



Shadow of the Cross

a passion week devotional & study guide

RESTON BIBLE CHURCH

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Introduction

Everything Jesus did was done with His death in view.

Shadow of the Cross is a song written in an effort to capture this stunning reality: Jesus Christ always knew that death on a cross was the climax of His mission. In other words, every thought, every feeling, and every action of Jesus' life was done "in the shadow of the cross." The cross was always looming before Him, and He was always moving toward it.

The New Testament gospel accounts show us how Jesus often taught that He would die and rise again (Matthew 16:21-28, Mark 8:31-9:1, Luke 9:22-27). When read from this perspective, these accounts drive home the love of God, through Jesus, for us. To understand God's love for us, we must understand who Jesus is, and to understand who Jesus is, we cannot help but gaze upon the cross. The cross provides the ultimate point of reference for grasping the deep, deep love of God where He proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). It's an amazing reality to reflect on—the cross was the lens through which Jesus lived and conducted His ministry. In all that He did, Jesus had an intentional, holy resolve to obey God the Father, ultimately to the point of death on the cross on behalf of those He came to save (Philippians 2:8). All that He did was done in the shadow of the cross.

When we look upon the cross, we see the perfect intersection of God's mercy and justice. The cross shows us the eternal beauty of His love because it displays the sacrifice our Savior was willing to make to cleanse our sin and bring us home to our Heavenly Father. We must constantly remind ourselves that we need rescuing and that God's rescue plan for us is Jesus. Our prayer is that *Shadow of the Cross* will serve as a reminder to us of God's great plan of redemption and help us see more clearly how that plan unfolds in the person of Jesus Christ.

You can find links to RBC's original recordings of this song online at:
www.restonbible.org/worship

How to Use this Guide

This guide, along with the song, is designed to help us move through Palm Sunday to Resurrection Sunday with deep reflection and growing gratitude as we focus our attention on the events that occurred the week leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection.

The week before Easter, often called Passion Week, gives us the opportunity to rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus. Without the resurrection, our faith is entirely in vain (1 Corinthians 15:14). But as we approach Easter, we must not simply skip ahead to the resurrection on Sunday. In order to more fully appreciate that glorious event, it is helpful to take into account all that Jesus did leading up to it. Everything that transpires in the gospel narrative communicates deep things about the character of God in and through Jesus Christ. As we read and reflect on the steps our Savior took as He moved toward His brutal death on the cross, our knowledge and love for Him should deepen.

Our hope is that by reading the gospel narrative in this specific context, our thankfulness to God through Jesus would deepen and grow. We created this devotional so that you can walk through it individually, as a family, or with your Shepherd Group. It covers each day of the Passion Week, starting on Palm Sunday and ending at Easter Sunday. Each entry offers a reflection on what Jesus was doing that day along with some questions to help you reflect on the meaning and impact of the cross and the resurrection.

About the Song

Shadow of the Cross was written in praise to our Lord and as a gift to the saints of Reston Bible Church. The song highlights specific events and days, roughly in chronological order. The first verse sets up God's plan of redemption and rescue, which we first see laid out in Genesis when God promises to send a Redeemer. The second verse fast-forwards us to the week Jesus goes to the cross, to the day that Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. We then see Jesus praying in Gethsemane and dying on the cross. And finally we come to the span of time between the death of Jesus and His resurrection. The first two choruses of the song use the phrasing "In the shadow of the cross" to depict that everything Jesus was doing was heading toward the cross. Yet in the final chorus, the words change to "Oh! The glory of the cross!" to articulate that Jesus no longer was moving toward the cross, but because He is resurrected, we can look back to the cross now as our only boast (Galatians 6:14). No longer simply an instrument of death, the cross now stands as a glorious testament of the finished, atoning work of Christ and of His love and glory.

Shadow of the Cross

Verse 1:

A glorious hope foretold
This prophecy of old
The promise of redemption
The plan of God unfolds

Verse 2:

Veiled in majesty
His glory not yet seen
For His signs and wonders
They hailed Him as a king

Chorus:

In the shadow of the cross
God showed His love for us
A humble king, He came to make a way
For the joy before Him
He bore our sin and shame
Dying for the ones He came to save

Verse 3:

Kneeling as He prayed
The Son of God betrayed
When the hour had come
Not My will but Yours be done

Chorus:

In the shadow of the cross
God showed his love for us
A humble king, He came to make a way
For the joy before Him
He bore our sin and shame
Dying for the ones He came to save

Verse 4:

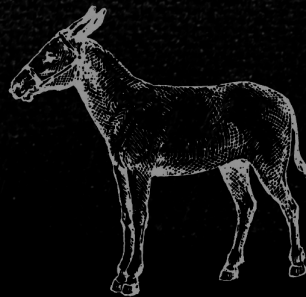
It seemed all hope was lost
As though the grave had won
Yet the power death was broken
In the resurrected Son

Chorus 2:

Oh! The glory of the cross!
God shows His love for us
A humble king, He came to make a way
For the joy before Him
He bore our sin and shame
Dying for the ones He came to save

1
SUNDAY

HOPE



Day 1: Sunday

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

A glorious hope foretold
This prophecy of old
The promise of redemption
The plan of God unfolds

Veiled in majesty
His glory not yet seen
For His signs and wonders
They hailed Him as a king

Read

Genesis 3:15, Galatians 4:4-5, Zechariah 9:9-11, Matthew 21:1-11

Reflect

What does God's promise to send a Rescuer and the fulfillment of that promise tell you about the character of God? How is this an encouragement to you today?

What kind of king do the people expect Jesus to be as He rides into Jerusalem? What kind of king do you expect Him to be in your life today? How often are you letting God's Word inform your expectations of who He is rather than your own understanding?

As you read about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, how does it strike you that the crowds hail Jesus as king, yet only days later He will be unjustly tried, convicted, and then crucified? How does it affect your gratitude for what Jesus did, knowing that both His exaltation and rejection were "in the shadow of the cross"?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and thank God for Jesus, who came to die for fickle people like you and me. We are just like the crowds who praised Jesus as king but later rejected Him. Take time to confess your sins to God knowing there is hope and forgiveness in Christ! Thank God for His faithfulness to you in sending rescue from your sins in Jesus. In what areas of your life do you see yourself gaining more trust in God's sovereign, redemptive work? If you are struggling, ask God for help in trusting Him. Remember His great faithfulness.

2
MONDAY

TEMPLE



Day 2: Monday

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

In the shadow of the cross
God showed His love for us
A humble King, He came to make a way

Read

Matt 21:12-22, Luke 19:45-48

Reflect

Why do you think Jesus goes back into Jerusalem and into the temple?

What do Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and His cleansing of the temple on Monday demonstrate about His authority over all things?

What significance do you see in the fact that while Jesus cleanses the temple, He also heals the blind and lame who come to Him there?

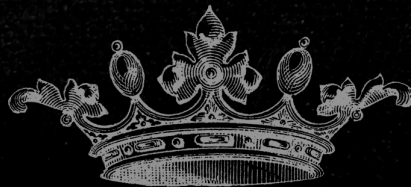
What sort of feelings do you sense are beginning to stir in Jerusalem as these events take place "in the shadow of the cross"?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and thank God for His authority over all things. We may struggle with authority, but we must recognize that God's ways are always good and produce joy. Our way is mangled with sin, and the way of sin inevitably leads to death. Just as the temple needed cleansing, our hearts do, too. Ask God to cleanse your heart from all that ought not be there (Psalm 51:10).

3
TUESDAY

AUTHORITY



Day 3: Tuesday

Jesus' Authority is Challenged

In the shadow of the cross
God showed His love for us
A humble King, He came to make a way
For the joy before Him
He bore our sin and shame
Dying for the ones He came to save

Read

Mark 11:27-33, Daniel 7:13-14, Mark 1:22

Reflect

Why do the chief priests and the scribes seek to challenge Jesus' authority? Where is Jesus' strength evident as He stands up to the religious leaders?

What does Jesus' response tell you about His authority and the religious leaders' motives for questioning Him?

How does considering the power and authority of Jesus "in the shadow of the cross" help frame the events that are unfolding as Jesus moves toward the cross?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and consider where you struggle to believe that Jesus has complete authority over your life and this world. Confess to God the sin of seeking to control your own life and circumstances. Ask Him to help you joyfully submit to His authority and follow Christ's example of humble servanthood.

4

WEDNESDAY

ANOINTED



Day 4: Wednesday

Jesus Anointed Before His Death

For the joy before Him
He bore our sin and shame
Dying for the ones He came to save

Read

Mark 14:3-11, Luke 22:3-6

Reflect

Why do Jesus' disciples consider the pouring out of the ointment on His head as wasteful? In contrast, why does Jesus say this was a "beautiful thing" done to Him?

Why do you think Mary's generous deed is so significant that Jesus says it will be remembered throughout history?

How does Mary's act of anointing foreshadow the cross? How does reading these texts "in the shadow of the cross" affect you as Jesus is both betrayed by one of His own and blessed by Mary's gift?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and consider where you struggle to give God "beautiful things." Ask Him to help you give freely and extravagantly of what you have (time, money, talent, etc.), just as Mary did. Give Him thanks for all you have, and recognize that it is all from Him (1 Corinthians 4:7, Psalm 116:12-14). Ask God to point you toward Christ's ultimate gift of His own perfect life, which is the supreme example of sacrificial giving.

5
THURSDAY

CUP



Day 5: Thursday

The Lord's Supper & the Garden Prayer

Kneeling as He prayed
the Son of God betrayed
And when the hour had come
Not My will but Yours be done

Read

Matt 26:17-75, John 13:1-18:27

Reflect

On the very day He was betrayed, Jesus institutes communion to represent the new covenant that will be established through His death and resurrection. What significance does communion have for us today? Why is it such a vital component to our worship?

The cross is very near now, and Jesus knows this (John 13:21). What does it say about Jesus' trust and confidence in God that He leads the disciples in song as He approaches His greatest agony (Matthew 26:30)?

What do Jesus' prayers in the garden reveal to us about His nature?

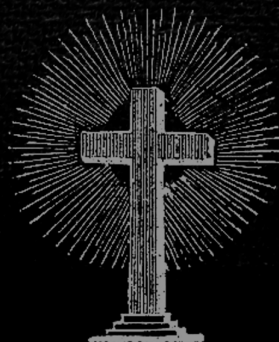
Jonathan Edwards says that in the garden we find the "greatest act of obedience that Christ was to perform." We see that though Jesus prays that the "cup might pass," God does not let it pass. So Jesus, the perfect God-Man, asks God for help in perfectly obeying and drinking this bitter cup. What might this mean for us? How does this encourage your love for God through Jesus?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and consider how Jesus' willingness to go to the cross out of obedience and love show God's love for you. Where are you struggling to believe that God's love for you is real, deep, and unending? Confess those struggles to God and be encouraged as you read and reflect on God's love for you, clearly shown in Jesus giving Himself up on the cross!

6
FRIDAY

CROSS



Day 6: Friday

Jesus is Crucified

In the shadow of the cross
God showed His love for us
A humble King, He came to make a way
And for the joy before Him
He bore our sin and shame
Dying for the ones He came to save

Read

Matthew 27:27-57, Isaiah 53, 1 Peter 2:24

Reflect

Pastor Russ Ramsey writes, “Never before or since has more been lost and gained at the same time as at Jesus’ crucifixion.” Do you agree with this? What are the implications of this statement?

How does reading the prophetic words of Isaiah and his vivid descriptions of the brutality of the cross deepen your love and gratitude to God for Jesus?

What was the source of the strength that kept Jesus nailed to the cross? Was it the nails, the Roman soldiers, or something else?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and take in the gravity of this moment. Jesus is suffering and bearing the full weight of the curse of sin. He is enduring all the punishment that sin deserves. What affections are touched within you as you reflect on the magnitude of His sacrifice? Confess to God your need for a Savior and your thankfulness for His forgiveness. Praise Him for the fact that, in His infinite love, He “did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32).

7
SATURDAY

SILENCE



Day 7: Saturday

Silence

Read

Matthew 27:62-66, Mark 15:46, John 19:39-42

Reflect

Scripture does not speak at length on what transpired on Saturday between Jesus' death and subsequent resurrection on Sunday. What must this time have been like for those who knew, loved and followed Jesus?

Have you ever placed heavy expectations on something or someone only to be let down? What happened? How did you feel? How did it affect how you moved forward from that point?

Charles Spurgeon said, "If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for Him. He is worth waiting for." Have you ever had to wait on the Lord, not knowing how He would come through? How does looking at the life of Jesus through the "shadow of the cross" give you assurance that He will?

Respond

Spend time in silence, reflecting on the reality that for those who had been following Jesus, their hope had died with Him. Imagine the fear, confusion, and despair that must have accompanied followers of Jesus in their grief. We know that tomorrow holds the miraculous resurrection of our Savior, but don't jump into that celebration yet. Contemplate all that Jesus' death has accomplished and how great the cost of this past week had been. Spend time thanking God for the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ and all that He did "in the shadow of the cross."

8
SUNDAY

RESURRECTION



Day 8: Sunday

Jesus Rises from the Dead

It seemed all hope was lost
As though the grave had won
Yet the power of death was broken
In the resurrected Son

Oh! The glory of the cross!
God shows His love for us

Read

Matthew 28:1-10, John 20:1-21, 1 Corinthians 15:3-7

Reflect

What do you imagine the reaction was to hearing the words, “I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said”?

To those who had seen their hopes die when Jesus died, what do you think is going through their minds and hearts as they actually see Jesus alive again? How does the reality of the resurrection of Jesus impact your life today?

He is risen! How do you find deep encouragement and hope that Jesus Christ is alive and reigning now? How should that inform, reform, and transform the way you live your life? How has considering all that Jesus did “in the shadow of the cross” deepened your love for Him?

Respond

Take a moment to sit in silence and consider the depth and riches of God’s love for you in Jesus. Pray Acts 4:11-12 to God, thanking Him for all that He has done for you in the forgiveness of your sin. Reflect on how deep the Father’s love is for you in Christ, and rejoice that today we celebrate a risen Savior who has conquered death, sin, and hell on our behalf. Rejoice! Rejoice, for He is risen!

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