

# Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,  
day after day, and that the people of God  
were filled with joy!

## Friday – Luke 22:66-72 – Jesus before the Council.

This is the early morning session of the Sanhedrin, which is recorded in Matthew 27:1ff and Mark 15:1ff. What was taking place here was the formal passing of the informal decision that had been taken during the hours of darkness by the Sanhedrin to put Jesus to death. In capital cases, Jewish law required an interval of at least one day before the sentence could be ratified at a second session of the Sanhedrin. As noted yesterday, the Sanhedrin had already broken its own laws by convening a night session, which was not allowed. But while everything was being done seemingly according to the 'book', nothing was being done according to their own laws and justice. First, the night session to find him guilty, and now they are meeting the next morning to confirm that decision. They are doing something that should have ordinarily taken at least forty hours in eight hours, and that's being generous. Why? Because once these men have Jesus in their grasp, they aren't going to let go of him. They are determined to get him dealt with as soon as possible. His days of embarrassing them with his crowd-gathering miracles and rabble-rousing teaching are at an end. They aren't going to listen anymore to people telling them about how authoritative and engaging his preaching is, nor how much they love to see him heal the sick and the lame. So, the illegality of the night trial is disregarded, and the need to wait at least one day before confirming the judgment is simply ignored. These bastions of truth and righteousness can and will set aside all they hold dear to deal with this man. So, they convene the full Sanhedrin.

The question is put to Jesus as to whether or not he is the 'Christ', the Messiah. The purpose is to seek to find grounds to justify the decision made. Of course, they are not thinking of the Messiah in the way that Jesus understands it. For them, Messiah means a nationalistic, highly political, materialistic, Saviour King. Jesus wasn't going to answer their question according to their understanding; but he also could not say 'No', because the truth is that he is the Messiah, so he answers as he does. He declares and testifies to what will happen to him. In doing so, he calls himself the Son of Man, because his glorious enthronement, following his ascension, relates to his human nature in which he fulfilled all that was required of him by the Father as a man. They had no idea of who Jesus was, but he knew everything about himself, and all that would concern him in the following hours of his life.

Q1. What time of day is this, and why is that significant?

Q2. How consistent were the Sanhedrin with their laws in these trials?

Q3. Why did Jesus answer the question - if he was the Messiah - as he did?

## Thursday – Luke 22:63-65 – Jesus is mocked.

We come today to one of the most heart-wrenching passages in the Word of God. The parallel passages are in Mathew 26:67,68 and Mark 14:65. Some find a conflict here, but the apparent contradiction of when this took place can be easily explained by understanding that Luke omits the night trial that took place before the Sanhedrin and goes straight to the early morning meeting of the Sanhedrin.

In this night trial (recorded in Matthew 27:57-66), a court was illegally convened, because court proceedings could not be held after dusk, and numerous attempts were made to find witnesses who would speak against Jesus. The Sanhedrin knew witnesses would have to testify falsely, but none were forthcoming until, at last, two did so. Both, obviously under direction and having colluded, stated that they had heard Jesus say that he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Matthew tells us that Jesus was initially silent, refusing to answer the allegations, but he then spoke to declare the reality of his succession to power in heaven and his second coming. At this point, the events we now read of here in Luke take place. Note, that it's not just the men physically holding Jesus who mock him. Once Caiaphas has declared the death penalty on Jesus, 'because' of blasphemy, the room erupts with rage and brutality that manifests in vicious mockery. These men of the ruling Council rise from their seats, setting aside their adorned dignity as the supreme judges of the nation, and reveal their true natures as they crowd around Jesus. In their cowardly brutality, they surround their bound prey and begin to inflict a deluge of hatred upon him. Proud they may be in the marketplace, upright and ostentatious in their daily dealings with the general populace, constantly fawning for attention; but now, in this room, at this moment, they are like children baying for blood in a schoolyard fight. It's not simply unseemly; it is heart-rending to think about their beating of the Lord; the word denotes bruising and breaking the skin. It's difficult to think about their spitting in his face, their blindfolding of him, their mocking, their taunting of him to prophesy, their blaspheming, and their saying all sorts of things about and against the Son of Man.

Q1. What takes place at the night trial recorded in Matthew's gospel?

Q2. At the end of that trial, what does Luke tell us that happens?

Q3. Is this easy to read about?

## Monday – Luke 22:47-53 – The betrayal of Jesus.

Having expressed his utter submission to the Father in prayer and having been strengthened by an angel for the events before him, Jesus is now speaking with the disciples. Suddenly a crowd appears in the olive grove. This isn't all that surprising given that Jesus was surrounded for the entirety of his public ministry by crowds, but this crowd is different. They are in the grove at the instruction of the Sanhedrin, the ruling Jewish Council, but they're not there to sit under Jesus' authoritative teaching. This crowd is armed with swords (the weapons of the Roman legionaries) and clubs (the weapons of the Levitical Temple police), which shows that it is a composite 'army' of Romans and Jews, probably numbering three or four hundred. But that doesn't mean that they are a ramshackle bunch; based on what John tells us (John 18:1-11), they are prepared and disciplined. That's not to say that there wouldn't have been excited onlookers being carried along in anticipation of something happening. At their head is Judas Iscariot, a point made by all four gospels. None of them will miss that fact, even if Luke's account of what happens next is very brief and states only the key facts.

Jesus steps forward; he's not surprised or disorientated by what is happening. He understands what is unfolding and completely controls all that will transpire. John's account is striking when he records how, when confronted by Jesus, all those in front of him drew back and fell on the ground (John 18:6). They are in the presence of eternal authority here in human form, and they cannot do anything but submit to it.

Luke doesn't say Judas identified Jesus with a kiss, but that is what happened. The verb used shows that he showered Jesus with kisses, probably because he was nervous and wanted to make sure that the cohort behind him got the right man. How does Jesus respond? He accepts this action of Judas without repulsing him; this is part of his submitting to the will of the Father. He does speak a few words to address Judas' conscience, as he uses the universal sign of friendship and love to betray the Lord. However, Judas' conscience had hardened, and no repentance would be forthcoming from his mind and heart.

Q1. Who now appears in the olive grove with Jesus?

Q2. How does Jesus react?

Q3. What does Judas do, and what does Jesus say to him?

## Tuesday – Luke 22:47-53 – The arrest of Jesus.

Judas has just betrayed Jesus with his kisses. Now, those accompanying Jesus step forward to engage those standing in front of him. Are they being brave or foolhardy? Even given the rashness of Peter, which we will come to in a moment, there wasn't much they were going to be able to do with just two swords against the hundreds standing in front of them. So, what's going on here? It stems from what I mentioned briefly yesterday, about how those confronting Jesus all drew back and fell to the ground when he identified himself (See John 18:4-9). It is at this moment when the crowd is overwhelmed with fear in the presence of Jesus; that the disciples step forward and want to take them on. Before Jesus can disabuse them of their foolishness, Peter draws the sword he has brought from the Upper Room and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, whose shoulder armour presumably protected the rest of his body. None of the synoptic gospels identifies Peter as the man responsible. Still, given his temperament and probable position standing close to Jesus, there can be little doubt that it was anyone else but him. Plus, John tells us that it was him.

Jesus' reaction is immediate: "let there be no more of this!" And as he is speaking, he reaches out and touches the servant's ear, probably hanging by a thread of skin, and restores it. Jesus' last miracle before his death is performed on a man who has come to take him to his death.

Jesus now protests both the fact and manner of his arrest. Again, not because it has shocked him, but because he is laying down a marker regarding the injustice and underhandedness of what is being done. Note that he doesn't say anything to the Roman soldiers. He directs all his comments to the Sanhedrin and their men. His words are measured and calmly expressed. He questions why they have come after him in the way they have, and why they had chosen to do so under the cover of darkness when they had numerous opportunities to have done it during the day. Of course, they're not going to respond, but he is stating it for the record.

Some have disputed the high priests and elders' presence as improbable. But what is probable about any of this, and what will unfold in the coming hours? This is wholly unique, not just in terms of this period in Jerusalem, but in the entire history of the world. The sinless Son of Man is being arrested and taken to trial; how can one even begin to process this? Only because, as Jesus says, it is to fulfil the Scriptures (Matthew 26:56).

- Q1. What do the apostles do, and what emboldens them?
- Q2. What does Peter do and how does Jesus respond?
- Q3. Who does Jesus then speak to? What does he ask them?

## Wednesday – Luke 22:54-62 – Peter denies Jesus.

Luke tells us that Jesus was seized and led away to the high priest's house; but to get a complete picture of what is happening, we need to set these passages of the gospels side by side. When we do so, we see that John tells us that he was taken first to the home of Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the Chief Priest (John 18:12,13).

Peter, we are told, was following events from afar. John also follows and tells us that he first managed to get into the Temple Court because he knew the high priest and brought in Peter, standing outside. So, this is how Peter comes to be sitting beside the fire with the Temple officers and servants, trying to keep warm on a cold night (John 18:15-17).

As Peter sits by the fire, trying to blend in, he is approached by the same servant girl who had let him into the inner court area. He had evidently caught her eye as he had walked past her, and now, she approached to have a good look at him. It doesn't take long for her to identify him as one of Jesus' disciples. It's not out of the blue; the Temple officers and servants are obviously talking about Jesus. But why does she identify just Peter and not John, also? Because of his interaction with the High Priest, John would surely have been known to her, also. She, after all, had let Peter in at the request of John. We are not told, but presumably, because John wasn't present, and she wanted to add something to the conversation. Whatever her thinking, it seems that her tone of voice carried such a degree of certainty that Peter, the man who just a few hours earlier had protested that he would go to prison, even death with Jesus, now exposed, fearing for his life and filled with panic, completely disowns Jesus. Peter denies ever having known Jesus. He waits for a while, and then, to avoid drawing attention to himself, he gets up and makes his way to the entrance (Matthew 26:71), where he is confronted by another servant girl who connects him as one of the men who was with Jesus of Nazareth. Again, Matthew tells us that Peter denies it, this time with an oath. Then a man, John tells us, a relative of the high priest's servant whose ear he had cut off (John 18:26), identifies him as a Galilean, one of Jesus' disciples. This is the third person to do so in an hour, and, for a third time, Peter, without hesitation, adamantly invoking a curse on himself and swearing oaths to God, denies that he knows Jesus. Then the cock crows, and Jesus turns and looks at him. No words are exchanged; they don't have to be; Peter knows what he has done and departs a broken man.

- Q1. Who follows Jesus?
- Q2. How many times is Peter identified as a follower of Jesus?
- Q3. How does Peter respond, and what happens?