

# Jesus Gives Up His Life for His Friends



SABBATH—MARCH 13

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** John 18:1–19:42.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends’ ” (John 15:13, NIV).

**IMPORTANT THOUGHT:** As we think about the cross of Jesus, we experience both His glory and our own value (self-worth) as humans.

**THE CROSS FOREVER ESTABLISHES THE SELF-WORTH OF THE HUMAN SOUL.** Humans have experimented with different ways to establish self-worth. But there is only one place where human self-worth is forever established. That place was on a hill called Calvary.<sup>1</sup>

On Calvary, our self-worth before God was forever shown to all people, angels, and the universe. On Calvary, the true nature and character of our Creator also were shown.

The story of Jesus on the Cross in the book of John begins and ends in a garden (John 18:1; John 19:41). The story is in three parts. First, there is the part describing Jesus' betrayal and arrest (John 18:1-27). The second part of the story is about the trial before Pilate (John 18:29–19:16). The third part of the story is Jesus being nailed to the cross, dying, and then being buried (John 19:16-42).

This week we will study the greatest event<sup>2</sup> in all history—Jesus' death on the cross.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 20.

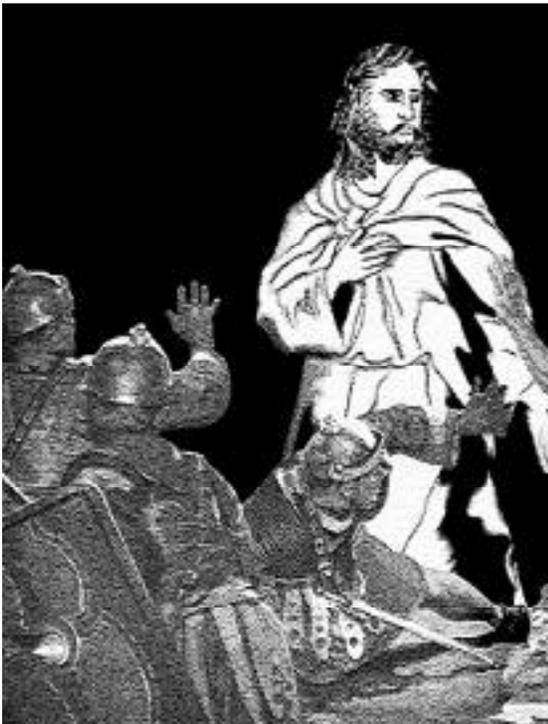
<sup>1</sup>Calvary—the name of the hill where Jesus was crucified.

<sup>2</sup>event—thing that happens.

SUNDAY—MARCH 14

**BETRAYED AND DENIED**  
**(John 18:1–11, 15-18, 25-27).**

**Read John 18:1-11. What does John say that shows how Jesus was in control? What does Jesus do to show that He was letting Himself be taken prisoner?**



“ ‘I am he’ ” (John 18:5, TEV).

The main point of John 18:1-11 seems to be that Jesus is in full control of the situation. This fulfills John 10:18: “ ‘No one takes [my (Jesus) life] from me [Jesus], but I [Jesus] lay it [my life] down of my own accord [will]’ ” (NIV). Jesus is soon to be mur-

dered. But He is not a victim. He had to die. Read John 3:14. If Jesus had wanted to avoid arrest, He could have gone to another place instead of Gethsemane, where He knew Judas would look for Him. But He led His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, even though He knew what would happen. Jesus did not wait for the mob to come to Him. He moved forward to meet the mob. In this way, He showed that He could overcome the mob fully if He needed to. But He did not need to. He chose to die.

**How did Peter react? Why was his reaction normal? John 18:10.**

Peter’s reaction is almost funny. Jesus was in full control of the situation. But to Peter, things looked totally out of control. So he took out his sword and tried to protect Jesus. But Jesus told him to put the sword away. Jesus must go to the cross, or God’s plan of salvation would fail. Peter had tried to gain control of the situation. But this would have moved things out of control. Peter’s rough action in Gethsemane put Jesus in danger before Pilate (John 18:36).

**Jesus knew the future. He knows the future today. What kind of comfort does it give you to know that God knows what is going to happen? At the same time, what kind of serious questions does it raise to know that Jesus knows the future?**

## MONDAY—MARCH 15

**BEFORE ANNAS AND PILATE  
(John 18:12-40).**

Only the book of John shows that more than one disciple followed Jesus into the high priest's courtyard (John 18:15, 16). The girl at the door knew that John (the "other disciple") was a disciple of Jesus. But she did not challenge him, because he had permission from the high priest, who knew him.

**Why does Jesus get slapped in the face in front of Annas? John 18:19-23.**

Jesus was quite bold in His meeting with Annas (John 18:20-23, NIV). Jesus challenged the fact that His arrest was made in secret ("I said nothing in secret"). He also challenged the legal steps being followed ("Why question me?"). He even made a little fun of Annas ("If I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"). In this example Jesus does not follow the interpretation of "turning the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39). Jesus protests Annas's abuse of authority (power) (John 18:23). There is sometimes a difference between being humble and being abused.

Jesus was then taken to Caiaphas. Afterward Jesus was brought before

Pilate, an important person in this part of the story. At the time, Pilate was in a position of great political weakness. A series of mistakes had made the Jews angry. Pilate was not popular. Rome had some doubt about his fitness to rule. If Pilate made one more big mistake with the religious leaders, he probably would be put out of office. This made him very easy to blackmail.<sup>3</sup>

In Pilate's court, the priests first made their charge against Jesus in such a way that a Roman governor could understand. Jesus must be killed, because His kingship was a threat to Caesar. But Jesus' statement "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36, NIV), and other proof made it clear to Pilate that Jesus' claim to kingship was not a threat to Rome. So Pilate decided to free Jesus and give the Jewish leaders a way out. He offered to let Jesus go through a prisoner release.

**Read what Jesus said to Pilate in John 18:36. What does it mean that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world?**

## TUESDAY—MARCH 16

**A POLITICAL "SOLUTION"  
(John 19:1-16).**

**Read John 19:1-16. The soldiers were mocking<sup>4</sup> Jesus when they**

<sup>3</sup>blackmail—trying to force a person to do things against his or her will by threatening him or her.

<sup>4</sup>mocking—making fun of.

**crowned Him king of the Jews (John 19:2-4). But why was what they did special?**



Problems got worse for Pilate when the Jewish leaders refused to accept his offer to release Jesus. The leaders wanted Jesus dead! That meant Pilate had to change their minds. Or he must let Jesus go while they were still angry. Pilate knew that this probably would cost him his job. Pilate was caught between justice (fairness) and self-interest.

Pilate tried to make the leaders feel sorry for Jesus by whipping Him. But the leaders refused to feel sorry for Jesus. The leaders sensed that Pilate's self-interest had weakened him. So the leaders started to argue that Jesus

should die because He had broken their religious law. They knew that Pilate could not afford to work against their religion.

**Read John 19:7, 8. Why was Pilate made even "more afraid" (NIV)? What did Pilate ask Jesus? John 19:9. Why would he ask Jesus such a question? What does that question show?**

Pilate seemed to know that he was weak. He could not save both himself and Jesus. So he decided finally to save himself. He would accept the religious leaders' demand. But they would pay dearly for it. He would let Jesus be crucified if they agreed to get the people to admit that they should serve Caesar: "We have no king but Caesar."

Earlier, Caiaphas had said that one Man (Jesus) had to be sacrificed so Israel might not be destroyed (John 11:48-52). Pilate was ready to sacrifice the nation for destroying one Man. The leaders were so against Jesus' right to be their King that they decided to honor Caesar, whom they always had hated. Pilate planned to hold them to that decision in the future. The leaders would have no more power over him. From this point on, Pilate refused to change. How strange that Jesus' death made Pilate strong!

**Pilate knew that what he was doing was wrong. He knew he was doing it for personal gain. What can we learn from Pilate's example that will**

help us when we are tempted to give up our beliefs on a moral<sup>5</sup> issue for personal gain?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 17

**SUFFERING, DEATH, AND BURIAL  
(John 19:16-42).**

Crucifixion was used by the Romans to scare their enemies. To breathe while on the cross, victims had to push up with their feet to raise their bodies. Death came when the victims were too tired to raise themselves anymore. Death was slow and painful. When the Roman soldiers wanted victims to die quickly, they broke the victims' legs. Then the victims could no longer raise their bodies with their feet, so they could not breathe. An additional part of suffering on the cross was the shame and exposure of hanging naked in front of family and friends.

**How important were the words on the sign Pilate had placed over the cross? John 19:19. Why do you think he had this sign placed there?**

In John 19:19-22, we see a stronger, bolder Pilate. He became bolder because of Jesus' sacrifice. The sign Pilate placed on the cross made Jesus' crucifixion a symbol of Rome's power over Palestine and its own religion. This

sign turned the Crucifixion into a blow against the honor of the Jews and their religious leaders.



**What important theme do we find in John 19:24, 28, 36, 37?**

Pilate felt he was in control. But everything was happening according to Bible prophecy. God is in control, even when humans think they are in control. Jesus chose to die to save us from sin. Bible prophecy pointed to Jesus' death.

In John 19:30, Jesus said, " 'It is finished.' " But what really was finished at the Cross? John 19 seems to be saying that the Cross is the fulfillment of the Bible prophecies pointing toward Jesus as the Savior. Every detail of prophecy was fulfilled: the part

<sup>5</sup>moral—having to do with knowing what is right and wrong.

of Jesus' clothing that was divided (John 19:23), the part of His clothing that was fought over (John 19:23, 24), and how Jesus' body was handled after His death (John 19:35-37). The Cross makes it clear that bad things may happen in our lives. But God is always in control. Followers of Jesus do not need to be afraid of what they cannot control.

**What did Jesus finish, for your sake, at the Cross? Also read Mark 10:45; Hebrews 9:26; and 1 John 2:2.**

## THURSDAY—MARCH 18

### IN SEARCH OF THE CROSS (John 12:20-32).

John offered additional interpretations of the Cross in other parts of his book.

**How does John turn Caiaphas's words into a spiritual lesson from the Cross? John 11:49-52.**

What is so special about the Cross that Paul glories only in it (Galatians 6:14)? Through the words of Caiaphas, John explained that Jesus' death is for every human.

According to Paul, at the Cross the wages of sin were put upon Jesus as our Representative<sup>6</sup> (Romans 6:23). If the law of God could have been changed, we could have been saved without the Cross. In the most powerful way, the Cross supports the fact that the law stands forever. The Cross condemned<sup>7</sup> human sin in the person of Jesus (Romans 8:3; 1 Peter 2:24). But the resurrection<sup>8</sup> of Jesus opened the way for our resurrection at the end of the world (1 Corinthians 15:12-23).

**How did Jesus explain the importance of the Cross? John 12:24, 31-33.**

Jesus used seeds to explain the "one in place of many" theme. Then in John 12:31-33, He showed that the Cross would mark the guilt of Satan and sin in a powerful act of judgment.<sup>9</sup> The Cross also would become a wonderful magnet that would draw (pull) "all men" to Jesus.

What is it about the Cross that attracts (pulls) people? Above all, the Cross supports a person's great self-worth. "One soul is of unlimited value (self-worth). Calvary tells us all that we have value."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Gospel<sup>10</sup> Workers*, p. 184. God loves every person so much that Jesus

<sup>6</sup>representative—someone who acts for another. Jesus is our Representative because He died for us.

<sup>7</sup>condemned—found guilty.

<sup>8</sup>resurrection—return to life.

<sup>9</sup>judgment—to find someone guilty or innocent. In this case, Satan and sin are found guilty.

<sup>10</sup>gospel—the good news of salvation.

would have died for even *one* person (John 3:16).

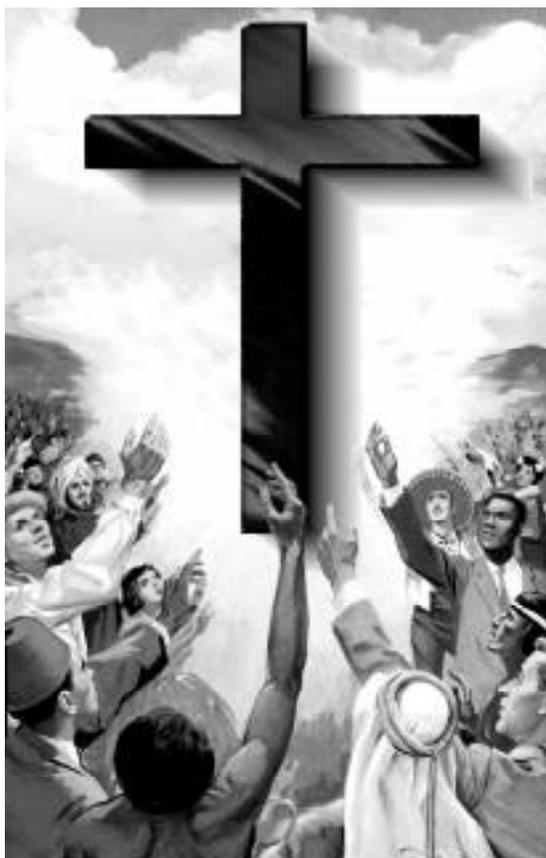
As Creator of the entire universe, Jesus has in His person unlimited value. In dying for you and me, Jesus gave proof of the unlimited value He gives to every one of us. The value we have in the Cross is a value that does not change. It does not matter what we do or who we become. In the end, if we refuse the Cross, our value in eternity<sup>11</sup> will be measured by how much God feels the pain of our absence.

**What should the Cross do to our pride and self-sufficiency?<sup>12</sup> Why?**

#### FRIDAY—MARCH 19

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read *The Desire of Ages*, pages 758–764, where Ellen G. White writes about the Cross without writing about the book of John except for quoting John 19:30, “‘It is finished.’” List the main themes in her words. Then list the main themes in John 18:1–19:42. Also read John 2:1–11 and John 6:50–59; and John 16:7–11. Find the similarities<sup>13</sup> and differences between the themes in Ellen White and John. How does Ellen White deepen and broaden the idea of “One in place of many”?

“Without the Cross, we could have no union with the Father. All our hopes depend on the Cross. The Cross shines the light of the Savior’s love. At the foot of the Cross, sinners look up to the One (Jesus) who died to save them. Then they may find complete joy because their sins are forgiven. Kneeling in faith at the Cross, sinners have reached the highest place they can reach.”  
—Adapted from *The Acts of the Apostles*,<sup>14</sup> pp. 209, 210.



<sup>11</sup>eternity—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

<sup>12</sup>self-sufficiency—thinking we can do everything by ourselves.

<sup>13</sup>similarities—things that are almost the same.

<sup>14</sup>apostles—leaders of the Christian church after Jesus’ returned to heaven. Peter, James, and John were some of the apostles.

“Paul saw that people must first understand Jesus’ character. Then they could love Him or view the Cross with faith. At the Cross, they must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of saved people through all eternity. The Cross is the only way to measure the true value (self-worth) of the human soul.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 273.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

Why does all our hope depend on the Cross? What happened at the Cross that gives us such hope?

**SUMMARY:** The Cross is where human value and meaning are established.

“Jesus paid for us the price that cannot be measured. According to the price Jesus paid, He wants us to recognize our self-worth.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry (Work) of Healing*, p. 498.

When we better understand our value in the Cross, we can begin to avoid feeling bad when other people do not treat us well or when we make mistakes. When we see ourselves in the light of the Cross, three things happen: (1) The Holy Spirit gives us the strength to overcome sin, (2) the Holy Spirit gives us (boldness) to defeat Satan, and (3) we feel the joy that comes from knowing we are children of God. No wonder Paul said, “May I [Paul] never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14, NIV).