

PASSION WEEK: FRIDAY; THE CRUCIFIXION

Matthew 27:31-66; Mark 15:20-47; Luke 23:26-56; John 19:17-42

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Jesus

Key-location: Calvary

Key-repetitions:

- Jesus spoke seven times while on the cross.
- Different reactions to the crucifixion were recorded: women (Lk 23:26-33); mockers (Mt 27:39, 38, 41); criminals (Lk 23:40-43); soldiers (Mt 27:54; Lk 23:46-47); witness who returned home distressed (Lk 23:48); Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (Jn 19:38-40).
- There were several supernatural phenomena: three hours of darkness (Mt 27:45); the curtain of the Temple was torn in two; an earthquake; and dead people were raised to life (Mt 27:51-53; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45).

Key-attitudes:

- The self-control of Jesus when he experienced intense pain on the cross.
- The forgiveness that Jesus manifested.
- The mockery of those who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion.
- The repentance of one of the criminals.
- After the crucifixion: the fear of the crowd; the soldiers' admiration; the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus; and the fear of the priests and Pharisees who wanted guards at Jesus' grave.

Initial-situation:

Two legal systems condemned Jesus: the Jewish Sanhedrin Council and the Roman civil court. In Palestine, the Roman government allowed the Sanhedrin Council to judge religious causes. If the sentence by the Sanhedrin resulted in the death penalty, execution could only occur if the case was approved by the government in a civil judgment. After the Jewish Sanhedrin Council gave Jesus the death penalty, they took him to the Roman governor, Pilate.

Pilate wanted to free Jesus; he knew that Jesus was innocent and that the Jewish leaders had condemned him out of envy. But the people screamed, "Crucify him!" Pilate saw that a riot was starting; he washed his hands and said he was innocent of Jesus' blood. He tried again to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard this, he handed Jesus over to the Jewish leaders to be crucified.

Initial-problem:

Soldiers led Jesus away to be crucified.

Final-situation:

Jesus' tomb was sealed and soldiers posted to guard it.

BIBLE STORY

FRIDAY

On the Way to the Cross Mt 27:31-34; Mk 15:20-23; Lk 22:26-33; Jn 19:17

Soldiers led Jesus away. They seized Simon from Cyrene, who happened to be coming in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd followed Jesus, including women who wept for him. Jesus turned and told the women, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me; cry for yourselves and for your children. Someday people will say, 'Blessed are the women who never conceived! Blessed are the women who never bore babies, who never nursed. People will call to the mountains, 'Fall on us' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' If men do these things to a green tree, what will happen when it is deadwood?"

Two criminals were also led out with him to be executed (Lk 23:26-33).

They offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it (Mk 15:23).

Crucifixion Mt 27:35-49; Mk 15:24-37; Lk 23:33-45; Jn 19:18-29

The soldiers took Jesus and the two criminals to the place called the Skull. There they crucified Jesus with one criminal on his right, and the other on his left. Jesus prayed for those who were responsible for his crucifixion, "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing" (Lk 23:33-34).

Pilate ordered a sign fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. The sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. The Jewish high priests protested to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written will not be changed" (Jn 19:18-22).

People passed by and hurled insults at Jesus, shaking their heads and shouting, "You were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. If you are God's Son, save yourself and come down from the cross."

The high priests, the teachers of the Law of Moses and the religious leaders also mocked Jesus saying, "He saved others, but he can't save himself! If he's the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we'll believe in him. He trusts God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him. He even said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the two criminals heaped insults on Jesus (Mt 27:39-44).

One of the criminals who hung there cursed Jesus, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

But the other criminal rebuked him, "Don't you fear God? Aren't you under the same sentence? We deserve our punishment. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will join me in paradise" (Lk 23:39-43).

The soldiers who had nailed Jesus to the cross took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each of them. They came to the robe, which was seamless, woven in one piece from a single piece of cloth. The soldiers said to one another, "Let's not tear it. Let's throw dice to see who will get it."

This happened to make the Scripture come true which said, "They divided up my garments and gambled for my clothing" (Jn 19:23-24).

Jesus' mother stood near the cross, along with her sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple John, whom he loved, standing nearby. Jesus said to his mother, "Dear woman, this man is your son," and to the disciple, "She is now your mother." From that time on, John took Mary to live in his home (Jn 19:25-27).

From the noon hour until three o'clock, darkness covered the land. About three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"

Some bystanders heard this and said, "He's calling Elijah."

Immediately, one person ran and got a sponge and filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Wait! Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him" (Mt 27:45-49).

Death and Burial of Jesus Mt 27:50-66; Mk 15:37-47; Lk 23:46-56; Jn 19:30-42

Jesus knew that he had finished his work; in order for the Scripture to be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there. Someone soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. Jesus drank the wine and said, "It is finished" (Jn 19:28-30).

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, I put my spirit into your hands." Then he breathed his last breath (Lk 23:46).

At that moment, the Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. An earthquake hit and rocks split apart. Graves broke open and the bodies of many of God's people were raised to life and came out of their tombs. After Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and were seen by many people.

The soldiers who were guarding Jesus felt the earthquake and saw all that had happened; they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Mt 27:51-54).

The people who had gathered to witness the crucifixion saw what took place, and they beat their breasts in anguish and went away. But those who knew Jesus, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance and watched (Lk 23:48-49).

Now it was Friday, the next day would be both a Sabbath and the Passover. It was a special Sabbath for the Jews, and they did not want the bodies left on the crosses during that Sabbath. They petitioned Pilate to have the legs broken to speed death, and then the bodies taken down. The soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they didn't break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. This happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another Scripture says, "They will stare at the one whose side they pierced with a spear" (Jn 19:31-37).

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council had been waiting for the kingdom of God. Joseph went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead. Pilate summoned the army officer and verified that Jesus had already died. Then he gave Joseph the body (Mk 15:42-45).

Joseph had kept it a secret that he was a disciple of Jesus, because he feared the Jewish leaders. Joseph, with Nicodemus, took the body away. Nicodemus had visited Jesus at night. Now he came in broad daylight carrying a seventy-five pound mixture of myrrh and aloes. The two men took Jesus' body, and following the Jewish burial custom, they wrapped it with spices in strips of linen cloth. There was a garden near the place where Jesus was crucified. In the garden there was a new tomb that had never been used. Because it was time to prepare for the Jewish Sabbath, they were in a hurry to put Jesus' body into the nearby tomb (Jn 19:38-42).

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw how Jesus' body was laid in the tomb. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the Law of Moses (Lk 23:55-56).

SATURDAY

Guards at the Tomb Mt 27:62-66

The next day was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The high priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember what that liar announced while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be guarded until the third day. If you don't, his disciples may steal the body and tell the people that he has risen from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

Pilate answered, "Post guards. Make the tomb as secure as you know how." The Jewish religious leaders went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone that covered the tomb, and posting guards (Mt 27:62-66).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the things Jesus said while he was on the cross?
2. How did different people react to Jesus' crucifixion?
3. What supernatural phenomena happened while Jesus was on the cross?
4. Why did the religious leaders want soldiers to guard Jesus' tomb?
5. What is the importance of Jesus' crucifixion to you?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. Jesus' death fulfills prophecy. The fulfillment of prophecies shows that God is omniscient; he reveals future events. He is omnipotent, he has the power to make happen everything he promises. Some of the prophecies fulfilled during the crucifixion: they divided his garments (Ps 22:18; Jn 19:24); they gave him vinegar to drink (Ps 69:21; Jn 19:28-29); they didn't break any of his bones (Ps 34:20; Jn 19:33, 36); they looked on the one they pierced (Ze 12:10; Jn 19:37).
2. Jesus died after completing the work he came to do. When Jesus said, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30), he meant that he had completed the work that the Father had given him to do. On the cross, he paid the debt that people have with God because of their sins. He offered the sacrifice to remove the sins of the world (He 9:28).
3. Jesus' death was verified. The soldiers saw that Jesus was dead (Jn 19:33). One of the soldiers verified his death by piercing Jesus' side with a spear (Jn 19:34). The apostle John was a witness to Jesus' death (Jn 19:35). Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus verified Jesus' death by burying him (Jn 19:38-41).
4. On the cross:
 - 1) Christ won the victory:
 - Over powers and authorities (Col 2:15);
 - He defeated the Devil (He 2:14).
 - 2) Christ redeemed us from spiritual slavery:
 - All who sin are slaves (Jn 8:34);
 - Jesus came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28);
 - Jesus rescued us with his blood (1 Pe 1:18-19);
 - Christians have been set free from being slaves to sin (Rom 6:17-18);
 - Christ redeemed us from wickedness (Tit 2:14).

- 3) Christ offered himself as a sacrifice:
- If no blood is shed, no sins are forgiven (He 9:22);
 - By the sacrifice of himself, Jesus totally took away the sin (He 9:26);
 - Jesus is the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29).
- 4) Jesus took the punishment for sin:
- Christ is the sacrifice of atonement for our sins (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; Rom 3:25). This means that on the cross, Christ diverted God's just anger from us sinners to himself.
5. God tore the curtain of the Temple in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38). The Temple had three main parts: (1) *the courts* where the crowds gathered; (2) *the Holy Place* where only the priest could enter; (3) *the Holy of Holies*. No one could go through the curtain from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies except the High Priest. He could only enter it one day out of the year, on the Day of the Atonement (Ex 26:31-37; Lev 16:1-30). The curtain that God tore was the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place.
6. Symbolically, the curtain separated the Holy God from sinful people. The curtain was torn from top to bottom, showing that God opened the way for sinful people to enter into his presence. No longer is there a separation between the worshiper and his God (Jn 14:6). The entrance to the Holy of Holies is open, because Christ made the atonement for sin. Christians can enter into the presence of God without depending upon sacrifices or priests. They only depend upon Christ's sacrifice. (See Hebrew 9:1-8; 10:19-22.)
6. The secret disciple cannot last. The secret will destroy the discipleship, or the discipleship will destroy the secret. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were among the Jewish leaders who had faith in Jesus, but they didn't speak openly in favor of him, because they were afraid of other leaders' opinion, and they wanted men's approval more than God's approval (Jn 12:42). The reality of Jesus' death gave them courage to openly manifest that they were disciples of Jesus (Lk 23:50-53; Jn 19:38-40).