

Jesus before Pilate

11Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." 12And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. 13Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" 14And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

15Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. 17So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

19While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." 20But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. 21But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" 23And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"

24When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." 25And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" 26Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

this morning we will look at one of the most singularly amazing bits of theatre in all of the Bible. And within the words exchanged by all of the

different parties involved we'll see the single most important question that faces each and every soul born into this world.

Do you see it there in vs. 22? *Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"*

Hebrews 4:13 says every person ever born will be required to answer this question. Every one. Heb. 4:13 *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

Him with whom we have to do. Every creature seen. Every creature on trial before Him.

I've been reading, as usual this week, trying to understand these things and to somehow present them to you in a compelling manner with the Spirit's help.

Al Mohler is a great source of understanding and help to me. He analyzes all of human history to explain how we woke up this morning in the situation we're in where only perhaps 1% of a community of people will have enough interest in God and His book to spend 35 minutes listening to it. How did we get to this point?

Mohler says that humans for their entire history until recently had only one way to explain what he calls "the big questions".

Who are we? Where did we come from? Where did the world come from? What else is there beyond what our eyes can see and our senses can detect. Why do our souls seem self evidently eternal but like a fish out of water here? What happens after we die?

That's a good list to start with and we could add to it. Mohler says that throughout all centuries until less than a couple of hundred years ago, people universally believed in enchantment to answer those questions.

Something bigger and wiser than us that our senses cannot tell, is there. Magic. Supernatural beings. All men everywhere, even on islands who

knew not that there were other men anywhere believed in some form of enchantment to answer those questions. God, or god's plural. Demons.

Univesally, in every place, men couldn't not believe. In something bigger out there.

Then came science and machines, and modernity. We began to find answers in science. We began to be able to answer many of the questions and the possibility seemed like it was just within our grasp to answer all of them.

A little side bar that brings us right up to our news feeds yesterday: Stephen Colbert and Ricky Gervais. Gervais an atheist and Colbert a Catholic, arguing for the existence of God. I read with interest and the atheists final death blow tickled my sensibilities;

Gervais, going for the kill, said; *“Science is constantly proved all the time,” he said. “If we take something like any fiction, any holy book, and destroyed it, in a thousand years’ time that wouldn’t come back just as it was. Whereas if we took every science book and every fact and destroyed them all, in a thousand years they’d all be back, because all the same tests would be the same result.”*

After that statement the catholic admitted defeat, and I'm thinking to myself, Gervais, just proved God. Who is the intelligence behind the reality that science which only finds out the building blocks of creation, would in fact be repeatable in 1000 or 10,000 years. Someone designed that?

So we had enchantment. Everything is here, by some magical source. Then we had science. We're smart enough to figure out why it's all here. The answers are within our grasp. In fact we've formulated "theories" and I highlight the word theory, since scientists seem to have forgotten it, we have theories about origins of, well, everything.

Big bang theory. Evolutionary theory. Theories about global warming. Things that can't be proven, but we're so enamored with what we *can* prove that we've elevated ourselves to godhead and now we believe the

theories that the gods of science have put forth.

Mohler then takes those truths to some conclusions about belief in God. And he documents where we are at this morning with 1% in church.

For centuries men couldn't not believe. Enchantment of some kind. Through all the centuries of men on earth. They believed is something bigger than themselves. They couldn't not believe.

Then with science and the industrial revolution and modernity, came the possibility to not believe. All of the answers are within our grasp. So we're told. You no longer have to believe in magic.

And finally, we wake up this morning in 2016 and somewhere in the last 150 years the possibility on non belief metamorphised into something else. The impossibility to believe.

Civilization has gone from the impossibility to not believe, to the possibility to not believe, to the impossibility to believe. In a hundred and fifty years, we made that journey.

The thought never entered the minds of my great grandparents that their might not be a God. Of course God is there. My grandchildren, with public education in a completely secularized environment, will have to be convinced that there IS a God. All in the span of 120 years.

In 2016, if you believe in some form of God, any form of enchantment, you are marginalized and no longer have a position at the table of discussion. Impossibility of belief rules the day to the point that, as

Mohler says, anyone who attends a place like this that teaches that an ancient book has authority over who you are and what you do, is using up social capital. Your peers will dismiss you as someone to perhaps be avoided? That might be the best case scenario. Or worst case in many places, persecuted. Driven out and away. Keep an eye on that weirdo.

With that in mind we approach this awe inspiring question that Pontius Pilate states for all of mankind here in this passage. *22 Pilate said to*

them, “what then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

Here you may argue, the question is for a group of jews and romans present that day. Why would you say it has anything to do with us today.

To that I would remind everyone on earth that so-called science has only put forth theories. It has not answered the questions this book poses. And this book says that many witnesses support undeniable evidence that one man, who was crucified, did in fact rise again from the dead. He came back from that invisible enchanted area.

And to that I would add this one man made a statement that encompasses every man who ever will live. We'll get to it in a few weeks. It's in Matthew 28. This man with many witnesses who died and rose again from beyond said; *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.*

He Owns Everything. He is the one with whom we have to do, as stated in Hebrews. He said; *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* Jn. 14:6

He proved it with a sinless life and resurrection from the dead. His disciple, Peter, preaching later to these very people who murdered Him says these words; *There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."* Acts 4:12

That's our introduction to this passage that contains these famous words by Pontius Pilate. Let's look at it briefly;

11Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.” 12And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. 13Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” 14And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

IF you combine the other authors you get a picture. The scene seems to be on a portico. A porch area, perhaps raised up from the street. Jesus has been handed over to Pilot. The jews will not enter his courtyard because of their traditions about uncleanness. They do not want to become unclean on this day especially. The Passover. They're murdering God but they're worried about ritual.

So they wait in the street. Hurling accusations, and Pilot seems to be going back and forth between Jesus who is inside and near enough to hear the shouts from the street, and this portico where Pilot can also address the jews out in the street.

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say."

Some more background for you about Pilot. He is not a jew. He is a Roman citizen who has been given the power and authority to govern this region of Israel. Judea.

Our president would do well to study the life and times of Pontius Pilate. When he comes to power, earlier, he rides into Jerusalem with a great show of force. His way, or the highway. That's how it's going to be.

And the soldiers have images of Tiberius Ceasar on their armour. And the jews go nuts. He's desecrating their space with graven images. A riot ensues and the jews go to Ceasaria where Pilate is and riot about the images for 6 days.

Finally pilate surrounds them with armed soldiers and tells the jews if they don't cease and desist with their religious complaint that means nothing to him, he will slaughter them. And the jews, en company, lie down on the ground and bear their necks. They called his bluff and he removed the images.

Next, Pilate takes money from the temple treasury and builds an aqueduct with the money. Again the jews riot, and this time, Pilate has

his soldiers dressed as civilians, and they surround the jews and beat them senseless and killed many of them. It got out of hand and way more punishment was served on the jews than Pilate had intended.

With Rome, the rule is three strikes and you're out. So, on this day, if Pilate allows the jews to have a riot, it will very likely mean he will be deposed from his governorship or even worse, Rome could require his life.

That's the situation as the jews bring Jesus to Pilate and demand His blood.

12And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer.

Why the silence? 2 reasons come to mind. First, they have zero evidence. They spent all night trying to find anything at all to accuse Him of, even falsely. Their screams do not dignify a response.

Second, the prophets foretold that it would be this way over 700 years earlier. Isaiah 53:7 says; *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.* It had to happen this way.

13Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" 14And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

Pilate isn't stupid by any means. He's in the wrong place at the wrong time, and his past performance is haunting him. He holds no animosity towards this Jesus. In fact he probably likes Him. Anyone who aggravates the jews would be on Pilates good list. Pilate hates these jews. He doesn't want to take this good man's life. He has an idea up his sleeve.

Vs. 15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16At that time they were

holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

Please note the word, notorius. Barabbas isn't just anybody. He's a terrorist of note. Pilate's got Osama Bin Laden in his poker hand to play with. Barabbas was a wicked murderer. A frightening person. The last person you want let out of Guantanamo. He's a bad hombre. A dangerous man.

Jesus is beloved. This will be easy.

17So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

Pilate knows that these pain in the neck jewish leaders have ego issues with Jesus. They hate Him because they are envious. But the people love Jesus. Right? *"Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"*

Just here we have an interlude. An interruption. Something wives have the prerogative to do. It's a rule. If we're wise, we honor it.

19While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him."

We've got jews who hate him because of jealousy. We've got indifferent Pilate who is caught between a rock and a hard place. And now we've got superstition injected into it. But at least Mrs. Pilate agrees with the evidence. This man is righteous.

The interlude caused by Mrs. Pilate is written in the plan of God from before the earth was founded. Because during this short interlude, something happens.

20But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.

Whoever the "crowd" is, at 5 in the morning, they are persuaded by the rulers. My guess is that this crowd is the same rabble that stormed the garden and arrested Jesus and drug Him before the chief priests and then before Pilate. There aren't many sympathisers there right now.

This crowd wants this inconvenient bit of business concluded so that they can get on with their Passover feast. So Pilate comes back out onto the portico and plays his Barabbas card.

21But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."

I think Pilate is stunned and confused at this point. Unbelievable. You want a known and dangerous terrorist instead of Jesus who heals your diseases?

22Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

The pathetic appeal of a trapped man. He has to make a decision about Jesus. A costly decision, because if he doesn't do what the jews are rioting about, it will mean his job, and it could mean his life.

This person that he believes he is in control of, this very Jesus, once said; *35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and for the gospel will save it. 36 What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*

What then shall I do with Jesus, is a soul defining question. Pilate's soul along with every other man's soul, pivots on this question. Unfortunately for Pilate, in spite of the miracles, all of the evidence, Jesus is little more than collateral damage. Something to be sacrificed to keep the peace.

They all said, "Crucify Him!" 23And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"

This is where the other gospel writer tells us they begin to throw dirt in the air. This is a riot in stage one. Crucify Him!!

24When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."

We're big on symbolism these days. Symbolic gestures instead of reality. It's part of our culture. Usually laden with hypocrisy. Why do we need a symbol. Give me the reality and keep you hypocritical symbols.

That's exactly what we have here. A symbolic gesture. A jewish one at that. These folks were big into ceremonial washing. This is like a slap in their face. I'll give Pilate that much.

You jews worry night and day about becoming ceremonially unclean. Meanwhile you murder an innocent man. Hypocrites. Ceremonially clean hypocrites who are black as ink inside your souls.

So Pilate takes his final slap at these jews who have defeated him. My hands are clean. I am innocent of this man's blood. Really? Really Pilate?

Later on, Pilate will surround and murder a bunch of Samaritans. The Samaritan people will complain to someone who has authority with Rome, and Pilate will be removed from his governorship.

History tells us, Pilate ends up in Gaul, and ultimately, like Judas Iscariot, he will take his own life. How much better for him, this day, to have given his very life in defense of this man, Jesus. He ultimately lost both his life and his soul in this ordeal.

25And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" 26Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

The jews have short memories. They cry out His blood be upon us and upon our children on this day. And indeed their wish will become true. But we see these same men in Acts 5 denying this very blood.

Acts 5:28 The chief priests have taken the apostles hostage and tell them; *“We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, . . . “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us responsible for this man’s” blood.*

They are in fact responsible, and this verse gives evidence that the apostles were teaching that very fact, fearlessly, in Jerusalem.

I think the place to end this morning is where we began. What then, shall we do with this man, Jesus.

The man who, according to this ancient book, spoke all of the worlds into existence with the breath of his mouth. Realities about which science can only offer silly guesses. Impossible theories that real science disproves.

The man who after appearing to many witnesses after his resurrection from the dead, said, He has authority over . . everything. The man withwhom, after we die, we have to do.

On that morning in Jerusalem 2000 years ago we witness all of the same reactions we see today. Most people are asleep and could care less about Jesus. Living their lives just as the people of Noah's time. Unaware that a flood would engulf them, unprepared.

The truth is ubiquitous, they can't be bothered with it. Then there are those who hate Him and want to murder Him. Since He's not around they take out their wrath on those who identify with Him. They hate Jesus and anyone who would have anything to do with Him. Some, with violence.

Then there are some who are superstitious, like Pilates wife. A false honor with words but not backed up by life altering belief. There are

some like Pilate to whom Jesus is an inconvenience. Willing to make collateral damage out of Him in order to get on with their lives.

And, hopefully, there are a few who will bow the knee to Jesus and worship Him, and receive His offer of pardon as we willingly leave this world behind and make following Him, first in our lives.

Everything, past, present, and future, revolves around this one Man, Jesus the messiah. I pray that we are those who bow the knee and worship, Him.