

Day 1 – 18th Feb 2015

读经 Reading: 马太福音 Matthew 24:1-14

Lent is the time when the church remembers the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. The period from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday is known as Lent. Lent has a history and tradition of more than a thousand years. In the period of Lent, every individual has a deeper awareness of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion. During this period, everyone can also read the bible passages on Jesus' suffering as part of our daily readings. In these forty days, we can slowly read the entire book of Matthew a few times over, and through every reading, put yourself in that situation and let it speak to you.

According to Matthew's account of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion two thousand years ago, and in this chapter, Jesus basically mentioned two things. He prophesied two things, namely the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and his second coming. Why did Jesus mention these two things at that point in time? The revival of Jerusalem is the revival of God's chosen people, where God would be King. And Jesus is the one, not to overcome the Roman empire, but to be the meaning and role of the temple. From hence forth, man would not be constrained by geographical environment, but every individual would have a more ideal temple from which to be close with God, where Jesus himself is the representative who will bring us to God to worship him. How do we know this? Jesus was killed because he said these words and did these things, but do not forget, Jesus rose from the dead three days later. What does His resurrection mean? It means that what he said and did before were true. And this is why these were recorded in the Gospel books. We also have to ask ourselves: Is this really Jesus? God told the Israelites that He would bring revival, restore His relationship with them: I have come, I have come to do this now. This is how God shows proof to man, he used this entire process to tell us what he has done for us.

大斋节是教会纪念主耶稣受苦受难的一个节期，自圣灰日开始一直到受难节结束。教会传统里守大斋节的习俗延续了超过一千年。在大斋节这段时间，信徒深层的意识到主耶稣受苦受难，这段期间以阅读主耶稣受难的圣经经文为每一天主要的阅读内容。今年的大斋节，让全教会弟兄姐妹以四十天的时间，把全本马太福音以慢读方式，反复读上几次。每次阅读的时候，让自己置身在那个处境当中，且让事件本身向你说话。

按照马太给我们提供的二千年前耶稣受难事件的过程，这一切成书收集在马太福音里。第 24 章里耶稣基本上提到两件事。他预言两件事，第一是耶路撒冷城和圣殿被毁，第二就是他再来的事情。但是为什么主耶稣要在这时候提到这两件事？复兴耶路撒冷是要复兴上帝理想的子民，这群人以上帝为他们的王，而耶稣知道他就是这一位要来的君王。他不是透过推翻罗马帝国而做王，乃是成为圣殿的意义和角色。人从此不再受到地域的局限，每个人可以有个更理想的殿来亲近上帝---殿的位置由耶稣本身代替，耶稣使人可以到上帝前来敬拜上帝。我们如何知道这一切是真的？耶稣因为讲了这些话、做了某些事被处死，但是不要忘记，耶稣三天后复活。他的复活表明什么意义？表明他先前说过的这些话、做过的事都是确定的、真实无误的。所以在福音书里这些事情被清楚的记录了。我们也要问自己：耶稣真的是那样吗？上帝来告诉以色列百姓：‘上帝要复兴你们，重新跟你们建立关系，我来了，现在来做了。’这是上帝向人类证明的方式，他就是用如此的过程向我们讲述他为我们做的事。

Day 2 – 19th Feb 2015

读经 Reading: 马太福音 24:15-28

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he did something that would lead to him being put to death. He went to the Temple, pushed away all the decorations that had no place in the Temple, and said words of reproach, words that would lead to his death. What did he say in the Temple? He reproached those who turned the temple of God into a hive of thieves, and said that he himself would tear it down and build it up again in three days. If you were a Jew, especially a religious leader, these words would lead one to anger, to the extent of wanting to get rid of Jesus. To the Jews, the Temple is a representation of God with them. In those times, as long as the Temple was present, to the Jews it meant that God was amongst them. Therefore no one would say something so outrageous or blasphemous about the Temple. To the religious leaders managing the Temple, when Jesus said the place was like a thieves' hive, it meant that Jesus was challenging their authority and legitimacy. This was even harder to accept for the Temple leaders because they felt that their positions as governors of the Temple had the approval of God. It was not allowed to challenge a supreme and divine position such as theirs, and the majority of the Jews would not do that. They gave utmost respect to the leaders in charge of the management and running of the Temple and only prophets of God had the authority to rebuke them. Here, you can understand the feelings of discontent they already had towards Jesus. Actually, Jesus only entered Jerusalem and did this in the last seven days of his life. In the previous two years, he preached in his hometown, did some things and had some altercations with the religious leaders. They felt that what Jesus said was in conflict with what they said, and he seemed to be challenging and slandering their religion. Hence, even though Jesus was their fellow Jew, there were reasons for the religious leaders to be unhappy with him. Jesus made many pointed and caustic remarks, challenged their authority, their level of purity and legitimacy, and worst of all, he unashamedly remarked that the Temple would be destroyed and he would rebuild it in three days.

耶稣进入耶路撒冷,做了一番令他遭杀害的事。他去到圣殿,推开圣殿里不该有的摆设,说了一番极其严重责备的话,这些话为他招来杀身之祸。那他在圣殿说了什么?他责备那些把上帝的殿变成贼窝的人,又说自己要把圣殿拆掉,三天后重建起来。我们可以想像当众的犹太人,特别是宗教领袖,听了这番话会极其气愤,甚至动念要除掉耶稣。要知道圣殿在犹太民族的心目中,代表了上帝的同在。在耶稣那个时代,大多数的犹太人都认同只要圣殿在,就代表上帝在他们当中;所以不会有人针对圣殿说这么大逆不道、亵渎的话。耶稣的话,听在管理圣殿的宗教领袖耳中,就是耶稣在挑战他们的权威与合法性!对圣殿领袖和负责人来说,真是听不下耶稣的责备,因为他们自认自己能负责圣殿,是有上帝认可的;有谁敢来挑战他们至高无上的地位呢?一般犹太老百姓是不会这样挑战他们的,因为百姓非常尊重负责圣殿和管理圣殿的人,也就只有上帝兴起的先知才敢去责备他们。有了这样的理解,你就可以感受到这些负责圣殿和管理圣殿的人,心里激起对耶稣满腔的不满。其实这起严重的事件,是发生在耶稣生命中最后的七天。在那之前的两年多,耶稣已经在他的家乡讲道,也行了一些事与这些宗教领袖产生碰撞和火花。他们认为耶稣的教导和评论,已经在挑战和诋毁他们的民族信仰。所以就算主耶稣是他们的同胞,但他激起宗教领袖对他非常的不满,确实是有起因的。因为耶稣的确讲了针对性和尖锐性的话,挑战他们的权威、纯正度与合法性。最严重的是他竟然大言不惭的说这圣殿要被毁、而他三天后要把它重新盖起来。

Day 3 – 20th Feb 2015

读经 Reading: 马太福音 24:29-44

In 23:37, Jesus lamented that he was also a prophet who would be killed. Before this, we see that he was acknowledged in his role and image as a prophet. Besides being a prophet, what other kind of person was Jesus assumed to be? The high priest stood up and asked him: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” This statement means: Are you the king anointed by God? In Israel back then, the king was called the son of God, and the Messiah referred to the one chosen by God. Jesus replied that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. This statement means that he was at the same level as God. We see that the religious leaders reacted very strongly. Ask yourself: Who is Jesus? Is he really who he says he is? Jesus was killed because of what he revealed, and God redressed this by raising him from the dead. Why is it important to be resurrected after three days? It is because without the resurrection, whatever was said before would become meaningless, and Jesus would be unworthy of our worship. But because of the resurrection, we see that it happened as he described, and he suffered and was crucified for all these. Although he needed to prove himself in this manner, but this is the way in which God speaks to us. Jesus Christ truly went through sin and death. You might say that there is no such thing as sin, but there is, and it was already placed on him. Did he conquer death? Yes, he did. Therefore we see true life and true forgiveness, because he took on sin and overcame it, and came back for us. All these were done to make clear to us that everything is the truth, that God came amongst us and went through all these. Christianity is not a set of theories, ideals and ideas, it is God personally coming to speak and live among man. And all these started with a nation of Jews as witnesses, and you see that Jesus received the approval from some among them. Unfortunately, they were unable to see more clearly; hence I hope that during this period of Lent, we will be able to see all these more clearly than they did.

在 23 章 37 节，耶稣感叹自己也是一位会被杀害的先知。马太福音较早前的记载，显示了他作为先知的职分和形象是被认可的。耶稣的身份，除了是先知，还有什么呢？大祭司就站起来对耶稣说“。。。你是神的儿子基督不是？”这话的意思是“你是不是那一位上帝所膏立的王？”在旧约当中，以色列的王被称为“上帝的儿子”，“基督”就是神所拣选的人的意思。在耶稣的回答里，他说，“你们要看见人子坐在全能者的右边驾着天上的云降临”。这句话的意思是---他与上帝同等。由此我们看到宗教领袖的反应很激烈。你得问你自已：“耶稣到底是谁？他真的是正如他自己所说的？”耶稣正为了自己揭露的身份被害，然后上帝为他平反，使他从死里复活。这就是为什么“三天复活”是很重要的，因为如果没有复活，前面的这些对话或自白都只是空口说的，不值得我们拜他为神。因为后来他真的照他所说的发生了，而他就是为这一切受苦受难。他需要以这样的方式来证明自己，但这就是上帝向我们说话的方式了---主耶稣真的是得经过受罪受死。

你说，到底有没有‘罪’的这一回事？有的！罪已经加诸在他身上。‘死’，有没有被胜过、得克服呢？有的！耶稣经过了！所以我们在耶稣身上看到真正的生命，也看到真正的赦免--因为他受罪而又胜过，又转回来找我们。这一切是真的事实，上帝也来到我们当中把这些事情呈现，他也亲身经过。基督教信仰不是一套理论、理想和主义，乃是上帝在人类当中亲自说话和行事；在人类历史当中，先让犹太民族来做这个见证，耶稣在他们当中也受到一部分人的认可。很可惜，他们所见有限，希望你我在大斋节能看得比他们清楚。

Day 4 – 21st Feb 2015

读经 Reading: 马太福音 26:17-30

It is customary practice that the head of the household would preside over the feast. He would begin by speaking the words of thanksgiving for the feast day, and lead saying of grace and singing of Psalms. He would recite the great events of Israel's redemption with rich symbolism employed by the various elements of the meal. Thus, Jesus naturally assumes this leading role as He eats the Passover meal with His disciples. Imagine the startled response of the disciples when the host of the feast, taking and breaking the unleavened bread, He made no mention of the ancient exodus' event, but instead solemnly declared, "This is my body." Jesus now invests the breaking of bread with new meaning. It foreshadows His body figuratively broken and literally killed in His upcoming death. In other words, the bread symbolizes the body of Jesus, which is about to be 'broken' on the cross.

This redemptive nature of His broken body becomes even clearer when Jesus took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to the disciples, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." As a tradition, the cup of the Passover meal is filled with red wine, symbolizing the blood of lambs sprinkled on the door posts that enabled Israel's homes to be passed over by the 'angel of death'. Again, Jesus gives it a new meaning by proclaiming that the cup of wine now stands for His blood poured out for many in His death on the cross. Just as the blood of the Passover lambs had been a sign of salvation at the beginning of Israel's history, so Jesus' blood poured out for many would be the sign of God's saving work in the end time. By adding the notion that it is His blood of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus indicates that the blood of His death will bring about the fulfillment of the new covenantal relationship between God and the human race. It is a priceless blessing of the new covenant. Furthermore, the new covenant sealed by Jesus' blood would bring also the deliverance of human race from slavery. The deliverance will not be like the first exodus; it will deal not with slavery to the Egypt Pharaoh or any other external enemy but with slavery to sin. The Last Supper is now the Lord's Supper, and it becomes the 'Christian Passover'.

一般来说，一家之主会主持逾越节的晚餐。一开始他会为这宴席说几句感恩的话，然后带大家做感恩的祷告，唱一些诗篇。他会运用桌面上有象征性的食物，讲述以色列得蒙救赎的伟大事件。在与门徒吃逾越节晚餐时，耶稣很自然地取了领导的角色。可是接下来这个宴席的主人，拿起桌面上的无酵饼，不提古老的出埃及事件，却郑重的宣告，‘这是我的身体’，你可以想象门徒们有多惊讶。耶稣当下赋予擘饼的动作以新的意义，他说这预告了他的身体将在不久的将来被打破，而后死亡。换句话说，这饼象征了耶稣的身体，不久要在十字架上被破碎。随着耶稣拿起杯来，祝谢了，交给门徒，说‘你们都喝这个，因为这是我立约的血，为多人流出来，使罪得赦’，他被打破的身体要带来的救赎意义表明得更加清晰了。在逾越节传统中，晚餐用的杯子装了红酒，象征羔羊的血，洒在门楣和门框上，‘死亡天使’看见，便逾越过以色列的家。耶稣此际给予酒一个新的意义，这杯里的酒，如今象征他将死在十字架，他的血为多人流出。在以色列起初的历史里，逾越节羔羊的血曾经表明了救恩，如今耶稣的血，倾倒出来，成为上帝在末世的救恩作为。当耶稣说到这血是立约的血，使罪得赦，耶稣是表明他的死亡，将完成神人之间的新的盟约关系。这新的约是无价之祝福。再者，这新的约，以耶稣的血来立下，也将为被掳中的全人类带来拯救。这拯救与第一次的出埃及不同，这回没有埃及的法老或者外在的敌人，而是要拯救世人脱离罪的奴役。这最后的晚餐如今成为主的晚餐，也成为‘基督徒的逾越节’。