

16. Luke 22:1 - 23:56



THE PASSION NARRATIVE : Luke 22:1 - 23:56

Luke 22:1-2

(Mark 14:1-2)

Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people.

Originally Passover was a pastoral festival celebrated on the night of the first full moon after the spring equinox. The finest year-old lamb from the previous spring was offered in sacrifice to God by way of a prayer for a good season of new lambs. It took only a small step to associate the festival with God's choice of Israel as his 'flock'.

Luke is preparing us for the new Passover Lamb, for the death of the new first-born, for our redemption from all that enslaves us, and for the new covenant that God will make with us as we journey towards the fullness of the promise.

Egypt saw itself, and with reason, as the mightiest nation on the earth. In their religious consciousness, they identified themselves as the first-born and favourite of the gods.

In their liturgical reliving of the Exodus, the people of Israel re-enacted God's rejection of the Egyptians, their oppressors. Israel is God's first-born, not Egypt. Through the mighty action of God, the Israelites avoided the terrible catastrophes that Egypt brought upon itself by its arrogance. They were passed over (hence the name 'Passover') and redeemed from Egypt to begin their journey to the Promised Land.

The slain lamb was called the 'Passover' (πάσχα). Its blood was poured out upon the ground, symbolising the return of its life to God, and its body was eaten in a communal meal, celebrating the familiarity of the people with their God.

The festival of Unleavened Bread (ἄζύμος) was originally an agricultural feast celebrating the beginning of the grain harvest (Exodus 34:18). It too was a spring festival, beginning with the first full moon after the spring equinox – the 15th Nisan according to the Jewish practice of beginning the day at sunset. The celebrations went for a week (Exodus 12:15-18). At some time prior to our historical records, it was combined with the feast of Passover.

Luke 22:3-6 (Mark 14:10-11)

Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

Here we see what it meant for Jesus to share to the full the weakness of our human condition. Love cannot force entry. Love cannot control. Love cannot ensure success. Love can only love and wait for the free response which brings about communion. If love is rejected there is nothing love can do except to keep loving.

Luke 22:7-13

(Mark 14:12-16)

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.” They asked him, “Where do you want us to make preparations for it?” “Listen,” he said to them, “when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.” So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

John tells us that this meal took place on the evening before the Passover (see John 13:1). Jesus gave it Passover significance.

Luke 22:14 The Last Supper

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him.



Luke 22:15-18

Jesus said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” (Mark 14:25)

Jesus thanks God, recalling, according to the traditional liturgy of the feast, God’s wonderful redemption of their ancestors from Egypt. They then drink the first cup, the so-called kiddush, which opens the feast and sets it aside as sacred. The traditional Jewish ceremony, the seder, begins.

Luke 22:19-20

(Mark 14:22-24)

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, *which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*” (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for *you* is the new covenant in my blood.”

The Passover is now being fulfilled; the kingdom of God is finally present (see 22:18). There is no mention of a lamb!

‘The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

When they take and eat this bread, he wants them to know that it is his body they are taking. It is his whole person that he is giving, everything he is and everything he has done in sharing the human condition: his weakness, his brokenness, his dying — and all as a gift of love to nourish their hearts and their minds, their bodies and their souls.

When they take the wine this night and drink it, he wants them to know that it is his life poured out for them. It is his Spirit that they are drinking into their thirsty souls. Yes, his life is about to be taken from him, but he wants them to know that he is giving it for them as his final act of love. All he has left now is himself, and he is offering himself to them in love.

We know that Jesus' disciples celebrated this memorial meal on the first day of the week, the day on which God began his new act of creation, the day of the resurrection of Jesus. They celebrated this memorial meal as a statement of their belief in his presence among them, sustaining and nourishing them to carry on his mission in the world (1 Corinthians 10:16-22; 11:17-34; Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11; 27:35).

Luke 22:21-23 (Mark 14:18-21)

But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!” Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this.

Luke 22:24-27 (Mark 10:41-45)

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Luke 22:28-30

“You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:28)

Luke 22:31-34 (compare Mark 14:29-31)

‘Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.’

And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!’ Jesus said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.’

Peter will deny Jesus. However, sustained by Jesus' prayer and by his faith in the one he truly loved, Peter will repent and go on to 'strengthen his brothers'.

Some of the ways in which Peter in fact strengthened the Christian community in the days after Jesus' death are recorded by Luke. He is mentioned as a significant witness to the Resurrection (Luke 24:34). He took the initiative in reconstituting the Twelve after the death of Judas (Acts 1:15-26). He played a leading role at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) and in the Jerusalem church (Acts 1-5). He visited converts in Samaria, Lydda and Joppa (Acts 8-9), and he began the outreach to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11). He also played a significant role in the Jerusalem Assembly (Acts 15:7-11).

Luke 22:35-38

He said to them, “When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “No, not a thing.” He said to them, “But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.

For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was counted among the lawless’ (Isaiah 53:12); and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.”

They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.”

He replied, “It is enough.” (‘leave it!’)

The apostles are not ready yet to grasp Jesus’ message.

Ephesians 6:10-18

‘Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil ... so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.’

Luke 22:39-42

(Mark 14:26, 32-36)

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37); and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial” (Luke 11:4). Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.”



Though Luke chooses to accent Jesus' serenity rather than his human anguish, he portrays the awful nature of the struggle in which Jesus was engaged.

We should reflect on the words of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: 'In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered' (Hebrews 5:7-8; see 4:15).

Luke 22:43-44

[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]

Luke 22:45-46

(Mark 14:37-38)

When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”



Luke 22:47-48

(Mark 14:43-45)

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve (Luke 6:13), was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss (φιλησαι) him; but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?”



Luke 22:49-53

(Mark 14:46-52)

When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed.

The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:63-65

(Mark 14:65)

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” They kept heaping many other insults on him.



Luke 22:66-71

(Mark 14:55-64)

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.” He replied, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” (Psalm 110:1)

All of them asked, “Are you, then, the Son of God?” (Davidic Messiah)
He said to them, “You say that I am.” Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!”

Luke uses this dramatic confrontation between Jesus and the highest court of Judaism to assert his faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah – not according to any and every understanding of that term, but precisely because of his relationship to God as Son, and because of the mission given him by God as the ‘Son of Man’.

Thessalonians 2:14-16

‘For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators
of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea,
for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots
as they did from the Jews,
who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets,
and drove us out.
They displease God .’

Jesus' Roman Trial I : Luke 23:1-5 (Mark 15:1-3)

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate (see 1 Timothy 6:13). They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the **Messiah, a king**.” Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

He answered, “You say so.”

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “**I find no basis** for an accusation against this man.” But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.”

Compare the accusations brought against Paul in Acts.

Acts 16:20; 17:6-7; 21:28; 23:5).

Luke 23:6-12 (compare Psalm 2)

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time (see Luke 9:7-9), because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer.

The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

‘In this city, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed’ (Acts 4:27).

Jesus' Roman Trial II : Luke 23:13-21 (Mark 15:6-13)

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, 'You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged ('fustigatio - whip lashing as a warning) and release him.' Then they all shouted out together, 'Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!' (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.)

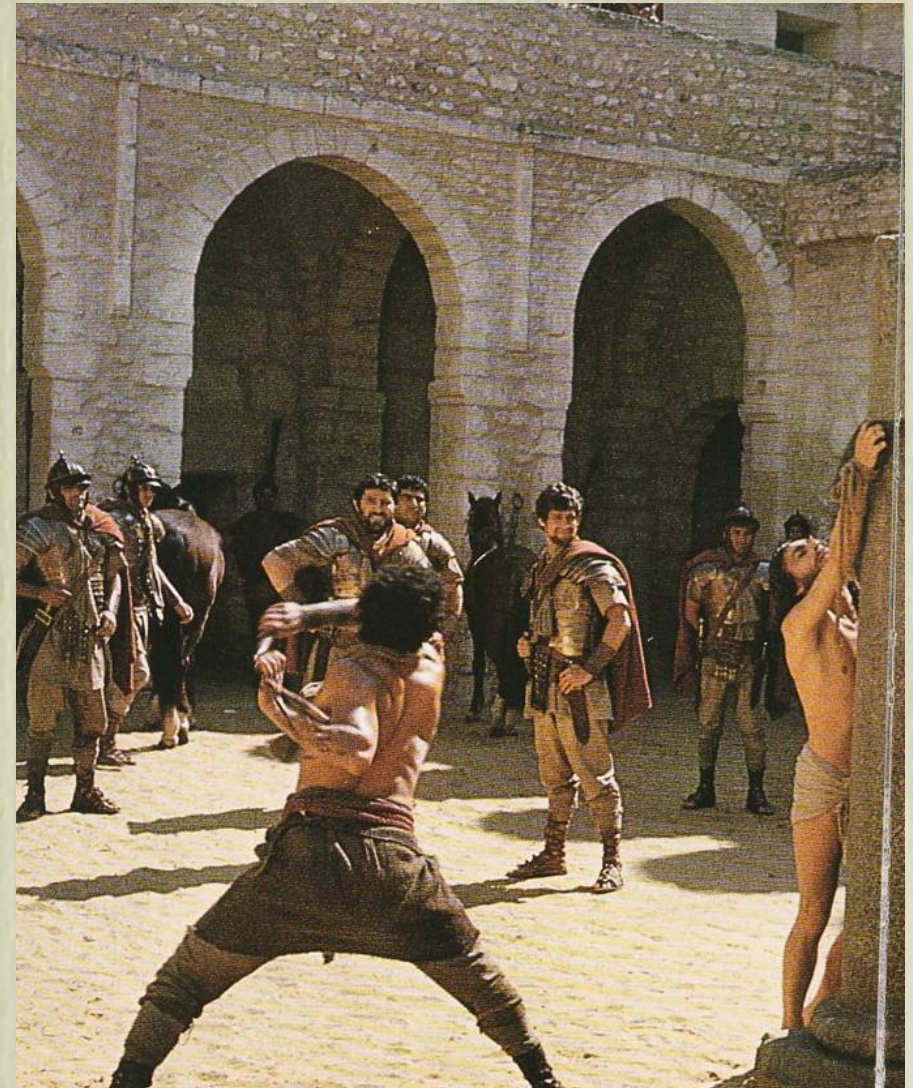
Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!"

Luke 23:22-25

(Mark 15:14-15)

A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.” But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed.

So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.



Luke 23:26

(Mark 15:21)

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene (Libya) , who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross (σταυρός) on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.



Luke 23:27-32

A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him (Zechariah 12:10-11). But Jesus turned to them and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed” (see Isaiah 54:1). Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us”; and to the hills, “Cover us” (Hosea 10:8). For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. (Mark 15:27).

Luke 23:33

(Mark 15:22)

When they came to the place
that is called The Skull ('calvaria'),
they crucified Jesus there
with the criminals,
one on his right and one on his left.



Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them;
for they do not know what they are doing.'

Then they cast lots to share out his clothing. (Mark 15:24)

'They divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my robe they cast lots' (Psalm 22:18).

Luke 23:35-38

(Mark 15:29-32)

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself (Luke 9:24) if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” *The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”* There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”



Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum (John 19:19)

Luke 23:39-41

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”

Luke 23:42-43



Then he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Luke 23:44-45

(Mark 15:33)

It was now about noon, and darkness (see Luke 22:53)
came over the whole earth until mid-afternoon,
while the sun's light failed.

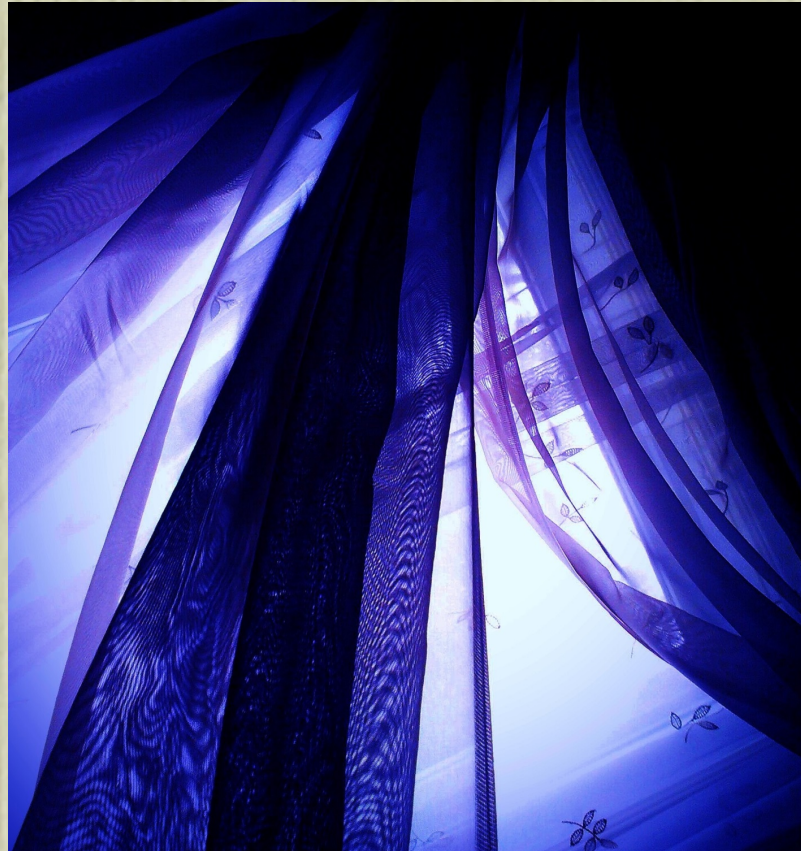
Virgil says that the sun “expressed mercy for Rome when Caesar was killed; he hid his shining head in gloom and the impious age feared eternal night” (Georgics 1.468).

‘On that day, says the Lord God, the sun will set at midday,
and the light will grow dark upon the land at daytime’ (Amos 8:9).

Luke 23:45

(Mark 15:38)

and the curtain of the temple was torn in two (Hebrews 10:19-20).



Luke 23:46

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed forth his spirit. (Mark 15:37)

‘In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me suffer shame;
in your justice set me free.

Hasten to hear me; come quickly to rescue me.

Be a fortress where I can find refuge,

a stronghold to save me;

for indeed you are my rock and my fortress;

for the sake of your name lead me and guide me;

disentangle me from the net that tightens around me,

for you are my defence.

Into your hands I commit my spirit.

You have redeemed me, Lord, faithful God’(Psalm 31:1-5).

Luke 23:47-49

(Mark 15:39-41)

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this was a just man.”

And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. (repenting)

But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee (Luke 8:1-3), stood at a distance, watching these things. (women: Matthew 27:55)

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. *Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*