



NG Study Guide: Mark 15:1-20 "What Will You Do With Jesus?" (9.19.21)

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Each of us must make a decision regarding Jesus. It is the most important decision impacting this life and the life to come. The benefits of the right decision produce contentment, purpose and life with God! The rejection of Jesus, and the refusal to receive Him (i.e. delay decision) results in unnecessary pain, heartache, and regret. So, as we consider Jesus' Roman trials, let's be sure to choose Jesus.

1. Who's on trial? (1-5)

Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. ² Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered and said to him, "It is as you say."³ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. ⁴ Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, "Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!"⁵ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

Immediately, in the morning (1) the full Sanhedrin (70 Jewish leaders including chief priests, elders, and scribes) gathered at sunrise to validate the illegal Jewish trial the night before. Jewish trials are held during the day to avoid abuse of justice. *They bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate* (1). The Jewish leaders confirmed the death sentence, but need the Romans to authorize the execution (and ultimately carry out the penalty at the cross).

Luke notes that Jesus was falsely accused of treason and insurrection against Rome (Lu. 23). Rome would not care about the Jewish charges of blasphemy against the Jewish God.

Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered and said to him, "It is as you say" (2). Pilate seeks to confirm whether Jesus is he King of the Jews. Jesus affirms that He is the Messiah, but not a political rival (Jn. 18:35-37). John records that Jesus declared to Pilate that the reason He was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth, and Pilate retorted, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:37-38). We can't tell Pilate's tone, was he curious or cynical? Is there truth about God, or does each person get to decide the existence and nature of God, spiritual life and eternal life?

Despite the many charges that were brought against Jesus *He answered nothing* (3). *Pilate marveled* at Jesus' silence (3-5). People begged for their lives before Roman governors. The accused were not presumed innocent, so they would almost always speak out in their defense. Similarly, at Jesus' trials before the Jewish leaders, He said nothing to defend Himself (14:60-61). Jesus did not defend Himself, as foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and afflicted yet He did not open his mouth; He was like a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Is. 53:7).

There is no need to offer additional evidence: Jesus' words and works in fulfillment of detailed prophecies concerning the Messiah prove who He is (Matt. 11:1-6). His life and imminent death and resurrection will also prove beyond a reasonable doubt that there is truth about God. That truth is displayed by Jesus' words, works and gospel.

Jesus declared the reason He came into the world is to testify to the truth. Thus, in a certain sense it is not Jesus who is on trial, but Pilate, the religious leaders, the crowds and you and I. The Roman trials had three phases. First, Jesus appeared before Pilate, but when Pilate discovered that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Jesus to Herod (Lu. 23:9). Pilate tried to avoid a decision by deferring to Herod, but Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. Pilate and Herod both concluded that Jesus was not guilty (Lu. 23:14). Both considered the evidence, recognized truth regarding Jesus, but still had to choose whether to yield to Jesus.

2. Who will you choose? (6-15)

Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. ⁷ And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. ⁸ Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. ⁹ But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. ¹² Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ So they cried out again, "Crucify Him!" ¹⁴ Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!" ¹⁵ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Pilate's custom was to release a prisoner to the Jews, whomever they requested, at the Passover (6). Pilate was looking for a way to release Jesus, and resolve the predicament, and assumed the crowd would call for Jesus. There was a prisoner named *Barabbas*, who had murdered Romans during a rebellion (7). When the crowd asked Pilate to release a prisoner, he asked them if they wanted the King of the Jews? (9). Pilate knew the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus, and thus takes a jab at them by calling Jesus, "The King of the Jews" (10). *The chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them* (11). *Barabbas* means "a son of the father" or an Israelite, but Jesus is the Son of the Father. This will always be mankind's choice: whether to choose God's Son Jesus or an alternative savior. *Pilate answered "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?"* (12). This is the most important issue, what will you do with Jesus?

So they cried out again, "Crucify Him!" (13). Pilate asks, *Why, what evil has He done?* Consider Pilate's question. Jesus has done no evil, yet people want to eliminate Him. Jesus reveals God's truth and grace (Jn. 1:14); and thus we are compelled to choose Him or reject Him – there is no middle ground (Matt. 10:32-35). Jesus threatens the status quo, threatens our desire to be in control (be god), and refuses to fit tidily into the boxes that we create for Him. It may seem easier to create an alternative savior, but only Jesus can restore you to God (Jn. 14:6).

The people never consider Pilate's question and *cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!"* (14). *So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified* (15). Pilate released Barabbas to the crowd. The multitudes got *who* they wanted. They rejected *the* Son of God for a son. The people got *what* they wanted when Pilate delivered Jesus to be whipped and then crucified (Is. 53:5).

John informs us that the Jewish leaders threatened Pilate that if he released Jesus, he was no friend of the Emperor (Jn. 19). So fear of reprisal, and a desire to *gratify the crowd* (15), and Pilate made His choice.

Matthew tells us that Pilate washed his hands in their presence and declared, "I am innocent of the blood of this innocent person ..." (Mt. 27:24). You simply cannot wash your hands, you must choose.

3. Who is worthy to receive worship? (16-20)

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, ¹⁸ and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

The soldiers or guards led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, part of the governor's residence, and they called together other soldiers (16). They clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head (17). Purple fabric was very expensive to produce and was made by extracting small amounts of dye from snails or shellfish. Thus, purple robes were associated with royalty. The crown of thorns was another symbol of mock worship. Crowns were associated with royalty, but the thorns remind us of a consequence of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:18). Jesus bears the curse upon Himself to deliver us from the curse of sin. Then the soldiers mocked their salute, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (18). They struck Jesus on the head with a reed (like a mock scepter) spat upon Him, bowed their knees in mock worship (19). Once they finished mocking Jesus, they put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him (20). For the Romans, parading a prisoner through the streets to be crucified was an attempt to intimidate their subjects. On the other hand, for the Jews, the imagery might remind them of the scapegoat led out of the city carrying the sins of the people (Lev. 16:10). Jesus died for the sins of the people who crucified Him

Jesus took Barabbas' place. Barabbas was guilty, deserved death, and could not free himself. Jesus took his place then his penalty, and Barabbas was set free. Barabbas is you and me! We are simply sons of the Father who have been restored to God by The Son of The Father!

In Rev. 5, the Lamb who had been slain receives glory, honor and praise from the church and angelic beings around the throne of God, because He redeemed humanity to God by the purchase price of His life. So, the heavenly host declare, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive honor, glory and praise FOR EVER AND EVER!

Conclusion: you and I are on trial, and we must choose who (or what) will be our savior. In light of all that Jesus has done, that no one else can do, He should be the master passion of your life. So, choose Jesus and worship Him.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How might Jesus' followers respond to someone who is skeptical whether there is truth about God and eternal life?

Q2. Describe your experience(s) related to choosing Jesus. How did you get to where you are today regarding choosing Jesus?

Q3. Consider the events related to Jesus' trials, and the cross. In that context, how might Jesus inspire worship?

Q4. As you contemplate the mocking worship of Jesus by the Roman guards it is easy to see that it wasn't true worship. How might people distinguish true worship from a counterfeit?

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful resource regarding Jesus' trials: <https://www.gotquestions.org/trials-of-Jesus.html>

2. Here are some insights related to the crowd's call for Jesus to be crucified: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Crucify-Him.html>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

This is a great time to invite people that you meet at church or where you live, work, study or play to participate in your Neighborhood Group (NG). NGs are a great way to become disciples who make disciples.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. **What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.