

- ◆ This **special Easter edition of the HammerTime card** is designed for you and your family to spend time together 4 times this week reading through and talking about the events of Easter week. Use the passages listed on each day to have discussions about what really took place in the final week of Jesus' life here on earth.
- ◆ **Check out this link for more timeline information about the week of Easter:** http://www.bibletimelines.org/passionweek_top.html

Current Series: "Healer"
Current Message: "The Easter Story"

Designed to supplement Pastor Dickie Spargo's current Sunday series.

- ◆ **Listen to this message** (or other messages in the series) again online at <http://www.bethlehembc.com/mediacenter.htm>.
- ◆ **Study Notebooks & Audio Message CD's** available at 'Above the Grind' Bookstore for purchase.
- ◆ **HAMMERTIME Cards** - available Sundays at Bethlehem Church or online at www.bethlehemtoolbox.com.
- ◆ Contact Matt Vanderbilt, Connections Pastor, at mvanderbilt@bethlehembc.com or 704-823-5050 x104 for additional information.

Day 1: Thursday - Last Supper & Gethsemane **Read:** Matthew 26:17-30 & 31-46

Think about: This was the last week of Jesus' life here on earth. As fully God and fully man, He had emotions just like you do. Surely He must have had some apprehension, nervousness or even fear as He knew what was coming the next day. As you read today's passages, note the two key events in this week, starting with His final meal with His closest friends (known to us as 'The Last Supper').

Do you know what Jewish celebration the disciples were observing? It is called the Passover, which originated with the Israelites experience in Exodus 12:1-30. It is symbolic of how blood was shed from a lamb to save the lives of the followers of God. It was also foreshadowing of what was to come for Christ less than 24 hours later.

In the Garden of Gethsemane (pronounced Geth-sem-a-knee), Jesus had His final time of private prayer with His heavenly Father. He literally intensely cried out to His Father to help Him with what was to come. When you go through intense, painful prayer, remember that Jesus has been there, too!

Act: Think on your own or talk with your family about what these two events must have really been like for Jesus. He could have 'bolted out of town' or just stopped preaching God's message, but even with what lay ahead for Him, He stayed focused on what He needed to do. The greater victory laid ahead.

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Day 2: Friday morning - Arrest & Trial **Read:** Matthew 26:47-68 & 27:11-26

Think about: How insulting to the Son of God to be betrayed, arrested and treated like a criminal. Yet Jesus endured it because He knew our eternity was riding on His completion of His mission. This arrest and trial seemingly ended painfully in death on the cross. He absorbed the ridicule, lies, spits in the face, and beatings.

To call it a 'trial' wasn't accurate, since the entire event was a setup. Jesus never had a fair chance to be judged on His character or His heart. Neither the members of the Sanhedrin, the governor, nor the priests and elders gave Him a chance to be freed. Jesus loved them all and endured what they put Him through. In fact, He was going to the cross to save their sins, too.

Act: Talk about losing freedom like Jesus did, about the pain that Jesus endured and the terrible ridicule. Realize that He did all this because of His love for you.

Day 3: Friday daytime - Calvary (Jesus on the Cross) **Read:** Matthew 27:27-66

Think about: Imagine what it would take to carry a large wooden cross up a hill, your body experiencing intense pain from beatings, with people mocking and yelling at you the entire time. After Jesus carried His cross to exhaustion, they hung Him from it to further torture and insult Him until He died.

Note what happened when Jesus died (verses 51-53). The world was literally coming apart as God's Son died. People began to realize this was not some ordinary man dying. When He was buried, the officials put extra security outside of His tomb to make sure His followers could not steal His body and claim that He had risen from the dead.

Act: Talk about why a person would go through intense suffering for the gain of other people. Discuss the amazing things that happened right as Jesus died. This is incredible evidence that there was something special about Jesus.

Day 4: Saturday/Sunday - Empty Tomb & Jesus Lives **Read:** Matthew 28:1-20

Think about: All was quiet on the day after Jesus died - no trials, no more yelling, no beatings, no more nails pounding. Jesus' followers did not yet realize that He was talking about Himself in Matthew 27:40 - He was the temple that was going to be rebuilt (rise) in three days. It seemed that all hope was lost.

When the ladies went to the tomb early on Sunday morning, they were shocked and confused by what they found. The guards were not there, the large stone had been moved and the burial cloths that had been around Jesus' body lay on the stone surface where Jesus' dead body had been. In the next hours, Jesus appeared to those same ladies and then to Jesus' closest friends, His remaining 11 disciples. **It was true: Jesus was really alive.** It was not a ghost or a vision of Him, but His raised body, with nail scars on His hands and feet. Soon He would leave for good, but first He would give a command called 'The Great Commission' to followers of that day and for generations of followers to come.

Act: His call to us is to dedicate our lives to telling others about Him and what He accomplished on the cross. His victory allows us to have victory in our lives and live with Him in heaven forever, when we accept Him as our Savior!

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