

# Jesus was arrested by His enemies

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 14:32-65, 15:1-20, Psalm 27:12, Isaiah 50:6, 53:3,7.**

## Last time

Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. People gathered around Him on the road and soon there was a procession with the people honouring Him as a king, even as the Messiah. The religious leaders wanted to arrest and execute Jesus. They paid Judas to betray Jesus by leading them to Him when there was no one around. Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples. He used bread as a symbol of His body which would be broken, and wine for His blood which would be poured out to seal a new Covenant between God and His people

## Jesus spends time in prayer before He's arrested

Mark continues with his account of the events leading up to Jesus' betrayal and arrest. Jesus and the disciples are on the slopes of the Mount of Olives walking through the orchard. (Mark 14:32-51) In the general area is a cave, still there today, which for centuries housed an olive oil press. There is evidence that this was within a walled, cultivated area known as Gat-Shemanim (transliterated to English as Gethsemane). Even though the Narrative doesn't specify, it seems likely that the cave is a place Jesus and His disciples regularly use for sleeping when they are in the Jerusalem area, and that it is their destination this night. The disciples can sense that whatever is about to happen is weighing terribly on Jesus. When they arrive Jesus draws His closest friends among the disciples - Peter, James and John - off to one side and tells them frankly that the knowledge of what He's facing is so overwhelming that it is crushing Him physically.

He just doesn't know how He can survive what He's going through at this moment. "I realise you guys are tired, but I need you right now. Will you stay awake and just be here for me...ask God for His help? Please." He moves a bit

away from them and falls down with His face on the ground. The thought of what's coming is unbearable. Always, always, always, in every single thing, He and His Father have been together. Yes, there have been challenges, even terrible disappointments - like Judas - but the Father has always been there to give strength, wisdom and fellowship. Now this terrible, dark path looms ahead, and He has to walk it alone, cut off, rejected, even shunned as an enemy. That's the real price that has to be paid. "Oh dear Father, is there any other way? Please. But no, I'm willing. I want your plans to be fulfilled...I reject the whole idea of me wanting anything else."

The disciples desperately want to stay awake and support Him, but after the big meal, the wine, the emotion...they just can't keep their eyes open. But now it's too late for sleep. What's that Jesus is saying? He's been betrayed? What's going on? There are voices, the clash of steel on steel, flickering lights coming through the trees. They're up, rubbing their eyes, "Hey, it's Judas. Yes, where has he been, anyway? Why is he leading those men? Look, they've got swords and clubs." Now Judas is walking up to Jesus. He says, "Rabbi" and kisses Him on both cheeks...immediately the armed men surround Jesus, pinning His arms.

He doesn't look at all surprised, it's as though He's been expecting them. In the confusion, someone trying to protect Jesus is wildly swinging a sword. Who is that? Wow, he took that guy's ear off, blood is pouring everywhere. (In his account, Luke, the doctor, mentions that Jesus heals it with a touch.) Best to get out of here. How can we help Jesus if we're all locked up? All the disciples have the same thought...they're off, running into the darkness. Jesus is left alone among people who want to see Him dead.

## **Jesus was tried first by the Jewish Council**

Peter has run away with the rest of the disciples but now, hanging back in the darkness, he's able to follow as they take Jesus the short distance to the high priest's house in the upper part of Jerusalem. (Mark 14:53-65) Here it's all hustle and bustle...there are torches burning, servants running around. It's cold and a fire has been lit in the courtyard. Peter slips in unnoticed among the guards.

Above, inside, a trial is going on - a mockery of justice if ever there was one. The main religious leaders are all here, desperate to find some evidence against Jesus that will justify having Him executed...but it's not going well. Certainly they'd had people to testify against Him, but their evidence is so petty and obviously fabricated that it won't stand up, even in this farcical court. Without realising it, they are fulfilling something David wrote centuries before in a Messianic psalm (Psalm 27:12) that they probably know well, "...they accuse me of things I've never done; with every breath they threaten me with violence."

Caiaphas, the high priest, is frustrated. If they can just get Jesus to say something, maybe He'll condemn Himself. But He remains detached, silent, unwilling to dignify these proceedings by defending Himself. Finally Caiaphas gets the kind of answer he's after when he asks Jesus if He is the Messiah, God's Son. Jesus responds with a resounding "I AM", and adds that one day they'll see Him sitting in a place of power and authority beside God. The high priest expresses outrage, but inwardly he's delighted, "We don't need any other witnesses. You've heard His blasphemy. What is your verdict?" As one they call out, "Guilty, He deserves to die."

Now they're jeering, spitting on Him, slapping and punching as He's led out. Despite these religious experts' familiarity with the Scriptures, it seems unlikely they remembered Isaiah's words that predicted this, and more that was to come, "I offered my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard, I did not hide my face from mockery and spitting." (Isaiah 50:6)

## **Jesus was tried before Pilate who finally sends Him to be crucified**

The limited powers of the Jewish Council under Roman rule do not allow them to implement the death sentence. So the next morning they take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, hoping he'll be convinced that Jesus should be executed. (Mark 15:1-20) The governor, of course, is not interested in the Jewish religious traditions... his role is to serve Rome by keeping the peace in this far-flung outpost of the empire and seeing that their taxes are flowing into the imperial coffers. He probes to see if Jesus really does pose a serious threat, as the Jewish leaders are saying: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus' answer is cryptic, "As you say it" - It is true, Jesus *is* the legitimate King of God's chosen people, but their definitions of kingship are very different.

The leading priests accuse Him of all kinds of crimes. Pilate is surprised at Jesus' calm refusal to defend Himself against their charges. The religious experts should, but don't, recognise the fulfillment of yet another messianic prophecy playing out before their eyes. Isaiah says (53:7) that the One from God will remain silent in the face of abuse and unfair treatment...not unlike how sheep go without protest to be sheared or even slaughtered. It doesn't take Pilate long to realise that Jesus is not guilty of any crime - the impassioned, almost hysterical, demand by the Jewish leaders for the death sentence is clearly driven by envy and hatred.


In his account, Mark explains that during the Passover celebrations it is traditional for the Jews to select one prisoner for the governor to release. Pilate sees an opportunity here...he suggests to the assembled crowd that this year he release Jesus, who he facetiously calls "King of the Jews". Presumably some of the crowd were in the procession just a few short days before, when

Jesus was exulted as King as He rode into the city. But they have proven to be fickle and their adulation short-lived. Now, angry and disillusioned because He has not met their expectations, and urged on by the leading priests, they ask for another prisoner to be released instead.

When Pilate, at a loss, asks what he's to do with Jesus, they demand death. In fact, they're screaming out that He should be crucified. One of the most painful and demeaning forms of Roman execution, crucifixion is reserved as a punishment for traitors, captive armies and the worst criminals. Performed in a public place to discourage crime, the victim's hands and feet are nailed to a stake or crossed timbers. The excruciating ordeal can last for days until exhaustion inevitably results in suffocation, heart failure and death. The crowd's demand for Jesus' death is difficult enough to fathom, but their insistence on this excruciating and humiliating form hints at something else...this is deeper and more sinister than just a mob baying for blood. It's obviously spiritually motivated, but it seems to also involve a physical, even pathological, compulsion to be rid of Him and all He represents. They are rejecting Him, in the most brutal and conclusive way they can. "He's not one of us. He doesn't even deserve to die as a Jew. Give Him to the Gentile filth to kill. That'll shut Him up, cut Him down to size."

Again, seven centuries before, Isaiah was given words from God to describe this national rejection of their Messiah: "He was despised and rejected - a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care." (Isaiah 53:3)

Pilate makes a political decision. He doesn't believe Jesus is guilty of any crime, but he's more interested in pacifying the crowd and keeping the Jewish religious leaders on-side than he is in justice. He orders Jesus to be whipped, as is customary before crucifixion. The Roman guards are efficient and merciless. The sharp lead spikes tied to the strands of the whip leave His back deeply lacerated and bleeding. The soldiers enjoy the moment...they try to outdo each other in cruel jokes at His expense. A cloak is draped on Him, purple - the colour of royalty, someone else weaves thorn branches into a crown and rams it on His head. As the blood runs down His forehead and into His eyes, they mockingly bow down before Him, "Hey, King of the Jews!" The thorns provide a vivid reminder of the curse God placed on the earth after man's rebellion. The One who has come to break that curse quietly stands with its cruel symbol wrapped around His head. Finally the soldiers tire of their cruel game. They lead Him away to be crucified.





## DISCUSSION POINTS

*Jesus was arrested by His enemies*

1. As you think about what Jesus did and said in light of what He was going through that evening in Gethsemane, what stands out to you the most? Consider particularly how He related (a) to His disciples and (b) to His Father in those particular circumstances and describe anything specific this tells you about Him.
2. Describe some of the differences you can think of between what Pilate, the Roman governor, would think when he used the term “King of the Jews” and the truth that Jesus had in mind when He acknowledged that title.
3. As you contemplate being Jesus’ representative in a hostile context, are there lessons to be gleaned from the way He faced His accusers? Based on this account and on what we know of Him from the Narrative, what attitudes did He have towards these people who hated Him and wanted Him put to death?
4. From what we’ve heard in the Narrative, are there features of Jewish religious culture that explain the Jews’ violent rejection of Jesus as Messiah? Does any of that relate to people’s attitudes towards Him in our society today, or was it an entirely unique set of circumstances at that place and time that resulted in them turning away from Him in the way they did?



## ACTIVITIES

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1. Familiarize yourself with a map of Jerusalem so that you can find the key locations from the events surrounding Jesus’ arrest, trials, and crucifixion. (Gethsemane, the likely site of the High Priest’s house, The Praetorium, Calvary, etc.)