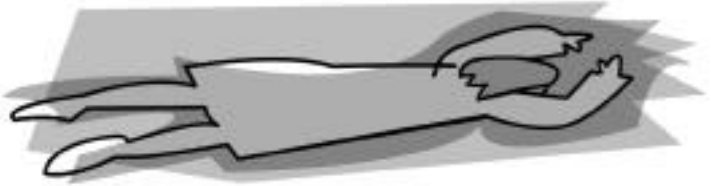


Passage to Calvary



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 26:57-68, Luke 22:66-71, John 18:2-9, 12-23.*

Memory Text: “**But Pilate once more addressed them, wishing to set Jesus free. They, however, persistently shouted, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’**” (*Luke 23:20, 21, Weymouth*).

In his book *The Trial*, Czech writer Franz Kafka wrote about a bank clerk named Joseph K. who was arrested, convicted, and executed on charges that were never explained to him. Throughout the story he faced an absurd and unjust labyrinth of interrogations, summonses, and delays. Though continuing to proclaim his innocence (even if not sure what he's charged with), Joseph K. is at the end led to an abandoned quarry and executed.

However absurd and unfair Joseph K.'s experience, it pales in comparison to the absurdities and injustices attending the trial of Jesus. And though hauled before a biased court that had no intention of getting the facts (they were interested only in getting Jesus), Christ maintained the dignity, love, and compassion that marked His entire ministry. However much of a farce, this trial reveals what fallen humanity is capable of doing, even in the face of unconditional love.

The Week at a Glance: **How, even in Gethsemane, did Jesus show His compassion for His enemies? How was the gospel prefigured in Christ's arrest and trial? How did Christ respond to those who persecuted Him? What helped explain the blindness of the leaders toward Christ?**

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 12.*

Arrest in the Garden

What opportunity did God provide to arouse the rabble to a sense of their crime in coming to arrest Jesus? *John 18:2-9.*

When they said that they came to seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord responded with two Greek words, *Ego eimi*, which means, “I am,” the same words He used when He said to the Jewish leaders, “Before Abraham was, I am” (*John 8:58*). This simple phrase is linked in meaning to the Hebrew name for God, often translated “Yahveh” (*Exod. 3:11-14*), and it seems to come from a Hebrew root word that means “to be.” Thus, some believe the name means the “One is who,” or “the Self-Existing One.” By using that phrase, Jesus was, perhaps, subtly witnessing to them about His identity.

Immediately after Jesus says “I am,” the crowd falls backward, to the ground. “A divine light illuminated the Saviour’s face, and a dove-like form overshadowed Him. In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 694.

What does Peter’s action show about how little even he understood what was happening? *Matt. 26:51, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:50, John 18:10.*

One would think that after seeing the crowd fall down before Christ’s “divine glory,” Peter would have realized that the Lord didn’t need the disciple’s weak sword to protect Him. By His words, and then by causing the unruly mob to fall to the ground, the Lord showed that He was allowing Himself to be taken. Even more so, by these acts, Jesus was still giving evidence of His divine character and nature, thus, in a way, witnessing to the mob that had come to take Him. Even here, amid the impending doom, Jesus was working for the salvation of those who hated Him.

Nothing in Scripture indicates that anyone in the mob, even after seeing this divine manifestation of power, changed his or her mind about Jesus. Why are our hearts so hard toward the Lord, even when faced with evidence of His existence and love?

Key Text: *Luke 22:66-71.*

Teachers Aims:

1. To allow us to consider the contrast between Jesus' and Peter's responses to questioning.
2. To review the scenes and issues in Jesus' three trials.
3. To invite class members to consider whom they will emulate in their response to Jesus' mission of rescue: Pilate or Pilate's wife.

Lesson Outline:

I. Jesus' Betrayal—the Work of a Friend (*John 18:2-18, 25-27*).

- A. Judas betrays Jesus under the guise of friendship.
- B. Jesus witnesses to the rabble through word and deed.
- C. Jesus stands unwavering while Peter falters and fails.

II. The Three Trials of Jesus: a Farce of Justice (*Mark 14:56-59*).

- A. Jesus' trials were motivated not by a desire to uncover the truth but to enact vengeance and justify murder.
- B. By His demeanor and responses, Jesus still sought to win people to Him.
- C. A correct understanding of prophecy and doctrine will help to prevent spiritual deafness to Jesus' voice, calling us to eternal life.

III. Choices—Even the Truth Does Not Change Public Opinion (*Heb. 12:2, 3*).

- A. Pilate is convinced of Jesus' innocence, but his political ambitions preclude him from interceding on Jesus' behalf.
- B. Pilate's wife has a dream of the whole plan of salvation.
- C. Pilate does not heed his wife's warning; will we?

Summary: Jesus' passage to Calvary is marked by choices. Judas, a friend, chooses to betray Jesus to the rabble. Peter denies his Lord while Jesus stands true to His mission. Pilate, Herod, and Israel's leaders choose to ignore the truth. In the midst of this turmoil, Jesus still chooses to save the lost, even commissioning a vision to a Gentile woman, Pilate's wife. We, too, are enlightened through God's Word so we can choose eternal life.

COMMENTARY

Passage to Calvary.

Introduction. Throughout the agonizing ordeal of His betrayal, arrest, desertion, bogus trials, fiendish torture, and insults, Christ remained calm, steadfast, nonretaliatory. For our redemption's sake He meekly endured every species of cruelty and blasphemous dishonor the devil could devise. Such towering love and courage, reverently considered, must surely conquer our hearts, win our eternal allegiance, and alienate us forever from sin.

Jesus Before Annas, Peter Before the Young Woman

Read John 18:12-23. Both Peter and Jesus faced questioning. What were the differences between the situations in which they were questioned, those who questioned them, and their responses to those questions? What can we learn from these contrasts?

What a powerful contrast between Jesus and Peter. Peter is outside, in an informal setting, before a person with no real stature or standing and, certainly, with no legal authority to do him harm. And yet, when questioned about his relationship to Jesus, Peter lies, saying “I am not.” In contrast, here’s Jesus, inside, before a high official in the Jewish nation, a leader with standing and power. And when asked about, among other things, His disciples, Jesus speaks openly and freely. Even when hit for His words, Jesus responded in a candid manner that showed He had nothing to hide.

Read carefully John 18:20-23, especially the words Jesus spoke to the officer who smote Him (*vs. 23*). **How is this little account—that of Jesus being unfairly struck by the officer—a small example of the whole principle of the gospel?** See *Isa. 53:5, 2 Cor. 5:21*.

Peter lies; Jesus is smitten for doing no wrong. What a powerful representation of the contrast between fallen humanity and the loving God who came to save humanity. In Jesus’ answer we see intimations of the gospel: His enemies can find no evil in Him; thus, it’s in His innocence that Jesus is punished.

How should this account of Christ’s treatment help us deal better with situations in which we ourselves are treated unfairly?

I. Arrest in the Garden.

When Christ led Adam and Eve forth from the Garden of Eden, He mercifully clothed them in protective raiment of fleece. When men thrust Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane, they bound Him in cords of punishment and were soon to subject Him to the shame of nakedness and scourging.

At every stage of events leading to Calvary, Jesus gave His adversaries opportunity to turn from their evil course. In the brief but intense outshining of His glory when the mob advanced to arrest Him, and in His healing of Malchus's ear, Christ gave unmistakable evidence of His divinity. But Satan, the god of this world, blinded their minds, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them" (*2 Cor. 4:4*). "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (*John 3:17*). "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (*John 3:19*). Thus, Christ observed on the night of His arrest, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (*Luke 22:53*).

II. Jesus Before Annas, Peter Before the Damsel.

Jesus was prepared for the ordeal into which He now was thrust with irreversible momentum. He had resolved to drink the cup of judgment in our place (*see John 18:11*). Prayer, submission to the Father's will, and consecrated conformity to the Word fortified Jesus for this supreme crisis. "[He] hid not [His] face from shame and spitting" (*Isa. 50:6*).

But Peter's drowsy, halfhearted prayer life, his bristling self-confidence, and his obtuse rebuttal of Christ's warning words to him unfitted him to face this hour. His courage crumbles before a bantering girl. His vehement, profanity-laced denial epitomizes the cowardly abandonment of faith we are all capable of, unless Christ's love and truth are so rooted in our hearts as to cast out all fear.

A great and shining reservoir of gospel grace is contained in the look of mercy Jesus cast upon Peter after that disciple's shameful denial of his Lord. That look enkindled deep repentance in Peter, which opened the way for his reinstatement to divine favor and a far more consecrated level of discipleship than he had previously dreamed of (*see Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pages 712, 713*).

III. The Evening Trial.

The Sanhedrin strained to formulate charges that would make Jesus subject to the death penalty by Roman law. His every word and action, if rightly represented, would redound to His vindication, attest to His Messiahship, and expose the vile animosity of His accusers. But the Sanhedrin were bent on His destruction. They overrode the

The Evening Trial

Read in **Matthew 26:57-68** (also in *Mark 14:53-65*) the account of Jesus before Caiaphas, the scribes, and the elders. How do these verses show how unfair and prejudiced the trial was?

Why was it not necessary for Jesus to answer those who had accused Him? *Mark 14:56-59*.

Because they were getting nowhere in their trial, the high priest finally asked this question: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God” (*Matt. 26:63*). Christ fully recognized that His affirmative answer was His death warrant, but He would not deny His identity or His relation to His Father. He warned the court, however, that someday they would see Him in His divine authority.

How does Jesus respond to the high priest’s question?

How fascinating that in response to the high priest’s question, Jesus referred not to His atoning death for the sins of the world or to His resurrection or to His upcoming ministry in heaven as the true High Priest (the one that Caiaphas was supposed to represent). Instead, in a clear and unambiguous manner, Jesus talked about His second coming, when He’ll be seen by them, not as some itinerant preacher whom they can arrest, torment, abuse, and sentence to death but as the Son of man, “sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (*vs. 64*). All through Christ’s ministry, He talked about the Second Coming to His disciples; now, at this climactic moment, He talks about it to His enemies, as well. After this, they could never say, “We weren’t told.”

By referring to His second coming, Jesus—despite the immediate circumstances—pointed to the great and grand hope of all Christians everywhere. Why, particularly in trying times, does the promise of the Second Coming give us our only hope? Why, in the end, is it our only hope?

rabbinic principle that an accused man was innocent until proven guilty and undertook the perfidious challenge of proving a man guilty of capital offenses even though they knew Him to be holy and

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Matthew 27:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 12:2, 3.*

- ① Our identity is shaped by our life experience and the response of other people to us. Jesus' identity is defined as "I Am," "the Self-Existing One." How does who Jesus is affect your life? Review His interventions on your behalf. How might sharing your testimony of Jesus bless someone else?
- ② Gardens are usually inviting places. The Garden of Gethsemane has become a symbol of violence and injustice. What gave Jesus the courage to be calm in the turmoil that beset Him there? Why did He continue to witness to those around Him? How can Jesus' example give you strength for the trials you are facing or may face in the future?
- ③ None of us welcomes an appearance in a court of law. What if all the evidence were falsely stacked against you? How would you prepare your defense? If you were granted a personal interview with the judge, how would you explain your religious convictions? Describe the evidence that would convict you of being a follower of Jesus Christ.
- ④ Dreams can be described as random firings of nerves during sleep. Pilate's wife had a dream that seems to portray the whole plan of salvation (see Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 732). How did she know it was a purposeful message from God? How does her example, on behalf of Christ, give you a model for action? What have you learned about Jesus that you should be sharing? How will you begin this week?
- ⑤ Our "only hope" lies in having a true understanding of Jesus' death on the cross and His plans for our salvation. When Jesus shared His mission with His unjust judges and with the crowd, He pointed to the culmination of that mission. How does the knowledge of the Second Coming impact your life? In what ways might "reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374) strengthen your faith in Jesus' soon return? Covenant with God to spend at least one hour each week considering Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as a special mission to save you.

The Morning Trial

After the night trial, Jesus again faced the leaders, perhaps in an act to formalize the death sentence issued against Him the night before.

Of all the Gospel writers, Luke gives the most detailed account of this morning trial. Read his account (*Luke 22:66-71*). What similarities exist with what happened the night before? What differences?

With more people there, they ask Him basically the same question they asked the night before. Notice how Jesus responds (*vss. 67-69*). Knowing their hearts and knowing that they weren't asking because they wanted to know truth but wanted only to condemn Him, Jesus doesn't answer their question directly, though He does answer it. "If I tell you, ye will not believe" (*vs. 67*). Believe what? That He's the Christ, what else? They certainly would have believed Him if He said that He wasn't. Indeed, they had Him there because they didn't believe that He was the Christ (otherwise they would not have been doing to Him what they were). Thus, Jesus revealed to them that He could see right through their farce of a trial. They weren't interested in finding out the truth; they were interested only in making the Truth go away.

Then, before the whole group, Jesus repeated His reference to the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God, alluding to His power and authority. The leaders, obviously assuming that He was talking about Himself, then asked Him flat out, "Art thou then the Son of God?" (*vs. 70*).

Here, too, Jesus, though not directly answering their question, answers it nevertheless, using in His answer the phrase "I am." Their reaction shows that they clearly understood His claim to divinity. Again, as the night before, Jesus made it clear to them who He was. With all the evidence He had given through His ministry of His divine credentials, the leaders should have believed Him. Sadly, for them, they did not.

One reason the leaders were so blind to Jesus was that they had a false understanding of prophecy. They expected the Messiah to come in a different manner. This ignorance helped explain, though not excuse, their hostility to Him. What does this tell us about how important it is to have, as much as possible, a correct understanding of prophecy, or Bible doctrine, in general?

innocent (*see Luke 20:14*). They must fabricate charges that would make Him appear a disturber of the peace and an enemy of the state. First, they led Jesus to the retired high priest Annas, the wily father-in-law of Caiaphas, current high priest. Thus began illegal proceedings of darkness that these mock guardians of justice and holiness will face again at a new, infinitely authoritative trial (*read John 18:12-28*).

“It was a part of His mission to bear, in His humanity, all the taunts and abuse that men could heap upon Him. The only hope of humanity was in this submission of Christ to all that He could endure from the hands and hearts of men.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 703.

IV The Morning Trial.

Ultimately, the Sanhedrin were forced to hire false witnesses, whose jumbled, contradictory charges exposed the naked treachery of the affair. Christ, the personification of truth and righteousness, must have found this total travesty of justice, these shabby, lying charges brought against Him, superhumanly difficult to endure. Yet, He bore

Witnessing

How powerful was Jesus' example at all times during His ministry in circumstances that cried out *unfair!* Throughout His ministry, He was confronted with those who sought to treat Him as poorly and unfairly as possible. At no time was this more evident than during the last week of His life here on earth. The sham hearings and trials to which He was subjected in the hours prior to His crucifixion personified unfairness. Yet, over and over and over again, Christ gently responded to the false charges brought against Him by redirecting His questioners to the real purposes for His earthly sojourn. He brushed aside opportunity after opportunity to justify Himself or accuse them.

Jesus ignored the mob mentality that surrounded Him. He attempted to reach out to those who followed Him just out of curiosity and to those who were quickly whipping emotions of hate, fear, and lust into a frenzy rather than listening to their heads and hearts. He made every attempt to bring the plan of salvation into sharper focus for those who closely surrounded Him. Friends and foes alike were caught in the net of hope, love, and reassurance of His second coming that He cast to them time and time again. At no time did He cry out, “It’s unfair!” “I don’t deserve this treatment!” “I’m not going to put up with this any longer!” or “I’m outta here—fend for yourselves!” Thank God, Jesus’ refusal to stray off course guaranteed all of us the opportunity to choose eternal life!

Pilate's Wife's Dream

After the three religious *trials*, Jesus was herded off for three political *trials* before Pilate, Herod, and then back to Pilate again. What's especially fascinating is what happened to Pilate when his wife warned him against bothering with Jesus. Notice the intensity of her warning (*Matt. 27:19*). Whatever she saw in her dream, it was real and convincing enough for her to tell her husband to stay away from Him completely, as opposed to just *be nice* to Jesus or to *treat Him fairly*. What did she see?

“In answer to Christ’s prayer, the wife of Pilate had been visited by an angel from heaven, and in a dream she had beheld the Saviour and conversed with Him. Pilate’s wife was not a Jew, but as she looked upon Jesus in her dream, she had no doubt of His character or mission. She knew Him to be the Prince of God. She saw Him on trial in the judgment hall. . . . She saw the cross uplifted on Calvary. She saw the earth wrapped in darkness, and heard the mysterious cry, ‘It is finished.’ Still another scene met her gaze. She saw Christ seated upon the great white cloud, while the earth reeled in space, and His murderers fled from the presence of His glory. With a cry of horror she awoke, and at once wrote to Pilate words of warning.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 732.

Analyze her dream. Notice the three specific elements about Jesus that were shown to her (see the texts below). What are they, and how are they all related to one another? Also, what significance is found in the fact that Pilate’s wife wasn’t a Jew but a Gentile? *Mark 14:62, Acts 1:11, Rom. 5:18, 2 Cor. 5:21, Phil. 2:8, Heb. 12:2.*

In one sense, in that vision, Pilate’s wife was given a compressed version of the whole plan of salvation, from the righteous character of Christ to His second coming. Notice, too, the parallel between what she saw regarding the Second Coming and Christ’s words to the leaders in both the evening and morning trial. Besides receiving a clear vision of the Cross, she was shown the Second Coming, as well. So closely tied was the First with the Second that in this dream, the angel gave her images of both.

Look over the week’s lesson and review the ways in which Jesus, even amid the turmoil, was working to save all those with whom He came in contact, even those who were bitterly opposed to Him. What hope should that give you—who might be struggling with faith and assurance of salvation—about God’s desire to save you despite your struggles and weaknesses?

it all with patience and meekness as a lamb before her shearers is silent. Finally, the high priest shrieked in desperation, “ ‘I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God’ ” (*Matt. 26:63, NKJV*). Jesus’ telling reply (*see Matt. 26:64, Mark 14:62*) will pierce the hearts of His accusers when they stand before His judgment throne in due course. Those who hustled forward most ambitiously to smite and condemn Him on that infamous day will shrink back on the day of judgment.

V. Pilate’s Wife’s Dream.

Pilate’s case was most pathetic. He had enough remnants of human decency to long to set Jesus free. Three times He officially acquitted Him, but his ultimate failure to stand for the right testifies that neither a privileged position nor a clear sense of justice will give anyone the moral courage to stand up for Jesus. We must confess Him as our Redeemer and Lord, whose grace we value and under His authority we live, if we are to confess Him through every challenge to our faith and integrity.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: How do you handle conflict? (Teachers: You may want to have your class divide into groups of twos or threes to discuss this. That will increase self-disclosure on the part of members and reduce the time it takes to answer this question. Do not ask your groups to report back to the entire class. Instead, ask a general question of the entire group, such as, “What are the common ways we handle conflict?”)

Verses for Group Focus: *John 18:1-27*.

Thought Questions:

- ① Contrast how Peter handled conflict with how Jesus did.
- ② What types of things do people prefer to do in the dark? Why? Which of these things have moral dimensions? The events of John 18 occurred in the dark. Consider Judas, Peter, the high priest, Pilate, and the crowd. What do their actions teach us about the nature of sin?

Application Questions:

- ① Imagine yourself in these scenes: (1) the garden, (2) the courtyard, and (3) the judgment hall. What would you have done in each scene, and why would you have done it?
- ② When is it appropriate to withdraw or to be passive in times of conflict?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 698–740; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1104, 1124.

“It will do you good . . . to frequently review the closing scenes in the life of our Redeemer. Here, beset with temptations as He was, we may all learn lessons of the utmost importance to us. It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour. . . . Everything noble and generous in man will respond to the contemplation of Christ upon the cross.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In healing Malchus’s ear and in His accompanying rebuke to Peter, what did Jesus reveal concerning**
 - a. His attitude toward His enemies?**
 - b. the degree of freedom He could potentially exercise to liberate Himself from their clutches?**
 - c. His manner of dealing with the mistakes of His disciples?**
 - d. His own state of mind regarding the peril in which He was placed?**
 - e. His approved methods of defending and upholding His cause?**
 - f. His view of employing physical force in the realm of spiritual conflict?**
- 2 When Pilate presented Christ and Barabbas side by side and offered to free the man of their choice, the mob pressed for Barabbas’s release. In what less dramatic ways do people today continue in principle to choose Barabbas over Christ?**
- 3 Why do you think Pilate was given a warning when Herod wasn’t?**