

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

MARCH 2016

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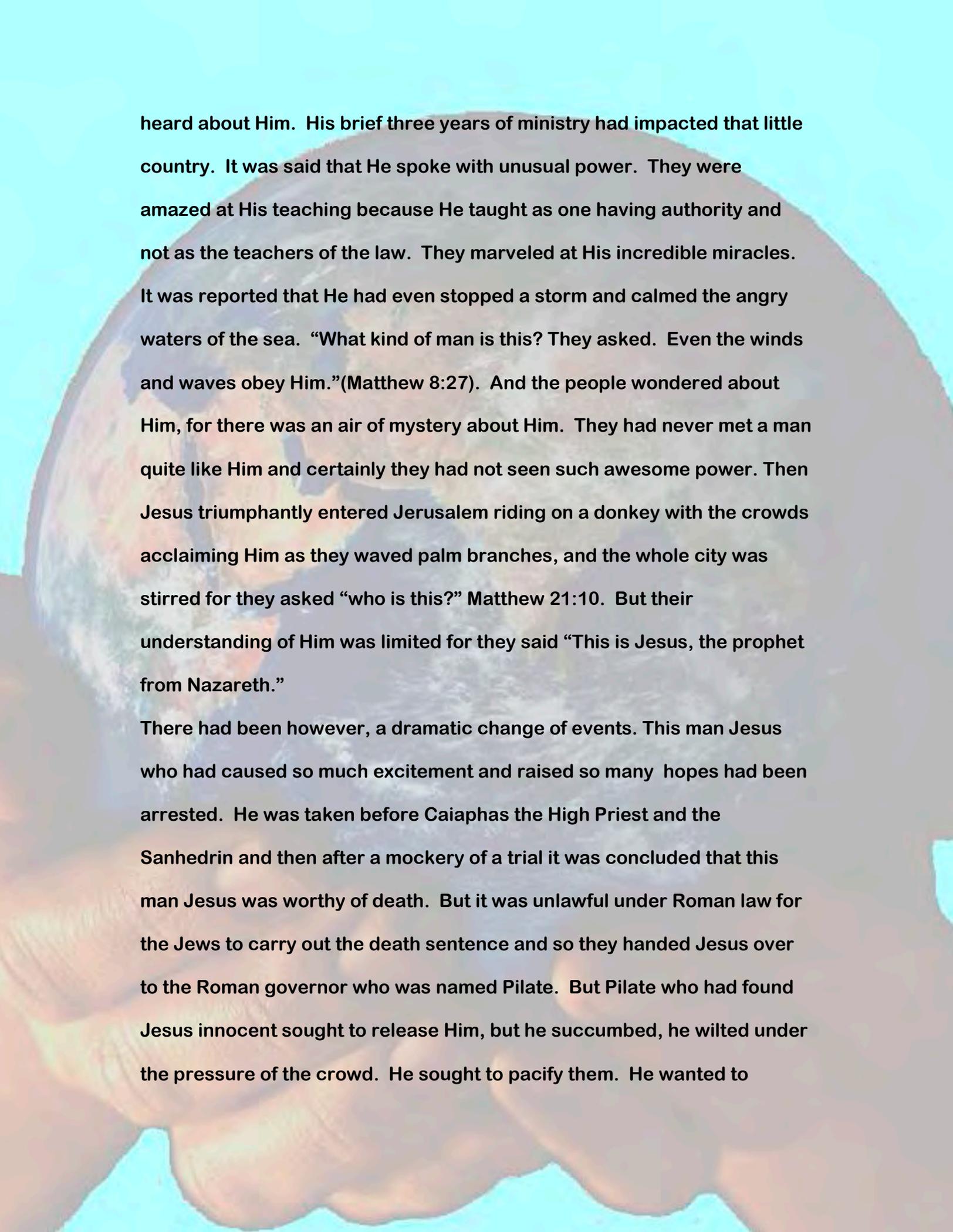
Bedwellglobalministries

CONSIDER YOUR VERDICT

Scripture Reading – Matthew 27:15-26. Text – Matthew 27:22.

Introduction

It was the time of the Passover in Jerusalem and people from various parts of the world of that day had gathered to celebrate this great feast in Jewish life. The streets thronged with happy people. The alleyways resounded with note of excited voices as people renewed old friendships. The merchants who took advantage of the incoming crowds were doing a brisk business. There was the usual spirit of expectation as the Jewish nation was about to celebrate this significant event in her history. It was an event which called to remembrance her dramatic deliverance from the hand of the Egyptians. Apart from the usual topics of conversation, there was talk about this man called Jesus. If they had not heard Him they had



heard about Him. His brief three years of ministry had impacted that little country. It was said that He spoke with unusual power. They were amazed at His teaching because He taught as one having authority and not as the teachers of the law. They marveled at His incredible miracles. It was reported that He had even stopped a storm and calmed the angry waters of the sea. “What kind of man is this? They asked. Even the winds and waves obey Him.”(Matthew 8:27). And the people wondered about Him, for there was an air of mystery about Him. They had never met a man quite like Him and certainly they had not seen such awesome power. Then Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey with the crowds acclaiming Him as they waved palm branches, and the whole city was stirred for they asked “who is this?” Matthew 21:10. But their understanding of Him was limited for they said “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth.”

There had been however, a dramatic change of events. This man Jesus who had caused so much excitement and raised so many hopes had been arrested. He was taken before Caiaphas the High Priest and the Sanhedrin and then after a mockery of a trial it was concluded that this man Jesus was worthy of death. But it was unlawful under Roman law for the Jews to carry out the death sentence and so they handed Jesus over to the Roman governor who was named Pilate. But Pilate who had found Jesus innocent sought to release Him, but he succumbed, he wilted under the pressure of the crowd. He sought to pacify them. He wanted to

accommodate them. This led him to ask the an extremely important question. Matthew 27:22. “What shall I do them with Jesus who is called the Christ? Now Pilate probably did not realize the full significance of that question. But which ever way you look at it is a appeal for a verdict. It is a challenge to decide on our stand with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it is a timeless challenge and after over two thousand years it still faces us today. What will we do with Jesus who is called the Christ? “What is our verdict concerning Him?” “What decision have you made about Him?” This is a crucial question. There are three possible reactions to this question. This question is a call. It is a,

CALL TO REFLECTION. Matthew 27:22. “What shall I do then, then, with Jesus who is called the Christ?” There it is, and any serious consideration of this question demands that we seriously reflect on who this man Jesus is. It is question that places Jesus on center stage. It directs the focus on Him, who He is and what He is, and what He is about in our world. You see, if I am going to decide for Jesus there are some things that I need to know about Him. Is He a phony, or is He who He says He is? If He is then I must take Him seriously for He claimed to be God. If we study His life and character there are some attributes which are obvious and which filter through during His arraignment before Pilate and through His crucifixion. Consider first of all.

a. His Innocency. Matthew 27. 23.

Pilate asked the crowd which clamored for His crucifixion. “What crime has committed?” If ever there was a miscarriage of justice in the annuls of

Jewish history, it was revealed in the judgment passed on Jesus. One has pointed out that “ it seems that eight hours after His arrest He was on the Cross. In a brief space of six hours He was examined five times and by four different authorities. He was accused by witnesses who contradicted themselves, condemned on a deliberate misinterpretation of His innocence.” Jesus had been tried under the Roman justice system and found innocent. Pilate evidently knew that Jesus had been handed over to him out of envy. The story of the trial of Jesus is a story of Pilate’s struggle between executing justice as was his responsibility and the instinct of self-preservation and political survival. The crowds were being stirred to demand the crucifixion of Jesus and in Mark’s Gospel 15:14. Pilate asks “Why, what crime has He committed. In Luke’s Gospel chapter 23:4, He declares “I find no basis for a charge against the man.” Verse 14 “You brought this man as one who was exciting the people to rebellion. I have examined Him in your presence and find no basis for your charges against Him. V.15 “Neither has Herod...” and in Matthew 27:26 “...He took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood.’” It is significant the Apostle’s were no doubt of this truth about Jesus. The Apostle Peter testifies that Jesus committed no sin and no deceit was found in His mouth.(1 Peter 2:22.). Consider further not only His innocency but,

b. His Authority. Matthew 27:22.

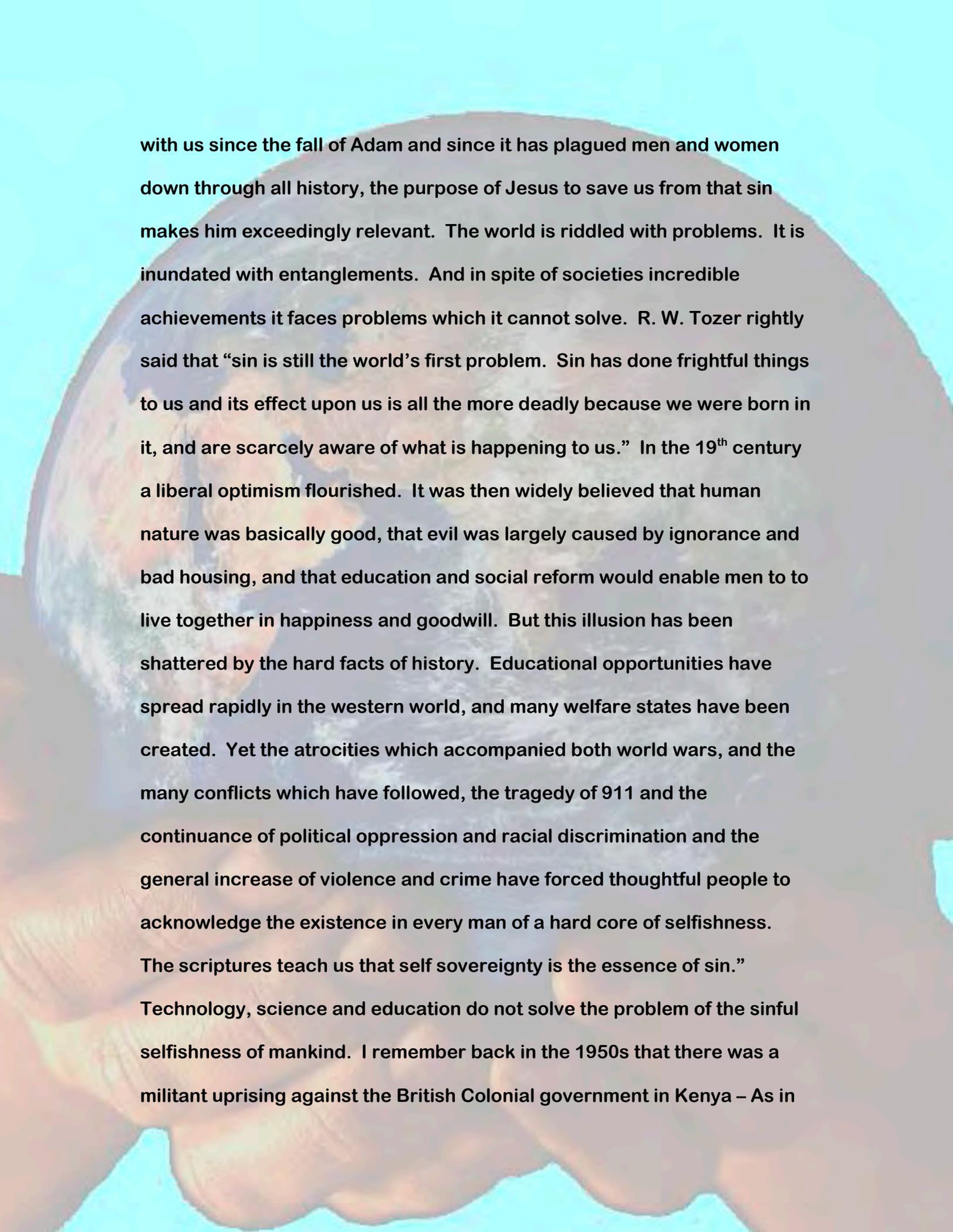
Pilate presented Jesus as the one who was called the Christ, but He was

unaware of the significance of his statement for the truth as he presented. Whether he knew it or not, he presented Jesus as Christ the Messiah – the anointed of God. The Jews understood the meaning of it. It spoke God's promise of a deliverer of His people. This man Jesus was specifically designated, Divinely appointed and anointed to be the Savior of the world. His mission was to bring salvation to the human race. He had the authority to do that because God had anointed Him to do it. He was the Christ. There is another element introduced into this story that touches the authority of Jesus. It was an issue which had come up on more than one occasion. It had to do with the sovereignty of Christ. Pilate asked Him "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied "Yes it is as you say." On that cross a Pilate placed an inscription above His head "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Matthew 27:37. The Jews, however, rejected Jesus on both titles. They dismissed and rejected His authority on both counts.

Note too,

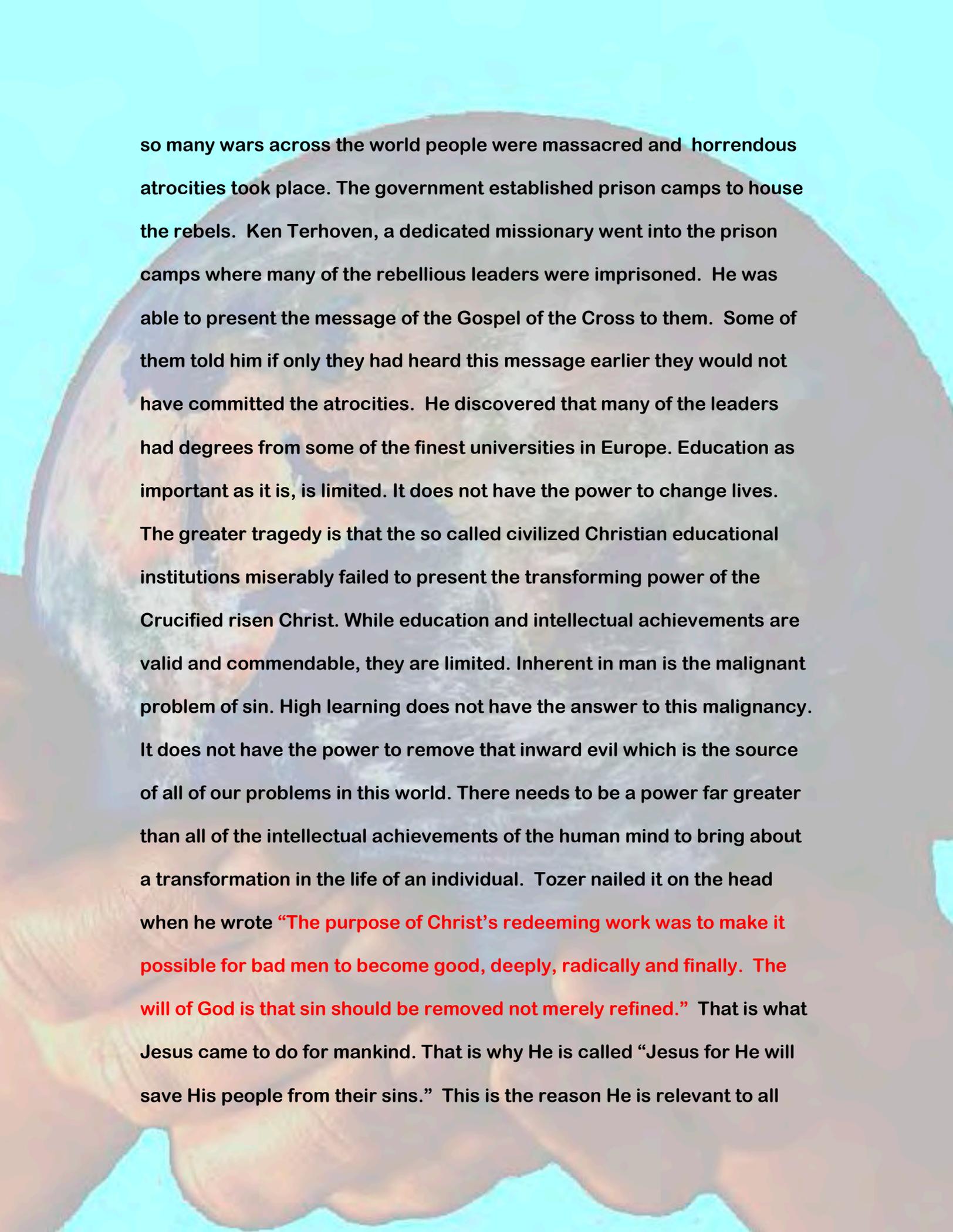
c. His Relevancy. Matthew 27:22.

Note too that Pilate referred to Him as JESUS. While the title Christ refers to His authority as the God anointed designated Messiah and explains the fact and character of His mission on the earth, so the name of Jesus refers to the purpose of His mission on earth. Jesus means Jehovah's Salvation or Jehovah is Salvation or Jehovah's Savior. Matthew tells us that He was called Jesus for He would save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21). This makes Jesus relevant to all periods of history. Since sin has been



with us since the fall of Adam and since it has plagued men and women down through all history, the purpose of Jesus to save us from that sin makes him exceedingly relevant. The world is riddled with problems. It is inundated with entanglements. And in spite of societies incredible achievements it faces problems which it cannot solve. R. W. Tozer rightly said that “sin is still the world’s first problem. Sin has done frightful things to us and its effect upon us is all the more deadly because we were born in it, and are scarcely aware of what is happening to us.” In the 19th century a liberal optimism flourished. It was then widely believed that human nature was basically good, that evil was largely caused by ignorance and bad housing, and that education and social reform would enable men to to live together in happiness and goodwill. But this illusion has been shattered by the hard facts of history. Educational opportunities have spread rapidly in the western world, and many welfare states have been created. Yet the atrocities which accompanied both world wars, and the many conflicts which have followed, the tragedy of 911 and the continuance of political oppression and racial discrimination and the general increase of violence and crime have forced thoughtful people to acknowledge the existence in every man of a hard core of selfishness. The scriptures teach us that self sovereignty is the essence of sin.”

Technology, science and education do not solve the problem of the sinful selfishness of mankind. I remember back in the 1950s that there was a militant uprising against the British Colonial government in Kenya – As in



so many wars across the world people were massacred and horrendous atrocities took place. The government established prison camps to house the rebels. Ken Terhoven, a dedicated missionary went into the prison camps where many of the rebellious leaders were imprisoned. He was able to present the message of the Gospel of the Cross to them. Some of them told him if only they had heard this message earlier they would not have committed the atrocities. He discovered that many of the leaders had degrees from some of the finest universities in Europe. Education as important as it is, is limited. It does not have the power to change lives. The greater tragedy is that the so called civilized Christian educational institutions miserably failed to present the transforming power of the Crucified risen Christ. While education and intellectual achievements are valid and commendable, they are limited. Inherent in man is the malignant problem of sin. High learning does not have the answer to this malignancy. It does not have the power to remove that inward evil which is the source of all of our problems in this world. There needs to be a power far greater than all of the intellectual achievements of the human mind to bring about a transformation in the life of an individual. Tozer nailed it on the head when he wrote **“The purpose of Christ’s redeeming work was to make it possible for bad men to become good, deeply, radically and finally. The will of God is that sin should be removed not merely refined.”** That is what Jesus came to do for mankind. That is why He is called “Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.” This is the reason He is relevant to all

ages in history and to all cultures in our world, and in all seasons in time.

He is the only cure for our sin.

Let me say if we need and desire that He save us from our sin, we have first of all to settle the question “what will we do with Jesus who is called the Christ. This is a question on which we need to seriously reflect. But this is also a question which by its very nature is,

2. A CALL TO RESPOND. Matthew 27:22-24.

Pilate asked “What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ? It is a reasonable question but it was also a question intended to get the crowd to come to a conclusion. Its purpose was to incite or excite some kind of response to Him. It is the kind of challenge that you cannot simply ignore it hoping that you can be non-committal about it. Ignoring is in reality a negative response to Him. As you study the developing events around the Cross, filtering through it all are three responses which bring together the most common responses that men and women have taken and have taken towards Jesus down through time. There is first of all,

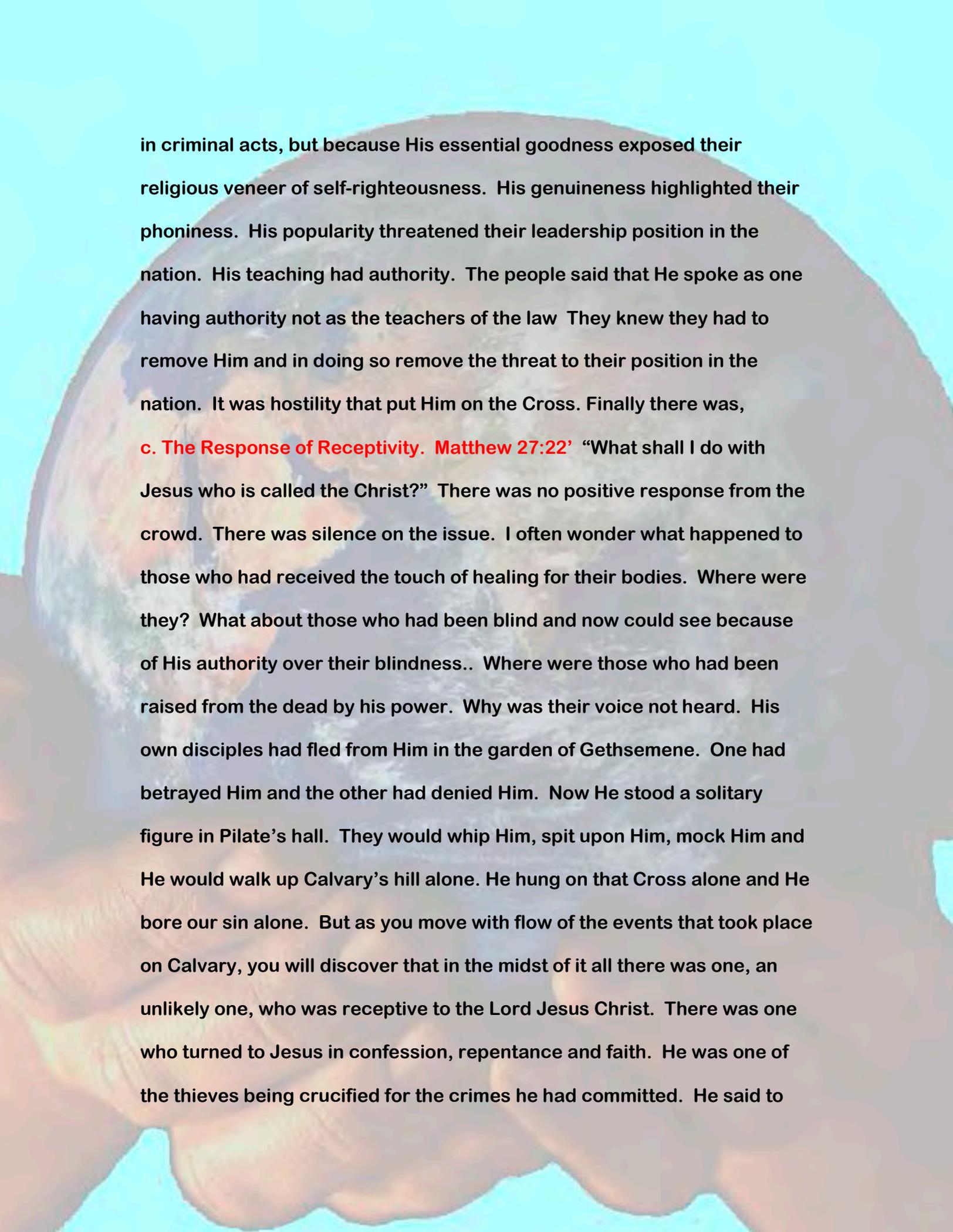
a. The Response of Neutrality. Matthew 27:24.

This is seen in Pilate’s act of futility before the crowd. He thought he could get away with his irresponsibility by his so called neutral stance. “I am innocent of this man’s blood.” He said. It is your responsibility and in a futile symbolic gesture he called for a bowl of water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. It is clear that Pilate wrestled with the demands of justice. He sought to release this man called the Christ. He wanted Him

free. His own wife lost sleep over this man called the Christ. “He was innocent,” she said, “do not have anything to do with Him.” But the crowd wanted Him crucified and the most telling argument that pushed Pilate over the edge of justice was “if you let this man go you are not a friend of Ceaser.” Then Pilate in his struggle to do what he knew to be right thought that he could excuse himself from his responsibility to administer the law by taking a neutral position. In trying to wash his hands off the whole matter, he revealed his true position. It was an act of futility. It was his so-called neutral position that opened the door for the crucifixion of Jesus. His neutrality was in real terms a decision against Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 “He with me is not with me is against me.” Pilate answered his own question with a neutral stance, “What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ.” The place of neutrality is a vote against Jesus. There was another response that came to light in this moment of challenge. It was,

b. The Response of Hostility. Matthew 27:23.

When Pilate asked the crowd this question their response was spontaneous and filled with hostility. The crowd shouted louder “Crucify Him. The Jewish leaders who were filled with hate were determined to have Jesus crucified. They wanted Him out of their way. He had walked into their lives, disturbed their comfortable lifestyle, exposed their religious façade and attacked their pride and hypocrisy and so they totally rejected Him. Not because He was essentially evil or had involved Himself



in criminal acts, but because His essential goodness exposed their religious veneer of self-righteousness. His genuineness highlighted their phoniness. His popularity threatened their leadership position in the nation. His teaching had authority. The people said that He spoke as one having authority not as the teachers of the law. They knew they had to remove Him and in doing so remove the threat to their position in the nation. It was hostility that put Him on the Cross. Finally there was,

c. The Response of Receptivity. Matthew 27:22' "What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" There was no positive response from the crowd. There was silence on the issue. I often wonder what happened to those who had received the touch of healing for their bodies. Where were they? What about those who had been blind and now could see because of His authority over their blindness.. Where were those who had been raised from the dead by his power. Why was their voice not heard. His own disciples had fled from Him in the garden of Gethsemene. One had betrayed Him and the other had denied Him. Now He stood a solitary figure in Pilate's hall. They would whip Him, spit upon Him, mock Him and He would walk up Calvary's hill alone. He hung on that Cross alone and He bore our sin alone. But as you move with flow of the events that took place on Calvary, you will discover that in the midst of it all there was one, an unlikely one, who was receptive to the Lord Jesus Christ. There was one who turned to Jesus in confession, repentance and faith. He was one of the thieves being crucified for the crimes he had committed. He said to

Jesus “remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus replied “I tell you the truth today you will be with me in paradise. And so salvation

came to a willing, receptive and repentant heart.

There can be different responses to the question that Pilate asked the crowd. We can try to be neutral to it, which is really a vote against Him. We can also be outright hostile to Him and crucify or we can be positively receptive to Him. But there is no middle ground. We are either for Him or against Him. The question comes to us this Easter season, “What will you do with Jesus who is called the Christ.?” This question is one which demands a response from us. What response is it going to be? Finally this question is,

3. A CALL TO A NEW RESOLVE. Matthew 27:22.

There is no doubt that the question Pilate asked implies that there needs to be,

a. A Personal Resolution. Matthew 27:22. Why is this so? Because it is a personal call – a personal challenge. “What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ. This was a personal challenge to Pilate. His problem was that he did not recognize that. He put the question to the crowd as to what he should do with Jesus. The decision concerning what we should do with Jesus is not a decision the crowd should make for us, for it is a personal decision. But Pilate also came up with a choice which he presented to the crowd. The scriptures tell us that it was the custom at the feast of the Passover to release one prisoner. At that time there was a notorious criminal whose name was Barabbas. He was a robber. Pilate thinking that the crowd would select Jesus the innocent one and not Barabbas the dangerous one asked the question “which one do you want me to release to you” Barabbas the robber or Jesus who is called the

Christ . And they chose Barabbus. This is a personal question calling for a voluntary decision.

In a peanuts comic strip, Lucy said to Linus: “I think I would make a good evangelist. Do you know that kid who sits behind me in school? I convinced him that my religion is better than his.” “Really? How did you accomplish that?” Linus asked. “I hit him with my lunch box!” Lucy replied. The lunch box gospel is not the New Testament gospel. Jesus never coerce a person. He challenges – He calls – He pleads – He knocks but never forces His way into the heart and life of a person. Pilate question is personal question demanding a voluntary personal response. Furthermore this question is also a,

b. Call to a New Decision. Matthew 27:22.

The question wants to know what decision you are going to make concerning Christ. Are you going to know Him simply as a passing acquaintance, or an ardent admirer or even diligent student of his teaching? This question goes beyond all this kind of superficial treatment of Him. The question goes to the extent or measure of our hearts response to Him. We know who Jesus is. We know what He has done for us. We know that His love for us was such that He paid the supreme price for our salvation. We know that He gave us His best. What more could He do than He has done in order to save us from sin and hell. Have we given Him our best? Can we do less than this? The question this morning is not only what we have done with Jesus, BUT are what are we doing with Him

day by day. If we gave Him our best does He still have it.

Conclusion

What must I do with Jesus who is called the Christ. What is your verdict concerning Him.? Consider it a fresh this morning for on your answer hangs so much. The Bible says that “today is the day of salvation now is the accepted time” What will you do with Jesus who is called the Christ? “We are like the jury.” said Dr. J. H. Jowett, “We are like the jury always hearing the evidence but never giving a verdict.” And the question comes to us “What will you do with Jesus who is called the Christ?” A little boy was taken to an art gallery where he saw for the first time the picture of Holman Hunt’s “The Light of the World.” As the little fellow looked at it there was something he could not understand. He saw the face of the one standing at the door asking admittance was the face of a loving patient person. He noted the nail pierced Hand, the thorn crowned brow. He knew that if admitted He would do no harm, only good.. After several moments silence he looked into his mother’s face and asked, “Mother, why don’t they let Him in” That is a good question. Why won’t they let Him in? What will you with Jesus who is called the Christ? What you do with Him now will determine what He will do with you at the Judgment