

CROSS EXAMINATION – WEEK 1: MURDER MYSTERY TAKE HOME INVESTIGATION GUIDE

CASE NUMBER: #00033AD
CASE STATUS: OPEN

Thank you for joining us in Week 1 of our investigative series, 'Cross Examination.' This guide is designed to help you reflect, research, and investigate further into the case of Jesus' crucifixion. Use it individually or as a family discussion tool.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

- Continue your investigation this week. Read one of the historical sources.
- Discuss your thoughts with a friend or family member.
- Stay connected with us on social media to stay updated on the case
- Scan the QR code below to access additional resources and recommended readings.

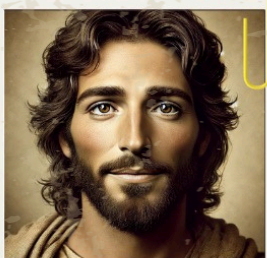


**EVIDENCE
DRAWER**



**MEET THE
SUSPECTS**

CASE OVERVIEW: WAS IT MURDER OR JUSTICE?



JESUS

Jesus of Nazareth was accused of two crimes:

- Blasphemy: Claiming to be the Son of God.
- Insurrection: Rebelling against Rome.

Based on the evidence, was He guilty of these charges or was He wrongfully convicted?

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: DID JESUS REALLY EXIST?

The following non-biblical historical sources mention Jesus and His crucifixion. Under each source, take notes on how this evidence strengthens the historical validity of Jesus' life and death.

- **Flavius Josephus** (Jewish historian, c. 93 AD)
- **Tacitus** (Roman historian, c. 116 AD)
- **Pliny the Younger** (Roman governor, c. 112 AD)
- **The Babylonian Talmud** (Jewish commentary, c. 500 AD)
- **Lucian of Samosata** (Greek satirist, c. 165 AD)
- **Mara bar Serapion** (philosopher, c. 73 AD)

Challenge: How does this strengthen or challenge your understanding of His existence?

WHO WANTED JESUS DEAD? THE SUSPECTS & MOTIVES



Caiaphas
(Religious Leader)



Annas
(Religious Leader)



Judas
(The Betrayer)



The Sanhedrin
(The Religious Court)



Pontius Pilate
(The Governor)



Herod Antipas
(The Political Figure)



The Roman Soldiers
(Executioners)



The Crowd
(Chose Barabbas)

Motives for the Crime:

- **Fear** - The religious leaders feared losing influence (John 11:48).
- **Jealousy** - Jesus' growing popularity (Mark 15:10).
- **Power** - The Romans and Jewish elite wanted control (Matthew 23:1-12; Matthew 21:12-13).

Reflection Question: Which suspect(s) do you think played the biggest role in Jesus execution and why?

PROPHETIC FORESHADOWING **THE MESSIAHS DEATH FORETOLD**

The Old Testament prophesied details of the Messiahs rejection, suffering, and death hundreds of years before Jesus. Here are just a few examples:

- Born of a Virgin - Isaiah 7:14 -> Fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23
- Born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2 -> Fulfilled in Matthew 2:1-6
- Rejected by His Own People - Isaiah 53:3 -> Fulfilled in John 1:11, Luke 4:16-30
- Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver - Zechariah 11:12-13 -> Fulfilled in Matthew 26:14-16, 27:3-10 - Silent Before His Accusers - Isaiah 53:7 -> Fulfilled in Matthew 27:12-14
- Crucified with Criminals - Isaiah 53:12 -> Fulfilled in Luke 23:32-33
- Pierced Hands & Feet - Psalm 22:16 -> Fulfilled in John 20:25-27
- The Suffering Servant - Isaiah 53:5 -> Fulfilled in Matthew 27:26-31

Using this information, fill out the prophecy & fulfillment timeline in your packet

Challenge: Read Isaiah 53 and compare it to the crucifixion account in Matthew 27. What stands out to you?

THE UNSOLVED MYSTERY: **WHERE IS THE BODY?**

Every murder case relies on a body, yet in this case, there is no body. This raises a critical question: What happened to Jesus' body?

Theories We Will Investigate Next Week:

- He survived and died later
- Could He have faked His death?
- The body was stolen
- Did His disciples steal and hide the body?
- He resurrected
- Is there evidence for the resurrection?

Reflection: Based on what youve seen so far, what do you think happened to Jesus' body?

WANTED

WANTED BY ORDER OF THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES

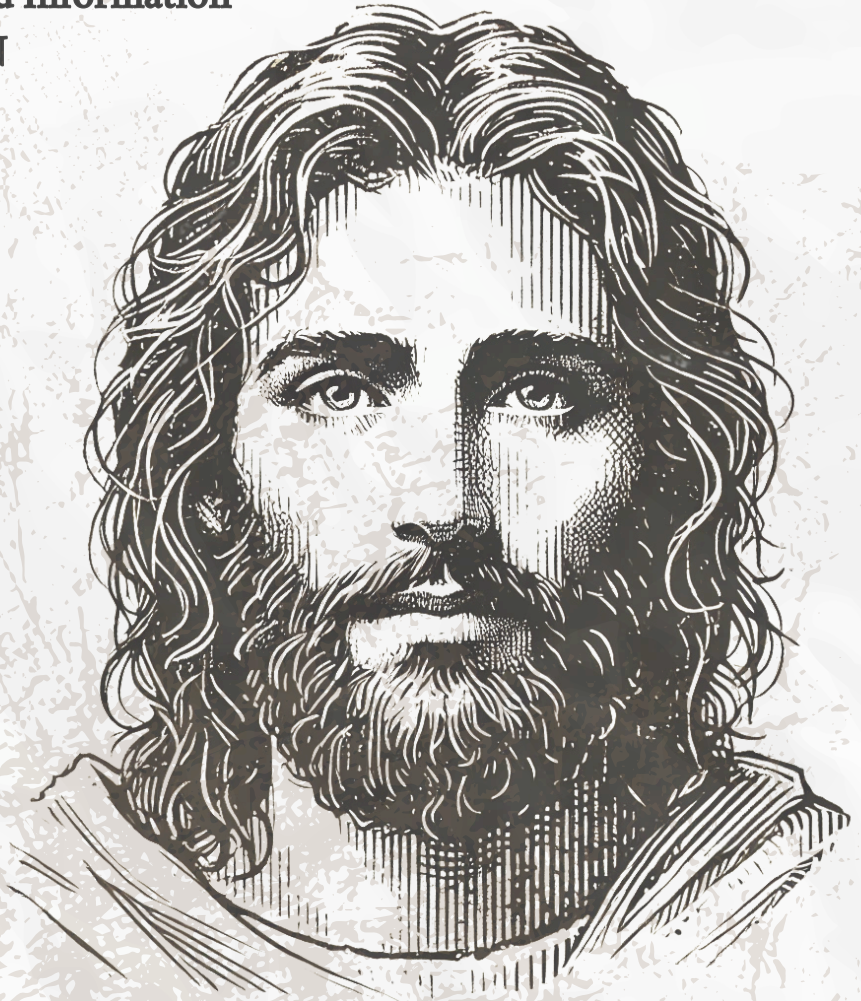
CRIME: Spreading False Reports of a Crucified Man Returning to Life

REWARD: 30 Silver Coins for Verified Information

STATUS: ACTIVE INVESTIGATION

ACCOMPLICES:

- Mary Magdalene – First to report seeing Him alive.
- Simon Peter & John – Entered the empty tomb and declared His body missing.
- The Eleven (Disciples) – Known associates, spreading rumors of resurrection.
- Over 500 Witnesses – Claim to have seen Him alive in Galilee.



OFFICIAL DECREE BY ORDER OF PONTIUS PILATE

All citizens and soldiers of Rome are commanded to report any sightings of these individuals.

Any person found spreading news of the so-called resurrection will face punishment.

This proclamation is sealed by the authority of Rome.



MEDICAL EXAMINATION REPORT

ROMAN PROVINCE OF JUDEA

AUTOPSY REPORT:

Subject: Yeshua of Nazareth

Case Number: 0033-JC

Date of Death: Nisan 14, Year 33 (Approximate)

Examiner: Primus Cassius, Roman Medical Investigator

Location of Death: Golgotha (Skull Hill), Outside Jerusalem

Presiding Authority: Governor Pontius Pilate

Cause of Death: Crucifixion (Asphyxiation & Hypovolemic Shock)

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION:

Race/Sex: Middle Eastern male

Estimated Age: 33 years

Height: Approx. 5'7" - 5'10"

Weight: 140-160 lbs (significant blood/fluid loss at time of death)

Condition of Body: Severely traumatized, evidence of torture and execution

CONCLUSION:

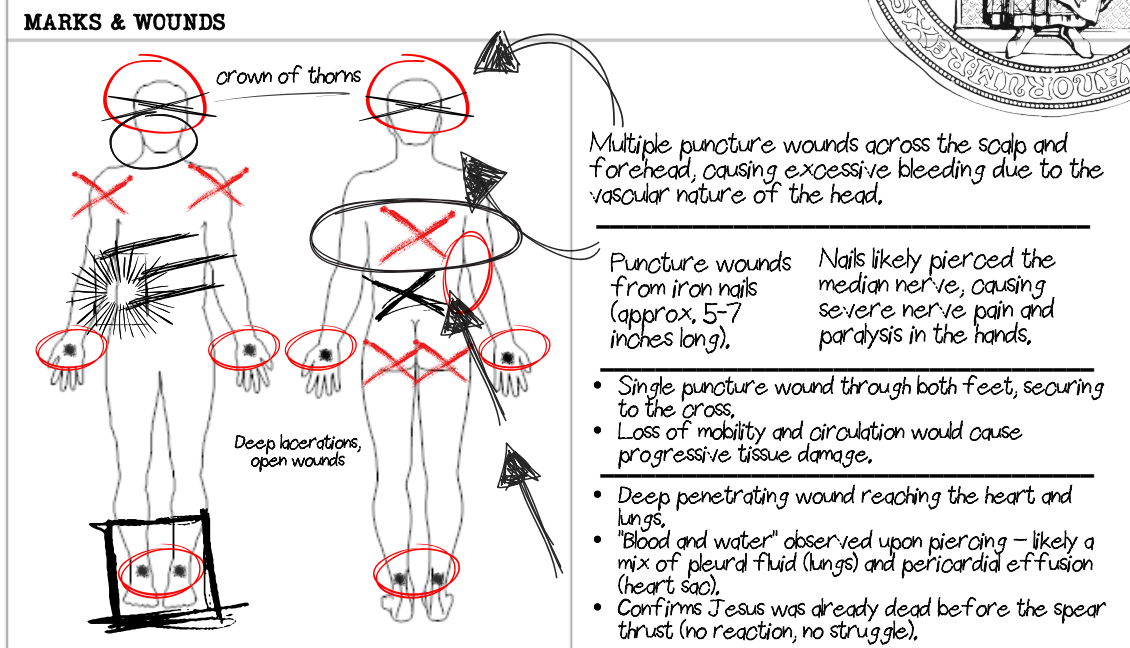
The subject did not survive the crucifixion and was confirmed dead before removal from the cross. The combination of scourging, crucifixion-induced asphyxiation, and blood loss resulted in irreversible fatality.

Attempts at resuscitation would be medically impossible.

STATUS: DECEASED

Official Seal of Roman Authority

"CASE CLOSED" – DEATH CONFIRMED.





IMPERIUM ROMANUM DEATH CERTIFICATE

Province: Judaea

Prefect: Pontius Pilatus

Case File No.: JC-0033-NZ

Document Type: Certificate of Capital Execution

- **Name: Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth**
- **Aliases: Rabbi, King of the Jews, Messiah**
- **Age: Approx. 33**
- **Citizenship: Non-Roman (Galilean Jew)**

Accusations: Blasphemy (Jewish law); Claiming kingship (Roman law)

Trial: Sanhedrin (religious); Final sentencing by Pontius Pilate

Verdict: Guilty

Sentence: Death by Roman crucifixion

- **Signs:**
- **Ceased movement and breathing**
- **Legs not broken (John 19:33)**
- **Spear pierced side; blood and water flowed (John 19:34)**
- **Death confirmed by Roman centurion (Mark 15:44–45)**
- **Cause of Death: Asphyxiation and hypovolemic shock**

BURIAL

- **Body Released To: Joseph of Arimathea**
- **Tomb: New tomb in a garden near execution site**
- **Security: Sealed and guarded under Roman authority**

STATUS: Deceased

Certified by: Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judaea

WEAPONS LOG

Using the scripture references listed below, find what weapons were used in this case.

WPN-01

John 19:1 _____

WPN-02

John 19:2

Matthew 27:29 _____

WPN-03

Psalms 22:16 (Prophecy)

John 20:25 _____

WPN-04

John 19:34 _____

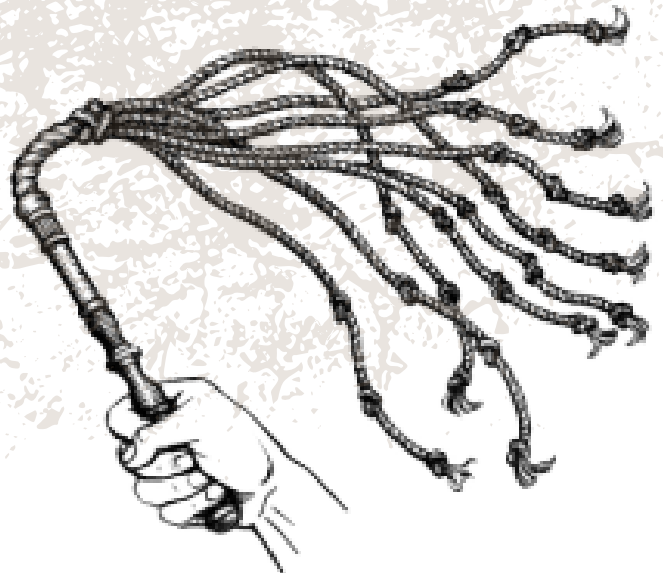
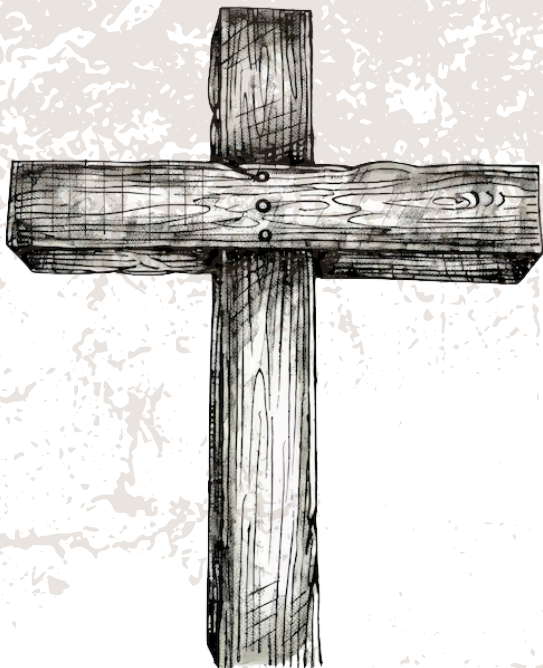
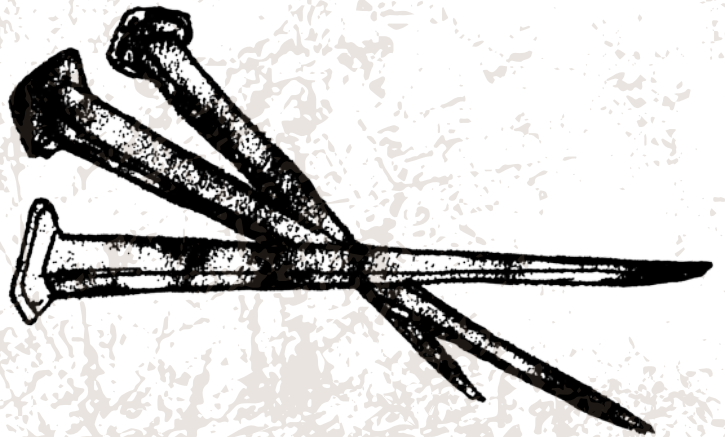
WPN-05

Philippians 2:8

John 19:17 _____

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Attach these photos of the weapons used in this case to your evidence board.



EYEWITNESS TESTIMONIES:

“HE’S ALIVE”



Witness 1: Mary Magdalene

- Location: Garden tomb outside Jerusalem
- Testimony (John 20:11–18)

Additional Notes: First recorded eyewitness to the risen Christ; not considered a reliable witness in 1st-century Jewish courts—making her testimony counterproductive if fabricated.



Witness 2: Simon Peter

- Location: The tomb and later in Jerusalem
- Testimony (Luke 24:34, John 21)

Additional Notes: Publicly executed under Nero around 64 AD—refused to recant resurrection belief.



Witness 3: Thomas (Didymus)

- Location: Locked room in Jerusalem
- Testimony (John 20:27–28)

Additional Notes: Skeptical by nature. Became a missionary to India; early traditions record his martyrdom.



Witness 4: James (brother of Jesus)

- Location: Jerusalem
- Testimony (Implied from 1 Cor. 15:7, Acts 1:14)

Additional Notes: Became leader of the Jerusalem church. Martyred around 62 AD. Converted only after Jesus' death—unlikely if the resurrection was fabricated.



Witnesses 5+: The Disciples & the 500

- Location: Jerusalem, Emmaus, Galilee
- Testimony (Luke 24:36–43, 1 Cor. 15:6)

Additional Notes: Mass sightings over time and geography, many willing to die for belief in His resurrection.



Witness 6: Paul (formerly Saul)

- Location: Road to Damascus
- Testimony (Acts 9:3–6; 1 Cor. 15:8)

Additional Notes: Former persecutor turned church planter; authored much of the New Testament; executed in Rome for his faith.

PSYCH REPORT

Several eyewitnesses claim to have seen, spoken with, touched, and eaten with Jesus of Nazareth after His crucifixion. Skeptics have proposed that these encounters were the result of group hallucination or mass hysteria. This report evaluates the psychological and historical plausibility of such a theory.

Factor	Hallucinations	Biblical Resurrection Appearances
Group Experience?	Hallucinations are individual events. There is no documented case of multiple people experiencing the same hallucination in detail.	Jesus appeared to groups (Luke 24:36–43, 1 Cor. 15:6), including 500 at once.
Sensory Involvement?	Typically visual or auditory, rarely interactive.	Jesus was touched (John 20:27), spoke, and ate food (Luke 24:41–43).
State of Mind?	Hallucinations usually occur under trauma, illness, drugs, or grief.	Appearances happened to skeptics and enemies (James, Paul - before conversion) not prone to emotional delusion.
Consistency?	Hallucinations vary wildly from person to person.	Accounts across multiple people were coherent and consistent.
Time Frame?	Hallucinations are brief and isolated.	Appearances occurred over 40 days in multiple locations (Acts 1:3).

Expert Conclusion:

Mass hallucinations do not account for:

- The number of eyewitnesses
- The physical interactions reported
- The transformation of skeptics
- The empty tomb

If this were a hallucination, the body would still be in the tomb.

Investigator's Summary:

The "mass hysteria" theory is psychologically unsupported and historically improbable. The evidence points away from hallucination and toward a real, physical event.

CASE FILE: SUSPECT BELIEFS

Face 1: Karma Cycle

- Belief System: Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism
- What Reincarnates? Eternal soul (atman/jiva)
- Why? Karma—your actions in this life determine your next life
- Goal: Liberation from the cycle (moksha / mukti)
- Analogy: A cosmic report card that follows you life to life

Face 2: Consciousness Flow

- Belief System: Buddhism
- What Reincarnates? Stream of consciousness (not a permanent soul)
- Why? Desire and ignorance keep the cycle going
- Goal: Escape suffering through Nirvana
- Analogy: One candle lighting another—same flame, new form

Face 3: Spiritual Evolution

- Belief System: New Age / Mystical
- What Reincarnates? The soul or spiritual energy
- Why? For growth, healing, or to complete a soul mission
- Goal: Enlightenment or transcendence
- Analogy: Replaying levels in a video game until you master them

Resurrection (the real story)

- Belief System: Christianity
- What Resurrects? The same physical body, made new by God
- Why? By the power of God—not karma, works, or spiritual progress
- Goal: Eternal life with God in a restored body and creation
- Analogy: A dead body brought back to life—permanently

Official Jury Notes

Case: Jesus of Nazareth — Historical or Hoax?

Date: _____

Juror Name: _____

Exhibit A: Nazareth

Claim by Prosecutor:

Response by Defense:

Verdict (Circle One):

☒ Credible ? Unsure ☒ Not convincing

Exhibit B: Bethlehem & Massacre of the Innocents

Claim by Prosecutor:

Response by Defense:

Verdict (Circle One):

☒ Credible ? Unsure ☒ Not convincing

Exhibit C: Sea of Galilee Sites (Magdala, Capernaum, etc.)

Evidence Presented:

Why it matters:

Verdict (Circle One):

☒ Credible ? Unsure ☒ Not convincing

Official Jury Notes

Exhibit D: Jerusalem, Pools, and Pilate

Notable Discoveries Mentioned:

- ☐ Pool of Bethesda
- ☐ Pool of Siloam
- ☐ Pilate Stone

Which was most compelling to you? Why?

Verdict (Circle One):

☒ Credible ? Unsure ☒ Not convincing

Exhibit E: Crucifixion & Caiaphas' Ossuary

What archaeological support was shared?

How does this strengthen the case for the crucifixion?

Verdict (Circle One):

☒ Credible ? Unsure ☒ Not convincing

Final Deliberation

Now that all exhibits have been presented...

What's your personal verdict?

I believe the evidence for Jesus' life and ministry is:

☒ Strong ☐ Somewhat convincing ☐ Still unsure

What exhibit most impacted you and why?

What's one question you still have?

Rome | Provincial Records Office — Judea Branch

Classification Level:

RESTRICTED — FOR PREFECT'S EYES ONLY

Subject: Disturbance Reports — Yeshua of Nazareth

Recent activity surrounding the [REDACTED] known as Yeshua (alternatively: Jesus) has generated unrest among the [REDACTED] religious authorities and general population in Jerusalem. Reports suggest increased gatherings, teachings contrary to the temple order, and [REDACTED] disturbances in Galilee.

Post-Crucifixion Developments:

Subject buried in private tomb (location possibly beneath current [REDACTED] shrine).

Tomb later reported empty; claims of resurrection have emerged.

Officials report soldiers stationed at tomb claimed they were "overcome" (Matthew 28:11–15).

Religious authorities bribed guards to suppress incident; official statement: "His disciples stole the body."

Recommended Action:

Continue monitoring sect referred to as "The Way."

High likelihood of expansion beyond Judea.

Subject's name and crucifixion referenced in Roman reports (Tacitus, Annals 15.44): "Christus suffered the extreme penalty... under Tiberius."

Also mentioned in Jewish historical account (Josephus, Antiquities 18.3).

Conclusion:

While subject remains a figure of controversy, his influence continues to spread posthumously. Long-term impact on Roman governance and regional stability is unclear. Recommend caution in suppressing movement too aggressively—may provoke further unrest.

Filed by:

[REDACTED]

Historical Inquiry Division
Caesarea Maritima

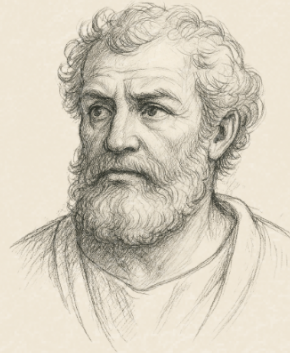
EVIDENCE OF A CHANGED LIFE



Judas Iscariot (aka “The Betrayer”)

- Betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver
- Felt remorse and returned the money (Matthew 27:3-5)
- Did not seek forgiveness from Jesus
- Took his own life (Matthew 27:5)

- Why do you think Peter responded differently than Judas?
- What does Peter’s story show us about the power of repentance and forgiveness?
- Have you ever felt like you failed God? What did you do with that feeling?
- What’s the difference between regret and repentance?
- Which response do you most relate to right now—and what’s your next step?



Simon Peter (aka “The Rock”)

- Denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion
- Wept after his denial (Luke 22:62)
- Saw the empty tomb (John 20:6)
- Had a personal moment of restoration with Jesus (John 21:15-19)
- Became a bold leader in the early church (Acts 2:14-41)

Jesus offers redemption.

You are not disqualified by your failure.

Like Peter, you can be forgiven and used by God to do amazing things.



“HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!”

MATTHEW 21:9

The same crowd that shouted “Hosanna!” later
cried out “Crucify Him!”

Who are you in the crowd?



Check one:

- ☐ I cheer for Jesus when it's easy, but disappear when it's not.
- ☐ I follow Him no matter the cost.
- ☐ I'm unsure where I stand right now.



Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver — the price
of a slave (Matthew 26:15).

You might say you'd never trade Jesus for money...

But what about your comfort? Popularity? Reputation?

“My 30 pieces of silver” might not be coins... but what am I tempted
to trade Jesus for?

Write one sentence below:

Jesus still invited Judas to the table.

He still offers forgiveness and redemption.

What would it look like for me to stand up for Jesus this week, no
matter the cost?

