

Matthew 27:1-23

"What Will You Do With Jesus?"

Matt 27 opens in the midst of the mock trial of J.C. The illegal "midnight meeting" of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court) has already happened & Jesus has been condemned to death; blindfolded & brutally beaten.

Peter, having witnessed the way He was being treated, when he was given the opportunity to identify w/Him, denied that he even *knew* Him 3xs. Upon his 3rd denial the rooster crowed just as Jesus had prophesied & Peter, remembering His words, went out & the scriptures tell us he *wept bitterly*, he was sobbing convulsively. His heart was hurting, he'd denied his Lord...

Now for us, as we read through these things (& over the course of the next couple of weeks *study* these things), we can kind of lose track of time. But I want you to realize that from this point forward (really from about Vs 47 of Ch 26 through the end of Ch 27) things are moving in rapid fire succession.

As Ch 27 begins, day is breaking. It's 1st light, probably somewhere between 5:30 & 6:00 a.m. By 9 a.m. Jesus will have been tried & He will be crucified. But as I mentioned last week (& reminded you moments ago) it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to convene at night. So the sentence they'd handed down "informally" & illegally they needed to ratify "officially".

That's 1 reason we see them gather again, & plotting to put Jesus to death here in Vs 1, notice.

Vs 1-2

Ok. This is where we do well to understand a little bit of the political environment that they're working w/in. Because initially we might think, "If they condemned Him to death, why didn't they just execute Him themselves?" 2 Reasons (1 practical, 1 prophetic). #1 From the practical perspective they had handed down a death sentence but they themselves didn't have the authority to enforce it. When Israel fell under Roman occupation, one of the things Rome took from them was the rule of capital punishment.

It wasn't that Rome was beyond putting people to death (by any means, they were notorious for crucifying criminals); that was just it. It would be *Rome* who would carry out the death penalty if need be. So in order to get a death sentence, they needed Pilate (the governor of that area) to hand it down (Jn 18:31-32). So from the *practical* perspective they couldn't legally enforce a death sentence, they needed *Pilate* to do that.

The 2nd reason (from the prophetic perspective) was that the scriptures (Ps 22) plainly pointed to crucifixion for the Savior. He would die that we might live. However, the *Jewish* form of capital punishment was what?

Death by stoning. Crucifixion was developed by the Persians but perfected by the Romans. So it was necessary that Jesus be handed over to Roman authority if He were to die for the sin of the world in the manner prophesied & portrayed scripturally (not to mention Jesus' own words time & again, Personally).

However, there was bit of a problem. Do you recall the reason that they decided He was worthy of death? Their allegation was *blasphemy*, He claimed Deity, that He would sit at the right hand of God & judge humanity. But they knew that Rome couldn't care less about a charge of *blasphemy*. Pilate himself had done many things (as recorded historically) to provoke the Jews & offend their religion; intentionally. Pilate wasn't a nice man. & Issues that dealt w/their religion, their "God" Pilate couldn't care less about.

So here in Vs 1 when we read that they plotted against Jesus to put Him to death, what they were doing was planning how to get a death sentence handed down from Pilate that would stick. Ultimately what they decided was that they would portray Jesus as an insurrectionist, a revolutionary, dangerous to Roman rule. They leveled 3 charges against Him before Pilate. Luke tells us that when they brought Him to Pilate they said, "*We found this fellow perverting the nation* (that is, twisting them & turning them against Rome), *and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.*"¹ It would be the 3rd charge that Pilate would ultimately latch onto because if one were to promote himself as a "king", now you're setting yourself up against Caesar (& that's a problem, punishable by death). Pilate being a ruthless & cruel individual (historically) the Jews didn't envision any problems securing favorable results in their desire to see Jesus put to death.

So when they'd hatched their plan, they bound Him & led Him away *delivered* (more accurately "betrayed") Him to Pilate. It would almost be humorous if it weren't so tragic... They "bound" Him. They bound the Hands that had calmed the seas & stilled the winds. They bound the Hands that had multiplied a few loaves & fish in order to feed thousands. *The Hands that had healed diseases of all kinds, made lepers whole, opened blind eyes & raised the dead. They bound the Hands that had come to set the captives free, loose the bonds of demonic strongholds, infirmities, afflictions & sin... they bound Him...*

At least they thought they did, what would they bind Him with?... 2 Things bound Him that day & their ropes weren't one of them. The only thing binding Him was His Obedience to the Father & His love for you... & me.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Lk 23:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 3-10

Few things we want to talk about out of this little section of scripture. I suppose we'll just take them in the order they appear. 1st off we read that Judas was remorseful when he realized that Jesus had been condemned.

To speculate what he was hoping for is pure conjecture. Was he hoping that Jesus would retaliate in some miraculous way, triggering the establishing of His kingdom (overthrowing Rome, ushering in the Kingdom of Heaven)? We don't know. It would seem at the very least that he didn't expect Jesus to be sentenced to death & when he realized that's what had happened, that he'd been instrumental in that process; he was (the word is) "remorseful".

But here's what we need to understand. "Remorse" or "regret" is not what God is looking for (though surely it's appropriate to feel guilt over our sin). However, the word that we want to define us isn't "remorse", it's "repentance". Repentance always turns us away from our sin & moves us toward God. Repentance leads to restoration w/God. Remorse, or regret may be accompanied w/sorrow, but it brings w/it a hopelessness & despair, feelings of worthlessness & depression.

We can even take it a step farther. Perhaps in your mind I'm splitting hairs. I mean, "Why argue over this word or that word?" Ok, fair enough, it's not the word that you choose to use that I'm interested in, it's the results. You can say, "Remorse", or "regret" if you like, but what I'm looking for is the result.

This is where Peter & Judas part ways. They both denied Jesus, they both turned on Him in some form or fashion. Peter wept bitterly & returned to Jesus (repentance). Judas felt terrible (genuinely), but rather than turning back to the Lord, he isolated himself even farther from the Lord & committed suicide. There is a worldly sorrow (that leads to death) & a godly sorrow that leads us to repentance. I suppose Paul put it best when he said, "*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*"²

Judas even acknowledged the fact that he'd sinned. *But listen, an acknowledgment of sin isn't necessarily indicative of a repentant heart. Perhaps you remember when Moses was being sent of God to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt? God used him to smite Egypt w/various plagues & Pharaoh, when he couldn't take it anymore would say, "I've sinned! Ask God to forgive me!"

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 7:10] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But he never forsook his sin, once the plague was removed he went right back to being the guy he was before. So, it's not the remorse in & of itself I'm looking to. The way we determine whether or not repentance is genuine, is by the *result*. What's the fruit that comes forth? Being sorry, shedding tears, that's all fine & well, but remorse alone doesn't commend us to God. We've got to repent, turn from our sin & trust in J.C. *That* will produce change in our lives... *

One of the horrible *aspects* of sin is that we can never undo what we've done. Once a thing is done, it's done. We can't alter it, we can't take it back... it's done. Judas tried. He brought back those 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests & the elders (that which he *desired* [the money] he now *despised*, he didn't want anything to do w/it). That's another aspect of the deceitfulness of sin. You think that by this "sin" you'll obtain your desire (& you might), but suddenly it's nothing but a reminder of your sin! Now that which you desired, which you were willing to sin for, you despise! You regret! It shames you & condemns you!

Judas was hoping (it would seem) that by returning the money, it would make things right. But again, you can't undo what you've done can you? As Charles Spurgeon wrote, "...sinner, you may sell Heaven for a few carnal pleasures, but you cannot buy Heaven by merely giving them up."

He says to the council, "I have sinned by betraying *innocent* blood." Notice that. Btw I want you to take note along the way how many times the testimony of the innocence of J.C. is brought to the forefront. *Judas declares it, Pilate declares it (more than once), Pilates wife declares it, even 1 of the thieves on the cross declares it. God is making it abundantly clear that Jesus didn't suffer for any sin of His own (He was the spotless, sinless Son of God). He was dying for your sin & for mine!*

But Judas had lived w/Jesus, slept near Jesus, ate w/Jesus, had personal private times w/Jesus for 3 yrs! If there were ever *anyone* who could accuse Him, or find some small detail to soothe his guilty conscience it'd have been Judas... "Well, I did see Him lose His temper w/people behind closed doors once." "Well, He *was* gossiping that one time about so & so; or He exaggerated a time or 2." There was none of that, "I have betrayed *innocent* blood."

The religious leaders basically say to him, "That's your problem, you deal with it." & In desperation he throws the money into the temple, perhaps implicating them as well, or hoping it might in some way atone for his sin & he went out & committed suicide...

Now, since Jesus said of Judas that it'd have been better for him had he not been born, & the bible calls him the "son of perdition" & Peter (in the book of Acts) said he "went to his own place". We know that Judas didn't go to heaven. Having said that I think it's important to state that it wasn't because he committed suicide.

Suicide, contrary to popular opinion is not an unpardonable sin. It *is* sin, it's self-murder. But it's not anymore unforgivable than any other sin. The only unpardonable sin (the bible declares) is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which ultimately is to leave this world having rejected J.C. It's the express agenda of the Holy Spirit to point us to the Person of J.C. & when we reject J.C. there can be no forgiveness because our forgiveness is found in Him.

Satan (Jesus said) is a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44). In Jn Ch 10 Jesus said that Satan came to steal, to kill & to destroy. Now I would like to tell you that as believers we're impervious to the lies & deception of the devil, but that wouldn't be true. & Sometimes even believers can be deceived into buying the lie of the enemy & ending their own lives. Listen, life can be tragic, it can be crushing & difficult to bear. Solomon spoke of that reality, Elijah suffered from depression, Paul the apostle recognized that truth. However, none of them took their own lives. Instead they came to understand that though they can't do it on their own, through God's grace they could endure. Paul said, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*³ & He learned that sometimes things come into our lives that's more than we can bear, so that we might learn to rely on the Lord... He told the Corinthians, *"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,"*⁴

I say all that to say this. Judas was confined to eternal punishment *not* because he committed suicide (as tragic as that may be), but it was because he rejected salvation by grace through faith in J.C. Who'd come to seek & to save that which was lost...

However, the hypocrisy of the priesthood continues to shine, taking the money (that they'd paid *out*) & refusing to take it *in* because it was "blood money". So they decided to buy a potter's field (either a field depleted of clay, or perhaps full of shards of broken pottery, not good for anything else) to bury strangers in.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 4:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Co 1:8-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now, I should point out that Matthew then quotes the scripture to demonstrate how even in this prophecy was fulfilled. However, he credits Jeremiah when the quote is found in Zechariah Ch 11:12-13. So what's the deal there?

Couple of solutions. It's possible that he *is* referencing Jeremiah since similarities exist between what Matt says here & a passage in Jeremiah 19. The other possibility (there are a # of possibilities actually, these are just the 2 that sounded most plausible to me) is that back in that time books weren't separated like they are today. A scroll would be however long & it would contain the writings of several different authors. In the scroll of the Prophets Jeremiah was 1st & it included Zechariah as well. So some scholars think that Matthew is simply referencing the *scroll* of Jeremiah which also included Zechariah. Others think that Jeremiah spoke the words, Zechariah recorded the words... But again, to me, it seems most likely that Matthew is simply referencing the scroll that the words are found in. **However, I can't say for certain. Matt's point is simply to say that everything that happened to Jesus & was happening around Jesus was carefully prophesied centuries before.**

Vs 11-14

It's interesting that for as cruel & ruthless as history records Pilate to be, he seemed to treat Jesus in a way that was out of character for him. There was something different about Jesus to him, & it affected him in some personal/profound way.

Again, Matt summarizes the events. Pilate examined Him, sent Him to Herod (Luke 23) & then examined Him again, this is actually the 2nd time Jesus stood before him. & As I mentioned the Jews formed 3 charges against Him, but Pilate focused on the 3rd because claiming to be a King was a definite threat against Rome.

When you read John's gospel (18) you find out that Jesus actually inquired of Pilate at this point. He asked him if he wanted to know for himself, or if he was just doing his duty. Pilate sort of scoffed at the question & so Jesus went on to explain that He was in fact a King, but not of this world... The account goes on, **"Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?'"**⁵ How sad, looking right into the swollen eyes of the embodiment of truth & couldn't even see it...

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 18:37-38]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Who's really on trial here? Pilate isn't really judging Jesus, his decision concerning Jesus won't effect the truth of who He is at all. His judgment concerning Jesus will only effect himself. Whatever one believes or judges Jesus to be doesn't effect Jesus, it effects us!

Pilate was blown away by how Jesus handled Himself. People shouting & reviling, accusing Him of one thing after the other & Jesus just stood silent. He was used to people seeking to vindicate themselves, beg for their lives or offer excuses. Jesus didn't try to defend Himself in anyway... as a lamb before its shearers are silent, so He opened not His mouth, He would fulfill the purpose of His coming.

Vs 15-18

Pilate may've been a lot of things, but "dumb" wasn't one of them. He knew that Jesus wasn't guilty of what they accused Him of (in John's gospel we read that he stated plainly, "I find no fault in Him").

They were envious (resentful) of His popularity & power w/the people. Beware of the sin of envy... Solomon said that envy is "rotteness to the bones" (Prov 14:30). James said that it's rooted in "self-seeking" (James 3:14-16).

Now to show goodwill toward the people, the governor was accustomed to release one prisoner of the people's choice back to them at the feast. Kind of like a presidential pardon. So what Pilate did was pick a man who (we find out from other gospel's) was an insurrectionist & a murderer (basically a terrorist) who probably wasn't popular w/the Jews & offered to release one of the 2... In his mind he's thinking, "Jesus has helped people, He's innocent, people like Him; this other guy is a murderer, an insurrectionist, he *deserves* to die, surely the people will pick Jesus to release." Look at Vs 19.

Vs 19

What this means exactly we don't know (nor do we know what she dreamt) but it's another testimony to the innocence of Jesus & it effected her enough that she was willing to interrupt her husband who was presiding over the trial at that very moment. The bottom line is that Pilate had more than enough evidence to judge Jesus innocent & release Him.

Vs 20-23

Wow... He knew what to do, but allowed the religious leaders to persuade him politically, through the voice of the people. If there were ever anyone who knew that Jesus died in his place, surely it was Barabbas... (3 Crosses, 2 thieves, 3rd proly Barabbas).

Pilate will default to the popular opinion of the people. How many of you realize that the popular opinion is rarely reliable? Noah & his family didn't represent the majority... The children of Israel got in trouble time & again because they gave heed to the voice of the majority in the wilderness wanderings. 10 spies said the land was unconquerable, 2 said it was good, they went w/the majority & it cost them tremendously.

Joseph's brothers were all wrong about him. Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego were the minority, refusing to bow before the Statue of Nebuchadnezzar, the whole nation of Babylon was wrong & here, the multitudes... are wrong. Don't follow popular opinion, do what's right. Honor the word & the ways of God...

* I leave you w/Pilates plight, "What then shall I do w/Jesus?" It's the question that confronts all of humanity throughout all of history... He had a choice to make, & so do we all. Many people still call for Barabbas. Oh, their Barabbas might be the lust of the flesh, it might be alcohol or some other form of intoxication, it could be the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches or the desire for other things... But the choice remains. What will *you* do with Jesus? *

Prayer Points:

Lord, we thank You for Your great love for us. I pray that we respond appropriately to Your love, leading lives (not of regret) of repentance. Turning from our sin, coming back to You again & again. We thank You that where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. Teach us to die to sin that we live no longer in it for the glory of Your name.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit is ministering to your heart right where you're at today. Don't harden your heart, open your heart. Believe upon the Lord J.C. who has loved you & given Himself for you. Turn from your sin, trust in Him today.