

FROM THE PULPIT

Jesus offers a bridge to God

By Brad Bryant

FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

We've just celebrated "Holy Week" — a time to help us think about the last week that Jesus spent on Earth as a mortal human.

According to Bible records, that week's busy schedule included:

▶ Jesus' "Palm Sunday" triumphal entry into Jerusalem, into the political and religious "headquarters" of the time, confronting the misteachings of the day.

▶ Jesus "cleansing" the Jerusalem Temple;

▶ Jesus teaching the people about sacrificial giving, the greatest commandment, and signs of the end times;

▶ Jesus sharing the "Passover" meal with His disciples, setting the example for our "Communion" or "Lord's Supper" experience today;

▶ Jesus and the Apostles retiring to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus offered that most powerful prayer: Looking ahead toward his coming arrest, and personal death — "... if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew

26:39 NIV);

▶ His subsequent betrayal, arrest, trials and sentencing, leading up to the "Good Friday" crucifixion.

These are just a few of the many events during Jesus' last mortal week.

His dead body was taken down from the cross, wrapped, and stored in the garden tomb, because Friday evening was the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, and they didn't have time to make the final "burial" arrangements until after the Sabbath period was over.

Along came Sunday morning — the first day of the new week, and time for His family and friends to "finish" preparing Jesus for burial. We know from the Scriptures of Mary, Peter and John, as they found the empty tomb ... the angel message ... the missing body ... We know today of His resurrection — opening a new chapter in the relationship between God and his human children.

The risen Messiah had now conquered death, by paying the sacrificial price for my sins and yours. Jesus, through His sacrifice, had built a bridge between your life, and God the Father — one that never existed

before. When Adam and Eve chose sin, rather than to follow God's two commandments in the garden, the "natural consequence" that God imposed was "you will die." And they did! Death became a part of our "natural" world from that point. But Jesus now had created a bridge between our self-centered, sinful world, and the God who created us in His image, and proclaimed us "Good" (Genesis 1:31 NIV).

God, in his creative genius, designed and created each of us to be unique, gifted, and invited us to find and cross that bridge back to relationship with the Father. The worth of all people is great in the sight of God, and He does not want anyone to be separated from Him.

This mortal life, for each of us, is a period of probation, where we have been given the chance to learn how to build relationships with each other, to study and learn about God, to experience good and evil and to choose, through daily decisions, whether to align our lives with good or evil. The bridge that Christ built is open to everyone, but only those who choose to cross it will find the

blessings that await them. God designed you to live with Him forever — but He will not force that upon you. He stands on the other side of the bridge, inviting you to make that journey by responding to the life and ministry of His son, Jesus, to be baptized in His name, and to be part of His family, in this life and beyond. Now is your time for preparation and choosing. What will YOU do with the resurrected Jesus?

Your friends and neighbors, who are local members of the worldwide Community of Christ, have committed our lives to proclaiming Jesus Christ as the living Son of God. We work together in His name, promoting communities where the spiritual gifts of Joy, Hope, Love and Peace can be experienced by all who seek them. If you want to know Jesus better, or to be introduced for the first time, we invite you to journey with us.

Working together for His purposes, we support each other in our ongoing relationships, life experiences, and in service to our communities and world.

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Church finds religious link in reality television

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Reality shows like "Fear Factor," "Joe Millionaire" and "The Bachelorette" have been dubbed by many as the absolute low of television fads. But one church believes their themes are perfect to express the teachings of the Bible.

Jerry Chapman, pastor at Capstone Community Church in Anderson, S.C., and a die-hard fan of "American Idol," got the idea to combine the popularity of reality TV and the words of God into a series of sermons entitled "Reality TV? The Truth Challenge." He believes it can change the way we look at the stories of Jesus Christ.

"One of the goals of the church is to be culturally relevant," said Chapman, "and

amazingly, these sermons have been well received. For instance, behind 'Fear Factor' prize, he expected to tell the story of Samaritan women on the road who helped the blind man. 'Joe Millionaire' is a story of love and love. The series with Chapman Jesus told we larger truth. people to look in terms of but through eyes. Then, the story could similar quarrel what they might

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