



PART 15 – HOLY WEEK

DISCUSS AND APPLY

Discuss – *questions to help understanding*

1. What experiences have you had of services or other Christian activities around Easter? How do they relate to the events of the life of Jesus?

Read John 18:28-19:37

2. Why did Pilate collude in the crucifixion of Jesus? What personal and political forces were at play and what does this reveal about human nature, especially of people with power and influence?
3. What do the words of the Jewish leaders in this passage say about why they wanted rid of Jesus and to what extent do you think they were speaking the whole truth?
4. What do Jesus' words to Pilate reveal about His identity and mission?
5. What is the significance of the words Jesus spoke from the cross (19:25-30)?
6. Why does John go to such lengths to record the evidence that Jesus had really died (19:31-37)?
7. Who was responsible for Jesus' death? What degree of blame do you think the crowd, the soldiers, Pilate and the chief priests had? What does 19:11 suggest about who was really in control?

Apply – *questions to help personal application*

- What do the events of the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion (entering Jerusalem, cleansing the Temple, the last supper etc.) say about His priorities and sense of His mission? How do they impact you?
- Does the account of the cleansing of the Temple strike you as unusual by contrast with Jesus' normal behaviour? Why did the Temple's purity and the inclusion of all people within it mean so much to Him?
- Jesus intentionally chose to go towards His crucifixion and He did not resist death. Does the thought that He chose death to rescue you mean anything to you?
- Why do you think Jesus had to die and what is your understanding of why Christians make the cross so central to their faith? Do you agree that this death had special significance and that He died for you?
- Do you agree with the five-point summary of the gospel message at the end of this study's notes? If not, at what point do you stick and how can you explore your questions further?

PART 15 – HOLY WEEK **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

What was the significance of Jesus riding the donkey into Jerusalem?

The Gospel writers tell us explicitly that Jesus' decision to ride into the city of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (which He arranged for His disciples to borrow) was a fulfilment of a prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9. This was a clear statement from Jesus of His identity as Israel's king. The choice of a donkey was significant according to the wider context of Zechariah 9. The king riding on the donkey was undoubtedly victorious, but he was also humble, not flaunting his power. The donkey represented his intention to remove the weapons of war, including the warhorse, and to bring lasting peace.

What is the significance of the words of Jesus on the cross?

The Gospels together record seven sayings spoken by Jesus from the cross which are full of significance:

1. Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who crucified them who were acting in ignorance because they did not know who He was (Luke 23:34). The grace of God and His willingness to forgive is seen.
2. Jesus assured the thief who recognised His kingship that He would join Him in paradise (Luke 23:43). In death, as in life, Jesus was concerned with the salvation of others. This dying man, ironically, sees what the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers could not see – that Jesus was truly God's king.
3. Jesus arranges for John to look after His mother as if she were his mother (John 19:26-27). In doing so, He fulfils the fifth of the ten commandments.
4. Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 in a cry to God asking why He had forsaken Him (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). This statement shows both His awareness that His death was fulfilling prophecy and also His experience of rejection by His Father as He took our sins upon Himself (nowhere else does Jesus ever refer to the Father as 'God').
5. Jesus expressed His thirst (John 19:28), showing His true human suffering and also fulfilling prophecy.
6. Jesus declared in a loud exclamation: "It is finished" (John 19:30). This was not a gasp of defeat (my life is finished), but a declaration of victory (my work is completed).
7. Jesus commends His spirit to His Father as He dies (Luke 23:46). The return to addressing God as Father is notable – the rift caused by His bearing of sin is now healed as His work is done.

Why did Pilate agree to Jesus' crucifixion?

Pilate is one of the most tragic figures in human history. He knew that Jesus was innocent, and his wife warned Him not to cause harm to the man she had dreamed about the previous night. The problem was that the chief priests were baying for Jesus' blood and they had whipped a crowd from Jerusalem into a frenzy to support their call for Him to be crucified. Pilate could see the truth, but he was clouded by his political interests. Tragically He asked Jesus, who had come to testify to the truth, what truth is. He authorised Jesus' execution to avert the risk of a Jewish insurrection, which could cost him his job. He washed his hands afterwards, to symbolise his desire to be free of responsibility. Pilate is like many people who can see the truth about Jesus but reject Him because of personal concerns and then try to plead innocence.

What is the significance of the special events surrounding Jesus' death?

The Gospels record some unusual phenomena around the time of Jesus' death which point to its significance:

- **Darkness** – there was darkness for three hours according to Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus' died at Passover, which is always a full moon, meaning this could not have been an eclipse. In Scripture, darkness symbolises sin. In this darkness, people were doing their worst to God's sinless Son and He was taking their sin upon themselves, bearing God's wrath against sin.
- **Temple Curtain Torn** – the curtain in the Temple separated the most holy place, where the ark of the covenant (God's throne) was kept, from the holy place. Only the High Priest could pass through it and that only on the Day of Atonement. When Jesus died it was torn from the top down (Matthew 27:51). The meaning is clear: because of Jesus' death, sin was removed and access to God was open to people.