

THEME: No Greater Love
TITLE: Eight Days that Changed the World: a week in the life of the man who changed the world
By Bob Young

Introduction

Our title is a good one; our theme a great one. No greater love. We know the word—passion, Passion, the passionate Passion. The love of Jesus for us is an undying love, never ending. It is not a love that will not die; it is a love that will die (John 15:12, John 3:16, 1 John 3:16).

Because of the love expressed/demonstrated in Jesus' action (Rom. 5:8), it is natural to talk of the final week of Jesus life, the Passion Week, as one that changed the world. Eight days, 192 hours, from Sunday morning to Sunday morning—less than the 168 hours of a week. This lesson focuses on that part of the week before the trial. This is introductory—others will complete the series.

This is truth: One solitary life changed the world. One man changed the world. Our goal is to understand the man Jesus, to understand that week. Tonight we paint a big picture with the early events of the week, up to Thursday night and the Supper. This is a grand panorama, from the triumphal entry to the Supper to the events of Thursday night.

Eight days that changed the world. Many would agree that our world needs changing. This means change is not always bad. Change is a constant in our world. The only things that are not changing are dead. When you die, you stop changing, unless you consider chemical decomposition. Yet change is not a popular word; some would rather talk of transition.

Many people want to change the world, to make a difference. One does not wake up one day and say, I think I will change the world today. The ability to change the world is the result of training, discipline. One can perform in the athletic arena by practice. One can preach or teach by practice. So I want to make this point as we begin—Jesus was constantly in training for this time. His concluding words are not “deliver me from this hour” but “for this hour I came into the world.”

Why did these eight days change the world? One may answer, because of the death of Jesus. But then, why did Jesus die? What does it mean for you and me? What kept Jesus on the cross? He could have called for angels. He could have overcome the Roman armies. He could have called down power. What kept Jesus on the cross? It was not the nails, but his nature. It was love. Our theme is “no greater love.” Jesus identified with us so magnificently that he became like us, even to the point of dying (Phil. 2:5-11). But was it only his death that changed the world? He suffered, but many had suffered and died before Jesus. We must begin with the awareness that it was the resurrection—the capstone event—that changed the world.

We go behind the scenes to see the rest of the story, to see the life of Jesus as the context of this week. Our primary text is the Gospel of Luke.

When we read Luke's gospel carefully, we are overwhelmed with the power for change. Jesus changed the world in numerous ways. The presence of the Holy Spirit; a heart set on the downtrodden and outcasts of society, women, children, the poor, the infirm, the lame, the troubled, widows, foreigners. There was power, seen in the focus on prayer. Of course there was power, for Jesus' purpose was clear. There was power present, for Jesus lived his life by principles that did not seek position, power, prominence, or prestige.

We want to love, but we do not know how to love. We want to escape our humanity and our tendency toward all that we desire to avoid, but we do not know how. Poor us, constantly caught, never quite satisfied, wondering if there should not be more to our lives, more to this thing called Christianity, more to the call we have answered.

Jesus tells us how to live life powerfully, in life-changing ways. Change does not come in the ways we want; one cannot force change. It is not of coercion, it is not of demand. It is not by overwhelming others with truth or clarity or power or holiness.

The key to this kind of change is to understand the true nature of power and authority. Jesus had all power and authority, and because he had power, he did not have to use it. We use power to prove we have it. Jesus had no such need.

We see Jesus' extraordinary power in the last week. We see the power that changed the world. In fact, the last week events grew out of a life that changed the world. Jesus was not on the cross a day, he was on the cross 33 years. He was on the cross a lifetime. Note the surprising number of references to the cross in the Gospels: Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27; 16:26. There are few references to the literal cross. The passion predictions focus our attention: Luke 9:22, 44; 18:31-34.

PURPOSE: Jesus lived a life of purpose; he had a purpose in life

4:15ff, Jesus had a purpose in coming.

9:51, Jesus set his eyes on Jerusalem, representation of his purpose in life. 9:51, et.al.

What does this mean? What is the significance of this journey motif? Questions! Where are we going? What is our goal, our destiny? How will we get there? Jesus said I have done what I came to do; I have fulfilled my mission (John 13, 17). Jesus knew he had come for "this hour."

POWER: Jesus prayer life in Luke is remarkable, his power came through prayer

His prayer life was the source of power. Jesus set his eyes on the Father. Lk 22:39ff. Cf. 19:47. 3:21; 4:1ff; 4:31ff; 5:15-17; 6:12-19; power and prayer, 9:18...

power	presence
mountain	marketplace
submission as a Son	submission to the masses
relationship with the Father	relationship to others
spiritual	spirituality in the midst of life

POSITION: Jesus' attitude toward position and authority

We can trace in the events of the early part of this week the focus on authority and power. Jesus did not seek position. He demonstrated this in his attitude toward service. Here are principles for living with authority. Jesus set his eyes on the needs of others. He did not seek the highest position, but rather the lowest. He was willing to go as low as necessary (22:15, 22:22-26). He shows us that genuine greatness is service to all; he shows us humility.

Conclusion

Ronald Reagan—we have failed to be good, to be gentlemen, and therefore we have failed to be great. We have failed to be people of honor, integrity, justice. We have failed to be kind and loving. We have a failure in maturity. And the world is not better.

To change the world....we must adopt three things from the life of Jesus--purpose, focus on prayer, a lifestyle of humility. Information is of no value without application and change.

- We must see our purpose, and set our eyes on that goal. God has us here for a reason.
- We must be people of prayer in order to know the power. God has power available still in our lives.
- We must be willing to live in a low position, outside the values of the world, to live our life by eternal principles.