

The Shame of the Cross Is Jesus' Hour of Glory



SABBATH—DECEMBER 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 18:33–38; John 18:38–19:5; John 19:25–27; John 20:1–7; John 20:11–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “Pilate said, ‘So you are a king.’ Jesus answered, ‘You are right to say that I am a king. I was born for this [reason]: to tell people about the truth. That is why I came into the world [to this earth]. And everyone who belongs to the truth listens to me’ ” (John 18:37, ERV).

JESUS DIES AND WAKES UP FROM THE DEAD. These two happenings are the most important part of the Book of John. John 1–10 talks about things that happen in Jesus' life for 3½ years. But John 11–20 talks about things in Jesus' life that happen in one to two weeks.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John talk about Jesus' death in different ways. Their stories about Jesus' death agree. But the writers talk about Jesus' death in ways that show the important themes in their books. Matthew and Mark talk about Old Testament promises about Jesus. Luke shows us how the cross saves us. Luke also tells the story about how Jesus saves the thief on the cross.

John shows how the cross honors Jesus and gives Him glory and praise. We may ask, how can Jesus' ugly death on the cross also be a time of glory and praise? The cross was the most awful way for the Romans to kill someone, right? Yes, Jesus died in shame. At the same time, He is honored as our Savior.



John shows how the cross honors Jesus and gives Him glory and praise.

WHAT IS TRUTH? (John 18:33–38)

In John 18:28–32, we read a few short verses about Jesus' trial. This part is short because John is more interested in telling us what happens next between Jesus and Pilate, the governor.

Read the story about Pilate and Jesus in John 18:33–38. What did Pilate and Jesus talk about?

The governor asks Jesus if he is the king of the Jews (John 18:33). This question is the first time in the Book of John that Jesus is named a king. Jesus asks Pilate if he is asking this question because he believes Jesus really is a king. Or is Pilate asking because other people are saying Jesus is a king? Jesus is really asking Pilate if he understands who He is. The reader already knows that Jesus is the King. Will the governor understand that, too?

Pilate answers Jesus' question with his own questions: "Pilate said, 'Do you think I am a Jew? Your own people and religious leaders have handed You over to me. What have You done?' " (John 18:35, NLV). Do you see how Pilate doesn't answer Jesus' question? Pilate's words show his decision not to accept the truth about Jesus.

Jesus answers that His kingdom isn't on this earth (John 18:36). Pilate then understands that Jesus is announcing that He is a king (John 18:37). Jesus then explains why He was born. Jesus came to this earth to announce Bible truth. Every person who accepts the truth will hear and obey Jesus' teachings (John 18:37).

Pilate then asks Jesus, " 'What is truth?' " (John 18:38, ERV). But Pilate doesn't wait for the answer. He goes outside to try to save Jesus from the crowd.

Truth is an important topic in the Book of John. Jesus is the everlasting Word (John 1:1–5). So, Jesus is the Light and the Truth (John 1:14). Mercy and truth come to us from Jesus (John 1:17). John the Baptist preached the truth about Jesus (John 5:33). Jesus announced that His Father is "true" (John 7:28). Jesus heard the truth from His Father (John 8:40). Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, ERV). God's Word, the Bible, is "truth" (John 17:17, NLV). Pilate missed his chance to know the truth. Why? Pilate disliked the Jews. He made bad decisions in the past. He also felt pressured to do what the Jewish leaders wanted.



The governor asks Jesus if he is the king of the Jews (John 18:33).

SEE? HERE IS THE MAN! (John 18:38–19:5)

How did Pilate try to get the people to ask him to release Jesus? Read John 18:38–19:5 for the answer.



The Roman governor, and not the Jews, dresses Jesus in royal clothes and shows Him to the people as a King.

Pilate didn't wait for Jesus to answer his question about the truth. Pilate went out to convince the people to ask him to make Jesus free. But when Pilate didn't let Jesus go free, he lost control of the trial. The Jewish leaders saw Pilate's mistake. They understood that they could use the crowd to control Pilate.

During the Passover, the governor often let a prisoner go free. Passover is a feast that celebrates the time when God made the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt. Pilate asks the people if they want him to let Jesus go. Pilate is surprised when the people ask him to release an evil man named Barabbas, and not Jesus, who is innocent.

At this time, the Roman soldiers make fun of Jesus. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head. They put purple clothes on Him. They name Him a king. Roman soldiers did these things when they wanted to honor the King of Rome. But the soldiers do these things to shame Jesus.

Pilate believes Jesus is innocent. Pilate wants to release Jesus. So, Pilate asks for the people's help. Pilate brings Jesus out to them. Jesus wears a crown of thorns and purple clothes. Pilate asks the people to look at Jesus: " 'See! This is the Man!' " (John 19:5, NLV). These words help us remember John the Baptist's words about Jesus: " 'See! The Lamb of God Who takes away [removes] the sin of the world [the people on the earth]!' " (John 1:29, NLV). The Roman governor, and not the Jews, dresses Jesus in royal clothes and shows Him to the people as a King.

In John 19:6–16, the crowd shouts for Jesus' death because He says He is the Son of God. When Pilate hears this reason, he becomes very afraid. Then Pilate tries harder to save Jesus and release Him. But the Jewish leaders say that if Pilate releases Jesus, he will not honor the Roman King. Pilate is loyal to the Roman King. But people will doubt his loyalty if he releases someone who says he also is a king in the Roman kingdom. The Jewish leaders say that the King of Rome is their only king. The Jewish leaders hated the Romans. But they hated Jesus more. The Jews hated Jesus more than they loved their country. So, the Jews were willing to serve the hated Romans to use them to get rid of Jesus.

IT IS FINISHED (John 19:25–27)

As John 19:17–22 shows, Pilate wrote a sign and put it on the cross. The sign was written in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages. The sign said, “ ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS’ ” (John 19:19, ICB). The Jewish leaders wanted Pilate to change what he wrote. Pilate refused. The sign stayed on the cross. The sign preached the truth about Jesus: the King of kings is nailed to the cross. He is on the cross of shame the same as a king sits on a throne of glory because His death will save sinners. But first, Jesus, their King, the King of the Jews, must hang on the cross, the same as a criminal.

“God caused Pilate to write the sign and put it on the cross above the head of Jesus. God used this sign to cause people to think about what they saw and study the Bible.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 745, adapted.

Read the story in John 19:25–27. What did Jesus say to His mother and John?

John, the beloved follower, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, stood with a few others in front of Jesus’ cross. Many years before, Simeon told Mary about this future experience when she and Joseph brought Baby Jesus to the temple for a blessing (compare with Luke 2:34, 35). Now as Jesus dies on the cross, He speaks to His mother and John. “Jesus saw his mother. He also saw the follower he loved very much standing there. He said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the follower, ‘Here is your mother.’ So after that, this follower took Jesus’ mother to live in his home” (John 19:26, 27, ERV).

Read Jesus’ final words in John 19:28–30. Jesus says, “ ‘It is finished’ ” (verse 30). What is Jesus talking about?

The word written as “finished” comes from the Greek word “teleō.” This word means “to finish” or “to complete.” This word tells us that everything the Bible promised about Jesus was happening and coming true.

When Jesus says, “ ‘It is finished’ ” (John 19:30, ERV), He is completing or finishing the work that the Father gave Him to do.



The sign said,
“ ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH,
THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ ”

THE EMPTY GRAVE (John 20:1–7)

Read John 20:1–7. What do these verses show us? Why is this Bible truth so important to us, as Christians?

Jesus died late on a Friday afternoon and woke up from the dead early on Sunday. The Sabbath was near when Jesus was buried (John 19:42). So, Jesus' followers buried Him in a hurry and didn't finish doing everything that needed to be done. Jesus' followers loved Him. But they didn't want to break the Sabbath. So, they kept the Sabbath day and didn't go back to Jesus' grave (compare with Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56). After the Sabbath, some women brought some perfume to the grave on Sunday morning. The women were surprised when they saw the stone was rolled away and the grave was empty.

Mary Magdalene was a woman who came early to the grave. She ran to tell Peter and John what she saw. The two men ran to the grave. John ran past Peter and arrived first. John stooped down and looked inside the grave. He saw the cloths that the followers wrapped Jesus in. But John didn't go inside the grave.

Peter went inside. He saw the cloths lying there. He also saw the face cloth that the followers put on Jesus' head. But the face cloth wasn't lying with the rest of the grave cloths. The face cloth was folded up and separated from the rest of the grave cloths.

What did the folded up face cloth mean? What was so special about the way that it was lying separate from the other grave cloths? Read John 20:8–10 for the answers.

After Peter entered the grave, John entered, too. John 20:8 says that John went in, saw, and believed. Why did John believe that Jesus woke up from the dead when he saw the grave cloths lying there and the face cloth folded up and lying separate? To answer this question, we must think about why the grave was empty. Did grave robbers steal Jesus' body? This explanation doesn't work for three reasons. (1) Matthew tells us that soldiers guarded the grave (Matthew 27:62–66). So, no one could easily steal Jesus' body. (2) Grave robbers steal treasures, not rotting bodies. (3) Grave robbers are in a hurry. They don't fold grave clothes. No wonder, then, that when John saw the face cloth folded, he believed that Jesus woke up from the dead.



After the Sabbath, some women brought some perfume to the grave on Sunday morning.

JESUS AND MARY (John 20:11–13)

Read the story in John 20:11–13. What happened in these verses that shows why Mary Magdalene didn't understand what Jesus' empty grave meant?

In John 20:2, Mary tells Peter and John about the empty grave. Peter and John run to the grave. After Peter and John inspect the grave, they leave. But Mary comes back to the grave. She cries and stays. For sure, Mary must have cried a lot during the last few days. Now, she finds the Savior's grave empty. Mary stooped down and looked inside.

To Mary's surprise, two angels were in the grave. They sat where Jesus' body used to be. "The angels asked Mary, 'Woman, why are you crying?'" (John 20:13, ERV). Mary's heart is hurting. She is very sad. She tells the angels that people have removed the body of her Lord. She doesn't know where they put Him.

What changed everything for Mary? Read John 20:14–18 for the answer.

Tears filled Mary's eyes. She turned and saw someone standing behind her. The Stranger asks, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" (John 20:15, ERV). Mary thinks she is talking with the gardener. So, she asks him to help her find Jesus' body.

The Stranger says one word, "Mary" (John 20:16, ERV). This one word changes Mary's life and the future of all Christians. When Mary hears her name, she understands that Jesus woke up from the dead and is talking to her! Mary must have felt so happy! Jesus tells her not to hold on to Him, for He must go to heaven. Jesus gives Mary a job. She must go tell His followers that Jesus is "going back to my Father and your Father. I am going back to my God and your God" (John 20:17, ERV). Mary did the work Jesus gave her to do. She told the followers that she saw the Lord. Mary also told them the rest of the things that Jesus shared with her (John 20:18).

Read what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:12–20. As Paul says, what good is our Christian faith if Jesus didn't wake up from the dead?



**The Stranger asks,
"Woman, why are you
crying?"**



As the winner, Jesus celebrated in heaven.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘It Is Finished,’ ” pages 758–764; “ ‘The Lord Is Risen,’ ” pages 779–787; and “ ‘Why Weepst Thou?’ ” pages 788–794, in *The Desire of Ages*. See also, Clifford Goldstein, *Risen: Finding Hope in the Empty Tomb* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2020).

“Pilate wished to release Jesus. But he saw that he couldn’t do this and keep his own honor. Pilate didn’t want to lose his power or control as governor. So, he permitted Jesus, who was innocent, to die. How many do the same thing that Pilate did when they want to escape loss or suffering? Duty tells us what we should do. But our selfish hearts tell us to do the wrong thing. When we start to do wrong things, we become a “slave” to evil. Then we can easily become guilty of all types of terrible crimes.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 738, adapted.

“Jesus didn’t give up His life until He did the work He came to do. With His final breath, Jesus cried out, ‘It is finished.’ John 19:30 [ERV]. Jesus won the war. As the winner, Jesus celebrated in heaven. The angels were filled with joy. Satan lost the fight. He [Satan] also knew he lost his kingdom on this earth.

“The angels and the people on other planets understood the meaning of Jesus’ cry, ‘It is finished.’ Jesus also said these words for them, and for us. Jesus’ words meant that His work to save humans was now completed. The angels and the people on other planets share with us in Jesus’ win.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 758, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What decisions can you make to avoid making the mistake that Pilate made?
- ② Why did Jesus need to die for us? Why did He need to be our Substitute? Why did Jesus need to die to save us? What Bible verses support your answer?
- ③ What happenings in history give powerful proof that Jesus woke up from the dead?
- ④ Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–20. How do these verses show that the dead sleep until the Second Coming?

KINGSTON FEELS HOPE

Joy Anderson, a Bible worker, invited several people to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Bethel, Alaska. Joy wanted them to share their life stories. Part of the 13th Sabbath Offering for fourth quarter 2024 will go to repair the church and add a new center to it for Bible workers.

No one showed up at the church for the meeting. Joy brought some food on the way to the church from her office, where she works as a lawyer. Joy thought food would encourage people to come to the meeting. Joy helps lead the church with another Bible worker.

A little later, Kingston walked in. Kingston was surprised to see that he was the only person who came to the meeting. Kingston helped himself to some of the food, sat down, and talked about why he worshiped at the Seventh-day Adventist church in Bethel, Alaska.

Kingston is 59 years old. He works as a janitor. For years Kingston tried to stop drinking alcohol and taking drugs. At that time, Kingston lived in Hooper Bay. Hooper Bay is a town in an area named the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. 1,400 people live in Hooper Bay, a town that is a 90-minute plane trip from Bethel. Kingston said, "I wanted to get away from the bad life I was living. I told myself, 'If I don't learn from my mistakes, people will think I am stupid.'"

Then Kingston moved to Bethel, Alaska. In the past, many other people left their small towns in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area and moved to Bethel. Bethel is the biggest community in western Alaska. 85% of the people who live in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta are Alaskan Indians. Most of the Indians are from Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Athabascan tribes or family groups.

After Kingston came to Bethel, he met Steve. Steve was also from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Steve was an Adventist, too. He invited Kingston to the Bethel church. Kingston said, "Steve asked me if I was sad or having trouble. I wanted to know where Steve worshiped, so I started coming to the Bethel church."

Kingston felt strong when he spent time with other church members who also won the fight against drugs and alcohol. Kingston said, "These church members helped me to stay away from those things. The church helps me stay strong." Kingston says that he is happy, but he continues to look for answers. "God is the Good Man up above. He sees everything. Somehow, He helps us find the answers we need."

Pray for Kingston, who goes to church almost every Sabbath. Pray for him to choose to be baptized. Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering that will support Bethel church's work this quarter.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



For years Kingston tried to stop drinking alcohol and taking drugs.



Joy Anderson