

The Sanhedrin, Herod, And Pilate

Luke 22:66-23:25

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 22:69

"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Masking tape.

As many sheets of construction paper as the number of children in your class, and crayons, pens, or markers.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Mock Trial

Choose a student to be a falsely accused defendant in a mock trial. Think of something outrageous to accuse the defendant of. You can come up with anything, like the defendant is accused of making the Leaning Tower of Pisa to lean. Just come up with something silly. Prepare ahead of time with 2 or 3 students who should know what you would be doing and have them come in as witnesses. They can say that they saw the defendant doing the outrageous thing he is accused of. Try to stir the class to insist upon his guilt. Tell the defendant that he may not speak a word to defend himself.

When your trial is over, interview the defendant and see how he felt to be falsely accused and not be able to defend himself. Explain to the class that Jesus was falsely accused, but did not defend Himself. He knew His destiny was the cross to save mankind.

LESSON TIME!

Our Lord Jesus endured six "trials" before they condemned Him to be crucified. Three of the trials were before the Jews and three before the Roman authorities. Arrested in the middle of the night, Jesus was taken to the high priest's residence. The religious leaders were in a hurry to try to get rid of Jesus. They wanted to complete the execution before the Sabbath and get on with the Passover celebration. Jesus had not yet officially been declared guilty, and yet the soldiers were permitted to mock and abuse Him. Jesus was put on trial and charged with the crime of being Himself, God in the flesh. **Jesus is the Son of God, our Messiah.**

LUKE 22:66-71

As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying,

"If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe.

"And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go.

"Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."

Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am."

And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

The council of the elders, also known as the Sanhedrin, was the Jewish nation's official judicial body. If the council found Jesus guilty, it would be the last word, the nation would also find Him guilty. This was the climax of the religious trial, and the key issue was "Is Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah?" They were sure that His claims of being the Messiah, the Son of God, were false, and that He was guilty of blasphemy, and the penalty for blasphemy was death (Leviticus 24:10-16).

Jesus knew the heart of His accusers, their unbelief and their dishonesty (Luke 20:1-8). Even if He had told them all, they would not have believed. Their hearts were hard.

Jesus is the perfect example to us of how we should behave when the world laughs at our faith and us. Jesus never sinned, yet He suffered as if He was a sinner, so that we could be set free. When we follow His example, we too may suffer. Our goal should be to live as Christ lived. And part of living as Christ is trusting in God to get us through persecution, like being made fun of, when it comes.

Jesus affirmed His authority as Messiah, the One who after His death, resurrection and ascension, would be seated at the right hand of God, the place of honor, authority and power. By claiming this honor, Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God. **Jesus is the Son of God, our Messiah.**

The High Priest recognized Jesus' claim and accused Him of blasphemy. For any other man, this would have been true, but in this case, Jesus was innocent because He truly was the Son of God. Blasphemy, the sin of claiming to be God, was punishable by death. The Jewish leaders had the evidence they needed, and with fierce determination, they did everything they could to put Jesus to death.

LUKE 23:1-7

Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.

And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "It is as you say."

So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man."

But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean.

And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

In Jesus' day, a death sentence could only be carried out by the Romans who ruled the area. Pontius Pilate was in charge of the area where Jerusalem was located. Now that the religious leaders had Jesus in their power, they had to convince Pilate that Jesus was deserving of death. Though Pilate mistreated the Jews and had caused them to hate him (Luke 13:1-3), the religious leaders pressured Pilate to cooperate with them to have Jesus executed. Pilate's position as Governor of the region of Judea was on shaky ground with Rome, and the last thing he wanted to deal with was a hostile crowd.

The religious leaders stood before Pilate, and falsely accused Jesus of perverting the nation, and refusing to pay the poll tax to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ, a king. But Jesus was sinless, Pilate concluded, through his private interview with Jesus, that He was guilty of no crime. Pilate affirmed the innocence of Jesus.

With the unrelenting pressure from the Jewish leaders, Pilate sought a way out of his dilemma and sent Jesus to Herod who was at Jerusalem at the time. Pilate hoped Herod would deal with the problem so he would not have to. Perhaps this wicked king could find some way to please the Jews.

LUKE 23:8-12

Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.

Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Herod had waited a long time to see Jesus. He hoped to see a miracle. He only wanted to be entertained by Jesus. When his questioning failed, Herod and his soldiers got their entertainment by mocking Jesus and dressing him in a kingly robe.

For each person, God chooses the best possible way to reveal Himself. He uses His Word, circumstances, our minds or other people to get our attention. He is persuasive and persistent but never forces Himself on us. It is sad that Herod had Jesus, the Savior of the world, in his palace but only wanted to be entertained by Him. Jesus holds the keys to eternal life, and He desires to come into our lives and make us new. What do we do when Jesus knocks on the door of our heart? How aware are you of God's attempts to enter your life? Have you welcomed Him in?

LUKE 23:13-19

Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people,

said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him;

"no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.

**"I will therefore chastise Him and release Him"
(for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).**

And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas";

who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.

Jesus had been tried by Pilate and Herod and still had no fault found against Him. Even when He was turned over to the Jews for execution, it was only because the Jews pressured Pilate. Still today, no one is able to find fault in Jesus. But like Pilate, Herod, and the religious leaders, many still refuse to acknowledge Him as the Son of God, but **Jesus is the Son of God, our Messiah.**

It was a custom to release a prisoner at Passover, and the Jews shouted for Barabbas to be released in place of Jesus. Barabbas had been part of a rebellion against the Roman government (Mark 15:7). Barabbas was a known criminal and was guilty of murder, but the people were so blind in their hate that they chose this man over Jesus. They chose the murderer over the One offering life. They chose death over life.

LUKE 23:20-25

Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them.

But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go."

But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed.

So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested.

And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but the crowd loudly demanded His death. He realized that his mishandling of the situation almost caused a riot, so he granted the wishes of the Jews.

He was a man of compromise, who openly said that Jesus was innocent, yet he permitted Him to be beaten and condemned to death. Pilate buckled under pressure, even though he knew he condemned an innocent man. We need to realize that the right decision could sometimes have very unpleasant consequences such as rejection, or ridicule. God wants us to stand up for what is right no matter what. We all need to choose daily whether we will please God or man.

Please God or Man?

Put a piece of masking tape down the center of the classroom. Indicate that one side represents pleasing God and the other pleasing man. Read some different circumstances and possible choices in those circumstances and have your class stand on the side that correctly represents the choice read, pleasing God or man.

Some examples of circumstances might be 1) not giving the answer to your best friend during a test or, 2) going to a movie without parental permission because friends told you to. Think of some additional situations age appropriate to your class.

Amazingly, the people were willing to have an insurrectionist and a murderer in their midst rather than **Jesus, the Son of God, our Messiah**. They would rather be with a well-known sinner than with the one who was innocent and able to forgive sins.

Because Jesus died in the place of Barabbas, this man was set free. We too are sinners and criminals against God's holy law. Like Barabbas, we should die for our sin. But **Jesus, the Son of God, our Messiah** died in our place, for our sins, and we have been set free. Anyone can accept the freedom He offers, by placing faith in Him to save.

Jesus freely gave up His life so that all who call upon Him can be saved. It is an amazing demonstration of love to think that Jesus laid down His life on behalf of us and even those religious leaders who put Him on the cross. Jesus lovingly longs for all to be saved, but we must respond to His invitation to be adopted into God's family (Galatians 4:4-6.) His death brought freedom for us who were enslaved to sin, so we could be a child of God. **Jesus is the Son of God, our Messiah**.

An Invitation

Have your children make an invitation from Jesus for someone they know to become a part of His family by receiving His forgiveness through the work of the cross.

Encourage your students to give the invitations to the intended person, or keep them as a reminder to pray daily for that friend or relation.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving that Jesus willingly went to the cross for our sins. If there are any children who have never asked Jesus to come into their heart, give them the opportunity to do so.