

What Shall I Do with Jesus? Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 27:11-18

Code: 2393

INTRODUCTION

A. The Key Question

In Matthew 27:22 is posed a most important and fateful question: "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?" Pilate was faced with an almost unbearable dilemma, but he is not alone: every human being on the face of the earth faces the same question. The answer will determine your eternal destiny.

Tragically, Pilate made a wrong choice in response to his question. He asked the right question, but instead of going to the right source, he went to the wrong one and got the wrong answer. It is my prayer that you will answer that question better than he did.

B. The Transition

In Matthew 27:1-2, we find the transition from the Jewish trial of Christ to the Roman trial.

1. The Jewish trial

Christ was being tried because the Jewish leaders wanted Him dead. The third phase of the Jewish trial was coming to a close. Christ stood before Annas, before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin during the middle of the night, and once more before them later in the morning so they could ratify what they did illegally during the night. (According to Jewish law it was illegal to try a man at night.) They condemned Him to death for blasphemy because He said He was the Son of God. However, He merely stated the truth.

To get rid of Christ, the Jewish leaders needed to get the Romans involved. Under the present Roman occupation, the Jews did not have the right of execution. The right of the sword, *ius gladii*, belonged only to Rome. Matthew 27:1-2 describes the last phase of the Jewish trial, which ended with the delivery of Jesus to Pilate. That began the first of three phases in the Roman trial.

a) The decision

Verse 1 says, "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death." That probably occurred early in the morning, around 5:00 A.M., before the dawn had begun to give its light. This meeting lasted perhaps no more than ten minutes. The purpose of it was to try to legalize the illegal decision they had come to in the middle of the night, between 1:00 A.M. and 3:00 A.M. Jesus had been kept prisoner for two hours, and the leaders wanted to properly ratify their illegal decision in the daylight and in the right place--the judgment hall.

b) The deliverance

Verse 2 says, "When they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." The Jewish leaders wanted the execution to be legal, so they wanted Rome to do it.

You might be wondering why they didn't execute Jesus the way they did Stephen (Acts 7:58). Their action against Stephen was illegal--it was mob violence. The religious leaders didn't want to act as a mob in Jesus' case because they were trying to maintain a form of legality. They also wanted to do it as fast as possible so that the crowds, already beginning to rise with the dawn of a new day, didn't get involved since Jesus was so popular with them. The leaders wanted everything done right, and that's why they wanted Pilate to execute Jesus. It was very early, around the fourth watch of the night (about 5:00 A.M.), when they arrived at Pilate's judgment hall. The hall was probably located in Fort Antonious, which was north of the Temple ground.

2. The Roman trial

The Roman trial begins in Matthew 27:11. (Verses 3-10 are a digression describing the suicide of Judas.) Verse 11 says, "Jesus stood before the governor." The Roman trial had three phases: Christ appeared first before Pilate, then before Herod, and then again before Pilate. That makes a total of six phases to the trial of Jesus Christ when the three phases of the Jewish trial are included.

Throughout all the phases, Jesus Christ is shown to be without fault. The Jewish leaders could not come up with a legitimate accusation against Him. The Spirit of God proved, without a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus is indeed the spotless Lamb of God who is fit to die for the sins of the world. In his gospel, Matthew continually presented the perfection, majesty, and purity of Christ, and does so especially well in his descriptions of the two trials. All the courts of men, combined with the efforts of demons, could not come up with one legitimate accusation against Christ. Neither Caiaphas, Annas, the Sanhedrin, the false witnesses, Judas, Herod, or Pilate could bring one against Him. The record stands that He was killed because He was hated and rejected. The evil in men's hearts killed Christ.

As we study Matthew 27:11-26, we will see Christ's innocence on display.

I. THE ACCUSATION OF THE JEWISH LEADERS (vv. 11-12a)

The lack of a legitimate accusation speaks volumes about the perfection of Christ.

A. The Questioning of the King (v. 11)

"Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest."

Matthew doesn't show us that Pilate asked Jesus this question in response to the accusation the Jewish leaders brought against Him. To see that accusation, we need to look at John 18.

1. The picture of phoniness (John 18:28)

In the dawn around 5 A.M., Jesus was led to Pilate's judgment hall. Verse 28 says, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas." (Caiaphas presided over the third phase of the Jewish trial. It was held in his house.) Verse 28 continues, "They themselves [the Jewish leaders] went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover." The Jews thought that contact with a Gentile meant defilement, and that included entering his house. The Talmud states that the dwelling places of heathens are unclean because of the heathen practice of burying abortions in their houses (Oholoth ch. 18). So to maintain cleanliness as they approached the Passover, the religious leaders wanted to avoid defilement from a Gentile house. What hypocrisy to be preoccupied with a tradition like that while attempting to execute the Son of the living God! The religious leaders maintained a fastidious commitment to their religion while seeking to kill the Source of their religion.

2. The problem of Pilate (John 18:29)

Because the Jews wouldn't go in the judgment hall, that meant Pilate had to come out. Verse 29 says, "Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?" He wanted an indictment. He needed to know what he was trying Jesus for. That was the first legal thing that happened in the trial of Christ. Pilate was a Roman governor. He had been placed in Palestine as the Roman ruler.

a) The rule of Herods

Pilate was not the only ruler. Herod Antipas ruled in Galilee and Peraea to the north. Herod Philip ruled the northeast, a less populated area. And Herod Archelaus had ruled in Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea. They were three sons of Herod the Great, an Idumite, who was once king of all Palestine.

He had killed off some of his sons, but the remaining ones inherited parts of his kingdom. They were nothing but small-time kings. Much pomp and circumstance accompanied them, but not much power.

b) The rule of Pilate

The judicial processes and military might in Palestine resided in the hands of the Roman governor, who had been placed there to maintain the Roman peace--the pax Romana. Pilate had been governor since A.D. 26, and he would serve about ten years.

Since the Romans held the exclusive right of execution, the Jewish leaders had to approach Pilate. From the standpoint of Scripture, Jesus had to be executed by the Romans because it had been prophesied that He would die a Roman death. So Pilate held court outside the judgment hall. Jesus was inside, but the leaders remained outside.

3. The proof of perfection (John 18:30)

Verse 30 says, "They answered, and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." They were saying, "What right have you to question our motives and our integrity? We wouldn't have brought Him to you if He weren't a criminal." Pilate asked a proper judicial question, but they couldn't give an answer. The Jewish leaders weren't looking for a judge; they were looking for an executioner. They didn't want another trial; they wanted Pilate to agree to take His life. The absence of any accusation here is another affirmation of Christ's perfection. Pilate didn't see Jesus as a threat. He knew of no crime He had committed. When he did ask for an accusation, the leaders had none to give.

4. The privilege of punishment (John 18:31)

a) Extended (v. 31a)

In verse 31 Pilate said to them, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Pilate may have been giving them the right to execute Him. He simply didn't want to get involved. Pilate knew about Jesus. There's little doubt that when the Roman soldiers accompanied the Jewish leaders to take Jesus captive in the Garden of Gethsemane that they were there at Pilate's command. He knew what was going on, and he held an opinion about it.

b) Refused (v. 31b)

Verse 31 says, "The Jews, therefore, said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Nevertheless, they did it when they wanted to! They put Stephen to death. Later, they tried to kill Paul, but the Romans rescued him, moved him to Caesarea, and put him in a cell for two years to protect him. If the leaders wanted to kill Jesus badly enough, they would have. But they wanted to

maintain an appearance of legality for the people.

5. The plan of prophecy (John 18:32)

The plan of God demanded that Jesus be executed by the Romans. Verse 32 says, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying what death he should die." Jesus said He would be lifted up in John 12:32--"This he said, signifying what death he should die" (v. 33). The Jewish leaders were fulfilling prophecy while thinking they were maintaining legality.

Refuting the Accusations

John 18:33 says, "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?" (cf. Matt. 27:11). Where did he get that accusation from if the Jewish leaders didn't give it to him?

1. The accusations revealed

Luke 23:2 says that the Jewish leaders concocted an accusation: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ, a king." They did not convict Him of that in their trial; they convicted Him of blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of God. But they realized a charge of blasphemy wouldn't hold up in a Roman court because the Romans wouldn't execute someone for his religious persuasion. So the Jews had to come up with an accusation that would appear to be high treason against Rome. The Romans had small toleration for rebels and revolutionaries. They had crucified many Jews who had tried to revolt against their government. The religious leaders also accused Christ of forbidding to pay taxes due to Caesar, and telling others to do so as well. Then they accused Him of claiming to be a king--setting Himself up as a rival to Caesar.

2. The accusations refuted

The leaders concocted those accusations on the spot, and of course they were false. Jesus didn't lead the nation of Israel into rebellion against Rome. He never led a social revolution. He never rebelled against Roman oppression. In fact, He was very submissive. He taught that if an official asked a man to carry his burden a mile, he should carry it two miles (Matt. 5:41). He taught people to respond properly to those in authority. He also taught people to pay their taxes. When Peter was asked if Jesus paid taxes, he said yes. Jesus affirmed that although they were technically exempt by being God's children, His followers were to pay their taxes to avoid offending anyone (Matt. 17:24-27). He even said, "Render ... unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God, the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). A man should pay his taxes to the government, but save his worship for

the Lord. Jesus was a King, but was not a threat to Caesar. When the people tried to make Him a king, He disappeared from their midst to avoid a revolution (John 6:15).

All the accusations were lies. They stand as a marvelous testimony to the perfection of Jesus Christ. He is the sinless, blameless Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

6. The priorities of the prisoner (John 18:33-37)

When Pilate asked Jesus if He was the king of the Jews, Jesus answered, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" (John 18:34). Pilate said, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?" (v. 35). Then Jesus answered Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (vv. 36-37). Jesus was telling Pilate that His Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom.

7. The proclamation of Pilate (John 18:38)

John 18:38 says that Pilate "went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all." That was Pilate's verdict. The phrase "I find" has been carried down to courtroom proceedings of our day. When Pilate said he found no fault in Jesus, he was rendering a verdict of "not guilty." He knew Jesus was not guilty of being an insurrectionist who called people to avoid paying their taxes and to defy the government of Rome. No proof had been presented. Pilate knew he had no case against Jesus because Rome wasn't accusing Him of anything--it was strictly a Jewish problem.

Matthew 27:11 is a condensed version of John 18:28-38: "Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." After Jesus explained His Kingdom to Pilate, the governor told the religious leaders that he found no fault in Him.

B. The Response of the Accusers (v. 12a)

"And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders"

Luke 23:5 says, "They were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee to this place." They put the heat on Pilate, who was no match for the furious hatred that was in the hearts of the leaders.

1. Empty talk

The accusation was empty talk; Pilate knew that. He already stated there was no fault in Christ. The religious court that mocked Jesus and the pagan court conducted by a coward named Pilate came up with the same verdict: not guilty. The Jewish leaders had to manufacture lies to kill Jesus Christ. Pilate could see through their plan. Was he to believe that the Jewish leaders, who despised the Roman presence, would ask that he execute someone because He was a threat to Rome? The thought is ridiculous. They would have joined hands with anyone who was a real threat to Rome; they certainly wouldn't have exposed him.

2. Envious hearts

Pilate knew that the Jews were motivated by envy (Matt. 27:18). They hated Him because He could do what they couldn't. He could heal people, teach wisdom, and raise the dead. He was popular and they weren't. Even a pagan unbeliever could see that the real issue was envy. Jesus never posed a threat to Rome. I'm sure Pilate suspected their motives when they asked him for a contingent of Roman soldiers to accompany them the night before.

Let the record stand--there is no fault in Jesus. When Pilate told that to the crowd, he should have dismissed them. He should have moved his soldiers in and given Jesus the protection He needed from them. He should have done what justice required. Instead, he allowed the leaders to scream more accusations against Him.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE LORD (vv. 12b-14)

The Lord's attitude in the midst of the accusations is another demonstration of His absolute perfection.

A. The Absolute Silence of Christ (v. 12b)

"He answered nothing."

While He was being fiercely accused, He answered nothing. When Pilate confronted Him another time, verse 14 says, "He answered him never a word." He said what He needed to say when He was on trial. The judge had rendered the verdict. There was nothing more to say. He knew He needed to die--that was the Father's will, and He was committed to it.

B. The Attempted Solution of Pilate (vv. 13-14)

"Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many [great] things they witness against thee? And He answered him never a word, insomuch that the governor marveled greatly."

Pilate was amazed. He had seen a lot of prisoners and condemned many to death, but here was someone who was being accused of serious crimes, yet said nothing in His own defense. Pilate had seen a parade of criminals who would plead their innocence and cry for mercy. But Jesus remained quiet. Where was the troublesome revolutionary who was a threat to Rome? Where was the tax-dodging protester who was leading the nation in an insurrection? Where was the king who was a rival to Caesar? The only individual Pilate could see was a calm, peaceful man who, without any obvious reason, was offering Himself for execution. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, and Jesus confirmed that by His silence. He was resolute--like "a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). He willingly went to the cross.

Pilate's Dangerous Position

What was Pilate to do? He knew Jesus didn't deserve to die, yet he didn't want to disturb the crowd and create an incident. His life and career were on the line, and he knew it. When Pilate originally came to power, he made some big mistakes.

1. Mistake #1

When Pilate was first appointed governor, he rode into Jerusalem with a large entourage of soldiers as a show of power. On the top of the banners that the soldiers carried were metal eagles. On top of each eagle was a molded image of Caesar. Prior governors had the sense to remove those kinds of things because the Jews believed them to be idols. The Jews didn't tolerate idols, so they rioted and demanded that he remove them from the banners. Pilate refused.

After accomplishing what he wanted in Jerusalem, Pilate returned to the seacoast at Caesarea, the headquarters of his operation. Jews followed him for five days demanding that he remove the graven images. He still refused and the Jews still persisted. Pilate finally called a meeting with those Jews in the amphitheater in Caesarea, surrounded them with his soldiers, and told them that if they didn't stop their demands, he would cut off their heads. The Jews bared their necks and dared his soldiers to do so. They called his bluff.

There was no way Pilate could go through with his ultimatum. He couldn't report to Rome that he had massacred many defenseless Jews. Furthermore, it could have led to a national revolution. Since he was sent to keep the peace, Pilate was forced to remove all the images. The Jews were now one up on him.

2. Mistake #2

Later in his reign, Pilate realized there was a need for a better water supply in Jerusalem, so he decided to build an aqueduct to bring in more water. To do so, he took money out of the Temple treasury--money that was devoted to God. That fomented another riot. Pilate dealt with it by sending soldiers into a huge crowd of people. At a given signal, they clubbed and stabbed many people to death.

3. Mistake #3

Pilate established residence in the city of Jerusalem and had shields made for his soldiers. On the shields he had engraved the likeness of Tiberius, the emperor. To the Jewish people, that was an emblem of a false god, so they demanded that the shields be changed. Pilate refused. The Jews reported Pilate's actions to Tiberius, who sent word to Pilate to change the shields immediately.

Pilate couldn't afford another report to Tiberius. He couldn't afford another riot or any kind of revolution. He was truly in a difficult place. He had enough of a sense of justice to know what was right, but he was a coward because he feared what would happen if he released Christ. Whatever would happen would most likely cost him his job. Also, it also wasn't unlike Tiberius to remove an ineffective governor and then execute him.

1. Deferring to Herod's Authority

When Pilate heard the religious leaders say that Jesus first started to stir the people up in Galilee (Luke 23:5), he realized there was a potential solution to his problem. Luke 23:7 says, "As soon as he knew that he [Jesus] belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time." The time was still around 5:00 A.M. Herod Antipas was the ruler of Galilee, yet he functioned under the yoke of Rome. Pilate hoped he could eliminate his problem by passing off Christ to Herod.

a) The curiosity of Herod

Herod Antipas knew about Jesus because of His great ministry in Galilee. After all, Jesus had virtually removed disease from Galilee. Christ judiciously avoided the city of Tiberius during His Galilean ministry simply because Herod's headquarters were there. Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded. He was an immoral, murderous man.

Jesus avoided Herod, but Herod was curious about Jesus. When Herod heard he was finally going to have the opportunity to meet Him, he was very happy (Luke 23:8). He wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle.

b) The countenance of Christ

Jesus was rushed off early in the morning as Herod set up a court of his own. Luke 23:9 says, "Then he [Herod] questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing." Jesus owed nothing to Herod because Herod did not have the right to judge a man in Palestine; Pilate held that right, and he had already pronounced his verdict. But why didn't Jesus tell Herod about his Kingdom, like He did for Pilate? Because Herod already knew; he had heard the preaching of John the Baptist. He heard everything there was to hear about the teaching of Jesus.c) The contempt of Herod's men

The chief priests were also present at this particular hearing before Herod. Luke 23:10 says, "The chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him [Christ]." Herod perceived the whole affair as a joke. He didn't see Jesus as a rival king or an insurrectionist. Christ stood before Herod with a face that had been beaten black and blue from blows delivered by the Temple guard in the hearing before Caiaphas (Matt. 27:67-68). He hardly looked like a threat to Roman security or Herod's throne. Luke 23:11 says, "Herod, with his men of war, treated him with contempt, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe [a bright, white robe that was commonly worn by Jewish kings]." Nevertheless, Herod came up with no accusation.

2. Declaring Herod's Affirmation

In reporting the results of Herod's interrogation to the crowd, Pilate said, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things of which ye accuse him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him, and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done by him" (Luke 23:14-15). So Pilate affirmed that Herod's verdict was the same as his. Jesus hadn't done anything. He was no insurrectionist or threat to security.

The accusation of the Jews demonstrated the perfection of Christ. The attitude of Christ before Pilate and Herod also demonstrated His perfection. Jesus answered nothing because there was no crime. So even the wrath of men vindicates Christ.

III. THE ANIMOSITY OF THE CROWD (vv. 15-18, 20-23, 25)

A. The Concession of Pilate (vv. 15-18)

The first phase of the Roman trial ended with an acquittal--Pilate found no fault in Jesus. The second phase ended with acquittal-- Herod found no fault in Him. Now Christ was back in Pilate's hands, initiating a third phase to the trial. Pilate could have ended the trial after the first or second phase. But he was trapped. He couldn't defy the Jews without starting a riot, which could be fatal to his career--

and possibly his life. So what could he do? He had another plan.

1. The customary observance (v. 15)

"Now at that feast [Passover] the governor was accustomed to releasing unto the people a prisoner, whom they would [desired]."

As a concession to a conquered people, the governor would release a criminal during the Passover (Luke 23:18, Mark 15:8).

2. The criminal Barabbas (v. 16)

"They had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas."

Barabbas was not just another common criminal; he was well-known. We don't know anything about his background. Some think his name means "son of father"; some think it is "son of rabbi." According to John 18:40, he was a robber. Mark 15:7 and Luke 23:19 say he was an insurrectionist and a murderer. He must have been a threat to the Jews as well as the Romans. He was an arch-criminal who was a severe threat to the safety of the population. He was due to be crucified. I believe Jesus died on the cross that was meant for Barabbas, as He was crucified between two of his thieving partners (Mark 15:7).

3. The calculating Pilate (v. 17)

"Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?"

Pilate added the phrase "who is called Christ" twice after the name Jesus--once in verse 17 and once in verse 22--to emphasize the difference between Jesus and Barabbas. So Pilate stated that Jesus was called the Anointed, another way of saying king.

What did Pilate have in mind? He knew whom the leaders would choose. But Pilate wanted to pit the leaders against the people. He knew about the popularity of Jesus, how the population treated Him in His triumphal entry. It was approaching 6:00 A.M. (cf. John 19:14), and the people were beginning to gather. Pilate knew the leaders would want Jesus crucified, but was sure the people would want Jesus released when given a choice. Even a pagan like Pilate knew the difference between Christ and a criminal. Thus we have another wonderful testimony to the innocence of Jesus Christ.

4. The covetous leaders (v. 18)

"For he knew that for envy they [the Jewish leaders] had delivered him."

Pilate believed that the people wouldn't be motivated by envy. They were the recipients of Jesus' ministry; they weren't in competition with Him like the leaders were.

B. The Campaign of the Leaders (v. 20)

"The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus."

I believe God allowed for an interruption from Pilate's wife (v. 19), which gave the Jewish leaders time to stir up the crowd against Jesus. Remember, it was the plan of God that Jesus die. Pilate's plan might have worked, but the people were convinced by the leaders because they were fickle. Four days had passed since Jesus came into town, and He had not performed any miracles or overthrown the Romans. Since both Pilate and Herod had found no fault in Him, the crowd might have concluded that anyone who Pilate said was not a threat was certainly no Messiah. They believed the Messiah would come to overthrow Rome, but here Rome saying Jesus had no fault. Could anyone Pilate approved of be their Messiah? The leaders used whatever leverage they could gain as they moved through the crowd. Mark 15:11 says, "The chief priests stirred up the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." They wanted to destroy Jesus. By the time Pilate's attention was turned back to the people, he had a worse problem because the crowd and the leaders had become one.

C. The Choice of the Crowd (vv. 21-23)

1. Release Barabbas (v. 21)

"The governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas."

I'm sure Pilate was jolted. He had underestimated the power of the leaders and overestimated the heart of the people. He had no concept of the demons of hell that were involved in the scene, nor did he know anything about the plan of God.

2. Crucify Christ (vv. 22-23)

"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified."

They wanted Jesus' blood, and nothing Pilate did would change that. If he wouldn't uphold simple justice, why should he expect a rabble mob to do it? Pilate was in a panic. He didn't want to violate justice, but he also didn't want to start a riot.

When he asked, "Why, what evil hath he done?" (v. 23), we see that when every aspect of the trial of Christ was finished, He remained blameless. The people cried louder and more vehemently for Jesus to be crucified. The whole crowd was out of control, and Pilate couldn't handle it. The mindless crowd was self-damning in its hostility.

D. The Curse of the Blood (v. 25)

"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."

What a frightening thought! The Jewish crowd said they would be responsible for His blood. That was the verdict of the nation Israel on their Messiah. No wonder Romans 11:20 says they have been broken off the stalk of blessing and have known the chastening of God. Nevertheless forgiveness is available for the Jewish person just as it is for any individual who comes to Christ. In fact, the gospel is to be preached to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16).

The nation soon forgot that they took responsibility for Jesus' death. After the apostle Peter began to preach in Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders said, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28). The apostles didn't do it; the nation brought it on themselves. They affirmed their own guilt in the death of Jesus Christ. That is yet another testimony to the innocence of Christ.

1. The fields of blood

The field that the Jewish leaders purchased with the money used to betray Christ was called "The Field of Blood." Everyone knew it was blood money paid to a traitor for betraying an innocent man. The place where Judas fell after hanging himself was called the same thing. Everything about Jesus stands as pure, while around Him hovered evil, dishonest, murderous people.

2. The forgiveness of Christ

As Christ was dying on the cross, He looked at the people and said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Ever since, forgiveness has been available for both Jew and Gentile.

The Jewish people took on themselves the blood guiltiness for Christ's death. In so doing, they gave testimony to the whole world that it was their responsibility.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is one question every person must answer at some time?
2. What did the Jewish leaders need to do to have Christ executed?
3. Why didn't the Jews want to execute Jesus as they later did to Stephen?
4. How did Matthew present Christ throughout his gospel?
5. Why were Jesus' accusers unwilling to enter the judgment hall of the governor (John 18:28)?
6. Who were the rulers in Palestine? How much power did each one hold?
7. Why did the Jewish leaders criticize Pilate for asking them for an accusation?
8. Whose plan was it that Jesus be executed at the hands of the Romans?
9. What accusations did the Jewish leaders bring against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23:2)?
10. Explain why those accusations were false.
11. What verdict did Pilate give based on the accusations he heard (John 18:38)?
12. What motivated the Jews to have Jesus killed (Matt. 27:18)?
13. Why did Jesus give no answer when the religious leaders accused Him?
14. Why was Pilate amazed at Jesus's silence?
15. Describe the three events that put Pilate in the dangerous position of having to decide what to do with Jesus.
16. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:7)?
17. Why did Christ not need to respond to any of Herod's questions?
18. What did Herod's men do to Jesus after He had been questioned by Herod (Luke 23:11)?

19. Why was it customary for the governor to release a prisoner at Passover?
20. Who was Barabbas?
21. What did Pilate want to happen when he offered the people a choice between Jesus and Barabbas?
22. How were the chief priests and elders able to foil Pilate's plan (Matt. 27:19-20)?
23. How did the Jewish people affirm their guilt in the death of Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:25)?

Pondering the Principles

1. In his gospel, Matthew presents the perfection of Jesus Christ. Over the course of the next week, read the gospel of Matthew. You may want to read four chapters a day. As you read, record each instance where Matthew presents Christ as perfect. When you finish, review your list. Then praise God for Christ and His plan of redemption.
2. Throughout the three phases of the Roman trial of Christ, Jesus stands blameless. No accusations that could be proven were ever brought against Him. The reason is simple: Jesus Christ is sinless. Look up the following verses about the sinlessness of Christ: Isaiah 53:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22; and 1 John 3:5. How might you apply those verses to your own life? Thank God for supplying such a perfect Savior to die in your place.

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