

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

questions

Read **John 18:28-19:16** – *Jesus Before Pilate*

1. If you were an observer at Jesus' trial before Pilate and were asked to summarize the proceedings, what would you identify as the key events or turning points of this hearing?

Answers will be different for everyone. The summary can be organized by how many times that Pilate came out to the crowd and then went back into his palace, which reflects his indecision.

18:29 – Pilate came out and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

18:33 – Pilate went back inside and summoned Jesus and talks to him

18:38 – Pilate went back out to the crowd and says, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

19:1 – Pilate has Jesus flogged and went out to the crowd again and said he found no basis for a charge against Jesus.

19:8 – Pilate goes back into the palace, afraid of the crowd's demand to crucify Jesus; he again speaks with Jesus.

19:11 – Jesus informs Pilate that the power he has over Jesus has been given from above. Pilate continues to try and set Jesus free.

19:13 – Pilate brings Jesus out to the crowd – "Here is your king!"

The crowd continues to demand crucifixion – and Pilate finally gives in

- ♥ Describe Pilate as he is depicted in this story. What contradictions do you see in his character?

Pilate was convinced of Jesus' innocence, yet he could not stand up to the Jewish leaders and their tactics. Fear for his own well-being won out over justice. The going in and out shows his indecision and fear.

- ♥ What is the irony of **18:28**? Why is it easier to follow religious traditions than to follow Jesus?

The Jews wouldn't enter the palace to avoid becoming "unclean or defiled" for the Passover while all the time carrying out a huge miscarriage of justice which, of course, showed how defiled they really were.

Religious rules are easier to follow because they are only outward signs. They can be obeyed even when the heart and motives are wrong. Following Jesus requires a clean and pure heart before God from whom nothing is hidden. We can fool other people by our actions, but never God.

2. Why did the Jewish religious leaders take this case to the Roman governor, Pilate? Why didn't they try and condemn Jesus in their own religious courts (**18:31**)?

Because they were under Roman rule, they had no right to execute anyone. (This rule was put in place by the Romans so that the Jewish courts would not condemn and put to death those Jews who might be sympathetic to Roman rule.)

If the Jews had not been under Roman rule, they, as a nation, would have had the authority to execute Jesus. However, the Jewish mode for capital punishment was *stoning*, not *crucifixion* (as with the Romans). Why was it important that Jesus die by crucifixion (**Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Galatians 3:13; John 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:32**)?

The most severe punishment for sin under the Old Testament Law was for a murderer to be executed and hung on a tree to show he was under God's curse for taking the life of a person created in God's image. This was a prophetic punishment pointing to the time when the Messiah would take on God's curse against sin for the whole human race. Jesus not only died in our place, but he took on himself the rightly deserved curse of the whole human race. Jesus knew he would die of crucifixion (not stoning) when he said that he would be "lifted up."

♥ Who is really in control of Jesus' trial (19:11)? How can this be a lesson to you when things look bad? Even Jesus' crucifixion was under God's control. Even bad and evil things in our life can be used for God's purposes. God promises to take care of those who are his children and belong to him. This does not mean, however, that we will not experience suffering. Sometimes God's **uses** suffering to accomplish his purposes.

3. How were the charges that the religious leaders brought against Jesus specifically designed to be brought before Pilate, the Roman governor (Luke 23:2)?

The Jews knew that they could not get Jesus executed by bringing religious charges against him, so they made up political charges that looked like treason – crimes against Rome and Caesar. Pilate could have ignored religious charges, but he could not ignore crimes against Caesar.

Jesus admits to being a king, but not of this world (18:36). From the Scriptures below, what do you learn about this kingdom?

| Scripture | Facts About the Kingdom |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| John 3:3 | We enter God's Kingdom by being "born again" |
| Luke 17:20-21 | The Kingdom is not an outwardly, earthy kingdom; it is within us when God rules in our hearts, minds and bodies. |
| Matthew 12:28; 1 Corinthians 4:20 | The Kingdom is where God's power defeats evil and wrong. |
| Romans 14:17 | The Kingdom is not about outwardly rules and regulations; it is living a life of goodness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. |
| Revelation 5:9-10 | The Kingdom consists of people from every people group who have been ransomed by Jesus blood (bought back from sin and death) and who have been made priests of God, to serve Him and to reign on the earth forever. |

- ♥ If you consider yourself a Christ-follower, what implications does Jesus' statement, "My kingdom is not of this world," have on your priorities, actions and lifestyle?
- ♥ What would it mean for you to acknowledge Jesus as king of our life? **Who** or **what** competes with Christ's authority in your life? Do you let your King decide your priorities? How so?
- ♥ What does Jesus promise to give his subjects in return for their making his kingdom their primary aim (Matthew 6:31-3)? Discuss how this works and what it would look like in your life. What are the risks?

4. Why does Jesus bring up the subject of *truth* with Pilate in 18:37? What was he hoping to accomplish? Do you think Jesus is defending himself or trying to engage Pilate? How so?

From Jesus' point of view, Pilate was a person in need, and Jesus gave him the opportunity to receive the truth if he would have it. Jesus made a greater effort to penetrate Pilate's mind than to defend himself. Truth was the perfect subject to bring up since Pilate, as judge, should have been looking for it and concerned about it. When Pilate said, "What is truth?" he was very near to the kingdom of God. In the end, Pilate sacrificed Truth for security and in the end he lost both.

- ♥ When Pilate asked, "What is truth?", what tone of voice do you think Pilate used (18:38)? Sarcastic? Sincere? Despairing? Wistful? What is *ironic* about his question (John 1:14; 14:6)?

Different scholars interpret Pilate's question in different ways and there is really no way to know for sure how serious or sincere Pilate was – except that Jesus seemed to take him seriously. Pilate's question is ironic because the Truth himself - the One sent from God full of grace and truth – was standing right next to him. Pilate was looking at and talking to Truth.

- ♥ If someone asked you, "What is truth?", how would you answer? How important is truth? Why?
- ♥ Jesus knew who he was, why he was born and what his mission was (18:37). How well do you know these things about yourself? How would knowing ourselves in this way help us in times of adversity?

5. What choice did Pilate present to the Jews (18:38-39) and what did Pilate expect their answer to be? Why (John 12:12-19)? Apparently it was the custom to release a Jewish prisoner at Passover time to appease the people. This was probably a prisoner who was popular with the people, a "folk hero" type who tried to rebel against Rome. Pilate thought the people would be pleased to have Jesus released (even if the officials and priests didn't like it) because just a few days before this Jesus entered Jerusalem to shouts of Hosanna! and Blessed is the King of Israel as many people waved palm branches. Pilate was betting that the people would overrule the desire of the Jewish leaders.

♥ Pilate thought he had found the perfect compromise in releasing Jesus as the "Passover prisoner" (18:39). How did he think his solution would satisfy the religious leaders, the people and himself? By releasing Jesus as a "prisoner", he was admitting that Jesus was a criminal, therefore appeasing the Jewish leaders. Based on the reception Jesus received when he entered Jerusalem the Sunday before, he thought that releasing Jesus would appease the people. And, by releasing Jesus, he could also clear his own conscience since he knew Jesus was guilty of any crime.

♥ How does Barabbas gaining his freedom at Christ's expense illustrate the Gospel (Good News)? Jesus came to die in our place and take upon himself our penalty. That is exactly what he did for Barabbas. How does it illustrate your own story?

6. What was Pilate probably hoping would be the result of having Jesus flogged (19:1-5)? What was the result (19:6)?

He was probably hoping that the flogging would appease the religious leaders and that would stop demanding that Jesus be executed. Instead, the chief priests and officials began to shout, demanding that Jesus be crucified.

♥ What tactic did the chief priests use in 9:12, 15 to trap Pilate and finally get him to hand over Jesus? They used a political argument, saying that if Pilate let Jesus go, he was guilty also of being a traitor to Caesar. What emotion were they playing on in Pilate (19:8)? Why is this emotion such a good weapon? They were playing on Pilate's fear. Fear crowds out reason and will cause people to do things they normally would not do. God's peace and presence is the antidote to fear. God tells us to not be anxious or fearful about anything, but to instead pray, telling God what we need. He promises his peace to those who do this (Phil 4:6-7).

♥ When have you been tempted to do what *works* rather than what is *right*? What **position** or **possession** might you be tempted to preserve at the expense of doing the right thing?

♥ Where do you need to stand for truth regardless of the consequences?

7. Jesus was falsely accused and convicted, and even though he had the power to save himself, he didn't use it. Why was Jesus able to do this (1 Peter 2:23)?

Instead of trying to defend himself and prove his innocence, Jesus entrusted himself to God left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

♥ When you suffer unjustly or suffer for doing good, what help do you find in 1 Peter 2:23 and 4:19?

♥ How does it make you feel to realize the injustice done to Jesus at his trial before Pilate? What do you think Jesus wants you to do about present day injustices? What will you do?

♥ How do you think a non-Christian would view Jesus after reading about him and the way he conducted himself at his trial? Respect? Disdain? Admiration? Mystified? Other?

Read John 19:17-37 - *The Crucifixion*

John makes no attempt to describe the physical horror of the crucifixion, probably because it was a process already well known to his readers and he wished to emphasize other aspects of Jesus' ordeal. If you have never read an account of what the human body goes through during crucifixion and how the crucified one finally dies, you might want to do that. Crucifixion was probably the most diabolical form of death ever invented. Crucifixion was so horrible that Rome did not allow a Roman to be sentenced to it, no matter how atrocious the crime. Jesus submitted willingly to this terrible death, not only to take all our sins on himself, but to also take on the kind of death our sins deserve. He did it all so that we could be restored to a love relationship with God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

8. Instead of describing all the details of Jesus' crucifixion, John has other reasons for writing his account. What was one of his purposes as shown in **19:24, 28** and **36-37**?

John wanted to show that Old Testament Scripture prophesied what would happen to Jesus – even down to the details.

- ♥ Why do you think John thought it was important to show that Old Testament Scripture prophesied the details of Jesus death?

Events in the New Testament that are prophesied in the Old Testament are a powerful testimony to the Divine origin of Scripture and the accuracy of Scripture even to the smallest detail. Old Testament prophecies also reveal that the crucifixion was God's plan, not man's. If God prophesied the crucifixion hundreds of years before it happened, we know that the crucifixion did not take God by surprise. It happened for his purposes and we see it as a victory and not a defeat.

- ♥ Read **Isaiah 53:1-12**. How many parallels do you see between these verses and Jesus' life experience? If there is time, this is a good question to discuss with your small group.

- ♥ Is the fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures important to your own belief in Jesus today? Why or why not?

9. What did Jesus mean when he said it is finished (**Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:11-14**)?

Jesus offered himself to God as a sacrifice for our sins. Unlike the Old Testament priests who offered an animal sacrifice once a year on the Day of Atonement to "cover" the sins of the people, Jesus sacrificed himself once and for all, summing up all the other sacrifices in the sacrifice of himself – the final solution of sin. Christ's sacrifice was a one-time event and it took care of sin forever. Christ's sacrifice was a perfect sacrifice by a perfect person to perfect some very imperfect people. By this single offering, he did everything that needed to be done for everyone who accepts his sacrifice. This is why Jesus said, "It is finished."

- ♥ How would you describe the necessity of the crucifixion of Christ to an unbelieving friend?
- ♥ How has the death of Jesus personally affected your life?
- ♥ What does the Christian faith offer that no other religion does?

10. Jesus said, "Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (**Luke 14:27**).

According to **Galatians 2:20** and **5:24**, what do you think it means to "carry our cross?" How is it done? To be crucified with Christ and to carry our cross means that we have died to having to get our own way and instead we live in submission to God and his will for us. We identify ourselves completely with Christ and our ego is not longer central. Instead Christ lives in us and through us. To carry our cross daily means that we carry with us, at all times, the willingness to die to self and what self wants, any time it conflicts with what God wants. We die to the old self which was ruled by sin and we embrace and live from the new self – the new "Christ-I" which is the new creation or new person that comes into existence when we personally accept what Jesus did for us on the cross.

- ♥ Why is the cross the symbol for Christianity? In what ways does it sum up what Christianity is?
- ♥ Even though Jesus was God's son, he learned obedience by what he suffered (**Hebrews 5:8**). What are some things you have learned through suffering?
- ♥ How do you view the crucifixion: Necessary evil? Tragedy? Victory? Other? Why?

11. The Cross of Christ not only *happened*, over 2000 years ago, but it continues to *happen* in our present-day lives, influencing us with its power and mystery. What are some specific benefits that Cross of Christ continues to work in our lives (**Isaiah 53:5; Colossians 1:19-22; Hebrews 2:14-15**)?

Isaiah 53:5 - Because Jesus took the punishment for our sins, we continue to be made whole and to experiencing peace with God. Because of his wounds, we continue to receive healing.

Colossians 1:19-22 – Though the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, God reconciled everything (including us) to himself after sin separated us from him. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, we can go into the very presence of God and he views us as holy and blameless, without a single fault!

Hebrews 2:14-15 – The power that the devil holds over us was broken and destroyed when Jesus died on the cross. The Cross continues to work it's power today and we can continue to live in spiritual victory and free from the fear of death. Our spiritual victory does not mean we won't ever have to do battle. The enemy still will try to exert his power over us, but because of the Cross, our victory is assured.

response

- What aspect of Jesus death has made the deepest impression on you and why?
- If the horrible and unjust crucifixion of Jesus can bring about something incredibly wonderful (our salvation), what hope does that give you about suffering, tragedies and disasters you may experience and God's ability to work good from them?
- What is a situation in your life where you need God to bring good from bad? Do you believe he will (**Romans 8:28**)? How can you be *sure* that He will (**Romans 8:32**)?

Encounter with Jesus

With your spiritual imagination and the eyes of your heart, see yourself at the Crucifixion. Spend some time at the foot of the cross, looking into Jesus' eyes. What specific sins and failures in your life do you need for Jesus to take upon Himself as he hangs dying on the cross? What *life, power* and *love* do you sense flowing back to you from Jesus as he takes on the penalty for your sins? Tell Jesus how much you love him. Listen for his words of love and affirmation to you.

BELOW IS THE EXTRA SCRIPTURE FOR LESSON 19 THAT YOU CAN PRINT OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME

NIV additional Scripture (except for John 12:12-17)

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, **23** you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

John 3:14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

John 8:28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

John 12:32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Luke 17:20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, **21** nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

Matthew 12:28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

1Corinthians 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. **10** You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1Peter 4:19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Hebrews 9:24-27 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. **25** Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. **26** Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. **27** Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, **28** so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Hebrews 10:11-14 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. **13** Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, **14** because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Colossians 1:19-22 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— **15** and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

NLT additional Scripture (except John 12:12-17)

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 “If someone has committed a crime worthy of death and is executed and then hanged on a tree, 23 the body must never remain on the tree overnight. You must bury the body that same day, for anyone hanging on a tree is cursed of God. Do not defile the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession.

Galatians 3:13 But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

John 3:14-15 And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so I, the Son of Man, must be lifted up on a pole, 15 so that everyone who believes in me will have eternal life.

John 8:28 So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will realize that I am he and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak what the Father taught me.

John 12:32 And when I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw everyone to myself.”

Luke 23:2 They began at once to state their case: “This man has been leading our people to ruin by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.”

John 3:3 Jesus replied, “I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God.”

Luke 17:20-21 One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will the Kingdom of God come?” Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God isn’t ushered in with visible signs. 21 You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is among you.”

Matthew 12:28 But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.

1 Corinthians 4:20 For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God’s power.

Romans 14:17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song with these words: “You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were killed, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 And you have caused them to become God’s Kingdom and his priests. And they will reign on the earth.”

Matthew 6:31-33 “So don’t worry about having enough food or drink or clothing. 32 Why be like the pagans who are so deeply concerned about these things? Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, 33 and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.

John 1:14 So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.

John 14:6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

1 Peter 2:23 He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

1 Peter 4:19 So if you are suffering according to God’s will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you.

Hebrews 9:24-26 For Christ has entered into heaven itself to appear now before God as our Advocate. He did not go into the earthly place of worship, for that was merely a copy of the real Temple in heaven. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the earthly high priest who enters the Most Holy Place year after year to offer the blood of an animal. 26 If that had been necessary, he would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But no! He came once for all time, at the end of the age, to remove the power of sin forever by his sacrificial death for us.

Hebrews 9:27-28 And just as it is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes judgment, 28 so also Christ died only once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again but not to deal with our sins again. This time he will bring salvation to all those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 10:11-14 Under the old covenant, the priest stands before the altar day after day, offering sacrifices that can never take away sins. 12 But our High Priest offered himself to God as one sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down at the place of highest honor at God’s right hand. 13 There he waits until his enemies are humbled as a footstool under his feet. 14 For by that one offering he perfected forever all those whom he is making holy.

Galatians 2:20 I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!

Colossians 1:19-22 For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, 20 and by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross. 21 This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, 22 yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.