

Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 27:1-26

“The Choice”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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So far, in our study, the Lord has faced two trials and has four more to go before the cross. Up to this point ... He’s been questioned by Annas, the retired high priest and by his successor, Caiaphas. This morning we’ll look at His trials before the Sanhedrin, Pontius Pilate, Herod and then back to Pilate.

But as we do that ... remember that what we’re seeing is nothing more than a continuation of the five-day inspection process that was prescribed for the Passover Lamb all the way back in **Exodus chapter 12**.

So ... let’s jump in ...

Verses 1-2: As we move along, we’ll be filling in some of the blanks from **the other gospels**, but for the moment ... you’ll have to take my word for it ... that buried within **these verses** is the Lord’s third, fourth and fifth trials. Proceedings before the Jewish Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod.

Matthew however ... gives those no more than a nod and take us straight to the second trial in front of Pilate.

Now Pilate was a Roman pawn. He was the Rome-appointed Governor of Judea and had been in that position for about four years. He reported to Caesar in Rome.

And secular history tells us that Pilate had a reputation for brutality and that he had a shaky reputation with both the Jews and with Rome. Primarily because, more than once, Caesar had to be called in to restore the peace ... after Pilate lost control of the Jewish people over some unpopular decision he’d made.

Now **Luke** adds to **Matthew’s verse 1** by explaining ...

Luke 23:1 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."

And again ... as **Matthew** says ... they “conferred together ... to put Him to death”.

So Pilate was facing a situation here, that put him on another the political bubble. If he didn’t go along with the Jew’s unfair plan to put an innocent man to death ... they would

once again get unhappy and likely take it to Caesar. So, Pilate feared, and probably rightfully so, that one more complaint would mean his job, if not ... his life.

Now ... as messy and corrupt as all this is ... there is an encouraging aspect of this. You know ... we so often speak of things like God's plans and His omniscience and omnipotence, but we probably don't think of them in practical terms often enough.

But in **John's gospel** we're given a **verse** that should make us consider these attributes afresh ...

John 18:31 So Pilate said to them [the Jewish leaders], **"Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law."** **The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death,"** **32 to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.**

Remember that had the Jews been permitted to carry out their own form of capital punishment ... they would have stoned Jesus to death, but since Rome maintained judicial control ... Jesus was crucified.

Now think about Old Testament prophecies like ...

Psalm 22:16 ... They pierced my hands and my feet.

And ...

Psalm 34:20 He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken.

Those must have been very confusing to the Jewish reader ... before Rome took control of Israel.

They must have looked at these prophecies and thought David had been hitten' the communion wine a bit heavy when he wrote them.

But God's vision isn't limited by time and space like ours. So, think about that ... it means that when Rome rose to power and took control of Israel ... God's plan was being fulfilled by sinners who refused to acknowledge Him.

Verses 3-10: Judas was guilty of poor decision making and specifically of not considering the consequences ... and he seems genuinely surprised at this outcome.

Apparently, he didn't think Jesus would be condemned despite his betrayal of Him. But as we see here ... sometimes, you just can't fix your errors and blunders, so we must speak and act carefully.

The Word says here that Judas "felt remorse" when He saw that Jesus had been condemned. It's the word metamellomai (met-am-el'-lom-ahee) and it means, "to regret

afterward”. A Jew would say, “metamellomai (met-am-el'-lom-ahee)” ... an American would say “OOPS!”

So, Judas’ remorse is a far cry from the “repentance” that we’re called to as Christians ... as evidenced by the way he deals with this remorse ... he gave the money back and then killed himself.

I don’t think any of us would argue that this represents genuine remorse, but again ... that’s not the same as repentance.

And it’s important that we note the contrast. Remember that just **one chapter back**, we saw another of the Lord’s disciples deal with his own failure. Peter denied the Lord and Judas betrayed Him. Both failed, but their responses to that failure are so different.

Peter repented while Judas merely regretted. Look back at ...

Matthew 26:75 ... Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said ...

Peter behaved as you would expect a true disciple to behave. In his moment of despair ... “he remembered the Word of God”. Judas only remembered his own failure ... and killed himself.

Listen carefully to the words of ...

2nd Corinthians 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Peter listened to God’s words of comfort and encouragement and forgiveness ... Judas only listened to the condemnations of Satan.

Q. And how about the fact that these religious leaders weren’t willing to put blood-money in the temple treasury, but they had no problem seeking false witnesses against Jesus, holding unlawful trials or condemning an innocent man? – As

Ecclesiastes 1:9 says ... there really is nothing new under the sun!

Even as Judas says here in **verse 4** ... “Wait, I lied ... He’s innocent.” They say, “That doesn’t matter to us.”

Let me remind you of what Jesus said to these men **a few chapters back** ...

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ... 24 ... who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Proof that living by religious rules will never change your heart. Loving God and joyously living for Him with our eyes fixed on the heavenly goal ... that's where we all need to be.

Now before we go on to **verse 11**, we're gonna read a little bit of **Luke's account**, to fill in some of those blanks I mentioned earlier ...

Luke 23:3 So Pilate asked [Jesus], 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.

This particular Herod was the governor (or tetrarch) of Galilee and Perea (which is the area due east of northern Israel) and, like Pilate, he reported to Caesar.

And as was his habit ... this Herod was in Jerusalem for the Passover. But unlike Pilate ... he wasn't there to keep the peace ... he was there to celebrate because this Herod had Jewish blood in his veins through his Samaritan mother.

Now **Luke** goes on to tell us ...

Luke 23:8 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."

But the Jewish chief priests and elders demanded that Pilate questions Jesus a second time ...

Verses 11-18: Once a year on Passover, Pilate would release one prisoner by popular demand.

And because of that we're introduced here to Barabbas who's described in the **other gospels** as an insurrectionist and murderer.

And no doubt, Pilate was very intentional when he offered up Barabbas alongside Jesus ... assuming that the people would not want a murderer back on the streets.

Afterall ... as it says here in **verse 18**, Pilate knew the leaders had handed over Jesus ...

“... because of envy ...”

Because He was more popular than they were. But still ... Pilate underestimated the mob-mentality.

Verse 19: We know nothing more of this dream ... only that it was very disturbing to this lady and that it compelled her to stand up for Jesus ... giving Pilate even more to consider:

Rome wanted no more trouble.
The crowd wanted Jesus crucified.
Mrs. Pilate wanted Jesus set free.
And Pilate was in turmoil!

Verses 20-23:

Q. Barabbas the murderer or Jesus the righteous One? – They say, “Barabbas”. Pilate questions them in **verse 21** ... “Are you sure?” – “Yes, we want Barabbas set free” they say.

“Okay ... I'll set Barabbas free, but what about Jesus?” – “Crucify Him!”

“Crucify Him ... for what? I can't find that He's done anything wrong. And besides He's already been severely beaten.” – “No ... we want Him put to death!”

It makes no sense in the physical world ... because these decisions and actions were being driven by the spiritual world. Satan's plan was to destroy the only possibility of man's salvation ... but the plan endorsed by the Father ... was to make salvation available to all of mankind.

Look again at **verse 22** if you would ... because it's really the entire gospel boiled down to **one verse**. “**What shall I do with Jesus?**” The most important question and answer in the Bible. The most important question and answer in all of history.

And it's that question that Pilate, like many throughout time ... tries so hard not to answer.

But the people couldn't answer it for Pilate.
The religious leaders couldn't answer it for him.

Neither could Herod or his wife.

This was a question that only Pilate could answer and ... that he had to answer.

His idea and hope was to just, “not answer”. But Jesus said ...

Matt 12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me ..."

Which means in plain English ... to “not decide” is a decision in itself. It’s a terrible one, but it’s a decision none-the-less. And it’s the same as choosing Hell outright.

Verse 24: Let’s look again to **Luke’s** record ...

Luke 23:20 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 delivered Jesus to their will.

Pilate fascinates me. We’ve read scripture that says he was “**amazed**” at Jesus. And here he calls Him “**innocent**”. **Luke** says, “**He wanted to release Jesus**”. We’ve seen him try several things to get out of having to make a final decision with regard to Christ.

He wanted to be on Christ’s side, but just wasn’t willing to take a firm stand. He had the power and authority but simply couldn’t muster the guts.

So, he then tried to wash his hands of the whole matter, but the question of **verse 22** can’t be ignored or washed off.

The history books tell us that shortly after this, Pilate resigned his position, apparently thinking that it would rid him of his guilt, but it didn’t.

So, he took his family and moved to northern Europe thinking that he could run away from the pain, but that didn’t help either.

And ultimately, Pontius Pilate committed suicide ... still seeking relief from the pain, but sadly we know that that only made things worse.

All he had to do, at any point, was to call on Jesus to forgive him and save him and the Lord’s promises of peace and joy and eternal life would have been his, but he didn’t do it.

He did as so many people do today when they feel the weight and the burden of sin; he turned to cover-ups and he ran. But those things didn't work for Pilate and they don't work for people today. Jesus is the only answer.

Verses 25-26: A heartbreaking play on words “**His blood shall be on us and on our children!**”

Q. And it has been for how many generations of the Jewish nation now? -- Not the blood of forgiveness, but the blood of guilt.

It all comes back to Pilate's question in **verse 22**.

Consider Judas in **this text** and Peter from **last week's study**. Two men who knew Jesus ... and failed. One betrayed the Lord, and one denied Him, but both failed Him.

And consider Pilate. He knew Jesus and he tried desperately to avoid a decision with regard to Him ... did everything he could do to wiggle out it.

But ultimately all three of these men responded to Jesus:

- 1.** One, we're told, rejected Him ... ran to the arms of the enemy and then hung himself.
- 2.** Another chose not to choose, and so ... had no escape from the arms of the enemy ... and history tells us that he too, killed himself.
- 3.** But the third man made a different choice. He chose to cry out to the Lord. To confess his failures ... ask for forgiveness and to trust in Jesus. Then he gave his life for the Lord's use.

Now ... there's one last person that you need to consider ... you!

Q. What have you done with Jesus? – We're going to take Communion this morning, so I urge you ... if, up to this point in your life, you've either rejected Jesus ... or avoided the decision ... get up ... go to the back and meet with one of the assistant pastors. Let them answer any questions you might have and then change the course of your life and your eternal destiny by simply saying YES to Jesus.

But for the rest ...

Communion:

Q. What is Communion? – The dictionary tells us that it's a possessing or sharing in common ...

So Christian Communion is when we, as brothers and sisters, share the fellowship of Jesus.

And that means that when we partake of Communion there are two aspects of it that need to be considered:

First the Communion that we have with Jesus and ...

Second the fellowship that we have with one another as His children ... children adopted into the family of God.

That's why Paul tells us in **1st Corinthians chapter 11** to search our heart before we partake of the elements. Invite the Holy Spirit to look for anything within you that would hinder your ability to partake of communion ... and then to take care of it.

Whether it's something between you and the Lord or between you and a brother or sister ... take care of it.

So, once you've received the bread and the cup ... take a minute in silent prayer to straighten out anything that needs to be addressed.

And ... as always, if you need to get up and speak with someone ... do so ... and then we'll partake together.

1st Corinthians 11:23 ... The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

1st Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.