

The Passion of Christ



From Jerusalem to Calvary



The most incredible week in the history of humankind transpired in the vicinity of Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago. It was there that the Lord of the universe was revealed as the promised king of Israel. Hours later, He challenged their understanding of His role as deliverer and was ultimately rejected.

- He was betrayed by a close friend.
- He was envied by the religious establishment.
- He was abandoned by the ones He had poured his life into.
- His relationship with a disciple denied.
- He was condemned unjustly in a Roman court.

In fulfilment of prophecy concerning Himself, Jesus remained true to the will of His Father and died on a cross overlooking a garbage dump on the outskirts of Jerusalem. John Stott wrote in *The Cross of Christ*. *"We too sacrifice Jesus to our greed like Judas, to our envy like the priests, to our ambition like Pilate. 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' the old Negro spiritual asks. And we must answer, 'Yes, we were there.' Not as spectators only but as participants, guilty participants, plotting, scheming, betraying, bargaining, and handing Him over to be crucified. We may try to wash our hands of responsibility like Pilate. But our attempt will be as futile as his. For there is blood on our hands. Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us. Indeed, only the man who is prepared to own his share in the guilt of the cross, may claim his share in its grace."*

Let us look together at the passion of Christ and see the significance of the death we caused and the life that renews us!

Study #1: The End of the Beginning

Read Matthew 21:1-11 & Luke 19:29-44

1. Describe an incident where you failed to recognize who someone was or the position they held.

What potential for embarrassment and difficulty arose from that failure to recognize?

2. The three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) approach this event from a different vantage point than John does. What is the difference? (Mt. 21:1 cf. Jn.12:12-13)

3. What is significant about Jesus riding the colt of a donkey into Jerusalem?

Why was it not a horse? (see Zechariah 9:9-10)

4. Why do you suppose it had to be a donkey that had not been ridden? (Lk. 19:30)

5. What indications are there in this passage that messianic fervour was beginning to spread?

6. What is signified by the laying of robes and branches on the pathway?

7. The quotation in Mt. 21:9 is taken from Psalm 118:25-26. The word, Hosanna was originally a cry for help, "Save." Later it became an expression of praise and acclamation. How are both elements present in this royal entry?

8. What does the term 'Son of David' imply? (cf. Mark 11:10)

9. What reaction was the crowd having to His royal entrance into Jerusalem? (Mt. 21:10 cf. Lk. 19:37)

10. Matthew 21:10 records the multitude saying, "*Who is this?*" Their response is quite literal, emphasizing where He was from. What other answers to this question are seen in who the crowd thought Jesus was at this time?

11. What was the Pharisee's reaction to the crowds response? (Luke 19:39-40 & John 12:19)

12. Why was Jesus weeping over the multitude before Him in Luke 19:41-44?

Why is this ironic, given the celebration also taking place? (see v. 42b & 44b)

13. Alfred Edersheim says that it is surely a strange mistake "*to regard this Entry of Christ into Jerusalem as implying that, fired by enthusiasm, He had for the moment expected that the people would receive Him as the Messiah. And it seems little, if at all better, when this Entry is described as an apparent concession to the fevered expectations of His disciples and the multitude.*" Why then, in the sovereign plan of God, was it necessary for Jesus to arrive in this way? (Luke 19:31 - *The Lord has need of it.*)

14. In what ways does God come to us and we fail to recognize Him for who He truly is?

Study #2: From Regality to Rejection

Read Matthew 21:12-46

1. What factors have led to the general loss of respect and acceptance of Britain's royal family? In your memory, what factors led to the ultimate rejection of Jesus?
2. What were the temple merchants doing that was so abhorrent to Jesus?
3. Contrast the following two Old Testament quotations as they refer to the temple:
House of Prayer (for all nations • Mark 11:17) - Isaiah 56:7 cf.

Den of Robbers - Jer. 7:11.
4. What things angered the priests and teachers (21:15)?
5. What are the priests and teachers really asking Jesus to do in 21:16? What is Jesus saying to them in His quotation of Psalm 8:2? What is the impact of quoting this verse?
6. How is the fig tree incident an acted parable about what has happened in the temple and what is to come for Israel (see Hosea 9:10-17)?
7. What possible answers could Jesus have given to the chief priests' questions? Why did He avoid answering their questions directly?
8. Jesus then tells two parables to the crowd around Him. Who were the parables directed at? What was accomplished by telling them (vv. 45-46)?

9. Who does each son in the first parable represent (vv. 28-32)?

What is the basic message of the parable? How do you suppose the religious leaders responded to this story?

10. In the second parable;

who are the landowner,

the vineyard,

the tenants,

the servants,

and the son to represent?

11. How does Jesus interpret this parable (vv. 43-44)?

12. The royal entry seems to be orchestrated by Jesus as the rightful (albeit misunderstood) acknowledgment of His kingship. Why is it that Jesus does a number of things immediately after His entry (*cleansing the temple, equating Himself with God, relaying stories condemning the religious leaders*) that seem designed to anger the Jewish religious establishment?

Study #3: The Judas Kiss

Read Matthew 26:14-16, 20-25, 45-56; 27:1-5

1. How had the chief priests and the teachers of the law failed to arrest Jesus to this point?
2. How was Judas part of their solution (Luke 22:1-6)?
3. Why do you think Jesus tells His disciples in advance that one of them will betray Him?

Why does He show them who it will be?

4. How does this news affect the disciples (Mt. 26:22)?
5. How could the disciples not know which one of them it would be?
6. How much of what is happening do the disciples really grasp? (cf. John 13:27-30)
7. Why do you suppose Jesus asked Judas to do his work quickly? (John 13:27)
8. What "woe" was to fall on the betrayer? (Mt. 26:24)
9. What motivation led Judas to betray Christ? (Matt. 26:15; 27:3-5 & Luke 22:3)

Did Judas really believe that his betrayal would lead to Christ's death?

10. What group did Judas align himself with?

How did they betray Judas in the end?

11. Why is the kiss of Judas such an ironically poignant image?

12. Describe Jesus attitude toward Judas during this whole tragedy?

13. How did Judas react to Jesus being condemned to die?

14. How could Judas have reacted differently to this news?

What does this say to us about how to deal with guilt?

15. How does Judas' story illustrate a tragedy being played out constantly throughout the world?

Study #4: Lest We Forget

Read Luke 22:7-20

1. What memory devices do we use to help us remember things?

2. What is unusual about how the disciples found the room to eat the Passover together?

Why would it have been dangerous for the disciples to openly seek to find a room to eat together?

3. What is the Passover Feast? (Exodus 12:1-14)

What is the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (Exodus 12:15-20)

4. Why does Jesus link the New Covenant meal with the Passover?

5. Why do you think Jesus was so desirous to eat this Passover meal with His disciples before His death?

6. Two times Jesus mentions the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God (vv. 16 & 18). How does this parallel 1 Corinthians 11:26?

7. What is the basic function of this New Covenant meal? (v. 19 cf. 1 Cor. 11:24-25)

8. What words convey the idea of Christ's substitutionary death?

9. What is the significant difference in emphasis between the two elements?

10. What is the New Covenant? (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15, 26-28)

11. In what way is the New Covenant meal a good memory device? How does it appeal to the senses?

12. What is the believer's benefit in keeping this feast? Why is it so important that we remember Christ's sacrifice of us (beyond the fact that he asks us to)?

13. What is significant about the fact that Jesus commanded this remembrance? ("*do this*" - Luke 22:19)

Study #5: The Agony of Gethsemane

Read Mark 14:32-52

1. What is the most difficult situation you have ever had to face? How did you long for escape?
2. Up to this point, how complete is the disciples' understanding of what was taking place?
3. Describe how Jesus is feeling in Gethsemane (vv. 33-34 cf. Luke 22:44).
4. Why was Jesus praying at this point? (cf. Luke 42-43)
5. Was Jesus seeking an out? (Mark 14:35)
6. What is the cup that Jesus is referring to? (see also, Mark 10:38-39 & John 18:11)
7. Is Gethsemane a part of Christ's sacrifice for us or is it in anticipation of His sacrifice?
8. What are the disciples struggling with in Gethsemane?

Why was it important that they stay awake?
9. What is the temptation facing the disciples (cf. 31, 50)?
10. What help does Jesus offer the disciples as they face temptation?

How is this advice applicable to us today?

11. In light of the events of the previous days, what is the significance of Jesus' statement, "*The hour has come.*"?

12. Who has sent the large crowd to accompany Judas in the arrest of Jesus?

13. What was Peter trying to accomplish in severing the high priest servant's ear?

What does it say about his understanding of all Jesus had said?

14. How do verses 48-49 illustrate Jesus' earlier prayer, "Yet not what I will, but what You will."?

15. How was Christ helped by His father as He faced the reality before Him? (cf. Luke 22:43).

How does God help us?

Study #6: The Jewish Inquisition

Read John 18:15-24 and Matthew 26:57-68

1. How do we as humans deal with being unjustly blamed or punished?

How do children react to unfair circumstances?

2. Jesus treatment by Jewish officials was against Jewish regulations.

Charles Swindoll notes six legal instructions as conveyed in the Talmud:

1. *Arrest for a capital crime must be made in broad daylight.*
2. *Arrest for a capital crime may not be made based on information from the offender's follower.*
3. *No Jewish trial is to be held at night.*
4. *No Jewish trial is to be held before only one person.*
5. *No verdict may be passed right away - a period of two days must elapse and testimony reheard.*
6. *The members of the Sanhedrin must vote one at a time, the younger members first.*

How did the Jewish trials break their own procedural regulations?

3. Jesus remark before Annas related to the establishment of his testimony. On what grounds was Jesus questioning their inquisition? (John 18:19-21)

4. What about Jesus' comment angered the Jewish official? (v. 22)

5. John 18:23 contains a classic statement about handling confrontation. How do we often behave like the Jewish official?

When confronted, how should we respond?

6. Why do you suppose Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas and the rest of the Sanhedrin?

7. What motivated the Jewish council? (Mt. 26:59-60)

8. Why was Jesus statement about destroying and rebuilding the temple a "*sticking point*" in the testimony? (Mt. 26:61-63)

9. Why did Jesus remain silent in the face of this accusation? (v. 63)

10. Why did Jesus qualify His claim to be the Messiah with a 'but'? (26:64)

11. What did Caiaphas understand Jesus to be saying? (v. 65)

12. What was the verdict of their inquisition?

What do these trials reveal about the integrity of the Jewish leaders?

13. What is the irony of verse 65?

14. How did Christ deal with this unjust treatment?

What can we learn from that?

Study #7: Peter's Boast Bursts

Read Matthew 26:31-35, 58, 69-75 and John 13:36-38

1. Can you recall denying association with a group or idea or person because of the social implications of being so joined?
2. Why do you suppose all of the disciples "*fell away*" when they had spent the last few years in close relationship with Christ?
3. Who are the shepherd and the sheep in this quotation taken from Zechariah? (v. 31)
4. How is Peter's self-confidence related to his failure (v. 33 and 35)? See also, Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Corinthians 10:12.
5. What is the danger of feeling we are immune to certain kinds of sin?
6. What is the significance of Matthew's comment about Peter in 26:58?
7. After hearing the Jewish council's verdict, a series of individual confront Peter about his relationship with Jesus?

What might their motivation have been?

8. Why do you suppose Peter denied association with Christ?
9. How are the accusations different?

What progression is there in them?

10. How are we tempted to downplay or even deny our relationship to Jesus?

11. In what ways was Peter's denial of Jesus different from Judas' betrayal?

12. What function did the rooster play?

Do you think Peter recalled Jesus' prediction of denial in the midst of it happening?

How does the Word of God fade in the middle of temptation?

13. How did Peter react after the rooster crowed?

How do you think Peter's character and faith were affected by his failure?

Study #8: The Roman Verdict

Read John 18:28 - 19:17

1. Can you recall any legal instances where there was a gross miscarriage of justice?

2. Why did the Jewish officials hand Jesus over to the Romans?

Why didn't they punish Him? (vv. 31-32)

3. In what way was Jesus a king? (vv. 33-37)

4. Why do you think Jesus is not more emphatic in his defence?

Do you think He could have explained His way out of this situation?

5. Did Pilate really desire the truth? (v. 38)

If not, why did he ask this question?

6. How often did Pilate allude to Jesus' innocence?

7. Why did Pilate fail to act in light of his proclamations of Jesus' innocence?

8. What is being pictured in the crown of thorns and purple robe?

9. Why was Pilate fearful at the Jewish charge against Jesus? (19:7-8)

10. What do verses 9-12 say about God's sovereign will that Jesus referred to in Gethsemane?

11. William Barclay notes, *"When the Romans had first come to Palestine...there had been a most bloody rebellion, because the Jews had insisted that God alone was their king, and to Him alone they would pay tribute."* In condemning Jesus, how had they strayed from that commitment?

12. How is Pilate similar and different from Judas and Peter?

13. Why do you think Pilate caved in to Jewish pressure?

14. Do you think the priests were pleased with the outcome of the trial?

Why or why not?

Do you think Jesus was pleased with the outcome of the trial?

Why or why not?

Study #9: The Bruised Branch

Read Genesis 3:15 & Psalm 22:1-31 & Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

1. What Old Testament images can you think of that point to Christ? (eg. Branch)
2. How is Genesis 3:15 a prophesy of the cross?
3. What is the literal Davidic context of Psalm 22?
4. Read Psalm 22:11-18. What prophetic parallels are there to the punishment and death of Christ?
5. In this prophetic psalm, what is the tone of expression? How is 22:1 a framework for the rest of the ideas that follow?
6. In Isaiah 53, one of the most graphic images ever, is given of Christ's death a full 750 years before it happened. Why do you suppose so many Jews were (and still are) so ignorant about how completely this scripture is fulfilled in the death of Christ?
7. How is 53:1 reminiscent of John 1:11 and the events of the last week of Christ? (see also 53:3)
8. What indication in this passage is there of Christ's substitutionary death? (v. 4-6)
9. What parts of Christ's final week are alluded to in vv. 7-8?
10. List all the words that indicate what Jesus suffered at Calvary, (vv. 3-11)

11. Why was the Father "pleased" to crush the son?

How is that seen in Jesus' final days?

12. What will Jesus see and be satisfied with in v. 11?

13. How are the ideas in verses 10-12 similar to Philippians 2:5-11?

14. Why did the Spirit reveal Christ's death so intricately before it had ever happened?

What does that say about the significance of this event?

Study #10: Committed to Calvary

Read Matthew 27:35-56

1. Describe the different places you see images of a cross?

What is their intended meaning in each context?

What does the literal cross of Christ symbolize?

2. What do you know about the cross as an instrument of death?

3. The pain of crucifixion is accompanied by the shame of what? (v. 35)

4. Why do you think these particular insults were chosen by Jesus' mockers?

Compare their words with Matthew 4:3, 6. Why do you suppose this wording is similar?

5. Why didn't Jesus come down from the cross?

Do you think the mockers would have believed in Him if he had?

6. What is the significance of each of the supernatural events accompanying Christ's death? (v. 45, 51-53)

7. As death began to engulf him, Jesus cries out to God (vv. 45-46). What does His cry, and the overshadowing darkness reveal about His relationship to the Father during His torment?

8. What triggered the Centurion's statement?

How meaningful is his belief?

9. What do you suppose is going on in the minds of the women near the cross?

10. Why did Jesus need to die?

11. When did the death of Jesus begin to make sense to you?

How would you explain the necessity of the Crucifixion to a non-Christian friend?

12. John 19:31-37 gives some more details about Christ's death. What is significant about the pierced side of Jesus and subsequent flow of blood and water? (v. 33 and 36-37)

13. What is significant about the burial of Jesus? (Mt. 27:58-66 cf. Mt. 12:39-41)

Study # 11: Famous Last Words

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing - Luke 23:33-38

1. What does this statement say about Jesus attitude as He approached death?
2. How is the second half of this quote true in light of all that has transpire up to this point?

Today you will be with me in Paradise - Luke 23:39-43

3. What moved the one criminal to ask Jesus to remember him?
4. How does this scene illustrate the grace of God established at the cross?

Behold your Son! Behold your Mother! - John 19:23-27

5. What do these tender words illustrate about Jesus concern for those he loved?

My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? - Matthew 27:45-46

6. In what way were the Father and Son separated?

7. Why did the Father forsake the Son?

I am thirsty - John 19:28-29

8. What does this statement say about the humanity of Jesus on the cross?

It is finished! - John 19:30

9. What is the significance of this statement in light of John 4:34; 5:36; 17:4 & 19:28?

10. What was finished? (see Hebrews 10:4-10)

Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit - Luke 23:44-49

11. "*Into your hands*" carries with it the joy of finally being in His Father's hands. In the previous twelve hours, how had the hands of others treated Him? (eg. Mark 14:65)

12. Jesus voluntarily gave up his life ... it wasn't taken from Him. Why is that significant?

Study #12: The Beginning of the End

Read Luke 24:1-49

1. In what ways is our world currently fascinated by supernatural phenomenon?

Can you imagine anything more incredible than the dead coming to life?

2. What proof do the gospel writers give us that Jesus really did rise from the dead? (see also Acts 1:3)

3. Why is Christ's resurrection pivotal for our faith in Him? (1 Corinthians 15)

4. Why do the disciples seem so slow to understand what Jesus was doing among them? (24:6-8 and 11)

5. What mood were the two on the road to Emmaus in when Jesus met them?

What conclusions had they drawn at this point from all the information they had?

6. Why would Jesus take time to explain to them from the scriptures what had happened rather than just revealing himself to them?

7. Why were the two disciples hearts burning while Jesus talked to them? (v. 32)

8. Why did Jesus appear directly to Peter? (v. 34)

9. What proof is given about the bodily resurrection of Christ?

10. Why was it necessary for them to believe that Jesus was not a ghost?

What would it mean for Christianity if Jesus had only been a ghost?

11. How is Christ's resurrection different from all that preceded it? (eg. Lazarus)

12. How does Jesus go about restoring Peter?

What does Peter's story illustrate about the wonder of the resurrection in our lives as well?