



**3 devotions
and a Bible
study from**

**32 DAYS WITH
CHRIST'S PASSION**

MARK ETTER

This series of three devotions and one Bible study are from the book "32 days with Christ's Passion which is currently available on Amazon as a print book and ebook for Kindle.

I hope that you will enjoy this gift to you and that it will be a blessing to you as you look at these three events in the passion of Christ. Be sure and look at the book "32 days with Abraham" which is also on Amazon.com.

03 What Did You Expect?

Luke 19:28-44

Context: On Palm Sunday, the Sunday before His death, Jesus rode into town fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. He rode down the hill on the eastern side of Jerusalem in full view of the city. Some cheered him and chanted their support. Others were appalled by this display.

We can pray for days and our loved one doesn't get any better. We can pray for a better job or for a better relationship with our spouse. Somehow, it doesn't seem to happen, either. In the end, we get mad at God because He didn't meet our expectations. Our problem is that our expectations are not built around the real Jesus. We try to fit Him into our mold instead of seeing the genuine article and letting Him bring the help that only He can give. The Prince of Peace can change our lives and bring real joy, but we need to let Him give the peace and healing that He has chosen for us. Like the people on Palm Sunday, we often want one kind of peace and Jesus wants to give us something far better and more lasting.

As Jesus comes down the hill toward Jerusalem, many cheered for a king. *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* (v.38) Pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem lined the road shouting and waving palm branches because the "Son of David" (Matt. 21:9) had come to town. They wanted a peace that would liberate them from the oppressive Romans. Their idea of peace would come when this powerful Messiah who cured the sick, fed the crowds and even raised the dead brought political victory to His people. The cheers, however, were temporary. Few understood the real peace that Jesus had come to bring. He had come to conquer sin and not conquer Rome.

The Pharisees thought that the crowd's words were blasphemy. They heard cheers for a Messiah and felt that Jesus was a fraud. The Pharisees jeered Him and commanded Him, *"Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"* (v.39) Their idea of peace was to get along with the Romans. A counterfeit Messiah coming into town with thousands of followers cheering Him as King might provoke a massacre by the Roman soldiers. Jesus' reply seems to point back to Habakkuk 2:11 where Habakkuk had prophesied that even the stones of Jerusalem would cry out about the sins of the people. The Jews would face judgment because of sin. Only a Savior from sin could bring real peace.

One would have expected Jesus to be beaming with pride at the cheers of the people on His arrival. Instead, we find tears. *"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it"* (v.41) After three years of teaching, the people still did not understand their need for a Savior. He would clear the den of thieves in God's house. He would be rejected by many who did not understand God's plan of salvation. Finally, He saw God's city and wept over the terrible judgment that would come to the city and the temple in just 40 years. Jerusalem and its people would be destroyed because they rejected the one who came to save them and bring God's peace.

Our expectations must be built on the real Jesus. There are still people who cheer for Jesus as the great teacher or healer, but who don't really feel that they need a savior to help them with their sin. There are also many who jeer at Jesus because they reject Him totally. These people feel that they need no God and no savior since they have technology and science. It is no wonder Jesus still sheds tears. The real Jesus is a friend who wants to heal and teach, but who came most of all to save. Caught in sin, we should cheer that we have a savior who has paid for our sin. We should cheer that He helps us overcome the sins that keep us in bondage. Jesus is our king because He

has freed us from our burdens and brings us to the temple in heaven where we can be close to our God.

The crowds were looking for another King David who would bring about a time of peace and prosperity for them. They wanted someone who would heal their illnesses and give them abundant bread. Yet, such a king would not last. Just as the first David died; a political messiah would die and his kingdom would only wither away. God sends a better Messiah who brings an eternal peace. Jesus is available to all generations. He is a king who has dealt with the human condition and not just its symptoms. He is a savior who has taken away the guilt and allows us to be in the presence of our God. He will always be with us to answer our prayers and to help us with the problems that the world brings our way. We should never try to make Jesus fill our mold. We need to take the time to see the real Jesus and let Him give us all the peace and blessings that can come only from Him.

- What reception would Jesus get if He came into your town today? What would the crowds want from Jesus? What would you be looking for?

18 Don't Give In To Evil

Mark 14:53-65

Context: From Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest, after making a stop at the home of Annas, the former High Priest (John 18). Here, the group would gather evidence for the trial before the full Sanhedrin.

Evil is all around us. It is a politician slinging dirt about a rival. It is a competitor who undercuts us in business. Our natural response is to be as crafty and mean-spirited as they are. We want to fight back by picketing a business or suing "the pants off" someone who has done us wrong. We forget that Satan's aim is to make good people just as evil as the world in which they live. He wants to bring us down to the level of those who hurt us. He wants us to become evil. The way to fight evil is not by being evil, but by being good in the face of evil. In His trial, Jesus followed this simple principle: When surrounded by evil, don't give in. He never became evil like those who wanted Him dead.

Sadly, you can expect evil to play dirty. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus did not get a fair trial. The outcome of the trial was determined long before the Sanhedrin had gathered. The problem was that Jesus was so good and holy that they were having trouble convicting Him. *"The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any."* (v.55) Jewish law required that two witnesses come forward and agree on their testimony if a man was to be found guilty. Many falsely testified against Jesus, but the Sanhedrin could not find two witnesses that could agree. If they couldn't find witnesses, the Sanhedrin would not be able to condemn Jesus under the "cloak" of justice. Evil would have to show itself for what it really was.

Usually, a person facing death will try to justify what they did. They will argue with witnesses and protest that they were innocent. Jesus kept quiet. The silence of Jesus must have been unnerving for the High Priest. *"Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?"* (v.60) Jesus had the luxury of keeping quiet and letting evil destroy itself. The false testimonies could not agree. No charge was going to stick. He had led a holy life healing the sick and teaching people about the Father. Jesus would not respond evil for evil. He would not panic. His silence spoke volumes about His innocence.

The high priest, sensing that the trial is falling apart, does the unthinkable. He calls on Jesus to incriminate Himself by asking "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" (v.61). Jesus is under solemn oath and must answer. He knows that the answer will seal His fate. Yet, He will no longer keep silent. He must tell the truth even if it condemns Him. *"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."* (v.62) To keep quiet when asked if He was the Christ might make it seem like this statement was just as false as the ones that came before it. Jesus boldly tells the truth invoking the Holy name of God, "I am". He proclaims that the Jewish leaders will see the truth that they have refused to acknowledge when Jesus comes to judge them all.

Jesus would have us give away worldly things so that we do not give away the heavenly things. Give away your money or your property rather than ruining your reputation. Let someone have the seat of power rather than scheming and you will show the ones who are evil or unworthy. You have a character and values that you have been given by God at a great price. Do not let evil bring you down to its level. Respond in love and let evil fall apart on its own. Live a life filled with love and mercy like Jesus so that people have difficulty finding a charge against you. People will remember your kindness and your honesty as evil shows itself for what it is. Good defeats evil. More evil for evil brings down everyone involved.

Instead of fighting evil, trust God to save you from evil. Jesus' answer to Caiaphas is telling. *"And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."* (v.62) Evil may think it has won, but God will triumph in the end. Everyone who condemned Jesus will face terror when they are judged on the last day by the Messiah who stands before them. God does judge evil in the proper time. Rather than becoming evil to fight evil, we would do well to live our lives in the purity and honesty of God. Let the Lord deal with those who would hurt us. We may face hardship at the hands of evil, but we need to be confident that the Lord protects His people.

Who do you often find yourself angry with? How does your anger make things worse? What could you do to bring peace and kindness to this relationship?

29 Darkness Turns to Joy

Matt. 28:1-10

Context: It was early on the Sunday morning that we now call Easter. Jesus' body had been hurriedly prepared on Friday before the Passover began. The women who came to finish the burial preparations had a surprise as their sorrow turn to joy.

The Saturday before Easter must have been the darkest day that the disciples ever experienced. For three years they had experienced the joy of following Jesus around the Holy Land. The miracles and messages that they had seen with Jesus must have been amazing. Now He was gone. He was taken from them in an instant when they were not ready and not prepared. At times, sadness abounds in our world as well. We lose our job or our parent gets sick. We have a child that is struggling or we just wonder how to pay the bills. Life gets tough and we wonder where to turn. The answer is, of course, to come to Jesus, but what does that mean? The answer is found in Easter and if we are not careful, we will miss it. The answer lies in three words: listen, obey and trust.

Those who listen to Jesus have hope. The angel is there to remind the women what Jesus has already told them. *"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and*

see the place where he lay." (v.6) Jesus told His disciples on several occasions that He was going to rise from the dead. If they had listened to Him, Saturday could have been different. They could have spent all of Saturday just waiting for Jesus to come to life. The day would have been one of expectation, not sorrow. The worry and doubt could have been replaced with hope and anticipation. Hope begins by knowing what God has promised and holding onto those promises. If we listen, God will always prepare us for what is to come. He will always help us be ready to make the most of the joy.

Having heard the message, the women were told to obey a task that God gave them. They were to go and tell the disciples. *"Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."* (v.7) When you have heard what Jesus says, you are to obey. It is only if the disciples go to Galilee that they will have the full future that the Lord has in mind for them. They will see Jesus later that day on Easter, but it will be in Galilee that the disciples will get the full instructions and understanding of what the resurrection means. Just standing in Jerusalem will not overcome their fears. Jesus wants them to participate in their future. Come to Galilee He says so that I can prepare you for what is to come.

The final step was one of trust. They were afraid. *"So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples."* They had expected to embalm the body of Jesus and had just heard the news that Jesus was alive. They needed to believe the message and trust the angel. Jesus had prepared them for the resurrection. An angel had told them it was true. Yet, they trembled as they let it all soak in. Slowly their doubts melted away and they believed what they had been told. It is faith that makes hope a reality. You have to believe what Jesus has said and trust Him with your life. Trust will overcome the doubts and bring joy for Jesus always keeps His promises.

God works in ways and at times we don't expect. Imagine the women's surprise when they arrived at the tomb and found the stone rolled away. As they looked in, they saw that God's plan of salvation was complete. They had been sorrowful and had not even thought about asking God for help. God will surprise you, too. In our dark days, He is working on behalf of his people even when they don't see Him working. He will heal their illnesses, help them find jobs and raise their kids. We may feel lucky when things work out, but luck doesn't bring us hope. Luck is fickle and can be good or bad. Only when we start depending on God to help can we get past the dark days. Only when we start expecting Him to be at the tomb or any other place where we have problems and questions will we have true hope and joy.

The stone was rolled back so that people could see for themselves what God had done for them. Sometimes, God rolls away the things that keep us from seeing His hand in our lives. He helps us see with eyes of faith what others miss. The change in the disciples when they saw the resurrection was amazing. The same disciples who had not believed the women (Luke 24:11) were declaring the resurrection to thousands on Pentecost. As Christians experience the power of the resurrection in their lives, it changes them. The sadness disappears and we start to rely on the Lord to help us in every aspect of life. When days are dark, we need to look to Jesus for a glorious Sunday. May we trust Him to help when we can see His work and when He works behind the scenes in our lives.

What is the darkest day that you have had recently? How does it help that Jesus is ready and able to help bring light and joy to your sorrow?

18 Don't give in to evil

Mark 14:53-65

Frank was having a great night with his friends. The group had gone to the movies and now were just hanging out at the mall. They went into the dime store and Tim challenged them all to try to shoplift a small item for fun. Frank was horrified and told them that he wouldn't do it. Not only that, he would rat them out as they left the store. His buddies grumbled and shot angry glances at him as they left the store empty handed. The man at the cash register stopped the group and thanked Frank and then pointed to the cameras on the ceiling. "You just saved your buddies some jail time."

Having been arrested, Jesus was brought to the house of Caiaphas so that the chief priests could find evidence and make their case against Jesus. The "trial" was filled with false evidence that didn't match. Finally, the high priest asks Jesus to incriminate himself in violation of Jewish law. Jesus is a model for all of what to do when evil attacks. He is quiet when the room is filled with lies but is not afraid to answer to the truth. Don't give in to evil, but keep your character so that the Lord can protect you.

What injustice do you see in our society?

Who was gathered together (14:53) and what was their purpose? (14:55)

What perversions of justice do you see in this "trial"? (14:55-61)

Why do you think Jesus remained silent as these accusations were made? (14:61)

How do you act when someone accuses you? Why do you feel compelled to react this way?

What does the high priest ask in order to force Jesus to speak? (14:61) How does Jesus answer? (14:62)

Jesus went on to say "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (14:62) What is Jesus predicting will happen on the last day? How will the High Priest feel then?

Why did the High Priest tear his clothes? (14:63) What did they feel was blasphemous about Jesus's statement?

What punishment did the chief priest pronounce on Jesus? (14:64) How did the Jews show their disdain for Jesus? (14:65)

How does Jesus' behavior differ from the behavior of the chief priests and elders? What can you learn from Jesus about dealing with those who oppose you?

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What injustice do you see in our society?

Answers will vary but may include a greedy politician or children who are starving. To start things off, you might want to bring newspaper articles and have the group discuss what makes the acts in the newspaper an injustice and how society should deal with it.

Who was gathered together (14:53) and what was their purpose? (14:55)

After a preliminary trial at Annas' home (mentioned only in John 18:12f), Jesus is taken to the home of Caiaphas, the current high priest. The language suggests that this was a trial by the Sanhedrin. The trial had two parts. First, they met at Caiaphas' home to gather evidence. Then they had an official trial in the temple as soon as it was daylight.

What perversions of justice do you see in this "trial"? (14:55-61)

Several actions were illegal according to Jewish law and custom. First, this trial was being held at night outside the normal court (14:53). Second, the group was gathering evidence and could not make their statements agree (14:56). Honest people would have concluded that Jesus was innocent. Third, the high priest asks a question meant to get Jesus to incriminate Himself (14:61) The Jews thought that they had Jesus in their control and they were determined to get rid of Him as soon as possible.

Why do you think Jesus remained silent as these accusations were made? (14:61)

There seemed to be no shortage of witnesses that night, but none could agree. Jesus wisely let the people make their conflicting accusations. It must have unnerved the chief priests to see Jesus quietly letting them destroy their own evidence. The Law of Moses decreed that no one could be put to death unless there were two or more witnesses. (Deut. 19:15) Jesus sat silently and let the Jews defeat themselves.

How do you act when someone accuses you? Why do you feel compelled to react this way?

Answers may vary, but many of us immediately proclaim our innocence. Explore the reactions of the group and ask why so many people act differently than Jesus. You might also explore what gave Jesus the confidence to remain quiet while the world seemed against Him and what makes us want to defend ourselves.

What does the high priest ask in order to force Jesus to speak? (14:61) How does Jesus answer? (14:62)

Caiaphas, the High Priest asks Jesus point blank if He is the Christ. Matthew's gospel (Matt. 26:63) tells us that Caiaphas had called Jesus to answer under oath this question so that Jesus was forced to answer according to Jewish law. It was an illegal move, but Caiaphas was not above skewing justice if he could get the evidence that he needed. Jesus had not bothered answering the false evidence, but to not answer this question would have seemed as if He was denying who He was. His answer, "I am" not only answers the question but points to Jesus' divinity for "I Am who I am" is what God called Himself before Moses in Exodus 3:14.

Jesus went on to say "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (14:62) What is Jesus predicting will happen on the last day? How will the High Priest feel then?

Jesus is referring to Daniel 7: 13-14 where "one like the Son of Man" was given authority over all the people. Jesus is predicting a great role reversal. In this courtroom, the Jews presume to judge Him, but on the last day, it will be Jesus who will judge them. Jesus is asserting His deity and presents a very scary picture for all those in the room. The high priest and the others should be shaking in their boots for they will face nothing but terror on the last day when they see an almighty Jesus at the right hand of God the Father.

Why did the High Priest tear his clothes? (14:63) What did they feel was blasphemous about Jesus's statement?

The high priest tore his clothes because Jesus had just claimed to be "I am". In his mind, this lawbreaker had just claimed to be God and was surely leading people astray. If anyone else had made that claim, it would have been blasphemy and punishable by death. We know the truth that Jesus is God and that He will be the one sitting at God's right hand judging all men. His words about being God and the prediction that they would see the Son of Man on the last day should have brought repentance. Instead, they brought anger.

What punishment did the chief priest pronounce on Jesus? (14:64) How did the Jews show their disdain for Jesus? (14:65)

Blasphemy was punishable by death according to Leviticus 24:16. Jesus had just given them all the evidence that they needed. No more witnesses would be called for because their witnesses were worthless anyway. While they should have recognized Jesus as a great prophet (for no one else could do miracles as He had done), they were blind and refused to listen to His teachings or judge them by scripture. Instead, they showed their disdain for this "false prophet" by spitting on Him and striking Him with their fists.

How does Jesus' behavior differ from the behavior of the chief priests and elders? What can you learn from Jesus about dealing with those who oppose you?

The Jews had their minds made up before they came to the trial. They tried to use lies, intimidation and fear against Jesus. Jesus remained silent to all the false accusations and spoke only when silence would seem like a denial of the truth. They were angry and Jesus was calm. They were out of control and Jesus was totally in control of the situation. Jesus is an example of patience, calmness and confidence for us when we find ourselves dealing with people who oppose us. Like Him, we must trust God in these difficult situations. If there is time, ask the class how they might implement what Jesus has taught us. It is one thing to know what to do and another to have a strategy to do it.

These devotions and bible study were taken from 32 days with Christ's Passion. The "32 days" book covers Holy Week and show the character of Christ so that His character can become your character. Use this book as a companion during lent or at anytime when you want to understand the cross and its impact on your life. [This book and "32 days with Abraham" are available Amazon. Com](#)

If you have enjoyed these devotions, you can also find weekly devotions by Mark Etter on the internet at www.32daysdevotions.com