

BEHOLD THE MAN

“Behold the man” said Pilate as he publicly displayed the humiliated Jesus before the jeering crowds who were calling for His crucifixion.[1]

I can only imagine the scene, and the intensity of the emotions running rampant as the Savior was led away to His death. The Jews were accusing Him of blasphemy, while His followers were wondering why He did not defend Himself by calling out legions of angels to wipe away the enemies of Christianity by whisking Jesus away with chariots of fire, punctuated by thunder and lightning. The Jews were steadfastly adhering to the tenants of their faith by destroying those who would make “false claims of divinity”. This blasphemous heretic would lead astray the masses dedicated to the pursuance of truth.

Even Pilate himself was confused, being caught between a political rock and a hard place. His interrogation of Jesus was precipitated by the chief priest Caiaphas, which, in turn followed the questioning by Caiaphas’ father in law, Annas[2]. Pilate was “politically correct” in everything he did. He followed the channels to the letter, and out of exasperation and frustration “grasped at straws” to find a way to release the innocent Jesus. He realized that the custom of releasing one prisoner at Passover was in effect, so, proclaiming Jesus’ innocence, Pilate asked if he should release Jesus. The crowd asked for a criminal named Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified.[3]

I have asked myself, “Where would I have stood, given that scenario?” Would I have adhered as tenaciously to the teachings of my Jewish Faith as ostensibly did the Jews who were egging on the crowds to ask for the crucifixion? Or would I have been with the terrified followers of the now seemingly discredited Jesus who scattered like chaff in the wind when the intensity of the crowd was apparently against them?. Would I have been like Pilate who did not understand any of it, especially the taciturn Jesus whose replies were certainly posing a quandary to someone who was only looking for a way out of a most curious political dilemma?

When Pilate questioned Jesus he did find himself on the horns of a dilemma, as previously stated. He dealt with it as do many of us when we deal with ethical or moral situations....He knuckled under. While he may or may not have felt strongly one way or the other about Jesus, he decided that the best way is to “cover his political rear end” and pass the problem on. Releasing the innocent Jesus would most assuredly have caused him much consternation when he was, more than likely, in a political hot spot most of the time anyway. So....”Behold the man” he said as he displayed the humiliated Jesus to the crowd.

We are faced with a situational dilemma as well. We live in a society where speaking reverently the name of Jesus Christ is “not in vogue”. We are branded as religious zealots if we give any indication that we adhere tenaciously to the tenants of our Christian Faith. Like Peter, we find it easier and more comfortable to deny our Savior[4].

We subsequently find ourselves, like him, repenting in tears[5].

No matter what we think, do, or say, Jesus Christ is before us, and if we are His followers, with us. We feel His presence daily, and hear His voice calling us to obedience as we enter into situational dilemmas of our own. We can ignore all this, but no matter what our choice is we still spiritually see Him before us and hear the call of “Behold the Man”. We, as Christians, are in a secular world whose god is money, sex and power. We find that the hedonistic pleasures sometimes seem to call with a louder voice than does the Savior we have pledged to follow all the rest of our lives, and when we acquiesce to the call of the world, we, like Peter, repent in tears.

Remember, however, that when Peter was confronted by a face to face encounter with the post resurrected Jesus, he was reinstated by Christ[6]. Therefore, if we sincerely turn to our Lord and Savior in repentance, asking forgiveness, how can we think that we, too, would not be welcomed with the open arms of the Savior who was crucified and rose again on our behalf?

[1] John 19:5-6

[2] John 18: 12-38

[3] John 18: 39-40

[4] John 18:15-37

[5] Mark 14:72

[6] John 21: 15-25