

WHAT SHALL I DO THEN WITH JESUS

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Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified (Matthew 27:22).

The story has been told of a Native American and an Anglo man who attended the same evangelistic service. The Native American heard the Gospel and accepted the Savior immediately. The other man listened but went away convicted of his sin. Ultimately he also became a Christian. but when he met his friend, he asked. "How is it that you found peace quickly. while I was troubled for such a long time?" The Native American replied: "I tell you. A rich prince offered us new coats. You look at your nice suit, and decide it will last a little longer: I look at my blanket and decide it is no good. I accept the new coat, but you could not leave your old one. I go away happy: you stay sad in your suit." These conflicting attitudes may be seen in every walk of life, but nowhere can they be recognized as in the later stages of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Trying the Lord... How Sinful

Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which 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. 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. 27:22-24).

The trial of Jesus was the most infamous in history, when all the principles of honesty and justice were violated. Pilate, the Roman judge, presided at an arraignment that was a farce. After questioning the Prisoner, he pronounced the Savior to be innocent and then permitted Him to be crucified. Through time and eternity Pilate will be remembered as a detestable man who thought more of himself than the honesty he was supposed to represent. Millions of people have recited his indictment saying: "I believe in God . . . and in His Son Jesus Christ . . . crucified under Pontius Pilate." Nothing will

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be able to remove the stain upon the record of that disappointing judge. Three irrefutable facts indicate his unworthiness.

He Suppressed Evidence

Jesus of Nazareth was not a stranger to public life. He had proved Himself to be the greatest benefactor known to mankind. For three years He had been the center of attraction, and unprecedented miracles transformed the life of many people. The blind had been made to see, lepers were cleansed, the lame walked. and even the dead were raised to life. His fame had spread throughout the land, and His exploits were discussed in every home and marketplace. Amazing kindness had been expressed in His words and deeds. The Savior denounced deception and hypocrisy. and was only opposed by people who were dominated by greed and hostility. False accusations had been made against Him, but when Pilate asked for evidence, none was forthcoming. When Jesus was delivered to His enemies, it was the equivalent of a modern judge allowing a lynch mob to murder an innocent victim.

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He Ignored Conscience

When Pilate announced, "I find no fault in him," he admitted there was no blemish in the record of the accused. Why then did he refuse to release an innocent Man? Probably he feared the reactions of the political leaders. With the aid of a garrison of soldiers close at hand, any uprising could have been easily terminated, but critical reports sent to Caesar could undermine his authority and threaten his life. Solomon said: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Prov. 29:25). Pilate would have been a wiser man had he accepted the advice given by the king of Israel.

He Rejected Advice

"When he (Pilate) 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). Even God Himself was concerned about the welfare of this unworthy man, for He suggested the special message sent by Pilate's spouse. Apparently the woman was greatly concerned about her husband. She knew he was presiding at the

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trial of Jesus of Nazareth and probably feared her partner might make the greatest mistake of his life. Her message represented God's final attempt to reach a lost soul. Actually, the woman wasted her time. for her partner was already sacrificing his soul!

Taunting the Lord... How Senseless

There were others who passed sentence upon the Savior, and their guilt was inexcusable.

And Herod with his men of war set him [Jesus] at nought. and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate (Luke 23:11).

Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others: himself he cannot save (Mark 15:31).

Their stupidity was expressed in scorn. Yet it was thought-provoking that they said. "He saved others." This fact was undeniable. There were many people able to speak of their healing, although they could not understand why He did not defend Himself. It would be interesting to know what the reactions of the high priest might have been had he become a leper. Would he have sought assistance from the Savior or allowed his disease to claim another victim? John wrote:

And one of them, named Caiaphas. being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year. he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. And not for that nation only, hut that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11 :49-52).

"When the apostle John wrote his gospel a half century later, this utterance had assumed new importance. He believed an unseen Power had suggested the words to the mind of the prelate; that the voice of the Eternal Spirit had found expression in the words of Israel's leader. John saw in the prediction of the priest

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the glorious fact that, through the death of Christ. other sheep would be brought together in the unity of a supreme fold, where one Shepherd would lead the flock. The statement: `And not for that nation only' is in perfect harmony with John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2."

It remains mystifying how any sinful man could utter such sublime truth and still reject the Son of God. It remains clear that the final word rests with God and not man. Abraham Lincoln was correct when he said: "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt."

Troubling the Lord. ..How Sad

And when he was near, he beheld the city. and wept over it. saying. If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation (Luke 19:41-44).

There are three references in the New Testament where Christ is reported to have shed tears. (1) He did so in Bethany where He saw how sin had hurt the world (John 11:35); (2) He wept over the city of Jerusalem when He predicted the doom of its inhabitants (Luke 19:41); and (3) He shed tears in the Garden of Gethsemane where sin was beginning to hurt Him (Heb. 5:7). His prediction concerning the fall of Jerusalem was literally fulfilled, for in the year 70 A.D. the city was totally destroyed, and even Christ was incapable of preventing the disaster. It remains an indisputable fact that even after the nation rejected Him, Christ continued to love the Jewish people. Nevertheless judgment becomes inevitable for unrepentant sinners. That fact should constitute a warning to all people. Even the love of the Savior is impotent when the righteousness of God is in question. Jesus knew these facts, but to watch as people lost their souls broke His heart. The Lord could not compel men to forsake their sinful ways, but one possibility remained. He took their sins to

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the cross and suffered, the just for the unjust. in the hope He could bring sinners to God. The Scripture said: "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Apart from the cleansing power of the precious blood of Christ. pardon is an impossibility.

Trusting the Lord... How Sublime

And he [the thief] said unto Jesus. Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him. Verily I say unto thee. Today shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:42-43).

Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying. Certainly this was a righteous man (Luke 23:47).

And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor: and he was a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them:) he was of Arimathaea. a

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city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus (Luke 23:50-52).

The amazing influence of Jesus of Nazareth is something not easily understood. Conquerors dominate by military might. and the greater their armies, the more quickly their triumph comes. Enormous sums of money are necessary to sustain the effort, and taxes increase as the conflict continues. Jesus had no army and no weapons of war upon which to rely. His servants went forth armed openly with a desire to bring other people to their Master. From a small hill outside the city of Jerusalem ordinary men carried their message to the uttermost parts of the world and continued to tell their story until nations were compelled to listen. Jesus of Nazareth, the despised and rejected of men, became the King of Kings at whose feet millions of people bowed in reverence. He had no money except that which devoted followers supplied. He never wrote a book, and yet the libraries of the world are filled with volumes written about Him. It is almost beyond comprehension that the hands which were nailed to a cross now welcome all who labor and are heavy laden. It must be admitted that some people continue to try, taunt, and trouble Him, but happy are they who trust Him. It might be wise to ask to which class do we belong?

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Dr. L. G. Broughton told the story of his going to preach in a fashionable church in an American city. At the end of his message he debated whether or not to issue an invitation, for he suspected such a procedure was unknown in that place. When he did, fourteen adults came forward to acknowledge their need of Christ. After the service, the wife of one of the church officers said, "I do not think that preacher should be allowed to disarrange the service for the sake of having a few people come to the front." The first man who responded to the invitation was a railway engineer who was killed in a wreck that Sunday evening. All people must decide what they will do with Jesus: but they should be in time!

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I. Ivor Powell, Johns Wouderful Gospel (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1983), 249.

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