

The Trials of Jesus

Passages: Mt 26:26–74; 27:1–26; Mk 14:53–72; 15:1–15; Lk 22:54–71; 23:1–25; Jn 18:12–40; 19:1–16

Memory Verse

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
Understand the events that took place between Jesus Christ’s arrest and His crucifixion.	1. God is love. 2. God’s prophecies never fail.	1. Boldly testify for Christ. 2. Be obedient in doing the will of God. 3. Emulate Christ’s virtues when facing wrongful accusations.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Jesus Is Arrested
- B. Jesus Is Tried in Court
- C. Jesus’ Response

Life Application

- 1. Jesus was innocent.
- 2. Jesus was obedient.
- 3. Jesus was silent.

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Despite the pain and anguish He was forced to suffer, Jesus Christ obeyed God’s will even till the end. Are we able to remain as faithful as Jesus was when faced with trials and wrongful accusations?

Spiritual Teachings

A. Jesus Is Arrested

What would you do if you were falsely accused, illegally tried, and then condemned? Let us first read John 18:1–12.

We learned when He prayed in Gethsemane that Jesus was “exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (Mt 26:38), but God sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Him (Lk 22:43). After the prayer, He prepared Himself for the arrest, knowing full well the abuse that His body would soon suffer. Shortly after, armed with “lanterns, torches, and weapons,” troops and officers of the chief priests and Pharisees all came for Jesus (Jn 18:3).

Yet, Jesus chose not to flee. He walked forward and met them, asking them whom they were seeking (Jn 18:4)! Further, even when His life was in danger, Jesus showed His compassion, requesting that they let His disciples go free (v. 8). And when Peter cut off the high priest’s servant’s right ear (v. 10), Jesus healed the servant despite his participation in Jesus’ arrest (Lk 22:51). The Romans then came forward, arrested, and bound Jesus (Jn 18:12).

In difficult situations, we usually concern ourselves with our safety and well-being. Nevertheless, Jesus, who had prayed to the Father to release Him from this suffering, chose to be obedient to God’s will above all, both in allowing His arrest and in manifesting the love of God, even to His enemies.

B. Jesus Is Tried in Court

	Judge	Text	Decision	Estimated Time	Place
Religious trials by the Jews	Annas	Jn 18:12–23	Guilty	2:00–2:30	House of Priest
	Caiaphas	Mt 26:57–68; Mk 14:53–65; Lk 22:54, 63–65; Jn 18:24	Guilty	2:30–5:00	House of Priest
	Sanhedrin	Mt 27:1; Mk 15:1; Lk 22:66–71	Guilty	6:00	Court of Sanhedrin
Civil trials by the Romans	Pilate	Mt 27:2, 11–14; Mk 15:2–5; Lk 23:1–6; Jn 18:28–38	Innocent	6:30	Praetorium
	Herod	Lk 23:7–12	Innocent	7:00	Jerusalem
	Pilate	Mt 27:15–26; Mk 15:6–15; Lk 23:13–25; Jn 18:39–19:16	Innocent	7:30–8:00	Praetorium

The First Trial

Now let us read John 18:13–24. Following His arrest, Jesus stood first before Annas, a former high priest and father-in-law of high priest Caiaphas.

Annas questioned Jesus concerning two subjects: His disciples and His teachings (v. 19). Such a preliminary inquiry was unlawful under Hebrew code. In any case before the court, the accusing witnesses must define their charge against the accused, and the accused must be protected from any effort to make him testify against himself. Jesus knew that Annas was breaking the law in an attempt to solicit testimony from Him. Though the Bible does not record an answer to the first question, Jesus responded to the second by telling Annas to ask witnesses about what He taught (vv. 20–21). Upon saying this, an officer struck Him with the palm of his hand (v. 22), to which Jesus said, “If I have spoken

evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" (v. 23). When Annas was finished with Jesus, they brought Him before Caiaphas (v. 24).

The Second Trial

Now, let us read Mark 14:53–65.

Caiaphas and a group of men, including false witnesses, gathered at his house. But these false witnesses contradicted one another (vv. 56–59). Caiaphas wanted to bring this case down to Pilate, so with a lack of valid witnesses, he once again broke the law and spoke to the accused. But Jesus kept silent (vv. 60–61). Only when Caiaphas asked Jesus, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (v. 61) did He finally answer: "I am" (v. 62). This statement was considered blasphemous and worthy of death. So the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?" (vv. 63–64). Those present during the trial not only condemned Him, but also spat on Him, blindfolded Him, beat Him, and mocked Him (v. 65).

Caiaphas broke the law again by appealing to the gathered. As moderator, Caiaphas did not possess the authority to decide the outcome; only the council had that right. Yet, Caiaphas instead appealed to those gathered: men biased against Jesus, who had already condemned Him long before the trial.

The Third Trial

We will continue with Luke 22:66–71.

The third trial was the shortest of all. First thing in the morning, the religious leaders brought Him before the Sanhedrin and again broke the law by making Jesus testify against Himself. Straightforward and to the point, they commanded Him: "If You are the Christ, tell us" (v. 67). Jesus understood that the council did not care how He responded; in their minds, He was already guilty. Thus He boldly said, "Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" (v. 69). So, the council asked another question: "Are You then the Son of God?" Giving no excuse or defense, Jesus responded, "You rightly say that I am" (v. 70).

Upon hearing Jesus' response, the whole multitude arose and led Him to Pilate (Lk 23:1). The Pharisees and Sadducees, normally in contention with each other, united in their opposition toward Jesus. However, knowing that the charge of blasphemy meant nothing in a Roman court, they changed the charge to treason when they brought Him to Pilate, claiming that Jesus was guilty of perverting the nation and evading taxes (Lk 23:2).

Why were the religious leaders so passionately opposed to Christ? To them, Jesus was a threat to the Jewish leaders' power. He confronted their sin. He upset their tables in the temple and threatened their monetary profits. He convicted them of their lack of love to God and to people. They were willing to do anything to get Him out of their lives, even to the point of sowing the seeds of falsehood.

The Fourth Trial

In Pilate's court, the law now followed the Roman Code of Criminal Procedure. Let us study further in John 18:28–38. The Jews led Jesus to Pilate, but dared not enter the Praetorium, for it was Passover (v. 28). The Talmud (Jewish civil and ceremonial law body) stated that no Jew could enter a Gentile court on Passover, or he would be defiled. While criminal in attitude and in their condemnation of Jesus, the Jews were still extremely legal in their religion, to a fault.

1. Accusation

The first step of the Roman criminal code trial procedure was accusation. When asked by Pilate what charges they brought against Jesus (v. 29), the multitude, having no valid accusation, answered evasively: "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you" (v. 30). Due to their lack of a valid accusation, Pilate told them to "judge Him according to your law" (v. 31), thinking that they had found fault in Him according to their own laws. However, the Jews replied, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death" (v. 31). Pilate now understood the gravity of the charges brought against Jesus.

2. Interrogation

The second step of the Roman criminal code trial procedure was interrogation, to probe and search for evidence against the man. Pilate first asked Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (v. 33). It was unlikely that Pilate would refer to Him as the King of the Jews, so Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" (v. 34).

Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" (v. 35). Pilate's concern was with worldly matters: was Jesus taking over the Jewish government? However, Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (v. 36).

3. Defense

The third step in the Roman criminal code procedure was defense. Like United States law, Roman law allowed defendants to have a defense attorney. Jesus was never allowed that option, so Pilate, acting on behalf of a defense attorney, had to look at the trial from the point of view of Jesus. "Are You a king then?" Pilate asked Jesus (v. 37). "Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice'" (v. 37). Jesus spoke of the truth of the gospel, but Pilate did not understand. Pilate replied, "What is truth?" (v. 38).

4. Verdict

The fourth step was the handing down of a verdict. Jesus said nothing of what He been accused of: overthrowing Rome and willfully evading taxes. Rather, He spoke of a kingdom that was not of this world. Thus, Pilate found Jesus not guilty of treason. But when Pilate went out and told the Jews, "I find no fault in Him at all" (v. 38), the multitude became even more incensed, crying out, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Lk 23:5).

When Pilate heard the word "Galilee," he had an idea. He asked and discovered that Jesus was a Galilean, which would make Him fall under Herod's jurisdiction. In an attempt to hand off the problem, Pilate "sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time" (Lk 23:7).

The Fifth Trial

Let us read on in Luke 23:8–11. Herod, the one who beheaded John the Baptist and who dealt cruelly with his subjects, viewed Jesus as a miracle man and wanted to see Him, having heard much about Him. However, he simply wanted amusement for his court. When Jesus chose not to cooperate (vv. 8–9), "the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate" (vv.

10–11). Herod did not even bother holding a trial. He and the Jewish leaders rejected Christ for different reasons, but they acted alike in their rejection of Him.

The Sixth Trial

Now came the final trial, recorded in Matthew 27:11–26. Once again, Jesus stood before Pilate. Once again, Jesus reaffirmed that He was the King of the Jews, but remained silent when the chief priests and elders falsely accused Him. His silence made the governor marvel greatly (v. 14).

Pilate's wife had sent to him, saying "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him" (v. 19). Pilate understood that the chief priests had delivered up Jesus because of envy (v. 18). The chief priests did not come to Pilate for a fair trial; they simply wanted permission to put Jesus to death.

Not wanting to condemn an innocent Man, Pilate attempted different solutions, one of which was a compromise: as it was customary to release a prisoner on the Passover, Pilate offered a choice between releasing Barabbas or Jesus (v. 17). Barabbas was a notorious criminal, while Jesus was clearly innocent. Yet, "the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus" (v. 20).

Pilate then asked what he was supposed to do with Jesus. The crowd answered as one, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" (v. 22). Unable to comprehend their response, Pilate asked in turn, "Why, what evil has He done?" (v. 23). But they refused to answer and repeated their cry, "Let Him be crucified!" (v. 23). Seeing the rising tumult, Pilate understood that this was a fight he could not win. So in a vain attempt to free himself of the guilt of condemning an innocent Man, he washed his hands before them (v. 24). He then released Barabbas to them, scourged Jesus, and delivered Him to be crucified (v. 26).

Pilate presented Jesus to the multitude saying, "Behold the Man!" (Jn 19:5), and declared Jesus' innocence. But the Jews cried out that Jesus should die, for He made Himself the Son of God (v. 7). Startled by this, Pilate returned to the Praetorium to ask Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus remained silent (v. 9), fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7, which said, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearer is silent, so He opened not his mouth."

When Pilate reminded Him that he had the authority to release or crucify Him, Jesus responded, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin" (Jn 19:11). Thus, Jesus pinned the greater culpability for His death upon the religious leaders.

Three times Pilate declared that he found no fault in Jesus (Lk 23:4, 14–15, 22). Yet despite his numerous attempts to free Him, Pilate finally gave in when the Jews accused him of working against Caesar by releasing Jesus (Jn 19:12). The chief priests even backed this claim by saying that they had no king but Caesar (v. 15), yet another show of blatant hypocrisy in their faith: their concerns for God's laws were purely out of self-interest. In the ultimate display of irony, it was the pagan Romans who found Jesus innocent and the chosen race of Jews who found Jesus "guilty." God's own chosen people crucified His Son out of envy and hard-hearted evil.

C. Jesus' Response

Today, there are many who make the same mistake as Pilate. They come into contact with Jesus and understand that He is right and true. But they fear that if they truly follow Him, it will come at a cost

they are unwilling to pay. Many fear exclusion or discrimination for declaring their faith, so they yield to pressure and compromise what they know inwardly to be right and true.

Jesus Christ responded differently in every situation, but He never compromised His purpose. When wicked King Herod confronted Him, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose: carrying out God's will.

Some people believe that silence, meekness, forgiveness, or humble testimony are signs of weakness. But to "love [our] enemies, bless those who curse [us], do good to those who hate [us], and pray for those who spitefully use [us] and persecute [us]" takes faith, strength, and, most of all, courage (Mt 5:44). When we are valiant in our testimony of Jesus Christ, we will be greatly blessed.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What did Jesus do when the troops and officers of the chief priests came to the garden to arrest Him?** He went forth to meet them.
- 2. Who was Annas?** Annas was the father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas.
- 3. Who found Jesus guilty?** The Jewish leaders, Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin all found Jesus guilty.
- 4. How did Jesus answer when Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews"?** Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."
- 5. True or False: Herod passed the sentence of death against Jesus.** False.

Life Application

The Christ whom people rejected shows us why we should repent and trust in Him:

- 1. Jesus was innocent.**

Jesus "had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth" (Isa 53:9). Pilate even proclaimed Jesus' innocence three times (Lk 23:4, 14–15, 22). Yet, Jesus' mistreatment at the hands of sinners fulfilled prophecies that He had made (Lk 9:22, 44; 18:32). It also fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah as the suffering servant. Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God, the only sacrifice for our sins. As Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."
- 2. Jesus was obedient.**

Jesus had the power to defend and even vindicate Himself. But when Pilate told Jesus that he had the authority to release Him or crucify Him, Jesus told Pilate, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above" (Jn 19:11). Jesus refused to save Himself, and instead obediently offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. So, we should trust Him and turn from all our sins out of love for Him.
- 3. Jesus was silent.**

"But He answered him not one word" (Mt 27:14). Each trial Jesus stood was an utter mockery, and He was surrounded by cruel men determined to see Him die. Awaiting Him was a heavy cross, piercing nails, and a fearful death. Yet He chose not to speak, for He knew that it was God's will for Him to shed His blood for our sins. "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:5). The charges were untrue, but He chose to

remain silent in obedience to God's will. Would we be able to remain silent if we were the ones falsely accused?

Jesus loves us so much that He stood resolute against accusations and condemnation by His own people. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Today, how can we repay His love towards us?

- By keeping His commandments
- By loving our neighbors as ourselves
- By preaching His gospel
- By serving in the church

Testimony

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify. During the end of fifth grade, my parents thought about buying a new house and moving out of state. At school, I always cared about what my friends thought of me, so the thought of having to make new friends terrified me. I had always felt the need to be accepted and liked by those around me, and after spending so much time and effort to have a few good friends, I did not want to take a chance at being rejected in a new school.

Thankfully, we did not move, but I realized how sensitive I was to the opinions of others. If I ever felt rejected or disliked, I would complain to myself, fight with my siblings, or complain to God in an attempt to make myself feel better. Sometimes, I thought that maybe I was just being too sensitive and I ought to be more confident, but there was always a need to justify my actions or clear up any misunderstandings. I even remember arguing with a friend over who met the other person first as if it was some competition to be the best friend a person could ever have.

After attending a student spiritual convocation, I wondered to myself, "Why do I care so much?" God's opinion of me should matter more than anyone else. I thought to myself, "What does God think of me?" I thought maybe the fear of rejection and the actions I took were all just a reflection of my insecurities with others. Through the power of prayer, I no longer felt the need to prove myself to anyone, but rather prove myself to God through imitating Christ for others to see. Instead of being loud or acting funny, I could be myself and be the person God wants me to be. Amen.

- Anonymous

Memory Verse

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7)

Meaning

All the prophecies in the Old Testament about the afflictions of Jesus had been fulfilled after Jesus was arrested, including this one that describes Jesus as a lamb led to the slaughter.

Greatly distressed and afflicted, Jesus was subjected to physical pain and mental anguish by His captors. The suffering He endured would usually be answered with anger and lamentation, yet Jesus was silent. The fact that He did not open His mouth in complaint was all the more remarkable, making the merit of His sufferings even greater. As a sheep standing before its shearers is silent, so was Jesus. He offered no resistance. He uttered no complaint.

Conclusion

There are many teachings we can learn from Jesus' trials, but one very important teaching was that the Lord Jesus remained silent. He "opened not His mouth" before the Jewish rulers, Pilate and Herod. Thus, He fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." Despite the pain and anguish He was forced to suffer, He obeyed God's will even till the end.

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Where does the Bible record: “He opened not His mouth”? And what does it mean? How did Jesus fulfill this?
This was recorded in Isaiah 53:7. As a sheep standing before its shearers is silent, so was Jesus. He offered no resistance and uttered no complaint. He obeyed God’s will for Him to be led quietly to His death.
2. How did Jesus react to the people who came to the garden to arrest Him?
With patience and compassion.
3. How many trials did Jesus undergo, and before whom was He presented in each?
Six: Annas, Caiaphas, Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again.
4. What was illegal about Jesus’ trial before Annas?
Annas asked Jesus questions before the charge against Jesus was clearly defined. It was also against the law to ask the accused or defendant to testify.
5. What three characteristics did Jesus display throughout His trials?
*His innocence – they could not find any real charges against Him.
His obedience – Jesus had the right to defend and vindicate Himself, but Jesus refused to use His power and authority to save Himself, and instead obediently offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.
His silence – Jesus stood trial without uttering a word in His defense despite the many false accusations flung His way and the numerous physical torments inflicted upon Him.*
6. Knowing that Jesus was obedient until death for our sakes, how can we repay His love for us in our everyday lives? Think of a task that you can complete this week and write it down below.
Personal answers.