



LESSON 22

The trial and denial of Jesus

MARK 14:53-15:15



Jesus was unjustly abandoned and condemned.



“And Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’” (Mark 15:14).

Supporting Truths

1. Jesus did nothing wrong.
2. Jesus is Messiah and King.
3. Jesus is the Son of God and Son of Man.
4. Jesus was abandoned by everyone.
5. Jesus was counted guilty so that guilty people can be counted innocent.

Objectives

1. Recite the key verse.
2. State the questions of Caiaphas and Pilate.
3. Explain that Jesus is the real judge.
4. Analyze the three responses to Jesus: the Jews', Peter's, and Pilate's.
5. Explain how the release of Barnabas is a picture of why Jesus chose to die.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

After Jesus was arrested, the Sanhedrin desperately tried to find an accusation against Jesus so they could put Him to death. They got what they wanted when Jesus Himself claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Son of Man. Not only was Jesus falsely condemned, but He was also betrayed by Peter, perhaps His closest earthly friend. Then, instead of protecting Jesus, Pilate flogged Him and condemned Him to be crucified.

Spotlight on the Gospel

In the end, Jesus was completely alone and rejected. His enemies thought they had won. But in reality, Jesus had refused to defend Himself because He was choosing to die, the innocent in the place of the guilty. Because He obeyed to the point of death, He won the battle. As a result, those who truly love Jesus will be forgiven even though they still fail. But those who care more about their own lives than about Jesus will be judged.

LAST WEEK



Jesus prepares for His death

Matthew 26:1–56

THIS WEEK



The trial and denial of Jesus

Mark 14:53–15:15

NEXT WEEK



Jesus endures the cross

Mark 15:16–47

THE PASSION WEEK OF JESUS

Lesson Commentary

Jesus was unjustly abandoned and condemned.

Jesus' condemnation is an upside-down story. The One who will righteously judge all people is judged by unrighteous imposters. The One accused of blasphemy is blasphemed against. The One who speaks the truth does not defend Himself, while the one who defends himself lies to do it. The innocent is condemned to death, but the guilty is set free. How could such a backward story happen? Jesus knew that victory would come through what looked like defeat, so He was willing to be abandoned and condemned by everyone.

The Jews judged the true Judge (14:53–65)

Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest (Mark 14:53), where He was condemned by those He came to save. Just as Jesus had predicted, He was rejected by the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes (8:31). Although it was probably not even 3 AM yet, the *Sanhedrin* had already gathered (14:55). This council of 71 religious and civil leaders was like Israel's supreme court, yet they did not care about justice. Instead of starting with an accusation and investigating to see if it was true, they started with a death sentence and then tried to find a reason for it. Since only Rome could legally put a criminal to death, all they wanted to do was find charges that would make it seem right to hand Him over to the Romans.

To do this, they needed at least two witnesses to confirm the same accusation, and they did not care if they lied to do it (14:56; Deut 19:15–19). Eventually, two witnesses accused Jesus of speaking against the temple (14:57–58; Matt 26:60–61). This was a serious charge. To talk of the temple being destroyed was to declare judgment against all Israel. When the prophets Uriah and Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Solomon's temple, Uriah was executed, and Jeremiah almost was (Jer 26:7–24). Even worse, to rebuild the temple was to take charge in the place of Israel's current rulers. So even though the accusation was false

(Mark 13:2), and even though the witnesses did not agree in every detail (14:59), it was close enough for Jesus' enemies to use it against Him (15:29).

Since the evidence was not legally acceptable, Jesus had no need to defend Himself according to the law. But He also willingly chose not to, because He had chosen to go silently to slaughter (14:60–61a; Isa 53:7). Surprised, the high priest questioned His authority directly (14:61b). Was He the *Christ, Messiah*, the One anointed to save and to rule (Ps 2:2; Isa 61:1)? Was He the *Son of the Blessed One, the Davidic king who will judge and rule over all nations* (Ps 2:7–12)? This time Jesus was not silent. Since it was time for Him to die, for the first time in His life He clearly and publically said He was the Messiah (Mark 14:62). He said, "I am," echoing God's own name (Exod 3:14). He called Himself the *Son of Man* coming on clouds, the One with authority from God to judge and rule over all forever (Dan 7:13–14). As the one who would sit at God's right hand, Jesus would judge His judges (Ps 110).

THINK ABOUT IT
Guilty judges condemned the righteous Judge.



The Jews' response is ironic. First, it is ironic that Caiaphas questioned Jesus' authority. Jesus rightly possessed all authority, but Caiaphas was high priest illegally, since he was not a descendent of Aaron (Exod 29:9; Num 16:40). Second, Caiaphas had said "Blessed One" instead of "God" to be extra careful not to blaspheme, and he tore his clothes as a sign of grief and horror at blasphemy (Mark 14:63–64). But Jesus did not blaspheme. He did not openly dishonor God, because He spoke the truth. It was the Sanhedrin who were blaspheming by dishonoring the Son of God right in front of them. Third, the temple police mockingly urged Jesus to prophesy (14:65). By mocking and spitting on Him, they were actually causing Jesus' prophecy to come true (10:34), and Isaiah's too (Isa 50:6).

Peter denied his true Friend (14:66–72)

In the face of such insults, at least Peter stood by Jesus. Or did he? Despite his flaws, Peter loved Jesus intensely. Of all the disciples, he alone was there

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON



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THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus was despised and rejected, just as Isaiah said He would be (Isa 53:3).

with Jesus (Mark 14:54). Yet even Peter abandoned Jesus (14:66–71). When Jesus was accused, He did not defend Himself. But when Peter was accused, he was only concerned with defending himself. When Jesus was questioned, Jesus spoke the truth. But when Peter was questioned, he kept lying. The third time, he used an oath, a promise, asking God to curse him if what he was saying was not true (14:71). Jesus was abandoned by even His closest friends.

Peter's failure warned and encouraged the Christians who first read Mark's gospel. Their loyalty to Jesus was being tested by persecution. Peter's failure warned them that if they were self-confident and prayerless like Peter was, they would fail (1 Cor 10:12). But Peter's restoration encouraged them that even in failure, there is hope through repentance. When Peter heard a rooster crow the second time, he burst into tears (Mark 14:29–31, 72). He realized he had failed the One he loved most (Luke 22:61–62). This is **godly sorrow**, for Peter was sad out of love for Jesus, not out of concern for himself. Jesus later restored Peter, and Peter wrote down two important lessons he had learned from his failure. First, be humble, because Satan easily devours



THINK ABOUT IT

Because Jesus was faithful, unfaithful people can be forgiven.

proud people (1 Pet 5:5–8). Second, even in failure, have hope. Because Jesus did not fail, God is able to restore and strengthen you to the very end (5:10).

Pilate handed over the true King (15:1–15)

After being taken to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, Jesus still refused to defend Himself (Mark 15:1–5). He was accused of claiming to be the King of the Jews, which would make Him a rebel against Rome. This was partly true and partly false. As the Messiah, Jesus really was the King of the Jews, and He really would crush Israel's enemies and set Israel free. But it was also false,

because Jesus' kingdom would come down from heaven, not through an earthly revolution (John 18:36). So Jesus answered Pilate, "You have said so" (Mark 15:2). In other words, "Yes, I am King of the Jews, but I am not the sort of King you are thinking of."

As the Roman governor, Pilate's job was to uphold law and order in Judea, and that meant punishing the guilty and protecting the innocent. But he was more concerned about his own career. Recently, he had foolishly tried to put shields with Emperor Tiberius' image on them in his headquarters in Jerusalem. This violated the Jewish ban on images in Jerusalem, so the Jews sent messengers to appeal directly to Tiberius. Tiberius sided with the Jews, and Pilate only avoided Tiberius' wrath because he was friends with Sejanus, Tiberius' second-in-command. But recently Tiberius had executed Sejanus for treason. Pilate was now vulnerable and could not risk the Jews appealing to Caesar again.

Still, Pilate hated to give in to the chief priests. When he heard the crowd asking for him to keep his custom, he suggested releasing Jesus (15:6–9). His plan seemed logical: if the religious leaders were envious of Jesus (15:10), then Jesus must be popular with the rest of the people, so surely they would ask for His release. But as usual, Pilate was wrong about the Jews. It seems the crowd had asked about Barabbas to begin with, since he was a popular freedom fighter (15:7–8). The chief priests turned this to their advantage (15:11). For the sake of his own political ambition, Pilate condemned the real King (15:12–15). He released Barabbas, whose name means "son of a father," and he failed to protect Jesus, the Son of the Father. Now the innocent would die in the place of the guilty.

THINK ABOUT IT

Barabbas was an anti-Roman insurrectionist guilty of robbery (John 18:40) and murder (Luke 23:19).



Lesson Outline

Jesus was unjustly abandoned and condemned.



AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

Love Jesus because . . .

1. He is the true Judge (14:53–65).
2. He is the faithful Friend (14:66–72).
3. He is the sinless King (15:1–14).
4. He is the sinless Sacrifice (15:15).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. The Jews judged the true Judge (14:53–65).
 - The Sanhedrin found no testimony against Jesus (14:53–59).
 - Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and the Son of God (14:60–62).
 - The Sanhedrin convicted Jesus of blasphemy (14:63–65)
2. Peter denied his true Friend (14:66–72).
 - Peter denied Jesus three times (14:66–71).
 - Peter heard a rooster crow and wept (14:72).
3. Pilate handed over the true King (15:1–15).
 - Pilate was amazed Jesus would not defend Himself (15:1–5).
 - Pilate knew Jesus had done nothing wrong (15:6–14).
 - Pilate handed Jesus over and released Barabbas (15:15).





Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did Caiaphas ask Jesus?**
Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One.
- 2. When asked if he was a follower of Jesus, what did Peter do?**
He denied Jesus.
- 3. Did Pilate think Jesus had done anything wrong?**
No.
- 4. Who did Pilate condemn, and who did he release?**
He condemned Jesus and released Barabbas.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What was wrong with the accusations against Jesus?**
They were false and inconsistent.
- 2. Did Jesus defend Himself?**
No. There were no real charges. Besides, Jesus was not trying to escape death.
- 3. What kind of person is the Son of Man seated at God's right hand and coming with the clouds of heaven?**
He is the supreme judge over all the earth.
- 4. Who was committing blasphemy?**
Not Jesus, because He spoke the truth. The high priest was, because he was directly opposing the Son of God.
- 5. Did Peter speak the truth like Jesus did?**
No. He lied three times.
- 6. Why did Peter burst into tears after the rooster crowed?**
He remembered what Jesus had said, and he realized he had betrayed the One he loved most.
- 7. What did Pilate call Jesus?**
The King of the Jews.
- 8. Why did Pilate not set Jesus free?**
Pilate was more concerned about himself than about an innocent man. He valued his own political career more than the King of kings.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

FALSELY ACCUSED

Have you ever gotten in trouble for something that your brother or sister did? Did you try to tell your parents that you did not do it? Did you defend yourself? In the lesson today, people say that Jesus did something bad even though He didn't. Do you think Jesus will defend Himself?

ROOSTER CROWS MUSICAL CHAIRS

Play a game of musical chairs. Choose a child or helper to stand with their back turned to the class. Tell them to crow like a rooster at any time they choose. When the other children hear the crow, they are to sit in a chair. The child who is left without a chair is out.



ILLUSTRATE

UPSIDE-DOWN DAY

Jesus' condemnation is an upside-down story. Illustrate this by doing things backward: reverse the class schedule, have the children sit up front while you sit in their spot during the lesson introduction, wear your tie backward, sit in your chair backward, color with the opposite hand, walk backward, put your shoes on the wrong feet, etc.

WHAT IS BLASPHEMY?

Blasphemy is saying things about God that are not right/true and using God's name to say things that are evil. Illustrate this by placing your hand over your mouth, showing that blasphemy is something that should not be said. Have the children put their hands over their mouths during the lesson when Jesus is blasphemed.



APPLY

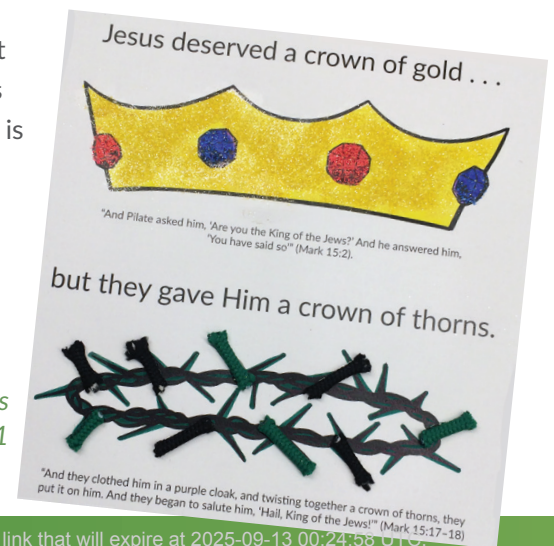
CROWNS

See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, glue stick, glitter glue, pipe cleaners.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color the images. Décor the crown gold with glitter (or sticker). Cut in pieces the pipe cleaners (black or brown) and glue the pieces on the crown of thorns.

Crowns
See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

ROLE REVERSAL

Imagine a criminal who enters the courtroom acting as if he is the judge, not the criminal: He demands that all rise while he enters, wears a black judge's robe, sits in the judge's seat, and calls the courtroom to order. Meanwhile, the judge enters wearing handcuffs and an orange prison jumpsuit. Do you think justice would be done? Well, that is basically what happens in today's story. Let's find out why.

FOR YOUR ENEMY?

Tell the heroic story of a soldier, policeman, or fireman who died to rescue another person. Ask the children to put themselves in this person's place: Would they be willing to give their life for someone else? Many of us would. But what if that person was our enemy? Would that change anything? It didn't for Jesus. Read Romans 5:6–8. In today's lesson, we will see that Jesus was willing to be unjustly condemned in order to rescue sinners.



ILLUSTRATE

WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL?

Today's lesson contains a number of lies. Ask the children why it's wrong to lie: (1) the Bible says it is sin (Prov 6:16–19), and (2) all sin will be punished by God (Prov 11:21; Rev 20:13). But lying is an especially dangerous sin. Do the children know why? If you become comfortable with lying, you can become comfortable with any other sin. You can lie to yourself and others, justifying any evil behavior or desire.

SCOURGED

Before being crucified, Pilate had Jesus scourged (Mark 15:15). This was a severe punishment, often resulting in death. Prisoners were beaten with whip that contained bits of metal or jagged bone at the end of leather strips. It caused massive amounts of bleeding and permanent disfigurement.



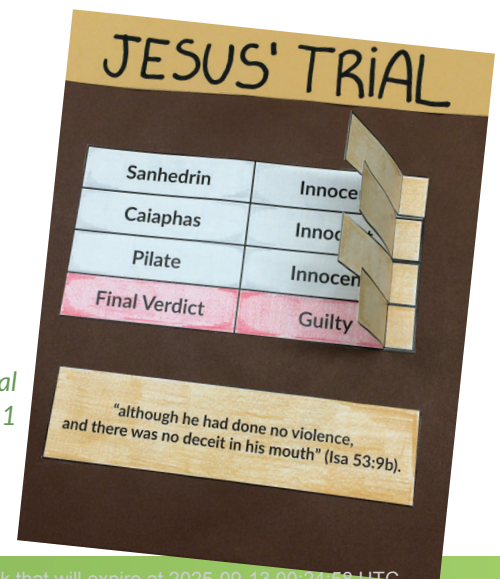
APPLY

JESUS' TRIAL

See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*.

Materials: Craft sheet, brown copy paper, crayons, glue stick, scissors.

Directions: Color the table of names with crayons (use a different color for the "final verdict") and glue it on the brown copy paper. Glue each folding strip on each of the verdict so that it can open and close. Glue the verse at the bottom of the page and then write "Jesus' Trial" on the top of the page.



Jesus' Trial

See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*

AGES 9–11

**IT WAS NOT ME!**

Have the children ever been blamed for doing something they did not do? How did they respond? More than likely, they passionately defended their innocence. In today's lesson, Jesus is charged with a serious crime—one deserving death. However, He remained silent before His accusers. Why would He do that? Let's find out.

THE DEFINITION OF HYPOCRISY, PART 1

Ask the children to explain what hypocrisy is. Explain that it is saying one thing and doing another. Then, ask them to give you some examples of hypocrisy. Tell the children that today's lesson contains one of the greatest examples of hypocrisy ever recorded in human history. Will the children be able to identify it? Have them listen for it as you teach today's lesson.

**PRESSURED BY PEERS**

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent (Mark 15:14; Matt 27:19, 24) and that the religious leaders had delivered Him over because they were jealous of Him (Mark 15:10). So why did Pilate still hand Jesus—a man he knew to be innocent—over to be scourged and crucified (Mark 15:15)? The answer is simple: peer pressure. Because of his precarious relationship with Rome, Pilate allowed himself to do something he knew was wrong. He placed his own reputation and political aspirations ahead of God. Have the children ever experienced peer pressure? How did they respond?

THE DEFINITION OF HYPOCRISY, PART 2

The Jewish religious leaders' condemnation of and blasphemy against Jesus is one of the saddest examples of hypocrisy ever recorded. The religious leaders, who went out of their way to obey even the smallest requirements of the Law (Matt 23:23–24), totally ignored three of the Ten Commandments when they falsely accused (Exod 20:16), blasphemed (20:7), and murdered (20:13) Jesus. They honored God with their lips, but their heart was far from Him (Matt 15:1–9).

**NOT ME!**

It is easy to criticize Peter for denying Jesus. But when we begin to think about it, it is likely that we too have denied Jesus. Do you deny Jesus by the movies you watch and the websites you visit? What about the books and magazines you read? What about the places you go, or the things you do when there are no adults around? How about the words you say or the thoughts you think? And what about the things you know you should do but do not? Instead of criticizing Peter, let's learn a lesson from him. First, though we fail and deny Christ, we can be forgiven (1 John 1:9; John 21:15–17; 1 Pet 5:10). And second, we must pursue humility, because Satan easily devours proud people (1 Pet 5:5–8).