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

What Shall I Do with Jesus? Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 27:19-26
Code: 2394

Let's open our Bibles to Matthew chapter 27. We return today to a portion of Scripture we began to study last Lord's day, Matthew 27, verses 11 through 26. And in that passage the most impactful question ever faced occurs. The question comes in verse 22. "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?" The question that every soul has to answer: what shall I do with Jesus Christ?

And to introduce our look at the text again, I would like to digressif I mightfor a moment from it to sort of pose another question. And that is this, why is it that every person must answer that question? What is it about Jesus Christ that lays such a claim on every heart? Why is it that every one must deal with Jesus Christ? Must make some decision?

And the answer to that is because of who Jesus Christ is. Because of what He said and what He did. Because of the person and work of Christ, the question for every heart is inescapable: what shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Christ?

The Scriptures proclaim that Jesus is God. From the very beginning in Matthew 1:23 it said His name shall be called Emmanuel which is God with us. The Scriptures proclaim that Jesus is the possessor of the divine names of God. For example, in Acts chapter 3 verse 14, Peter calls Jesus the Holy Onean Old Testament name decidedly and distinctly given to God.

The Scriptures also proclaim that Jesus is one with God the Father. In John 8 it says to know Him is to know the Father. In John 15 it says to hate Him is to hate the Father. In Matthew 10, to believe Him is to believe the Father. In John 14, to see Him is to see the Father. In John 5, to honor Him is to honor the Father. And in Mark 9, to receive Him is to receive the Father.

Furthermore, the Scriptures proclaim that Jesus is omnipresent. He Himself said in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always." A characteristic only true of God.

The Scriptures further proclaim that Jesus is unchanging and eternal. In Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 8, it says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The Scriptures further proclaim that Jesus is the creator of the world. It says in John 1 that all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.

The Scriptures also proclaim that Jesus is able to forgive sin. Repeatedly in His ministry, such as in the second chapter of Mark, it says He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." A prerogative belonging only to God.

The Scripture also proclaims that He is to be worshiped as God. Paul writing in Philippians chapter 2 said that to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, every knee shall bow of things in the earth, above the earth, under the earth.

So, you see, Scripture very clearly indicates to us and those are just samples that Jesus Christ is God...that Jesus Christ is every bit God, fully God. And as God, He lays a tremendous claim upon man to respond to Him. Now these things do not tell us that He is any less man. He is the perfect Godman. We read the Scripture and we find out that He was fully human. How do we know that? For one thing, He was born. For another, He was circumcised. For another, He grew. For another, He had a human name. For another, He had flesh and blood. He was hungry. He wept. He thirsted. He slept. He was weary. He suffered. He was tempted. He would...He was wounded. He died and He was buried. All indications of His humanness.

This Jesus was the Godman. No one like Him exists ever. And so, He makes tremendous demands upon our lives because of the uniqueness of who He is. We have to deal with that.

Furthermore, the Old Testament clearly indicates that He is the promised Savior, that He is come into the world not only to show us what God is like but to bring us to God in an act of redemption. And the prophets outlined the details of life with astounding accuracy. For example, His birthMicah said it would be in Bethlehem. Daniel gave us the approximate date. Isaiah told us it would be a virgin birth. Genesis 9 indicated that it would be a Semitic line through which He would come. Genesis 22 indicated it would be the line of Abraham. Genesis 49 indicated it would be through the tribe of Judah. Second Samuel 7 said through the seed of David. Hosea said He would be taken out of Egypt.

And then you look at His life. In Deuteronomy it said He would be a prophet like Moses. In Psalm 22 it indicated He would trust God from His birth onward. Isaiah 9 said He would begin His ministry in Galilee. Isaiah 11 said He would be anointed by God's Spirit. Isaiah 53 said He would carry our pains and diseases. Zechariah 9 said He would enter Jerusalem on a colt. Isaiah 35, He would perform miracles.

And even His death. In Psalm 2, that kings would see His death. In Psalm 22 that He would be forsaken in death by God. In Psalm 22 again, He would be scorned and mocked. In Zechariah chapter 11, the prophet said He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. In Zechariah 12, He would be smitten and pierced. In Isaiah 52, they said He would be brutally treated. Isaiah 53 says He would die for the world's iniquity. Psalm 22 said His garment would be divided. Psalm 41, He would be

betrayed by a friend. Psalm 34, not a bone of Him would be broken. Isaiah 50, verse 6, His beard would be plucked out. Isaiah 50 also verse 6, He would be spit upon.

And then, of course, Hosea 6 said He would be raised from the dead. And Psalm 16 said He would never see corruption. Psalm 22 said He would conquer death.

And even His priestly work at the present. In Psalm 110, verse 4 indicates that He would continue as a priest. And Amos 9, that He would sit on David's throne. And so it goes and so it goes.

You see, we have to deal with someone who is such a dominant theme of Scripture and who is none other than the Godman Himself. The perfection of the person of Jesus Christ is absolutely astounding. And His perfection is demonstrated. You study His life and you find out, for example, that He was holy. He was clean from defilement. He loved righteousness. He hated sin. He was victorious over temptation every time He confronted it. He rebuked sinners. He will judge the unbelieving.

We learn, also, from the Scripture as we look at His life that He was loving. That He loved the Father and He loved Him obediently and He did His will. That He loved people. He loved the lost, the ungodly, the sinners. He loved His own. He loved the church. He loved children. He showed His love by becoming poor, by giving His life, by forgiving sin, by seeking the lost, by healing, supplying needs, sympathizing, strengthening His people, showing compassion on those who were without a shepherd, those who were lost, those who were hungry, those who were sick and blind and demonized and grieved and repentant and even dead. And He was prayerful. And He was meek. And He was humble and righteous and good and faithful and truthful and just and self denying. And in every way the spotless perfect Lamb of God who came for the sins of the world.

It is this person of whom Pilate asks: what then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ? And the answer to that question is the determiner of every person's destiny. For Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem the world from sin, to bring salvation, to remove transgressions, to destroy Satan, to set up an eternal kingdom of peace and glory for those who love and believe in Him. And it was essential in doing this that He die for sin. And as we come to Matthew 27, we know that we are close to the cross and therefore close to the climax for which Christ came into the world. He came to die for our sins, to pay the penalty as our substitute and to rise again that we might live forever.

And so, no other person has ever come even remotely close to Jesus Christ. And the destiny, as I said, of every human being hinges on what that person does with Jesus Christ. Therefore I say Pilate asks the most important question that could ever be asked.

Now let's look at our text. What brought the question up? Why does he even ask it? Do you remember? Jesus had spent three years teaching and preaching, healing, casting out demons, raising the dead. Three years training the Twelve. Now that's all come to a climax as He enters into

Jerusalem for this His final Passover. He comes into the city, as you know, on Monday and cleanses the temple on Tuesday and comes back to the temple on Wednesday and teaches all day long in a confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees and even the Herodians and everybody else who could get involved. And then Wednesday night, as He retreated from that busy, busy day of teaching and confrontation and rebuke in the temple, He goes to the Mount of Olives and there He gives the great Olivet Discourse which is the sermon of our Lord on His own Second Coming.

And then on Thursday He makes preparation for the Passover. And the disciples get everything ready and Thursday night they eat the Passover. And near midnight they leave that upper room in Jerusalem to go out to the Mount of Olives to the garden of Gethsemane where the Lord wants to pray to ready His heart for the death that awaits Him later that very same day. And it is at the midnight hour as Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane, sweatingas it weregreat drops of blood in agonizing conflict with Satan who comes at Him in three waves of temptation that He is completely victorious again. Resolute, He sets His face to the cross.

No sooner does He come back from that prayer time then Judas arrives with all of the religious leaders along with a spira(?), that's a cohort of Roman soldiers numbering about 600 men. They come into the garden. They take Jesus captive. They rush Him off to the house of Annas and Caiaphas for a mock trial in order that they might somehow legitimize their desire to execute Him to get Him out of the way.

The whole nation of Israel has been eternally impacted by Jesus Christ in this brief ministry. Some believed. And for them the impact was eternal life. Many rejected with hostility and for them the impact is eternal death. The most of the people, the majority were just curious and noncommittal and suffered the same fate as those who hostilely rejected Him.

So, when Jesus comes to Jerusalem for this last time, everything comes to a climax. The hostility and the rejection of the populous of Jerusalem reaches a fever pitch. And as we saw in our last study, they screamed for His blood in this very passage, to have Him crucified.

Now remember, there were three phases to the Jewish trial. Jesus was first taken to Annas because Annas was the power behind the scene. And they thought Annas could come up with an indictment. They didn't have any indictment, they didn't have any crime for which to try Him. They tried bribing false witnesses. They tried getting people to lie. They paid off Judas. But even Judas came and threw the money back and said, "I have betrayed innocent blood." They couldn't get any legitimate accusation against Him. They brought Him to Annas figuring Annas might come up with something. Annas was absolutely unsuccessful, sent Him to Caiaphas. And from one to three in the morning, Friday morning from 1 A.M. to 3 A.M., there was a mock trial in front of Caiaphas at which time they accused Jesus of blasphemy for saying He was the Christ the Son of God...which was not blasphemy but the truth. Then they blasphemed Him by spitting in HIs face, slapping Him while He was

blindfolded and asking Him who it was that hit Him. And then punching Him in the face until He was black and blue with a puffy face and spittle all over it.

Then they kept Him captive till about five o'clock in the morning at which time they brought Him into the legal place of trial, the Judgement Hall. And they had a sort of a...of a quick, maybe a five to ten minute trial in the dawn because the Jewish law required that a trial had to be during the day and in the Judgment Hall. And, of course, there's was in the middle of the night in the house of Caiaphas and thus was illegal.

So, wanting to put a veneer of legality over their...their desire to kill Jesus, they had this mock trial repeated in the morning at 5 A.M. They decided that He must die. The problem for them was they had not the right of execution. So they had to take Him to Pilate. And so, you have three more phases in the secular Roman trial of Christ before Pilate. And as we've noted in this, Matthew's purpose is always the same. He exalts Christ, no matter how bleak the scene, no matter how ugly the surroundings, no matter how dehumanizing and blasphemous the situation might be in reference to Christ, Christ always comes out glorious, always comes out glorious. Even when they're spitting in His face, His glory shines and their ugliness is made manifest.

Now each element of the trial before Pilate exalts the Savior. Let's go back for a moment and remind ourselves of what we saw last time. First was the accusation of the Jews. You can follow your outline if you'd like. The accusation of the Jews in verse 11: "Jesus stood before the governor, the governor asked Him, saying, Are You the king of the Jews? Jesus said, Thou sayest." The Jews had accused Him. Do you remember, they finally sort of formulated an accusation against Him and it indicated that they accused Him ofthis is from Luke 23they accused Him of being the leader of a seditious insurrection, troubling the people, stirring them up, cultivating a revolution. Secondly, they accused Jesus of forbidding people to pay taxes to Caesar. And thirdly, of claiming to be a king which made Him a rival in terms of sovereignty against Pilate, against the Herods, against Caesar himself. In other words, they had to come up with an accusation that would involve the Romans. The Romans weren't going to carry out a trial of Jesus for some religious issue that belonged within the framework of Judaism. So they had to manufacture a Roman issue. And so, they tried to convince Pilate that Jesus was in fact an insurrectionist rebel who was vying for the throne of Rome. And, of course, it was a lie. It was all false.

And you remember what happened. They took Jesus to Pilate. They wouldn't go in the Judgment Hall of Pilate because they didn't want to be defiled for the Passover by going into a Gentile dwelling, part of their ridiculous tradition. Jesus went on inside. Pilate came out. Talked to them on the outside. Got their accusations. Walked back in. Conducted his trial with Jesus Christ. Came back out a few minutes later. It's still only about 5:15 in the morning likely. And he says to them, his verdict is "I find" and that is a technical term for a verdict. We use it even today. The jury finds the defendant guilty. The word "find" is indicative of something legal that has occurred. He says "I find no fault in this man."

John 18:38 indicates that finding in that first phase of the trial.

The people refuse to accept the verdict and they screamed and yelled and more powerfully accused Jesus of sedition and being a threat to Roman rule. And, of course, we remember, don't we, that Pilate was in a very difficult place. He had already had three riots that he had caused among the Jews. He had been reported to Tiberius Caesar for the last one. Things were very tenuous. The Romans wanted peace and he was having a hard time keeping it. And he was not about to let another riot break out. He knew that if he released Jesus, which would be consistent with his verdict, he would foment another riot. It probably would get back to Caesar and his job would be on the line and maybe even his head would be on the line. He could not survive politically another problem with the people he was given rulership over.

But we saw, didn't we, in that first element, that accusation of the Jews how innocent Jesus was. Because they had to manufacture a lie about Him to even make an accusation. So He is exalted by the fact that they can find no legitimate thing against Him, though they have tried and tried and tried.

The second thing we noted was the attitude of the Lord. Not only the accusation of the Jews, but the attitude of the Lord. And in it all He was completely silent. Verse 12, "He answered nothing." Verse 14, "He answered them not a word." There was no answer. There was nothing to say. Why Pilate had come out after phase one, which was recorded, remember, in John 18, not here in Matthew after that first phase. Pilate had come out...we just have an allusion to it in verse 11, that's all, not the full details. And he had said not guilty.

So when all the crowd started screaming at him and all the accusations, He didn't say anything because there was nothing to say. He did not need to defend Himself. The court had been held and the verdict was in. And calmly and majestically He stands there innocent. And the wonder and the beauty of it is that He is so resolutely committed to the cross that He never bothers to defend Himself. He never bothers to try to argue against their accusations. He is absolutely silent. He is absolutely innocent. He is utterly committed to the cross for the sake of the sins of the people themselves who were even screaming at Him.

Well, one of the things they screamed, as we remember from studying the comparative gospels, was that He was seditious starting at Galilee even unto this place. In other words, He's building a sedition all over the land. And, of course, when Pilate heard Him say "Galilee", that triggered in his mind the realization that Galilee was the territory ruled by Herod Antipas who was one of the puppet kings that Rome allowed to be there. And though they didn't have military power and judicial power, they had a certain sort of...sort of presence. And there were some particular things that they could do, it was mostly pomp and circumstance and not a lot else. But there were times when they were useful, and this might be one of those times.

Realizing then that Jesus was from the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas in Galilee, and that Herod was in Jerusalem for the Passover, Pilate sent Jesus bound to Herod. And all the Jews went along with Him and they brought Him before Herod hoping from Pilate's viewpointthat Herod would take this thing over, condemn Jesus to death, or deal with the Jewish people or do something that he couldn't accomplish. And you remember Herod's response. He thought the idea was ludicrous. This man a king? He laughed. He mocked. He put a robe on Jesus and made a joke out of the whole thing. It was not only ridiculous, it was even funny. And Jesus became a laughing stock, the butt of the jokes of Herod.

And Herod sent Him back. And it's still not even six o'clock in the morning, back to Pilate again robed in this robe supposedly representing a king. And Pilate has Jesus back again. And through it all, it says, when He was in front of Herod, He said nothing, never a word. There was nothing to say. The verdict had been rendered. In fact, you might be interested to know that before this trial before Pilate and Herod is over, the innocence of Jesus will be stated five separate times. The religious world, the pagan world, the demons of hell cannot come up with one accusation that stands.

And so, Jesus is silent. And Peter comments on it and says, "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed to Him who judges righteously." Think of what He could have said. Think of the curses He could have said...stated. Think of what Jesus might have said to those people that day but He said absolutely nothing. The defense of Jesus as to His absolute innocence is left with the facts not a selfdefense. And He is exalted again.

Thirdly, we sawand we'll go back to it nowthe animosity of the crowd...the animosity of the crowd. That, too, demonstrates the exaltation of Christ. And that begins in verse 15. But before we look at that, I want to remind you of the twenty third chapter of Luke because as I have said we have to bring in all of these to get the full picture...Luke 23:15...23:13 to 15. Just to get the scene: "And Pilate..." now Pilate has Him back from Herod, "and when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people..." Now he's got to deal with this thing a third phase in the trial. "Said, You have 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 the things of which you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod." Herod didn't either. "For I sent you to him and lo, nothing worthy of death is done by Him."

And we can go back to Matthew. Now let the record stand, all right? No accusation stood before Annas. No accusation stood before Caiaphas. No accusation stood before Pilate. And no accusation stood before Herod. And the record of history stands that He is not guilty. And Pilate reiterates it and this initiation of the third phase of that Roman trial. And as I said, according to John 19:14, it is about six A.M. and all this hurryup kind of thing has taken only about an hour or so. Pilate wants to get rid of Jesus. He can't afford another riot but he also has to deal with his own conscience and sense of justice.

So, verse 15 says, "Now at that feast, the governor was accustomed to releasing unto the people a prisoner whomever they would. And they had a notable prisoner," that is a prisoner of mark, or a prisoner of note, "called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, Whom will you that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?"

Now you remember what I just pointed out in Luke's gospel, that he called together the chief priests and the leaders and the people...do you remember that? We just read that. Why? Initially, in the first two phases it was only the chief priests and leaders. Now he calls the people because he has a plan. He knows that Jesus is popular with the people. It's now six A.M., the city is moving about, it is the day of the Passover for the residents of Judea, Jerusalem. And so, things are moving very fast early in the morning. And he calls the people because his plan is this, Jesus is popular with the people, Jesus is hated by the leaders. "What I will do is offer them the alternative of Barabbas or Jesus and pit the people against the leaders."

That was his plan, feeling that the people who were attracted to Jesus, whoby the wayand surely he was well aware of it, had hailed Jesus as their Messiah King and so forth on Monday when He rode in triumphally to the city. He knew of the popularity of Jesus. He was well aware of that. He also knew that the leaders wanted Jesus dead out of jealousy, verse 18. He knew it was a matter of envy. So he knew that this was a plot against Jesus by the leaders and thought he could pit the leaders against the people who felt Jesus to be very popular.

But verse 19, an amazing thing happened. There was an interruption. We'll come back to that, go to verse 20. And while he was distracted for a few moments, the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. A providential divinely caused interlude and in the moment of that interlude, it gave the leaders the time they needed to stir up the multitude against Jesus. And so, instead of pitting one against the other, the multitude was sucked in as a fickle crowd by the leaders and Pilate's effort failed.

In verse 21, "The governor answered, came back from his interlude, and said, Now which of the two will you that I release unto you? And the whole mob said Barabbas...Barabbas. The coward Pilate who refused to do what was right and was trying all these little plots was again foiled. And then he posed the question in verse 22, "Pilate said to them, What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?" And he uses that little descriptive phrase "who is called Christ" to set Jesus so distinctly apart from Barabbas. Barabbas, who was a criminal, an insurrectionist, a murderer, a plunderer, a bandit...and Jesus who is called the anointed. With all of the ramifications that that term Christ would have, that term "anointed" in their understanding, he wants to identify for them who Jesus is by definition so that they can see the contrast. And so he asks that very, very essential question, what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?

Back to Luke 23 for a moment, we pick up something that's important. In Luke 23:20, "Pilate willing to release Jesus spoke again to them, but they cried saying, Crucify Him, Crucify Him. He said to them the third time, Why? What evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him, I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go." And the question you ask at this point is why? If you find no fault in Him, why are you going to chastise Him? Well, it's an act of condescension. It's to try to appease the bloodthirsty cries of the people. But that's not going to be effective and they were urgent with loud voices requiring that He might be crucified and the voices of them and the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they require.

Incredible. Five times he announces the innocence of Jesus Christ then sentences Him to death. "And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison whom they had desired. But he delivered Jesus to their will."

Now go back to Matthew again. They wanted Him crucified. Pilate did it because Pilate was trapped, he was blackmailed for fear of losing his job and his life. Verse 23 picks up that same scene. The governor said, "Why? What evil has He done? And they just cried out the more saying, Let Him be crucified."

And then in verse 25, remember, we stopped on this note last time, the people then answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Listen, dear friends, I have a great love for Jewish people. This does not reflect the attitude of every Jewish person who's lived in history, not even every Jewish person who lived in the time of Christ, not every Jewish person in Jerusalem, not even every Jewish person in that crowd. But this was the dominant cry of that crowd that day. And the fact of the matter is, however you wish it would be, it is true that the blood of Jesus Christ was by their own testimony taken on the people of Israel. Yes, He was executed by the Romans and there was complicity there for sure. But it was the Jewish population and leaders that screamed that His blood be accounted to their charge.

Later on, you remember, in Acts chapter 5 and verse 38, as the apostles went out to preach, they preached this same message. They preached that Israel was guilty of the blood of their own Messiah. A crime of proportions that are so monstrous it's indefinable. And we know they preached that message, we know the apostles preached the guilty of Israel because in Acts 5:38 they said, "You are filling all Jerusalem with this doctrine and intend to bring on us the blood of this man." So we know they preached that...that that nation might understand its guilt.

You say, "Is that the end of the story?" No, the end of the story is that Israelaccording to Romansshall be saved in the future and this then becomes one of the greatest if not the single greatest testimony to the grace of God in all of human history. God is a God of grace to redeem a people who have taken on themselves the responsibility for the blood of His own Son. That is the grace of God. That is

supernatural.

And so, we see even in the animosity of the crowd the beauty of Jesus Christ, so perfect. Declared innocent five times by Pilate. And even in this scene, He is exalted as the perfect spotless Son of God.

Now I want you to go back to verse 19. And there's a fourth testimony to the exaltation of Christ. We'll call this the apprehension of the wife...the apprehension of the wife. Let's see what that interlude was that interrupted Pilate and allowed the leaders to stir up the crowd. Pilate was seated on the Judgment Seat, that is the judicial bench, the official seat of authority. Remember now, the Jews wouldn't go into the Judgment Hall where this was suppose to occur so Pilate had to take his chair out and put it on the porch in front and the people stayed out in the courtyard or the patio or the street, whatever. And Pilate takes his seat outside, sits it down, takes a place in the seat and therefore constitutes a genuine judicial act. He is seated on the Judgment Seat.

At that point, his wife sent unto him. Here comes a message from his wife. It isn't his wife, it is a message from his wife. Now there are times in your life when you just really don't need to have a message from your wife. This...this would definitely be one of those times. Don't bother me when I'm judging, you know. That kind of thing. So he's out there and he gets a message from his wife. The message is this: "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man." Now stop at that point.

Now she must have had a little clout with Pilate. This is a desperate thing. And his response to it indicates that what she said carried weight with him. "Have nothing to do with that righteous man." What is Pilate's wife verdict on Jesus Christ? What is her verdict? Righteous. No doubt they had discussed Jesus even the night before because remember the night before when the Jews came to capture Jesus, they had all these Roman soldiers. In order to get those Roman soldiers, they would have had permission to be given by Pilate and so Pilate knew about Jesus. He was not oblivious to what was going on in the land of Palestine.

Jesus, for all intents and purposes, had banished disease from the whole land. He knew about Him. Everybody knew about Him. He knew what had gone on all week. He knew He'd cleansed the temple. He knew He'd come into the city and been hailed as Messiah. He was very much aware of this miracle worker. The word of the resurrection of Lazarus, no doubt, had even come to him. And that night they had discussed this. He knew that it was envy over Jesus that caused the Jewish leaders to want Jesus dead, verse 18 said. He knew about Him.

And his wife was convinced that this man Jesuswherever she got her informationbasically was a righteous man. And here is the testimony incredibly of a pagan. Now listen to this. The nation Israel with all the prophets and all the messages of God and all the promises and all the law of God to whom the Messiah of God came first and just let the Gentiles lick the crumbs off the table, the nation

of Israel curses Jesus Christ, takes His blood on themselves, kills Him as an unjust and evil man and a pagan who knows nothing says He's righteous. What a condemnation of the people of Israel. What depth of evil and sin and denial of the authority of Old Testament Scripture and its interpretation have they come to. And her word to her husband was, "Don't get involved with this man. Don't have a thing to do with Him. Get out of the picture. You're dealing with a righteous man."

She was fearful of the consequence. And she was right. Pilate later on was taken out of Palestine, sent to Gaul and there he committed suicide. He committed suicide for the same reason that Judas did, because both of them couldn't deal with the tremendous guilt of having betrayed and dealt unjustly with the only perfectly righteous person that ever lived. As I told you before, the primary cause of suicide psychologically is retribution. It's selfinflicted punishment. And the ultimate crime demands the ultimate punishment. And we have little to wonder about in the suicide of Pilate as in the suicide of Judas. It really was inescapable.

Now where did she get these fears? Verse 19, "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." Now there's nothing in the text to indicate that that is a supernatural dream, that God gave her that dream. The dream may have been simply the providence of God. Oh, I believe God was in it and I believe God sent the messenger at the moment that that messenger was to be there to stir up that crowd because Jesus had to die, right? That had to happen. Everything that happens here is under the control of God by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God...Acts 2 says. I don't necessarily believe it is a supernatural dream but that all of the thoughts about Jesus and they knew the uniqueness of Jesus and they knew that the leaders were jealous of Him and they knew that He was a good man. And that had been confirmed already by Pilate. And all of these thoughts certainly directed by the Spirit of God brought a dream that filled her heart with fear and she suffered through that nightmarish dream and she suffered...we don't know the specifics of what she thought would happen to her husband in dealing with Jesus but her worst fears were coming true. Here he was trapped with this Jesus. A dream of agony, a dream of fear and a testimony of a pagan Gentile woman to the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So, you see, even in this part of the scene, the exaltation of Jesus Christ appears, doesn't it? He is a righteous man. And He's exalted again. And Israel is indicted by a pagan who could see what they refused to see. And so she said, "Don't have a thing to do with Him." It was too late for that. But her worst fears were realized, there he was trapped.

That leads us to the last point. The acquiescence of the governor...the acquiescence of the governor. And here you see the exaltation of Christ come through again even in what Pilate does. Go over to verse 24. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing," prevail is the word gain, he could gain nothing. He couldn't gain a thing with all of his attempts, trying to reason...he couldn't even outshout them. "But that rather a tumult," thorubos, an uproar, a riot. He didn't need that. I mean, he really couldn't afford that. The last one of these had gotten him into trouble and he had received a direct

rebuke from Tiberius Caesar. He didn't need another one of those. Everything is out of control and another bad incident like the one in which his troops had come in originally to the city of Jerusalem with images of Caesar and started a riot. Like the time when he took money out of the temple treasury to build an aqueduct. Like the time that he had the inscription of Caesar's name on the shields and the Jews thought it was idolatry and all of those created riots because of his obstinate refusal to bend to their wishes. And here it was again. The same situation.

Now we can say something's good about him. I mean, he tried to get Jesus off his hands. He really tried. He had sent Jesus to Herod. He had suggested that He be released at the Passover. He had rendered Him five verdicts of innocence. He had appealed to the people. He had tried to give Him back to the Jews. You remember early on, he said take Him and try Him yourself and do what you want, giving them back the right of execution which they refused because they wanted it to appear legal. And, of course, Jesus was to be crucified and that was a Roman way of death. So the prophets had to be fulfilled. Now he wants to get off the hook.

He's got one other angle here. He saw that he could prevail nothing and rather an uproar was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude. Now what is this? This is a Jewish tradition based on Deuteronomy chapter 21, verses 6 to 9. In the cities of Israel in ancient times, a murder could occur. And the elders of the city were responsible to find the one who was the guilty party in the murder. But sometimes that was not possible. And so the elders would then come into a public place in the city and they would take out a basin of water and they would wash their hands in front of the people. And this was a sign that even though they were unable to find the murderer, they were free from the guilt of the murder.

In other words, they looked as long as they could look and when it was realistic that there wasn't going to be any way to find the murderer, they just sort of washed their hands of the whole thing. They had given it their best effort, the blood of the dead victim was not on their hands. You see, there was this principle in the Old Testament laid down and that is this, that God does not tolerate unrequited blood. That is why the capital punishment was instituted in Genesis 9. For a life, there must be given a life. And when Cain killed Abel, God said the ground cries out from the blood of Abel. In other words, wherever there is a death inflicted by someone purposely, there must be blood to pay the penalty. An unrequited blood cries out to God. And so, a city where there was a murder would do all it could to get the murderer, but if it couldn't be done there was a time when they had to say we can't do this but we're still innocent of the blood. We just can't find the murderer.

So, Pilatein a senseis taking this Jewish custom before them and saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this man. I have no responsibility." And that's, of course, when the people screamed "His blood be on us." We will take the guilt of the blood of Christ, that is the guilt for His execution. And again he confesses, "I am innocent of the blood of this...and he uses his wife's word...righteous person." And then he says, "You see to it." And he gives them again the right to kill Jesus. He passes them the

eis(?) gladii, the right of the sword. You do it, kill Him if you want.

Pilate just tried to get rid of Jesus. Can't do it. Jesus won't go away. He tried to get rid of Him so many ways, so many times, he couldn't do it. But again he affirms the innocence of Christ. And remember, listen to this, as we've seen it all the way along, do you think Pilate would wish that Jesus were guilty? Of course, it would solve everything. If he could find one thing about Jesus that would make Him guilty, everything would be simple. Then he could execute Jesus and maintain his conscience. I mean, it was like Judas. Do you think Judas wanted to find one flaw in the life of Christ that could justify his betrayal? Of course he did. Do you think Annas wanted to find one thing wrong with Jesus that could justify his hatred and Caiaphas? Of course they did. And Pilate, of course. And the false witnesses, yes. And that is the resounding testimony that these are desperate people who want a justification for their evil acts and can't find one. Again, marvelous testimony to the innocence of Christ. Always the same...Innocent, innocent, innocent, innocent, innocent, innocent. And everybody around Him...Guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty.

So, we go to verse 26. "Then released he Barabbas unto them. He released Barabbas. "According to the custom, and when he had scourged Jesus, he handed Him over to be crucified." He said he would chastise Jesus and then let Him go. Here it just says He scourged Him and led Him to be crucified. That's true. But his intent was to scourge Him and let Him go. It just didn't work out that way. Matthew doesn't give us the details.

Let me tell you what happened. He scourged Him. What is that? A short wooden handle about...maybe about that long, heavy wood and on the end of that wooden handle were a series of leather thongs and in the end of those thongs were bits of lead and brass and bones sharpened to a razor's edge. The man was then taken, and in most cases, by the wrists, he was tied and hung from a post. His feet dangling so that his body was taut and stretched. Two men, one on each side, then whipped him across the flanks through here and the back to the point where arteries and veins and entrails were gashed and exposed...very often brought death, was often done before crucifixion to speed the death on the cross. It is a torture beyond description. And if you want insight into the very scene itself, look with me for a moment to the nineteenth chapter of John's gospel.

Here's the scene. Verse 1, John picks up what Matthew leaves out. "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him." By the way, the Jews always gave 40 lashes save one that the Romans didn't. We don't know how many the Romans gave. We don't know how long they pounded Jesus, tore and ripped His flesh. We do know that He couldn't carry His own cross because He was so weak. And you can believe that if there ever was a man of strength, it was Him. Because a man without sin would be a man of strength. But He was beaten so weak that He couldn't carry His own cross and had to be carried for Him.

And then after the scourging, or as even a part of the scourging, the soldiers, verse 2 of John 19 says, "Put a crown of thorns on His head." They gathered some thorns, wove it together, made a crown to mock Him as a king and crushed it down into His brow and put on Him a purple robe. Tragic scene. They mock Him, verse 3. They said, "Hail king of the Jews." It literally says, "And they kept coming to Him and kept saying and kept giving Him blows." And this...this has been going on all morning now and even in the night, punching and slapping and hitting and spitting all over Jesus.

And they put all this kingly kind of garment on Him because they were playing a game. If you were to go to Jerusalem and to go into the old grounds of Fort Antonius, you would find that the gabbatha, or the pavement is still there, the very same pavement. And on that pavement you will see in those great massive stones where our Lord was brought before Pilate and these soldiers, there are little markings. And the little markings are a game the Roman soldiers played. And I remember the little Scottish nuns years ago who explained to me all about the game. The game was sort of like "King for a Day." And it was a game they played with the prisoners, the way they passed the time down there as a prisoner was there they mocked him and they played the game having to do with these little markings on the floor.

It was also a game they played in the streets with idiot boys. They would find retarded children and they would set them up and mock them and dress them in certain ways and so forth. It was a game for idiots and prisoners. It was a game of mocking, thoughtless inhumane cruelty.

And that's what they did to Jesus. Threw an old robe on Jesus, smashed Him and pelted Him in the face with their fists. Matthew adds, of course, that they spit on Him, smashed His head with sticks, a big long bamboo kind of reed. They would hit Him like a whip almost. And they played their game. And after their game was through, Pilate therefore in verse 4, "Went forth again and brought out Jesus and said, Behold, I bring Him forth to you that you may know that I find no fault in Him." Inconceivable, he says it again, and why is he doing this? He's trying to quench their thirst for blood, really. He's exposing now a pathetic man, a man whose face is beaten black and blue, whose head is crushed with a crown of thorns, whose literal back and sides are ripped raw so that His internal organs are visible, blood running down from everywhere, gaping gashes, open wounds, streaking blood, bruised swollen face, ugly appearance. No wonder Isaiah 53 says there's no beauty that we should desire Him. And then Pilate says in verse 5, "Behold the man." Behold the man. Here's your king. Look at Him. Is He a threat?

He wants Him to look so bad he thinks the mockery will be enough so that the people will let Him go, that's enough. We can't take anymore. The inhumane character of it is all we can stand. But they had tasted blood, dear friends, and in verse 6, "When the chief priests therefore and the officers saw Him," here they go again to lead the crowd, these leaders, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." It's the same cry for His blood. And Pilate said, "Take Him and crucify Him. I find no fault in Him. Let the record stand." And he says it again. They literally hounded Pilate to the death of Christ monotonously.

They won't kill Him. They want Pilate to kill Him. They can't kill Him. He Himself said He would be lifted up. If He was killed by Jews, He would be thrown down and stoned, John 12:32 and 33. And so in verse 7, "The Jews answered, We have a law and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God." And now they get to the blasphemy. As long as he's going to say, "You take care of it," they're going to tell him what the real issue is.

Well, Pilate just heard something he didn't want to hear. He said He was the Son of God. "And when Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was even more afraid." See, he knew about Jesus. He knew Jesus was a healer. He knew He was a raiser of the dead. He knew He was a marvelous incredible person. He knew He had unique and strange powers. He had been with Him now for over an hour and in that hour period of time had seen some remarkable things about Jesus. He was amazed at His silence, the calm, the peace. This was a very, very strange and bizarre situation for Pilate to be involved in. And now he hears something that frightens him more than anything, "This man is the Son of God."

Now in the pagan mind of Pilate, there was room for a lot of gods and a lot of gods with a lot of sons. And is he dealing with the son of a god here? And he is spurred by superstitious fear. And so he goes to Jesus back in the Judgment Hall in verse 9, back from the crowd, back inside, and he said to Him, "Where did You come from?...Where did You come from?" He doesn't mean what town either. Where did You come from?

You see, two of the three incidents that Pilate had gotten himself into with the Jews had to do with false gods. First was the image of Caesar above the eagle on the standards that the soldiers carried. Secondly was the engraving of the Caesar who called himself a god. In fact, Caesar called himself the son of God, by the way. And both of those were idolatrous issues. He knew that he didn't want to get involved with the Jews again over false gods. And so his thinking is Are they saying this is a false god...this is another one like the images...another one like the shields...am I back in that same thing again?

Listen, it is a brilliant diabolical tactic sponsered by Satan that's coming through the mouths of these Jews. When they said He is the Son of God, Pilate was right back in the same problem. This is the very issue he had been reprimanded for by Rome and that is interfering with Jewish religion. Are they trying to put to death the son of a false God? Am I right back where I used to be, having to eliminate a false God? It is a brilliant tactic inspired by the mind of all minds, the corrupt mind of Satan.

And so, Jesusverse 9 saysgave him...what?...no answer. Didn't say a word. He knew Pilate's heart. Pilate was a truth rejector. There was nothing to say. And whether or not He was the Son of God was no matter for Roman justice. And Pilate had rendered his verdict five times already. What was there to say? He said nothing.

"Then Pilate said to Him, Speakest Thou not unto me, knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and power to release Thee?" Petty governor. Didn't even know who he's talking to. "Jesus said, You could have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above. Therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin."

You don't have any power unless God allows it...none at all. But the people who delivered Me to you are the sinners who are the greater. You sin through weakness. You're just a pawn in the whole thing. They sin through willful hatred. There are degrees of rejection of Christ. The severer the rejection the hotter the hell.

Then came the back breaker. "From then on Pilate sought to release Jesus." Now he goes back and he wants to get Jesus out of his hands for sure because he's afraid now that he's going to have another one of these incidents with a God. "But the Jews cried out," here it comes, "If you let this man go, you are not...what?...Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

They're back to the political issue. You're not a friend of Caesar. You're showing complicity with an insurrectionist. And he knows that if that message gets back to Caesar, he's done. "And so, when Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, sat down in the judgment seat in the place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew gabbatha, it was the preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour...that's Gentile time, six A.M....he said to the Jews, Behold your king." And he mocked them with that. And, of course, he insisted that be put on the cross. "And they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your king?" And listen to what they say, "The chief priests answered, We have no king but...what?...Caesar." Boy, underline that in your Bible. That is...that is the finale. That is the finale in the rejection of Israel.

It's one thing to say the blood of the Messiah be on us. But to say we have no king but Caesar? Is it any wonder that in 70 A.D. God destroyed their city and their religion? Is it any wonder that for centuries and centuries and centuries they have been under the judgment of God...except for the remnant that are called out by His grace through faith in Christ? Frightening. They said they had no king but Caesar. That is the total rejection of Jesus Christ stated. Put His blood on our account, we have no king but Caesar.

You know something? It was the truth. That's the sad part. Their king was an earthly king, convenience.

So, what do you have in all this? Jesus Christ is innocent. He is exalted. He is perfect. He is holy. Now listen very carefully, why? Because the Old Testament law said one thing, the lamb that is offered for sin must be a lamb without...what?...spot, without blemish. All of this, dear beloved friends, is to prove the suitability of the perfect Lamb of God to die for the sins of the world. Monumental truth

here. The whole world of men, religious and irreligious, the whole world of demon beings inspired by the devil himself cannot come up with one spot or blemish on the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Thus He is the perfect sacrifice. O how He is exalted. Though His visage is marred, His form is ugly, He is physically abused and battered and smashed and hit in front of Annas and Caiaphas and Pilate and Herod, He is slapped, punched, spit on, crowned with thorns, scourged, He still comes forth as the spotless beautiful Lamb of God.

How then could...how could they sentence Him to death? Here it is. "It was the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God," it says in Acts 2. It says in Isaiah 53, "God has laid on Him...what?...the iniquity of us all." God called Him to be the Savior.

Let me close with this. Jesus wasn't on trial here...really, who was? Everybody else. That's right, everybody else. And you're on trial, too. What you do with Jesus Christ will determine your eternal destiny. What are your options? Well, listen:

The Jews hated Him...and I mean by the Jews the leaders, the Jewish leaders hated Him. They hated Him. That's an option.

The crowd rejected Him...mindlessly, stupidly. Led by the nose, fickle, unthinking.

Herod laughed at Him, mocked Him, made a joke out of Him.

Pilate's wife, what did she do? She just wanted to have nothing to do with Him.

Pilate, he tried to shake Him...couldn't. He chose the material world and sentenced Him to death.

What are you going to do with Jesus Christ? That's the question. Hate Him? Mindlessly reject Him because everybody around you does? Or maybe you just laugh at the whole thing. Or maybe you just say, "Well, look, I'm not interested in it, I really don't want to have anything to do with this." Or maybe you just choose what is and sacrifice eternity like Pilate did and put Jesus away, get rid of Him. You will make a choice and it will be one of those. And it will be an eternal thing.

Father, we thank You for the Word this morning, for the powerful testimony of Scripture to the majesty of Jesus Christ. Bless our responses to it. May they be right responses.

In a moment of silence, everyone just staying prayerfully before the Lord, if you don't know Jesus Christ, we invite you to come to Him. In your heart you may open your heart and say, Lord, I want salvation, I want my sin forgiven, I want to receive Christ, I want to be like the Centurion who stood by the cross and said, "Truly this was the Son of God." I want to be like the thief who hung beside Him and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." To whom He said, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." I want to be a believer.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).