

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John chapter 19. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John chapter 19 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John chapter 19 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John chapter 19. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in John 19:4-12 about the complete innocence of Jesus.

First. The governor pronounced Jesus completely innocent.

It is remarkable how many times during this trial the Roman governor pronounced Jesus completely innocent! The governor, Pilate, brought Jesus out of the courtyard to stand in front of the Jews with the purpose of letting the people know that he found not a single basis for a charge against Jesus (4)! According to the Gospel of John, three times he said, “I find no basis for a charge against him!” (18:38; 19:4,6) and according to the Gospel of Luke he said, “I find no basis for a charge against this man” (Lk 23:4); “I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death” (Lk 23:14-15); and for the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty” (Lk 23:22). Thus, by means of the highest human authority, God himself declared the perfect innocence of Jesus Christ.

But if Jesus was innocent, how could the righteous God permit his death? The only answer is found in Isaiah 53:6,8, “The LORD has laid on him *the iniquity of us all*. He was cut off from the land of the living; for *the transgression of my people* he was stricken.” *The divine reason why Jesus was crucified was that he died for our sins!*

Second. The governor did not release Jesus out of fear for the Jews.

When the governor heard that the real reason why the Jews wanted to kill Jesus was that he had claimed to be the Son of God, he feared. Pilate feared both the spiritual world as well as the Jews. Pilate was superstitious and was very afraid that he might offend some unknown god. He took Jesus back into the palace and asked him where he came from. If he had listened to Jesus earlier, he would have known that Jesus came from heaven to establish a spiritual kingdom on earth (18:36-37). But this time, Jesus gave him no answer. The governor deserved no answer, because although he had publicly pronounced his innocence again and again, he still ordered Jesus to be flogged nearly to death! The governor was utterly corrupt, untruthful and unreliable.

But the governor also feared the Jews. He was afraid that the Jews would accuse him before the Roman emperor Caesar and that he would lose his political position and even his life. *The human reason why Jesus was crucified was fear to lose their position in this world.*

(T) An important truth for me is in John 19:30 about the meaning of Jesus’ last words on the cross. From the four Gospels we know that Jesus spoke at least seven times from the cross. He said, “Father, forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34). To one criminal he said, “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). To Mary he said, “Woman, look! Your son!” and to John, “Look! Your mother!” (Jn 19:26-27). To God he cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46). To the soldiers he said, “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). Then he said, “It is finished.” (Jn 19:30). His last words were, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Lk 23:46). When Jesus says, “It is finished”, he says that his entire work of salvation has been brought to completion. In the mind of Jesus Christ, his death and burial was so certain that he could speak as if it had already been accomplished! No man on earth can add anything to the completed salvation work of Jesus Christ! When anyone is saved, he is saved only by the completed salvation work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He will never be saved by his prayers and fasting, by his trying to keep the law or by doing good works! When Jesus finally committed his human spirit into the Father’s hands, it

shows that the Son never rejected the Father, and that nobody took his life from him, but that he voluntarily sacrificed himself (Jn 10:17-18). Jesus laid down his life for us! He laid down his life for me!

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in John chapter 19 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (19:1-3) How was Jesus tortured before his death?

(T) One. Jesus was flogged.

Pilate ordered that Jesus be flogged. He continually sought a compromise in order to avoid sentencing Jesus to death. He hoped that the people would pity Jesus and save him from death. Flogging was a terrible way of torture. The Roman whip consisted of a short wooden handle to which several thongs were attached. The tips of these thongs consisted of pieces of iron or sharply pointed bones. The lashes of the whip were laid over the whole body, but especially over the victim’s bared and bent back. The body was torn and lacerated to such an extent that often the deep-seated blood-vessels and even inner organs were exposed! It often resulted in death. When flogging preceded execution, it was ordered as a sign to indicate that the victim was about to be crucified. Roman citizens were exempted from flogging and crucifixion.

Two. Jesus suffered a mock-coronation.

The soldiers desired to torture Jesus in the courtyard. They pressed a crown made of thorns on his head, so that blood ran down his face. They threw an old discarded soldier’s mantle around his shoulders and put a reed in his hand, in order to make him look like a king. Then they marched up to him again and again giving him their mock-salute and striking him at the same time in the face.

2nd Question. (19:10-11) How was Jesus threatened before his death?

(S) The governor was angry that Jesus refused to give him an answer. So he began to threaten Jesus. He claimed that he had the power or authority to set him free or to have him killed. Then Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.” Jesus teaches that although political and military leaders have power and authority, it is God who has delegated to them this power and authority. Political and military power and authority is a sacred trust given by the Almighty God to certain people on earth and they are responsible and answerable to God for how they use it (Rom 13). The consistent message of the Bible is that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ (Mt 28:18). That is why Psalm 2 warns the political and religious leaders of this world, “You kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son (of God), lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way” (Ps 2:10-12).

3rd Question. (19:14-22). How was Jesus publicly mocked? Why is Jesus called the king of the Jews?

(T) One. From the governor’s point of view.

The Jews had successfully threatened the governor and forced him to sentence the innocent Jesus to be crucified. But now the governor returns this insult by publicly saying that Jesus is “the king of the Jews”. This was the last thing the Jewish leaders wanted to hear and they tried in vain to change the governor’s mind. The governor even forced the Jews to say publicly that their only king was the worldly Roman emperor Caesar (15)!

The governor aggravated this insult to the Jewish leaders by having a title written saying, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”. This plaque was fastened above Christ’s head (Mt 27:37). The crime of criminals sentenced to be crucified was usually written on it, but in Jesus’ case, there was no crime! The Jewish leaders wanted the governor to change this title into a description of the crime, which they said Jesus had committed, but he refused. He wrote it in the three main languages used at that time in the world. And the thousands and thousands of Jews passing by the main road read it. It was intended to be an insult to the Jewish religious leaders: they had requested the death of Jesus and thus *they had rejected and crucified their own king!*

Two. From God’s point of view.

The Jewish religious leaders thought they had gotten rid of Jesus by having him crucified. But the sovereign God turned their victory into the greatest victory in the history of the world. The death of Jesus became God’s means to atone for sins and to reconcile sinners to himself. The death of Jesus became the victory over all sin, over all the wicked people, over the sinful world and over Satan and all his evil spirits. From God’s point of view, Jesus is not only ‘the king of the Jews’, the long expected Messiah, but also ‘the king of kings’. From now on, all power in every nation of the whole world will be in the hands of Jesus Christ and he will rule the world in the interest of the Church (Eph 1:22).

4th Question. (19:17-18) How was Jesus crucified?

(S) John says that Jesus first carried his own cross. With his bruised body, this must have caused him much pain. Luke 23 describes in more details what happened on the way to Golgotha. Jesus was crucified together with two criminals, one on each side of Jesus.

One. The form of the cross.

Much has been written about the form of the cross. Some people think it had the form of an “X” and others think it had the form of a “T”, but the best is to regard the cross in the form of “a Roman dagger” (+) with a longer upright beam and a shorter crossbeam, because the plaque was fastened *above* the head of Jesus (Lk 23:38).

Two. Death by crucifixion.

Death by crucifixion was a very cruel way of torture and dying. It was practised by several ancient nations, but the Romans reserved it only for slaves and criminals. While the cross was lying on the ground, Roman soldiers hammered large nails through his hands and feet. Then the cross was pulled upright and dropped into a hole to help it stand upright. The feet rested on a tablet not far from the ground. Crucifixion was unspeakably painful: there was severe inflammation, swelling of the wounds, unbearable pain from torn tendons, fearful discomfort from the strained position of his body, throbbing headache and burning thirst.

Three. The meaning of crucifixion.

Far more than all his physical suffering, Jesus suffered vicariously for all the sins of his people! On the cross, he experienced what it means to be forsaken by God. The Old Testament regarded a person hanging on a cross as accursed by God (Dt 21:23) and Galatians 3:13-14 teaches that Jesus Christ became a curse for us so that his blessing given to Abraham might not be limited to Jews but may be given also to the Gentiles.

Four. The place of crucifixion.

Jesus was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem and this was another sign of being accursed (Lev 16:27; Heb 13:12-13). This place was called ‘the place of the skull’. No one knows the exact place anymore and it is not important to argue about where it was (in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or at Gordon’s Calvary). The Bible does not regard such places as ‘*holy*’ and such places should not be venerated as places to be visited by pilgrims.

Fifth. The crucifixion of two criminals.

Jesus was crucified between two criminals. From a worldly point of view this was intended as an insult to the Jews. Their king was regarded as a criminal. Yet from God’s point of view this was an honour, because Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save sinners (Lk 19:10)!

5th Question. (19:38-42) How was Jesus buried?

(T) Jesus was buried openly by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Joseph was a rich man (Mt 27:57), a devout man (Lk 23:51) and a member of the Sanhedrin (Mk 15:43). But he had not consented to the plot to condemn Jesus to be crucified (Lk 23:51). He was a secret follower of Jesus, because he feared the Jews. He probably feared that the Jews would throw him out of the Sanhedrin and the synagogue. But the result of Christ’s atoning death and love for him was that he became very courageous. He openly requested the body of Jesus from the governor.

Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee and a professional interpreter and teacher of the law. In the beginning he also feared the Jews, but later was very courageous when he questioned the authority of the Sanhedrin to judge anybody without giving him a fair trial (Jn 7:50-52). Together, these two men took the body of Jesus from the cross, wrapped bandages intermingled with costly spices around his limbs and laid him in Joseph’s own new tomb. The tomb was in a garden and they closed the entrance with a large stone. Several women were present and saw where they buried him.

6th Question. Why does the Bible record so many fulfilments of prophecies?

(S) The fulfilments of prophecies are one of the greatest proofs that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, that is, that God really took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and entered his creation and our history in order to reveal himself to us and make atonement for our sins. A scientist counted that there are 332 distinct prophecies in the Old Testament which have been fulfilled in Christ. He calculated that the mathematical probability that all these prophecies could be fulfilled in one man in the history of this world is only one chance in 84 times 10 to the power of 97 (97 zero’s)! Only the Living God, the God who revealed himself in the prophets of the Old Testament and in Jesus Christ can make such prophecies and can fulfil such prophecies. No other religion in the world has such fulfilments of prophecies!

(T) **STEP 4. APPLY**

Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of *possible applications* from John chapter 19 and then choose one possible application and make it our *personal application*.

(S) I simply cannot imagine how much Jesus suffered for me. Although I can form a mental picture of his suffering, I can never fathom his vicarious suffering, when he took all the holy wrath of God against my sins upon himself! I want to thank God with all my heart that Jesus Christ was crucified in my place. I thank him for making atonement for all my sins. I want to thank him for forgiving all my sins and reconciling me to God. I want to thank him for saving me for eternity!

(T) I am deeply impressed how Jesus behaved throughout his immense suffering. When he was questioned, he calmly answered or even kept quiet. When he was insulted, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he did not threaten (1 Pet 2:23). He did not cry out in pain, but like a lamb led to slaughter, he did not open his mouth (Isa 53:7). No human being could have done what he did! I pray that God will give me much grace to learn how Jesus suffered persecution and bore suffering.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John chapter 19.

Dear Father in heaven, with everything that is me, I thank you for suffering in my place! I thank you for saving me for all eternity!

(T) Dear Father in heaven, please give me much grace to learn from the example of Jesus Christ how to suffer persecution and bear suffering. Help me not to retaliate when I am insulted, and not to threaten when I am suffering. In Jesus' name, amen!

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John chapter 20.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".