

## Matthew Chapters 26&27: What Will You Do With Jesus Who Is Called Christ

Brothers and Sisters, what a year and a half it has been. The word 'unprecedented' has been used to describe so much of what has taken place. Whether that be bushfires, floods in the north, economic turmoil, and then of course this virus (sent by God) which has so plagued the world! Uncertainty and fear seems to abound everywhere. Jobs, livelihoods and indeed lives have been lost. Many people have shamelessly abused the support system in our country. Even when their jobs were again available they've not gone back to work, because \$750 a week in the hand is very easy to live. In Australia, over 900 lives were lost (Due largely to the total incompetence of some of the powers that be). And yet it seems that no one is to blame. Or perhaps more to the point, there seems to be no one left with enough integrity who will take ownership for the loss, of most of those Australian lives!

Yes uncertainty and fear abounds today. The old hymn comes to mind: 'On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is shifting sand, all other ground is shifting sand!' Over a million people, (and it may now be multiple millions of people worldwide), have died from this virus alone. The whole world it seems is putting its hope in some vaccine or other. In Australia today the insanity of left-wing gender politics and polity confronts us everywhere. Through the media it comes into our homes as we are bombarded by it through the TV and Internet and news outlets. As well as being thrust down our throats in just about every movie or TV programme that we may watch! The same sex movement and lobby seems to have the loudest voice today. While the idolatry and deception of the climate change religion infects and permeates all sides of politics!

And yet at the same time and speed as all of these things are taking place, (equally as fast and perhaps even faster still), the remnants of our Judeo Christian heritage are being an erased! You can have any opinion whatsoever upon any issue, whatever that may be, as long as it isn't Christian and biblical!

So while all of this upheaval is taking place I'd like to ask you the most important question which you will ever be faced with throughout the whole of your lives this morning, regardless of the circumstances. And it is the same question that Pontius Pilate asked the murderous crowd at Jesus' sentencing. "What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ?" And I aim to do this by looking at Matthew chapters 26 and 27 this morning.

You see the reality is that the troubles and turmoils of this world will continue to be with us until Jesus returns. And as important and confronting as all of these things are, they are but fleeting in the scheme of eternity. Yes all of those things will pass away. So the greatest imperative which every man, woman and child is confronted with today is their face to face meeting with the Judge of the universe! So again dear friends I ask you the question this morning; What shall you do with Jesus who is called Christ?

But firstly, let's remind ourselves of the narrative so far. Matthew 26, in the garden of Gethsemane the night before Jesus' crucifixion, Matthew 26:38, Jesus says, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." As we saw last week, the Lord's humanity was "stretched out" to the limit. He felt like He was at breaking point. "Stay here and keep watch" with Me in prayer. I can't do this alone; I need you now my brothers. Matthew 26:39 "Going a little farther he fell with his face to the ground. "Father if it's possible, take this Cup from me." Luke's account tells us that "His sweat became like drops of blood." Yes friends, What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ? This happens three times and then in Matthew 26: 46 Jesus says "Rise, let's go; here comes my betrayer."

The rabid mob arrives led by Judas Iscariot. He betrays Jesus with a kiss. Peter cuts off a servant's ear, Jesus heals him, and then those sad words of v56 "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." He is hauled before the Jewish heavyweights. He is beaten with fists and clubs. He is spat upon, then in v66, He is found to "be worthy of death"! Well, Peter disowns him three times. The third time even calling down God's curse upon his own head if he did so. And then the rooster crows!

The next day, overwhelmed by what had he had done, and the gravity of his sin weighing him down, even to the grave, Judas tries to return those 30 pieces of silver, that "Blood money" back to the Jews but to no avail! Matthew 27:5b "then he went away and hanged himself." Matthew 27:1-2: "early in the morning all the chief priests and elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor."

Yet again I ask the question brethren: What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ? The 30 pieces of silver that Judas tried to return are used to purchase the Potter's field, in fulfillment of Zechariah 11:12-13. And now we find Jesus standing before Pontius Pilate and the maddening crowd! Bleeding, He's face beaten so badly that when you looked at Him you couldn't recognise a human being. Then in Matthew 27:11 Pilate asks the question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Well, as in Matthew 26:63 Jesus replies, "Yes it is as you say"; then in chapter 26: 64 "But I say to all of you, in the future you will see The Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

And yet in Matthew 27: 12, when he is questioned further by the corrupt chief priest and Jewish elders, "he gave no answer" But why? Why not defend Himself - He was innocent. The only truly innocent man who had ever lived! Well, He had to fulfil all that had been written about Him. Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed and afflicted, and yet he did not open his mouth, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." You see, it had all been foretold by the Holy Spirit through the Prophets. Jesus had to fulfil all that was said of Him. He truly was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"! Matthew 27:13-14 "then Pilate asked him; Do you hear the testimony they're bringing against you? But Jesus made no reply. Not even to a single charge." Can you see? Jesus wouldn't even dignify the corrupt words of his accusers with a reply. He knew they were like "their father the devil"(John 8:44). Just as Satan is, they were full of lies and murder. There was no truth in them. For Him to answer them it would in a sense give them some kind of legitimacy. But that was beneath Him. Their own words would condemn them when they, would stand before Him, come the day of judgement!

In v15-17 we read "It was the custom of the governor to release" (to pardon), a prisoner of the people's choice. So Pilate puts the question to this murderous, maddening mob who were gathering before him! I have two prisoners here. I am putting them and their destiny into your hands. To the one you will give life, to the other death! Now v16 tells us that this "Barabbas" was a "notorious prisoner," or in other words, according to their law he was indeed deserving of death. So the one man stands guilty: he is a "notorious prisoner," a well-known criminal, an evil man. While the other man, Jesus, stands innocent of all charges. His only crime (if we can call it that) is that He has spoken the Truth, about God and Himself! That he was indeed, who He had claimed and had proved to be! He couldn't lie. He had to affirm the truth that He was who they say he was. He had to affirm the truth!

I want you to take note of the telling and crucial verse, v18, because it shows so clearly the cowardice of this politician. As we saw with Herod Agrippa the First, he was a man pleaser and not a God pleaser! Look at the words v18 "for he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him" Pilate already knew that Jesus was innocent. There was no doubt here. There was no

possibility of Jesus being guilty. Jesus' innocence was beyond doubt. It was murderous envy which had Him standing before this spineless governor! And to reinforce the innocence of Jesus before Pilate, look at v19: "while Pilate was sitting in the judge's seat his wife sent him a message" (again look at the words), "don't have anything to do with that innocent man. For I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." Now friends, I want you to notice that this was not some dream of the night, some kind of nightmare, no. But a dream of the day. God had sent an envoy from heaven to pierce the mind of this woman's daytime nap. Even to celestially proclaim the innocence of Jesus! "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man." Yes, this man is innocent!

Well surely then, it has got to be case closed. Pilate knows that the charges have been brought by murderous envious men, his wife has received a message from God, (from heaven) concerning Jesus' innocence, while on the other hand, standing alongside Him is one who is this "notorious prisoner Barabbas." Surely there is no decision to make here. Jesus must go free! Again I ask, What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ?

Friends, I want you to notice the evil, the pure and unadulterated evil of the religious elite here. V20: "but the chief priests and the elders had persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed." Can you see? This was Satan working in the midst of the recognised church. Even those people who claimed God as their own! Even if Jesus had not been the Son of God, they are happy and advocating that an innocent man be put to death, in the place of one who is indeed deserving of death!

So the crowd is primed but Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent. And God's even spoken to him through his wife's dreams of that innocence! And yet he again asks in v21 "which of the two do you want me to release to you? "Barabbas," they answered." V22: "What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ? They all answered him, "Crucify him!"

Friends, I said last week that often the gravity of what Jesus did upon that cross can so easily be forgotten and taken for granted. Yes God's Grace and Mercy through Jesus' death can roll off our tongue like ordering a takeaway meal at the drive through at Maccas. But to truly ponder that price which Jesus paid, by God's Grace, helps us begin to understand God's love for us!

And now I want you to picture yourselves not viewing the scene as a spectator, but standing in the crowd. V23 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him. Crucify him!" And now before us we have the epitome of hypocrisy. And the essence of cowardice. This one with all of the power and authority to set Jesus free, (and who overwhelmingly knows that Jesus is innocent) makes a public display declaring not the prisoner's innocence, but his own! As the crowd is getting out of control he takes some water and washes his hands in full view of everyone declaring, "I am innocent of this man's blood."

Brothers and sisters, I keep trying to get my head around it. We teach our children, (well at least we used to), to take responsibility for their actions. But it struck me so powerfully that this man is just like most modern day politicians. They wash their hands of every question which they are asked. They actually never even answer a question. It's called spin. And it's apparently viewed today as being acceptable. No matter what occurs under their watch they are not to blame. Indeed, like all sinners, (all mankind), they're looking for someone else to blame. While of course looking to take credit for everything that goes right. Even if they had nothing to do with it! But how can this be?

How can such things take place? Well let's remember, we are now standing in the crowd. We are not spectators; we are standing in the crowd crying out for Jesus' blood. "Crucify him, crucify him," we cry. "But what crime has he committed? Crucify him, crucify him. It is your responsibility." And then

comes one of the most insane moments or statements throughout the whole of the bible. Yes, the collective insanity sweeps over the crowd, sweeps over us. Because it is one thing to be prepared to wield the axe upon an innocent man's life, but it is another thing altogether to call down God's wrath upon the heads of our children and our children's children perpetually, for generations to come!

Look at the collective insanity. Our insanity. V25 "all the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and our children." 'Behold the man upon the cross, my sin upon His shoulders; ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life; I know that it is finished!' Yes, "let his blood be on us and our children."

Beloved, be not mistaken, this is who we all are by nature. There is no good thing in us that merited Jesus to die for us. He didn't die for us because we are good and special. It is His dying for us that makes us special. Prior to our hearts being pierced by the Holy Spirit and opened to Christ's gospel message, as we stand within the crowd of the world we are in effect happy to take ownership of the blood of this innocent, God-Man, as simply just another dead Jew, who lived and died some 2000 years ago! Yes, 'Behold I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished, his dying breath has bought me life, I know that it is finished.'

Yes friends, that's who we all are by nature. As we stand in the crowd before Pontius Pilate, and in the crowd before Jesus' Cross, crying: 'Save yourself Jesus and we'll believe in you.' That is why it is indeed called Amazing Grace!

Well, Pilate, now 'innocent' of Jesus' Blood, has "Barabbas released and Jesus flogged, and handed over to be crucified." The flogging alone could have killed Him. Many people died at the horrific injuries which they suffered at the hands of those who wielded the cat of nine tails! Yet again He is beaten mercilessly by the governor's soldiers. Yet again He is ridiculed and spat upon with a vicious "crown of thorns" forced down upon His head. He is then forced to carry His cross up the hill of Golgotha to the execution grounds, known as the place of the skull. Most likely due to the many lives which were taken there!

But along the way, as the mockery and ridicule continues, and He falls. He can carry the cross no longer. Then a man named Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry it for our Lord. Finally, He is crucified with one thief on His right and the other on His left. And while the crowd continues to ridicule and mock the two thieves also hurled insults at Him!

And yet, miraculously, as we know, God's Grace would claim one of those men that very day for Jesus! Luke 23:42-43: "then he said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth: this very day you will be with me in paradise." Matthew 27:39: "Those who passed by hurled insults at him." Yes, 'behold I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers'!

V45-46 we read: "From the 6th hour until the 9th hour darkness came over the land. About the 9th hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi Eloi Lama sabach thani" ("My God My God why have you forsaken me?") And then in v50 "and when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, (with the words "it is finished") we learned from John's gospel, and from Luke's account we read "into your hands I commit my spirit".

V51: "at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." Then from Matthew 27:52-54 we read: "the tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into

the holy city and appeared to many people. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely this man was the Son of God." Yes "surely this man was the Son of God."

Beloved, we have looked today at the reality of the last days of Jesus up to the Cross. Not the Hollywood version but the reality of that price which Jesus paid that we might live. Yes the real account of the passion and death of the Son of God. So for the final time this morning I ask you dear friends, dear sinners: What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ? Will you remain calling out in the crowd of the world, or will you come to Him for eternal life!!!

Let`s Pray.