Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

What Shall I Do with Jesus? Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 27:11-18

Code: 2393

Let's open our Bibles to Matthew chapter 27 for our study of God's Word this morning. Matthew chapter 27, we're going to begin a look at verses 11 through 26. And in this passage, the most important, the most fateful, the most serious question that could ever be posed by anyone is posed. It appears in verse 22.

Matthew 27:22 says, "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?" That is the key question.

Pilate found himself in an almost unbearable dilemma as to what to do with Jesus Christ. But Pilate is not alone. Every human being on the face of the earth faces that very same question, what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? That is a query that faces every man and woman alive. And the answer to it that you give will determine not only your time but your eternal destiny.

So, Pilate articulates a question that is a question facing every person. Sadly, tragically, Pilate made a wrong choice in response to that question. He asked the right question, what shall I do with Jesus Christ, instead of going to the right source, he went to the wrong source, got the wrong answer and ended up as an eternal tragedy. It is my prayer that you will answer that question better than he did.

In order to get into the scene, let's go back to verses 1 and 2 of Matthew 27. Because here is where we find the transition from the Jewish trial of Christ to the Roman trial.

Remember now, Christ is being tried because the Jewish leaders want Him dead. The threephased Jewish trial is now over. He has stood before Annas, He has stood before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and then again the morning before them to ratify what they illegally did during the night, and that is condemn Him to death for blasphemy because He said He was the Son of God which, of course, was true. They want to be rid of Him.

And in order to accomplish that, they have to get the Romans to get involved. Because for a long time under Roman occupation, the Jews have not had the right of execution. They have had to depend upon the Romans to do that. The right of what was called eus gladii(?), the right of the sword belonged only to Rome. And so they want Jesus executed but they need the Romans to do it.

And so we find in verses 1 and 2 that we see the last phase of the Jewish trial and then they take Him to Pilate to open the three phases of the Roman trial. Let's look at those two verses together.

"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death."

Very early in the morning, probably a little before five o'clock, before the sun was even up. And the dawn had just begun to give its light, preceding the sun, they met rapidly in a very brief meeting that perhaps lasted no more than ten minutes. And the idea was to try to legalize the illegal decision that they came to in the middle of the night between 1 A.M. and 3 A.M. They have kept Jesus prisoner for two hours bound and now they're going to try to ratify in a proper fashion in the daylight and in the right place, the judgment hall, what they did so illegally during the night.

And so, they meet very early in the morning. When morning has just begun...to finish the decision relative to Christ. And then in verse 2, after that they bound Him, led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor. They want the Romans to execute Him. They want the execution legal.

And some people have said, "Well, why didn't they do to Jesus what they did later to Stephen, just take Him out of the city, throw Him down and stone Him? Didn't they have the right to do that?" No. In their action against Stephen, they were acting illegally. It was a mob action. They were not going to act as a mob because they were trying to maintain a form of legality, they were trying to appear as if this was legal. And they weren't about to act in a mob fashion. They wanted to pull it off also as fast as expeditiously as possible so that the crowds already rising now in the dawn didn't get involved, because they knew Jesus was popular. No, they wanted to maintain a facade of legalism. They wanted it to be done right and so they went to Pilate with Jesus to get Pilate to comply with them and execute Him.

So it was very early. The fourth watch of the night, about 5 A.M. when they arrived at Pilate's judgment hall, most likely located in Fort Antonious which was to the north of the temple ground. And they hand Him over to Pontius Pilate.

That brings us to the Roman trial. Now if you go over to verse 11, you will find that we then pick up the scene. Verses 3 to 10, remember, is a digression to describe the tragic suicide of Judas which is going on at the same time. And so we are taken away in verse 3 to Judas. We're brought back in verse 11 to the scene before Pilate. "And Jesus stood before the governor," says verse 11. And that sets the scene for us.

Now we're going to see a threephased Roman trial. First, before Pilate. Then before Herod. And back to Pilate. And that will be six different elements to the trial of Jesus Christ. And the thing that comes ringing through all of it is that Jesus Christ is without fault. With all of the things that had gone on all night long with the Jewish leaders, they came up with no legitimate accusation against Him. It's as if the Spirit of God is proving without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is indeed the spotless Lamb of

God who has no blemish, who is fit to die for the sins of the world. Matthew, who always wants to present the perfection of Christ, always wants to life up the majesty of Christ, always wants to show His purity, does so even in this scene. All the courts of men, all the efforts of men and demons combined together cannot come up with one single legitimate accusation against Christ and the record stands that He was killed because they hated Him and rejected Him. It was the evil of their own hearts, not anything Christ had done.

And so, Matthew in taking us to the Roman trial will accomplish the same thing he did through the Jewish trial and that is the exaltation of Jesus Christ. And the record stands in the Scripture for all men and women of all ages to read that Jesus Christ was crucified by the hatred of men an absolutely perfect righteous sinless majestic person, the Son of God indeed He was against whom they could bring no accusation, not Caiaphas, not Annas, not the Sanhedrin, not false witnesses, not Judas, not Herod and not Pilate. All the courts of men failed to come up with any accusation against the perfect Son of God.

Now as we flow through verses 11 to 26, we will see some elements that are important to us. And these are elements that just sort of unfold the passage. But each of them demonstrates the innocence of Christ. Each of them shows His perfect righteousness. Let's begin in verse 11 with the accusation of the Jews. The very accusation itself, or better yet, the lack of a legitimate accusation speaks volumes about the perfection of Christ.

In verse 11, "Jesus stood before the governor, the governor asks Him a question: Are You the king of the Jews? And He said, Thou sayest." Now that precludes the fact that he was asking Him relative to the accusation the Jews had made. Matthew doesn't give that accusation. In order to get it, we have to go to the gospel of John, then we'll understand verse 11 better. So let's look at John chapter 18. Pilate in Matthew 27:11 simply asks Him a question if He's the king of the Jews. We ask the question, why did he ask that? The answer is because that was the accusation which we'll see in John 18.

Now in John 18, we pick up the story in verse 28. And we will have to harmonize the gospels in order to fully understand this tremendous scene. Jesus now in the very dawn, around 5 A.M.

is led to Pilate's judgment hall. It says in verse 28, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas"that is from the house of Caiaphas and then out to the...to the trial which was held, no doubt, in the proper judgment hall presided over by Caiaphas and now that was the third phase there in the right place, early in the morning.

And now He's led to the Hall of Judgment, likely in Fort Antonious, it's still very early. "And they themselvesthat is the Jewswent not into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled but that they might eat the Passover."

They wouldn't go into Pilate's judgment hall because they didn't want to be defiled and they had this tradition that contact with a Gentile is defiling. Entering into a Gentile home is defiling. They had all kinds of bizarre superstitions recorded in the Talmud such as the fact that when a Gentile woman aborts a baby, she throws the baby down the drain and thus the whole house is contaminated by a dead body. And if you go into a Gentile house, you will receive a condemnation and defilement.

And they believed that Gentiles were unclean. And so, in order to maintain the place of cleanliness as they approached the Passover, they wanted to be sure they avoided such contact. It is indeed hypocrisy of all hypocrisies to be preoccupied with some silly tradition like that while busily going about executing the very Son of the living God. But that shows the horrible dissection of their minds. They maintain the fastidious commitment to their religion while they were in a hurry to kill the very one who was the source of it. And so they wouldn't go in. That meant Pilate had to come out.

And he did. In verse 29 it says, "Pilate then went out to them." Out on the porch. They were below him in the street and he was on a porch. "And he said, What accusation bring ye against this man?" Give me an indictment. You brought Him here for a trial, you desire me to render a verdict. Court is open, what is the accusation? What are we trying Him for? And here, frankly, is the first legal thing that has happened in the trial of Christ.

Pilate is a Roman governor. He has been placed in Judea in Palestine to give Roman presence. There were other rulers there.

There were the Herods. There was Herod Antipas who ruled in Galilee and Peraea to the north. There was Herod Philip who was northeast of that in a very unpopulated area. And there was Archelaus...Herod Archelaus who ruled in Judea and Samaria and Idumaea. They were three sons of Herod the Great who was once the Idumite king of all of Palestine. He had killed off some of his sons, the remaining ones had inherited pieces of his kingdom.

They were sort of smalltime kings. A lot of pomp and circumstance and not a lot of power. They did have some power.

They did have some rule. They did amass some fortunes.

But basically the judicial processes and the military might was in the hands of the Roman governor who was placed there to maintain the Roman peace, the pax Romana. So Pilate is really the judicial person. And since the Romans had the right of execution only, they had to approach Pilate...at least from their standpoint that's the reason. From the standpoint of the Scripture, Jesus had to be executed by Romans because He would die a Roman death as we will note in a moment.

Now Pilate had been governor since 26 A.D. and would be governor for about ten years, until 36 A.D. So they bring Jesus to Pilate and in a proper fashion as a judge, he steps out and holds court outside the judgment hall because they won't come in.

He's not going to hassle them about that. Jesus is inside. They stay out. And he says, "What is the accusation?" Which is a fair enough way to begin the trial. Notice their response.

"They answered and said unto him, If He were not a criminal we would not have delivered Him up unto thee."

What an amazing answer. They impugned Pilate for even asking the question. They say, "What right have you to question our motives? To question our integrity? We wouldn't have brought Him to you if He weren't a criminal." Pilate asked a proper judicial question: what is the accusation? They don't give an answer. They just indict Pilate for even asking the question. They weren't looking for a judge, they were looking for an executioner. They didn't want another trial, they wanted Pilate to just agree to take His life. And again, may I suggest to you, that the absence of any accusation here is another affirmation of the perfection of Jesus Christ.

Pilate had no information about Jesus Christ that would let him know what their accusation might be. Pilate saw Jesus Christ as no threat. Pilate knew of no crime He'd committed. And when asked about an accusation, the Jews had none to give. They have no charge. So Pilate says to them, verse 31, "Take Him and judge Him according to your law." Do it yourself. He may have even been giving them the right to execute Him. If you feel He ought to be executed, execute Him, I don't want to get involved in this.

Now he knew who Jesus was. There's little doubt in my mind that the night before, when the Roman soldiers came along with the Jews to the garden to take Jesus captive, the Roman soldiers were there because Pilate had granted permission for them to be there. So he knew what was going on. And he even had an opinion about it. He even had an opinion about why they wanted to take Jesus Christ. So he was up to speed, at least in part. So he says, "What's your accusation?" And they say, in effect, "We don't want you to be a judge, we want you to be an executioner.

You think we'd bring somebody to you who's not a criminal?"

And Pilate says, "Take Him and judge Him yourself." To which they reply in verse 31, "It's not lawful for us to put any man to death." They sure did it when they wanted to. They put Stephen to death. Later on they tried to put Paul to death and the Romans had to rescue Paul and take him to Caesarea and put him in a cell for his own protection for two years. So they...if they really wanted to badly enough they could have. But they were trying to maintain a legal appearance so that when the people

started asking questions they could say it was all very legal and the Romans did it and so forth and so on. And, of course, there was the plan of God which demanded it as well. And that's what verse 32 says, "In order that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke signifying what death He should die." And that He spoke in John 12 when He said, "The Son of Man shall be lifted up." Remember that? "This spoke He signifying what death He should die." So they were fulfilling prophecy but thinking in their own minds that they were doing this to maintain legality, they were really doing it to fulfill the plan of God.

And then Pilate went back into the judgment hall. "And he called to Jesus and he said," and that's where Matthew 27:11 comes in, "He said, Are you the king of the Jews?" Now where did he get that accusation if they didn't answer anything?

Well, you have to go to Luke at this point. And Luke says, and it's a very fascinating thing, but Luke saysyou don't need to turn to it, I'll just refer to itin 23:2 of Luke, you write it down somewhere, Luke 23:2, Luke says that they then concocted an accusation. And this is what it was. "That He is perverting our nation forbidding to pay taxes and claiming to be king, making Himself a king."

Now that isn't why they convicted Him in the Jewish trial.

They convicted Him in the Jewish trial of blasphemy because He said He was the Son of God. But they know that a blasphemy charge in a Roman court isn't going to hold water because the Romans aren't interested in executing people for their religious persuasion. That is not going to handle...that is not going to be handled by Pilate. So they've got to come up with an accusation against Jesus that appears to be high treason against Rome. The only way they can get Pilate they see involved is to accuse Jesus of something that is a threat to Roman security.

And the Romans had very, very small toleration for rebels and revolutionaries and insurrectionists as they had proven by crucifying many, many Jews who had tried to revolt against their government, even in Palestine. And so, they come up with this idea that Jesus is a threat to Roman security, that He perverts our nation, that is He is a rebel, stirring up the nation against Rome. Secondly, that He forbids to pay taxes, that is that He's not rendering to Caesar what is due Caesar. And He's telling people not to as well. And thirdly, that He's claiming to be a king, that is He's setting Himself up as a rival to the Caesar himself.

Now this is brand new. They just concoct this on the spot.

And, of course, the accusations are totally false. Jesus didn't pervert the nation into rebellion against Rome. He never led a social revolution. He never rebelled against Roman oppression.

He never called the people to do that. He never incited anybody to do that. He was very very submissive. He even taught that if a Roman solder's going along and asks you to carry his burden a mile, carry it two miles. He taught the people to respond to those in authority over them properly. He also taught to pay taxes. When He was approached and asked if He paid taxes through Peter the Apostle, He said yes we pay taxes so we don't offend anyone. He even said, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." That is pay your taxes to the government, but save your worship for the Lord.

And yes He was a king, but not a king who was a threat to Caesar. Because when they tried to make Him a king, He disappeared from their midst lest there be a riot and a revolution. So all of their accusations were lies and again marvelous marvelous testimony is born to the perfection of Jesus Christ. The only thing they can come up with are lies of such obvious nature that anybody reading the Bible knows they're lies.

All you have to do is read about Jesus and you know that He didn't do any of these things they accused Him of doing.

And again, it is more testimony to His perfection. More testimony to His sinless, spotless blameless purity and making Him fit to be the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

And so, Pilate calls Him back in and says, "Is it true? Are You the king of the Jews?" And you remember His answer, don't you?

"He said, "Well, I am a King." First He said to Pilate, "Is this your idea, are you asking Me this for your sake or are you just carrying a message? Are you an errand boy?" And Pilate says, "Am I a Jew? This isn't my problem. Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You unto me. What have You done?"

he says in John 18:35. "What have You done? I'm not accusing You of this, this is Your own people."

And Jesus answers him and tells him, "Yes I am a King, but My Kingdom is not a kingdom like you know kingdoms. If it was, My servants would fight. My Kingdom is not of this world. I was born a King, for this cause came I into the world." But what He is saying to Pilate is My Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom, My Kingdom is an internal Kingdom.

In verse 38, after this little dialogue, John 18 says in verse 38 that Pilate went out to them and said to them all, "I find no fault in Him." What is that? That's the verdict. Did you get that? "I find" is a courtroom term. The jury has found, the judge finds, the finding of the court is, he was found guilty, he was found innocent...that is a term that's carried down even today to show that the proceedings having been followed, the verdict is rendered. And when he came out and said, "I find no fault," he

rendered the verdict "not guilty" on Jesus. He was not guilty of being an insurrectionist rebel who called people not to pay their taxes and to defy the government of Rome, no proof was brought for that...none at all. Pilate did not see any. Jesus said to him, "Is this your accusation? Is Rome making this accusation against Me?" He says, "This is your own people," and Pilate in saying that knew he had no case. How could Rome convict Him of a crime Rome wasn't even accusing Him of? So, he says "no fault...no fault."

Now go back to Matthew chapter 27. "Jesus then stood before the governor," in this condensed portion which leaves out what we just said, "and the governor asked Him, Are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus said, You said it." And then He explained what He meant as we saw in John. Then Pilate comes back out to the people and says to them, "I find no fault, He's not guilty."

And you know what happens? Verse 12 then, "And when He was accused by the chief priests and elders," the whole crowd started to verbalize their accusations against Jesus. Here's Pilate out on the porch again, and the whole crowd is stirred up. In Luke 23:5 which cuts across this very same moment, it says, "And they were the more fierce saying, He stirs up the people teaching throughout all Judea beginning from Galilee to this place." And they started to cry against Him, more fierce, more fierce. They started to put the heat on Pilate...really put the heat on him.

And he is no match for the furious hatred of Jesus that is in the hearts of these leaders who are Satan possessed.

The accusation is empty talk. Pilate knows it. Let the whole world know. The record stands, dear friends, you pick up the Bible and you read about Jesus Christ and there is no fault in Him. The courts of the world whether they were the religious court that mocked Jesus in a trial under Caiaphas and Annas, or a pagan court conducted by a coward named Pilate, they came up with the same verdict. They had to manufacture lies to kill Jesus Christ. Pilate could see it all. I mean, he wasn't dumb. It was obvious. I mean, was he supposed to believe for one minute the Jewish leaders who absolutely despised him, despised Rome, hated Roman oppression, hated the Roman presence would bring to him someone to be executed because he was a threat to Rome?

Ridiculous. Anybody who was a real threat to Rome, they would hide and join in his revolution. They wouldn't expose him.

Pilate knew the whole thing was a farce.

And he knew what is recorded in verse 18 of Matthew 27, they did it for envy. They hated Him because He could do what they couldn't. He could heal people and He could teach wisdom and He could remove disease and raise the dead. And they couldn't do that. And He was popular and they were not and they hated Him because of it. It was that simple. Even a pagan unbeliever could see the

real issue was envy. So the whole thing was ridiculous. Jesus had never posed a threat to Rome. And if He was a real threat to Rome, the Jews wouldn't have brought Him there to be exposed by Rome and executed for doing that. No, he knew it was all a matter of envy.

He must have even suspected that when they came to ask for Roman soldiers the night before to take Him captive. He must have known then what the real issues were. No, let the record stand, there's no fault in Jesus. And Pilate knew it and pronounced Him not guilty. But when he brought Him back out, he should have dismissed the crowd, he should have moved his soldiers in, broken them up and given Jesus the protection He needed from them. He should have done what justice said he should have done.

But instead, he sort of puts Jesus on the dock and lets everybody start screaming accusations at Him. And Jesus, it says in verse 12, answered nothing. And that takes us to the second point. The first point here, the first element in this scene that shows the perfection of Christ is the accusation of the Jews, its emptiness, its pointlessness, its...its lie. The second is the attitude of the Lord. His attitude is a demonstration of His absolute perfection. Literally, verse 12 says, "And while He was being accused..." So they just started screaming their accusations against Him, constantly, fiercely.

And He answered nothing...nothing.

Verse 14, when Pilate confronts Him and says, "Aren't You going to respond to this? He answered him not a word." He had said what He needed to say when He was on trial. The judge had given the verdict. There was nothing more to say. It was over.

What else to say? Not guilty was already the verdict. And He's not going to answer the crowd and He's not going to answer Pilate because there's nothing left to say. The Jews have already railroaded Him. There's nothing to say to them. And there's nothing to defend for Himself because He must die, that is the Father's will and He is committed to it. And so He says nothing when they accuse.

Verse 13, "Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest Thou not how many thingsor how great things is a better way to translate ithow great things they witness against Thee?" Can't You hear the tremendous accusations they're making against You? "And He answered him not a word...not even one word," the Greek says.

Not even one word did He say..."Insomuch that the governor marveled greatly." He was absolutely amazed. I mean, he had a lot of prisoners and a lot of people condemned and here was somebody who was being accused of heinous kinds of things, serious kind of crimes who said nothing in His own defense, absolutely nothing. I mean, Pilate had seen a steady parade of criminals who would plead their case and cry out for mercy and protest loudly to those who were wanting to convict and charge them with crimes. He'd seen all the people demanding their exoneration, pleading their

innocence and here is Jesus, absolutely quiet, never says a single word.

Where is the troublesome revolutionary who is a threat to Rome? Where is the taxdodging protester who's leading the nation in an insurrection? Where is the king who is a rival to Caesar? Here is a calm serene peaceful man who is literally offering Himself without reason.

Pilate knows He's innocent. And Jesus confirms it by saying nothing...absolutely nothing. He is resolute...like a sheep before her shearers, Isaiah said, is dumb. So He opened not His mouth. He would willingly go to the cross.

But what would Pilate do now? He knows He doesn't deserve to die and yet he doesn't want to irritate the crowd and create another incident. His life is on the line. His career is on the line. He's got some real problems. You see, Pilate was in a very dangerous position. Let me tell you why.

When he originally came to power, he made some big mistakes.

The first thing he did to make a show of power when he was appointed governor was to ride into Jerusalem with a whole entourage of soldiers to show his power. And in came the soldiers and they had these banners, these flags. And on top of the flags in brass or some kind of metal was an eagle and on top of the eagle was a molded image of Caesar. Prior governors had had the sense to remove those kinds of things because the Jews believed them to be idols...any graven image. And the Jews had left idolatry since the Babylonian captivity, they didn't tolerate it. And the other governors had been careful about that but Pilate, wanting to show his power, came in with his whole group of soldiers, all with the image of Caesar, which of course the Romans believed to be a god. And so here was an idol in the city of Jerusalem, the holy city. The Jews rioted and protested and demanded that he take those off his banners. In a power play, he refused to do it.

After accomplishing what he wanted to in his splendorous appearance in Jerusalem, he turned to return the 60 miles to the seacoast in Caesarea where his basic operation was headquartered and they followed him for five days, screaming and rioting and demanding sometimes patiently, sometimes impatiently that he remove those graven images. He refused to do it. He called a meeting of all these rioting Jews. He put them in the amphitheater, surrounded them with his soldiers and said if they didn't stop the demands, he would cut off their heads. At which point they bared their necks, pulled their heads to one side and told his soldiers to go ahead and cut off all their heads. And they called his bluff.

There was no way he could do it. There was no way he could report back to Rome that he had massacred a whole bunch of defenseless Jews in an amphitheater with their necks bared.

Furthermore, it could have led to a wholesale national revolution. He couldn't have survived that situation because he was sent to keep the peace, not start a war. They called his bluff. He removed all of those images. And they were one up on him. They had him where they wanted him.

A little later, he realized the need for a better water supply in Jerusalem. So he decided to build an aqueduct to bring water into the city of Jerusalem. And to do it, he took the money out of the temple treasury, money which was devoted to God.

This so greatly irritated the Jews that it fomented another riot which he had to deal with by sending his soldiers into a huge crowd of people with clubs and spears and swords and at a given signal they clubbed and stabbed people to death to break up the riot.

The third and really most devastating thing that happened to Pilate was when he established a residence in the city of Jerusalem and made some shields for his soldiers. And on the shields he had engraved "Tiberius," the emperor. Which to the Jewish people again was an emblem of a false god and they demanded that the shields be changed. And he refused to do that.

And so they sent word to Tiberius. They reported him actually to Caesar that he was doing this. Caesar sent word down to get those shields changed immediately. So they have him right where they want him.

He cannot afford another message sent to Tiberius. He cannot afford another riot. He cannot afford any kind of revolution. He is really in a difficult place. He has enough of a sense of justice as a Roman and as a judge, a governor to do what's right. But he's a coward because if he does what's right and releases Christ, he's going to have a riot on his hands. And something's going to happen and he knows that it could end up in his losing his job. And it wouldn't be unlike Tiberius to remove a governor and then execute him for his unfaithfulness.

And so, and he hears the crowd say, as I mentioned in Luke 23 that Jesus started in Galilee and has come to this place, all the while stirring up the people, as I read in Luke 23:5.

Something snaps in his mind....Galilee...Galilee. And that's a solution for him. And in Luke 23 we find that when Galilee comes into his mind, he gets a great idea. Luke 23:7 says, "As soon as he knew Jesus belonged in Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod who himself was at Jerusalem at that time." It's still around five o'clock in the morning. Herod's right in Jerusalem.

But Herod was the...was the ruler, the tetrarch of Galilee. So he says, "I know what I'll do, I'll pass this whole thing on to Herod." And these kings were basically under the yoke of Rome.

They functioned as Romans wished they would functioned. So I'll just pass it off to Herod and that way I can get rid of the issue all together and I'm not going to have to be caught in this trap between what I know to be right and losing my job and my reputation with Rome. So he decides to send Him to Herod.

Now this is Herod Antipas, one of the three sons of Herod the Great who was given a third of the kingdom when Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. Herod Antipas was given the region of Galilee and Peraea which is east of the Jordan River. He knew about Jesus, Herod Antipas did. Oh yes, because Jesus had a great ministry in Galilee. Jesus removed disease from Galilee, so Herod Antipas knew of Him. Judiciously, Christ in all of His Galilean ministry had never gone to the city of Tiberius named after Caesar where Herod had his headquarters...Herod Antipas.

He had avoided that because Herod Antipas was the one who had beheaded John the Baptist. He was an incestuous man. He was a murderer. He was immoral. He was a very evil man. Jesus avoided that.

And so, Herod had been curious to meet Jesus. And when Herod heard that He..he was going to have the opportunity, Luke 23:8 says, he was exceedingly glad. And basically, he was excited because he wanted to see Jesus, he had wanted to for a long time because he wanted to see Him do a miracle. He was fascinated by Him and what he had heard about Him.

So then Jesus is rushed off early in the morning again to Herod who sets up some kind of a...of a court in his own presence there. And Luke 23 tells us most importantly what happened. Let me just read briefly that scene to you in Luke 23, verse 9, "Then he questioned Him." Herod questioned Him, "in many words. But He answered nothing." He owes nothing to Herod. Herod is not the one who has the right to judge a man in the land of Palestine, that is a Roman right, Pilate is the judge, the verdict is already in. He needs to say nothing to Herod.

You say, "Why didn't He tell him about His Kingdom? Why didn't He tell him who He was like He told Pilate?" Because he already knew. He had heard the preaching of John the Baptist.

He had heard through the grapevine everything there was to hear about the teaching of Jesus. There was nothing to say to this man. And so He answered nothing. And the chief priests, of course, were there, too. "And they were vehemently accusing Him again." They would just follow Him all around and scream their accusations. But Herod thought the whole thing was a joke.

This is no king. This is no rival to me. This is no rival to Caesar. This is no insurrectionist. Look at this poor man with the puffy face, black and blue because of the fists that have blasted against His flesh that very night when He was punched by the Sanhedrin members and the temple guard in the place of Caiaphas. And look at His face with the slaps and the spittle all over it from those who spit on Him,

this is no threat to Roman security, this is no rival to my throne.

And so it says in verse 11, "Herod with his men of war treated Him with contempt and mocked Him and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe." The gorgeous robe means a bright white resplendent glistening robe that was commonly wore by Jewish kings and sometimes they wove silver thread in it to make it glisten in the sun. And so they put a robe on Him like He was a king and they just mocked the whole thing.

But he came up with no accusation. In reporting the results, Pilate says in verse 14, "You brought this man unto me as one that perverts the people and behold, I have examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things of which you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod for I sent you to him and lo nothing worthy of death is done by him." So he affirms that Herod's verdict was the same. This man hasn't done anything. This man is no revolutionary, no insurrectionist, no threat to security. So the verdict of the second phase before Herod is the same as the first phase, not guilty, not guilty.

So, Herod sends Him back. Still early in the morning. He comes through the town with this robe on, the mock king. And He's back in Pilate's hands. And when you come to verse 15, Pilate has to deal again with Jesus.

The accusation of the Jews only demonstrates the perfection of Christ. The attitude of Christ before Pilate and the attitude of Christ before Herod of absolute silence only demonstrates again the perfection of Christ. He has nothing to answer to because there is no crime...nothing. The only thing that Pilate could say is: are You a king? And He said: Yes, but not like you think I'm a king, I'm a King of a spiritual Kingdom. There's no legitimate accusation. And so, even the wrath of men praises Him. Oh, how the wrath of men praises Him. They can come up with nothing...nothing.

That takes us to the third and we won't complete this, we'll just look at it initially. The animosity of the crowd...the accusation of the Jews and the attitude of the Lord and the animosity of the crowd all speak of the perfection of Christ.

The first phase of the Roman trial ended with acquittal.

Pilate says I find no fault in Him. The second phase ended with acquittal. He says Herod found no fault with Him. Now he's back for a third phase, the coward. He could have ended it after the first. He could have ended it after the second. What is he bringing it back to them again for? The reason is because he's trapped, you see. He is trapped. He can't just defy them without a riot and a riot could be fatal to his career and even to his own life. So he's trapped.

What's he going to do? He's on the road to disaster. He can't defy the Jews again. Every time he's tried that, he's lost. So he comes up with an idea. Verse 15. "Now at the feastthat is the feast of Passover once a yearthe governor was accustom to releasing unto them a prisoner whom they would or whom they desired."

As a concession to a conquered people, as an act of kindness and goodness, the governor annually at the Passover would release a criminal as a way of showing mercy to this conquered people.

And so this custom was potentiated at this particular season as it had been in the past. In fact, if you read the other gospel record in Luke and Mark you will find that the people even asked for it. They demand that he release someone to them.

And he realizes that they have in hand, verse 16, a notable prisoner. Literally a prisoner of mark, or a prisoner of note.

Not just another common criminal but somebody who was wellknown.

His name is Barabbas. We don't know anything about his background. We really don't even know what his name means. Some think "Barabba" is son of father, some think it's son of rabbi.

We don't know what it means. We don't know anything about his background.

We do know that according to John 18:40 he was a robbing plunderer. We know from Mark 15 and Luke 23 that he was an insurrectionist who was also a murderer. He must have been a threat to the Jews as well as the Romans, and perhaps even more so the Jews or the Romans wouldn't have been willing to release him here. He is...he is an archcriminal. He is a famous criminal who is a threat to the safety of the population.

Obviously a severe threat. He is due to be crucified and I believe that he was the one whose cross Jesus died between two of his own thieving buddies. Jesus literally did take Barabbas' place in that regard.

So Pilate sees an out. He sees the idea of giving them an option between Barabbas and Jesus. Verse 17, "Therefore when they were gathered together," they're all out in the front now and they're screaming accusations against Jesus. "And Pilate says to them, Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas?

Or Jesus who is called Christ?" And he adds that after the name Jesus twice, once there and once in verse 22 to emphasize the difference between Jesus and Barabbas. Barabbas and Jesus who is called the anointed. A euphemism of sorts for king. Who you going to choose? Your anointed, your Messiah or Barabbas, a criminal?

And what does he have in mind? Oh, he knows who the leaders will choose. But what he has in mind is pitting the leaders against the people. Because he understands the population of Jesus, surely he knows about the triumphal entry that happened on Monday, surely he knows how the population were turned toward Him, surely he knows this miracle worker had made Himself one whom the people cheered. And so his object is to pit the people against the leaders and morning is now arrived and the people are starting to gather, is approaching six o'clock. John 19:14 says this comes sort of to a final fruition, this last phase of the trial in the sixth hour, and that's the Roman clock which would put it at six in the morning. So he sees the crowd coming and he realizes now that he can play off the people against the leaders.

The leaders will want Jesus crucified but surely the people will want Jesus released when given this choice. You see, even pagan Pilate knows the difference between Christ and a criminal, doesn't he? Another wonderful testimony to the beauty of Jesus Christ.

Well, verse 18 tells us that Pilate knew that the Jewish leaders had a motive and the motive was envy, just envy, that's all. But the people wouldn't have that motive because the people were the recipients of Jesus' ministry, not in competition with Him like the leaders. So he figured he had a good way out.

Then something very interesting happened that I believe was divinely appointed by God in verse 19. There was an interruption and we'll come back to that next time. But an interruption occurred with his wife. And he had to turn to pay attention to what was going on. And by the time he turned around, look at verse 20, off of that interruption which we'll see later. "The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus."

I believe God allowed a divine intervention, a pause to give time for the leaders to stir up the crowd against Jesus because it was the plan that He die, right? And Pilate's plan might have worked, pitting them against the people who still were somewhat fascinated against Jesus, but they could be convinced. Because their fascination was very fickle, right? And it had been five days, or four days since Jesus came into town and He'd done no miracle and He hadn't overthrown the Romans. And here He was standing there next to Pilate and Pilate was saying He was innocent and he found no fault in Him, and Herod found no fault in Him and they could have well concluded when they were stirred up that anybody who Pilate said was no threat was certainly no Messiah. Because they thought the Messiah would come and overthrow Rome and here was Rome saying this man has no fault, we don't see this man as any threat. Could anyone that Pilate approved of truly be their Messiah?

Oh, they could be stirred up. Their passion was very fickle. And after all, Jesus had attacked the temple anyway, not Rome. Cleansed it. So the leaders used whatever leverage they could gain,

moved through the crowd. Mark says, "Stirred up, or incited the crowd to bring about the destruction of Jesus." They wanted to destroy Him, it says in verse 20. The fickle passions of the crowd are turned. And by the time Pilate comes back from this little interlude, he's got a real problem in his hands.

Because the crowd and the leaders have become one. And he can't play off against another. And in verse 21, "The governor answered and said to them, Which of the two will you?" And he's repeating the question, the very same one he asked in verse 17 before he was interrupted. So he just goes back and picks up his same thought. "Okay, now I'm back, who do you want to be released to you?"

"And they said...what?...Barabbas...Barabbas." I'm sure he was jolted. He had underestimated the power of the leaders. He had underestimated the fickle hearts of the people, or I suppose overestimated. He didn't know anything about the demons of hell that were involved in the scene, nor did he know anything about the plan of God. And he was jolted.

And out of his mouth comes the question of verse 22, "What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?" What do you want me to do with Jesus? It's almost as if he is stunned. What do I do with Jesus then? And they all have become one now, and they all say unto him, "Let Him be crucified."

It's no use, they want Jesus' blood. He's not going to be able to change it. He's not going to be able to prevent it. If he would not uphold simple justice, why should he expect a rabble mob to do it? He was in a panic. He didn't want to violate justice but he also didn't want to start a riot. It's no use.

And the governor said in verse 23, "Why?" And he's back to where he started, "What evil has He done?"

And I submit to you, ladies and gentlemen, again that here is the testimony of Scripture that when all is said and done in every aspect of the trial of Christ, He comes out blameless. Do you see it? That is the testimony that Scripture is giving us that no accusation stands. Pilate is saying, "What has He done?"

And their answer, "They cried all the more saying, Let Him be crucified." Louder, more viciously, more vehemently they keep the screaming that they did originally there that they did in front of Herod and now they're doing it again. The whole thing is out of control, he can't handle it. The mindless crowd is selfdamning in its hostility.

And verse 24 says, "Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing." Nothing he could do. You know, they were so desirous of the blood of Christwe'll come back to these verses next timebut look at verse 25 for a moment. "Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us and on our children."

Frightening. They said we'll be responsible for His blood. And that is the verdict of the nation Israel. They took upon themselves the guilt of the blood of Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder that Romans 11 says they have been broken off the stock of blessing? Is it any wonder that they have known the chastening of God? It isn't that there is not forgiveness. Bless God, there is forgiveness for Israel, for any individual who comes to Christ there is forgiveness, be he Jew or Gentile. In fact, the gospel came to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. But as a nation together they said His blood be on us. Oh, they forgot that they said that, because in Acts 5:28 when the Apostle started to preach and fill Jerusalem with their doctrine, the leaders said, "You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this man's blood on us."

No, the Apostles didn't do that, they did that themselves.

They affirmed their own guilt in the death of Jesus Christ. That is a testimony to the innocence of Christ. His blood be on us.

They knew Jesus was not at fault. Everything about His death speaks of His innocence. The field that was purchased, you remember, with the money was called the Field of Blood because everybody in the city knew it was blood money, that is money paid to a traitor to betray an innocent man. The place where Judas fell when his rope broke, or the branch broke, whatever occurred that caused him to fall from hanging himself and be destroyed on the rocks beneath was also called the "field of blood." Because anything Judas touched represented the blood money that was given to him to betray an innocent man. Everything about the testimony of Jesus stands as beautiful, as clear, as clean, as pure as His own lovely person. And the whole world that swirls around Him is a world of evil, dishonest, lying, murderous people. And now as a nation, they come together and say His blood be on us.

And bless God, when He was dying on the cross, He looked at that same nation that had said that and He said this, "Father...what?...forgive them for they know not what they do."

Ever and always even since then there has been forgiveness for the Jew or the Gentile that comes to Christ. But they took upon themselves the blood guiltiness for Christ in His death. And in so doing, they give testimony to the whole world that it was their responsibility, unrequited blood is on their hands.

Well, there are other elements to this testimony of the glory of Christ and we'll see those the next time we come to this chapter. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the marvelous imagery that Scripture has given us of the beauty of Christ, that when it was that the world could have made Him look the worst, He shines in spotless glory. But

all the evil of hell, all the worse that men can bring cannot diminish His beauty. All the tribunals of evil men, lying murderous hearts, cowards, and egomaniacs come together to try Christ, they try themselves and are found guilty and He stands innocent. O, the spotless Lamb of God without blemish. Father, we thank You that we could be there at that scene to see our Savior, the one who died for us, the perfect Lamb, sinless who became sin on the cross that we might become righteous in Him. We thank You for what He did for us.

While your heads are bowed in a closing moment, if you don't know Christ, this is a time for you to respond. You have to answer the question: what will you do with Jesus? Pilate condemned Him. The crowd accused Him. Herod mocked Him. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. What are you going to do? The right thing is to receive Him as Savior and Lord. I invite you to do that right now in your heart. The one who came to die for you, take away your sin, give you eternal life.

Pilate was removed from Palestine a few years after the death of Christ. A tragic man, exiled and ended up a suicide.

Little wonder. Judas couldn't live with his guilt, neither could Pilate. So you look into your own heart and ask yourself a very serious question: what are you going to do with Jesus Christ?

For what you do with Christ will impact your time and eternity.

What will you do with Jesus Christ? That's the question. What's your answer?

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