

**A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us**
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 23- **Luke 23:1-25**
340- The Love of the World; The Condemnation of Jesus
and The Sovereignty of God- Part 2

March 12, 2017

Luke 23:1-25

- 1** Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.
- 2** And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."
- 3** So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "*It is as you say.*"
- 4** Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."
- 5** But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."
- 6** When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.
- 7** And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.
- 8** Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.
- 9** And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.
- 10** And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.
- 11** And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.
- 12** Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.
- 13** Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

15 "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.

16 "Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

17 [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]

18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"

19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)

20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,

21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!"

22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt *demanding* death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices *began* to prevail.

24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

To the Glory of God

Now as far as I can tell, Jesus appeared before Pontius Pilate at least two different times. But sending Jesus to Pilate was simply a formality because the Jewish rulers were no longer debating whether Jesus was guilty. the Sanhedrin Court had already condemned Jesus as a blasphemer late Thursday or early Friday, and Dr. Luke recorded that interchange in **Luke 22:66-71:**

66 When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council *chamber*, saying,

67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe;

68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer.

69 "But from now on *THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND* of the power *OF GOD*."

70 And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am."

71 Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

So, it is very important to understand that the "straw that broke the camel's back" in relation as to *why* these religious hypocrites finally pronounced the death penalty on Jesus was because He had made Himself equal with God. So, the next time somebody tries to tell you that Jesus never said He was God, remind them that His straightforward, unambiguous, clear and unashamed declaration to these men was:

"Yes, I am."

Now keep in mind that these evil religious frauds were seeking here to use Pilate to their own ends. They weren't interested in Justice; they weren't interested in keeping the Law of God; they weren't interested in defending God by rebuking a blasphemer. They wanted Jesus dead, and they were prohibited from carrying that out with Pilate's permission. That is the only reason, as far as they were concerned, that they brought Jesus to Pilate. But, something else was at work here, because this same Dr. Luke tells us this in **The Acts 4:27-28**

27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

So, two very important things are at work here:

1. The evil intentions of wicked men to kill Jesus to rid themselves of this "thorn in the flesh".

2. The Omnipotent Sovereignty of God in bringing the sinless Lamb of God to the Slaughter so that the Glory of God's Grace would be seen and demonstrated and valued.

Now, to be Biblical about this, we must not think that God "saw" the wickedness of these evil men, and then "responded" to their evil intentions by "turning" this whole scenario around in order to get some "Good" out of it. That *isn't* what was happening here at all, and it is dishonoring to God to think that way.

God doesn't "turn" the evil intentions of men so that some "Good" can come forth. God is not in the business of using His Sovereignty to try to salvage something good out of a bad situation. That *isn't* what Luke wrote. He said:

... in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

Luke says that God's Hand and Purpose in the Capture and Trial and Sacrifice of Jesus was predestined. And that means that God's Purpose that He determined in "Eternity Past" rules here. *That* is what the infallible word of the living God says. And that means that God is Sovereign over all the evil intentions of all these wicked men. And that means that God doesn't *respond* to Evil. God doesn't respond to anything. God initiates, God causes, God allows.

The Bible teaches that God sovereignly allows Evil to exist, and He uses Evil to further His Own Purpose in the earth. And that means that no human being, no matter how rich he may be, no matter how politically connected he may be, no matter how influential he may be, no human being is the "First Cause" of anything in the earth, God is.

God is *always* the Alpha, God is *always* Primary, God is *always* First, God is *always* the Originator of what goes on. And that means that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, all the time.

Right at this very moment, when Jesus is weak in His Body, and exhausted and dripping blood, He is ruling and reigning as the Supreme Sovereign over the entire Universe. And God is using these worldly and

sinful people to bring about the Purpose of God in the crushing of the "Darling of the Trinity."

Now it is important that you understand that God didn't *cause* these men to do this evil. No, turn with me to **James 1**. There, James tells us:

James 1:13-18

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

James reveals to us here that people carry out evil when they are:

... carried away and enticed by his own lust.

So, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is already inherent in the fallen nature of every human being born after the Fall. And that is *exactly* what the Apostle John taught in **1 John 2:15-17**, when he said:

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Now notice what John is saying here. He said if you love the world, the Love of God the Father is not in you. So, that is not talking about your love for God, it is talking about God's Love for you. What

John is teaching is that if you love the world, you're not saved. So, by definition, to be a "world-lover" is what being lost is all about. Now just what "world" is John talking about? Is he talking about the dirt and the trees and the rivers or even the people? No, Moses wrote in **Genesis 1:31** that God saw all that He had made, and He called it "**Very Good**". And John wrote in **John 3:16** that **God so loved the world**.

So, is John talking out of both sides of his mouth? No, the "world" that he is referring to is the "world system" that dominates and governs everyone who has not been born from above. And, in verse 16, he tells us what he meant by using the word "world":

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

So, this is the "**lust**" that James was talking about. And that lust resides inside the flesh and nature of every single human being who was born after Adam failed God. And that is the "lust" that dominated the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Scribes. And that is the lust that dominates and drives Pilate.

So, even though it is God's Will that Jesus be captured and beaten and murdered, He doesn't have to actively and sovereignly *create* the desire to kill Jesus in these people, they *already* have that desire. God doesn't have to *force* Pilate to use pragmatism to govern his decision to allow Jesus to be murdered, he was already pragmatic because he was already lost.

All of these people were lost, *all* of them were worldly, *all* of them were driven and dominated by the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. *None* of them were led by God's Spirit.

And that is why *all* of these men were all fully accountable for what they did. And that is why God could *damn* them for what they did. In His Absolute Sovereignty, God passively stepped aside and *allowed* these men to do what was already in their hearts to do anyway. All God did was *manage* their wickedness to the degree that His predestined Purpose would be carried out.

So, under the terms of the Roman occupation of Palestine, the Jews could not carry out the death penalty on their own. They had to get *permission* from the pagan Roman rulers. So, as far as they were

concerned, the only reason Pilate is in this picture at all is because these Jewish rulers needed a political “okay” to get the job done. But now we know that something far more powerful and far more important is at work here than the evil worldliness of these wicked men. God’s absolute Sovereignty is shining here.

Now, also, keep in mind that Pilate wasn’t fooled by the hypocrisy of these Jewish leaders for a second. He had been in power now at least three years, and he had seen them exercise their double standard and watched them favor the powerful over the weak, and saw how they brutally and unmercifully ruled over the people using the Word of God as a hammer to keep the people in fear and beat them down. So, he wasn’t fooled one bit about their logic or their reasoning or their religious conclusions about Jesus or anybody else.

Now that doesn’t make Pilate a good man, he wasn’t. He was an evil and unmerciful man himself. Pilate was worldly, in every sense of that word. But, what it makes him is a good politician who understands the basic law of politics:

People only “like” a politician when they know he has the power to do something they want and when they fear that he can do something negative to them. As soon as they sense a politician is weak and can no longer help them or hurt them, their loyalties vanish very quickly.

So, the name of the game in politics is the fine art of “Pragmatism”. And Pragmatism is simply another word for “worldliness”. So, Pragmatism says, “whatever works must be good”. And the logic of Pragmatism when the modern Church uses it is, “whatever brings in more people or whatever brings in more money or whatever gives us more influence in the community, must be of God, regardless of what the Bible says”.

And that is why Pragmatism is something to be repented of, something to be ashamed of, something to run from, not something to use and celebrate and put in a book to teach others.

Now everybody who comes to a politician tries to “butter him up”. So, the smart politician is not impressed by people’s praise, nor is he fearful of their anger. He knows that “love” is in short supply in politics, and the only reason anybody is standing before him is either

because they want to try to manipulate him to be on “their side” or to rebuke him for *not* being on “their side”.

And this is the main reason why I cry out so strongly about the American Church getting neck deep in politics while pretty much *abandoning* their primary Mission, which is:

To contend earnestly for the Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints and herald the “whole Purpose of God’s Word” clearly and consistently with conviction and authority so as to call lost people to repentance and faith in Christ and to call saved people to holiness.

The Church of Jesus is to maintain a clear and unmistakable distinction from politics and Government and those who serve in it, so that we may hold all those in positions of power and authority to account. But, even though Government is *not* the Church and should *not* function as the Church, Government is still “of” God and was given to us “by” God. Therefore, Government and politics and politicians are to rule wisely and justly and impartially according to the revealed Word of the living God.

I pray that since this last election, those of us who are saved today can look back and see that we already had the “marriage” between the Church and the Government for the better part of the first 1,500 years of its existence. And it didn’t work then, and it won’t work any better now. Listen, we don’t want “Christendom”, we want *Christianity*. It is very important that we realize that Political Conservatism is *not* the same thing as Christianity, and while it may be true that the Republican Party is *closer* to our positions than the Democrats, Politics, by definition, is not godly, no matter what Party label it carries. *All* Political Parties, *all* Politicians and Government, in general, operate on worldliness and pragmatism, not holy conviction; so whatever “wins” is deemed to be “good”.

Now please do not misunderstand me. I love my country. I am in awe of how God raised this nation up and I am just as upset about many of the things that are going on as anybody else is. But we must always maintain three things:

1. God over Government
2. Christ over Country

3. Biblical Purity over Politics

... we need to remember that Ronald Reagan was wrong and the United States is *not* the "Shining City set on the hill"; the Church of Jesus Christ is.

Now, having said all that, I do *not* believe that we can simply "check out" and *not* be involved with what is going on at all. And so, we are to pray *with* and *for* politicians. And we are to hold them accountable. The Biblical formula for transforming the nation has nothing to do with Washington or the Supreme Court or even Politics. And this formula is very simple but profound:

1. Men must repent for not being godly, loving, and strong leaders in their homes. They should repent of their sexual lust and of "copping out" to their God-given mandate to lead and rule their homes with Love and Truth.
2. Prayer Meetings, Bible Studies, Catechisms, and Family Devotions should be common in the homes of believers. And it is the responsibility of the Husband and Father to see to it that this is done.
3. And as Husbands and Wives and Children begin to understand what God expects of them, they should then strive, by the Power of the Holy Spirit with the Grace of God, to be submitted to that model.
4. As these godly and loving families,; who are led by godly and loving men, come to Church, they will transform the DNA of that local Assembly and Truth will be preached, and the Assembly will then be grafted into the one, single Church of Jesus.
5. As God raises up godly and loving Churches, comprised of godly and loving families, led by godly and loving men, the Church will influence the Community, out of which Governmental leaders will rise to rule with Justice and Conviction.
6. And as the Communities are influenced to be godly and loving based on the influence of godly and loving Churches comprised of godly and loving families, led by godly and loving men, the Nation will be influenced to repent and be godly and loving.

Now this is a lot harder and will take a lot longer than pulling a

lever and voting for the "right guy" to sit behind the desk in the Oval Office and appoint the "right" Supreme Court judges, but this is the Biblical Pattern. But we are spinning our wheels to assume that we can see a wholesale return to godliness and Christian Love in this Nation without engaging in this effort. And that is the purview of the Church, not the Government.

So, the Jewish religious leaders were neck deep in the Government of Rome in the 1st Century, and they brought Jesus to Pilate to try to manipulate him into agreeing that Jesus must die. So, they were on their best behavior and Pilate is on his guard as well.

Now the Apostle Levi tells us that it was on Friday morning when Jesus was delivered to Pilate. And John Mark writes and tells us that it was *early* on Friday morning. So, Jesus has been up since Thursday morning, and He has already prayed so hard that He sweats Blood, and He has spent the last 12 hours being dragged and pushed around and slapped and spit on as He has been interrogated relentlessly.

But, notice that up till now, He has said very little. The greatest amount of dialog that Jesus will have from now until He screams in agony on the Cross, as He absorbs all of God's Just Wrath against all of the sins of all of God's elect, will be with Pilate. And I think that is significant.

Now look again at **Luke 23:1-2**:

1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

Now the only reason these religious frauds are bringing up Caesar in this discussion is to try to impress Pilate. They couldn't care less about Pilate or Caesar; in fact, they hated both of them. Look what Dr. Luke wrote in **Luke 13:1**:

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

So, about two years earlier, when Pilate had first taken Command of the region, he went out to show the Jews who was boss and to strike

fear in their hearts by slaughtering some Galileans, and then taking their blood and mixing it with the sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem and forcing them to offer that to God.

In other words, Pilate was saying, *"Your God is dead. Look what I do and yet God does nothing. I am god to you, so fear me, not your make-believe deity."* So, the average Jew, as well as these men, despised Pilate and prayed regularly for his death.

The fact that these Jews are bringing up the charge that Jesus had been teaching things against Caesar was simply to "butter" Pilate up. But Pilate was wary of them and was quite bored with the whole ordeal. He thought this was nothing more than a religious matter, something that he neither had jurisdiction over nor wanted. And so, he completely ignored the charges that he would have control over and "cut to the chase" and asked Jesus a very direct question in verse 3:

"Are You the King of the Jews?"

Now the fact that he ignored their charges concerning paying taxes to Caesar and asked a theological question here is quite telling. And I think this fact is mostly missed when this Passage is read or preached.

Why is Pilate asking this question? He has no jurisdiction over religious matters. And even though the Sanhedrin has brought up charges that he would have control over, he completely ignores them and goes for the more eternal issue. And to prove that this is significant, look how Jesus answers him:

"It is as you say."

Now the Greek here is a little complicated. And this statement by Jesus could mean nothing more than...

"That's what you say."

... but this *could also* be interpreted as Jesus saying:

"That's what you think" or "That's what you believe" or "That's what you have said."

... which indicates that it is *possible* that Pilate has been talking about Jesus *before* this moment, and since He is Omniscient, Jesus knows that. And so what Jesus is doing here by answering Pilate like this is very troubling to this man. And we know it is troubling based on two things:

1. The dialog that the Apostle John recorded for us that goes into much greater detail.
2. The response that Pilate has.

Now both the Apostle Levi and John Mark echo what Dr. Luke wrote here. But, John goes into much more detail about this exchange, so let's read **John 18:33-37**:

33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?"

36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Now look closely at what Jesus asks Pilate in response to him asking Jesus if He was the "King of the Jews":

Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?

Well, Pilate hadn't said anything. He asked Jesus a very serious theological question that had nothing to do with the secular charges that the Sanhedrin had hoped he would latch onto. And then Jesus response initially by asking him if Pilate had said this on his own initiative, or did others tell him about Him.

As far as I am concerned, this is too much dialog to be coincidental. And it is getting to the very heart of this moment. You must remember that Pilate was a cruel and unmerciful pagan tyrant, who showed no hesitation in condemning people to die. He was used to having people grovel at his feet, begging for their lives. And yet here, he is engaged in a very deep and serious theological discussion with Jesus.

Now I can only image what the 70 men of the Sanhedrin were thinking right about now. Keep in mind that when Pilate is questioning Jesus, he was alone with him, inside what was termed "the Praetorium", which was the place where judgment was rendered by the Romans. So, the Sanhedrin are standing outside, unable to hear what is going on. But remember, the only reason they had brought up taxes and Caesar to Pilate was because they fully expected Pilate to go off in his fury and immediately condemn Jesus to die. They really thought this was going to be quick. And yet they wait and wait outside, pondering why it was taking so long. The last thing these men expected or wanted was for this pagan to begin discussing theology with Jesus. And yet, that is *exactly* what is going on. And my question is, "Why?"

If all that is important is that Pilate condemn Jesus to die, if that is all that God wants here, then why all the words? All Jesus would have to do is say nothing and Pilate would have come to the very same conclusion that he eventually did. So, why is Jesus going back and forth here with this evil men?

I think that Jesus is doing to Pilate *exactly* what He did with Nathanael, even if for a different reason. You will remember that in the very first Chapter of John, near the beginning of His Ministry, when Jesus was choosing His disciples, this interchange went on from **John 1:44-49**:

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**"**

48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

49 Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

So, Nathanael was a skeptic. And when Philip came to him and told him that they had found the Messiah, he didn't buy into it. And when Philip told him that the long awaited Messiah was "Jesus of Nazareth", Nathanael replied:

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

... which was a slam to both Jesus and this little community. And Philip's only response was:

"Come and see."

So, as Nathanael was walking up to Jesus, Jesus bursts out:

"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

... and Nathanael was startled by this comment and replied:

"How do You know me?"

... which was like saying, "*I don't know you, so how do you know who I am*"? And then Jesus delivers the "coup de grace":

"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Now I have no idea what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree. The Bible doesn't tell us. It could have been some wicked sin that Nathanael thought no one knew but himself. But it *could* have been a time of deep conviction and prayer that Nathanael was certain nobody saw. But whatever he was doing, this statement by Jesus was enough to convince Nathanael that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah, and so he blurted out:

"Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

Now that is exactly what I think was going on with Pontius Pilate, even though it was for a completely different reason. Jesus responded to Pilate's question, *"Are you the King of the Jews"?*, with a reply that only Pilate knew:

"Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

Now Pilate was caught completely off guard. The brutal, unmerciful ruler was standing before the disheveled, worn, helpless man in chains, blood dripping down from His beatings. And yet, the Man in the chains is now totally in charge, speaking directly to Pilate's very soul, telling him things that only Pilate's closet associates knew about.

Now, normally, Pilate would not spend five minutes conversing with the man he was going to condemn. But here, with Jesus, he sees the need to reply. So, he says:

"I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?"

Now why did he say this? Again, there is no reason for Pilate to almost defend himself here to this Man Who stands before him. And yet, in his own way, Pilate is saying:

"I am not a Jew- God doesn't speak to me. I have nothing to do with Your religious issues. I am what You term, a pagan. And yet, Your Own people have brought You to me for me to give them permission to kill You. What in the world did You do to make these religious frauds so mad at You?"

And very calmly, Jesus looks Pilate in the eye and says,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

Now, very straight-forward, Jesus tells this wicked ruler that He has a Kingdom that is not of this world. And to prove that, His followers were not fighting with swords to set Him free. But the logic as to why His followers were not fighting on His behalf that Jesus uses here is amazing as He says:

... so that I would not be handed over to the Jews

Now Pilate has never met anyone like Jesus. Instead of trembling before Pilate and begging for His Life, Jesus is very precisely letting Pilate know that the only reason He is standing there before Him was because of God's Will and the predestined Purpose of God. Jesus has absolutely no fear, no trepidation about His impending torture and death. The very Glory of God has already resigned Himself to carrying out God's Will from the very moment that an angel came and strengthened Him back in the Garden, during his long, agonizing prayer that lasted several hours.

And this statement by Jesus drew this response from Pilate:

"So You are a king?"

Now we're back to that very simple but profound question that everyone must answer, "Who is Jesus"? Nobody can be saved without correctly knowing Who Jesus is, and those who are chosen will come to the very same conclusion about Jesus:

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God

That Divine Revelation about Who Jesus is is the "Rock" on which the entire Church is built. And all who are part of Christ's Church *embrace* that one single Revelation. And it is this one Revelation being revealed to lost sinners through the preaching of the Gospel and their glad embrace in this Revelation that forgives sins and saves souls.

And with that belief in Who Jesus is comes devotion to Jesus, and obedience to Jesus, and the Command to deny oneself and take up ones Cross and follow Jesus. You do not *add* Jesus to your "already-planned-out-life". Jesus is Lord, not some *addition* to your life that you can use to accomplish all your dreams.

No, all who come to Jesus, and who believe and who confess this one single Revelation, dies. They die to sin, and they die to their own agenda and their own plans, and they spend the rest of their lives living and saying and doing all that they say and do for no other reason than the Glory of God.

This is what Jesus was confronting Pilate about. And I think he saw it. I think Pilate understand very well what Jesus was saying here. And Pilate hears Jesus say:

"You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

... meaning: "You, Pilate, have said that I am truly a King Who is not of this world. You have said this many times to those who were the closet to you. You have walked in the Praetorium many times pondering Who I am. You know as well as anybody else that the Sanhedrin are wicked false religious hypocrites. And you know full well that I am not like them. And that has deeply troubled you. Because you realize better than most that to embrace Who I am means the end of your political ambition. You will have to forgo everything you have worked so hard to achieve, and you will have to abandon all your dreams and follow me in broken humble obedience. Because even though you are a powerful ruler, you cannot come to Me except by grace and through faith. And God does not grant saving faith to anyone who is not "of" the Truth, or chosen by God. Those are the only people who can come to Me."

Now the Prisoner is in charge here. The weak, beaten Man standing before Pilate is shining in the brilliance of His Glory. And Pilate knows it. And as he stares deeply into Jesus Eyes, Pilate trembles. He knows full well that everything Jesus has just said is true. And now he must either embrace Jesus and fall before Him and worship Him, or He must condemn Him to die.

And so, at this moment of great stress, Pilate leans on what he knows best: his pragmatic, worldly nature. And so, he responds with a rhetorical question:

"What is truth?"

... which is just a "cop-out statement" designed to change the subject. Jesus is getting too close for comfort here, and so Pilate deflects to this philosophical, rhetorical question, which has nothing to do with anything that he and Jesus have been discussing.

But it *does* illustrate the fact that Pilate was not going to be saved. Now for many years, I believed what most people believe today, that God *wants* to save *everybody*, but He can't unless they "let" Him. I believed and taught that all God can do is "offer" people Salvation, but they are the ones who have to make that decision to take God up on His Offer.

Like many of you, I embraced the concept, even though I couldn't explain it, that *somehow* we were able to keep the free will that Adam had, even after the Fall. That while the Fall was damaging, it was not *that* damaging. And this Passage here with Pilate would be used to prove that logic.

And so, back then, I would have told you that Jesus was trying very hard to get Pilate to repent and be saved here, but it was up to Pilate, and all Jesus could do was offer it. I hope you know that I categorically reject that concept today.

I have come to believe from Scripture that God is Sovereign. And, in His absolute Sovereignty, God determines what His Will is-, and then works to bring His Will to pass, using both "good" and "evil" in the process. And so God never loses; He never knows defeat. He saves all those who have been chosen for Salvation from before the foundation of the world. And He doesn't miss a single one.

Salvation is *not* the product of "human self-determination". Salvation is not some "offer" that God makes. Salvation is the Sovereign Work of God in Him graciously coming to the elected sinner and *forcefully* and *decisively* changing his nature, *without* his permission and *without* his cooperation, so that the sinner will have both the desire and the ability to repent and trust in Jesus.

And that means that Jesus is not "trying" to do anything here. He is simply doing it. Now Jesus *is* preaching the Gospel to Pilate because our Lord is modeling the Truth that we need to sow seed into everybody's life, and then hope and pray for them to be saved. But, if Jesus wanted to save Pilate, He would have. Like Pharaoh back in

Egypt, Pilate is an example of someone whom God chosen not to intervene with, and someone that God has decided to leave to himself. And this is the way that Moses put it:

Exodus 7:3

But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

So, God is hardening Pilate's heart here, and rather than merely *offering* Salvation to Pilate and then waiting breathlessly for his human decision, Jesus is saying all this to show us the great danger of being worldly. Remember what John said:

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Ian Murray, the editor of the Banner of Truth, said this:

“Worldliness is departing from God. It is a “man-centered” way of thinking; It proposes objectives which demand no radical breach from man’s fallen nature. It judges the importance of things by the present and material results. It weighs success by numbers. It covets human esteem. It wants no unpopularity. It knows no Truth for which it is worth suffering. It declines to be a fool for Christ sake. Worldliness is the mindset of the unregenerate. It adopts idols. It is at war with God.”

So, like He did with the rich young ruler, which was to show us the danger of loving and trusting in money and possessions, Jesus is illustrating here with Pilate how that loving the world, how being pragmatic, is the very definition of what it means to be lost.

The ongoing prevailing testimony that a person enjoys and embraces the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life means that that person is worldly. And, being worldly means that the Love of the Father is not in that person. And, that is just another way of saying that God has hardened his heart.

So, I ask you this morning. Are you worldly? Does the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life dominate you? Do you find the fullest expression of your delight in the things

that are passing away? Are you pragmatic? Are you at war with God? Come to Jesus, fall at His Feet, embrace and trust in the Revelation that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and find your rest in Him.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.