priest who pours out his Spirit upon all who call upon his name, making us all “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9).

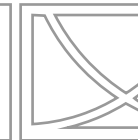
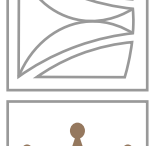
Every figure that came before him was a shadow, a murky picture of the Messiah before he came. But his greatest act of solidarity with his people came in his final hours, when the sinless Savior cried out, “My God, my

God, why have you forsaken me?” On the cross, Christ becomes like his people in a new and dreadful way. On the cross, the Lord takes upon himself all the sins of his people, bearing the weight of our collective depravity. On the cross, Christ displays himself as the Passover Lamb, whose blood covers us and frees us from the power of sin and death.

God’s words were always on Christ’s lips, and this “cry of dereliction” is the first line of Psalm 22, which predicts the crucifixion with startling accuracy. Though he was the innocent one, Jesus becomes like “a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people” (Psa. 22:6). Though he had trusted in God “even at my mother’s breast... [d]ogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet... [t]hey divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment” (Psa. 22:9, 16-18). With worldly eyes, we look at the cross and we see a beaten man, destroyed by his enemies, crying out to God to no effect. Indeed, Jesus is abandoned to death and those who mock him say, “Let the Lord rescue him” (Psa. 22:8, cf. Matt. 27:43).

But with the eyes of faith, the crucifixion is a vision of Christ’s peculiar glory, and the love of God on display for all to see. On the cross, Christ is counted among us sinners, weighed down by our evil, suffering condemnation at the hands of all the powers of the world. But this is his final act of obedience and the culmination of his eternal purpose. At the cross, God himself receives the penalty of sin, bearing our sin as though it were his own, securing an “eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

Though Christ cries out under the weight of our sin a cry of abandonment, God did not abandon him. Indeed, because Jesus was faithful to God unto death, the Father vindicates Christ against his enemies, raising him to new life, “highly exalt[ing] him and bestow[ing] upon him the name that is above every name” (Phil 2:9). And because of Christ’s death and resurrection on our behalf, weak and weary sinners can trust his words: “I will never leave nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).





MONDAY

April 11 | LUKE 23:34

When you read the gospels, one thing is very clear: the people are seriously confused. Despite healing lepers and the blind, casting out demons with a word, and even raising the decomposing Lazarus to life, the people remain unconvinced that he was the promised Messiah. John the Baptist even begins to wonder, sending his disciples to question Jesus as to whether or not he was the anointed one (Luke 7:20).

His disciples weren't much better than the crowds, often baffled by Jesus' words. Jesus warned them that the Pharisees are "blind guides," leading those who follow them to fall into a pit right along with them. Yet his disciples don't get it and Jesus asks, "Are you also still without understanding?" (Matt. 15:16). Later, Jesus again warns them to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, referring to their way of life and teaching. What animates the Pharisees and Sadducees is the opposite of what should animate God's people. But they turn to one another saying, "We brought no bread" (Matt. 16:7). It isn't their understanding that was impressive, but their willingness to remain despite the difficulty of Jesus' teaching. When many of Jesus' followers abandon him due to his hard sayings, Peter speaks for the twelve, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). They remained because they knew Jesus was their only hope, even if he left them perplexed more often than not.

Sin is a blinding power. The false gods and idols of the nations "have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear" (Psa. 115:5-6). We become what we worship. When God's people turn away from the living God to the blind and deaf gods of their neighbors, they become blind and deaf themselves (Isa. 42:18). At the cross, we see the darkness of the world at its deepest. As Jesus said to his captors, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). But in their blindness, this act of evil men results in their own downfall, and the redemption of the world.

Knowing who he is, we look at this scene rightly with horror. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob came to walk in our midst and we killed him. But what appears to the eyes of the world to be the greatest humiliation and defeat, Jesus says is the hour when when “the Son of man [will] be glorified” (John 12:23). What appears to be Satan’s greatest victory is the very thing that resulted in him being cast out of the heavens, never to appear before God to accuse us again (John 12:31, cf. Rev. 12:5, 7-10). On the cross, Jesus does pay for sin, but his crucifixion is also the moment where he makes a mockery of all demonic powers that seek to deceive and blind the world: “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them” (Col. 2:15). They too were blind to the truth. None of the rulers of this age understood what Christ was going to accomplish, Paul says, “for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).

Yet, on the cross, we do not see a boastful Christ, reveling over his enemies, but a humble redeemer. He came not to destroy, but to give life. To reject him is to stand condemned, for there is no life to be found anywhere else, but he came to give mercy to all who call upon his name. Even in his last moments, Jesus exemplifies an unearthly kind of love—the love of enemies—saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The love of Jesus is a reconciling love. In sin, we display hatred for God, but it is “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

We cannot stand at a distance from the cross, nor pretend we played no part. He went there for us and it was our sin that held him. But he goes for the sake of love and forgiveness. Though we were once enemies, we become beloved children. Though we were once those who hated one another, in Christ we become family. We can rest assured, because of Christ’s work on our behalf, the accuser has been cast out. Now it is Christ, the Lord of glory, who sits at God’s right hand, pleading mercy for us all saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”



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TUESDAY

April 12 | LUKE 23:43

The mercy of God is a scandalous grace. It flies in the face of every normal assumption we have about the world. We are bombarded at all times by messages that declare that we are the true masters of our destiny and everything of consequence in our life depends upon us. There is some truth to this, of course. If you spend your time meditating on everything your husband or wife has done wrong, you will find nothing but increased dissatisfaction as you peel the scab off old wounds, never letting them heal. If it is your habit to constantly “one up” everyone around you, you’ll find that your friendships diminish and wonder, “What’s wrong with them?” If you never take the time to make plans or think through how to move forward in the things God has called you to—your career, your family relationships, your ministry toward others—you will progress in life like a car stuck in the mud. What we do matters and there are real consequences. What we do again and again and again will impact our future.

But the mercy of God renders all of our best efforts null and void. In the face of God’s great mercy, we have no choice but to come to the end of ourselves, realizing that our works, however wonderful they may seem, have failed. If that couldn’t be any clearer before the crucifixion, there is no question after. All of us “have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Nothing that we do on our own meets God’s standard, which is nothing short of perfection. In the end, we have to recognize that no one is good, “not even one” (Rom. 3:10). How great is our need? So great that only the death of Christ is sufficient to restore us. But the cross likewise demonstrates that God revels in showing grace, abounding in steadfast love. The prophet cries out, “Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isa. 55:7).

If ever you believe that you are too far from grace, our Lord offers to us the thief on the cross as an example. Hanging upon a cross as a result of

his own crimes, he acknowledged, “We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve” (Luke 23:41). He is quite literally at the end of himself and completely powerless. But with his next breath, he dares to ask Jesus, “[R]emember me when you come into your kingdom” (23:42). Jesus told his disciples that just as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the desert so that all who looked upon it would be saved (Num. 21:9), likewise would Christ be lifted up for the salvation of his people (John 3:14-15). And on that day, face to face and cross to cross, the thief found the matchless love of God looking back at him. Without hesitation, Jesus cancels his debt with a word, promising that they would be together in paradise on that very day.

We cannot barter with God, nor offer up our own works to lessen the burden of our debt. We are far more guilty than we realize, with far more sins left unnoticed than those we’ve been able to count. But God’s mercy is for all who know their need and look to Christ to mercy. For all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, looking to the sacrifice of his cross even at the hour of our death, Jesus says, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”







WEDNESDAY

April 13 | LUKE 23:46

The most famous of all the Psalms is Psalm 23. This psalm is famous for many reasons, particularly because it describes God as the great shepherd of our souls. Despite the fact that we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear any evil because God is with us. God is the shepherd who makes us “lie down in green pastures” and guides us to “still waters” (Psa. 23:2). With his rod (his scepter) and his staff (a shepherd’s crook), David says, “you comfort me” (Psa. 23:4). Because God is in control, we can find rest and comfort even in the most dangerous places. Even there, God ensures that we are cared for; he is the one who prepares a table “in the presence of my enemies” (Psa. 23:5). Despite the fact that enemies gather around us, we have a place at the table of the King. When the Lord referred to himself as the good shepherd, he was bringing all of these images to mind. The very God about whom this psalm was written is the Lord Jesus who has come to live among his people.

As our shepherd, Christ leads us—he goes before us—into the valley. One of the great comforts we can find, particularly when we face dangers that seem too much for us to bear or too deadly to overcome, is that Jesus does not stand at a distance. On the contrary, he is the one who walks before us everywhere we go. Every step of the way, we only ever go where Jesus himself has gone.

For all of us, whether we know the Lord or not, the greatest of all unknown dangers is death itself. I’d venture that many of us, at one time or another, may find ourselves anxiously meditating on death, with a niggling fear we can’t quite shake that it might not be “sunshine and roses” on the other side. Death is not like other doors we might walk through, where we can hold someone else’s hand and make the journey together. It is a great blessing to die with our hands held by loved ones, but the fact remains: we meet death by ourselves and we don’t get to bring anyone else along for that particular journey.

From eternity, Jesus has been the beloved Son of the Father. He did not speak any of his own words, but only what the Father told him to say. In the midst of hostile crowds, surrounded by enemies, again and again the Father spoke from heaven, declaring that Jesus is his “beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 17:5) and elsewhere that he would glorify himself as his Son through his death (John 12:28). Jesus knows the Father and “we have seen his glory as of the Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). At the moment of his death, the Lord shows us the way through the fear of death saying, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

We have been fully adopted into the household of God, but not merely as add ons. We are those who have been united to Christ. We are “in Christ.” For this reason, we aren’t regarded merely as second or third born children. In Christ, “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:6). In Christ, the Father loves us as if we were his firstborn. Indeed, the life we live is no longer our own: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Though we are made of dust and subject to doubts and fear, Christ is the shepherd who goes before us. The church father Irenaeus says it this way, “He did not reject human nature or exalt himself above it. [Becoming] an infant among infants, he sanctified infants; becoming a child among children, he sanctified those having this age... becoming a young adult among young adults, he was an example for young adults and sanctified them to the Lord... Lastly, he came even to death so that he might be ‘the Firstborn from the dead,’ himself ‘holding primacy in all things’ (Col. 1:18), the Author of life, prior to all and going before all.”

When we pass through the threshold of death, it will not be an end, nor should we face it with fear. The Author of life and the Lord of glory has gone before us in all things, securing our path along the way. Because Christ has gone before us, offering up his spirit to his faithful Father, death has now become the doorway to eternal life and never-ending peace.





# MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 14 | JOHN 19:26-27

The conflict throughout the Scriptures is the manifestation of two different families—two different households. When Israel suffered in bondage among the Egyptians, they were living in “the house of slavery” (Deut. 7:8) and “the house of Pharaoh” (1 Sam. 2:27). There is more going on here than meets the eye. What appears to be battles between peoples, nations, and worldly powers, is in fact a battle “against the spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:12). To Satan, God had said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring; he will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). Ever notice what kind of an animal the pharaohs of Egypt wore on their head? The conflicts of the Bible are skirmishes in a war between the household of God and the household of the serpent.

This battle often rages within our natural families. Adam and Eve were parents to both Cain and Abel. Jacob is faithful, but Esau despised the covenant. Joseph’s brothers were his greatest foes, selling him into slavery. Jesus himself “came to his own, but his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11). Many of his closest relatives did not believe in him (John 7:5). He warned his disciples, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother... a person’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matt. 10:34-36).

The truth, whether we like it or not, divides. Right reveals what is wrong. Holiness makes corruption clear. And Jesus came into the world “to testify to the truth” (John 18:37). Jesus is himself the Truth and the line in the sand. As the righteous judge, Jesus separates wheat and chaff, sheep and goats. By declaring the way of righteousness, Jesus makes clear that every other path leads to death. Jesus’ ministry is a ministry of division. And the costs are not insignificant: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or

daughter than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). To love Jesus is to be separated from those who do not.

But every division in scripture is for the purpose of an even greater joining. Adam has flesh and bone taken from his side in order that he might be joined in one flesh with Eve. Abraham and his household are separated from all the peoples of the earth, so that through Abraham’s offspring “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 18:18). While sin separates, God is the great reconciler of all people and he intends to join all people—every tribe and tongue—into one new family.

In the hour of his greatest need, Jesus takes care of his mother. Mary had been warned “a sword will pierce through your soul” when her son brought redemption to his people (Luke 2:35). The moment of Christ’s agony was also hers. But Jesus honors his mother, loving her to the last. To ensure that she would never be in need, Jesus gives his mother to a new son who would take her into his home as his own. And this is precisely what Jesus promises to do for us all.

Jesus gives us sure promises that “everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:29). Though we may face having our own souls pierced by the hatred of those we love, we have a Lord who understands and gives us to one another as a gift. Even more, in Christ we have been given God as Father and Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters (Heb. 2:11). We will never be orphans, even if parents hate us or brothers reject us, because we are adopted members of the household of God. In Christ, everywhere we go we will find fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers—everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord.





# GOOD FRIDAY

April 15 | JOHN 19:28

Water is the most precious resource and the precondition of life anywhere it is found. At any given moment, around 60% of our body is water. Sometimes, even the premature wrinkles we fear are forming on our foreheads will disappear if we're properly hydrated, showing up again when we're too parched. Everything in our life depends on water and that is by design.

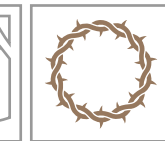
In the beginning, the earth was formless, void, and dark, and the Spirit of God hovered over "the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). Before Adam was created, we are told that certain plants had yet to spring up because "the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground" (Gen. 2:5). In truth, Adam is no different than the plants that require water to live. What is a righteous man? "He is like a tree planted by streams of living water" (Psa 1:3). To make Adam, God gathers "dust"—waterless soil—and brings him to life by "breath[ing] into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (Gen. 2:7). With our breath we fog up mirrors or clean our glasses. Breath is both water and air. The world begins in water and all life that comes up from the earth depends on water, including our dusty forefather.

It should not surprise us that the giving of water is a symbol of salvation. The way to salvation is always by way of water. In the flood, God returns the world to its original state, covered by water, and Noah and his family step out of the ark into a "new" world. Israel passes through the Red Sea, out of the house of slavery in Egypt. Later, they cross the Jordan into the promised land—the land "flowing with milk and honey [which] drinks water by the rain of heaven, a land the LORD your God cares for" (Deut. 11:9, 11). The prophets speak of the coming of the Messiah as the day in which God would "pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring... they shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams" (Isaiah 44:3-4).

Yet, on the cross, Christ took on the full reality of mankind under the curse. In the beginning God plants a garden, showing Adam what humanity was to do, before giving the world into the care of Adam and Eve. As the streams that flowed from the garden went out from God's presence into the world, they were to work the ground, bringing life wherever they went. But in sin, the ground was cursed to bring forth thorns and thistles. Instead of gardens, the world was filled with desolate places, dry and cracked. Christ, crowned with cursed thorns, died a thirsty man.

Christ is the one who gathered up dust to form Adam's body, and he also stooped down to spit on the ground, making mud to give the blind man new eyes (John 9:6). Christ is the one who breathed into Adam, bringing him to life, even as he breathed upon his disciples to give them the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). And the God who made us in his image came to bring life to the world through his death. The saving work of Jesus goes well beyond forgiveness for sin. Indeed, even the very earth itself will one day "be set free from its bondage to corruption" (Rom. 8:21) when Christ returns.

All thirst and every desire we have is, at its core, a desire for God. In sin, those desires become twisted. In sin, we forsake God, "the fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13), settling for water that does not satisfy. But in Christ, we never need to thirst again. In Christ, we pass through the waters of baptism, out of darkness and into the kingdom without end. Even more glorious, in Christ, each of us becomes a source of water for the dying world. "Whoever believes in me," Jesus said, "out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Because Christ thirsted, he now invites all: "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" (Isa. 55:1).



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# HOLY SATURDAY

April 16 | JOHN 19:30

Out of all the authors of scripture, John was given some of the most exalted words to write. His gospel is dramatically different from the others. No doubt we've all found ourselves thumbing through Revelation, perplexed by the visions he reported there. John was given a heavenly vantage point and he describes the mission of Christ from that perspective. In John's gospel, the divinity and majesty of Christ is front and center at all times, starting with the first words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1, 3).

Jesus is not merely the Son of David, nor merely the promised seed of Abraham. Jesus is God himself—the very source of creation, through whom everything in existence has been made. There is no life, except the life that is in him, and it is because of him that all of us "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Everyone in all places and in all times depends upon Jesus at every moment, despite the fact that most don't realize it. By beginning his gospel with Christ's role in creation, John sets a much grander vision of the redemption before us. A mortal king can do a great deal—for a single lifetime. Tyrants like Nero, Hitler, Putin, or Xi Jinping have numbered days before they return to dust. But what might the Creator accomplish?

In fact, the mission of Jesus is nothing less than to bring about a fully renewed creation. Unless "one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," Jesus had said to Nicodemus, "[U]nless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). Those who believe in Christ and receive him, John tells us, are given "the right to become children of God" because we have been born again, "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Our redemption is not being dusted off and polished a bit; rather, our redemption is nothing less than new birth, by water and the Spirit.

As we saw yesterday, Christ gives his Spirit like living water, causing deserts to bloom and, by his Spirit, we ourselves become sources of life everywhere we go. The waters of baptism, among other things, signify that we have passed through water into the new creation itself. As the world was covered in waters in the beginning and as each of us comes forth from the amniotic waters of our mother's womb, in Christ we are brought out of the darkness of "the world" into the new life of God's eternal kingdom. In Christ, we pass out of the world that is doomed to end, into the real world that will last forever. Indeed, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

While we have yet to see the new creation fully realized, which we will see in its most glorious manifestation after the resurrection of the dead, Jesus has already established that victory. Jesus likens his death to a seed being planted in the ground: "[U]nless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). So long as the grain of wheat remains standing, it is fruitless. But if it dies, that one life becomes the source of life for many more. So too with Christ. On the cross, Jesus gives up his life in order that his death would bring life to countless billions—"a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev. 7:9).

The wages of sin is death and because Christ died for us and in our place, our sin has died with him. Because Christ died, accomplishing his redeeming work, we can know with an unshakeable confidence that our life has been eternally covered by his blood. There is nothing more to add because nothing necessary has been left out. Because he has sprinkled us clean, our sin will never rise again to condemn us. On the cross, Jesus declares his victory, giving us the most encouraging promise we might ever receive: "It is finished!"







# EASTER SUNDAY

April 17 | JOHN 20:1

Put this devotion down and go read Genesis 1 through 2:3. Take note of what gets repeated and what doesn't. It's okay—I'll wait... What did you see? Every day, except the second, shows God taking stock of what he did that day and judges it to be good. On the second day, God created the firmament—the barrier between heaven and earth. Why is that, of all things, not called good? Isn't everything that God made good? God has woven the threads of redemption throughout scripture. Everything that came before Christ points to the glorious things that Christ would do. The creation narrative show us the first “work week.” God works for six days and the rests on the seventh. We are made in God's image, so we do what God does—working six days and resting on the seventh. Seven days are business as usual. On “the eighth day” business as usual comes to an end. On the eighth day, barriers between God and humanity fade away.

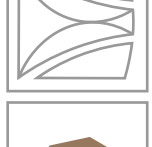
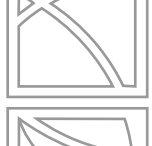
One way we see this is through the rite of circumcision. Circumcision is a kind of death, quite literally wounding the bodily member that causes conception. With circumcision, they became full members of God's covenant people, like Abraham before them, entitled to every promise given to Israel. When Abraham attempted to see God's promise fulfilled in his own power, Abraham was able to have son with Hagar. But Ishmael was not the child of promise. Only after Abraham receives the covenant of circumcision was Isaac born. The new life God gives is through renouncing the flesh and trusting God who gives life. To be circumcised is to enter into a new kind of life—the life of God's priestly people. For one week, newborn boys were like everyone else in the world, but on the eighth day they are granted permission to draw closer.

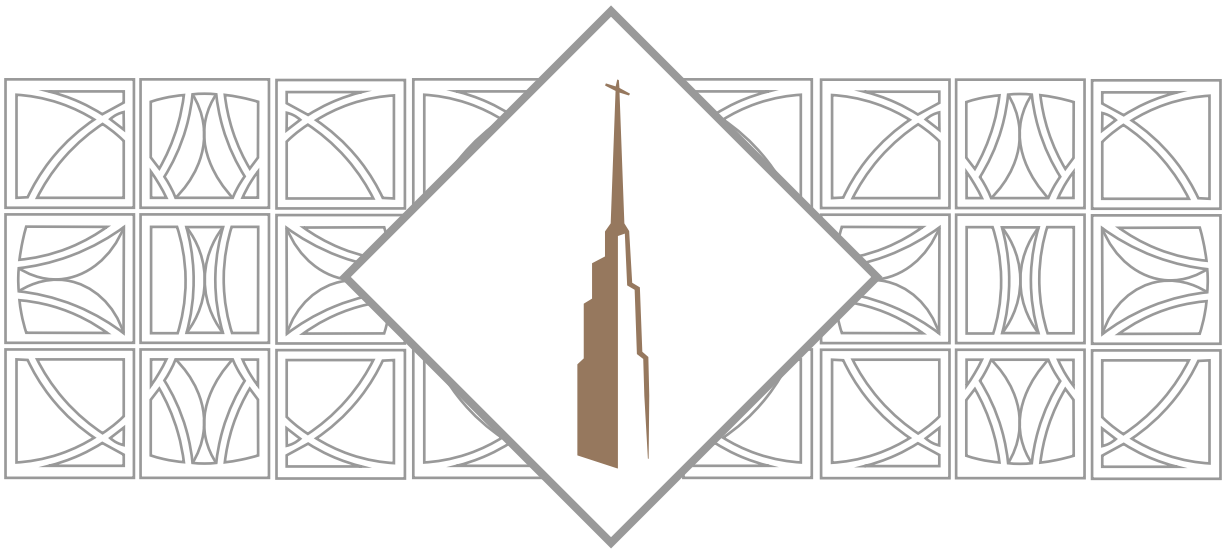
Yet, significant barriers remained. While normal Hebrews were allowed to come into the inner court of the tabernacle and temple, only the priests were allowed to go in. But, for this, the priests had to undergo another transformation. For the first seven days of their ordination ritual, the

priests were like every other Hebrew. They still didn't have permission to enter God's house. But on the eighth day that barrier is removed—Aaron is granted permission to offer the final sacrifice for his sins, taking the blood into God's presence, sprinkling the blood himself (Lev. 8-9). On the eighth day—the first day of the new week—Aaron became a high priest, allowed to push past the curtain into the Holy of Holies. On the eighth day, the way to God's presence is made open. And then we hear, “on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb” (John 20:1).

Why was the second day not good? On the second day, God created the barrier between heaven and earth. On the second day, God created the cosmic “curtain” that stood between God and man. This is why a curtain stood before the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. In order to cross the barrier between heaven and earth itself, we needed a much greater priest. Christ is our great high priest. Every priest before him, like Aaron, had to make atonement for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. But Aaron and his tabernacle were merely shadows of Christ and the true tabernacle. Jesus is the sinless high priest who needs no atonement. Much more, Jesus is “the high priest of the good things that have come” who goes “through the greater and more perfect tent [that was] not made with hands, not of this creation” (Heb. 9:11). Unlike Aaron, Jesus does not push through the curtain in a temple—he tears that curtain and temple down. Jesus ascends through the firmament itself into the heavenly temple. He crosses this final and ultimate barrier, not by the “blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). But Jesus does not cross this barrier alone—he removes it altogether, taking all of us with him.

Because of Christ's death and resurrection we have all entered in to a new heavens and earth, where no barrier remains. Indeed, we have become his body—united to him more fully than we could ever imagine. Because Christ walked from the tomb that Easter day, we can now know with confidence “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).





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