

THE PRESENT TRUTH

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It Was for Us Pt. 2

The Jewish rulers had been anxious to get Jesus into their power, but for fear of raising a tumult among the people they had not dared to take Him openly. So they had sought someone who would secretly betray Him, and had found in Judas, one of the twelve disciples, the man who would do this base act. Judas had naturally a strong love for money, but he had not always been wicked and corrupt enough to do such a deed as this. He had fostered the evil spirit of avarice until it had become the ruling motive of his life, and he could now sell his Lord for thirty pieces of silver (about \$17.00), the price of a slave. (Exodus 21:28-32.) He could now betray the Saviour with a kiss in Gethsemane. But he followed every step of the Son of God, as He went from the garden to the trial before the Jewish rulers. He had no thought that the Saviour would allow the Jews to kill Him, as they had threatened to do.

At every moment he expected to see Him released and protected by divine power, as had been done in the past. But as the hours went by, and Jesus quietly submitted to all the indignities that were heaped upon Him, a terrible fear came to the traitor, that he had indeed betrayed his Master to His death. As the trial drew to a close, Judas could endure the torture of his guilty conscience no longer. All at once there rang through the hall a hoarse voice, which sent a thrill of terror to the hearts of all present: "He is innocent. Spare Him, O Caiaphas. He has done nothing worthy of death!"

The tall form of Judas was seen pressing through the startled crowd. His face was pale and haggard, and large drops of sweat stood on his forehead. Rushing to the throne of judgment, he threw down before the high priest the pieces of silver that had been the price of his Lord's betrayal. He eagerly grasped the robe of Caiaphas, and begged him to release Jesus, declaring that He had done no wrong. Caiaphas angrily shook him off, and said with scorn: "What is that to us? See thou to that." Matthew 27:4. Judas then threw himself at the Saviour's feet. He confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, and begged Him to deliver Himself from His enemies.

The Saviour knew that Judas did not really repent for what he had done. The false disciple feared that punishment would come upon him for his terrible deed; but he felt no real sorrow because he had betrayed the spotless Son of God. Yet Christ spoke to him no word of condemnation. He looked with pity upon Judas, and said: "For this hour came I into the world." A murmur of surprise ran through the assembly. With amazement they beheld the forbearance of Christ toward His betrayer. Judas saw that his entreaties were in vain, and he rushed from the hall, crying: "It is too late! It is too late!" He felt that He could not live to see Jesus crucified, and in despair went out and hanged himself.

Later that same day, on the road from Pilate's judgment hall to Calvary, the wicked throng were leading the Saviour to the place of crucifixion. Suddenly there came an interruption to their shouts and jeers. As they passed a retired spot, they saw at the foot of a lifeless tree the dead body of Judas. It was a revolting sight. His weight had broken the cord by which he had hanged himself to the tree. In falling, his body had been horribly mangled, and the dogs were now devouring it. His remains were immediately buried out of sight; but there was less mockery, and many a pale face revealed the fearful thoughts within. Retribution seemed already to be visiting those who were guilty of the blood of Jesus.

Before Pilate: After Christ had been condemned by the judges of the Sanhedrin, He was taken at once to Pilate, the Roman governor, to have the sentence confirmed and executed. The Jewish priests and rulers could not themselves enter the judgment hall of Pilate. By the ceremonial laws of their nation, they would become defiled by so doing, and thus be debarred from taking part in the feast of the Passover. In their blindness they did not see that Christ was the real Passover lamb, and that since they had rejected Him, this great feast had for them lost its meaning.

As Pilate beheld Jesus, he saw a man of noble countenance and dignified bearing. No trace of crime was to be seen in His face. Pilate turned to the priests and asked: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" John 18:29. His accusers did not wish to state particulars, and so were not prepared for this question. They knew that they could bring no truthful evidence on

which the Roman governor would condemn Him. So the priests called the false witnesses to their aid. "And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King." Luke 23:2.

This was false, for Christ had plainly sanctioned the payment of tribute to Caesar. When the lawyers had tried to entrap Him in regard to this very matter, He had said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." Matthew 22:21. Pilate was not deceived by the testimony of the false witnesses. He turned to the Saviour, and asked: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest." Matthew 27:11. When they heard this answer, Caiaphas and those who were with him called Pilate to witness that Jesus had admitted the crime of which they accused Him. With noisy cries they demanded that He be sentenced to death.

As Christ made no answer to His accusers, Pilate said to Him: "Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee. "But Jesus yet answered nothing." Mark 15:4, 5.

Pilate was perplexed. He saw no evidence of crime in Jesus, and he had no confidence in those who were accusing Him. The noble appearance and quiet manner of the Saviour were in direct contrast to the excitement and fury of His accusers. Pilate was impressed with this, and was well satisfied of His innocence. Hoping to gain the truth from Him, he took Jesus by Himself, and questioned Him: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Christ did not give a direct answer to this question, but asked: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

The Spirit of God was striving with Pilate. The question of Jesus was intended to lead him to examine his own heart more closely. Pilate understood the meaning of the question. His own heart was opened before him, and he saw that his soul was stirred by conviction. But pride arose in his heart, and he answered: "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?" Pilate's golden opportunity had passed. But Jesus desired Pilate to understand that He had not come to be an earthly king, therefore He said: "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." Pilate then asked, "Art Thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." Pilate had a desire to know the truth. His mind was confused. He eagerly grasped the words of the Saviour, and his heart was stirred with a great longing to know what the truth really was, and how he could obtain it. He asked Jesus: "What is truth?" But he did not wait to receive an answer. The tumult of the crowd outside the hall of justice had increased to a roar. The priests were clamorous for immediate action, and Pilate was recalled to the interests of the hour. Going out to the people, he declared: "I find in Him no fault at all." John 18:33-38.

These words from a heathen judge were a scathing rebuke to the base perfidy and falsehood of the rulers of Israel who were accusing the Saviour. As the priests and elders heard this from Pilate, their disappointment and rage knew no bounds. They had long plotted and waited for this opportunity. As they saw the prospect of the release of Jesus, they seemed ready to tear Him in pieces. They lost all reason and self-control, and gave vent to curses, behaving more like demons than like men. They loudly denounced Pilate, and threatened him with the censure of the Roman government. They accused Pilate of refusing to condemn Jesus, who, they affirmed, had set Himself up against Caesar. Then they raised the cry: "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." Luke 23:5.

Pilate at this time had no thought of condemning Jesus. He was sure of His innocence. But when he heard that Christ was from Galilee, he decided to send Him to Herod, the ruler of that province, who was then in Jerusalem. By this course Pilate thought to shift the responsibility of the trial from himself to Herod. Jesus was faint from hunger, and weary from loss of sleep. He was also suffering from the cruel treatment He had received. But Pilate delivered Him again to the soldiers, and He was dragged away, amid the jeers and insults of the merciless mob. {The Story of Jesus Pg.118- 127}

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