

# DARKEST NIGHT



A FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
FOR THE EASTER SEASON

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ILLUSTRATED BY PHIL SCHORR

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# INTRODUCTION

## THERE WAS DARKNESS OVER THE WHOLE LAND. LUKE 23:44B ESV

*Darkest Night* records the last week of Jesus's life, from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the sealing of his body in the tomb. It includes the story of the darkest night in history—the night of Jesus's death and burial. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record that at the moment of Jesus's death, darkness covered the earth.

The day that Jesus died was the darkest day, for God the Father had poured out on his Son the punishment for sin. It was also the darkest night for all who grieved Jesus's death.

It was the darkest night for Mary who watched as her son was nailed to the cross. It was the darkest night for the disciples who hoped Jesus would redeem Israel. And it was the darkest night for everyone who believed in him. The same Jesus who had opened their blinded eyes, given strength to their crippled legs, commanded their demons to flee, and forgiven their sin now lay dead in a tomb.

After reading “The Tomb,” story number 7, on Holy Saturday, here is an idea for how to transition to reading *Brightest Day*, throughout Easter Week. On Easter morning, set the book with the *Brightest Day* cover in the front, on a piece of white fabric (representing Jesus's grave clothes). If you wish, surround it with treats and baked goods to celebrate Resurrection Day, the brightest day in history. Your children will wake up to the wonderful surprise and you can begin by reading the first story, “The Stone Is Rolled Away.” Read a new chapter each day of Easter Week.

DARKEST NIGHT



# THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

MATTHEW 21:1-17  
MARK 11:1-18  
LUKE 19:28-48  
JOHN 12:12-33

**A**S JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES HIKED UP THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, NEWS SPREAD OF HIS COMING AND A CROWD GATHERED. Thousands were streaming into the city of Jerusalem for the coming Passover Feast. Everyone was talking about Jesus. Many had seen him heal the sick and give sight to the blind. Many spoke of how he raised Lazarus from the dead. But not everyone was happy to see Jesus. The chief priest and Pharisees had given an order that if anyone knew where Jesus was, they should tell them so he could be arrested. The religious rulers were afraid Jesus would start a rebellion against Rome. They feared Rome would send an army, remove them from power, and take over the city.

Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead to find a young donkey—a colt. It was not just any colt but one that had never been ridden before.

Jesus told them that if anyone asked them why they were untying it they should say that the Lord needed it. They did just as Jesus said and brought him the colt. Then they threw their cloaks on top of it. Jesus mounted the colt and continued along the road to Jerusalem.

As people saw Jesus riding down the Mount of Olives, they began laying their cloaks on the ground. Others gathered palm branches to do the same. The disciples and those in the crowd shouted, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38). All this took place to fulfill what the prophet Zechariah had said—that the king of Israel will come into the city riding on a colt. Pharisees standing nearby grew angry. They ordered Jesus to rebuke his disciples. But Jesus answered them, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40).



When the disciples told Jesus there were Greeks as well as Jews in the crowd, Jesus said that the time had come for him to glorify his Father. He then predicted his own death in a prayer. As he prayed to his Father in heaven, he shared his concerns over what was to come, but he also displayed trust in his Father's plan, praying, "Father, glorify your name!"

Suddenly, a voice from heaven said, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). The people in the crowd heard God the Father answer his Son. Some thought it was thunder, while others believed an angel had spoken to Jesus.

As the crowd approached Jerusalem, the temple came into full view. When Jesus saw it, he wept over the city. He wept over how the people didn't realize he had come to bring them peace. He then predicted that the city would one day be destroyed—that every stone would be torn apart—because the people rejected his coming.

As the great procession entered Jerusalem, the whole city was excited and wondered who Jesus was. The crowd following Jesus identified him as Jesus the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.

The next day, Jesus returned to the temple. Just as he had done at the start of his ministry, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers. He did this because the temple was to be a place of prayer, rather than a place to sell goods and steal from others.

At the same temple, blind and lame people approached Jesus and he healed them. Children began shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David," which means, "Hooray! Our king has come!" When the chief priests and the scribes saw and heard what was happening, they grew angrier and complained to Jesus. But Jesus corrected them and reminded them that even infants and children were called to praise the Lord. In doing so, Jesus was claiming to be God. At the end of the day, Jesus left Jerusalem and returned to Bethany for the night.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the people following Jesus, and why did so many want to see him?
2. Why were the religious rulers upset with Jesus?
3. Why were the children shouting Hosanna to Jesus?
4. Why didn't the religious rulers like what the children were shouting?

Answers: (1) Word of Jesus's miracles, especially his raising of Lazarus from the dead, spread far and wide. (2) The religious rulers were afraid the people would make Jesus their king and start a rebellion against Rome, and cause them to lose their power. (3) Even the children were excited to see Jesus heal the sick and give sight to the blind. (4) The children were saying that Jesus was the promised King in the line of David.

