

PLACES *of the* PASSION



SESSION 1

The City of
Jerusalem



SESSION 2

Bethany and
the Mount
of Olives



SESSION 3

The Garden of
Gethsemane



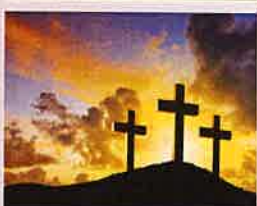
SESSION 4

The High
Priest's
Courtyard



SESSION 5

Pilate's
Judgment
Hall



SESSION 6

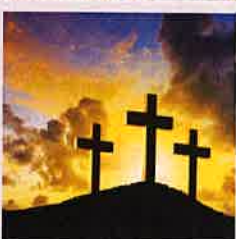
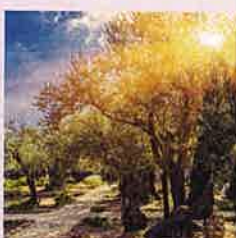
Golgotha



A 6-SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**
FOR LENT

PLACES *of* the PASSION

A 6-SESSION **BIBLE STUDY** FOR LENT



In this Bible study for Lent, participants walk in the footsteps of Jesus, visiting the places where his Passion took place to learn more about his sacrifice for us. Study and discussion questions, prayers and reflections help remind us that the places Jesus went on this earth made it possible for us to have a place in heaven with him forever.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 4

SESSION 1

The City of Jerusalem 5-8

SESSION 2

Bethany and the Mount of Olives..... 9-13

SESSION 3

The Garden of Gethsemane..... 14-18

SESSION 4

The High Priest's Courtyard 19-24

SESSION 5

Pilate's Judgment Hall..... 25-29

SESSION 6

Golgotha..... 30-34

Introduction

On the night of his betrayal, “the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him” (John 18:12). The Messiah who had come “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1) was himself bound and held captive. That same night and early the next day, the innocent and unjustly accused prisoner was led all over Jerusalem—to the house of the high priest, to the judgment hall of the Roman governor, to Herod’s palace, back to the governor’s hall and, finally, to an execution site outside of the city. At every place, and very likely along the way, the Savior was beaten and ridiculed, until he was finally nailed to the cross. Through his suffering and death, we have been set free from sin, death and the devil. By faith in his name, we have forgiveness and eternal life, for “with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

SESSION 1



The City of Jerusalem

*As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people,
from this time forth and forevermore. PSALM 125:2*

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, help us to see ever more clearly that true peace is found only in the forgiveness of sins that is ours through faith in your name. Guide our study of the Word as we follow your path to the cross, from your betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane, through the city of Jerusalem to Golgotha outside of the walls and, finally, to a garden tomb. Dear Savior, hear our prayer and accept our praise. Amen.

DISCUSSION

Describe a peaceful place that you have visited. Why did the place seem peaceful?

INTRODUCTION

Jerusalem—its name means “city of peace”—but it is a city that throughout history has known very little rest. King David captured the city, taking its “stronghold of Zion” from the Jebusites and renaming the fortress of Zion “the city of David” (2 Samuel 5:6-10). David’s son Solomon built the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem, but the city of peace and its great temple were destroyed and many of its people sent into exile by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (2 Chronicles 36:17-21). Seventy years later, the returning exiles rebuilt the city and the temple. The city of peace, knowing no peace, would be destroyed again, but before that terrible day, Jerusalem would welcome—and then reject—the Prince of Peace.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

1. The Prince of Peace, Jesus, the Son of God and Mary’s son, first visited Jerusalem as an infant. His parents brought the infant Redeemer to the temple to be redeemed according to God’s command (Exodus 13:13). Jesus came again to Jerusalem when he was 12 years old, sitting among the teachers in the temple. **Read Luke 2:25-35 and Luke 2:41-52.** In what ways are distress and even violence present in these early years of Jesus’ life?
2. **Read Matthew 10:34-39.** When Jesus was born, the angels sang about peace on earth. What does Jesus say about his coming and peace? Why might family members be set against each other for Jesus’ sake? We are commanded in Scripture to honor our parents and love and care for our children. What does Jesus say about such love among family members? What does Jesus mean by saying this? How would this be expressed in the relationships within your family? **Read John 14:27.** How is Jesus’ peace different from the world’s peace? How might a sword come into the cross-bearing to which Jesus calls us (Matthew 16:24-25)?
3. **Read Luke 9:51-56.** What was Jesus determined to do and why? Why did the Samaritan villagers refuse to receive Jesus simply because he was going to Jerusalem? (See John 4:9 and 19-21.)

4. **Read Luke 13:31-35.** Jesus is sometimes portrayed as “meek and mild,” and he often reacted to people with gentle compassion. How does Jesus’ response to Herod remind us more of a sword than of peace? Why is Jesus so determined to be in Jerusalem? How do Jesus’ words to Jerusalem—even knowing what would happen to him there—express his compassion? When will Jerusalem see him?
5. **Read Matthew 21:1-11.** The “daughter of Zion” is a reference to the Jewish people and to Jerusalem. How do the people of Jerusalem respond to Jesus’ arrival? The word *hosanna* means “Save us now!” How might they expect to be saved? Are the people hoping for peace? Why or why not? **Read Zechariah 9:9-10.** How might the prophet’s words fuel the expectations of the people? **Read John 12:13 and 19.** Jesus is hailed as the Son of David, the Messiah. In John’s gospel account of Palm Sunday, what is Jesus called? What does this reveal about the expectations of the people?
6. Jesus had said to Jerusalem, “Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). **Read Matthew 24:1-2.** The disciples, like a group of visiting tourists, point out the beautiful temple buildings to Jesus. What will happen to Jerusalem’s beautiful temple? Jesus’ prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Roman legions under the command of Titus responded to a Jewish rebellion by destroying the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The walls were torn down and the city and the temple burned.
7. Before the temple was burned in 70 A.D., another temple would be destroyed—and raised again. **Read John 2:13-22.** What did the Jews demand after Jesus chased the money-changers from the temple courts? What proof of his authority would Jesus provide for them? What had to happen before the disciples would understand Jesus’ words?
8. **Read John 19:16-19.** The Prince of Peace is led outside of the city, to an execution site called the Place of the Skull, and nailed to a cross. **Read Colossians 1:19-20.** What are some of the wrong ways in which people today seek peace? How are they like the people of Jerusalem who welcomed Jesus on the first Palm Sunday? What was accomplished by the blood of Jesus’ cross?

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 137:1-6

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.

On the willows there we hung up our lyres.

For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth,
Saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!

Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you,
If I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!

HYMN

(Tune: Jesu, Meines Lebens Leben 87 87 88 77)

Christ, the life of all the living,
Christ, the death of death, our foe,
Who, thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe:
Through thy suff’rings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto thee.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask participants for prayer requests. Ask for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus, who is the only true source of lasting peace.

SESSION 2



Bethany and the Mount of Olives

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. PSALM 23:5*

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, during your earthly ministry you enjoyed the company of friends and the close fellowship of your disciples. Help us by the power of your Spirit to preserve the unity that we have with our brothers and sisters in faith. We offer humble thanks and praise to you because you have named us as your friends. Amen.

DISCUSSION

Name some Bible stories that took place on mountaintops or hilltops.

INTRODUCTION

The village was located on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about 1½ miles from Jerusalem. Today the village's Arabic name, Al Eizariya, remembers one of its more famous biblical residents—Lazarus. The meaning of its biblical name, Bethany, is disputed by scholars and may mean “house of figs” or “house of affliction, or poverty.” A fig tree near the village plays a part in Jesus' lesson on faith (Mark 11:12-14, 20-25). Jesus tells his disciples, “Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” In Bethany, Jesus' prayer to his Father would be answered in an astonishing way, and in front of many witnesses.

YOUR KING IS COMING

1. **Read John 11:1-5.** What is Jesus' relationship with Lazarus and the sisters Mary and Martha? According to Jesus, what is the purpose for Lazarus' illness? Does such a purpose apply to every illness we may face? Why or why not?
2. **Read John 11:6-16.** What is Jesus' unusual response to the news of Lazarus' illness? How will Jesus' delay bring glory to God the Father and to himself, the Father's Son? How might Jesus' response and delay concerning Lazarus' illness bring comfort to those we know today who may be suffering through a long illness? Jesus' disciples warn him against returning to Judea, where the Jews had just recently sought to stone him (John 8:58-59). What does Jesus mean when he answers with comments about light and darkness? Why is Jesus glad that he was not present to prevent Lazarus' death?
3. **Read John 11:17-27.** Martha tells Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Sometimes we might feel the same way in times of distress and sorrow. Share, if you wish, a time when you might have spoken in a similar prayer to God. What does Martha believe about Lazarus and the resurrection on the Last Day? What does Jesus mean with his statement that he is the resurrection and the life? What does

Martha confess about Jesus' identity? **Read Matthew 16:15-18.** Peter makes a similar confession of faith concerning Jesus. What does Jesus say about Peter's confession?

4. **Read John 11:28-44.** How does the crowd respond when Jesus weeps at Lazarus' tomb? Yet at the same time, what complaint do they have about Jesus? When might we have the same complaint about Jesus and his answers to our prayers? Jesus had raised others from death—Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49-56) and the young man of Nain (Luke 7:11-17). How is the raising of Lazarus different from these earlier miracles? What is the purpose of Jesus' prayer at the tomb? **Read John 11:45-46.** How was Lazarus' death, as Jesus had said, for the glory of God and the glory of his Son? **Read John 11:47-53 and John 12:9-11.** How do the religious leaders react to the raising of Lazarus? How will their response ultimately bring glory to the Son of God?
5. On the day before Palm Sunday, a dinner is given in Bethany in Jesus' honor. Lazarus is present and Martha serves, but Mary honors Jesus in a very different way. **Read John 12:1-8.** In ordinary circumstances a servant might wash the feet of dinner guests, but what does Mary do for Jesus? What is Judas' complaint, and what reason does John (the gospel's author) give for that complaint? Foot-washing is not an act of service generally done in our culture. What act today might be done to honor a guest? How do we show our devotion to Jesus today? According to Jesus, what does the anointing signify? "You do not always have me," Jesus said. The poor, the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40), will always be present, but Jesus' death is less than a week away.
6. **Read Luke 19:28-30 and John 12:12-19.** Where does Jesus' Palm Sunday journey begin? As the prophet Zechariah foretold, Jesus enters Jerusalem on a colt, a young male donkey. Why is the crowd of disciples praising God? How did the earlier miracle in Bethany fuel the excitement of the crowd? The people wave palm branches like flags to welcome Jesus. What do they call out to him? **Read John 6:26.** Earlier the crowds sought out Jesus for the wrong reasons. What did they want from him then? How might their opinion of Jesus then reflect their wel-

come as he enters Jerusalem? How do the events of Palm Sunday add to the Pharisees' concerns about Jesus? **Read Mark 11:11.** After entering Jerusalem, Jesus returns with his disciples to Bethany. Within a few days, other, more somber, events will take place on the Mount of Olives, and a mob will seek out Jesus for a different purpose.

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 118:22-29

The stone that the builders rejected
Has become the cornerstone.

This is the LORD's doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the LORD has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
You are my God; I will extol you.

For his steadfast love endures forever!

HYMN

(Tune: Winchester New LM)

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O God, thy pow'r and reign.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask participants for prayer requests. Ask for opportunities to show our love and devotion to Jesus by serving and caring for others, including “the least of these.”

SESSION 3



The Garden of Gethsemane

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." MATTHEW 26:36

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Savior, in Gethsemane you prayed that there might be another path to follow. Then, according to your Father's will, you took up your cross for the sake of our salvation. Teach us to pray as you prayed, so that we might, in all circumstances, humbly accept our Father's purpose for us. Amen.

DISCUSSION

Share, if you wish, a time when your prayers were answered in unexpected ways.

INTRODUCTION

Gardens have an important role to play in the story of our salvation. At the dawn of creation, God “planted a garden in Eden, in the east” for the man and woman he created (Genesis 2:8). Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were sent out of their garden paradise because they disobeyed their Creator, choosing to be like God themselves rather than worship the true God. But before they left the garden, God promised that an offspring of the woman would come to crush the serpent who had tempted them to sin.

The woman’s offspring, Jesus our Lord, was betrayed in a garden called Gethsemane; he was tried and condemned to death. In the place Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, “and in the garden a new tomb,” where Jesus’ body was laid. But on the first Easter morning, there was an empty tomb in that garden, for Jesus had risen! Through his death and resurrection, through faith in Jesus, we will one day live in an eternal garden, invited to “eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7).

YOUR WILL BE DONE

1. The Lord Jesus spent many hours in prayer. **Read Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; John 6:11; and John 11:41-42.** What were some of the places and circumstances in which Jesus prayed? What can Jesus’ life of prayer teach us about our own habits of prayer? If you wish, share private places and times in which you prefer to pray. Do you like to use the formal prayers of the church, the psalms, your own prayers or all of these? Why?
2. **Read Luke 22:39-41.** Jesus was accustomed to praying in Gethsemane, and after their Passover meal he goes there with his disciples. Gethsemane—the name means “oil press” (for olive oil)—was located at the foot of the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley and outside of the walls of Jerusalem. **Read Matthew 26:30.** After they had finished their Passover meal and had sung a hymn, Jesus and his disciples went out to Gethsemane. The hymn may have been part of the Hallel, that is,

Psalms 113 to 118, sung as part of the Passover celebration. **Read Psalm 116.** Imagine Jesus singing this psalm on the night he was betrayed, knowing of the terrible death that awaited him the following day. Which verses and phrases seem to express what Jesus experienced that night, his anguish and betrayal? Which verses and phrases speak of hope and trust in God? Which verses seem to point to the hope of the resurrection? **Read Psalm 118.** Which verses are a reminder of the distress Jesus suffered and the way in which he was treated by the authorities? Which verses speak of the Lord's victory and of the hope and promise of the resurrection? How did the events of Holy Week fulfill Psalm 118:22?

3. Jesus had spoken of his death, burial and resurrection as the sign of Jonah. "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Jesus said of himself, "Behold, something greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:32). **Read Jonah 2:1-10.** Which words from Jonah's prayer in the belly of the great fish reflect Jesus' experiences in Gethsemane and his death and burial? Which verses from Jonah's prayer speak of hope and resurrection?
4. Before the Last Supper and Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, Judas made his plans to betray Jesus. **Read Matthew 26:1-5.** Why were Jesus' enemies afraid to arrest him openly? **Read Matthew 26:14-16, 20-25 and John 13:21-30.** The betrayal was no surprise to Jesus. What does he say about his betrayer? (See also John 17:12.) **Read Psalm 41:9 and Zechariah 11:12-13.** What was foretold about Jesus' betrayal in the Old Testament Scriptures?
5. **Read Matthew 26:36-46 and Luke 22:39-46.** What does Jesus ask of Peter, James and John? Why might Jesus have asked this of them? What is the cup that Jesus asks might pass from him? (See Matthew 20:20-23 and Isaiah 51:17.) What details does Luke add that are not in Matthew's account? How is Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane answered? Share, if you wish, a time when you have asked your brothers and sisters in Christ to "watch" with you in prayer. Is such mutual watching in prayer comforting? Why or why not? What does Jesus' prayer and its answer teach us about our own prayers and God's answers?

6. Jesus knows what lies ahead and rises from prayer to meet his betrayer. **Read Matthew 26:47-56.** Peter rushes to defend Jesus (John 18:10), but why does Jesus refuse to defend himself? What does he say he could have done to save himself? What keeps Jesus steadfast on his path to the cross?
7. As foretold in Scripture (Zechariah 13:7), Jesus' disciples flee, leaving their Lord alone with the mob that has come to arrest him. The plan for our salvation was in place before the world was created, and we were chosen in Christ before creation. (See Ephesians 1:4.) What does God's choice teach us about our election and his grace? **Read 1 Peter 1:17-21.** What is said about the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for the sins of the world? **Read Acts 2:22-24.** In his Pentecost sermon, what does the apostle Peter say about Jesus' betrayal, arrest and crucifixion?

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 116:1-9

I love the Lord,
Because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

Because he inclined his ear to me,
Therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me;
The pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;

I suffered distress and anguish.
Then I called on the name of the LORD:

"O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"
Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;

Our God is merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;

When I was brought low, he saved me.
Return, O my soul, to your rest;

For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.
For you have delivered my soul from death,

My eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;
I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

HYMN

(Tune: Gethsemane 77 77 77)

Go to dark Gethsemane,
All who feel the tempter's pow'r;
Your Redeemer's conflict see,
Watch with him one bitter hour;
Turn not from his griefs away;
Learn from Jesus Christ to pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask participants for prayer requests. Ask for the Lord's help in establishing good habits of prayer and for the strength of faith to pray as Jesus did, "Your will be done."

SESSION 4



The High Priest's Courtyard

Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. MATTHEW 26:58

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the people you came to save planned your destruction. One of your disciples betrayed you and the rest deserted you and fled to save their own lives. Peter denied you three times, swearing that he did not know you, yet you forgave him and the disciples, sending them into the world as your witnesses. Forgive us when we act in faithless ways, fearful of speaking up for

you when we have the opportunity. By the power of the Holy Spirit, make us faithful witnesses for you, so that others will come to know and worship you as Lord. Amen.

DISCUSSION

If you wish, share an opportunity that you had to witness for Christ Jesus. Were those who heard the message receptive?

INTRODUCTION

In November of 1990, an ossuary, or bone box, was found in a burial cave in southern Jerusalem. The box contained the bones of six people, including those of a man of about sixty years of age. The richly carved box, indicating that it belonged to a family of high status, was inscribed with the name, "Joseph, son of Caiaphas." Many scholars believe that the bones of the older man are those of Caiaphas, the high priest who presided over Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas served as high priest from 18 to 36 A.D. Before him, his father-in-law Annas had been the high priest, and at the time of Jesus, Annas still enjoyed the power and prestige of his former office.

The Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, consisted of 70 lay elders, the presiding chief priest and the scribes (experts in Jewish law). This council condemned Jesus to death, but under Roman rule did not have the authority to carry out that sentence (John 18:31-32). As a result, Jesus was sent to Pilate, the Roman governor. Jesus was crucified, but no ossuary will ever be found with the Savior's bones. (See Psalm 16:10.) Jesus has risen from the dead!

ARE YOU THE CHRIST?

1. Jesus' opponents plotted against him. They sought the grounds and opportunity to arrest him, "but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come" (John 7:30). How does the phrase, "his hour had not yet come" indicate that the plans and purposes of God are at work in Jesus' ministry and in the events of Holy Week? As Jesus' hour drew near, the plots against him grew more serious, especially after Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. The Sanhedrin was summoned to make a decision about this "Messiah." **Read John 11:47-53.** What concerned the council about Jesus' continued teaching? What does Caiaphas un-

knowingly prophesy? **Read John 12:27-33.** Finally, Jesus' hour has come near, the hour of his death. What does Jesus say about that hour? Jesus foretells his death by crucifixion, when he will be "lifted up from the earth." What does he say about the result of his death that is similar to Caiaphas' unknowing prophecy?

2. Jesus is betrayed and arrested in Gethsemane. **Read John 18:12-14.** Where was Jesus first taken? **Read John 18:19-24.** Annas first questions Jesus. Although Jesus will not often speak in his own defense, what does he say to Annas? Why does the officer strike Jesus? (See Acts 23:3.)
3. Jesus is next taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. **Read Matthew 26:57-68.** What indicates that the council's decision has already been made before this trial begins? Why would Jesus' claims, as stated by the false witnesses, anger the Jewish leaders? (See John 2:13-21.) The high priest requires that Jesus testify under oath (verse 63) that he is the Christ, or Messiah, and the Son of God. How does Jesus identify himself? **Read Daniel 7:13-14.** Jesus is applying Daniel's prophecy about the Messiah to himself, a reference from the Scriptures that the Jewish leaders would readily recognize. Who is the Ancient of Days? How will Jesus receive "dominion and glory and a kingdom"?
4. **Read Mark 14:53-65.** Jewish law required the testimony of at least two witnesses to condemn someone (Deuteronomy 17:6). What difficulty does the Sanhedrin have with this requirement? Jesus is rejected by "his own people" (John 1:11) and the Messiah is condemned to death. **Read John 15:18-25.** What had Jesus said to his disciples—earlier that same evening—about the world's hatred for him and for them? **Read Acts 4:1-7.** How are Annas and Caiaphas involved in the continued hatred and persecution of Jesus' disciples? What evidence do you see of the world's hatred for Jesus and for his disciples today?
5. **Read John 18:15-18.** During Jesus' trial, Peter gains access to the high priest's courtyard through the influence of "another disciple," possibly the disciple John. **Read Matthew 26:30-35.** What was Peter's proud boast, echoed by all of Jesus' disciples? **Read Matthew 26:69-75.** How do the people in the courtyard recognize Peter? How do Peter's denials increase

in intensity? **Read Luke 22:60-62.** What sad detail is added by Luke to the account of Peter's denials? How do stories of the disciples' failures support the truthfulness of the gospel accounts? How are we recognized as followers of Jesus? (See John 13:35.) How might you respond to someone who says, "I know that you are with Jesus!"?

6. **Read Matthew 27:1-10.** What causes Judas to change his mind? Was his change of mind different from true repentance? Why or why not? How is the chief priest's response to the return of the betrayal price especially hypocritical?
7. **Read Luke 22:31-33.** How does Jesus foretell not only Peter's denial, but also his repentance? **Read John 21:15-19.** The risen Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples, showing them the marks of the nails in his hands and the wound in his side from the soldier's spear. The Savior ate with them and invited the disciples to touch him, proving he was truly alive, that he was no spirit or ghost (Luke 24:39). Jesus again came to the disciples as they cast their nets for fish in the Sea of Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee). After eating breakfast with the disciples, Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Just as Peter's denials had grown more intense, his answers to Jesus' questions grow increasingly frustrated. Surely Jesus knows that Peter loves him! How do we know that Jesus has forgiven and restored Peter? What tasks are assigned to Peter? How is Peter's future death described? According to tradition, Peter was condemned to death by the Emperor Nero and crucified in Rome in 64 A.D. Some traditions suggest that Peter asked to be crucified head downward so that he would not die in the same manner as his Lord,
8. **Read 1 Peter 5:6-11.** How might these inspired words from the apostle Peter reflect the experience of his denials and the Lord's forgiveness? What do you find comforting or encouraging about the apostle's words? **Read 2 Peter 1:5-9.** We would all like to be effective and fruitful in faith. With what qualities are we to supplement our faith? Which of these qualities seemed to be lacking in Peter on the night of Jesus' betrayal? As they were with Peter, many of these traits are often lacking in our own lives. What single reason is given for a lack of these Christian qualities?

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 69:4, 17-21

More in number than the hairs of my head are those
who hate me without cause;
Mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies.

What I did not steal must I now restore? ...
Hide not your face from your servant,

For I am in distress; make haste to answer me.
Draw near to my soul, redeem me;

Ransom me because of my enemies!
You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor;

My foes are all known to you.
Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair.

I looked for pity, but there was none,
And for comforters, but I found none.

They gave me poison for food,
And for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

HYMN

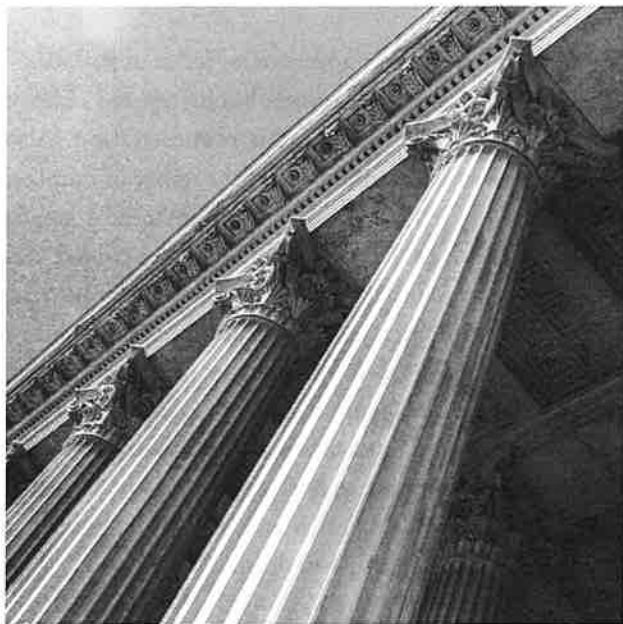
(Tune: Der Am Kreuz 87 87 77 88)

On my heart imprint your image,
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
Never may your work erase;
Let the clear inscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation!

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask participants for prayer requests. Ask the Lord for the gift of steadfast faith, such as that displayed by the apostles and martyrs who have died under persecution in our own day. Pray for those who still suffer for the name of Jesus.

SESSION 5



Pilate's Judgment Hall

They bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor. MATTHEW 27:2

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, although you had done no wrong, you allowed yourself to be unjustly condemned to death so that we might live. Help us faithfully to confess the truth of your identity and the joy of our salvation, as you bore witness to the truth before Pilate. Lead us to walk with humble and repentant hearts through this Lenten season as we follow you to the cross. Amen.

DISCUSSION

Share examples of unjust trials that have been discussed in current news reports.

INTRODUCTION

Pontius Pilate became prefect, or governor, of Judea in Palestine in 26 A.D. Apparently, he governed the province well, but his ten and a half years of rule were not without controversy. Early in his administration, Pilate brought into Jerusalem troops whose standards bore the image of Emperor Tiberias. The Jews, offended by this display of “graven images,” started a riot and Pilate was forced to replace the troops with another cohort. Another riot began when it was rumored that Pilate stole funds from the temple (which he had not done) to build an aqueduct, or water channel, into Jerusalem. That riot resulted in bloodshed. In still another incident, Pilate dedicated a set of golden shields to the emperor. King Herod demanded that the shields be removed. Governors who ruled unwisely risked being recalled by the emperor, a potentially serious threat to both career and life. So it is not surprising that, when facing a possible riot (Matthew 27:24), Pilate sentenced an innocent man—Jesus of Nazareth—to death by crucifixion.

Through Roman and Jewish political conflicts, mob action, fears over the possible loss of a political career and an unjust condemnation, God was at work. For through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, God would “reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20).

WHAT IS TRUTH?

1. **Read Luke 23:1-5.** What accusations are brought against Jesus? **Read Matthew 27:11-14 and Isaiah 53:7-8.** How does Jesus fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah? How are the accusations in Pilate’s judgment hall different than those brought against Jesus in his trial before the Sanhedrin? Why are these “new” charges more effective in a Roman court of law? Why would Pilate be concerned about the fact that Jesus’ teachings were stirring up the people?
2. **Read Luke 23:6-12.** Why does Pilate send Jesus to King Herod? This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who ordered the slaughter

of the infants of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. What had Herod once thought of Jesus? (See Matthew 14:1-2.) What is the result of Jesus' hearing before Herod? What does Herod do to mock Jesus' claims? Jesus has once said of Herod, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course'" (Luke 13:32). Now Jesus, standing before Herod, is very near the end of his course.

3. In his gospel, the apostle John gives a detailed account of Jesus' trial before Pilate. **Read John 18:28-32.** Why do Jesus' accusers refuse to enter the governor's headquarters? Why have the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate? According to John's account (verse 32), why was this done? (See John 12:32-34.)
4. **Read John 18: 33-38.** Why would Pilate be concerned about the fact that Jesus was called "the King of the Jews"? What does Jesus say about his kingdom? If he was an earthly king, what would have happened? What is the truth to which Jesus came to bear witness? (See John 14:6 and Romans 1:25.) How are Jesus' words before Pilate similar to the Savior's comments in John 10:27?
5. **Read Matthew 27:15-23.** What does Pilate recognize as the Jewish leaders' motive for condemning Jesus? (See John 11:47-48 and John 12:19.) **Read Luke 23:18-19.** Why was Barabbas in prison? Why does the crowd ask for Barabbas to be released? According to some traditions, Pilate's wife is thought to have become a Christian and is known as St. Procula. The Orthodox, Coptic and Ethiopian churches regard her as a saint. In some legends Pilate is said to have suffered a terrible death because he ordered the death of the Son of God, yet other stories claim sainthood for him, along with his wife.
6. **Read Matthew 27:24-26.** At times throughout history, the crowd's response, "His blood be on us and on our children," has been wrongly and terribly used as an excuse to persecute the Jewish people. How do both the release of Barabbas and the response of the crowd signify the true purpose of Jesus' death? (See 1 John 1:7.)
7. **Read Matthew 27:27-31.** Jesus is scourged, a severe beating with a multi-

lashed whip. He is mocked as the King of the Jews. The one whom the Father has made Judge of all (John 5:22 and Acts 17:31) submits to unjust human judgment. The “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16) is mocked as a failed rebel king. **Read Psalm 2 and Acts 4:23-31.** What does the psalm foretell about the Lord’s Anointed, that is, the Messiah? After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the disciples are arrested by the Sanhedrin and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus. After they are released, the disciples gather for prayer. How do they interpret Psalm 2 in their prayer? How does part of their prayer reflect Jesus’ answer to Pilate, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11)? What do the apostles ask of the Lord? In what ways do some “kings of the earth ... and the rulers”—government authorities—set themselves against the Lord Jesus and his Church today? According to Psalm 2, how does the Lord regard such opposition?

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 2:1-9

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,

Against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,

“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

He who sits in the heavens laughs;

The Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath,

And terrify them in his fury, saying,

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;

Today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
And the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron
And dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

HYMN

(Tune: Herzlichster Jesu 11 11 11 5)

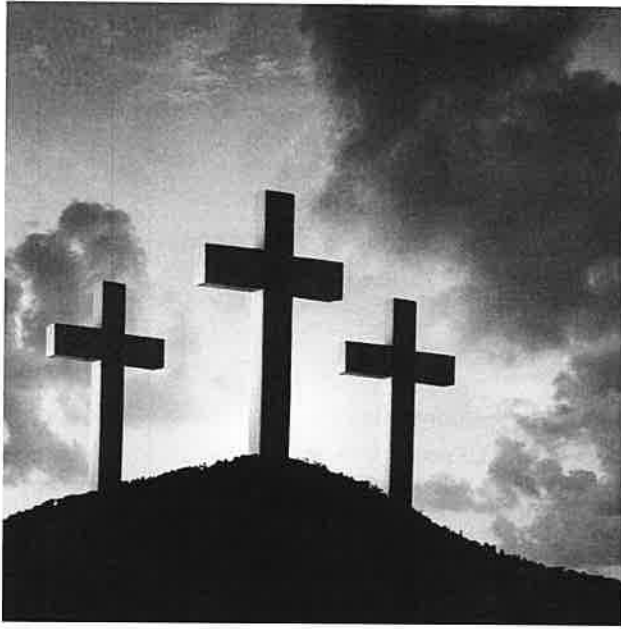
O dearest Jesus, what law hast thou broken
That such sharp sentence should on thee be spoken?
Of what great crime hast thou to make confession,
What dark transgression?

The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;
Man forfeited his life and is acquitted;
God is committed.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask the participants for prayer requests. Pray for boldness in witness in a world that does not know or honor Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

SESSION 6



Golgotha

He went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. JOHN 19:17

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, in your love for the world, in obedience to your Father's will, you took up your cross and carried it to Golgotha, where you offered up your life to save us. Help us by your Spirit daily and willingly to take up the cross as we follow in your steps, living in faith toward you and with love toward others. Looking forward to the celebration of your resurrection on Easter morning, we give you praise and thanks for the gift of new life, eternal life, that we have through faith in your name. Amen.

DISCUSSION

What depictions of the crucifixion (paintings, stained glass windows, crucifixes) have been most meaningful to you?

INTRODUCTION

Some ancient writers include in their histories comments on the events of the first Good Friday. The first-century Roman historian Tacitus, writing about the persecution of Christians in Rome, explains that “Christus, the founder of the name [Christian], had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate.” Another first-century historian, the Greek Phlegon, reports a day when a “great eclipse of the sun” happened at about noon, making the sky so dark “that the stars even appeared in the heavens.” Phlegon’s careful record of the date allows modern scholars to determine the year of the event—33 A.D. The Passover calendar places Jesus’ crucifixion in the spring, in the month of April. It is also known that, despite Phlegon’s choice of words, there was no solar eclipse at that particular time. As a miraculous event and sign, the land was veiled in darkness as the Son of God hung on the cross, the innocent Lamb of God offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. As we sing in a Lenten hymn:

“Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in” (*Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed*, verse 3).

HE DIED FOR ALL

1. A large mural of the crucifixion by the Polish artist Jan Styka depicts a worker at the foot of Jesus’ cross unearthing a human bone. The scene illustrates a legend claiming that Jesus was crucified at the place where Adam, the first man, was buried. This is, of course, an unlikely story, but it does express the truth that Jesus died not only for Adam’s sin, but for the sins of all people throughout human history, for our sins and for the sins of all those yet to be born. The site of Jesus’ execution was called in Aramaic Golgotha, or “The Place of a Skull” (sometimes the site is called Mount Calvary, from a Latin word for skull, *calvaria*). Jesus was led out of the city, carrying his own cross—possibly carrying, if not the entire cross, the heavy crossbeam that would be fixed to an upright post

at the site. Simon of Cyrene was pulled from the watching crowd to carry the cross for Jesus. **Read Matthew 27:32-36.** Wine mixed with gall (or myrrh, Mark 15:23) was given as a kind of narcotic, perhaps to make the condemned victims easier to control. Why do you think Jesus refused the drink? **Read Genesis 3:20-21 and John 19:23-24.** When Adam and Eve were sent out of Eden, God clothed them with the skins of animals. Jesus is stripped of his garments and shamed. Through his redeeming death, our guilt and shame are taken away. **Read Galatians 3:27 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.** How are we now clothed by faith in Jesus?

2. **Read John 19:18-22.** Why are the chief priests upset about the sign announcing Jesus' "crime"? Why was the sign written in three languages? Why do you think Pilate refuses to change the inscription? Was the sign true and accurate in its description of Jesus? Why or why not?
3. **Read Matthew 27:39-44.** How do the religious leaders use Jesus' own teachings to ridicule him? What "sign" or miracle do they demand in order to believe in him? **Read Matthew 12:38-42.** What had Jesus said about the demand for signs? **Read 1 Peter 2:21-23.** What does the apostle Peter say about Jesus' response to ridicule? How should we, as followers of Jesus, respond to those who ridicule us for our beliefs or who speak to us in anger or opposition toward the Christian faith?
4. The gospel accounts record seven times that Jesus spoke from the cross. Write his words from each of the verses below:

Luke 23:34 _____

Luke 23:39-43 _____

John 19:25-27 _____

Matthew 27:45-50 _____

John 19:28-29 _____

John 19:30 _____

Luke 23:46 _____

What do these sayings reveal about Jesus and his ministry, even in his last

hours? Read **Psalm 22:1-2, Psalm 31:4-5 and Psalm 69:20-21**. Jesus may have been praying Psalm 22 from the cross. Read **Psalm 22:22-31**. How does the end of this psalm proclaim a message of life and hope?

5. The crucified victim, hanging from his hands, could only draw breath by raising his body, pushing up against his nailed feet. To hasten death, the victim's legs were broken so the victim would quickly suffocate. Read **John 19:31-37 and Matthew 27:45, 51-54**. What signs took place as Jesus hung on the cross and then when he died? Read **Hebrews 10:19-25**. According to the writer to the Hebrews, what does the torn temple curtain signify?
6. Read **Mark 15:42-47 and John 19:38-42**. Some people claim that Jesus never really died on the cross. How do these eyewitness accounts argue against such false beliefs?
7. Read **Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14-15; Hebrews 9:11-12, 22; 1 Peter 1:18-21; and 1 Peter 2:24-25**. Jesus said from the cross, "It is finished." There are many ways to describe what Jesus accomplished for us by his death on the cross. How do these passages describe what took place at the cross? Which of these descriptions is most meaningful to you? Which might be most helpful in witnessing to others concerning Jesus' saving work?

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 22:1-8

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,

And by night, but I find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried and were rescued;

In you they trusted and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm and not a man,
Scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me;
They make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

“He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
Let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

HYMN

(Tune: Southwell SM)

O perfect life of love!
All, all, is finished now,
All that he left his throne above
To do for us below.

No work is left undone
Of all the Father willed;
His toil, his sorrows, one by one,
The Scriptures have fulfilled.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray the Lord's Prayer together.