

## *The Murder of Jesus*

### **Study Questions & Answers**

#### **Chapter One**

1. The Jewish people have often been “blamed” for the murder of Jesus, but what other factions were involved?

*Rome, Herod, the Gentiles, the Jewish Sanhedrin, and the people of Israel. The crucifixion of Jesus is the only time in history that such diverse factions worked together to achieve a common goal.*

2. Isaiah 53:10 says that it “pleased” the Lord to bruise Jesus. Why would God be pleased at this?

*God had ordained that His Son must die in order for the plan of redemption to be fulfilled. He was pleased that His Son was obedient; He was pleased that His plan of salvation was fulfilled; He was pleased to demonstrate His love for humanity.*

3. Why was the timing of Jesus’s crucifixion significant?

*It occurred at Passover, when the sacrificial lambs were slain as atonement for sin. Thus it was fulfilled that Christ would be “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).*

4. Describe other times, prior to the crucifixion, when attempts were made to kill Jesus. Why did they not succeed (John 10:18)?

*Shortly after Jesus’s birth, Herod ordered that all male infants in and around Bethlehem be slaughtered. The people of Nazareth sought to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:16–30). Some Jews sought to kill Him for healing on the Sabbath and for calling God His Father (John 5:18). They did not succeed because God was sovereignly in control of when His Son would die. Jesus said of His Life, “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have from My Father” (John 10:18).*

5. What may have been some of Judas’s motives for betraying Jesus?

*In a greedy desire for power, glory, and wealth, Judas perhaps had hoped that Jesus would deliver Israel from Roman oppression and establish an earthly throne. When Jesus did not and began speaking more and more of His rejection and impending death, Judas became disillusioned, perhaps even angry.*

6. What are some of the accounts that display God’s sovereign control in the days leading up to Christ’s crucifixion?

*Matthew 26:4–5 says that the Sanhedrin did not want to kill Jesus during the Passover, but God orchestrated it otherwise. In Luke 22:22 on the night of His arrest, Jesus says, “The Son of Man goes as it has been determined,” revealing that God had already planned when and how His Son would go. Matthew 26:6–13 depicts Mary anointing Jesus with oil in preparation for His burial.*

7. If God was sovereignly in control when His beloved Son was murdered, can you trust Him to be in control of the events occurring in the world today? In your life today? What do you need to entrust to Him?

## **Chapter Two**

1. How did the Passover feast originate? How did the Jews celebrate it at the time of Christ?

*The first Passover was celebrated on the eve of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 12:3–6). Every family in Israel commemorated the nation’s deliverance with a Passover feast and the sacrifice of a spotless lamb.*

2. What were the chief elements at a Passover Seder? What did they represent?

*Bitter herbs (parsley, endive, and similar leafy greens) represented the harshness of Israel’s bondage in Egypt; charoseth with unleavened bread represented the mortar used by the slave bricklayers in Egypt; lamb represented the atonement for their sins.*

3. Why was the Passover meal that Jesus celebrated with His disciples so significant?

*It represented the culmination of all previous Passover Seders. It was the last Passover before the true Lamb of God fulfilled the ultimate sacrifice.*

4. Why did Jesus wash His disciples’ feet? What did He want to teach them?

*He washed His disciples’ feet to depict humility and true holiness. He modeled the humility they were to show to one another. He was also illustrating that even they as believers needed to have their hearts periodically washed to cleanse them from the external defilement of the world.*

5. What indications suggest that Judas enjoyed a special measure of trust?

*He was the disciples’ treasurer.*

6. What did Jesus mean when He called the bread His “body”?

*That He was the true “bread of life” (John 6). His sacrifice would open the way for them to have abundant, eternal life.*

7. When Jesus took the cup, He said, “For this is My blood of the new covenant.” Why did He say this? What did He mean?

*Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that the shedding of His sacrificial blood signified a new covenant between believers and God. It served, once and for all, as the atonement for their sin and the price for their redemption.*

8. Read John 17, the prayer Jesus gave to conclude the Passover feast. What are some of the requests Jesus made, not only for His twelve disciples then, but also for His disciples today?

*The believers’ protection, sanctification, unity, and ultimate glorification. Essentially, Christ was praying for the good of the future church.*

### **Chapter Three**

1. How did the disciples respond when Jesus told them they would deny Him? What were they putting their trust in?

*They pledged their undying loyalty, claiming that they were ready to go to prison and to death with Jesus. They were putting their trust in their own strength.*

2. Read Ephesians 6:12. Peter tells Christ, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” Describe the type of battle Peter saw ahead of them versus what Christ saw.

*Peter saw a physical battle, a flesh-and-blood conflict that depended on courage and stamina. Christ knew that apparent defeat lay ahead of them, but that faith in the God who was sovereignly in control of all events would mean ultimate victory.*

3. What did Jesus pray for His disciples (Luke 22:32)? How was that prayer fulfilled in their lives?

*Jesus prayed that His disciples’ faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). The disciples’ faith faltered, but it did not fail. They went on to have an abundant ministry after Christ’s resurrection.*

4. Describe the characteristics of the disciples after Pentecost. Why were they so different?

*They were fearless, righteous, and bold in the strength of the Lord. They had learned the utter insufficiency of their own physical resources and the complete sufficiency of entrusting their lives to Christ.*

5. Why did Jesus make a point of asking Peter three times if he loved Him?

*Peter had denied Christ three times, so Christ gave him three opportunities to express his love. Jesus was driving home the point that Peter needed to trust His all-knowing, sovereign power, which would never fail him.*

6. When have you put your confidence in your own strength instead of in Christ? What were the results?

## **Chapter Four**

1. Scripture depicts Jesus as having many human attributes. What were some of them?

*Jesus became thirsty, hungry, tired, angry, joyful, and sad.*

2. Read Hebrews 4:15. Why is it significant that, in addition to being fully God, Jesus was fully human?

*By being fully God and also fully human, Jesus was able to take on our form, being tempted and suffering as we suffer, yet remaining without sin. He is able to fully empathize with our weaknesses, and act as the perfect Mediator on our behalf.*

3. Why did Jesus bring Peter, James, and John with Him to the garden?

*He wanted them to learn a powerful lesson in how to handle affliction. They witnessed both His agony and His faithfulness to be obedient to His Father.*

4. Jesus prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." What was the "cup" that He dreaded?

*The "cup" was the outpouring of divine wrath He would have to endure from His Father. By taking on all the sins of the world, He knew His Father would have to turn His back upon Him as He hung on the cross. He would experience the worst pain imaginable — separation from God.*

5. What was the ultimate petition of Jesus's prayer in the garden?

*"Your will be done" (Matt. 26:42). Though He dreaded the cup that He must drink, He desired, above all, that His Father be glorified. Therefore, He was willing to submit so that His Father's will might be done.*

6. According to Titus 1:1–2 and 2 Timothy 1:9, when did God make the promise of eternal life? To whom did He promise it?

*God made the promise of eternal life “before time began.” He made the promise to believers through His Son Christ Jesus.*

7. Have you ever considered that God had a plan for your redemption even before time began? What is your reaction to this truth?

## **Chapter Five**

1. Who accompanied Judas to the Garden of Gethsemane?

*A mob that may have numbered in the hundreds. They were armed with clubs and swords. Included in this mob was a detachment of Roman soldiers and members of the temple guard.*

2. Why did the chief priests send such a large crowd?

*They were clearly frightened of Jesus’ power.*

3. Why did they arrest Jesus in the middle of the night?

*They were cowards, and they knew their charges against Jesus were not legitimate.*

4. How did Judas signal whom to betray? Why was this signal particularly cruel?

*Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. It typically conveyed respect, homage, and affection, but clearly, Judas used it to convey disdain and betrayal.*

5. Why did Jesus rebuke Peter for using his sword?

*Once again, Peter was relying on physical strength to fight this battle. Jesus was modeling the importance of submission to divinely ordained authority, even when that authority is unjust or abusive.*

6. Jesus supernaturally caused the entire mob to fall to the ground; He also healed Malchus’s ear, yet neither of these miracles deterred the crowd. Why? (Consider Genesis 19:10–11.)

*The mob had intently set their hearts on doing evil.*

7. Describe Christ’s demeanor throughout the chaos of His arrest.

*He endured it peacefully and without resistance, trusting in the sovereignty of the One who had ordained all of these events to occur.*

8. On the night of Jesus' arrest, the disciples became so overwhelmed with the circumstances unfolding around them that they forgot the reassuring promises Jesus had given them. When have circumstances caused you to forget God's promises? When have God's promises comforted you during fearful circumstances?

## **Chapter Six**

1. During Jesus' time, Israel was a theocracy. Describe how this type of government worked. Who were Israel's legal experts?

*God was King, mediating His rule through the revelation of His Word. Israel's leaders were to govern by biblical principles. Civil law and religious law were inextricably intertwined; there was no separation of church and state. Israel's legal experts were those with the most expertise in Moses's law, the Old Testament scriptures.*

2. What legal principles did the Sanhedrin council violate in order to condemn Jesus?

*The charges against Jesus were trumped up and brought by the council rather than an outside party. The witnesses against Him were likely bribed. The trial was held in the middle of the night. No one was allowed to speak in Jesus' defense. None of the evidence that supported the validity of Jesus' claims was entertained.*

3. Which two disciples followed Jesus to the high priest's courtyard?

*Peter and John.*

4. What reasons might the high priest Annas have had for seeing Jesus killed?

*Jesus threatened Annas's business interests. Twice Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple. Jesus also represented everything a high priest should be—holy, devout, chaste, honorable, and virtuous—thus serving as a constant rebuke to Annas's corruption.*

5. Two false witnesses testified similarly against Jesus. What were their claims against Him?

*According to Mark 14:59, the details of their stories did not agree, but they claimed that Jesus said, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."*

6. How did Caiaphus interpret Jesus' statement that He would destroy the temple and raise it up three days later? What did Jesus actually mean?

*As did most of the hearers, Caiaphus thought Jesus claimed that He would overthrow the Jewish religion by replacing the current temple with another one. Jesus was actually referring to His own body as the temple.*

7. On what grounds did the Sanhedrin council ultimately decide Jesus deserved to die?

*Jesus committed blasphemy by claiming to be the Son of God.*

8. Christ relinquished all His rights while on earth in order to glorify His Father. Both in word and deed He demonstrated complete humility again and again. Read Philippians 2:3–11. Considering Jesus had the right, as the Son of God, to be treated as a King rather than endure the humiliation of the cross, how does His demonstration of humility speak to you? In what areas of your life do you need to relinquish your rights and “empty” yourself for the glory of God?

## **Chapter Seven**

1. Even after the disciples had abandoned Jesus, how did God's grace uniquely equip them for future ministry?

*They were uniquely equipped to strengthen weak, fearful, suffering believers to remain faithful (1 Pet. 1:6–7).*

2. Contrast Judas's betrayal of Christ with Peter's denial of Him. Why was one a defeat and the other, ultimately, a victory?

*Judas's betrayal of Christ was premeditated, deliberate, and final—an act of hardhearted, full rebellion against Christ. Peter's denial of Christ was a spur-of-the-moment act of weak-hearted cowardice. Judas felt remorse for his betrayal of Jesus, whereas Peter felt remorse that led to repentance.*

3. How was Peter's denial of Jesus a gradual defeat? What steps in his life led up to the life-changing failure the night of Jesus's trial?

*He boasted in his own strength (Matt. 26:31–35; Mark 8:32–33). He prayed too little (Matt. 26:38). He slept too much (Matt. 26:43–46). He acted impulsively and relied on physical force (Matt. 26:51). He did not follow Christ closely enough.*

4. Describe Peter's reaction when he realized Jesus' prophecy of his denial had been fulfilled. What evidence do we have of his repentance being genuine?

*He went somewhere to be alone and wept bitterly. His sorrow led to true repentance in that he never denied Christ again.*

5. What do all four gospels highlight in recounting Peter's failure?

*Scripture recounts Peter's episode to highlight the grace that restores him to a vibrant life in Christ.*

6. According to 1 Peter 1:3–7, where does Peter testify that our security rests?

*Our security rests in the power of God.*

7. What "various trials" has God used to strengthen "the genuineness of your faith"? Do you see that your victory in them has further equipped you to serve Him?

## **Chapter Eight**

1. Why did people have such differing opinions as to who Jesus was?

*Jesus had never explicitly said in His public teaching that He was the Messiah.*

2. After they gave their verdict, why did the Sanhedrin council send Jesus to Pontius Pilate?

*They needed Roman approval to put Him to death, and they wanted Roman executioners to be the ones who killed Jesus.*

3. Why was Judas's crime against Jesus particularly heinous?

*Judas had been privileged to walk closely with Jesus for three years—to witness His lovingkindness, truth, and innocence—yet the presence of Christ had not penetrated his hard heart. Judas was such an expert in hypocrisy that he even managed to hide his true character from the other disciples.*

4. Why did Judas feel remorse when he realized Jesus had been condemned?

*Judas realized he had betrayed an innocent Man. He may have thought that Jesus would escape arrest as He had done before, or be able to clear Himself of charges brought against Him. But when Jesus was condemned, Judas felt horrific guilt for the role he had played in handing Jesus over to His murderers.*

5. What steps did Judas take to attempt to deal with his sin?



*He offered restitution by taking the thirty pieces of silver back to Sanhedrin. He offered a confession to the Sanhedrin, acknowledging his guilt and Jesus' innocence. Finally, instead of confessing his sin to God and seeking His forgiveness, he sought to escape the pain and consequences of his guilt by taking his life.*

6. How did members of the Sanhedrin council demonstrate hypocrisy when they refused to put the blood money in the treasury?

*The blood money used to pay Judas to betray Jesus had originally come out of the treasury, yet they refused to put it back in when the deed was done and Judas no longer wanted the money.*

7. What did Jesus mean when He likened the Jewish religious leaders to “whitewashed tombs”?

*They exhibited external obedience to the law, giving the appearance of holiness, but on the inside they were full of hypocrisy and unrighteousness. They gave no attention to what mattered most—the condition of their hearts.*

8. Read Jeremiah 9:23–24. If you are going to be proud of something, what does God want you to be proud of? Like the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, are you boasting in outward appearances or delighting in the reality that you truly “know and understand” God?

## **Chapter Nine**

1. Why did the Sanhedrin council not enter Pilate's home?

*Their rabbinical tradition taught that if they entered the home of a Gentile, they would be ceremonially unclean and unable to partake of the Passover feast.*

2. Why did the Sanhedrin want a Roman execution rather than stoning Jesus themselves?

*They were fearful of the people's opinion. They did not want the responsibility of Jesus' death resting solely on them. They would be defiled if they stoned Jesus before partaking of the Passover feast.*

3. How did the Sanhedrin attempt to portray Christ to Pilate so he would order His death?

*They portrayed Him as a threat to the Roman government, an insurrectionist who refused to pay taxes and declared Himself king.*

4. What was Pilate's predicament?

*He could not afford to offend the Jewish leaders. In the four years leading up to Jesus' trial, Pilate's credibility to govern Judea had already been questioned several times by his Roman superiors. Yet Pilate did not truly believe that Jesus deserved to die. He was caught between a desire to "keep his job" and a desire to be fair to Jesus.*

5. How did Philo describe Pilate?

*Pilate was corrupt, insolent, cruel, unjust, and inhumane.*

6. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod? Why was Herod eager to see Jesus? How did he treat Him?

*Pilate could not find grounds for executing Jesus, yet he did not want to anger the Jewish leaders, so he sent Jesus to Herod for Herod to decide what should be done with Him. Pilate realized that Jesus was a Galilean and Galilee was Herod's jurisdiction. Herod was eager to see Jesus because he had heard of Jesus' claims and His miracles. He hoped that Jesus would entertain him. When Jesus did not, he mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate.*

7. Why did Pilate's wife send word that Pilate should "have nothing to do" with Jesus?

*She had a dream that had convinced her that Jesus was innocent and that Pilate should release Him.*

8. What measures did Pilate take to avoid crucifying Jesus? How did the crowd respond?

*Pilate tried to reach a compromise by offering to have Jesus punished with a Roman scourge and then released. He then tried to dissuade the crowd by offering to release Barabbas, a notoriously evil criminal, in place of Jesus. The crowd chanted that Barabbas be released and Jesus crucified.*

9. Why did Pilate wash his hands before the multitude?

*He knew he had sentenced an innocent Man to death. By washing his hands he was communicating to everyone present that he was not responsible for this Man's death, that he had been forced into his verdict by the demands of the people.*

10. Throughout His trial, Jesus responded to Pilate's and Herod's questionings, the mocking, and unjust accusations with a calm, sometimes silent, demeanor. How do you think you would respond under similar circumstances? What have you learned from Christ's attitude toward those who mocked Him? How can you apply the things you have learned to situations you face today?

## **Chapter Ten**

1. How did the Roman soldiers mock Jesus?

*They fashioned a king's costume for Him and slapped and taunted Him.*

2. What did the robe, crown of thorns, and reed symbolize?

*The purple or scarlet robe signified royalty. The crown of thorns signified kingship; Caesar wore a crown of laurels. The reed symbolized a scepter, a symbol of power.*

3. Who was chosen to carry Jesus's cross? Why was it ultimately significant that he was chosen?

*Simon the Cyrene. Ultimately, Simon became a believer in Christ.*

4. Why did the Romans crucify their victims along major thoroughfares?

*They wanted Roman citizens to witness the punishment Roman lawbreakers received. Crucifixion victims served as a warning to others of the consequences of violating Caesar's laws.*

5. Describe the location where Jesus was crucified. What does *Calvary* mean?

*Nowhere in Scripture is it called a hill, but it is generally assumed that the location was on an incline that had the appearance of a skull. Calvary means "skull."*

6. What did the soldiers offer Jesus to drink? Why did He refuse it?

*They offered Jesus sour wine mixed with gall. Jesus refused it because the gall would act as a narcotic, deadening His senses. He had come to the cross to bear the full effect of sin.*

7. Why did the Roman soldiers drive the iron nails through a victim's wrists rather than hands?

*The flesh in the hands would tear and not hold the victim. The bones and ligaments of the wrists could support the weight of the victim.*

8. How did crucifixions maximize a victim's pain?

*It did not permit the victim to die quickly. Crucifixions usually lasted about three days.*

9. How did the Roman soldiers, Pilate, the onlookers, and the thieves seek to humiliate Christ?

*The Roman soldiers stripped Christ of His clothing and cast lots for it. Pilate erected a sign over Jesus's head on the cross that read, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews." The onlookers and thieves taunted Jesus, yelling that if He really were a Messiah He would save Himself.*

10. Have you ever considered, in this much detail, the suffering Jesus endured for your salvation? What is your reaction to what He endured?

## **Chapter Eleven**

1. Why did Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"? How was this prayer answered?

*Jesus knew His crucifiers were ignorant of the enormity of their crime. They did not realize that the One they were putting to death was the Light of the World. In the hours and weeks that followed, several people who were at the cross—a centurion, a thief, and onlookers who were later at Pentecost—confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior and received forgiveness.*

2. Describe the transformation that took place in one of the thieves' hearts. What did Jesus promise him?

*He stopped mocking Jesus and grew silent. He confessed that he deserved punishment for the crimes he had committed, but recognized that Jesus was innocent. Then he turned to Jesus and addressed Him as Lord, asking Jesus to remember him when He entered His Father's Kingdom. Jesus then promised him, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).*

3. Whom did Jesus delegate to care for His mother? Why did He not choose one of His brothers?

*He chose John to care for His mother because His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5).*

4. How is the true meaning of the cross found in the utterance, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

*God punished His own Son as if He had committed every wicked deed done by every sinner who would ever believe. The sin Christ bore was so despicable to the righteousness of God that He had to separate Himself from Him.*

5. What caused the greatest amount of suffering for Christ on the cross?

*The wrath of His Father being poured out on Him, followed by the separation from His Father.*

6. What is the significance of Christ crying out, "It is finished"?

*He meant that the work His Father had given Him was fulfilled. His atoning work was finished; redemption for sinners was complete.*

7. How did Jesus' final words from the cross depict, once again, that He was sovereignly in control?

*By proclaiming, "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit," Jesus signified that no one took His life, but He gave it up willingly.*

8. Of the seven last sayings of Christ, which speaks most poignantly to your heart? Why?

## **Chapter Twelve**

1. What were some of the supernatural events that occurred while Jesus hung on the cross?

*The sun darkened for three hours, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, an earthquake occurred, and many bodies of the dead saints were raised.*

2. What does darkness typically symbolize in the Old Testament? Give some examples.

*Darkness typically symbolizes God's judgment: (Ex. 10:14-15, 21-23; Isa. 5:30, 50:3; Joel 2:2, 31; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:14-15; Rev. 9:2).*

3. Scripture does not indicate why darkness occurred at the crucifixion. But what is a possible explanation based on instances of darkness occurring elsewhere in Scripture?

*It may signify the Father's judgment falling on His Son as He bore in His person our guilt.*

4. What happened to the veil shielding the Holy of Holies when Christ died? What did that signify?

*It tore from top to bottom, signifying the removal of our sin as a barrier, and our free, unobstructed access to the Father.*

5. What did the earthquake signify?

*The shaking of the earth signified God's divine wrath being poured out.*

6. Whom did God raise from the dead when Christ died? What did they do after the resurrection of Christ?

*God raised many of the saints, and after Christ's resurrection they appeared to many people in Jerusalem. They, too, were testimony to Jesus' triumph over death.*

7. What caused the centurion and his soldiers to admit, "Truly this Man was the Son of God"?

*They witnessed that Jesus prayed for His killers, the noble way He suffered, the earthquake, and the three hours of darkness. Their eyes were opened to understand they had witnessed supernatural occurrences.*

8. Why did the Sanhedrin want the bodies off the crosses before the end of the day?

*The following day was the Sabbath and they did not want it defiled. Old Testament law required that corpses must be buried and out of sight before the Sabbath.*

9. Why is "knowing Jesus Christ and Him crucified" the heart and soul of the gospel message?

*The Cross gives meaning to the resurrection life. Because of Christ's atoning work on the Cross, we can step into abundant life with Him.*

10. Read Hebrews 4:16. Christ endured great suffering so you might have intimate access to God. Have you been enjoying the full access you have to the Father? Are there areas in your life that you need to bring before God's throne of grace?