

Date May 8, 2022

Scripture/Bible Story/Theme

Jesus Before Pilate – Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18-19

Children's Illustrate Bible - p.p. 272-273

Trail of Jesus

Background notes for the teacher

Jesus has eaten his last Passover meal with his disciples and has gone to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. After agonizing prayer the guards come to arrest him, led by his disciple Judas who betrays Jesus with a kiss. Here in the middle of the night, Jesus is led away to face his final trials...

Political Leaders and Times

Life in 30 CE Jerusalem was turbulent. Israel chafed under Roman dominion. To better understand trial and crucifixion of Jesus, it is important to have an understanding of the political issues and leaders of the times.

Caesar or Emperor Tiberius was king and ruler of the entire Roman empire, but governors or procurators were assigned to various localities. Pontius Pilate was the assigned governor of Judea. Pilate was known as a brutal and fearsome man, much hated for his cruelty and noted for his intense disdain for all things Jewish. He lived in Caesarea, but visited Jerusalem during the Jewish feasts. An especially vigilant Roman presence was needed during feast times due to crowds and the patriotic fervor that accompanied the feasts, particularly the Passover. Herod was a technically (though only partly) Jewish man, whose family gained its political clout through its loyalty to Rome. Herod Antipas (trial and crucifixion) was the son of "King" Herod the Great (of birth story fame). Herod the Great, though a suspicious, jealous and violent leader, managed to bring the regions of Israel under a relatively calm consolidation, placating Rome and his Jewish subjects. Upon the death of Herod the Great, Israel was fragmented into separate regions again. Herod Antipas, two of his brothers and his sister became the shared rulers or tetrarchs of Israel. (technically = one-fourth ruler = Herod Antipas maintained his father's loyalty to Rome. He served as tetrarch to Galilee throughout the lifetime of Jesus from 4 BCE until 39 CE. Herod aspired to become known as the "King of the Jews" like his father.

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish ruling council during New Testament times. Technically, Israel was under Roman rule, but the Sanhedrin ruled in religious matters; they were the Jewish Court of Justice. This group of seventy-one men consisted of chief priests and scribes, Pharisees and Saducees. They were a powerful group. They made laws, had their own police force and could arrest people and send them to jail. The "president" of the Sanhedrin at this time was the high priest, Caiaphas. The gospels portray the Sanhedrin as a group most interested in preserving their own power and position. They were obviously threatened by Jesus and his message and were violently opposed to him. Only one member, Joseph of Arimathea, was a supporter of Jesus, though a secret one, "for fear of the Jews." (John 19:38) Joseph of Arimathea is the one who requested permission from Pilate to remove Jesus' body from the cross and used his own tomb for Jesus' burial.

During a religious festival, such as Passover, the Jewish people were reminded of Rome's rule over their religious life. Because Passover celebrated Israel's deliverance from slavery, this feast especially aroused the resentment and ire of the Jews. Herod and Pilate were responsible for keeping the Pax Romana. The religious leaders also knew that the crowds must be kept under control or they risked losing their freedom to observe their religion. The death of one obscure rabbi was a small price to pay to keep the peace.

So, Jesus is arrested by the guards of the Sanhedrin and taken to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas. There the Sanhedrin is waiting to put Jesus on trial. The Sanhedrin was known throughout the world for their just laws.

Trial

Jesus had angered the Sanhedrin on several occasions, by cleansing the Temple and by making them appear ridiculous during question and answer sessions. The resurrection of Lazarus a month ago had been the final nail in Jesus' coffin! The Sanhedrin was convinced that the problem of Jesus must be settled once and for all. There would be no fair trial for Jesus. Several witnesses spoke against Jesus. Caiaphas commanded Jesus to respond to the charges. "Are you the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus replied, "I AM... In days to come, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One..." This outraged the high priests who immediately demanded that Jesus be put to death. They then spit on him, hit and slapped him. The guards took him and beat him.

Pilate and Herod:

Early the next morning the chief priests, elders, teachers and Sanhedrin brought Jesus to Pilate. Only Pilate could sentence a criminal to death. Pilate listened to their complaints but was not interested and essentially told them to deal with Jesus themselves. But the priests were insistent. Jesus should be put to death and for that they needed Pilate. Pilate questioned Jesus and found no reason to charge him. But the chief priests were adamant that this troublemaker from Galilee be stopped. When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod (the tetrarch of Galilee) who was also in Jerusalem for the Passover. Herod was actually glad to see Jesus and hoped to witness some of his miracles. But Jesus did not respond to Herod's questions. Herod and his soldiers taunted Jesus, placing a royal robe on him and sending him back to Pilate.

Once again Jesus was in Pilate's presence. The crowds were whipped into a frenzy by the priests and religious leaders. They shouted for Jesus to be crucified. The practice at Passover was to let one prisoner go free. Pilate offered to release Jesus, but the crowd demanded instead the release of Barabbas, a known robber, murderer and rabble-rouser. The gospel accounts make it clear that Pilate did not believe that Jesus was guilty. The gospel of Matthew even records Pilate's wife warning him of a dream she had about Jesus' innocence. But Pilate eventually succumbed to the will of the crowd and ordered Jesus to be whipped and then to be crucified.

Workshop Name

Verse Shuffle

Opening Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for bringing us all here together. We thank you for the stories in the Bible that teach us about you. Help us to learn and understand more about you and your love for us. In Jesus' name. Amen

Objectives

1. Children will locate the story in the Bible.
2. Children will identify the four gospels.
3. Children will locate Jerusalem on the map.
4. Children will identify key characters and their role in the Passion narrative: Pilate, Sanhedrin, Herod.
5. Children will retell the story in their own words.

Supplies

Index cards will be in your supply bag. I counted out 30 cards per student.
Markers – You will need these at home.

Activity**Memory Verse –**

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. John 3:16

Write the memory verse out, one word per index card. Then put the whole quote in the correct order. Put the scripture reference on a single card.

Sanhedrin – Jewish ruling council, made up of 71 religious leaders, including chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and Saducees (religious leaders)

Caiaphas – chief priest and president of the Sanhedrin

Pontius Pilate – Roman governor of Judea

Herod (Antipas) – ruler of Galilee region

Caesar – supreme ruler over all of Roman Empire

Joseph of Arimathea – member of the Sanhedrin who supported Jesus, gave his tomb for Jesus' burial

Sin - doing wrong things, what keeps us separate from God

There are 4 special Books at the beginning of the New Testament. John is one of them. What are they called altogether? The Gospels

Who was Caiaphas – the high priest

What was the Sanhedrin – council of Jewish leaders

What does Jesus say when asked if he is the Son of God? – yes, he was the Son of God

Who was Pilate? – Roman governor

What happened to Judas – return the coins and then kills himself

Did Pilate want to kill Jesus? – no, can't find any crime he has committed

Who does Pilate release? – Barabbas

Why does Pilate release Barabbas? – that was who the crowd wanted released

Who placed the Crown of thorns on Jesus' head? Soldiers

The soldiers placed a cloak around Jesus. What was the robe's color?

What did the crowd of Jews yell to Pilate when he said, 'Here is your King!' Away with him – Crucify him

Why did Pilate condemn Jesus to death even when Jesus was innocent?

Possibly Pilate thought that Jesus and the crowds were causing trouble and may start dangerous rioting so that it would be easier to get rid of Jesus to avoid riots, or it could be that Pilate wanted to be a popular leader, so when the people asked for Jesus to be hung on the cross he agreed

Reflection/Evaluation

As you look at a picture of Jesus on the cross what do you think? What does that thought mean to you in your daily life?

Lord's Prayer