

JANUARY-APRIL 2026



# New Daylight

Sustaining your daily journey with the Bible



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Resurrection hope CATHERINE WILLIAMS

Zechariah AMY BOUCHER PYE

Ephesians 3–4 ROLAND RIEM

# New Daylight

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Edited by **Gordon Giles**

**January–April 2026**

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## **Suggestions for using *New Daylight***

Find a regular time and place, if possible, where you can read and pray undisturbed. Before you begin, take time to be still and perhaps use the prayer of BRF Ministries on page 6. Then read the Bible passage slowly (try reading it aloud if you find it overfamiliar), followed by the comment. You can also use *New Daylight* for group study and discussion, if you prefer.

The prayer or point for reflection can be a starting point for your own meditation and prayer. Many people like to keep a journal to record their thoughts about a Bible passage and items for prayer. In *New Daylight* we also note the Sundays and some special festivals from the church calendar, to keep in step with the Christian year.

## ***New Daylight* and the Bible**

*New Daylight* contributors use a range of Bible versions, and you will find a list of the versions used opposite. You are welcome to use your own preferred version alongside the passage printed in the notes. This can be particularly helpful if the Bible text has been abridged.

*New Daylight* affirms that the whole of the Bible is God's revelation to us, and we should read, reflect on and learn from every part of both Old and New Testaments. Usually the printed comment presents a straightforward 'thought for the day', but sometimes it may also raise questions rather than simply providing answers, as we wrestle with some of the more difficult passages of scripture.

*New Daylight* is also available in a deluxe edition (larger format). Visit your local Christian bookshop or BRF's online shop [brfonline.org.uk](http://brfonline.org.uk). To obtain an audio version for the blind or partially sighted, contact Torch Trust for the Blind, Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market Harborough LE16 9HL; +44 (0)1858 438260; [info@torchtrust.org](mailto:info@torchtrust.org).

## **Comment on *New Daylight***

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## Writers in this issue

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**Tony Horsfall** is an author, retreat leader and mentor. Among his many books published with BRF Ministries are *Attentive to God*, *Knowing You*, *Jesus*, *Working from a Place of Rest*, *Rhythms of Grace* and *Grief Notes*.

**Martin Leckebusch** worked in IT for 37 years before retiring to spend more time writing. He lives in Gloucester, is an elder at a Baptist church, and is the author of over 500 published hymn texts.

**Roland Riem** is vice-dean of Winchester Cathedral, where he is involved in the greening of the cathedral and the development of its interpretation for visitors.

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**Catherine Williams** is an Anglican priest working as a spiritual director and freelance writer. She is the lead voice on the Church of England's *Daily Prayer* and *Time to Pray* apps.

## Gordon Giles writes...



Welcome to a new year and a new edition of *New Daylight*. We begin – as we always do – in the Christmas season and traverse the three peaks of Epiphany and the slopes of Lent before descending to the depths of Holy Week, and are then raised up through Easter Week and beyond.

The three ‘peaks’ of Epiphany are the three miracles of revealing – the *tribus miraculum* – the visit of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus and the changing of water into wine, the first of Jesus’ miracles, according to John. This undulating journey connects Christmas with Easter in a way that secular or commercial enterprises do not realise or recognise.

Or do they? In December 2024 Aldi supermarkets started selling a ‘Chreaster Egg’. These chocolate eggs inevitably drew media attention. Ecclesiastical eyebrows were raised, and I even tried one in front of TV cameras. So yes, dear reader, I am now a media chocolate taster! I was even quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, a publication with an international reach almost as great as *New Daylight*...

Joking aside, the fuss was all about pairing Christmas with Easter. This is hardly original or new, and is an extension of the chocolatisation of Christianity (think of Valentine’s Day and Halloween as well as Easter). For the wood of the manger is the wood of the cross; one cannot have one without the other, and each only makes sense, theologically, redemptively and pastorally, alongside the other. The Word made flesh was born to die, and rise again for our justification. Cover it in chocolate if you must, but the bittersweet centre is the loving mercy of God, incarnate at Christmas, revealed at Epiphany and raised twice in Holy Week: first on the cross and secondly from the empty tomb.

This is our faith and the message to be proclaimed to the world. St Francis may have said, ‘Preach the gospel. If necessary, use words.’ In today’s religiously illiterate culture we might say, ‘Preach the gospel. If necessary, use chocolate.’

As you read this edition of *New Daylight*, travel from Christmas to Easter. Taste the journey, and remember that Easter eggs point us backwards to Christmas too.

GORDON GILES

# The prayer of BRF Ministries

*Faithful God,  
thank you for growing BRF  
from small beginnings  
into the worldwide family of BRF Ministries.  
We rejoice as young and old  
discover you through your word  
and grow daily in faith and love.  
Keep us humble in your service,  
ambitious for your glory  
and open to new opportunities.  
For your name's sake,  
Amen.*

## **'It is such a joy to be part of this amazing project'**

As part of our BRF Resources ministry, we're raising funds to give away copies of Bible reading notes and other resources to those who aren't able to access them any other way, working with food banks and chaplaincy services, in prisons, hospitals and care homes.

*'This very generous gift will be hugely appreciated, and truly bless each recipient... Bless you for your kindness.'*

*'We would like to send our enormous thanks to all involved. Your generosity will have a significant impact and will help us to continue to provide support to local people in crisis, and for this we cannot thank you enough.'*

If you've enjoyed and benefited from our resources, would you consider paying it forward to enable others to do so too?

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## Resurrection hope: John 11—12



John 11—12 capture the heart of Jesus' mission and show us some of his most dramatic moments. They are full of emotion: grief, love, anger, hope, envy and sacrifice. Through them we see that Jesus has power over life and death, but also is willing to give up his own life for us. You may find it helpful to read

through both chapters in full before we begin.

In John 11 we engage with the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In the exchanges that Jesus has with the sisters of Lazarus, we catch a glimpse both of his humanity and his divinity. Jesus weeps with Mary for his friend and tells Martha: 'I am the resurrection and the life.' In heart-breaking situations, Jesus weeps with us and promises to bring new life from the most wretched of places. We can trust Jesus to have both human compassion and divine authority. We see the power of God at work bringing new life from death.

The story is a trailer for the events of Good Friday and Easter Day. God's power extends over all things, even death itself. We are invited to trust that with God no situation is hopeless, and there is nothing that cannot be redeemed.

In John 12 we move from the miracle of new life to the mystery of sacrifice. Mary anoints Jesus with expensive perfume – another precursor for the moment when the body of Jesus will lie in the tomb. Such extravagant love points to the sacrifice that Jesus will make when he lays down his life for us.

Next, we follow Jesus on his journey into Jerusalem as he walks the way of the Messiah. Those who are longing to meet him come close and find that the truest way to see Jesus is to look to the cross, finding beyond its horrors love and life transformed.

Exploring these chapters takes on a deeper significance as we engage with them during this Easter season. Viewed through the lens of Jesus' death and resurrection we see afresh Jesus' power over life and death and the significance of his sacrifice. As we walk this week with Jesus, we are invited to consider our faith in the light of his loving words and actions.

## Disrupted plans

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha... So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

How do you react when plans are changed or disrupted? Changing tack requires much effort and some people find this very difficult. Others sit light to events, going with the flow, embracing sudden surprising upheavals with curiosity and a sense of adventure. I have been in the first camp for much of my life, needing to plan thoroughly and getting stressed when plans are derailed. More recently I have been working at letting go of control and being open to what emerges. God can work in amazing and brilliant ways when we leave outcomes open, trusting God to act for good.

Despite hearing the message from the sisters that the friend he loves is ill, Jesus does not rush to Bethany to be with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. He seems certain that Lazarus' illness will not lead to death; he says as much to the disciples. But he also seems to know that somehow God will be revealed through this event. Later in this chapter, when Jesus hears that Lazarus has died, he says he is glad that he did not rush to see him because an occasion for deeper belief has opened up. Jesus recognises the disaster of his friend's death as an opportunity for the glory of God to be revealed. As we will see later this week, Jesus is deeply moved by the death of Lazarus. At the same time, he holds on to hope that something good will emerge. The story of Lazarus, with its echoes of Easter, encourages us to keep trusting in God. Amid the harsh realities of disrupted plans, grief and disaster awaits new life. Death does not have the last word for the Lord of Life.

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*Lord, help me to trust in your promise of new life. Amen.*

CATHERINE WILLIAMS

The Second Sunday of Easter 117

# I Am

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away... When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

Jesus suggests that the death of Lazarus opens the way for deeper belief in God. Martha's response to Jesus confirms this. Though heartbroken at her brother's death, Martha has faith that Lazarus will rise at the resurrection of the dead at the end of earthly time and that God will respond positively to Jesus' requests now. She has hope for the future and a deep longing for God to act in the present.

Responding to Martha, Jesus makes an astonishing declaration: 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Jesus has spoken several 'I am' statements already: 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12); 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35); and (the one that got everyone really riled) 'Before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:58), suggesting that he is the God of Israel, the great I AM.

Announcing himself as the resurrection and the life encourages even greater faith from Martha. She boldly declares Jesus to be the Messiah. Soon we will see Jesus demonstrate life-giving power in his interaction with Lazarus. It will be a spoiler alert for what is to come fully in Jesus' death and resurrection. Martha's deep relationship with Jesus means that even amid her grief and disappointment she is filled with hope and belief in God's power to act.

When our lives are rocked by loss, it can be helpful to ponder how we are experiencing God amid the challenges we are facing. Can we hold on to the hope that the future is God-shaped? Jesus walks with us, declaring himself to be the one who brings new life, encouraging us to embrace deeper faith and trust.

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*'Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son; endless is the vict'ry  
thou o'er death hast won' (Edmond Budry, 1854–1932). Amen.*

CATHERINE WILLIAMS

## Where were you?

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus saw her weeping... he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’ But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?’

When challenging things happen to us – accidents, illness, the death of loved ones, losses or catastrophes – it is not unusual to question God: ‘Where were you? Why didn’t you look out for me? Why did you allow this to happen? We thought you loved us!’ People have been questioning God since time began, accusing God of failure, betrayal and hard-heartedness: holding God to account.

Martha did it in the passage yesterday. Mary does it again today. If only Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. There are no easy answers, but expressions of anger and disappointment are healthy. God knows what we think and feel and the heartfelt words we express keep our relationship with God lively and honest.

Jesus gives Mary no answer. There is no apology for not coming sooner. Instead, he turns his attention to Lazarus, asking to see his grave. There, in solidarity with the sisters and those gathered to mourn, Jesus weeps. There is much that we do not know about death, but we do know that in Jesus, God weeps with us, feeling the pain of loss. The Lord who cries is the same Lord who resurrects. The Lord who feels our pain is the same Lord who brings new life out of deadly situations. Death and loss are not the end of our story, they are a place through which we are all called to journey on the way to eternity. As we experience death and loss Jesus is alongside weeping with us, waiting to call us into a new future with him.

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*‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me’ (Psalm 23:4a, ESV).*

## Release

Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me...’ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

The trappings of death bind us tightly. Loss and grief take us into airless places where we struggle to breathe and where we are not sure which way to turn. The world we know shrinks and turns in on itself like a tomb. The death of someone we love can do this to us. But other losses, too, tie our hands and hearts, forcing us into a shape and space from which it seems hard to escape.

Jesus asks for the tomb of Lazarus to be opened. Martha expects the stench of decay to come flooding out but the essential ‘aliveness’ of Jesus – the Lord of life – calls Lazarus back from the grave and out into the fresh air of new life. Lazarus is still wearing the winding cloths which bind him tightly. Jesus asks his family and friends to take these grave clothes from him, releasing him to live again.

As Christians, we are called to witness to new life in Jesus. The grave is not the end but the gateway to a spacious new way of living beyond anything we can imagine. During our time on earth, Jesus is always calling us into new life, new ways of seeing and being that bring life and joy to ourselves and others. Jesus calls us out of a constricted existence into expansive life in all its fullness. Let us resolve to unbind each other from the deadly things that trap us and encourage God’s new life to flow through us.

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*Lord, roll away the stone and release me into new life. Amen.*

CATHERINE WILLIAMS

## Fragrant devotion

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?'

Bethany is Jesus' happy place. This family home, just outside Jerusalem, is a haven where he can rest and renew his energy and resolve. For Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Jesus has become incredibly special. He has restored Lazarus to life. The siblings throw a celebratory party for Jesus. Imagine this home, filled with warmth, laughter and the love of friends, brought together by God who makes the impossible possible, bringing triumph from tragedy.

Martha offers her gift of hospitality, and Mary anoints Jesus' feet with the most expensive, exquisite perfume money can buy. What an act of devotion! Mary is anointing the anointed one – the Christ. Imagine the sweet fragrance filling the house. Breathe in the heady, delicious scent. The moment is intense and intimate. As Mary breaks open the jar and pours out its rich and costly contents, Jesus pours out himself for everyone. The fragrant, loving sacrifice of Christ fills the whole world.

Sadly, there are other odours at Bethany. Just below the surface, in the mounting tension, is the scent of something rotten and deadly. Can you smell it? Judas is trying to grab the moral high ground, asking why the perfume was wasted on Jesus when the money could have been given to the poor. Is he envious? Does he long to anoint the feet of Jesus too but fears the intimacy? The scent of betrayal and untimely death is lingering in the shadows waiting to pounce.

We know how the story plays out and which scent ultimately prevails. As we celebrate the resurrection, on this day in Eastertide, what is the fragrance of your response to Jesus?

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*May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place. Amen.*

## In hindsight

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord – the King of Israel!’ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: ‘Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!’ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing! Confusion, bewilderment and frustration may happen in the present, but looking back we see patterns emerging and make sense of events. ‘Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards,’ wrote the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55). The disciples only put the jigsaw together after the death and resurrection of Jesus. At the time they were caught up in living the events.

And such events! Crowds waving palm branches, shouting welcome to the king of Israel, who they hoped would liberate them from the Romans. ‘Hosanna!’ they cry, ‘Save us, Jesus!’ A great moment of drama unites the onlookers. Soon they will be united in condemning Jesus and baying for his blood. How quickly a crowd can turn.

Jesus comes into Jerusalem humbly on a young donkey. It is not the regal entry of a king or conqueror. He comes from the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley and through the Golden Gate in the eastern wall. This way into the city is also called the Gate of Mercy. It is the gate through which the Messiah is expected to enter the temple. Jesus is re-enacting the prophecy from Zechariah, but it is only later that people will make the connections.

As you look back over your journey of faith, can you see how God has been preparing you to welcome Jesus? How and where did you first encounter him, and who is he for you now? What is your cry as you welcome the risen Christ today?

---

*‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ (Psalm 118:26, NIV).*

CATHERINE WILLIAMS

## Seeing Jesus

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’... Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’

Why do the Greek visitors to Jerusalem wish to see Jesus? With the miracles, healings, confrontations with the religious authorities, and raising of Lazarus, Jesus is becoming a celebrity. No wonder they want to see him. I want to see this Jesus too! Do you?

Jesus responds by announcing his destiny. His hour has come, and he illustrates this with a picture from the natural world. Abundant life from death. This is the principle that God has hard-wired into the universe. When death leads to life, God is revealed.

So, to see Jesus truly and to understand who he is, the visitors to Jerusalem, the disciples and we should look to the cross. Dying for each of us, Jesus draws us to himself and the glory of God is fully revealed. In our celebrity culture, fame, status, honour and wealth matter most. But God’s glory is seen in defeat, humiliation, servanthood and self-sacrifice. It is this way of dying and living that bears fruit.

Seeing Jesus, then, is not a spectator sport, like royal watching or celebrity hunting. Seeing Jesus is a way to follow, a truth to embody and a life to live. We see Jesus by letting go, emptying, dying to self and allowing new life to arise.

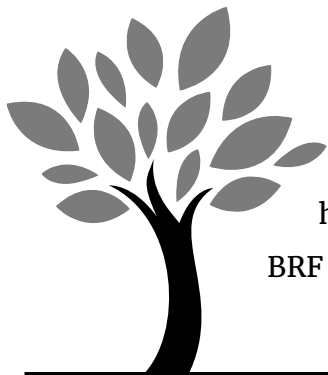
Our world is full of those who need to see Jesus. Do they see Jesus in us, his followers and friends who journey with him, walk in his footsteps and follow his way? This Eastertide who can you encourage to meet with the risen Lord, who has endured the cross, conquered death and longs to lead all into new life?

---

*‘He who on the cross a victim, for the world’s salvation bled,  
Jesus Christ, the King of glory, now is risen from the dead’  
(Christopher Wordsworth, 1807–85).*



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‘Thank you to all the wonderful writers who bring scriptures to life and make them relevant for us in the here and now.’

‘I just wanted to say how much I appreciate the notes for helping to keep me going with reading the Bible and shedding light on demanding passages.’

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**New Daylight** is edited by Gordon Giles, Canon Chancellor of Rochester Cathedral.

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