

# The Trials of Jesus

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Date: 02 April 2023

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Our Father in heaven, thank you that you're the one who does good things. As Terry prayed, you've been raising up people from us to go and serve you in many places over the years. Thank you for the opportunity to gather together this morning with each other's brothers and sisters.

And we pray that you, as we look at your word, that you would do your work in us, growing us more like the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name. Amen. Well, we can become all too familiar with the trial of Jesus.

A righteous man who was open and honest in all that he said and did. And yet God actually brought him into this world.

And he was then humbling himself under the scrutiny of the very people that he'd created. And what God had planned since the beginning of time is inexorably coming to a close now as you head towards the cross.

And what's happening is happening in the most wicked way. As wicked men have their wicked way, justice and truth is dispensed with. And yet as justice and truth are dispensed with, so the way forward for justice and truth to reign comes about.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] Pilate, really, he's the author of post-modernism, isn't he, really? For his utter contempt of the truth. Because when he says, what is truth?

He makes things relative so that he can actually avoid the truth. And when the Jewish leaders hear about this truth, they would rather shoot the messenger than actually submit to the truth and hear the truth.

And then the question is, when we hear the truth about Jesus and our world and ourselves, what will we do when we hear truth? So we're back at verse 1 here.

When Jesus spoke in these words, that refers to everything from chapters 13 to 17, where Jesus has been up in the upper room, talking in that discourse, and then has been wandering through the streets of Jerusalem.

When Jesus finished saying these words, well then, we're up to this point now. The very nature of love and mature and service and the nature of leadership and discipleship.

[ 2 : 1 9 ] He's prayed for himself, prayed for the disciples and all those who believe down the age. It's now the time for the opponents to strike Jesus, to arrest him. They think that they're in the ascendancy, that they're the ones who are going to bring about their plans and purposes and control Jesus.

But they're doing exactly as the Father has beginning since the beginning of time. God is absolutely, sovereignly in control of all that transpires in this world, even when the world is at its most wicked.

And so let's look at Jesus' demise. He's betrayed. He leaves the city of Jerusalem and he heads off to one of his favourite places, a garden across the brook of the Kidron Valley. That is the Garden of Gethsemane.

It's on the side of the Mount of Olives. And Judas knows that Jesus is probably going to be found there, where Judas will give up Jesus. It's a good place to hand over Jesus.

No crowds. It's dark. It's near Jerusalem, so the authorities can come and get him. It won't be noticed by the crowds that are descending on Jerusalem for Passover season.

- [ 3 : 37 ] And then Judas leads the mob to catch Jesus in the garden there in verse 3. So Jesus, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

It's made up, this band is made up of soldiers and some officers from the Jewish hierarchy, chief priests and Pharisees. It seems like there's some scheme afoot between the Jews and the Romans conspiring together to get Jesus.

The Romans have provided Judas with some of their soldiers, who would have been based in Jerusalem at this Passover time to maintain order in the city.

Because when the crowds come, who knows what these unruly Jews will get up to at Passover time. A small battalion is armed and ready to take their man. And now the Jews are in league with the Romans to get Jesus.

And so he's arrested there in verses 4 to 11. Jesus knows what's going on and how everything is going to go and what must take place there in verse 4. You see it. When Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, there's no surprise to Jesus what's going on here.

- [ 4 : 58 ] And he gives himself up. And twice he says, for all to hear, who do you seek? And they want Jesus of Nazareth.

And he says, as Peter said, literally, I am he. Literally, I am.

And he says it three times. You can't but help here. There's some big statements being made here. You're actually after God.

And he makes sure they get the right man. And not just one of the other disciples. It's a totally different game plan to what Judas was expecting. He's expecting a showdown, taking some clubs and some weapons to get him.

But Jesus humbly gives himself up. And he confronts Judas and his mob. They don't confront Jesus and his disciples.

- [ 5 : 59 ] See there in verse 5. So powerful is Jesus' appearance. Just his appearance to the mob. That they fall down to the ground.

You want me? You've got me? Here I am. Fulfilling the words he prayed earlier. That not one of them will be lost. Not one of them is lost.

They get Jesus. They get their man. The only problem is that Peter's there. You've got to like Peter. True to form. He says, hang on a second. I'm going to do something about this.

Gets his sword out. Off comes Malchus' ear. And Luke chapter 22, I think it is, Jesus puts it back on again and heals him. But Jesus says, okay. This is part of the plan.

Even though you don't think so, it's got to happen like this. And Jesus asks a question, seeking a definite yes. You see there at the end of verse 11.

- [ 6 : 57 ] Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? He certainly will. The cup is not some nice drink of wine, you know, you're having at a party.

That's not the idea of the cup. The idea of the cup is the cup of wrath. You read about it in Isaiah 51 and Jeremiah 25. It's the cup of God's wrath is what he's going to be drinking.

Of suffering, which you'll drink to the bitter end at the cross. And then he's bound, verses 12 to 14. He's arrested, bound and taken to Caiaphas.

And this Caiaphas, you learn, is the expedient one. He's the one who expediently actually speaks prophetically. It is better for one man to die than the nation.

Remember chapter 11? It's better that one man die for the people. One man will die for the people. But not just the Jews. But also the Romans.

[ 7 : 59 ] It's interesting that another disciple is introduced. An unnamed disciple. Verse 15. Most likely John himself, speaking elusively around about the situation. He's well known to the high priest and well known by others as well.

So that he can speak to the girl at the gate who recognise him and lets him bring in Peter. That's what's going on there in verse 15 and so. Peter had been waiting outside the courtyard.

But now we see Jesus denied. It seems that the servant girl knew that the other disciple was a disciple of Jesus. And so, one second, one second.

She asked Peter, are you one as well? You are not one of the man's followers, are you? She's asking in verse 17. The question's put in a statement of fact.

Like you could say, it's a beautiful autumn day in Brisbane, is it not? And you would say, it certainly is.

[ 9 : 00 ] Or you'd say, you're not driving that piece of rubbish, are you? Knowing certainly that you do drive that rubbish in a car. And they do. So Peter's known associate with the accused.

He's combined with the fact that he's the one who's cut off Malchus' ear. And that's the high priest's servant, no less. And he's in the high priest's courtyard right now.

And he's put in a very vulnerable position. I mean, what are they going to do with Jesus? And given his place in an unfamiliar surrounding where he's ill at ease, Peter finds it very easy to deny his discipleship.

Verse 17. I am not. And once he's denied his Lord once, he's on track to deny him two more times. We read about it there in verse 25.

You're not one of his disciples, are you? I'm not. I didn't not see you in the garden. You're the one who cut off my relative's ear. Verse 26.

[ 10 : 10 ] No. Not me. And then the roost to crows. When the sun is coming up early. Friday morning.

Friends, the temptation is always there for us to deny Jesus, I think. It really is. To be embarrassed to be known as an associate of Jesus. To distance ourselves from him when things get tough.

To do a Peter and demonstrate lack of integrity. The temptation is always there. Have you ever been sold out by someone?

Have you been on the receiving end of it? Been sold out by someone? Someone you thought was a friend, a supporter. Only to find them abandoning you when you needed their support most.

To relate to others like Jesus has no place in our life. Is to deny, is to betray Jesus.

[ 11 : 17 ] I mean, but why would we ever do that? I think partly the pressure's on, isn't it? Because being a disciple of Jesus, to be someone who's known as a Christian these days, is now no longer necessarily just quirky.

But it's to be the bad guy. Who stands against everything this world loves and approves of. I wonder what those who work with us, who relate to us, what they actually know about us.

Do they have any idea what we believe and who we are aligned with? Can I encourage you to include Jesus in just relational language?

Speaking of being thankful to God for. Not being ashamed to say, I was at church yesterday morning. Or speaking of praying for each other and others.

Telling people what we're convinced of, what we're convicted by, what we're encouraged of in at church. It may be hard.

[ 12 : 40 ] But let's not be ashamed of our allegiance to Jesus. Let people know that we're actually believing what Jesus says in his word. All of his word. That will be confronting.

Well, let's move on to Jesus being tried. He's tried by the religious Jewish high priest. And in contrast to Peter, we see Jesus showing incredible integrity.

Jesus comes before Annas. And it's Annas who questions Jesus now. You can see that there in verse 19. It's actually Annas who's questioning Jesus.

He wants to know what Jesus has been saying and what his disciples have been up to. And then Jesus refuses to give him information. It's on public record.

You can see it for yourself. Go and check it out. Do your research. He refuses to implicate his disciples or bring them into danger. He won't incriminate the disciples in any attempts to possibly gain his own freedom.

[ 13 : 46 ] You know, chuck someone else under the bus. He won't enter into a plea bargain anyway. In any case. Everything Jesus has said or done is on the public record.

Done in public. And anything he said to the disciples alone was in accord with what he taught and said elsewhere. There's no conspiracy. The prosecution should seek evidence elsewhere from others.

Jesus has no secrets about his actions, his teaching, his life. And yet by stating these things plainly, he is then assaulted by an officer standing by.

See in verse 22. Is that the way you'd speak to the high priest? Can you feel the irony here? Can you feel the irony? He's a trumped up high priest who's not really the high priest at the time.

And who is speaking contemptuously of the real high priest now? I mean, Jesus is the great high priest.

[ 14 : 58 ] Who should be getting the beating? Who should be getting the punishment right now? And Jesus again seen in control of his inquisitor.

Verse 23. He interrogates them. Telling them to get their evidence straight. Telling them to justify their actions. Well, this is enough for Annas. He sends him off to Caiaphas, his son-in-law.

We don't know anything really of the detail that happened there before Caiaphas. Except that from there, he ends up before Pilate, the Roman governor. So it sounds like Caiaphas and the Romans are acting together in some way.

And so we see this interrogation of the Roman governor. Well, Pilate and the Jews. Here we go. Have a look at this. We've got to know that Pilate's a really ordinary character.

He's the kind of bloke who would sell his grandmother if it would actually improve his political standing. That's the kind of bloke he is. He's a two-faced scoundrel who's deceptive in his ugly dealings with everyone.

[ 16 : 09 ] That's the background you can just know about Pilate. He plays off one group against another to his own advantage. That's what he's like. Saying that things so as to allow him to mislead people to make himself look good while being a completely duplicitous and despicable character.

Pilate doesn't regularly live in Jerusalem. That's not his home. He's normally down in Caesarea. That's where he would live. But during the feast, he comes up to Jerusalem with some of his troops to make sure that things stay under control because you're going to have up to 6 million people turning up into Jerusalem.

And if the Jews get too rowdy, you don't want a word getting back to Caesar, your boss, that you've lost control of the town you're supposed to be in control of by those revolting Jews who've got a tendency to be awkward cusses at times all through their history.

So Jesus is brought before Pilate and it seems with the intent that Pilate will ratify their decision to have him killed. That's their desire.

But did you see an illegalistic Pharisee righteousness? Look at it there in verse 28. Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters.

[ 17 : 38 ] It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled but could eat the Passover. The irony is building here.

I can feel the irony building here. They want to participate in the Passover, right? Not be cut off from the Passover. While they're plotting with the Gentiles to kill an innocent fellow Jew.

They want to participate in the Passover, the reminder of God's great work of salvation and yes, they will participate in the Passover by bringing about the fulfilment of the Passover in bringing about the death of Jesus who is the sacrificial lamb led like a slaughter as the Passover sacrifice.

Where God's wrath will actually come upon him for the sins of the world. And so everyone who trusts in his blood will be spared from the wrath of God and God's wrath will pass over the firstborn son of all the people as God's wrath actually comes upon God's firstborn son for the people.

And Pilate asked for the charge in verse 29. And the Jews don't worry about the charge. Hear with me, verse 29. So Pilate went outside of them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man?

[ 19 : 33 ] They answered, If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you. No charge. There's just guilt hurled upon him.

The Jews don't worry about the charge. We all agree he's an evil man yet it is the leaders of Israel who are the evil ones wanting him dead.

No need for a trial to establish the facts. The Jews want him dead, verse 31. That is clear for all to see now. They want him dead.

And they want Pilate to do it for them. Because, well Pilate says, Well you go and do the deed. You go and kill him. You can see the, just the, of Pilate.

You go and do it. Their reply, verse 31, Well we can't. It's not lawful to kill. See while they're under Roman accusation, under Roman rule and occupation, it's Roman rule that needs to apply, not Jewish rule that needs to apply.

[ 20 : 34 ] They're powerless to do it. And Pilate knows it. So the Jews have to convince Pilate of the need for Jesus' death. And that's something that Pilate knows full well.

He is nothing but contempt for these obstreperous Jews. And so he rubs it in their faces. And it then will fulfil the way that Jesus would die. Not by stoning for blasphemy, which would be the accusation that they would bring.

But by crucifixion, the Roman way. Which then brings about the most powerful symbol of Christianity in the world.

So Pilate summons Jesus to the palace and his Jerusalem residents to examine him. And you see there in verses 33 to 38, the question is, are you the king of the Jews?

As opposed to Caesar. Now who puts this question into Pilate's mind? Was it his own?

[ 21 : 45 ] Or was it the Pharisees and the chief priests who put this idea into Pilate's mind? For that charge of treason will be worthy of death. And notice again, Jesus then turns the table and becomes an inquisitor.

And Pilate's indignant. Have a look at verse 35. So, verse 34, Jesus answered him, did you say this to your own accord or did others say it to you about me?

And Pilate asked him, am I a Jew? Your own nation and chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? And Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of the world. When he says, am I a Jew?

It's really short for saying, are you my king? Wake up. It was your people who handed you over to me.

[ 22 : 50 ] Literally betrayed you to me. Just as Judas had done. I'm not a Jew. You're not my king. Jesus takes the kingship idea and runs with it.

But runs with it in a way that Pilate has no expectation. Because Jesus' kingship is not territorial. Get it right here. It's not territorial.

It's not of this world, verse 36. After all, if it was, well then he had people in this world would fight for him. Take up arms and defend him. As it was, one did.

Peter, and I told him to stop. His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom, Jesus' kingdom, is of a different order.

So Pilate contemptuously smiles to himself. You are a king then, but a very strange one.

[ 23 : 53 ] Typical of your people. You're no threat to me. You're some idealistic crazy just like the rest of your people. And yet, Jesus speaks graciously to Pilate.

If my kingdom was this world, I would have had my friends come and save me. But notice what he says. For this purpose, I was born.

And for this purpose, I've come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. And then we have those famous words of Pilate.

Pilate said to him, What is truth? Pilate, entrenched in his own world of lies and intrigue, utters those famous words.

But those who are of the truth, those who are of God's people, they listen to Jesus' words. And submit to God. And bend the knee to Jesus' rule as king.

[ 25 : 09 ] What is truth? Postmodernism is nothing new, is it really? It was around in the first century. It's always been around. Just another expression of sin. Showing you utter contempt for the truth.

Pilate's had enough of Jesus. Just do away with him. For Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the best true revelation of God ever.

He is the embodiment of truth. Well, it's time to get rid of him. But, just to rub it into the Jews a bit more.

Not wanting to be kind to Jesus, I don't think. He says you can't find any reason to kill him. You've got to do a better job than that, everybody. But, how about we let him go free?

You want him dead? I don't want to kill him for you. Suffer. Hmm. But, how about we let him go free? And, he reminds them of the custom of letting someone go free at Passover.

[ 26 : 10 ] How about we let your king go free? Rubbing into the Jews' noses once more. But, the Jews cry out for Barabbas.

A robber, but more than a robber, he's someone who is an insurrectionist. He is someone guilty of treason, yes. A guerrilla fighter who's already been part of an uprising where blood was shed.

And so, Pilate acquiesces and he gives Jesus up to death. Someone who is no threat to his worldly rule, who's never raised a club against Rome, and he releases a convicted criminal who is no known threat to Rome.

Just trying to think about an example of this. I mean, it's an old example and it's loaded with political overtones, but I'll just give it to you anyway, so you know, just take it at face value.

It'd be like the Americans having captured Osama bin Laden, letting him go and then putting the famous Billy Graham in the gallows, in jail to face death.

[ 27 : 35 ] That's the kind of thing going on here. It is the example of the righteous one for the unrighteous one.

The righteous one will die so the unrighteous one can go free. The righteous one dies so the righteous one can go free.

And it's all in accordance with God's word, all in accordance with God's foreknowledge. While evil men, religious men, people from every strata of leadership in the known world plot the destruction of Jesus, they've made their move.

Yet in making their move, they're actually involved in bringing about the things in accordance with God's sovereign strategy to save the world and bring about the kingdom of God.

God's God's God's God's God's God's God's God's truth. Let's think about that for a minute or two then we'll finish. So who is Jesus to me?

[ 28 : 47 ] Who is Jesus to you? Let me tell you about who Jesus is to me. I believe he is who he is. He is the righteous king of the Jews whose kingdom is not of this world, who is the one who goes to the cross willingly for me.

That's who he is. He's the righteous one who goes to the cross for the unrighteous one, me. According to the will of God who sent him in the world, but not only for me and my sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

That is who Jesus is for me. And what Jesus says I'll believe. And what Jesus says to do I will do or try to do with God's spirit helping me.

I will listen to his voice and follow him gladly wherever he goes, wherever he leads me. That would be the best thing for me to do in God's strength.

I will listen to his voice. Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, who will never disown me, never sell me out, never deny me. And on that day when I need him to stand for me, he will not let one of his disciples go.

[ 30 : 17 ] And he's the one who gives me the questions and it's my place to answer him. It's not me to tell him how he should do his job.

Far from it. What about you? Who is Jesus for you? Is he someone who has to prove himself to you?

Well, be careful because in the end, he'll be the one asking the questions and you will have to give the answers and give an account to him.

as Annas and Pilate and everybody else who has aligned against him. Is he the king you will willingly bend the knee to?

The king of the kingdom that is not of this world but nonetheless still the king over this world?

[ 31 : 20 ] Whatever you do. whatever I do. Whatever we do. Know that God is absolutely in control of everything that is happening in this world at every moment of time in history.

And know that nothing can thwart his plans. Jesus must drink the cup of wrath in obedience to his father's will.

will. And we'll see that over the coming weekend where we'll see how Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.

Let's pray. Our loving heavenly father we thank you for the way that your plans and purposes continue to work their way out even despite the wickedness of mankind.

We do pray you'd help us to align ourselves with Jesus and to submit to his rule and his kingdom which is not of this world. And help us never to be ashamed of him.

[ 32 : 35 ] Never to deny him as our Lord. Never to deny your word in the way that we live and speak and act in this world. Lord. And we pray that over this season that our family and our friends and our neighbours and our colleagues and our children and we ourselves would be moved to live with Jesus as Lord and to be thankful and praise you for him as our saviour.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.