

# “What Shall I Do with Jesus?”

Thomas Robinson, *God's Kingdom Breaks In!* 6, March 5, 2017

## **Matthew 27:11-31**

### ***Jesus before Pilate***

<sup>11</sup> Now **Jesus** stood before **the governor**. “**Are you the King of the Jews?**” the governor asked him,

“**Those are your words,**” Jesus replied. <sup>12</sup> And while charges were being laid against him by the chief priests and elders, he **answered nothing**.

<sup>13</sup> Then **Pilate** said to him, “Don’t you hear all this testimony they’re lodging against you?”

<sup>14</sup> But **he didn’t answer him, not even one word**, so that the governor was quite amazed.

### ***Jesus Barabbas***

<sup>15</sup> Now at **the feast** the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd one **prisoner** that they wanted. <sup>16</sup> And at that time they were holding a **well-known prisoner** named **Jesus Barabbas**. <sup>17</sup> So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release for you: **Jesus Barabbas**, or **Jesus** the one called **Messiah?**” <sup>18</sup> For **he knew** that it was **out of envy** that they had **handed him over**.

### ***Pilate’s Wife and Jesus’ Innocence***

<sup>19</sup> But as he was sitting on the elevated tribunal, **his wife** sent word to him, “Don’t have anything to do with that **innocent man**, because this very day I suffered so much because of a **dream** about him.”

<sup>20</sup> Now the chief priests and the elders **persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas** but destroy Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?”

And they answered, “**Barabbas.**”

<sup>22</sup> Pilate says to them, “**What then shall I do with Jesus** the one called **Messiah?**”

They all say, “**Let him be crucified!**”

<sup>23</sup> He responded, “Why? **What evil** did he do?”

But they shouted all the more, “**Let him be crucified!**”

### ***Pilate Betrays Justice***

<sup>24</sup> So when Pilate saw that he was **gaining nothing**, but rather that a **uproar** was beginning, he took water and **washed his hands** before the crowd, saying, “**I am innocent** of this man's blood; this is your business.”

<sup>25</sup> And all the people answered, “**His blood is on us** and on our children!”

<sup>26</sup> Then he released for them Barabbas, and after **he had Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified**.

### ***Jesus and the Mocking Roman Soldiers***

<sup>27</sup> Then the **soldiers of the governor** took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole **battalion** before him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped him and put a **soldier’s scarlet robe** on him, <sup>29</sup> and twisting together a **crown of thorns**, they put it on his head and put a **reed** in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they **mocked** him, saying, “**Hail, King of the Jews!**” <sup>30</sup> And they **spit** on him and took the **reed** and struck him on the head.

<sup>31</sup> And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and **led him away to crucify him**.

### **Jeremiah 26:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> [Jeremiah said,] "I am in your hands. ... <sup>15</sup> Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants...."

### **Exodus 12:13**

<sup>13</sup> "The blood shall be a sign for you .... And when I see the blood, I will pass over you ...."

### **Exodus 24:8**

<sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.

### **Matthew 26:27-28**

<sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, ... saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

## **A Silent Jesus – King, Messiah, Fool?**

Mt. lead us through the swirl of events of Passover. The chief priests "handed Jesus over" to Pilate (Roman Prefect for 4 yrs, hated by the Jews, but worked with Caiaphas). This Passover has already seen one insurrection led by a man named Barabbas, charged with killing (a Roman), sure to be crucified with others (Mk 15:7). Now here's another threat. Really?

Caiaphas asked Jesus if he was "Messiah (Anointed king), Son of God," in Scripture language. Pilate asks the same question in Roman words: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus gives the same reply, but then silence. It's the core question. What does God's King look like; do?

Pilate comes to the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" (v 22). Jesus is the object of others' actions. He's handed over. Judas, Peter, Priests, Pilate, crowds, soldiers, all do something with him. Mt asks us if we can see what Jesus is doing – through them, for them, for us.

## **Conflicting Power Plays**

Pilate likely from spies knows about Jesus' popular following this Passover – a threat to temple or Rome? He knows the priests' fear. He wants to execute Barabbas without more uproar. He decides to play Jesus as popular Messiah to get the crowds to approve Barabbas' death. Two Joshuas: Jesus Barabbas (Fatherson) and Jesus called "Messiah" – he uses their term.

But the chief priests see an opening. They know how much the crowds hate Rome and Pilate and push Barabbas to the crowds, thwarting Pilate. Throngs that cried "Hosanna!" now are ready to destroy Jesus. Pilate tries to play on their hope for a Messiah, but it doesn't work.

## **Rituals of Irresponsibility**

In all this Mt lets us see that everyone knows that Jesus is innocent of all charges his accusers brought. He's not destroying the temple, setting up a Jewish kingdom to overthrow Rome, raising an insurrection army – all things that Barabbas likely did. But on a deeper level he also is absolutely guilty: He is indeed Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, King of the Jews!

Pilate's wife sends a fearful message from a nightmare she's had about Jesus. Pilate, the only one with real Roman power here, sees he can't gain an advantage and pretends he's not responsible by washing his hands. Mt echoes Judas' betrayal. Still he hands Jesus over.

The manipulated crowds, the least responsible, take his blood on them, executing a blasphemer. By Mt's day the negative side had been played out in Jerusalem's destruction. But Mt also wants us to see another side: Jesus' "blood of the covenant" on "the people" like the blood of the Passover lamb, the sign of God overcoming death and forgiving the sins of all people.

Finally we see Jesus with Rome's soldiers, who know power. For them Jesus is a ridiculous fool. Mt. sees Israel's Suffering Servant. Crucifixion begins. Under mockery, God empties himself.