

# Tried *and* Crucified



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**ALL ROADS LEAD TO CALVARY.** We have traced the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they inevitably lead to Calvary, His place of rejection, shame, suffering, and death; but to our place of victory, hope, and eternal life.

Calvary, and what followed, sets Jesus of Nazareth apart from all other religious teachers the world has known. Others left wise teachings, did kind deeds, gathered a band of followers, and became the center of movements that persisted and grew after their deaths, some into world religions. But only Jesus, after His death, was resurrected and reigns as a living Savior. And that difference makes all the difference in the world.

**The Week at a Glance:** What reasons did the high priests think they had for putting Jesus to death? How did they influence Pilate? What was the significance of Jesus' being crucified between two thieves? How central is the idea of substitution in understanding the death of Jesus? What happened to the Godhead at the Cross?

**Scripture Passage for the Week:** *Mark 14:53-65, 15:1-41.*

**Memory Verse:** "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (*Mark 15:34*).

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 18.*

## Before the Sanhedrin *(Mark 14:53-65)*.

The trials of Jesus were a farce. They were not intended to impartially examine the evidence but to trump up charges that would result in Jesus' condemnation and death. The religious leaders had reached their decision before any trial began: They wanted Jesus dead. While they attempted to maintain the appearance of legality, the whole process—a hastily called “court” in the middle of the night—made a mockery of justice.

By piecing together the accounts of Jesus' trials in the four Gospels and additional comments by Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary* concludes the following: Jesus was given two preliminary hearings, one before Annas alone and another before Annas and Caiaphas. He was arraigned twice before the Sanhedrin, first by night and then by day. Jesus appeared twice before Pilate and once before Herod, between the two appearances before Pilate (see vol. 5, p. 528).

**As you read this account in Mark, put yourself in the place of the high priest. Why would he want Jesus dead? How could he have “justified” his own course? After the texts, write out what “justification” he believed that he had.**

*Matthew 12:2*

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*Matthew 12:24*

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*Mark 14:62-64*

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*Luke 4:22*

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*John 2:19*

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*John 7:41, 42*

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*John 10:33*

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*John 11:48*

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**We're often astonished, and rightly so, at the blindness of the leaders in their attitude toward Jesus. Yet, after summarizing in your own mind their rationale from the above texts, can you see how easy it was, even despite the evidence, for them to do what they did? What lessons might there be here for us, we who also have a capacity for justifying whatever we do, as well?**

## **Pilate and the Religious Leaders** *(Mark 15:1-19).*

Study the accounts of Jesus before Pilate in Mark 15:1-15 and the other Gospels (*Matt. 27:11-26, Luke 22:66-23:25, John 18:28-19:1-16*). How incredible that a pagan ruler was trying to save Jesus while the religious leaders, supposedly the guardians of the faith, wanted Him dead. How incredible that Jesus would be called “King of the Jews” by a pagan ruler and his soldiers while His own people, who long professed to be waiting for Him, shouted, “Crucify Him!” How incredible that Pilate offered to release Jesus, the Life-Giver, and the crowd wanted Barabbas, a murderer, instead. What a frightening testimony to the power of Satan to deceive hearts that are not surrendered completely to the Lord.

**Who** was more guilty in the eyes of God, Pilate or the religious leaders? What justification do you have for your answer? See *John 19:11*.

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Religion can be a powerful tool either for good or evil. In this account, we see it used for a terribly evil purpose. When people, like the religious leaders here, do things under the idea that they are doing it for God, what can stop them? The notion that one’s actions are being done under a divine impetus can lead one to do a whole host of things that, otherwise, would not be done. After all, if God is leading someone, who or what should be allowed to stand in the way?

**We** never sin in a vacuum, do we? That is, our sins never just impact ourselves. Reread the account for today. Who else was impacted in a very negative way because of what the religious leaders did? What’s the message for us here? What other examples can you find in the Bible of how quickly the influence of sin can spread to hurt others?

**Put yourself in the place of Pilate during the final judgment (*Eccles. 12:14, Rom. 3:6*). What kind of arguments might he try to use to justify his actions? How many times in the last month or so have you used the same principle to justify your own wrong acts or words?**

## **Golgotha** (*Mark 15:16-37*).

Of all the scenes from the life of Jesus, this is the one that most demands our prayerful contemplation. See Him hanging on the cross, bruised, bowed, and bloody, God's only begotten Son. His back is lacerated, His hands and feet pierced with nails. All night He has been up; He has had neither food nor drink since the meal the night before. Now He hangs helpless, skewered between felons, exposed to sun and wind, flies and ants.

**Read carefully Mark 15:27, 28.** What significance do you find in the fact that not only was Jesus crucified as a common criminal, but that he was placed there amid two criminals? How does the Old Testament text (*Isa. 53:12*) quoted there by Mark help answer that question? What point is being forced home here to us about what happened to Jesus on the cross?

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At the Cross, Christ became our Sin Bearer. That is, He became so closely associated with sin that, according to Paul, God “for our sake . . . made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (*2 Cor. 5:21, RSV*). Without quite saying that Jesus was a sinner, which would have, of course, been wrong, Paul came as close as he possibly could, instead bringing out the idea that God regarded Him as a sinner, a transgressor, and thus treated Him as such. In a way that we can barely understand, Jesus—the only One who never sinned—took the place of every sinner.

**Read John 1:29, Galatians 3:13, Hebrews 9:28, and 1 Peter 2:24.** What are they saying that helps us understand the relationship between Jesus and sin at the Cross?

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**How should the realization of what sin did to the Son of God motivate you to seek His power in overcoming sin?**

## The Meaning of Calvary (*Isaiah 53*).

**In** the texts we looked at yesterday, Mark quoted from *Isaiah 53*. Read that chapter and list the phrases that explicitly suggest that “Christ died for our sins”—that is, in our place (*see Isa. 53:4-12*).

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**In** what ways can you see the idea of “substitution,” that Jesus died in our stead? Why is this so important for understanding the plan of salvation?

Christians have tried to explain just how God in Christ provides the way of salvation. They have set forth the various theories of the atonement. Some explanations or suggestions are as follows. How do they work, or not work, for you?

1. The Father was reluctant to save humanity, but Christ’s love provided the answer.
2. Christ’s death was a ransom price paid for the devil to free humanity from his clutches.
3. God’s honor was offended by sin, and Christ had to die to satisfy that offended honor.
4. Christ had to die as an example to the rest of the universe of the effects of sin.
5. Christ died in order to manifest God’s love so that we might be softened and won to Him.
6. On the cross the Father was punishing the Son.

No one theory is sufficient to explain how God provides a way of salvation in Jesus Christ. Many of the various “explanations” worked out—sometimes in great detail—by Christian thinkers over the centuries contain elements of truth, but the full story is much greater. The answer lies in God, who Himself provides the atonement. Note the following truths set forth in the Bible.

1. In the plan of salvation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are One in love and action. We must avoid portraying the Father as cruel or merciless and the Son as merciful by contrast. (*See John 3:16*.)
2. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (*2 Cor. 5:19*).
3. The death was necessary (*Rom. 3:24-26, Heb. 9:22*).
4. Christ died in our place (*2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:3*).
5. The Cross is the supreme evidence of divine love (*Rom. 5:7, 8*).

## The Death of Jesus *(Mark 15:33-41)*.

**“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** *(Mark 15:34)*.

“Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

**Dwell** on this Ellen White quote. How does it help us understand what happened at the Cross? What does it tell us about the character of sin? Of God? How does it help us understand what our salvation cost God?

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Although Jesus tapped the depths of despair in His cry of woe—“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”—His final words, “It is finished” *(John 19:30)*, expressed confidence, hope, and trust anyway. He declared that He had won the last decisive battle with Satan; the outcome of the great controversy with evil was assured. The war isn’t over yet, but we know how it will end, because Jesus won the victory on Calvary. Finally, commending Himself into the Father’s keeping, Jesus bowed His head and died.

**Think about it. Jesus was One with the Father from eternity** *(John 1:1, 2)*; **He and the Father were One in unity, action, and purpose** *(Gen. 1:26, 3:22, John 10:30)*; **and yet, there, at the cross, Jesus felt this overwhelming sense of separation because of sin! There was a sundering of the Godhead itself there at Calvary! Have you ever been separated from someone that you love and feel very close to? How did that separation make you feel? How could those experiences, in a small way, not only help you appreciate what Jesus did for us but also help you live in loving obedience to the God who went through all this for you?**

**FURTHER STUDY:** Compare the parallel accounts in Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1-56; Luke 22:66-23:49; John 18:12-14, 19-19:37. Read Ellen G. White’s “Before Annas and the Court of Caiaphas,” “In Pilate’s Judgment Hall,” “Calvary,” and “It is Finished,” in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 698-715, 723-764.

“The Captain of our salvation was perfected through suffering. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was necessary for the awful darkness to gather about His soul because of the withdrawal of the Father’s love and favor; for He was standing in the sinner’s place, and this darkness every sinner must experience. The righteous One must suffer the condemnation and wrath of God, not in vindictiveness; for the heart of God yearned with greatest sorrow when His Son, the guiltless, was suffering the penalty of sin. This sundering of the divine powers will never again occur throughout the eternal ages.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 924.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Write out a small narrative, putting yourself in the place of Caiaphas. Justify why you had to have Jesus put to death. Bring it to class and have members read their accounts and then discuss whatever you can learn from this exercise.
- 2 Why did Jesus have to die in order to save us?
- 3 As a class, discuss the implication of the statement: “The whole purpose of the Cross was merely to help us learn to trust God.” Why do you agree or disagree with it?
- 4 What could you do, as a church, to be more Cross-centered? How can you make sure that when people think of your church, they first and foremost think of a community whose individual lives have been changed by Christ’s death on the cross?

**Summary:** Christ died for our sins. Only as we see ourselves at Calvary—see and confess that Jesus died for me, in my place—does the Cross reach us with its full import. “If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

# What Changed Michael?

Ohemaa Akyaa Archin

“Michael. . . Michael!”\* Mother called.

“I’ll be with you in a minute, Mum!” Michael called back. “I’m having quiet time.”

“What?” Mother said, surprised. Michael had avoided family worship and hadn’t read his Bible in months. Mother decided to go see what he was really doing. She peeked through the half-open door.

She saw Michael sitting on his bed reading his Bible. Then she noticed that the posters of rap stars were gone. In their place was a large picture of Jesus with a message under it that read, “I love you for saving my life. I will serve you forever.”

Mother quietly walked to where her husband sat and shared what she had seen. A few minutes later Michael came into the room. His hair was combed, he was neatly dressed, and he smiled.

Michael was the eldest son in an Adventist family in Ghana, West Africa. He was outgoing and much loved. He grew into a strikingly handsome teenager. But when he entered senior high school, something happened to him. This once obedient son became disobedient. He no longer came when he was called, no longer willingly took part in family worship or church activities. He smoked, hung out with the wrong crowd at school, and worried his parents to tears. His behavior became so bad that his parents worried about his influence on the younger children. They prayed daily for their wayward son.

When December break approached, the young people in the church began talking about the upcoming youth camp. As the time drew near, more and more young people talked enthusiastically about youth camp, and to Michael’s parents’ surprise, Michael decided to go. Even the youth leader wondered whether it was a good idea to let Michael go. Would the other children be influenced by his behavior?

The youth arrived at camp and were assigned their housing. The days were so packed with activities that there was no time for mischief. Michael took part in the games, the singing times, and he even listened during lectures. “No matter who you are or how sinful you have been,” the speaker said, “God can wash you clean and pure.” During the call of dedication, Michael gave his life back to God. Michael returned home a changed boy, and the change lasted.

\* Michael is not his real name.



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