

“What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

by Bill Crews

When this question was asked by Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judea, Jesus was on trial in Jerusalem at the official residence there of Pilate. Pilate was addressing the chief priests, scribes and elders, the ones who had orchestrated this whole nefarious affair.

Prior to this Jesus had been illegally arrested in the garden of Gethsemane — *illegal* because it was night, *illegal* because it was during Passover week, *illegal* because it was without any criminal charges. He had been arrested and bound and brought before Annas, ex-high priest and father-in-law to Caiphas. There, without any charges against Him, Jesus had been asked to tell Annas about His teaching and His disciples — an *illegal* “fishing expedition.” He was unlawfully struck in the face and taken to the house of Caiphas, the acting high priest, where were gathered chief priests, scribes and elders of the Sanhedrin (enough for a quorum).

There hired false witnesses had been gathered to testify against Jesus — to no avail. That failing, Jesus was placed under oath and *illegally* asked if He were the Christ, the Son of God. When He answered in the affirmative, He was *falsely charged* with blasphemy and sentenced to die. The elders all agreed and then abused Him without mercy. At break of day a quorum of Sanhedrin judges (the elders) convened and quickly repeated what Caiphas had done — the meeting and the procedure were both *illegal*. From there Jesus was hurriedly taken to the residence of Pilate for two reasons: they could not kill Jesus without Roman permission and they wanted Jesus slain by the Roman method of crucifixion.

After finally extracting from the Jewish leaders their capital charges against Jesus, manifold lies because they were not their charge of blasphemy, because they were all false, and because they had not been “found” in a judicial sense (such a trial had not taken place). But Pilate, based on their false charges, took Jesus inside, examined Him (Jesus made clear that His was not a secular kingdom and how He went about reigning as a king). Based upon His examination, Pilate came out and pronounced Jesus innocent and not worthy of death. From the protests of the mob he learned that Jesus was from Galilee, and immediately sent Him away to Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Perea and in Jerusalem for Passover. There Jesus would say nothing at all, was shamefully arrayed and mocked, then sent back to Pilate.

Pilate did not want to condemn Jesus to death and again declared His innocence. A disturbing message from his wife did not make the situation any easier. Some from the crowd reminded Pilate of his Passover practice of releasing a prisoner of their choosing. Rather than allow them to choose just anyone, he selected Barabbas, now in prison and bound with several others who had robbed and murdered in an attempted insurrection. Pilate then gave them a choice between Jesus and Barabbas (surely they would never want a man like Barabbas set free). He was wrong; leaders of the Jews had moved among the crowd ordering them to shout for the release of Barabbas. As stunned as he must have been, Pilate ordered the release of Barabbas and **then uttered the words that serve as the heading of this article**. It was Pilate’s and Pilate’s alone to make that decision, but he had not a clue as to the true identify of the man whose physical life was in his hands.

He did not know that this was indeed the promised Jewish messiah (John 1:41; 4:25-26), deity that had become flesh (John 1:1,14), the very one who

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