

Aim of lesson

To show that Jesus was in control of the events and his crucifixion was the culmination of a life of selfless sacrifice of total love to the will of his father and the salvation of us.

To convey the suffering of Jesus long before the cross and the cross itself and the actions and reactions of the characters that surrounded these events.

To show that whether the authorities liked it or not they were fulfilling prophecy in many ways.

To show how the death of Jesus can affect our lives now and in the future.

Bible background

Matthew 27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19

Preparation required

Look at the Students' Notes and be familiar with the gospel records referred to there. Also a good plan of the City of Jerusalem and surrounding areas would be useful to follow the movements of the final week of Jesus' life around Jerusalem and Bethany.

Suggested outline of lesson

Consider the role of the religious leaders at the time of Jesus and how they had lost the relevance of their worship and were as "whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones". All the Scribes and Pharisees were concerned with was their external appearance to the people they were supposed to be leading.

It was understandable that the religious authorities were trying to find ways to 'quieten' this young man Jesus, or reduce his popularity.

Read Matthew 23:1-11. Jesus could see beneath the outer appearances and knew the reasons behind the Pharisees actions - Jesus was a threat to their authority, and spoke openly against their behaviour and their hypocrisy. This would obviously have been quite hard for them to swallow, a very good reason from their point of view for Jesus to be 'quietened' or got rid of. It is against this background that Jesus enters into Jerusalem for the final time leading up to the crucifixion.

Relevance to our lives

Thinking slowly through the crucifixion narratives helps us to understand a little of what Jesus went through on our behalf and to appreciate that he was totally in control of events.

Prayer

We pray that the events that took place in Jerusalem all those years ago, a sacrifice for sin, a loving father giving his son and a son in true obedience, will have an impact on all our lives. Through baptism, our figurative death and resurrection we can have the opportunity of forgiveness of our sins and the opportunity to remember this act of the Lord Jesus the giving of his life, in the emblems of bread and wine just as he did with his disciples in the upper room. We pray that he will soon return to call all of his disciples, past and present, to the kingdom that was rightly his all those years ago when they put the sign on the cross "the King of the Jews". We thank you Father that Jesus endured the pain until the end when he could have called legions of angels to his aid. Help us to recognise the price that he paid for us and to respond in obedience. Amen.

Other suggestions for activities

Look at Luke 2:41-50; Matthew 16:21-23; Matthew 17:1-8, and discuss how Jesus knew from an early age what his life held for him but his disciples could not accept it. However, he continued tirelessly to teach, heal and explain.