

# LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

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Mark 15 – What Will You Do With Jesus?

## Introduction:

We are fast approaching the end of our study in the gospel of Mark. I realize that we are moving very quickly over these last chapters. There is so much material and so many topics that could be covered, but I want to finish this up in a couple of weeks with the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

This morning we are going to be looking at Mark 15 together with some passages from the other gospels. The key events of this section are the trials and the crucifixion of Jesus. Once again – a quick overview of the events, then focus in on one particular theme.

One of the amazing things about these last hours of the life of Jesus is his silence. As he stood before Pilate, he did not try to defend himself. As he was mocked and abused by the soldiers, he said nothing, nor did he accuse them in any way. It is easy to wonder why he did not respond to the injustice that was taking place. But the only answer I can come up with is the fact that he knew that all of this had to happen for two very important reasons. One was to fulfil the prophecies of Scripture, which even predicted his silence. The other was that it was all part of God's plan of redemption which had been conceived in eternity past.

The trials of Jesus really began right after he was taken from the Garden by the temple guards. He was taken before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council – Mark 14:53-65. They did their best to come up with an accusation, bringing false witnesses, but were unable to make anything stick until Jesus himself spoke of his coming in glory – v. 62. They immediately seized that statement and accused him of blasphemy. Their decision was that he must be put to death. But, since only the Romans could sentence someone to death they waited for morning in order to bring him to Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea. By the way, it was during this interrogation that Peter uttered his denials.

That brings us to chapter 15...

## An Overview of the Events Surrounding Jesus' Death

- Jesus before Pilate (vv. 1-5) – Pilate questions him at length about who he is and about the accusations the chief priests were making against him, but he refuses to respond. His silence amazed Pilate...
- There is another element to this account that Mark does not mention. Luke records (Luke 23:6-12) that in the accusations of the chief priests, it came out that Jesus was from Galilee. On hearing that, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time... *Discuss the encounter briefly.*
- Jesus was returned to Pilate, who declares that neither he nor Herod have found any reason to execute him (Luke 23:13-16).
- Pilate tries to have Jesus released (vv. 6-11) – by tradition, Pilate would release one prisoner at the Passover each year. He offered to release Jesus but the people, at the instigation of the priests, refused and demanded that instead he should release Barabbas, a notorious criminal.
- The crowds demand that Jesus be crucified (vv. 12-15) – Pilate finally relents and delivers him up to be crucified.
- Jesus turned over to the Roman soldiers (vv. 16-20) – a whole battalion of soldiers were brought in – they mocked and ridiculed him... abused and tortured him, and finally, when they had enough of their sport, they took him out to crucify him.
- The crucifixion (vv. 21-32)
  - Simon compelled to carry his cross
  - He was put on the cross
  - Soldiers gambled for his garments
  - Two others crucified with him
  - The mocking of the crowds, the chief priests and scribes, as well as the other two men who were crucified
- The death of Jesus (vv. 33-41)
  - Darkness over the land for three hours
  - Jesus' cry of desperation – separation from his heavenly father
  - Offer of sour wine
  - His final cry and he gave up his life

- The curtain in the temple torn in two from top to bottom
- Reaction of the centurion who was overseeing the crucifixion
- Recognition of the women who had ministered to him and were now on hand to watch the terrible ordeal of his death
- The burial of Jesus (vv. 42-47)
  - Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, requests permission to take his body and bury it
  - Pilate's surprise and the confirmation that he was already dead
  - Joseph takes the body, wraps it in a shroud and places it in the tomb, then rolled a stone over the entrance to the tomb
  - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary watch and see where he was laid.

That is the account of his trial and crucifixion. We've gone through it and considered some key facts and applications along the way. But there is one important question that arises from this that every one of us needs to consider.

## The Question We All Must Face

Look back for a moment to the debate between Pilate and the crowd over who should be released from custody during the Passover feast – vv. 6-14 – *review the discussion briefly.*

Pilate's question in v. 12 – "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" That is the question that we all must face – what will you do with Jesus?

In just one day in Jesus' life there was a host of individuals and groups of people who were confronted with this issue – what will you do with Jesus? Let's consider them and then ask the question of ourselves.

**Pilate** – He tried to avoid the issue. He repeatedly asked questions of Jesus, trying to get him to condemn himself in his answers. When the opportunity arose, he sent Jesus to Herod, hoping to avoid making any decisions about Jesus. Let him deal with it, it's not my responsibility. When he couldn't avoid it any longer, Matthew tells us that he took water and literally washed his hands in front of the crowd to indicate that he was not taking responsibility in the matter. Yet in the end it was really Pilate

who signed Jesus' death warrant, by turning him over to the soldiers to be crucified. By refusing to make a decision, he decided against Jesus.

**Herod** – He admired Jesus, but from a distance. He saw in Jesus some kind of circus sideshow. He wanted to get a chance to see Jesus, not to worship him, but because he had heard about the miracles Jesus had performed and wanted to see it for himself. When he didn't get the magic act he was hoping for, he turned against him and sent him back to Pilate. He was looking for amusement, for personal gain, and came away disappointed.

**The Crowds** – they rejected him. They demanded Barabbas in exchange for Jesus. They were influenced by the leaders of the Jews and demanded his death, allowing Barabbas to go free. In a sense they tried to replace Jesus with a murderer.

**The Soldiers** – they mocked him (vv. 17-18). They stripped him, spit on him, abused him. They made a mockery of his position as king. They gambled for his robe and ridiculed him.

**The Centurion** – he recognized that there was something different about this man. Perhaps he had been the soldier in charge at many crucifixions, and he had never seen anyone like this...

## Conclusion

There were many responses to Jesus throughout that awful day. But there one other response I want to mention. That is the response of God the heavenly Father. Even though he was forced to abandon his Son on the cross as he bore your sin and mine, His response to Jesus' suffering and death is recorded for us in Philippians 2:9-11 – "*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

The question we must answer is this: What will you do with Jesus? The way you answer that question will have an eternal impact on your life. Many years ago, A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance expressed it well in a great hymn when he wrote,

Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall,  
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all;  
Hearken! what meaneth the sudden call?  
What will you do with Jesus?

*Refrain*

*What will you do with Jesus?  
Neutral you cannot be;  
Some day your heart will be asking,  
"What will He do with me?"*