

# *Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*

*May 2, 2021*

*“What Are You Doing with Him?”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.*

## NEWS

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

The New Building is a GO!

**One Service, One Pastor, One Worship Leader, One Big Building Project... All for Unity at Alêtheia!**

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## **MATTHEW 27:11-14 ~**

All four Gospels give this account. Combining them we get a fuller picture. In John Jesus told the Governor that He came into the world to testify to the Truth, to which “Pilate said to Him, ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ ’” (John 18:37&38).

Only Luke shares the meeting with Herod Antipas where Jesus was clothed with the “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” (Luke 23:11) of a king.

Only Matthew uses the title “Governor,” it is ἡγεμῶν (hā-gě-mōn).

Pilate’s interest in the case can be summed up by his question, “Are You the King of the Jews?” In other words, “Do you pose a threat to stability?”

Jesus responded with, “You said it yourself.” Confirming His Kingship, but denying His rebel intent.

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

Jesus refused to say a word in His defense, not because He was intent on being found guilty, but because He knew nothing would change the Father's plan.

### **MATTHEW 27:15-18 ~**

John reports Pilate's presentation of Jesus to the crowd with the line, "Behold the Man." In Latin it is Ecce Homo (pronounced in ecclesiastical Latin as ā-chā hō-mō).

Barabbas was undoubtedly a Zealot and probably a member of the Sicarii. He was taken into custody during a riot where people died. "He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder" (Luke 23:19, Mark 15:7). He was a "Robber" (John 18:40), which is ληστής (lā-stās), an insurrectionist.

### **MATTHEW 27:19-23 ~**

Now Pilate moved to a public place of judgment - the βῆμα (bā-mä), "Judgment seat."

Pilate's wife thought her premonition urgent enough to him interrupted during the trial. He was already sure of Jesus' innocence.

### **MATTHEW 27:24-26 ~**

Mark says Pilate "Wished to satisfy the crowd" (Mark 15:15), John reports the Jews saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar." When Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" They answered, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:12&15). In Matthew, Pilate washed his hands of the whole affair and the people accepted the guilt on themselves with, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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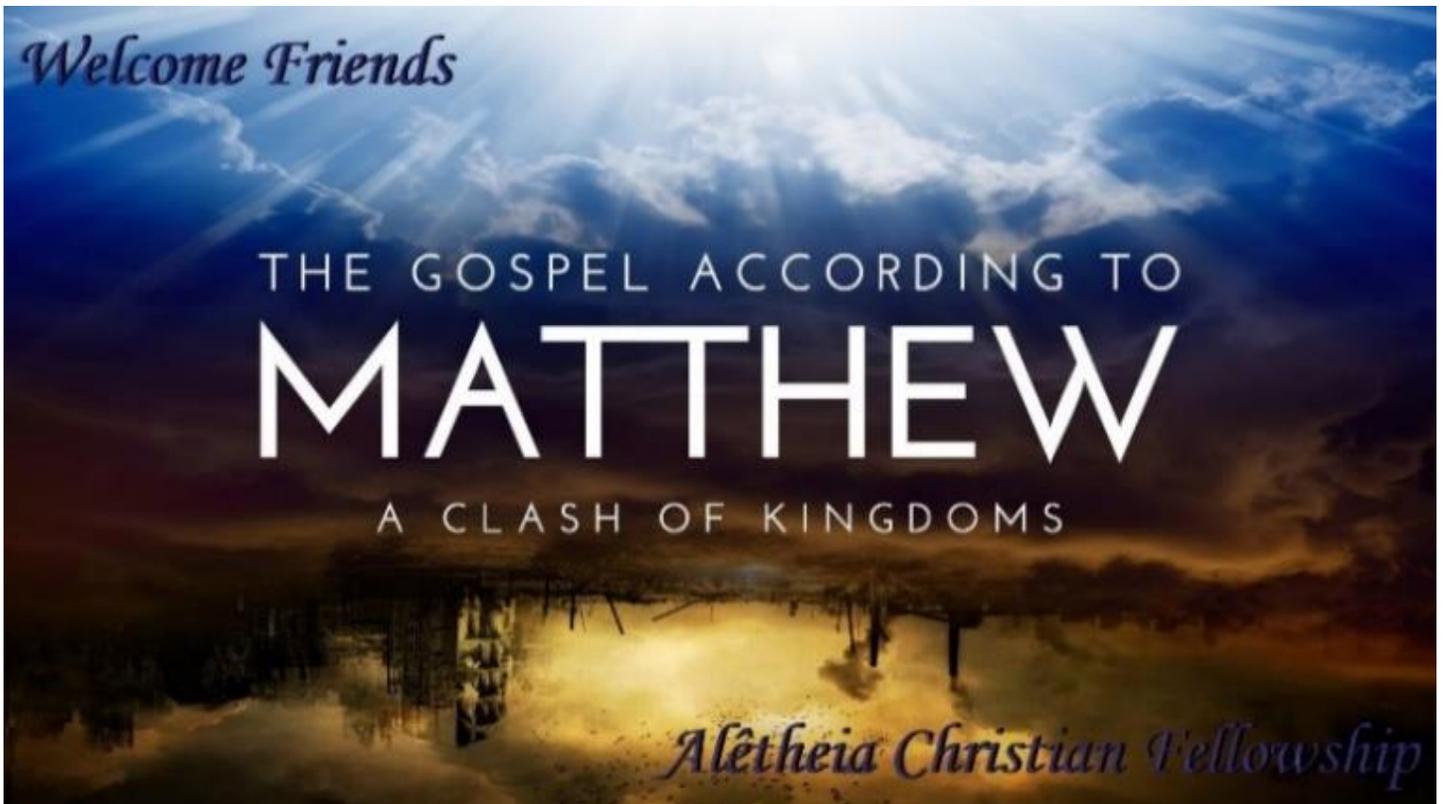
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Matthew 27:11-14, 11Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying,

“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.

All four Gospels give us the same basic account. John is far more detailed, sharing the content of conversations between the parties involved, including one of my favorite exchanges in the Bible. Jesus told the Governor that He came into the world to testify to the Truth, to which “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is Truth’” (John 18:37&38).

Only Luke shares the part about Jesus being sent to Herod Antipas. That’s where Jesus is mockingly clothed with the “Gorgeous robe” (Luke 23:11) of a king. Combining all four reports we get a fairly complete picture. Since we’re studying Matthew and not the other Gospels, I’ll keep the bouncing around to a minimum.

## 7.5



Matthew is the only one to use the title the “Governor,” it is ἡγεμών (hā-gě-mōn), a general term for a person who rules. It gives us our word hegemony meaning dominance by one, over others - as in, “America’s worldwide hegemony has diminished.” In ancient times it was mostly used to describe prefects, like Pilate, and procurators, like Felix and Festus who tried Paul.



Pilate asked Jesus many things, they had at least two conversations that are summed up by the question, “Are You the King of the Jews?” ... That’s all we really need to know. The line of inquiry that Rome is interested in is whether Jesus poses a threat of unrest by being some kind of opposition leader.

If Jesus is a peace-loving law-abiding dude who happens to be extremely popular with the people, it’s a situation Rome would monitor. If Jesus is a guy who can draw a crowd and can incite that crowd to cause problems, then He has to go. That’s what interests Pilate.

John goes into great detail here including a conversation about authority where Jesus plainly tells the Governor that he would have no power over Him if it hadn't been granted to him from God above. Matthew and the others are content to sum it all up with Jesus' answer to Pilate's direct question about His Kingship.

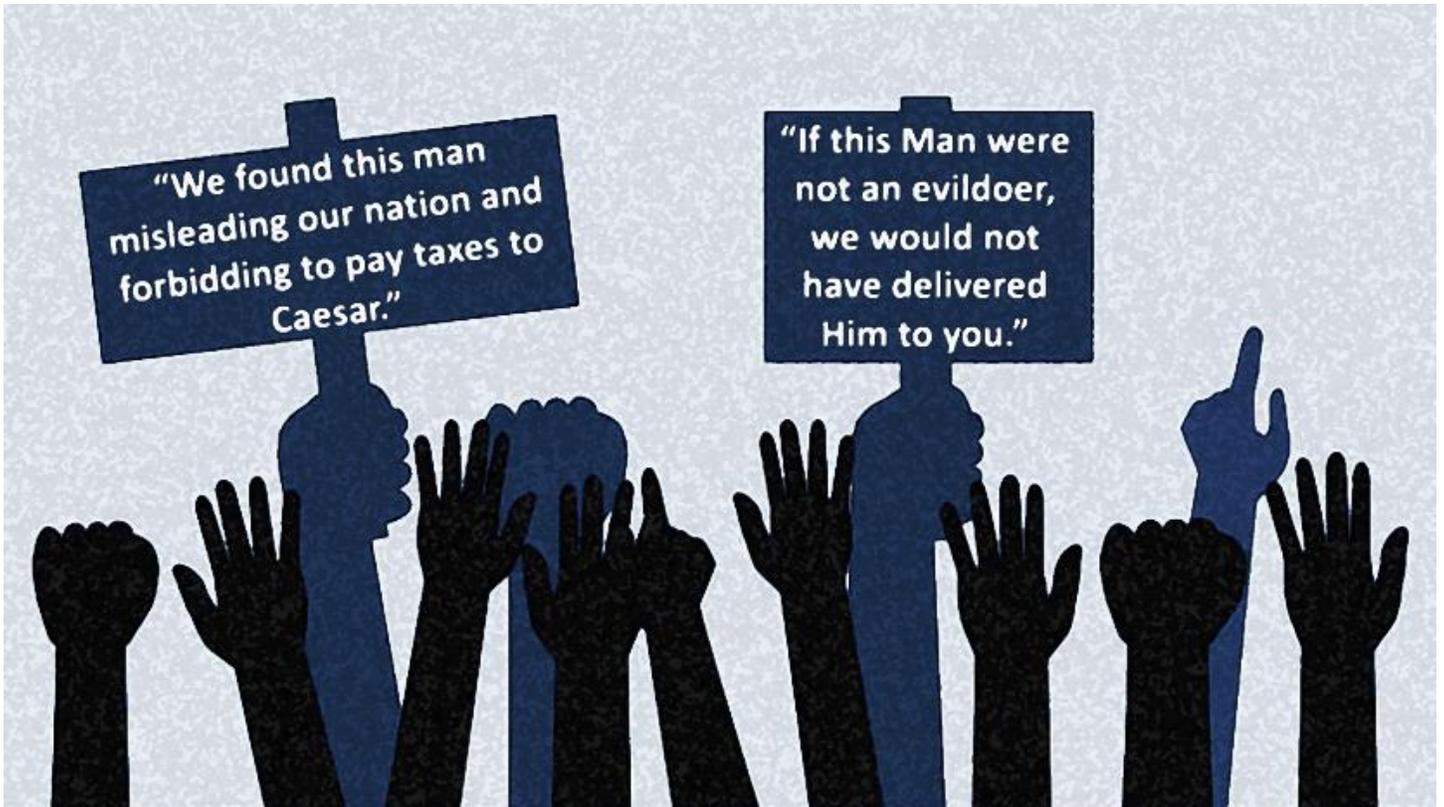
For the third time in a short span, Jesus responded with, "You said it yourself." It accomplishes everything the longer version in John accomplishes without the extra detail. What it means is that on the one hand, Jesus cannot deny that He is the "King of the Jews" especially to a Gentile.



I'm a nobody, nobody is  
perfect, therefore I am perfect!

Why especially to a Gentile? The title is imprecise in that there are far more appropriate titles theologically, such as the Anointed One, or the Messiah, or the Christ, or the Son of Man. A Gentile, like Pilate, wouldn't get the difference, or care to get it, and so, for the uninitiated, it all means the same exact thing. Jesus couldn't outright deny the charge without giving Pilate the impression that He was denying being the Christ.

On the other hand, Jesus couldn't fully embrace the charge because the ramifications of being the "King of the Jews" carried a complete misunderstanding of His role, and His rule. John explains all that... Here we simply have the phrase that both agrees and is non-committal at the same time... "Those are your words, Governor." Jesus didn't say yes, but He didn't say no, either.



The Jewish Leadership comes back to the forefront in verse 12. Even so, notice how Matthew, as ever, really keeps the focus on Jesus. Anyway, remember, that they had already gotten Pilate involved in the arrest of Jesus as being some sort of a threat to peace and stability... Well, now, they had to demonstrate the validity of their concern. It won't go over well with Pilate if they used a cohort of his troops and it was all a waste of time.

In addition, remember that after they questioned Jesus and were satisfied with a charge, they conferred with one another on how to make the charge stick. Here's

where they begin to put that part of their plan into action.

In this brief mention of their accusations, we can already discern the tactic they've settled on. Take His admission of being the Messiah and emphasize the part of that role where He will be the King long promised by God who will rescue the Jewish nation and establish a Kingdom forever. In John's Gospel, Jesus made it clear to Pilate that while He was a King, His Kingdom was not of this world.

The Jewish leaders wanted to blur that distinction and accentuate the part about the Messianic King driving out evil (i.e., the Romans) and establishing Jewish hegemony once and for all. That would obviously be a threat to Roman hegemony.

Jesus refused to say a word in His defense, not because He was intent on being found guilty, but because He knew that nothing, He could say, would change the Father's plan. He wasn't about to dignify the misleading and false charges with an answer.

Pilate was "Quite amazed." The reason was because Jesus wasn't even trying to defend Himself from the

accusations and at the same time was not giving any hint that He wanted to die. It's not amazing to have a person go along with charges if they want to be a martyr... If they have a death wish... Many people over the centuries have wanted to die and they, in a sense commit suicide, by giving in to the justice system, rather than trying to fight it. That was not what Jesus was doing and that's why the Governor was so intrigued by Jesus.



Matthew 27:15-18, 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?” 18 For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

John reports Pilate’s presentation of Jesus to the crowd with the famous, or infamous, line, “Behold the Man.” In Latin it is *Ecce Homo*, said in ecclesiastical Latin as *ā-chā hō-mō*.



Most liberal scholars, like Bart Ehrman, have a real tough time with this bit of the story... I mean if we’re honest they have a tough time with all of the bits of the Bible... That’s sort of the definition of liberal Bible

scholar. Ehrman, once an Evangelical Christian now identifies as both a humanist and an agnostic, but he still makes money teaching the New Testament as a professor and scholar. The issue he, and those like him, have here is they cannot believe that a Roman Governor would set a notorious criminal free in this way. They find no historical corroborating evidence for a policy of setting one prisoner free during the Passover.

Their arguments in this area are so persistent that some more conservative scholars vacillate. One advanced an idea to try to bridge the gap between accepting the Word as written and refusing to do so. We have historical evidence that at about this time, Pilate, did indeed, set free a notorious rebel named Jesus, possibly Jesus Barabbas (Jesus is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name Joshua and was quite common). The theory put forth was that this single event was later misunderstood by early Christians as an annual thing.

Well, that's dumb! All four Gospels agree that Pilate had that policy and there is enough difference in the way each handles the information to conclude that it comes from multiple independent sources early on.



If you believe, as I do, that the ultimate Author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, then there's no question about the facts. Even if, you think it was human authors, the overwhelming internal evidence speaks to the historical accuracy of the policy. Remember, there's zero evidence against it... Liberal scholars rarely prove anything - they just cast doubt on everything and insist that the burden of proof falls on Believers. Believers must prove to them that their liberal unbelief is misplaced. It's sure easy to sit in the cheap seats and throw rocks and require your opponent do all the work.



Anyway, this dude named Barabbas, possibly Jesus Barabbas, was undoubtedly a Zealot and perhaps part of the really violent wing of that group called the Sicarii.

At that time, the time of Jesus, 2,000 years ago, Israel had already had 2,000 years of racial history. Their nation was founded with Father Abraham in the Promised Land, even though they didn't really possess the land for another 5 centuries. Still the actual nation of Israel, in control of that territory given to them by Almighty God, had already existed for 1,500 years when this trial took place.

Americans are up in arms, ready to fight a civil war because things are not the way they believe they ought to be, and we've been a nation for 245 years. Not only have we only been around for a fraction of the time Israel had been during Jesus' life, most of us - certainly, most of our ancestors - got here long after the founding of this nation. Few Americans can claim what my son can claim. He has a direct ancestor that has fought in every war America has ever been involved in, from a many times great grandpa who was a Captain serving in the Revolutionary War, all the way through to him, a Captain presently serving in the War on Terror. Every war all the way back to the beginning and yet, that's just one branch of his family tree. Most of his ancestors, arrived long after America was America. We have such a small stake in American history compared to the Jews in Israel's history, but we're all ready to kill because we don't like the direction this country is going.

For the Jews in Jesus' day, they had been a distinct people for 2,000 years and a settled nation for 1,500 years. Their country was controlled by a foreign occupying force led by a brutal military governor - much like the Nazi's occupying France 75 years ago. Beyond that, their own Jewish religious leadership was

so corrupt they were in bed with the alien oppressors, selling out their own people for money and power.

Do you think as a Jewish person back then you might be upset by the whole thing, that you might want to go to extreme lengths to get rid of the foreigners and overthrow the corrupt religious leaders and get back to the principles upon which your nation was founded?

Enter the Zealots with their extremely radical subgroup called the Sicarii.

Barabbas was taken into custody during a riot where Zealots had caused enough unrest that people died. Luke states that “He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder” (Luke 23:19). It is completely possible that He himself was a minor character in the riot and personally killed no one. In fact, it’s possible that none of the rioters killed anyone.



When Pilate cracked down on such things and Jewish people died as a result of his troop's "Police brutality," their deaths were charged to the rioters, not to the soldiers. (I would never condone police brutality of any kind, but we in America don't have a clue what police brutality really is. What it is in places like North Korea, China, Russia, Iran, etc., etc., ad nauseum. Or what it was in the ancient world, especially Roman brutality against non-citizen insurrectionists). When Mark reports "The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection" (Mark 15:7). It does not necessarily mean that he or anyone in his group murdered anyone... The Romans may have done all

the killing in stamping out the riot... But the blood was on the hands of those causing the crackdown by Rome.



To lighten the mood... Anyway, Barabbas is called “A notorious prisoner” (Matthew 27:16), and a “Robber” (John 18:40). “Robber,” is the same term used by Jesus when asking the arresting party, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber?” (Matthew 26:55). You might remember the last time you saw this swash-buckling cat, that the word is ληστής (lā-stās), and you might also remember that I don’t like the translation,

“Robber.” While “Robber” can be a legitimate translation of the word, it’s not in these contexts.

It is the noun form of the verb meaning to plunder openly and violently... Not a thief, but an armed robber who steals forcefully. The word is used to describe pirates, armed marauders, highway bandits, but also the rebels, insurrectionists, revolutionaries, and guerilla fighters. That’s far closer to the meaning in these contexts.

Incidentally, Jesus was not hanged between two “Thieves,” He was hanged between two of Barabbas’ associates. They were Jews willing to use violent measures to regain national independence. The misunderstanding about that is thanks to the poor translation found in the KJV.



Anyway, my point is that Barabbas was an insurrectionist, which by definition made him a ληστής, and so he would be called a notorious prisoner, but he may well have been seen by Pilate as a fairly minor player whom he was willing to set free.

Pilate wouldn't have offered him up in place of Jesus unless he was both a bad man compared to Jesus and, at the same time not much of a threat to Rome. Even if he himself had personally killed someone, it wasn't a Roman and Pilate was willing to see him back on the street.



Now, put in light relative to America, do you have a little more sympathy for the Zealots trying to get their ancient nation back on track? Please note this important fact... Jesus, the Word of God made flesh who could draw a huge crowd of people and oftentimes did. Jesus, your Lord, and your Savior who was seen by thousands of Jews as the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus the Son of God on earth, who just days before, had arrived in Jerusalem to a massive welcoming riot of joyous people... Posed zero threat to the Roman government occupying His nation.

Pilate was eager to let Him go. It is impossible for that to be true and for Jesus to ever have given even a hint

that he wanted to overthrow the government. Jesus was not political. He was radical, far more radical than any of us want to be that's for certain. but He was not political. Jesus and His early Followers had much bigger fish to fry than worrying about the political machinations going on around them.

Even though the High Priest had involved Rome in arresting Jesus, it was now obvious to the Governor that Jesus was not the threat they made Him out to be and that it was only His popularity as a religious figure sparking jealousy in the High Priest and his cronies that put Him there.

Pilate was ready to free Jesus.



Matthew 27:19-23, 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!"

Here again, we get some confusion in piecing all four Gospels together. I won't go into all the details, except to say that a lot of stuff is compacted into a just a few words in each account. Jesus was first brought to the Governor's Palace early in the morning and there was a preliminary inquiry without an audience, then Pilate, knowing Jesus wasn't guilty of anything other than causing envy in the Jewish leaders, saw a way out by sending Jesus to Herod Antipas the ruler of Galilee. Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate, and then Pilate entered the official court where He would judge the matters before him that day.

That's what verse 19 is all about... At this point the Governor had moved out to a public place of judgment - and taken up his position on the "Judgment seat." It is βῆμα (bā-mä), which is derived from a verb that basically means to take a step. In this context, it is the steps up to an elevated stage with a judgment seat upon it and therefore it is a Greek, or Roman, judgment seat.

Under Roman rule there was no separation of powers. The Governor was the executive, the legislative and the judiciary all rolled up in one guy. We don't like that in America, but that's the way God operates as well.

You might be familiar with the term βῆμα because it is associated by the Apostle Paul with the judgment of Believers by Christ as opposed to the Great White Throne Judgment that only ends badly.



It was still early in the morning and Pilate's wife woke up with a nightmare, or premonition and thought it urgent enough to have the Governor interrupted during his official duties as judge. As I mentioned before there's not a lot of concern for Jesus, there's just a lot of fear about how the events will affect them personally. Her husband had already concluded much the same

thing about Jesus - He was innocent. In Luke and John, Pilate repeatedly says, "I find no guilt in Him."

Back in verse 17, and now more obviously in verse 20, there is a crowd of Jewish people witnessing the trial and it's quite apparent that they were preselected by the Jewish leadership. It is a stacked deck. This was all part of their scheming just before they took Jesus to see Pilate. The Leaders incited, enticed, and manipulated the crowd into demanding the crucifixion of Jesus with such tenacity and ferocity that Pilate eventually relented.

Some cast doubt on whether a Roman military governor, like Pilate, would give in like that. First, Jesus was just another Jew to Pilate. He wouldn't lose any sleep in crucifying Him. Second, Pilate's entire job, even in his role as judge, was to keep the peace so the economy would keep clipping along. He wouldn't risk a riot for one man, innocent or not.



Matthew 27:24-26, 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.

Mark says Pilate “Wished to satisfy the crowd” (Mark 15:15), which included the High Priest and the other Jewish officials who were pulling their strings. Luke tells us that granted their demand and “Delivered Jesus to their will.” In John we see Pilate was actually “Afraid”

by this point and really tried to release Jesus, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar” Pilate then asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar’” (John 19:12&15). Here in Matthew, we see Pilate washing his hands of the whole affair and the people accepting the blood of Jesus as being on them and their children - not in a salvific way, quite the reverse. “His blood shall be on us and on our children!”



The problem with Pilate, is the same as that with the Chief Priests; neither can wash their hands of their

complicity in the murder of God made man. They will answer for their crime.



The obvious question is what would you have done that day? Would you have been like Pilate's wife? Worried, but ineffective. Would you have been like Pilate, pronouncing a sentence, but convincing yourself that you would bear no guilt for it? Would you have been like the religious leaders; justifying your actions as necessary and even as righteous? Would you have been like the crowd assembled, acting out of fear? Would you have been like the Roman soldiers, simply carrying out their duty? Perhaps you would have been

more like Peter, or even Judas. While that's the obvious question, it isn't the pertinent question.



The question really is, what are you doing right now with Jesus?