

“What Shall I Do With Jesus . . . ?”

by Walton Weaver

The question asked by Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ" (Matthew 27:22), must be viewed as the most important question in the world. Not only was this a troublesome question for Pilate, but every person who has learned about Jesus Christ has faced the same challenge.

Pilate must have known long before Jesus was brought before him that eventually he would have to face the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" He must have heard many times the reports about Jesus, and, no doubt, these reports greatly disturbed him. It had proved to be no easy task to keep the Jews subdued. Those who worked under Pilate had surely kept him fully informed about what was going on in this region. It is doubtful that there was anything that Jesus taught and did that Pilate did not know. Jesus had fascinated Pilate's wife. Her acquaintance with Jesus had come over a period of time, and so had Pilate's. In addition to the many reports they had received, Pilate's wife may have even heard this man teach in the streets of Jerusalem.

Once the religious and political leaders of the Jews had arrested Jesus, Pilate most likely suspected that someday a political crisis would develop and he probably would be the one who would have to deal with it. Then it would be not only the reports, but also the real person of Jesus that he would have to face. It was when Jesus was brought face to face before Pilate that this man was faced with the question, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"

You must remember Pilate's problem is our problem as well. Just as someone brought Jesus before Pilate, so someone has brought this same man before you and me. We, like Pilate, are acquainted with Him. We have heard, or read, the reports from our New Testaments, and even beyond that, someone has brought this man right before us so that we, just like Pilate, cannot avoid Him. We not only have read or heard about Him, but we have come face to face with Him. We no longer question who this man is. We know Him. Our only question now is the same question Pilate faced: "What shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?"

AN ANSWER REQUIRED

Pilate had to do something. Inaction on his part was impossible. He had to DO something. The question he raised was not, "What shall I *think* about Jesus?" but "What shall I *do* with Jesus?" Pilate knew that the religious and political leaders of the Jews had decided what they would do. They would do away with Him. Pilate was being pressured to make the same decision. But he was also being pressured to let Jesus go. Pilate's wife wanted him to vindicate Jesus. She said to him, "Have nothing to do with that just man" (Matthew 27:19). Pilate agreed because he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just

person" (Matt. 27:24). He knew what he thought about him, but now, "What shall I DO with Him?" was his nagging question. To do nothing was impossible. He was being forced to make a decision.

Even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, and in his heart he wanted to do the right thing, he was under tremendous pressure. Have we not at times found ourselves in this predicament? It may be that as you face this same question about Jesus you are pressured by the crowd to "crucify Him," or eliminate Him. Do the same pressures that troubled Pilate trouble you? Are you worried about what others will think or do if you do with Jesus what you really want to do? So often we have so much in common with Pontius Pilate, don't we? But just as Pilate learned that inaction is impossible, we must learn the same lesson. We must answer the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?"

AN ATTEMPT AT EVASION

The Roman Governor wanted to put the responsibility of making a decision about Jesus off on someone else, for, we read, "he sent him to Herod" (Luke 23:7). Pilate did not have the moral courage to do what he knew he should do, so he turned Jesus over to someone else hoping he would do the right thing with Him. Do we have anything in common with Pilate here? We certainly do. How many husbands do you know who have attempted to turn the question of what to do with Jesus over to their wives? They favor their wives going to church faithfully, but that's not for them. Parents sometimes send Jesus to their children, so that perhaps they will do the right thing with Him. They have shirked the issue, and left it to their children. They may encourage them in every way to go to church, but they themselves do nothing about Christ. They hope their children will do with Jesus what they do not have the moral courage to do.

My friend, you cannot shirk the issue. You cannot leave this matter to somebody else. Your attempt at evasion will fail, as it did with Pilate, because "Herod sent Him again to Pilate" (Luke 23:11). You just can't get rid of the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" Nevertheless Pilate still tried to shift the responsibility to someone else. He next wanted the people to decide. He would let them choose between Jesus and Barabbas. He saw this as the way out.

Do you suppose Pilate thought the people would make the right decision? I think he probably did. Surely, he must have thought, the people will ask that this innocent man be set free. But he did not understand the power of sin. Common sense and justice would have demanded that that be the decision of the people. But whoever thought that common sense and justice were compatible with sin? The people asked for Barabbas, not Jesus. That put the matter back in Pilate's hands. Pilate must answer the question himself. And so must you. You simply cannot avoid the issue.

AN INCREDIBLE REJECTION

Pilate played the role of the coward. He rejected Jesus. His rejection was not due to his having examined the evidence and found it wanting. After he had examined the evidence his verdict was, "I find no fault in Him" (John 19:4,6). When the people cried out that Jesus be crucified, Pilate even sought to release Jesus, especially after Jesus told him that he would have no power against Him unless it had been given to him by God (John 19:11,12). But the people pulled Pilate in the other direction by saying, "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend." The shouts and the threats of the people won out, and Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.

Maybe in his heart Pilate felt justified in his act, but washing his hands in water and saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person," did not free him of responsibility. His responsibility as Governor was to free any innocent man. Pilate was guilty, and he failed because he was a coward.

Is that your problem if you have decided to reject Jesus? Are you afraid to confess your faith in Him? But you must believe on Him and confess Him to be the Son of God (John 8:24; Matthew 10:32,33). Are you afraid to turn away from sin through repentance, and be baptized into Christ that your sins might be remitted? But you must, or else you will also reject Him by rejecting his word and failing to obey Him (John 12:48-50; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:26,27). If you have become a Christian already, are you afraid to own Christ and stand up for Him? What are you going to do with Jesus? Jesus says, "For whosoever is ashamed of Me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

YOU WILL SOMEDAY STAND BEFORE JESUS

What we do with Jesus now will determine what Jesus shall do with us when He comes again. So make your choice, give your verdict, take your stand now. An old hymn challenges us to do just that, in view of the Lord's coming and His verdict toward us:

Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall
Friendless, forsaken, despised by all.
Hearken, what meaneth this sudden call:
What will you do with Jesus?

What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be!
Some day your heart will be asking
What will He do with me?