

Episode #942 Matthew 27 Part 4-The Savior Mocked

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Pilate well knew that the Lord Jesus was innocent of any crime when the jealous religious leaders of Israel brought Him before him. However, he did not want to oppose these powerful men himself, but tried to manipulate the crowd into calling for Jesus’ release to give him an excuse for letting him go. The chief priests and elders proved themselves better manipulators than he was, however, and they talked the crowd into asking for the notorious Barabbas instead.

III. Jesus or Barabbas? Matthew 27:15-26.

- A. Verse 22. This demand was at the instruction of the chief priests and elders. The crowd would not have cared. Remember, this was their plot, hatched back in verse 1.
- B. Verse 23. Pilate, shocked by the failure of his plan, inanely asks this question. What point in questioning a mob in this way? For this was more or less a mob action. Pilate, if he had been strong and done what was right, would never have put himself in this position. Instead, he tried to manipulate things so as to get the crowd to oppose the powerful chief priests and scribes for him, to give himself an excuse not to grant their request. This failing, he is left sputtering. He has no chance to manipulate a crowd that has already been manipulated against him by master deceivers. He asks what bad thing the Lord had ever done? Pilate well knows He had done nothing. They just cried out greatly, exceedingly, beyond measure. Having been provoked to this, they enthusiastically insist on this travesty of justice. Crowds can be manipulated this way, and the individual wills are dissolved into that of the masses. Individuals seem to think that they will not be held accountable for mob actions, since so many others around them were in with them on it. Yet Peter accuses these people of their betrayal and murder of the Prince of Life, Acts 3:15. He does not count them not guilty because there were others in it with them.
- C. Verse 24. “Prevail” is gain or profit. There was nothing he could do to win over the mob now. Having taken the weak road of letting others color his decisions, it is far too late for him to backtrack to the strong position of insisting on what is right and just. He lets the rage of a murderous mob pull him along with it. A tumult was what a Roman governor was tasked to keep from happening, or to put down if it did. This symbolic act did not cleanse his guilt, though he would have liked for it to have done so. He had the power to disperse this mob and put an end to this, but he did not do so. This Roman governor was as guilty as anyone else. Wouldn’t it be nice if, before doing something wrong, you could just say, “I am innocent of what I am about to do because someone else told me to do it,” and that would really be the case? I, of course, am speaking sarcastically. Can a man in charge, before giving his underlings orders to carry out an outrage, wash his hands publicly and say, “I am innocent of what I am about to order my men to do, because a mob insisted I do it, and I blame them”? Not in the least! This was hypocrisy and not truth. The Romans involved were just as much “Christ-killers” as the crowd. “Blood” means the murder. “Just Person” or Righteous One. Pilate witnesses to the fact that the Lord had done nothing worthy of death, and in fact nothing wrong at all. Guilt cannot be transferred orally this way!.

- D. Verse 25. Some like to make much of this statement. But they had no power to bind guilt on themselves or loose it by their words. They were guilty because of what they had done in demanding His death, not because they said they were guilty. They also had no power to bind guilt on their children. Do not think for a minute that because this unruly mob said, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” that that means every Jew since that time has been guilty as a Christ-killer. This mob had no right to speak for their own children, not to mention all the millions of Jews who were not there at Pilate’s judgment seat. Do men today think there were only a few thousand Jews in the whole world? Besides, Christ looked down from the cross and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” Luke 23:34.
- E. Verse 26. “Scourged” means they whipped Him. He had no reason to scourge Him, any more than he did to put Him to death. This was just gratuitous violence against an innocent man. This governor Pilate is guilty of a travesty of justice. His silly water could not change that fact. Nothing short of the blood of Christ could wash away his sin, and we have no indication that he ever availed himself of that, ancient Christian writings (fiction?) to the contrary. “Delivered” means to give into the hands of another. Of whom? His own men, of course, as only the Romans had the right to crucify, and as we read in the very next verse. How could anyone claim anything but that these were his actions and it was his authority that did this?

IV. The Crown of Thorns. Matthew 27:27-31.

- A. Verse 27. “Soldiers of the governor” shows that this was all done under his authority. The Praetorium, Greek the *praitOrion*, the “headquarters” of the Romans in Jerusalem. This was in a magnificent palace that Herod the Great had built for himself, and that the Roman governors used whenever they were in Jerusalem. “Gathered” is *sunagO*, assembled together against Him. Thus the Gentiles gathered against Him, just as the Jews had. So the twelve state in their prayer in Acts 4:27. This was the governor’s band, about 600 men. This word is used of those who arrested Him in John 18:3, but that band was under the captains and officers of the Jews, John 18:12, and so was not the same band as this. The Jewish soldiers would never have gathered in Pilate’s residence on Passover day.
- B. Verse 28. The scarlet robe may have been an old, cast-off robe of Pilate’s that they had handy, though the Scriptures do not say this for certain. The point was to make Him look like a king. Not much of one, naked, and wearing only a scarlet robe!
- C. Verse 29. “Twisted” or woven together. The crown being the symbol of kingly authority. This crown of suffering was put on the Lord in our place. This is what the Gentile soldiers did. The reed was to symbolize the scepter, the right to rule. This reed was a poor scepter to give to the Maker of all, the Lord of the universe. Four bow the knee to the Lord in Scripture. 1. The man whose son was moonstruck in Matthew 17:14. 2. The soldiers, mockingly, here. 3. The leper pleading for cleansing in Mark 1:40. 4. The rich young ruler in Mark 10:17. Of course, in this case it was insincerely, unlike the other three times. Bowing the knee is what ought to be done to a king. They mocked Him as the Lord said they would do in Matthew 20:19. “Hail” is literally “Rejoice!” a Greek greeting or salutation. The only other one to say this to the Lord was Judas in Matthew 26:49. The Lord greeted the women this way in Matthew 28:9. They were the occupying force in Israel, and Israelites were one of the most dissatisfied people to be under their rule in their Empire. Their usual policy with

pagans of adding their gods to their own pantheon didn't work in Israel. These soldiers knew most people they passed on the street would cheerfully assassinate them without a second thought if they knew they could get away with it. Anyone who claimed to be King of the Jews would not get much sympathy. Pilate condemning Him was generally all they needed to know.

- D. Verse 30. The Lord is the only One spit upon in the New Testament. Remember the Jews of the Sanhedrin had spit on Him back in Matthew 26:67. These "noble" religious leaders were just as uncouth as the Roman soldiers they despised. This is an outrage against the Lord, yet there is no miracle; there is no response; there is no action. The Lord could have turned them to ashes at a word, but He did not do it. He allowed this violence of sinners against Himself.
- E. Verse 31. They returned His garments, which is why the soldiers who crucified Him were able to gamble for these. He did not go naked to the cross. The way those who crucified men were paid for this grisly job was by being able to divide up the belongings of the condemned; at the very least his clothes. The soldiers know this and return the clothes to Him for them.

V. Conclusion: The Lord was sadly mocked and humiliated by these soldiers. They saw a threat, a helpless victim, a member of an enemy people. What do we see when we see the Lord suffering on our behalf? A religious zealot? A failed reformer? Or do we see what God sees: His representative in human form taking on the sin of the world and suffering and dying for sinners like we are? Let us see all these things from God's perspective, and recognize in this suffering victim a mighty and triumphant Savior!