

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE KING OF THE JEWS?

Mark 15:12 *And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?*

Pilate had certainly heard much about the Lord Jesus Christ. He was stationed in Judea somewhere between 26-36 AD. Pilate had spies and informants reporting to him and he must have received detailed reports about the character and miracles of the Lord. Pilate knew very well that the Lord's mission was not political; in fact, he must have relished the Lord's attacks on the Pharisees and Sadducees because Pilate could not stand these Jewish leaders himself. The historian Josephus wrote, among others, that Pilate entered Jerusalem with pagan images of the Roman Emperor Tiberius which enraged the Jewish leaders who demanded he remove these images. On another occasion, Pilate took money from the Temple to construct an aqueduct which also incensed the Jews against him. In other words, Pilate must have admired the courage of the Lord in standing up against his own enemies, alone.

So, we can only imagine how unprepared Pilate was when he suddenly saw the Lord brought before him accused of blasphemy and the Jews demanding his crucifixion. Pilate had the distinction of being the only person before whom the Lord was brought on trial – the only man who could pass the death sentence on Jesus. Since Pilate, however, Jesus has appeared before the judgment seats of countless people because we must all pass a judgment on his identity. Pilate asked the wrong question to the Jews: *What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?* The correct question is the title of this sermon, “What will we do with the King of the Jews?” Every single person on this earth must answer this question. Pilate thought that, as a foreigner, he would never have to pass judgment on Jesus of Nazareth – he has enough problems with the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jerusalem. The truth is: whether you are a Jew or a foreigner, we must all answer the question at some point in our lives.

Hebrews 2:3 *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*

Pilate's wife told him that she suffered many things in a dream because of the Lord Jesus. “When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him” (Matt 27:19). The “judgment seat” represents the seat where we all sit down to make a decision about the Lord Jesus Christ. Before Pilate judged Jesus, his conscience

judged him through his wife. His wife already declared Jesus a “just man”. How then can he overturn this decision? The wife of Pilate represents the conscience God has given every individual. However, she was wrong in one aspect: we all have something to do with Jesus of Nazareth. Even in his palatial home Pilate could not escape the voice of Jesus. Such is the love of Christ for all! If the thief on the Cross could repent the last moment, so too Pilate. Jesus always works for our salvation until the last moment. The problem with Pilate was his interest in power and money. The Lord was accused of several serious issues. Among others, telling Jews not to pay taxes to Caesar and calling himself a King. Pilate was only interested in whether Jesus was a King perhaps because he reckoned that with the miraculous powers Jesus displayed, combined with some royal title, he may benefit. However, like many people today who hear about Jesus, Pilate was disappointed when he heard Jesus speak about the truth.

John 18:38 *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

Corrupt and worldly souls are only interested in the vulgar occupations of this world: power, money and other pleasures of the flesh. The Jews who came to hear Peter on the Day of Pentecost were called “devout” Jews. They were looking for God and his truth, and they found it in the preaching of Peter in Acts 2:38. Pilate was not looking for the truth, but he knew somehow that Jesus was unlike anyone he ever met before. Remember that Pilate was a bloody and brutal ruler even by Roman standards. He never hesitated to commit heinous crimes. “There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices” (Luke 13:1). Pilate killed thousands of people in Judea and beyond without hesitation, but he hesitated to kill one man – Jesus of Nazareth. Why? Clearly because he had a strange sensation for the first time ever that it was Jesus who was the Judge, and not Pilate. In his mercy the Lord comes to judge everyone of us. He spoke about the truth, that he is the King and that he could summon 72,000 angels.

John 19:11 *Jesus answered, Thou couldest 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.*

John 19:12 *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.*

We can never release Jesus, only Jesus can release us! This was the lesson Pilate never understood. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2Cor 3:17). In this sense, we are all Pilate – we are stuck with Jesus. We must give a verdict!

God help us not only to declare Jesus innocent, but to embrace him as Lord and Savior! Pilate tried to stall for time and find other solutions to the problem. “The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas” (Matthew 27:21). Pilate was not surprised. He knew why they chose a thief and murderer above the Lord – for spite, envy. Yet Pilate could not choose Jesus. This is the predicament of many people in this world – they know who Jesus is, they know he died for our sins and is God, and yet they choose Barabbas. This is the greatest of all human tragedies! How does a nation, founded by God, with fathers like Abraham, Moses, David and Isaiah chose a criminal like Barabbas above the Lord Jesus? The answer is sin! Sin blinds and destroys – and, yet, paradoxically, gives rise to hope because the first person for whom Jesus shed his blood was Barabbas. He died in the place of Barabbas – and for all of us. Had Barabbas been released, we would all die forever. In their blinded, sinful state, the people chose correctly.

Act 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.

Finally, when Pilate could not muster the courage to release or condemn Jesus, he asked for water to wash his hands. “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it” (Matt 27:24). No water can wash away our sins – only the blood of Jesus. The water of baptism in Jesus name comes only after the blood washes away our sins. On the third day Jesus rose up from the grave. Imagine the shock Pilate got when this news was given to him. Pilate realized that Jesus indeed was King – King over death and the grave. Was he very afraid that the Lord would now visit him? Perhaps not. He remembered the words of the Lord that his kingdom was not of this world. Did Pilate repent and surrender his life to the Lord? We will never know, but we know that Pilate ultimately realized his mistake – we all have something to do with Jesus of Nazareth, not just the Jews or Christians. One cannot ignore Jesus of Nazareth – he appears before the judgment seat of every individual for a verdict until one day every person who ever lived will appear before his judgment seat.

2Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.