

“Conversations on this Present Distress
with Harry Reeder and Bruce Stallings”
Part Four, Questions on Holy Week
April 12, 2020 • Sunday Evening

This fourth program is coming to you on the evening of Resurrection Lord’s Day which is at the close of our celebration of Holy Week. In this program we won’t be so much focused on this present distress as much as we will be addressing questions sent to us regarding the Easter events, the Holy Week events. The text of Scripture for this program comes from the angels who were at the tomb from Luke 24:5–7 which says [5] *And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men (angels who came as in the appearance of men) said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? [6] He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, [7] that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”* Christ was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures to the praise of the Father, the assurance of our salvation and His rule and reign by grace until He comes again. He is not among the dead. He is living, ascended, and interceding for us in His providential care of working His purposes throughout the whole world so we can fulfill the Great Commission, live the Great Commandment in anticipation of His coming again.

Titus 2:11–14 says [11] *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* We are His and He is ours. So let’s get started.

Bruce: This has been a great Holy Week. I do want to point out three people that are behind the scenes that people don’t see – Jesse, Hadden, and Lee. I thank the Lord for all they have done to make our live streams happen.

Harry: I would like to thank Landon as well for the graphic work that had to take place. Dave Balias oversees that entire department. There is no way we could do all we’re doing in this ministry interim worship plan without them. We also thank our music team as well so that we could give full worship services in response with the governmental guidelines but to be able to communicate this to the best of our ability. People have used this in significant ways evangelistically with family and friends along with some opportunities to share the Gospel in ministry with deeds of love and mercy, even with these restrictive guidelines. It’s pretty exciting. I thank the entire pastoral staff as well. It’s been a privilege to serve the Lord in all this.

Bruce: The circumstances have made us adapt every day to different things so let’s get into the questions. The first comes with confusion in the Holy Week about days and times with reference to the hours, watches, the day of preparation, etc. so can you give an explanation that would help better understand this week better?

Harry: There are two things I would like to remind people of. When you're reading the Bible and you see a word like 'day' you have to get back into a Hebrew cosmology which is a Hebrew world and life view. One is the word 'day' is used about four different ways. Sometimes it refers to a season, like the day of evil, which doesn't mean 24 hours but a season of evil. Sometimes it's used to refer to a 24 hour period. Sometimes it's used to refer to a 12 hour period and then sometimes it's used to just refer to the light part of a day and not the night part. Genesis uses all four of these ways of the word day. The second thing to this is that in Hebrew cosmology when you say 'day' you are including anything that happens within a day which includes the night and day. And in a Hebrew mind the day begins at sunset, not at dawn.

So when Jesus dies on the cross that is considered the first day. That subsumes the previous night as well as that day. Then He is put in the grave/tomb on what we would call Friday night but actually that is beginning the next day which is the Sabbath. So that would assume all of Friday by going into the grave Friday. Jesus says during this week 'in two days' they will have the Passover.' He is speaking on a Tuesday so assuming the Tuesday then there is Wednesday and the Thursday. He is in the grave Friday and there that night, Saturday, Saturday night which is inclusive of the next day and then comes forth on the third day. So any part of that day assumes all of those days in the Hebrew mind. We see this all the way back to the book of Genesis when it says Genesis 1:5, [5] *God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.* That's the way the day is counted.

Bruce: Let's go to Friday now where Jesus is crucified which begins around noon. Then they are hurrying to take care of the body to get it in the grave before the Sabbath because that will begin at sundown.

Harry: They had about 2 to 3 hours to take of the body which would have been about 3pm to 6pm on that day.

Bruce: Another question that came to us was, why weren't the Disciples (the 11) involved in the burial of Jesus and where were they?

Harry: They had all fled just as Jesus said they would. John was at the cross but Jesus had directed him to take away Mary, His mother. John 19:27 says [27] *Then he (Jesus, while on the cross) said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.* It also says he took to his home which is another issue that has to be dealt with in the text. Now where had they fled to? I would say they were in one of four places. They could have been back in the upper room. There is a lot of evidence that some had fled to Bethany to be with Mary, Martha and Lazarus in their home, where they had stayed at the first part of that week. Thirdly, it looks as if John and James, the cousins of Jesus, their parents had a home there in Jerusalem. It would not be unusual for one to have a home in Jerusalem and a business in Galilee for Zebedee and his sons had a fishing business in Galilee. I would suggest that the home John took Mary to was Zebedee and Salome's home in Jerusalem. Whether it was a primary or secondary home, I do not know. The fourth place could have been the Hasmonean palace. There were two palaces in the area. One was the palace of Herod and the Hasmonean palace that preceded Herod's. The Hasmonean palace is one where Herod Antipas would have set up his headquarters. Pontius Pilate would have occupied the old Herodian palace. Joanna or

Susanna were either family or workers there in the Hasmonean palace under Herod Antipas. Some of the Disciples may have found refuge with Joanna and Susanna at that palace as well.

Bruce: Referencing some of the women – Salome, Joanna, Susanna, Mary etc. – putting together all the Gospel accounts someone has asked, exactly how many women are there? They would like an explanation of the multiple Marys and the other women.

Harry: This is been a real study of mine throughout the years so I'm grateful for these questions. There are four Marys. There is Mary who is the sister of Martha and Lazarus who lives in Bethany. There is Mary the mother of Jesus. Then there is Mary who is married to Cleopas, also named Alpheus and she has two sons, one of which is a Disciple – James the younger or James the lessor. There is some evidence in the Scripture that Alpheus may have been a brother to Joseph, Jesus' 'adopted' father. Then there is Mary Magdalene.

Then there is Salome which as I mentioned is the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John and the Scripture informs us that she was the sister of Jesus' mother, Mary. That makes James and John first cousins to Jesus. Then there is Joanna and Susanna who are of the Herodian palace, either family or workers and there is some discussion as to what their place is. I can't name the rest of the women because two different Gospels speak of 'other' women with no mention of names but it said that most are from Galilee.

It seems as if there was a gathering of women, who from either their work or labor, would support the ministry of Jesus. Jesus is an itinerant minister. He has no place to lay His head, no home and has these 12 who are going with Him, with it now being 11 after Judas went out to kill himself after he came to remorse. Because Judas was known as the treasurer there were contributions and gifts to His ministry and He would take care of His Disciples. The Scriptures are pretty clear they contributed to the support of Jesus, probably doing much of the logistical work as where they would stay, who would open up their homes to them, etc.

Bruce: The women are very central in this eye witness account which is certainly unique to that time and so another question is why do you think the women were such central figures even the first ones Jesus appears to after being resurrected and the first ones to give testimony to the Disciples of His resurrection when at that time women would not even have a platform of testifying in court?

Harry: In the secular world, the pagan world, and the imposed world that had been placed upon them in Israel, women had a very important place throughout the Old Testament. In the law of God, it says things like 'under your father and mother' and yet that would never happen. A wife and a mother was just utilitarian property in the pagan world of the Romans, Greeks, Babylonians and Assyrians, but it's very different among God's covenant people right from the very beginning. A woman would not have been allowed to commit adultery but men would have in the pagan cultures. Do not commit adultery applying to both husband and wife, honoring your father and mother, the responsibility to care of the wife by a brother of the husband and all of that, indicated this really high view that while men and women were different, they had this status of equality yet differentiation of gender role in life and in ministry.

Jesus and the Gospel writers unabashedly bring forth women as witnesses of the resurrection. You are correct, in the courts of the world the women would not be allowed to testify but as far as the Scripture is concerned their testimony is just as valid as anyone else. One

preacher said to me at one time, 'Isn't it interesting that the women were the last at the cross all the way to the grave/tomb then the first at the empty tomb, but they still did not understand or believe yet in the resurrection.' They would not have been coming with spices on the third day to prepare the body if they had yet embraced the truth of Jesus being raised.

There is hardly anything that Jesus repeated more in His ministry teaching than He was going to be delivered up, crucified and on the third day rise again, but it's obvious no one is believing that is going to happen. They love Him, they're devoted to Him, they're willing to risk their lives, but these women and the Disciples did not yet believe in this resurrection. I believe they had a saving faith in Christ but they had not yet grasp the actuality of what Jesus is talking about. Part of that is because they live in a Roman and Greek world that devalued the body so why would someone even be concerned about a resurrection. You can see the Gospel is countercultural not only with the elevation of women as witnesses and the preoccupation with the Gospel writers in enumerating their very important ministry in the three years of Jesus' public ministry as well as at the cross and at the tomb. It's interesting how the Scripture is very countercultural.

Bruce: There are several things said in Scripture that took place with Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. A question that came from that is why is there not more mentioned of the dead rising from the grave and walking around the city on Good Friday? I would have thought that would have been a bigger deal. The next question is, what happened to them and where did they go?

Harry: This is mentioned in Matthew 27:51–53 which says [51] *And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. [52] The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, [53] and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.* This refers to the Old Testament saints who were saved by grace, believing in the promises of God that would be fulfilled in the Messiah who has now come and on the cross at the moment of this passage.

We know two things from this passage. There was an earthquake at the death of Jesus there at Calvary that went to the Temple and tore the curtains. There were two curtains. One is the curtain that separate the Gentiles and the women from where the Israel covenantal men could go and the second curtain was at the Holy of Holies. Some think it only split one of the curtains but it is my opinion that it split both of the curtains and I think the Scripture allows that interpretation. There is now neither Jew nor Gentile in the redeeming work of Christ for that curtain is split and now God is going to make His dwelling place in us (you). He is not teaching us something in the dwelling place of the Holy of Holies but He is teaching us that Jesus has done something where we (you) are now holy by the blood and righteousness of Christ and the Spirit of God, the Shekinah glory is going to be poured out in us (you), the believer.

What does that affirm? It affirms that Jesus is going to be resurrected in three days. I can't speak real definitively on this but I will share a few thoughts with you. I believe that resurrection of the Old Testament saints was doing two or three things. One, it was affirming to everyone that the saving work of Christ retroactively covers all who believe in Him so the Old Testament saints are also saved by the blood and righteousness of Christ by the grace of God. This is a little bit of a first fruits type thing.

Secondly, it is anticipating the resurrection of Christ because their appearance isn't known until He is resurrected. It says their resurrection was at the time of His death but the appearance is not seen in Jerusalem until His resurrection. So it's done to affirm the efficacy of His atonement with their resurrection but they are seen, not in preceding His resurrection, but in accompanying His resurrection to affirm it and verify that all of the saints in the future will one day be resurrected.

It's interesting that only Matthew mentions it and deals with it but that event would be of great significance to the Jewish population – the Old Testament saints resurrected. I believe that is why the Spirit of God put it on Matthew, who is writing an apologetic to the Jewish and Hebrew people in particular for his Gospel is an apologetic that Jesus is the Messiah that has been prophesied, predicted, symbolized and typified in the Old Testament. So Matthew would be the one that would want to include that.

Bruce: Putting a few questions together that had the same topic, is what happens to Jesus? Jesus says 'It is finished,' breathes His last breath and dies. He had just said to one hanging next to Him on the cross 'Today you will be with Me in paradise' and we acknowledge and declare in a creed that He descended so what happened to Jesus between His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave?

Harry: You have actually answered the question. Jesus went to paradise, but I will attempt to answer all the questions you have attached to it. The Apostles Creed had the statement added to affirm the full humanity Christ. It was a real death and He descended to the grave and the place of the dead. The general term for the place of the dead from the Old Testament was gehenna and the Greek word that would give us the word gehenna is the word hades. Now the place of the dead had a place of torment, hades and a place of blessing which was called two things in the Bible – Abraham's bosom and paradise. The creed is affirming that He went to the grave and the place of the dead. Jesus tells you exactly where He went. He did not go to torment. All of torment which is due for our sins had already fallen upon Him at the cross.

I never use the phrase 'hell on earth' because I don't think that it's true. I don't think hell on earth has ever been true except one time and that was Good Friday when all the hell that was due for all the sins of all of His people fell all upon Christ to the last drop, and He paid the penalty for our sins. Therefore the torment and wrath of God against sin, which I am rightly under, Jesus took my place and took it all and as the hymn says 'all to Him I owe.' Jesus did not have to go pay any more penalty after His death for when He said 'it is finished' it was done, the payment was made.

Jesus went to what He told the thief on the cross – paradise, which is the intermediate state. If you die before Jesus comes back and you know Him as Savior that is where you will go. It is the intermediate state of the spirit and souls of those who have died in Christ, go to be with the Lord awaiting the second coming of the Lord. Then there will be two destinations. One is the lake of fire and that is the gehenna of absolute torment of judgment that is everlasting but it is not the intermediate, preliminary state of torment called hades. The second destination is to the new heavens and the new earth where you will have a new body because your body will be resurrected and the soul and body as from creation is now united, glorified, even as Jesus' body was raised with His human soul as well.

Bruce: Another question has to do with the return of Christ, when Christ returns will He be in His resurrected body?

Harry: Yes, and that is an amazing thing to me. Not only that, the Bible indicates that we will see in the body the marks of His judgment on the cross from the spear, the wounds. Jesus showed them to Thomas. I believe that's another blessing because as I understand the Bible no one can look upon God and live, even angels. It would consume us, but yet we will be with Him and we will see Him. How? We will see Him through the veil Incarnate body of Christ that is glorified in all of its majesty, the resurrected body of Christ, which is a real body. It is a spiritual body fit for eternity but a real body. It is our physical body transformed into that real body that is there for all eternity.

The intermediate state where you go to now will no longer be an intermediate state but a final state which will be either in gehenna, the lake of fire – judgment, isolation, torment – because one would not surrender to Christ, or the new heavens and the new earth, with a new body for all eternity with no sin and no ability to sin and you will be able to see your Savior. That's why we say 'come quickly Lord Jesus.'

Bruce: One of the questions comes from the Maundy Thursday service this past week. If you were not able to see the service you can view it or read it from our website at <https://briarwood.org/resources/sermon-audio/> for it was very instructional and helpful. In that sermon you made a reference to the six trials Jesus had to go through and people want to know what were the trials and why did Jesus have to go through all those trials?

Harry: I have done a lot of study on this. Today what is taught as the Via Dolorosa, I don't believe all that is taught there and I don't believe Jesus started at the Fortress Antonio. I believe He actually started at the palace of Herod. Someday I'd like to draw this out in diagram with the Scriptures supporting why I believe that. Jesus still has a Via Dolorosa, a way to the cross, but from a different perspective which I think brings some lessons to its own. So let's address where I get the six the trials.

Jesus has three different appearances to Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. Not in all of them are the full Sanhedrin present and one of them is informal. Jesus has three different command appearances on that night which is the beginning of Good Friday and then He has three appearances to Gentile kings – twice to Pilate and once to Herod. Those are the six trials which becomes much more understandable when you see the close proximity of the house of Caiaphas, the Herodian palace and the Hasmonean palace where Herod Antipas stayed.

Bruce: I think that was one of the highlights and takeaways when we were able to go on the Israel trip with you. You give a good tour of the Via Dolorosa and right when you get done you say 'Now, that wasn't it' and you immediately go to the one you believe is the one Jesus walked, but it is amazing to see how much in close quarters the old city was which does help that unfold the way Scriptures would indicate.

Harry: We have had to postpone our Israel trip this year due to the current pandemic but Lord willing we will do at the end of May and first week of June of 2021.

Bruce: Here is the last question for this time and it's a predictable question. We get asked every year the Sunday after Easter, why are the three crosses still up in front of our church, Briarwood Presbyterian Church? And when do they get taken down?

Harry: We start the crosses in anticipation as Christ in Luke 9 starts toward Jerusalem and we have the days leading up to Holy Week. Purple is the color of regality and because Jesus is our King headed to the cross we use a purple sash on the cross in the middle. On Good Friday when the King goes to die for our sins, which is the symbol of death and His victory over darkness through the black cloth which we put on the middle cross until Saturday while He is in the grave. Then on Resurrection Sunday we use the white cloth for His resurrection from the grave, proclaiming our Savior with His purity and victory that has won our victory for He is now risen. The crosses then stay up 40 days on the other side of Resurrection Sunday which lasts all the way to Ascension Sunday. After that will come Pentecost Sunday which refers to 50 days later but the Ascension Sunday was 40 days later. On Ascension Sunday is when Jesus ascends to glory which is when we take the white cloth down, for now Jesus is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us and is there in His glorified bodily presence until He comes again.

Also every Resurrection Sunday I say 'we'll do this again next week' meaning it's okay for us to take a season of year. Just like the Old Testament had five feasts, the New Testament we have kind of developed, binding no one's conscience because the Scripture does not prescribe these, but we have a celebration of His Incarnation Advent Season, the Holy Week season to focus on His death, burial and resurrection and the third celebration is Ascension Sunday at Pentecost in which we celebrate the ascension of Christ then the pouring forth of the Spirit of God there upon the 120 disciples in the Upper Room, which now include the four brothers of Jesus – James, Joseph, Simon and Jude. In Scriptures as we see this out pouring of the Spirit of God we see the church going from Jerusalem in Acts 1 through 8, to Judea and Samaria in Acts 9 through 12 and to the whole world in Acts 13 through 28. So that's how and why that symbolism is being used.

Bruce: That is all the time we have for this session but I would like to remind everyone in our next session we'll go back to answering questions concerning our present distress so send your questions to askthepastor@briarwood.org.

Harry: I want to thank everyone who have helped us with this and those who are sharing this with everyone. We will continue our morning Lord's Day series of Crisis and the Christian and to prepare for this coming Lord's Day read Nehemiah 1. How does Nehemiah handle a twofold personal and national crisis? There's a basic lesson we'll learn from this in that study. I hope and pray you have been encouraged with the celebration of Holy Week and that you who know Jesus as Lord and Savior have been embolden, empowered and equipped and you groan for instruction. I pray that you love the inerrant, infallible Word of God to dig into it and to see the grandest and greatest story that has ever been told, with all the stories in the Bible that support it. That is the Good News story that Jesus has come, died for our sins, risen, ascended and He is coming again. Let's go proclaim the Gospel everywhere. The Lord bless you. Amen.