

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-34 The Crucifixion

Since no human being can really see what is going to happen in the future, Judas had no idea what terrible events his kiss of betrayal would set into motion. In our last lesson we learned how Satan entered into Judas and led him to betray Jesus to the Jewish leaders. In this lesson we will look briefly at Jesus' death and burial which followed.

Judas watched as the temple guard and the mob led Jesus away. Then he went to collect his bag of 30 silver coins. He had expected Jesus to receive some sort of punishment, but was shocked and dismayed when he discovered the next morning that Jesus was sentenced to death. Satan was not surprised. It was all part of his plan. He was done using Judas so he left him. He had used Judas to accomplish his dirty work and now he had more important work to personally attend to. Jesus had been arrested, but Satan needed to personally make sure that the rest of his plan was carried out.

Thus Jesus was dragged before Annas who had been the high priest before the Romans removed him from that position. Annas still held considerable power and influence among the Jews. It was his plan to interrogate Jesus and create charges that would lead to His death. "Tell us about your disciples and what it is you are teaching," Annas ordered Jesus, hoping to turn Jesus' own words against Him.

But Jesus, knowing his motives, said; "I have spoken openly to the world. I taught in synagogues and at the temple where all of the Jews meet. I spoke nothing in secret. If you want to know what I have taught, ask them."

At this, one of the officers struck Jesus across the face demanding, "You do not speak to the High priest like that."

"If I have spoken evil, prove it. But if I have spoken the truth, why did you strike me?" Jesus answered (John 18:20-23).

Annas finished his interrogation and then sent Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas, the high priest who at that time presided over the Jewish council called the Sanhedrin. All of the scholars and elders would be present for this trial. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two stood and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they all answered.

Then they spit in Jesus' face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?” (Matt 26:59-68).

Once they had found Jesus guilty of breaking a Jewish law that required the death penalty, they had a problem. Because the Jews were under Roman law, they had jurisdiction only over religious matters. They did not have the authority to execute anyone. So they dragged Jesus across Jerusalem to the Praetorium, the palace where the Roman governor Pontius Pilate stayed when he was in the city. It was now very early Friday morning of Passover week. Friday was called ‘Preparation Day,’ for Saturday was the Jewish holy day. The Jews could not enter into the Roman Praetorium or they would become ceremonially unclean and not be allowed to have their Passover meal that night. So Pilate met them in his courtyard, where they presented Jesus to him for sentencing.

Now Pontius Pilate was no fool and he quickly surmised that the Jewish leaders were jealous of this man called Jesus. So he personally interrogated Jesus and could find no fault in Him. He had a custom of releasing one Jewish prisoner at the Passover feast each year and thought that this would be a good way to bypass the Jewish leaders. So as a crowd grew out in front of the Praetorium, Pilate sat upon his judge’s seat and offered the crowd a choice as to whom he would release. “Do you want me to release to you Jesus, or would you rather have Barabbas?” Pilate knew that Barabbas was a murderer and traitor. He assumed the people would choose their prophet Jesus.

But the Jewish leaders riled up the crowd into a boisterous mob and they all cried out, “Give us Barabbas!”

Pilate was shocked. He asked them “What shall I do with Jesus?”

And the mob cried back, “Crucify him!”

Pilate again was shocked and dismayed. But, fearing that the situation was about to turn into a riot, he decided to give them what they were crying for. So taking a bowl of water and dipping his hands into it, he declared to the mob, “I wash my hands of this man's blood!” And with that Jesus was given over to the Roman guard.

How could this happen? People loved Jesus and honored Him as a great prophet who did many miracles. How could they have turned against Jesus so quickly? Perhaps it was Satan and his fallen angels stirring up the crowd and clouding their thinking. Satan needed to make sure that Jesus would die. With His death, Satan's victory would be sealed.

Jesus was beaten and whipped—almost to the point of death. The Roman whip was a terrible device composed of short leather strips to which pieces of metal had been attached. It was designed to rip and tear human flesh. Jesus was then forced to carry His own cross through the streets of Jerusalem. He was exhausted, His body bleeding, and He was going into shock. He stumbled again and again along the way. The Roman centurion forced another man to carry His cross the remainder of the way, out through the gate and onto a hillside overlooking Jerusalem. It was called ‘the place of the skull.’ It was the Roman practice to crucify criminals along the roads to their major cities to serve as warnings to all. So Jesus was nailed through His hands and feet to the cross and it was stood up so all could see Him. Two thieves were crucified along with Jesus, their crosses on either side of His.

Crucifixion is a very slow and agonizing death which could last days. Many people stood around and watched the crucifixion. Jesus’ best friend, the apostle John, was there with Jesus’ mother. Many people were mourning, but others laughed and hurled insults. One of the thieves recognized Jesus for who He was and said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When He had said this, He breathed his last and died.

Soon after, a righteous leader of the Jewish Council named Joseph approached Governor Pilate and asked for permission to bury Jesus. It was late in the afternoon and they had little time for a proper burial. Jews consider sunset to be the beginning of the next day. Thus when the sun set on Friday evening, the Jewish Sabbath or holy day would begin, and it was against the Jewish law to work on the Sabbath. So after gaining permission, he quickly had Jesus’ body removed from the cross. There was no time to wash His body and prepare it properly. They wrapped Jesus’ body in a burial cloth and then placed it in a small burial cave that had been dug out of the mountainside. A large rock was rolled over the mouth of the burial cave and then the sun set—ending the darkest day in human history.

Satan had won. He had played his strongest hand and had done what none of his fallen angels could do. He had planned and orchestrated the death of his enemy.

This lesson is **important** because it shows the consequences of just one person making a wrong choice and how Satan can use it for his plan. Jesus suffered injustice and cruelty at the hands of his enemies. The crucifixion process was long and painful, but Jesus endured it to pay the penalty for the sins of the world.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that even though Satan thought he had conquered and eliminated Jesus, God was actually fulfilling His master plan for the redemption of all humanity.

Let’s **review** what you learned in this lesson.

1. Why did the Jewish leaders take Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate? [Pause]
 - A. If you said they did not have the authority to sentence a man to death, you are correct.
2. Where did Jesus say that He would be the evening of His crucifixion? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Jesus said that he would be in Paradise that night,” you are right.
3. Do you think that Satan believed he had won the war against Jesus after getting him crucified? [Pause]
 - A. The Bible does not tell us exactly what Satan was doing or thinking at this point. We can conclude from what we have learned thus far and what we will learn in our next lesson that Satan must have felt confident that he had won.

Your **assignment** is to watch this lesson and the previous two lessons again until you understand this entire sequence of events. After you have mastered the truth of these three stories, find a friend and consider with them how many people were impacted by the wrong decision of one man, Judas. There were many disciples, 70 Sanhedrin members, some political leaders, dozens of soldiers, and perhaps hundreds in the crowds who passed by—not to mention generations who have heard the account since the first century. Ask your friend to consider how many people might be positively affected by the right decisions of those who follow Christ and win others to Him.