

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Death of Jesus Christ

This study is broken up in four sections: The Death of Jesus, Witnesses of the Crucifixion, Jesus' Side is Pierced, the Burial of Jesus and Guarding of the Tomb.

The Death of Jesus

Matthew 27:45-54, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, and John 19:38-42.

1. Darkness covers the land (Read the verses outlined in red: Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, and Luke 23:44). All three authors state darkness covered the land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour. **Using today's clock, what time of day were they talking about?** At that time, the Jews started their day at sunrise. This would usually be about 6:00 a.m. At the sixth hour, this would be at 12:00 noon. The ninth hour would be 3:00 p.m. The twelfth hour would be 6:00 p.m., and then a second twelve-hour clock would start from 6:00 p.m. until sunrise the next day.
2. God forsakes Jesus. (Read the verses outlined in yellow: Matthew 27:46-47, and Mark 15:34-35) **Why did Jesus say, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" What does this mean?** Although many theologians have grappled with this saying, no human can fully understand the significance of His outcry. Most all agree on one common consensus. Jesus knew no sin. He was innocent and blameless. God cannot have sinned, nor can He have sin enter His kingdom. However, through Jesus, God had Jesus bore the responsibilities for our sins. Jesus was required to die in our place, to absorb, and endure the sin of all those who would believe in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). It would be impossible for anyone to put into the full hammer of the wrath of God the Father who poured out all sin onto Jesus at that moment. The word "abandonment" comes up many times in man's interpretations during this moment. Abandonment is not the appropriate word. To abandon means to leave without the intention of returning. This was never God's plan. God cannot have sinned, and yet Jesus, as part of the trinity, needs to absorb the sins of mankind (past, present, and future). Jesus in His Glory temporarily separated Himself from the Trinity so Jesus as a man, but also God's son, bore the sins (past, present, and future) of mankind. God, in His perfection, cannot be in the presence of sin, therefore at that moment, He removed His presence from Jesus. Some have commented that during that moment, as Jesus cried out to God, Jesus was absorbing all the sin, while God was apart from Jesus, for Jesus to be apart, alone from God, forever how brief a moment, and to endure the transgressions of our sin, must have been in excruciating. Jesus knew the whole chapter of Psalm 22 was about Him because he says those exact words in Psalm 22:1.

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3. Jesus thirsts. (Read the verses outlined in green: Matthew 27:48-49, Mark 15:36, John 19:28-30a). As we combine these three passages together, Jesus said, "I thirst!", then immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on the reed (or hyssop), and offered it to Him to drink. **Why did they give Jesus sour wine to drink?** John mentions in 19:29, a vessel with sour wine was sitting nearby. Roman soldiers commonly drank a very low-grade light white wine. If rendered or fermented incorrectly, it would yield a bitter or acidic taste with a low 2.5 PH balance close to vinegar. Sometimes they would add myrrh or some other bitter wood. The effect is said to dull the senses. For the crucified, it would render them insensible to pains of death.
4. Jesus dies. (Read verses outlined in blue: Matthew 27:50, Mark 15:37, Luke 23:46, and John 19:30b). All four gospels describe Jesus' death similarly. Breathed His last breath, cried out in a loud voice, and gave up His spirit. **What does it mean in John 19:30, when Jesus said, "It is finished!"?** Jesus fulfilled the purpose for which He came. He finished the work for which He was required to accomplish; To establish a new covenant with humanity, to take on the responsibility of sin of believers, and to pave the way for believers to the kingdom of heaven. The work that has been prophesied by so many prophets for hundreds of years is done. Jesus fulfilled more than 324 individual prophecies that related to the Messiah. If a single man were able to fulfill just 48 prophecies, the odds would be 1 in 1, followed by 157 zeros.
5. The temple veil was torn in two. (Read the verses in purple: Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, and Luke 23:45) **What is the significance of the temple veil being torn in two?** Both Matthew and Mark specifically mention the veil was torn from top to bottom. There were most likely two curtains or veils. The first veil would have been in front of the holy place. The second veil would have separated the holy place from the most holy place. The construction can be found in Exodus 26:31-33. It is the second veil between the holy place and the most holy place that was torn. The most holy place within the temple was considered a type of heaven, or the closest one could come to heaven, yet still being on Earth. The tearing of the veil signifies Christ making it possible for believers to enter into Heaven. Jesus paved the way as the forerunner for His followers to enter.
6. The Roman soldiers feared Jesus. (Read the verses outlined in black: Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:39, and Luke 23:47) **Why did the Roman soldiers say this man was the Son of God?** The Roman soldiers witnessed Jesus' agonizing death. They saw the earthquake right when he died. Also, in Matthew, if the Roman soldiers are referring to "and the things that had happened," meaning Matthew 27:52-53, where the graves

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were opened during the earthquake, and the bodies of the saints were raised and went into the holy city (Jerusalem) the Roman soldiers would be afraid and conclude this must be the Son of God.

Witnesses of the Crucifixion

(Read verse outlined in gray: **Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49, and John 19:25-27**)

7. Who were witnesses of the Crucifixion?

- (1) The disciples.
- (2) Jesus' Mother Mary.
- (3) Mary Magdalene.
- (4) Mary, the mother of James and Joses.
- (5) Salome, the mother of John and James, the Zebedee children.
- (6) A sister of Mary, mother of Jesus.
- (7) Mary, the wife of Clopas.
- (8) If you wish to go into more depth and be completely technical, you could probably include: the Roman soldiers, the two criminals, the Roman Centurion, Matthew, Luke, and John for certain. Mark may not have been present as he wrote down much of what Peter told him. Peter, The Chief Priests, and Jewish Leaders.

Jesus' Side Pierced

(John 19:31-37) Although there is no other reference than John to Jesus' side being pierced, it is significant enough to study here.

8. Roman soldiers go to break the legs of the crucified. (Read verses outlined in dark red: John 19:31-33) **Why did the Jews ask Pilate to have Jesus and the two robber's legs broken when they were being crucified?** Being executed by crucifixion was a long agonizing, and painful death. The life of the crucified could last four to eight days, depending on their strength. The Jews did not want to have the land polluted with their bodies in suspension on the Sabbath. This Sabbath was also called the Sabbath day, was a high day. The annual Sabbath would begin at sunset (6:30-7:00 p.m.), the day of the crucifixion. The Jews wanted to hasten the time, so they could remove their bodies.
9. Breaking the crucified legs hastens their death. (John 19:32) **Why would breaking the legs of the crucified hasten the time of their death?** When the legs of someone who is crucified are broken, it is much more difficult to push the diaphragm to compress air in the lungs and force the air out. The victim would have to push on the feet nailed to the cross to exhaust carbon dioxide or speak. Broken legs would mean the victim could no longer push their legs/feet to help force the diaphragm upward.

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Carbon dioxide would build up in the blood quicker, increasing carbonic acid. The victim would die from suffocation or cardiac arrest.

10. Blood and water came out. (John 19:34) **Why did blood and water come out of Jesus when the Roman soldier pierced His side?** Hanging on the cross, the weight of the body pulls down the diaphragm. The victim would have to push on the feet nailed to the cross to exhaust carbon dioxide or speak. As it becomes more difficult to breathe, this leads to a slow form of suffocation. Carbon dioxide builds up in the blood, causing an increase in carbonic acid. Blood pressure increases as the heart beats faster. Watery fluid begins to leak into the tissues. More watery fluid begins to increase around the heart and lungs. Being pierced in the side would definitely release blood. The water could come from many areas in tissues and surrounding the organs. Some believe if the spear pierced the heart, the clear pericardium fluid would leak out from the pericardial sac and look like water. Most healthy males have up to 50 ml of clear pericardium fluid surrounding the heart. Many commentators conclude the blood signifies eucharist (the Christian ceremony commemorating the Last Supper in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed), and the water signifies baptism or sanctification.
11. "Not one of His bones shall be broken." (John 19:36) **Where is this scripture written so this prophecy may be fulfilled?** This is found in several OT prophecies: Exodus 12:46, Psalm 34:20, and Numbers 9:12.
12. "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (John 19:37) **Where is this scripture written so this prophecy may be fulfilled?** This is found in Zechariah 12:10

The Burial of Jesus

(Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56 and John 19:38-42)

13. Preparation Day. (Read verses outlined in orange: Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54, and John 19:31) Mark, Luke, and John talk about the haste of completing the burial of Jesus because it was "Preparation Day." **What is the significance of this day, and what was the Jew's activity on this day?** The observation or remembrance of the Sabbath (Saturday) was a day the Jews maintained to be a holy, non-working day. For greater detail, read the "Lord's Supper" about why the Passover is celebrated. To be able to keep the Sabbath properly, adequate preparation is required to avoid working on the day of the Sabbath. Hence, the day before the Sabbath (before Friday sundown) is known as "Preparation Day." This means all work-related activities need to be completed on Friday. Necessary preparations including purchasing goods to last through Saturday, all money transactions completed in advance, preparing special

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meals in advance, cleaning, arranging schedules for prayer time, a cleaning ritual in a bath, followed by prayer. Most Jews observed all “work-related” actions and duties that needed to be completed on the Preparation Day before the Sabbath. In some cases, the interpretation was extreme. Jesus provides an action of “healing” on the Sabbath. The Pharisees considered this “work” on the Sabbath. However, Jesus demonstrates this as an act of “good” on the Sabbath. Read Matthew 12:9-13 and Mark 3:1-6.

14. Joseph of Arimathea Revealed. (Read the verses outlined in light green: Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15:43-46, Luke 23:50-53, and John 19:38-42) All four gospels talk about Joseph of Arimathea asking Pilate for Jesus' body. Pilate agrees to give Jesus' body to Joseph. Great care is taken of His body, wrapping it in linen cloth and laying it in a new tomb carved in the rock. Matthew and John mention Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but only John mentions Joseph did it secretly.

Three Questions:

1. **Why was Joseph a disciple secretly?** He was in fear of the Jews.
2. **Why does the Lord not want us to have a secret relationship with Him?** It is implied that Joseph believed Jesus was the Messiah. In Luke 23:51, he did not consent to the decision of the other Jews to have Jesus crucified. Joseph was waiting for Jesus to build up the kingdom of God. He retained his secret belief stated in John 19:38 that Jesus would be proclaimed the Messiah. It is also stated in Mark and Luke that Joseph was a prominent council member. Being in a prominent public profession, he did not want to expose his secret love for Jesus. At times, people chose to delay their declaration they have a bond or closeness to the Lord. God called Joseph out to publicly demonstrate his love for Jesus by asking for Jesus' body, wrapping Him in linen, and placing him in a new tomb. God requires that our attachment to Him is to be made known and for us not to be ashamed of Him.
3. **What scripture does it state we are not ashamed of Him? Hint: Mark... Mark 8:38.**

The Guarding at the Tomb

(Matthew 27:62-66)

15. Only Matthew details events of the necessity to guard the tomb of Jesus. (Read verses outlined in light blue: Matthew 27:62-66) **Why did the chief priests and Pharisees ask Pilate to place Roman guards in front of the tomb of Jesus?** The chief priests and Pharisees were afraid at night; some of Jesus' disciples would take Jesus' body out of the tomb and

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pretend he rose from the dead. With an empty tomb, they could proclaim he had risen from the dead and have a wider and deeper following than before.

16. **What was the misinterpretation the chief priests and Pharisees concluded in Matthew 27:63?** The chief priests and Pharisees heard Jesus state this in the temple: John 2:19-22. They concluded if Jesus were killed, after three days, he would rise again. Or, at the very least, Jesus' disciples would steal Jesus' body from the tomb, providing the perception Jesus has risen from the dead. The correct message Jesus was getting across was in John 2:19-22. Jesus is the church. The temple is the body of Jesus. Jesus was not talking about the physical temple. Jesus was referring to His resurrection. I will rise from the dead, and my temple (body) will be rebuilt.