



CHRISTUS REX

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We are called to love, worship and obey God; to put His love into practice in the power of the Holy Spirit through our witness and service, that all may know Christ our King

The Season of Lent

Early Christians observed "a period of penitence and fasting" in preparation for the Paschal feast, Pascha, now Easter. The season now known as Lent (from the Old English word *lencten* meaning "spring," [cf. Afrikaans *lente*]) has a long history. Originally, in places where Pascha was celebrated on a Sunday, a penitential period of preparation and fast lasting two days was observed. In the third century this period of preparation was lengthened to six days – becoming Holy Week. In the fifth century this penitential observance became a fast of forty days, in imitation of Christ's fasting in the wilderness, applicable to all the faithful. The forty-day fast was especially important for converts to the faith who were preparing for baptism, and for those guilty of serious sins who would be restored to the Christian community during the Easter Vigil. The services of baptism and confirmation are an integral part of the Easter Vigil, as is the renewal of baptismal promises. (An Anglican Prayer Book 1989, p 215-227)

Today Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are regarded as fast days during which the amount of food eaten is to be reduced, and the weekdays of Lent as days of self-denial, in remembrance of Jesus' suffering and death. Anglicans are encouraged to observe Lent in one or more of the following ways: By giving more time to prayer, Bible study, to spiritual reading; by eating less or simpler food; by giving up some pleasure or luxury, and using the money saved to help other people. (APB 1989 p 437-438).

In the western church there are 46 days between Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday but omitting the six Sundays between these dates – as these are regarded as 'Little Easters' which give thanks for the Lord's resurrection – a Lenten Fast of 40 days is observed. The last three days of Lent are the sacred Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is named for the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful as a sign of repentance. The ashes used are gathered after the palm crosses from Palm Sunday celebrations the previous year are burned. Ashes were used in ancient times to express

mourning, remorse, and penitence. Penitents expressed sorrow for their faults and sins by pouring ashes on their heads. (Job 42:5-6).

Holy Week

From early times Christians have observed the week before Easter as a time of special devotion. As the pilgrim Egeria recorded in the late fourth century, Jerusalem contained many sacred places that were sites for devotion and liturgy. Numerous pilgrims to the holy city followed the path of Jesus in his last days. They formed processions, worshipped where Christ suffered and died, and venerated relics. From this beginning evolved the rites we observe today on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. These services provide a liturgical experience of the last days of Jesus' earthly life, as well as the time and events leading up to his resurrection. The Book of Common Prayer provides special liturgies for each of these days. The eucharistic lectionary also provides proper readings for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Holy Week. Some parishes observe the service of Tenebrae on one of these days in Holy Week. In many dioceses, the diocesan clergy will make a reaffirmation of ordination vows in the context of a eucharist during Holy Week, usually before or on Maundy Thursday. The three holy days, or Triduum, of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are at the heart of the Holy Week observance. In many Anglican parishes, the liturgical colour for Holy Week from Palm Sunday through Maundy Thursday is red. Holy Week ends at sundown on the Saturday before Easter, or with the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

Palm Sunday

The Sunday before Easter that introduces Holy Week is known as Palm Sunday. The distinctive ceremonies of the day are the blessing of palms, and in Western churches a procession representing the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem a week before the Resurrection. A Palm Sunday procession in Jerusalem is known to have occurred in the 4th century and liturgical evidence indicating regular processions occurs in the 9th century. The current Anglican rite is that palms are blessed in a building away from the church in which the Eucharist is to be celebrated. This is followed by a reading of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem from one of the Gospels, after which the clergy and people process into the church singing the traditional *Gloria Laus* (All Glory, Laud and Honour). In the church a feature of the service is that the entire Passion narrative from one of the Gospels is either chanted, recited, or dramatized.

Tenebrae

This form of the monastic office (matins and lauds) is commonly adapted for congregational use during Holy Week, often on one of the last three days but usually on Holy Saturday morning. The office is structured around psalms, readings, and responsories. A distinguishing characteristic of this service is the series of readings from Lamentations which appear early in the office. The distinctive ceremonial of Tenebrae includes use of fifteen lighted candles, often set on a special, triangular stand. One candle is extinguished as each of the fourteen appointed psalms is completed: the name of the devotion is derived from this coming of darkness. The fifteenth candle, symbolic of Christ, is left lighted at the end of the final psalm. But it is carried away to be hidden, which signifies the apparent victory of the forces of evil. A sudden loud noise is made at the end of the service, symbolizing the earthquake at Christ's death. The lighted candle is then restored to its place, suggesting Christ's eventual triumph. Tenebrae is an optional observance for use during Holy Week.

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are a series of 14 pictures or carvings, designed for devotional purposes, depicting incidents in the last journey of Christ from Pilate's house to His entombment. These are commonly arranged around the walls of a church. During Lent and particularly during Holy Week a popular devotion is to visit the Stations in order, reciting prayers and meditating on each incident. The devotion developed from an early date as pilgrims to Jerusalem followed the traditional route from Pilate's house to Calvary. The devotion became popular in the later Middle Ages, but the final selection of incidents was not settled until the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

Seder Meal

At this traditional Jewish Passover meal, the story of the Exodus (Haggadah) is read, and ritual actions are performed. The seder today consists of fourteen elements: 1) Kiddush, the blessing of wine, and the day, 2) Urehatz, washing of hands, 3) Karpas, eating green herbs, 4) Yachatz, breaking the middle matzo, 5) Maggid, the Passover story, 6) Rahatz, washing of hands, 7) Motzee-Matzo, blessing the unleavened bread, 8) Maror, eating bitter herb, 9) Korekh, eating bitter herb and matzo together, 10) Shulhan Orekh, the Passover meal, 11) Tzafun, the afikomen (finding a piece of matzo hidden for the children), 12) Berakah, grace after the meal, 13) Hallel, recital of the Hallelujah psalms, and 14) Neertza, the conclusion of the seder.

It is unclear how much of this order was in place in the first century, but it was at a meal similar to this that Jesus celebrated the Passover. Because of this connection with the institution of the eucharist Christians have come to celebrate Seders. The celebration of a Christian Seder during Holy Week is considered by some to be inappropriate because the meal is a Jewish festive celebration, and festivity is deemed inappropriate for the week in which Christians should be reflecting on the final week of Jesus' life on earth.

Maundy Thursday

The traditional English name for the Thursday before Easter is derived from the Latin antiphon *Mandatum Novum* (A new command – John 13:34), that introduces the ceremony of the washing of the feet. The need for a special celebration, in commemoration of the Lord's Institution of the Eucharist on that day, was recognised by the Council of Hippo in 393 CE. Apart from the Priest's washing of the feet of twelve congregants, other liturgical features of the day are the Blessing of the Holy Oils during a Chrism Mass, and the affirmation of vows of ordination by ordained clergy.

In the Anglican tradition the Maundy Thursday Eucharist is celebrated in the evening and following Communion the tabernacle is emptied and left open: any host required for sick communion being carried to some other place of reservation without ceremony. The Hosts needed for the Good Friday liturgy are consecrated and taken in solemn procession to the Altar of Repose, where a watch is kept for some hours if not through the entire night. After the Host has been moved the altar is stripped and decorations removed to leave the church stark and bare for Good Friday. The service concludes without blessing or dismissal.

Good Friday

The Friday before Easter on which the anniversary of the Crucifixion is kept. It is a day of fast, abstinence and penance. In the Roman Catholic tradition, it is one of two days of the year (together with Maundy Thursday) on which no Mass is said. The rite used in western churches dates to the early years of Christianity and consists of four parts. (1) The Liturgy of the Word,

consists of lessons and a reading of the Passion according to John; (2) Prayers of Intercession; (3) Solemn Adoration of the Cross which includes the Reproaches (a set of 12 reproofs addressed by the Crucified Saviour to his ungrateful people) as well as the Trisagion (thrice Holy) refrain, "Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us". (4) Communion from Hosts reserved on Maundy Thursday.

There is no set time or duration for the Good Friday rite, but Anglican tradition is for a three-hour service to be held between Midday and 3 p.m. (the traditional time of Christ's death).

Holy Saturday

The day before Easter Sunday, formerly known as Easter Even. It commemorates the resting of Christ's body in the tomb. Whether or not there are special services differs. The CPSA Anglican Prayer Book 1989 makes allowance for a Collect but contains the rubric: "There is no Eucharist on this day, but the Easter Vigil may begin in the evening."

March Bible Quiz Jesus' Last Week Fill in the missing phrases.

1. On the **Sunday** before his death Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah by _____.
2. On the **Monday** Jesus caused a furore in the temple area by _____.
3. On the **Tuesday** Jesus was teaching in the temple and sat down opposite the place where offerings were placed, and seeing what occurred he called his disciples, and told them: "_____."
4. What do the Gospels record Jesus doing on the **Wednesday**?

5. **Thursday**. Jesus tells his followers to ask the owner of a house:
"_____?"
6. **Friday**. The last words Jesus spoke before his death on the cross were:
"_____"
7. **Saturday**. Jesus' body was

8. **Sunday**. When Jesus rose from death He appeared first to _____ who went and _____.

Answers to February Bible Quiz Jesus' Healing Miracles Match the miracle Jesus performed with the person for whom the miracle was performed.

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| 1. A Royal Official (John 4:46-53) | b. Son healed |
| 2. Jairus (Mark 5:22-41) | e. Daughter raised from dead |
| 3. Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52) | c. Received Sight |
| 4. High Priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51) | j. Ear restored |
| 5. Widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-16) | f. Son raised from the dead |

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| 6. Mary and Martha (John 11:39-44) | i. Brother raised from the dead |
| 7. Peter's mother-in-law | a. Fever healed |
| 8. An invalid for 38 years (John 5:5-8) | g. Walked again |
| 9. A woman in the crowd (Mark 5:25-29) | d. Freed from her suffering |
| 10. Man chained hand and foot Luke 8:26-38) | h. Freed from demon |

Diseases of the Bible – O to W

A disease is a definite entity of sickness of part or all of the body, with a characteristic group of symptoms. It is likely that the Hebrews were subject to the same diseases that are prevalent in the semitropical climate of the mid-East today. However, in many cases the Bible only mentions symptoms, such as fever, haemorrhage, discharge or itch, and one can only surmise what the disease entity was.

This is the last of the series on the diseases of the Bible and their symptoms: this month O to W.

Obesity. "Now Eglon was a very fat man";(Judges 3:22) "and the fat closed over the blade." Surgeons who have had to cut through centimetres of fat to get into an abdomen can easily understand what happened to Eglon. Excessive fat is located not only in a thick layer between the skin and muscles, but also around the organs.

In biblical times in places where food was scarce and an adequate diet difficult to obtain, it was a source of pride if the members of a household had full faces and protuberant abdomens. There was little awareness of the dangers of obesity with respect to hearts, varicose veins, arteriosclerosis, arthritis, diabetes, possible surgery, and lifespan. Diet and reasonable exercise are the ingredients of relief.

Pestilence is a word that is used frequently in the Bible. There is a striking example of David's sin that was punished with the death of 75,000 of his people by a pestilence (2 Sam 24:15) that lasted three days. Amos 4:10 speaks of "pestilence after the manner of Egypt."

Plague is the disease most likely referred to. It was endemic in Egypt and along the Mediterranean Coast of Palistine. In severe outbreaks of the disease, death usually occurred within three days of the first appearance of symptoms. Some Biblical scholars have suggested that cholera might be implicated, but others hold the view: "Prior to the nineteenth century, cholera was unknown outside India."

If cholera did exist in the land of Israel, it certainly would fit under the heading of pestilence. It is commonly transmitted by contaminated drinking water or by food that had been grown in fields fertilized with human excrement. It is characterized by a terrific diarrhea, with adult patients passing up to thirty litres of liquid bowel movement in one day. Patients drink great quantities of water, if they can get it. In modern times, early treatment cures almost every case; but when patients are not treated, the death rate in adults is about seventy percent.

Starvation. In Biblical times starvation was a matter with which people in the mid-East were well acquainted. Periods of drought were common, and when they continued for successive years they were disastrous. We need think only of the experience of the Egyptians and Joseph. The drought was so bad that Joseph induced the Egyptians to pay for their food with their personal wealth, then with their livestock, next their land, and finally with their freedom, making them all slaves of the Pharaoh. The Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel contain many verses detailing the horror of starvation.

The craving of hungry people food can be extreme. Within the brain there is a small portion of brain tissue known as the hypothalamus. This organ has control of appetite and sends out agonizing sensations of hunger when the food intake is seriously inadequate. When the intake of calories is less than the body needs for its metabolism, reserve body fat is first used. When this is largely exhausted, the proteins will be called on. Meanwhile the body is gradually weakening until it dies either from lack of nutrition, or from a disease that has gained a foothold in the weakened body. If water is easily obtainable, a healthy person may live from thirty to forty days without food. With no water, they will die in less than half that time.

Worms. The Book of Job has many verses detailing his afflictions from worms. The Israelites experienced these living in a semitropical country. The biblical references may be to tapeworms, flukes, roundworms, hookworms, ascariases, threadworms, or pinworm.

The tapeworm gets into the body when persons eat food infected with them. There are beef, pork and fish tapeworms. They grow to be several metres long and may live up to twenty-five years. Their eggs may reach a farmer's fields when human excrement is used as fertilizer and pupate on the plants that the cattle eat. The embryos penetrate the muscles of the cattle. People eat the infected meat and a new life cycle begins.

Flukes are the small worms: the eggs of flukes are found in snails. The flukes multiply rapidly, get into water, and attach themselves with suckers to anyone sloshing through the water. They dig through the skin, enter the blood stream and reach the lungs, liver, intestine and bladder, where they may do permanent damage. They are endemic in Israel, Iraq and Iran. Pinworms are also common worms in the Middle East. Ascariases is a large roundworm found in humans. Hookworms are minute and suck blood from the small bowel causing anaemia

[Sources: <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/diseases-bible>]

Concluding Thoughts

"Love one another as I have loved you"
May seem impossible to do,
But if you will try to trust and believe,
Great are the joys that you will receive
For love makes us patient, understanding, and kind,
And we judge with our hearts and not with our minds,
For as soon as love entered the heart's open door,
The faults we once saw are not there anymore
And the things that seem wrong begin to look right
When viewed in the softness of love's gentle light
For love works in ways that are wondrous and strange,
And there is nothing in life that love cannot change,
And all that God promised will someday come true
When you love one another the way He loved you.

-Helen Steiner Rice



The greatest happiness in life is the conviction that we are loved –
loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.

-Victor Hugo



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