**The Greatest Question Of Life**

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

1. **INTRODUCTION—QUESTIONS**
2. **From the Bible**

-All throughout the Bible there are many questions that were asked by men and women. Some of the questions were asked by God. Some of the questions are rhetorical in nature and are designed to make men think.

* Where art thou? (God to Adam and Eve)
* Am I my brother’s keeper? (Cain)
* Wilt thou go with this man? (Rebekah’s family)
* Who is on the Lord’s side? (Moses)
* If a man die, shall he live again? (Job)
* What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou visitest him? (David)
* Is the young man safe? (David concerning Absalom)
* What doest thou here? (God to Elijah)
* Can a leopard change his spots? (Jeremiah)
* How wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan? (Jeremiah)
* Will a man rob God? (Malachi)
* Lord, is it I? (The disciples to Jesus)
* What must I do to be saved? (Philippian Jailer)
* How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Writer of Hebrews)
* For the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand? (John in Revelation)

-These are just a few questions that come from the Bible.

1. **About Jesus**

-There are questions that our generation is asking about Jesus Christ. Most of them are being asked in such a way as to destroy our faith.

* Was Jesus born of a virgin?
* Did Jesus really fulfill prophecy?
* Did Jesus work authentic miracles?
* Was Jesus really the Son of God?
* Did Jesus die for our sins?
* Did Jesus rise from the dead?
* Did Jesus ascend into Heaven?
* Will the Lord come back again?
* Is Jesus the only way for men to be saved?
* Why be so dogmatic about the Gospel?

-In reading through all of these questions that came from the Bible and then those that come from the world about Jesus, it appears that all of these questions have their birth in places of crisis.

1. **Crisis Points**

-Thankfully most of the moments of real crisis only come to us on a limited basis throughout our lives. But when they do present themselves, there is little warning that precedes them.

-Some forewarning of crisis points would be nice to know. It would be great if we could track the great tension points of life as the hurricanes that blow in on us from the gulf. But this is not the way that life is lived out.

* We have no way to know that we might face a dangerous temptation tomorrow.
* We have no way to know if we are going to face a great sorrow next week.
* We have no way to know if we will have to endure a great debilitating blow to our health next month.
* We have no way to know what temptation or trial lurks around the corner.

-These things break in on our souls unannounced and suddenly. There was no way that Pilate knew that when he lay down to sleep on that Thursday night that the next day would present to him the very crisis of his life.

-When he got up the next morning there was still no warning that he would have to deal with an angry mob and a corrupt group of religious leaders.

Years ago, I read the book *The Yearling* by Marjorie Rawlings to the boys. It is some of the best fiction that I have ever read because of the plots and the characters that Rawlings wrote about. The story centers around a young boy named Jody who found an abandoned fawn that he named Flag. Flag followed Jody around like a pet. While I wouldn’t want to spoil the story for any who would like to read it, I will say that a vast part of the story revolves around how they react to a hurricane that rolled in off of the Gulf that they had no way to prepare for until just hours before it hit.

-That is what happened to Pilate on that fateful day. Matthew records the great question that Pilate asked the crowd on that day. . . What shall I do with Jesus? While the question was addressed to the crowd, I have a feeling that Pilate was really asking the question to himself.

1. **PILATE’S RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION**

-Pilate had no reason at all to be intimidated by this Jesus of Nazareth. There is a good reason to believe the when Pilate first looked on the face of Jesus that it was a look of contempt. Pilate was a strong man, he had soldiers under his command, and he had spilled blood with his sword long before he had been sent to this Judean outpost by the Caesar.

-But when Pilate’s eyes met the eyes of Jesus, there was such a confrontation with goodness that immediately any malice and ill-will drained out the soul of Pilate. It was as if a dishpan of dirty water had been tossed out the back door like they used to do in the old days.

-In fact the kindness, mercy, and veiled authority in the eyes of Jesus arrested not just the eyes of Pilate but the soul of Pilate. Something stirred in Pilate’s soul that had been asleep for many years.

-The sleeping conscience that makes all men better was stirred from its long slumber. Pilate may have thought that his conscience was dead but when he looked at Jesus, he discovered that his conscience thundered aloud! *This is an innocent man!*

-One of the old sermon masters mentions something called the ‘truce of God.’ What they meant by this was that it was a serious and holy call to turn from their sin. This ‘truce of God’ urges that men choose God and righteousness before it is too late.

-That ‘truce of God’ is almost as if God is granting a space of time when a person is tempted sorely to take the wrong path or to turn away from the Lord and condemn him again to be crucified.

-There are scenes in the Bible that give us an idea of what the ‘truce of God’ looks like:

* Peter had such an experience when he cursed the Master in the courtyard of the high priest. . . The ‘truce of God’ came when Jesus looked him sorrowfully in the eye.
* Judas had such an experience when Jesus washed his feet at the Last Supper and then said, ‘what thou doest, do quickly.’
* Herod Antipas had such a moment when his soul was “sorry” as the Bible says when he heard Salome’s request for the head of John the Baptist.
* Pilate experienced that same truce when he looked into the eyes of Jesus. . . He could have granted the innocent Man an out.

-But Pilate responded several ways to this look from the Lord.

1. **He Reasoned. . .**

**Luke 23:4 KJV** Then said Pilate to the chief priests and *to* the people, I find no fault in this man.

-And again. . .

**Luke 23:14 KJV** Said unto them, 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 whereof ye accuse him:

-Pilate reasoned with the matter. Before it was over he wanted Jesus dealt with according to the Jewish law but they would not have that.

-Pilate reasoned to himself and thought that if he would scourge Jesus that perhaps this would appease this mob.

-Pilate reasoned to himself that if he would let his men deal roughly with the Lord it would satisfy them.

-What Pilate did not realize that when you attempt to reason with yourself that you end up reasoning with the devil. When men reason with Satan, they always come up with a lost cause. There is no way that a man can reason with the devil on an intellectual or emotional level and come out victorious.

1. **He Wanted to Turn Him Over to Someone Else**

-Pilate lost the battle with reason so he then decided he would turn Jesus over to someone else. He would pass the buck. He decided that he would let somebody else make a decision that he should have made.

-Pilate knew that Herod had the jurisdiction over the Jews and he felt like that he could get rid of the problem by sending him to Herod.

-When Jesus got to Herod’s court, he didn’t say a word to him. When Herod saw that no words or works would be coming from Jesus, he sent him back to Pilate.

-Suddenly, Pilate had Jesus back in his court to deal with. Pilate was just like us! There are times that we have to understand that it is just us and God. There is no one around to help us and we have to decide for ourselves if we are for Him or against Him.

* Some questions of life are entertained by a group of advisors that help us.
* Some questions of life require the help of our family.
* Some questions of life are reserved for us and our spouse.
* But there is one question that we all face—alone—What will you do with Jesus?

-There is coming a day that I will die and it will be for myself. There will not be another who will die for me. There is coming a day that I will be judged. No man can be judged for me!

-I cannot turn this decision over to anyone else. . . I have to decide what I will do with Jesus!

-The great causes of God and of men aren’t very often defeated by the hot assaults of the devil. Instead it comes from the slow, crushing, glacier-like mass of indifference. The great causes of revival and spiritual growth are more often destroyed because of indifferent irresponsibility. . . Let’s turn it over to someone else. . . It’s not my job. . .

-That is the challenge of the times. . . What will we do with Jesus?

1. **He Wanted to Compromise**

-Pilate wanted to reason about Jesus. . . He wanted to turn Him over to someone else. Both of those avenues failed him. So now he decided that he would compromise.

-Looking into the past of Pilate gives us an idea of why he wanted to make this matter of Jesus to be quietly dealt with. He had made a series of bad mistakes and according to history his tenure in Judea had not gone well.

-He had alienated the Jews through various acts of oppressive rule that had infuriated them. It had gotten so bad that they had lodged a protest with Caesar Tiberius. Another complaint from these maddening Jews might destroy his career.

-Pilate was looking for some way out of this disastrous situation.

-He decided he would scourge Him and set Him free. Instead of really dealing with the Lord, Pilate determined to bypass the inevitable.

-There are many in our society today who are in the business of compromising with the greatest decision of their life. They say. . .

* I will give up drinking, smoking, and philandering.
* I will give up my crooked business practices.
* I will quit treating my family so bad.
* I will be a model husband and work on my marriage.
* I will make some contribution to society to make it better.
* I will give the church some money.
* I will give up some of my evil ways and evil speech.
* I will resolve to be more helpful to those who are around me.
* I will try to live a better life.

-All of these things are nothing more than bypassing the crucial question. . . What will you do with Jesus???

-Every man who has ever lived has been in the very position that Pilate was in on that day. We all have to come to a defense of the Christ and determine what we will do with Him. It demands courage to do what is right. . . Let us be stronger men than Pilate was.

-Any other path that we take will be doing nothing more than compromising our eternal destiny.

1. **He Tried to Substitute. . .**

-Pilate reasoned. . . Pilate wanted to turn Him over to someone else. . . Pilate wanted to compromise. . . None of those things worked and so he decided that he would try to substitute Jesus for someone else.

-Pilate pulled the worst criminal he could find out of the prison in an effort to trade the Lord for Barabbas. That work of substitution pushed the question even more closely to Pilate’s heart because the people chose the worst criminal of their day over Jesus.

-When that happened there was a desperation that seized the soul of Pilate and the question roared throughout eternity. . . it still is ringing in his ears now. . . What will I do with Jesus???

-How often are men guilty of this very thing in life? They attempt to substitute something in their life for the faith that will save them. There is a Christ that can deliver them but they make a trade with something far less.

-Those trades are always so tragic and sorrowful in the end. The man who makes the wrong trade always comes up empty in the end!

* There is one Name by which we are saved!
* There is one way for a man to get through the gates of the Kingdom!
* There is only one life that was poured out on the earth to save us from this untoward generation!

-Substitutes may do well in some things but the reality of the matter is that nothing will substitute for what we do with Jesus!

1. **He Tried to Wash His Hands of the Matter. . .**

-Pilate tried to reason. . . He tried to turn Him over to someone else. . . He tried to compromise. . . He tried to substitute. . . None of these things worked.

-His last gasp to answer the question of what to do with Jesus was that he decided to wash his hands of the matter.

**Matthew 27:24 KJV** 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.*

-But the fact remains that he delivered the Lord to the execution anyway. Jesus died under the mandate of a Roman leader named Pontius Pilate.

-No man can wash his hands of the judgment any more than a man can wash his hands of God.

1. **CONCLUSION—THERE IS A FOUNTAIN FILLED WITH BLOOD**

-I am aware of all of the old stories that circulate about the demise of Pilate and about speculations of his own suicide. But I would lay hope against hope that was not the case with Pilate. If my sale of my Savior, and of my own soul, has so often chased me to the Cross of Christ, so I think Pilate’s remorse must have endeavored to pursue him also.

-On the Passover morning, instead of calling on the grace of God, on the love of God, he merely called for the basin of water. As he washed his hands in the water that morning, so I will hope that he has washed his heart ten thousand times in after days in the Fountain for sin which he had such an awful hand in opening.

-William Cowper wrote a classic song in 1779 called “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood.”

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;

And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Lose all their guilty stains; lose all their guilty stains;

And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;

And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

Wash all my sins away; wash all my sins away;

And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood shall never lose its power

Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.

Be saved, to sin no more, be saved, to sin no more;

Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream thy flowing wounds supply,

Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.

And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;

Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing thy power to save,

When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.

Lies silent in the grave, lies silent in the grave;

When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.