



# The Trial of Jesus



**Scripture Reference:**  
[Matthew 26:57-27:31](#)

**Suggested Emphasis:** Do the right thing even if you are treated unfairly.

**Memory Verse:** “If you are punished for doing wrong, there is no reason to praise you for bearing punishment. But if you suffer for doing good, and you are patient, then that pleases God.” [1 Peter 2:20, ICB](#)



## Story Overview:

After being arrested, Jesus was taken before a number of different religious and civil courts. He suffered false accusations and mistreatments at every stage. The result was that Jesus was sentenced to death on the cross. Even as these trials were taking place, Peter denied him, and Judas took his own life. Everything about the trial of Jesus and the surrounding events was unfair and sad, yet Jesus never strayed from his purpose.

## Background Study:

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all write about the trial of Jesus. Each writer approaches the events from a different angle and stresses different parts. Sometimes a writer places things in order of importance rather than chronologically. Each Gospel writer tells the story in the way he does in order to bring out something about the significance of Jesus and his death.

- [Mark 14:53-15:20](#)
- [Luke 22:54-23:25](#)
- [John 18:12-19:16](#)

It was during Jesus’ various court appearances that Peter denied him ([Matthew 26:69-75](#); [Mark 14:66-72](#); [Luke 22:54-62](#); [John 18:15-18, 25-27](#)).

Judas, saw the consequences of what he did and hung himself ([Matthew 27:1-10](#)). [Acts 1:15-20](#) more graphically describes his end.

The Sanhedrin- The Jewish leadership. It consisted of three main groups. The “Chief Priests” included the ruling high priest (Caiaphas) and the former high priest (Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas). The “elders” were lay members of the Sanhedrin. The “teachers of the law” were Jewish scholars of the day. Roman law limited the power of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was normally not allowed to carry out capital punishment.

Roman Government- Officials were appointed over regions to keep order among the many conquered nations living under Roman rule. Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor of Judea (A.D. 26-36). His residence was in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast but he was in Jerusalem during Passover to prevent trouble from the large number of Jews assembled for the occasion. While there he stayed in the magnificent palace built by Herod the Great near the temple. Mark refers to this palace as the “Praetorium” ([Mark 15:16](#)). Herod Antipas was another governor. His main headquarters was in Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee but, like Pilate, he had come to Jerusalem because of the Passover crowds

1. Jewish Trial:

A preliminary hearing before Annas, the former high Priest ([John 18:12-14, 19-23](#)). Annas tried to get Jesus to admit to false teaching. He ended up having Jesus struck and then sent him to Caiaphas.

2. Trial before Caiaphas, the High Priest, and the Sanhedrin ([Mark 14:53-65](#)):

They could not find any strong evidence against Jesus. Caiaphas finally asked him to point blank if he was the Christ. Jesus said, “I am.” This was considered blasphemy and worthy of death. He was blindfolded, struck with fists and beaten.

(Final Action of the Council ending all-night session ([Mark 15:1](#)). Jesus pronounced guilty, tied up again and sent to Pilate.)

3. Roman Trial:

The trial before Pilate ([Mark 15:2-5](#)). Pilate considered Jesus a Jewish religious problem and not a civil one. He was amazed that Jesus did not defend himself. When Pilate heard Jesus was from Galilee he was happy to send him off to Herod Antipas who governed that region. Although the Mark passage does not record the time with Herod Antipas (next paragraph) it seems as if Pilate sent Jesus away only to have him sent back again by Herod Antipas.

4. Trial before Herod Antipas (this is only recorded by Luke in [Luke 23:6-12](#)):

Herod had heard about Jesus and wanted to see a miracle. He and his soldiers mocked Jesus and put a robe on him. Sent him back to Pilate.

5. Trial before Pilate continued and concluded ([Mark 15:6-15](#); [Luke 23:13-25](#)):

Pilate had no reason to give the death sentence that Jews wanted but the crowd demanded crucifixion. Pilate gave the frenzied crowd the choice and they chose a murderer to be released instead of Jesus. Pilate’s wife sent word to him that she was having dreams and Jesus was innocent. Finally, when Pilate saw that the crowd was turning ugly he ceremoniously washed his hands of the situation. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

The name “King Herod” appears a few times in the New Testament. Here are descriptions of three of them:

1. Herod the Great- (37-4BC) King at the time of Jesus’ birth. Visited by the wise men. In an attempt to kill baby Jesus, he ordered Jewish boys under the age of two to be killed. [Matthew 2:1-15](#)
2. Herod Antipas- (4BC-AD39) He put John the Baptist to death ([Matthew 14:1-12](#)). Pilate sent Jesus to him before his crucifixion ([Luke 23:7-12](#)).
3. Herod Agrippa I- (AD 37-44) Killed James and had Peter thrown in prison. Struck down by an angel and eaten by worms ([Acts 12:1-24](#)).



# Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask the children to share with the class times when they have been blamed for something they did not do. If you have a story in your own life to relate it would really add to the lesson. Talk about how that felt. "In today's story we are going to learn about a time when Jesus was blamed for something he did not do."

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## The Story:

Have you ever seen a picture of Jesus on the cross? Jesus was a good man so who decided that he would die on a cross? How did this happen?

Today, let's talk about how and why it was that Jesus came to die on the cross.

Before he died on the cross Jesus spent time with his friends, the apostles. One evening they shared a special dinner together. Since it was the last time they ate together this meal is called the "Last Supper".

At the supper, Jesus told his friends that he would soon die. Jesus told them that even though they were his friends even THEY would all run away when he got into trouble.

The apostles did not believe this could ever happen. Peter told Jesus that there was no way he would ever leave Jesus. Jesus told Peter to just wait and see. He said Peter would deny him three times before he heard the sound of a rooster crowing. Peter just couldn't believe this could ever happen.

Later, Jesus went to a garden to pray and soldiers came and arrested him. They tied him up and took him to the religious leaders. First to Annas and then to Caiaphas. Some people and religious leaders told lies and said Jesus had done many bad things. They did not like that Jesus said he was the king of the Jews.

The religious leaders were so angry at Jesus that they decided to take him to the Roman Governor and tell him to have Jesus killed.

The Roman Governor was called Pontius Pilate. The religious leaders said to Pilate, "We demand that Jesus be crucified!"

"Crucified?" Pilate thought, "Only the worst criminals were every punished by being put on a cross and crucified to die." Pilate kept asking Jesus questions about what the religious leaders were saying but Jesus did not even try to defend himself.

Pilate didn't really want to crucify Jesus so he told them to take Jesus to another governor, Herod Antipas.

Herod Antipas only made fun of Jesus. He and his soldiers made a crown from thorns and placed it on Jesus' head. They also put a robe and on him to make fun of him for being called the king of the Jews.

While all of this was happening, where do you think Jesus' friends were? Do you think they were trying to help Jesus?

No, they were just confused and afraid. Some people saw Peter and asked him if he knew Jesus. He was afraid that if he said he knew Jesus the people might hurt him just like they were hurting Jesus. So Peter denied he knew Jesus. Two other times people noticed Peter and asked him if he know Jesus. Each time he said, "no". Finally, after the third time guess what Peter heard? He heard a rooster crowing! It was just like Jesus said it would happen!

Meanwhile, Jesus had been sent back to Pilate. The Jewish leaders and many people kept demanding that Jesus be crucified.

Pilate did not like so many people being angry and shouting. He had an idea. Pilate brought out a really bad prisoner named Barabbas. He put this really bad man next to Jesus and asked the crowd to choose which one should be set free.

Surely the crowd would say that Jesus should be set free! But no, the crowd was so angry that they began yelling for the bad man to be set free and for Jesus to be crucified.

Pilate had finally had enough. He let Barabbas, the bad man, go free.

Then Pilate called his soldiers. He said, "Take Jesus away. Beat his back with a whip and then put him on a cross and leave him there until he dies."

Jesus has more power than Pilate or the angry people or even the soldiers. If Jesus wanted to he could have stopped everyone.

But Jesus did not stop them. He let the soldiers lead him away, Jesus was thinking about everyone in the world who has ever done anything bad (sinned). Jesus loves everyone in the world very much!

EVERYONE who has ever sinned deserves to be punished. That even means you and me. But instead of letting everyone be punished Jesus took one BIG punishment for all of us instead. Jesus died on the cross so that all of us could be forgiven of our sins instead of being punished for our sins.

And that's how it happened that Jesus was sent to the cross.

## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Additional illustrations are available at:

- <http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/ac-barabbas/> and
- <http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jesus-trials/>

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## Review Questions:

1. Which disciple denied knowing Jesus three times? Peter
2. Did Jesus receive a fair trial? No
3. Which Roman governor sentenced Jesus to die? Pontius Pilate

## Song Suggestions:

- [1-2-3 The Devil's After Me Song](#)
- [Oh, How I Love Jesus Song](#)
- A great song from a church hymnal might be "I'll Be a Friend to Jesus" or have someone come to class and teach the children.
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

# Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

## Activities:

- Appoint a “judge”. The judge should ask the class to list all the things Jesus did right, and then ask them to list what he did wrong. Discuss the fact that he did not do any wrong, but he suffered for us anyway ([1 Peter 2:21-22](#)).
- List situations where we might deny Christ (not tell friends we are Christians, etc.) Discuss how Peter must have felt. We will hear more about him later.
- Use large paper to draw scenes from today’s story. Assign each child a different scene. Use for review.
- Older children can use dramatic reading to read from the Bible. [Find a dramatic reading example here.](#)
- This lesson is one of several that tell the story of Jesus’ Death, Burial and Resurrection. These events are often grouped or taught together and called “The Passion Week.” If you or the children want to explore this group of events, you can look below at the related lessons:
  - [Triumphal Entry](#)
  - [The Last Supper](#)
  - [A Night of Betrayal and Prayer](#)
  - [The Trial of Jesus](#)
  - [Jesus is Crucified](#)
  - [Burial and the Resurrection](#)



## Crafts:

- Make a “fan” and remember the rooster crowing after Peter’s 3rd betrayal statement. Glue feathers on a paper plate, fold the plate in half, and attach a craft stick. Write: “Don’t betray Jesus” on the fan.



- This story is part of a bigger story about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. A simple way to tell the story is to open plastic Easter Eggs one at a time. Each egg reveals something about the story. If you tell stories about the death, burial and resurrection over a few weeks, you might try repeating this method weekly. The children will really know the story after this! [Click here to learn how to do it.](#)



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

# Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets about the Sanhedrin, Herod and Pilate \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about Pilate and the road to the cross \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page of Jesus on Trial \(bible-printables.com\)](#)
- [Video: "The Trial of Jesus-His Blood Be On Us" by Messages of Christ. Youtube video 4 minutes and 20 seconds in length. Excellent video explaining the symbolism of the blood of Christ.](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-ministry-last-week-death-resurrection/>  
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