

## Deny yourself take up your cross

- John 19:15-16 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" **Pilate** said to them, "**Shall I crucify your King?**" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then **he**[Pilate] **delivered Him to them to be crucified**. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.

**What does this statement by Jesus mean?** "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

- Mark 8:33-35 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

**Answer:** When the truth about **Jesus Christ is revealed to a person**, a decision MUST be made.

This decision is very clear, for it demands that the individual **MUST** make a choice of **taking one of only two possible paths**. Believe/trust Jesus or Reject Jesus.

The individual's entire future is held in balance by which path he/she chooses to take. After hearing the truth which Jesus declared about Himself, the hearer must decide: Will I believe and trust in Jesus or will I reject Him? Will I embrace Jesus or will I deliver Him to be crucified again?

Believing what Jesus declared about Himself to be true will demand another decision: Will I follow Jesus and become His disciple [follower] or will I reject Jesus and continue to lead my life as I have prior to receiving this information?

If I become a follower of Jesus, He becomes not **ONLY** my SAVIOR but also my LORD. I now voluntarily place myself under His leadership and government. This means I deny my inherited desire to be my own "god" and attempt to rule my own life.

This is why Jesus further explained: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

All human beings are born with an innate fallen desire to be their own "god", ruling their own lives desperately trying to frame life choices to get whatever they want, whenever they want it and in their exact timing.

Jesus comes and simply declares [paraphrased]: 'This thinking will lead to tragedy in your life on earth and separation from God in hell forever. If you choose to 'lose' your life by giving the control of it over to Me, you, in fact, will NOT lose it in the important matters, but will gain unimaginable blessing and joy.'

Pilate gives us the clearest possible example of making an eternal choice concerning Jesus.

Pilate gives us the indisputable record of a man who struggled with this decision but, against his conscience, denied Jesus and delivered Him to be crucified. After his examination of Jesus as the Roman Governor of Judea, **Pilate clearly determined Jesus was innocent**. In fact, Pilate seemed to even believe in part Jesus' answer about His kingdom not being of this world but of another world, a spiritual world. Pilate faced that "eternal destiny" fork in the road.

Pilate went to sleep the night before this encounter with Jesus, without thinking he would be facing a choice about his eternal destiny the next day. But soon pressure would be pressed upon him with only a few moments to make his decision. Awakened that day, Pilate had no thought of being faced with the most important decision he would ever be confronted with in his entire life.

Such is true for all of us human beings.”). One day a line to be crossed will be presented. Will we or will we not, is the answer each one of us **MUST** give.

- Revelation 20:11-12,15 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and **books were opened**. And another book was opened, which is the **Book of Life**. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. And anyone **not found written** in the **Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire.

What decision would Pilate make? Would he release Jesus, the innocent Man, or would he condemn him to death? Pilate was confronted with the "potential LOSS" of his earthly kingdom and career when the religious leaders declared, in essence, they would report him to Rome if he did NOT kill Jesus.

**Pilate's Decision.** John 19:5-16 Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, **"Behold the Man!"** 6 Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, **for I find no fault in Him.**" 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." 8 Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, 9 and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." 12 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, **"If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."** 13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, **"We have no king but Caesar!"** 16 Then **he delivered Him to them to be crucified.** Then they took Jesus and led Him away.

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No person who rejects Jesus Christ is innocent! Pilate tried to somehow avoid making a clear decision about Jesus, even to the point of making an elaborate show of washing his hands.

- Matthew 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, **he took water and washed his hands before the multitude**, saying, **"I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."**

In vain, Pilate made this showing of "washing his hands". In his heart Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, yet he made his decision against Him. Pilate chose to attempt to save his life and

career by rejecting the clear, unavoidable truth about Jesus and sealed forever his separation from Jesus in hell.

In a very clear parallel, each of us is confronted with the same choice. A line is drawn before each of us. Jesus is clearly proclaimed. The truth is unavoidable. A choice must be made. One's very next step will clearly show the decision made in the heart. One path declares Jesus is true invoking the heart's cry, "This Man is Jesus Christ. He is my Lord and Savior, He died so I could be forgiven and live with Him forever. I will give Him my life!"

The other path declares: "I will NOT believe Jesus. I will reject Jesus. I want to keep living my life under my authority."

What will you choose today? There truly exists only two choices, one of two only possible paths. Every person will make a choice and their next step determines their eternal destiny!

- Luke 23:38-43 And an inscription also was written over Him [Jesus] in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS**. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong. Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Just as these two criminals on the crosses next to Jesus on that day of crucifixion faced their line of decision, so likewise will every person ever born. One criminal rejected Jesus choosing to die as "his own god", the other criminal, when confronted with the same truth about Jesus Christ, was humbled, repentant and to his eternal blessing simply said, "**Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom.**"

You and I and every person will die as one of those two criminals next to Jesus either believing Jesus or rejecting Him.

Today you have been clearly presented with "the line" which must be crossed. Will you choose to remain with Pilate or will you join the repentant criminal on the cross next to Jesus and cry out with him, "**Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom.**"

- Romans 10:9-11 . . . "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "**Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.**"

Will you choose to be like forever lost Pilate or the forever saved Criminal on that crucifixion cross some 2000 years ago?

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In Christ -  
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