

Friston Baptist Church

Mill Road, Friston, Saxmundham, IP17 1PH

Easter 2007

To our neighbours near the church in Friston village and our neighbours near where we individually live.

Dear neighbours,

Jesus spent about three years going around teaching and healing; but an incredible amount was crammed into the last week or two of his earthly life.

We read that, as he set out on the last journey, Jesus “stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9.51). As He came within 25 miles of that city He began to explain to His disciples a little of what was going to happen.

“Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

“And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.” (Luke 18. 31-34)

The gospel according to Luke has 24 chapters. That is, a quarter of the whole gospel is taken up with these last few days. May I encourage you to pick up your Bible (we have some to give away, if you like) and read those chapters from 18 to 24.

It is the same with the gospel according to Matthew. He picks up on the same incident at Matthew 20 verses 17-19. Matthew has 28 chapters. Because some of his latest chapters are among his longest, the proportion of actual writing is about the same. Because his gospel is longer, his record of that period is also longer.

Then there is the gospel according to Mark. He again picks up the same event at Mark 10 verses 32-34. He has 16 chapters.

The gospel according to John is put together rather differently. The events from chapter 11 onwards cover the time when Jesus was in and around Jerusalem. John has 21 chapters; which is to say that about half the gospel is taken up with the events of those days, as the life of Jesus on earth came to a climax in His death, resurrection and ascension.

May I encourage you, further, not only to read what I suggested in Luke but to build on that by reading in Matthew, Mark and John the chapters outlined above. You will unearth many interesting things.

It is because so much happened in that last week of Jesus' life that many churches have, down the years, held services every day of the week. The idea being that it was the only way to cover all the events with the public reading from the Bible of what took place, together with helpful explanation.

We don't do that, though we do have a Good Friday service at 6.30pm as well as on Easter Sunday. Every Sunday morning we read consecutively through the gospels, followed by an explanation in the sermon; though we will pause, wherever we have reached, and pick out some theme concerning the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ at Easter.

Among all the things that happened at that time, I choose one to bring before you now. The time Jesus spent praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26. 36-56; Mark 14. 32-52; Luke 22. 39-53; John 18. 1-14). It is difficult to tell from the language of Luke 22.44 "And being in an agony he (Jesus) prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" whether the sweat poured off him like blood or whether there was more to it than that. That it really was sweating blood.

My thinking point is this – if the preparation for Calvary was so intensely agonizing, what must the reality of Calvary have been? Sin causes insensitivity. How sensitive the pure sinless body of the Lord Jesus would have been to all the agonies of body, mind and soul laid on Him there!

Three hours of Jesus' hanging on the cross at Calvary was hidden by thick darkness so that the intensity of the suffering Saviour was hidden from prying eyes. There and then He bore in His sinless body all the sins of all His people and made an atonement for them. In truth, we see the fulfilment of the words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3.16).

Our weekly services are at 1045hrs on Sunday mornings, 1400hrs on Sunday afternoons, and 1930hrs Tuesday evenings. You are welcome to them all. Good Friday at 1830hrs and Easter Sunday 1045 and 1400hrs.

Our website, which we invite you to visit, is www.fristonbaptistsuffolk.org.uk. It has a selection of audio sermons for downloading and other interesting things. For your interest I have also enclosed a leaflet entitled, "He showed Himself alive" (Acts 1.3).

Yours sincerely,