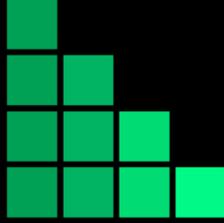


# NEW LIFE ONE STUDIES



**Series: “His Hour”  
Week 4 Study Guide**

**Message:**

**“What will you do with Jesus?”**

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## **SCRIPTURE**

<b>Main Text:</b>	<b>Cross References:</b>
<b><i>Matthew 27:11–26</i></b>	<b><i>Isaiah 53:7</i></b> <b><i>John 10:18</i></b> <b><i>Exodus 23:2, 7</i></b> <b><i>1 Peter 3:18</i></b> <b><i>Romans 3:23–25</i></b> <b><i>Romans 6:23</i></b> <b><i>Matthew 7:13–14</i></b> <b><i>John 3:16</i></b>

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## **UNDERSTANDING THE STORY**

*(This section focuses on understanding what the text means —  
before jumping to what it means for us.)*

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## **Read Matthew 27:11**

**Main Idea:** *The King of Kinds stands before Pilate with an identity that cannot be reduced to political categories.*

### **Commentary:**

Matthew shifts the scene from the Jewish trial to the Roman governor's court. The Jewish leaders have already reached their verdict, but because they lack the authority to carry out execution, Jesus must now be presented to Pilate. This transition is significant because the accusation must be reframed in political terms. Charges of blasphemy would not concern Rome, but a claim to kingship would.

Pilate's question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" reflects that political framing. In the Roman world, kingship language suggested rival authority and possible rebellion. Yet Jesus' reply, "You have said so," is deliberately restrained. He does not deny the title, because it is true; yet He doesn't explain it in a way that would allow Pilate to interpret His kingship as a political threat. Matthew presents Jesus as a King, but one whose identity cannot be understood on Roman terms alone.

### **Discussion Question:**

1. What does Pilate's question reveal about how the Jewish leaders presented Jesus to Rome?
2. Why would a claim to kingship be significant in a Roman legal setting?
3. How does Jesus' response differ from a simple yes or no, and why might that matter?

**Takeaway:** *Jesus is truly King, but His kingship does not fit the political assumptions of either Pilate or the religious leaders.*

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## **Read Matthew 27:12–14**

**Main Idea:** Jesus' silence reveals deliberate submission to the Father's will and fulfills the prophecy of the suffering servant.

### **Commentary:**

After the initial exchange, the chief priests and elders continue accusing Jesus, but He gives no answer. Matthew emphasizes the silence by noting that Jesus made no reply "to a single charge." In an ordinary trial, especially one involving the possibility of execution, silence would have been unexpected. A defendant would normally challenge testimony, defend motives, or appeal for mercy. Jesus does none of these.

Pilate's amazement highlights how unusual this response is. Matthew's presentation of Jesus here closely echoes Isaiah 53:7, where the servant of the Lord remains silent before his oppressors. The silence, therefore, is not mere resignation. It signals intentional submission. Jesus is not being overpowered by events; He is willingly moving toward the cross. (*See: John 10:18*) This matches the broader New Testament witness that His death is not ultimately forced upon Him, but embraced in obedience to the Father's saving purpose.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why would Jesus' silence have been so surprising in the context of a capital trial?
2. How does Matthew's description of Jesus here echo Isaiah 53:7?

3. What does Pilate's amazement contribute to the reader's understanding of Jesus' silence?

**Takeaway:**

*Jesus' silence is not weakness, or victimhood, but purposeful submission within God's redemptive plan.*

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**Read Matthew 27:15–18**

**Main Idea:** Matthew presents a deliberate contrast between Jesus and Barabbas in order to highlight innocence, guilt, and substitution.

**Commentary:**

Matthew next introduces the Passover custom of releasing one prisoner chosen by the crowd. Into that setting he places Barabbas, described as a “notorious” prisoner. The contrast that follows is central to the scene: one man is guilty; the other is innocent.

The irony is sharpened by Barabbas' name. In some manuscripts he is called “*Jesus Barabbas*,” creating a striking contrast between two figures bearing the same personal name. “Barabbas” means “son of the father,” which deepens the force of the comparison: the crowd must choose between a guilty “son of the father” and Jesus who is *truly* the Son of the Father. Matthew uses this contrast to make visible a larger theological pattern: *the guilty man goes free, while the innocent man is condemned*.

Verse 18 also clarifies Pilate's own perception of the situation. He recognizes that Jesus has been handed over out of envy. In other words, even the Roman governor can see that the case isn't driven by justice but by the motives of the religious leaders.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does Matthew frame the contrast between Barabbas and Jesus?

2. Why is Pilate's recognition of the leaders' self-interest important to the narrative?
3. What effect does the Barabbas/Jesus contrast have on the way the reader understands the trial?

**Takeaway:**

*Matthew intentionally contrasts Jesus and Barabbas to highlight the innocence of Christ and the release of the guilty.*

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**Read Matthew 27:19**

**Main Idea:** Additional testimony to Jesus' innocence is introduced at the very moment judgment is being decided.

**Commentary:**

Matthew alone includes the detail about Pilate's wife and her dream. While Pilate sits on the judgment seat, he receives a message warning him not to have anything to do with "that innocent man." This detail serves several literary and theological purposes:

*First*, it adds another witness to Jesus' innocence. Throughout the Passion narrative, Matthew repeatedly underscores that Jesus is not suffering for His own wrongdoing. *Second*, the timing heightens the dramatic tension. The warning arrives while Pilate is in the act of deciding the case, making the moral clarity of the moment even stronger. *Third*, dreams in Matthew's Gospel often function as a means through which God communicates guidance or warning. Even in the Roman governor's household, the innocence of Jesus is being announced.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What role does Pilate's wife's message play in the structure of the trial narrative?
2. Why is the emphasis on Jesus' innocence important in this passage?
3. How does this detail intensify the tension surrounding Pilate's decision?

**Takeaway:**

*Matthew adds Pilate's wife's warning to further establish that Jesus is innocent even as He moves toward condemnation.*

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**Read Matthew 27:20–23**

**Main Idea:** The crowd's choice reveals the power of manipulated public opinion and the rejection of the innocent one.

**Commentary:**

Matthew makes clear that the crowd's decision is manipulated. The chief priests and elders persuade them to ask for Barabbas and to demand Jesus' execution. This is an important narrative detail because it shows how the crowd is being directed by leaders with their own agenda. The scene is not simply about popular preference; it is about influence, pressure, and the corruption of justice.

Pilate's repeated question, "*What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?*" brings the central issue into focus. The crowd's answer, "Crucify him!" is striking because Matthew gives no evidence that Jesus has committed a crime deserving such a sentence. Pilate himself asks, "Why? What crime has he committed?" but the text records no reasoned response — only louder cries for crucifixion. The narrative exposes the breakdown of justice. The verdict is not the result of evidence, but of escalating collective hostility.

This moment also echoes Exodus 23:2, 7, where Israel is warned not to follow the crowd in doing wrong and not to condemn the innocent. Matthew's account shows that these commands are being violated in the most extreme way.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does Matthew emphasize about how the crowd came to choose Barabbas?
2. Why is Pilate's question, "What crime has he committed?" so important in this scene?
3. How does the crowd's response reveal the collapse of proper justice?

**Takeaway:**

*Rebellion is often disguised as righteous or popular action.*

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**Read Matthew 27:24–25**

**Main Idea:** Pilate attempts to disclaim responsibility, while the crowd openly accepts participation in Jesus' death.

**Commentary:**

When Pilate sees that he is getting nowhere and that an uproar is developing, he takes water and washes his hands before the crowd. This act is meant to symbolize innocence or non-involvement; but the gesture is deeply ironic. Pilate cannot remove responsibility by ritual display because *he is the one with legal authority to act*. His handwashing reveals not actual innocence, but an attempt to distance himself from a decision he still makes.

The crowd's response, "*His blood is on us and on our children,*" intensifies the scene further. In context, this is a public acceptance of responsibility for the execution. Matthew presents this as part of the tragic blindness of the moment: the people are willing to bear guilt for

condemning the innocent Jesus. At the same time, the language of “blood” also prepares readers to think ahead theologically, since Matthew’s Gospel has already connected Jesus’ blood with covenant and forgiveness (see *Matthew 26:28*). The crowd speaks more truly than it realizes, though not in the sense it intends.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does Pilate’s handwashing symbolize, and why is it ultimately inadequate?
2. How does the crowd’s declaration in verse 25 take on deeper meaning in light of humanity’s sin and Jesus’s sacrifice?
3. How does Matthew continue to emphasize responsibility in this section?

**Takeaway:**

*All of humanity is responsible for rebelling against God.*

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**Read Matthew 27:26**

**Main Idea:** The final exchange of Barabbas and Jesus displays the heart of substitution: *the guilty go free while the innocent suffers.*

**Commentary:**

Matthew concludes the scene with a stark reversal. Barabbas is released, while Jesus is flogged and handed over to be crucified. The brevity of the verse makes the exchange even more powerful. No extended commentary is needed because the contrast is now fully visible: the guilty man is spared, and the innocent man is condemned.

This exchange is not just a historical irony, but a picture of the gospel itself. The innocent Jesus takes the place of the guilty. Later New Testament texts make this explicit, describing Jesus Christ as the

righteous one suffering for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18). Matthew's narrative therefore shows more than injustice. It reveals the pattern by which Jesus' death becomes humanity's salvation: He bears the sentence that belongs to others.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why is the release of Barabbas and the condemnation of Jesus central to the meaning of the passage?
2. How does this verse prepare the reader to understand Jesus' death in terms of the Gospel of Salvation?

**Takeaway:**

*In the exchange between Barabbas and Jesus, Matthew gives a powerful picture of the Gospel. Jesus took the sentence for sinners!*

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## **MAKE IT PERSONAL**

1. **This passage calls each of us to answer: What will you do with Jesus?**
  - a. Will you ignore Jesus like Pilate, avoiding responsibility for your own sin and Jesus's sacrifice for you?
  - b. Will you follow the crowd, rejecting Jesus because others do?
  - c. Will you trust Jesus fully, accepting His death in your place and believing in Him for forgiveness and eternal life?
2. **Reflect:**

- a. Are there any aspects of your life where you're avoiding Jesus or avoiding the reality of sin?
  - b. Are there times you follow the crowd rather than standing for truth?
  - c. How can you trust Jesus and embrace the freedom he offers this week?
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## **LIVING IT OUT**

**Understanding this passage is meant to shape how we respond to Jesus in everyday life. Consider putting the truth of this text into practice in the following ways this week:**

**1. Slow down and reflect on the cross.**

Set aside time this week to read Matthew 27:11–26 again slowly. Picture the scene: the accusations, the silence of Jesus, the crowd choosing Barabbas, and the innocent Savior being led away. Ask God to deepen your appreciation for what Jesus endured and why He did it.

**2. Practice personal honesty before God.**

The story of Barabbas reminds us that the guilty man went free while the innocent one was condemned. Take time in prayer to honestly acknowledge your own sin before God. Confess specific areas where you have fallen short and thank Jesus for taking the punishment you deserved.

**3. Resist the pull of the crowd.**

The crowd in this passage was persuaded and swept along by louder voices. Pay attention this week to where cultural pressure, popular opinion, or the expectations of others might influence your choices.

Ask God for the courage to stand for what is true rather than simply going along with the majority.

**4. Take responsibility for your response to Jesus.**

Pilate attempted to wash his hands of the situation, but the decision still rested with him. Reflect on your own response to Jesus. Instead of avoiding the question or remaining neutral, intentionally choose to trust and follow Him in your daily life.

**5. Live with gratitude for the grace you've received.**

Barabbas walked free because Jesus took his place. Let that picture shape your attitude this week. Thank God daily for His grace, and look for opportunities to show that same grace to others—offering forgiveness, patience, and kindness where it might not be deserved.

**6. Share the hope of the gospel with someone.**

This passage reminds us that Jesus died in the place of the guilty. If there is someone in your life who doesn't know that truth, consider starting a conversation about what Jesus has done and why it matters.

*\*These practices can help move the truth of this passage from something we understand to something that shapes the way we live.*

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***For LifeGroups:***

**ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER**

The story of Jesus and Barabbas shows that grace is given to the guilty, not the deserving. Jesus took our place on the cross — our punishment, our sin, our death.

## **Be an encourager:**

1. Remind each other of the gospel. When someone is weighed down by guilt or failure, point them back to the truth that Jesus took the punishment we deserved.
2. Help each other resist “crowd thinking.” Talk honestly about where cultural pressure or popular opinion can pull us away from following Jesus, and pray for courage to stand firm.
3. Celebrate grace together. Share ways you’ve seen God’s forgiveness and mercy at work in your lives, and thank Him together for the freedom Christ has given.
4. Pray for bold faith. Ask God to help each member of your group respond to Jesus with trust and obedience, rather than indifference or avoidance.