

# The Hour of Glory: The Cross *and* Resurrection



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *John 18:33–19:5; John 19:17–22; John 19:25–27; Luke 2:34, 35; John 20:1–18; 1 Cor. 15:12–20.*

**Memory Text:** “Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice’ ” (*John 18:37, ESV*).

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are the climax of John. The first ten chapters cover roughly three and a half years; chapters 11–20, in contrast, cover about one to two weeks.

The four Gospels present the death of Jesus in different ways. Though their accounts are compatible, each author emphasizes key points that especially resonate with the themes of his Gospel. Matthew emphasizes the fulfillment of Scripture; Mark emphasizes the parallel between the baptism of Jesus and the Cross; and Luke focuses on the Cross as healing and salvation (the story of the thief on the cross).

But John presents the Cross as the enthronement of Jesus, particularly tied to the idea of *the hour*, which is referred to numerous times throughout the book (*John 7:30, John 8:20, John 12:27*). This idea of enthronement is an ironic picture since crucifixion was the most ignominious and shameful way to die that the Romans used. This contrast points to the deeply ironic depiction that John presents: Jesus is dying in shame, but it is, at the same time, His glorious enthronement as the Savior.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 21.

## What Is Truth?

In John 18:28–32, the trial of Jesus is not described in detail. The focus is on Jesus brought before Pontius Pilate.

### **Read** John 18:33–38. What did Pilate and Jesus talk about?

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The governor asks Jesus if He is the king of the Jews (*John 18:33*). It is the first reference to this title but will not be the last. Jesus asks Pilate if he is asking this on his own or did others say that He was. His question turns the tables on the governor, querying if he understands to whom he is speaking. The reader already knows that Jesus is the King. Will the governor?

Pilate responds with his own query: “ ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?’ ” (*John 18:35, NKJV*). It was an evasion, rooted in irritation at the close application of Jesus’ question. It was the governor’s first step away from the truth, letting prejudice block his perception.

Jesus responds that His kingdom is not of this world (*John 18:36*). Pilate then perceptively deduces that Jesus does claim to be a king (*John 18:37*). This leads to Jesus’ important explanation that He was born to bear witness to the truth and that every person who is “ ‘of the truth’ ” hears His voice (*John 18:37*).

Pilate then asks, “ ‘What is truth?’ ” (*John 18:38, NKJV*). But he doesn’t wait for the answer. Instead, he goes outside to try to save Jesus from the crowd.

Truth is a theme in John’s Gospel. As the eternal Word (*logos, John 1:1–5*), Jesus is the Light and the Truth. All this is in contrast to darkness and error. He is full of grace and truth (*John 1:14*). Grace and truth came through Him (*John 1:17*). John the Baptist bore witness to the truth (*John 5:33*). Jesus affirmed that His Father is “true” (*John 7:28*). Jesus Himself heard the truth from His Father (*John 8:40*). Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (*John 14:6*). The Word of God is “truth” (*John 17:17*). Despite his question, Pilate missed his opportunity to know the truth because of his prejudice, his earlier decisions, and the pressures upon him.

### **How do you understand the idea of Jesus as the Truth?**

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## Behold the Man!

**Read** John 18:38–19:5. How did Pilate try to persuade the people to ask for Jesus' release?

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Pilate did not wait for an answer from Jesus concerning truth. Instead, he went back out to try to persuade the people. By dialoguing with them instead of just letting Jesus go free, Pilate placed himself at a disadvantage. The religious leaders recognized that they could manipulate the governor through the crowd.

Pilate refers to a custom of letting a prisoner go free at the time of Passover and asks if the people want him to release “the King of the Jews.” Surprisingly, and quite ironically, the people ask for the release of a brigand named Barabbas rather than the innocent Jesus.

Now begins the mockery and shaming of Jesus. The Roman soldiers plait a crown of thorns, put a purple robe on Him, and keep coming up and mockingly hailing Him as King of the Jews. This type of greeting by soldiers would be similar to the way they greeted the emperor, but here it was done in mockery.

By playing on the pity of the people, Pilate seems to be seeking some way to release Jesus. He brings Jesus out wearing the crown of thorns and purple robe. The scene, unmentioned on by John, displays Jesus in mock kingly garb, with the governor calling on the people to “Behold the man!” (John 19:5, *ESV*). This reminds the reader of John the Baptist’s words in John 1:29, *ESV*, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” It is ironic that the pagan governor presents the Messiah in this kingly attire before Israel.

However, as John 19:6–16 shows, the mob calls for Jesus’ crucifixion, based on His claim to be the Son of God. This frightens Pilate, who seeks all the more to arrange Jesus’ release. But the leaders seal Jesus’ fate by claiming that to release Him is to oppose Caesar. They know that Pilate’s loyalty to Caesar would mean he could not release someone claiming the same role. The leaders say they have no king but Caesar. Thus, their deep hatred of Jesus was greater than their national aspirations. To rid themselves of this Jesus, they were willing to sacrifice claims to national autonomy.

**How scary—a pagan ruler wants to release Jesus while the spiritual leaders of the nation, who should have recognized Him, wanted Him crucified instead! What lessons can we take from this for ourselves?**

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## “ ‘It Is Finished’ ”

As John 19:17–22 shows, Pilate wrote an inscription in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew that said, “ ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’ ” (*John 19:19, ESV*). The religious leaders wanted it changed. Pilate would have none of it, and the inscription remained, a mute witness to the truth about Jesus and one of the markers that Jesus is enthroned on the cross as the King. Here was Jesus, truly their King, the King of the Jews, hanging on a cross like a common criminal.

“A higher power than Pilate or the Jews had directed the placing of that inscription above the head of Jesus. In the providence of God it was to awaken thought, and investigation of the Scriptures.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 745.

**Read John 19:25–27.** What touching scene regarding Jesus’ mother happened at the cross?

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Among those standing at the foot of the cross that day were John, the beloved disciple, along with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and others. Many years before, Simeon had predicted this very experience when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him (*compare with Luke 2:34, 35*). Now in His dying moments, Jesus speaks to His mother: “ ‘Woman, behold your son!’ ” To John He says, “ ‘Behold your mother!’ ” (*John 19:26, 27, NKJV*).

**Read John 19:28–30.** What is the significance of Jesus’ dying words, “It is finished”?

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The Greek verb *teleō* (to finish, complete, carry out) in John 19:28 (“all was now finished,” *ESV*) is the same verb as used in verse 30 (“It is finished”). Furthermore, a related word, *teleioō* (to finish, make perfect) also appears in verse 28 in reference to the fulfillment of the Scripture (“to fulfill the Scripture,” *ESV*). However horrific the scene, everything was being fulfilled, accomplished, and completed.

When Jesus says, “It is finished!” He is completing, fulfilling, the work that the Father gave Him to do.

**When Jesus said, “It is finished,” what does that mean for each of us? What was finished, and how does that apply to our lives?**

## The Empty Tomb

**Read** John 20:1–7. What is the importance to us about what is depicted in these verses?

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Jesus died late on a Friday afternoon and rose early on Sunday. Because the Sabbath was near when He was buried (*John 19:42*), the burial process was done hastily and not completely. However much they loved Jesus, His followers kept the Sabbath day and did not go to the tomb (*compare with Mark 16:1, Luke 23:56*). After the Sabbath, a number of women bought spices to the tomb on Sunday morning. To their shock, the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty.

Mary Magdalene was one of those who came early to the tomb. She ran to tell Peter and John what she saw. The two men ran there. John outran Peter and arrived first. Stooping down, he looked inside and saw the linen cloths with which Jesus had been wrapped. But he did not go in.

Peter, however, went inside and saw the linen cloths lying there. He saw, too, the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head, but it was not with the rest of the cloths. It was folded up and sitting apart.

**Read** John 20:8–10. What was the meaning of the folded face cloth?

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After Peter entered the tomb, John also entered. John 20:8 says that he went in, saw, and believed. Why would seeing the grave cloths lying there and the face cloth lying separately, folded up, lead John to believe Jesus had risen from the dead?

To answer this question, it is necessary to ponder why the tomb would be empty in the first place. The most typical answer would be grave robbers. But this explanation fails for three reasons. First, Matthew tells us that the tomb was guarded (*Matt. 27:62–66*), making grave robbery unlikely. Second, grave robbers typically steal valuables, not rotting bodies. Third, grave robbers are in a hurry and do not fold up grave cloths. No wonder, then, that when John saw the face cloth folded, he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

## Jesus and Mary

**Read** John 20:11–13. What happened here that shows why Mary Magdalene still did not understand the meaning of the empty tomb?

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The last reference to Mary in the text before this one is her telling Peter and John about the empty tomb (*John 20:2*). They ran to the tomb, and she came back there a little later. After Peter and John inspected the tomb, they left it. But Mary returned and, weeping, lingered there. No doubt she had done a great deal of crying during the last few days. And now—this as well? Stooping over, she looked inside.

To her surprise, two angels in white were in the tomb, sitting where Jesus' body had lain. They asked her, “ ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ ” (*John 20:13, NKJV*). Her pained reply was that they had taken away her Lord, and she did not know where they had laid Him.

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

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Through tear-dimmed eyes, Mary turned and saw someone standing behind her. In words similar to those of the angels, the Stranger asks, “ ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ ” (*John 20:15, NKJV*). She thinks she is talking to the gardener and asks for his help in finding the body of Jesus.

The Stranger says one word, “Mary.” It was a one-word revelation that changed the world. Suddenly, the surprised Mary recognizes that the risen Jesus is talking to her and acknowledges Him. Jesus insists that she not detain Him, as He must ascend to His Father. But her task is to go and tell the disciples that He is ascending “ ‘to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’ ” (*John 20:17, NKJV*). Mary fulfilled her mission. She told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and also told all the other details He had shared with her (*John 20:18*).

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–20.** According to Paul, what good is our Christian faith if Christ had not been raised from the dead?

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

“Pilate longed to deliver Jesus. But he saw that he could not do this, and yet retain his own position and honor. Rather than lose his worldly power, he chose to sacrifice an innocent life. How many, to escape loss or suffering, in like manner sacrifice principle. Conscience and duty point one way, and self-interest points another. The current sets strongly in the wrong direction, and he who compromises with evil is swept away into the thick darkness of guilt.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 738.

“Christ did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and with His parting breath He exclaimed, ‘It is finished.’ John 19:30. The battle had been won. His right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory. As a Conqueror He planted His banner on the eternal heights. Was there not joy among the angels? All heaven triumphed in the Saviour’s victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost.

“To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, ‘It is finished,’ had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ’s victory.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 758.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 What decision-making processes can help you avoid making the kind of mistake that Pilate made?
- 2 Why did Jesus have to die in our place? Why did He have to be our Substitute? Why was His death necessary if we were to have salvation? What Scripture passages support your answer?
- 3 What is the relationship between Scriptural evidence and historical evidence when it comes to belief in Jesus’ resurrection? That is, what is the historical evidence that powerfully confirms Jesus’ resurrection?
- 4 Think about 1 Corinthians 15:12–20. How does one make sense of the idea that, without Christ’s resurrection, “those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor. 15:18, NKJV), if those who have “fallen asleep in Christ” immediately go to heaven? How do Paul’s words here confirm the truth that the dead sleep until the resurrection at Christ’s return?

## Kingston Finds Hope

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

A Bible worker invited several people to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Bethel, Alaska, to share their life stories with a visitor from Adventist Mission. Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for fourth quarter 2024 will go to repair and expand the church so it can accommodate a center of influence for ministry in Bethel. I had flown to the town of 6,300 people to collect mission stories to promote the project.

But no one showed up at the church at the designated time. The Bible worker, Joy Anderson, waved toward a large pizza that she had picked up on her way to the church from her office, where she works as a lawyer.

“Help yourself,” said Joy, who is originally from Alabama and co-leads the church with another Bible worker. “I had hoped that pizza would encourage people to come.”

About half the pizza was gone when Kingston walked in. He expressed surprise that he was the only person present. Then he took a slice of pizza, sat down, and spoke about why he worships at the Adventist church.

The 59-year-old custodian said he struggled for years with alcohol and drugs in Hooper Bay, a Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta town of 1,400 people located 90 minutes by small plane from Bethel. “I wanted to get out of the crummy life that I was living,” he said. “I told myself, ‘If I do not learn from this lesson, if I do not learn from my mistakes, people will think that I am dumb.’”

Then Kingston moved to Bethel, following the path of many Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta residents who have left small towns in hope of better lives in Bethel, the largest community in western Alaska. Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta’s population is about 85 percent Alaska Native, who are primarily Yup’ik, Cup’ik, and Athabascan.

One day, Steve, an Adventist and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta native, invited Kingston to the Bethel Church. “He asked me if I was troubled or down,” Kingston said. “I was curious where he was going, so I started coming.”

Kingston found strength in spending time with other churchgoers who had overcome their dependence on alcohol and drugs. “They helped me to stay away from those things,” he said. “This setting has helped me.” He said he is happy but still seeking answers. “The Good Man up above sees everything,” he said. “We all find our answers somehow.”



*Please pray for Kingston, who attends church nearly every Sabbath but has yet to make a decision for baptism. Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that will support the Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church’s mission outreach this quarter. The names of Bethel residents have been changed to protect their privacy. The photo depicts Joy Anderson.*