

## Chapter 4

# Good Friday

*(Leader's Guide)*

Luke 22:66-23:56

After Jesus is betrayed by Judas on Holy Thursday, He is arrested and led off to fulfill the saving work that He had foreseen long ago. This is the day that the angels wept, that the veil in the Temple was ripped in two and the day that changed the world forever.

- 1 **Read Luke 23:1-2.** The people here say that Jesus refused to let them give tribute to Caesar. Do you think that this is a surprising statement to come from the mouth of a Jewish person living in Jesus' time? If so, why?

For the Jewish people of Jesus' time, Caesar was the representation of everything they were trying to overcome. The Roman Empire had been controlling the Jewish people for years and they longed to be free of Roman rule. In fact, the common belief was that the coming messiah would free the Jewish people from Caesar and the Romans and re-establish the Jewish kingdom. In a nutshell, there was no one they would love more *not* to give tribute to than Caesar. You might say that they would have *wanted* a messiah who forbid them to "give tribute to Caesar." But in fact, because of the hardness of their hearts, they turned on the true Messiah and chose to remain in captivity rather than accept the freedom which Christ would offer. We do this every day. The following questions look more deeply into how we do this.

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- 2 In what ways do we act like the little child Lewis describes in the above passage?

Lewis gives another example of this in his book *The Great Divorce*. He speaks of a man who would “like well to be able to scratch; but even when he can scratch no more he’d rather itch than not.” That is to say, we would rather choose the comfort of the things which hold us down because we are used to them - they become comfortable. We choose to turn down the satisfaction of scratching because we can’t imagine what it’s like not to itch.

This applies greatly to a life in Christ. **Ask:** what areas in our lives do we have a hard time giving over to Christ and why is it so difficult to give them up? Does Lewis’ analogy apply to your life? Do we become overly comfortable in our sin or complacency? What are the aspects of our lives that we want to keep all to ourselves?

- 3 Do you think Lewis’ analogy applies to the people in the crowd wanting to crucify Jesus? What is it about Jesus that they cannot accept?
- 5 Are you surprised at the fickleness of the crowd wanting to crucify Jesus? After all, these same people were waving palm branches and proclaiming Him as Messiah just days before.

**Questions 3 & 5:** Try to really probe the question of why the people turned on Jesus. Just a few days prior, they were waving palm branches and seemed ready to coronate Him. What was it about the events of the days in between that caused such a drastic change? **Ideas to start discussion:** The people were expecting a militaristic messiah who would conquer the Romans who were holding the Jews in captivity; crowd mentality - people following the lead of others who wanted Jesus crucified; lies spread about Jesus. What of these or other factors led to the crowd’s sudden change of heart?

4 What do we have a hard time accepting?

Try to really probe this one. Use the C.S. Lewis passage to try and show that Jesus is a person who demands a decision of us. We cannot call Him merely a “good man” or a “good teacher.” This would be a good place for a piece of personal testimony if applicable. Jesus called Himself God (John 8:56-58, John 14:6, John 10:30). If He really called Himself God, then as Lewis says, He was either lying to us; He was a crazy man who we should write off; or He was telling the truth. **Emphasize:** as Lewis said, Jesus didn’t leave us room for another option. We must make a decision about Him. What is our decision?

6 Have you ever heard Jesus referred to as the “Lamb of God?” Have you ever wondered why we call Him this? Why do you think we do?

You might want to go back to the story of the Passover in **Exodus 12: 1-13**. The point of the Passover in Exodus was that the nation of Israel was freed from its captivity in Egypt. They had been a nation in slavery. Only by sacrificing a “spotless, blemish-free” lamb and eating it’s flesh, could they be freed. The Church believes that this is a clear foreshadowing of the saving work of Christ generations later. Most of us know the Passover story at least in a vague way. But have you ever wondered why the Israelites had to sacrifice a *lamb*? What was the significance of a lamb? As we saw in the last chapter, Israel had a bad habit of falling into the sin of those it was around. The Egyptians worshiped a plethora of different gods. One of them was the lamb. Israel, having been in Egyptian captivity for hundreds of years, had started to worship some of the gods of the Egyptians. As the saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans.” The act of sacrificing a lamb and spreading the blood on the doorpost for all to see was a symbol of the Israelites abandoning their adherence to this false god. It would be similar to an alcoholic taking a bottle of liquor and smashing it in the street to show that he would no longer be held by his addiction.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus would take the whole sin of the world on Himself and allow Himself to be crucified with it in order to set His people free. It was the greatest act of emancipation in history. Israel’s

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freedom from slavery in Egypt by the sacrifice of a lamb foreshadowed our own freedom from the slavery of sin by the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb.

**Ask** the students if they see a connection with the Eucharist here. For the Passover to be complete, we are told in Exodus that the family had to *eat* the lamb. If Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb and its fulfillment, then it makes sense that we would eat His body.

- 7 **Read Luke 23:3-5.** What kind of significance do you think Pilate's statement holds for us?

Pilate says that he "finds no fault" with Jesus. In other words, He is clean. In **Exodus 12:5**, we saw that the Passover lamb was to be free of blemish. In Jewish culture, the high priests of the church would spend the week prior to the Passover examining the lambs to be sacrificed to be sure they were clean and "without blemish." We have seen that the Pharisees and church leaders spent the week leading up to Good Friday questioning and scrutinizing Jesus. On Good Friday, Pilate, without realizing what he is saying declares Jesus clean and therefore ready to be sacrificed. He essentially gives the green light for Jesus to proceed to the cross and fulfill His mission of emancipation as the Passover Lamb.

- 8 **Read Luke 23:32-43.** The Church tells us that the first person to enter heaven was the criminal we meet in these verses. Why do you think Jesus chose this man to enter His Kingdom "that very day"?

Jesus is further showing that His mission of salvation is for *everyone*, not just for the Jews, as some thought it would be. The criminal on the cross essentially shows us the formula for gaining salvation. He makes a decision and admits that Jesus is the Messiah He says He is. He realizes his own faults and sinfulness with true humility and brings it before Christ. He then asks with confidence and honesty that Jesus have mercy on him and bring him back into the family. Jesus shows how simple it is by declaring that the criminal will share salvation with Him that very day.