

# Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

## 27:11-26

by J.C. Ryle

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### Transcript

These verses describe our Lord's appearance before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. That sight must have been wonderful to the angels of God. He who will one day judge the world allowed himself to be judged and condemned, though he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth (i.e. Isaiah 53:9). He, from whose lips Pilate and Caiaphas will one day receive their eternal sentence suffered silently, an unjust sentence to be passed upon him. Those silent sufferings fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (i.e. Isaiah 53:7). To those silent sufferings believers owe all their peace and hope. Through them they will have boldness in the day of judgment, who in themselves would have nothing to say. Let us learn from the conduct of Pilate how pitiful is the condition of an unprincipled great man. Pilate appears to have been inwardly satisfied that our Lord had done nothing worthy of death: we are told distinctly that he knew that for envy they delivered him. Left to the exercise of his own unbiased judgment, he would probably have dismissed the charges against our Lord, and let him go free. But Pilate was the governor of a jealous and turbulent people; his great desire was to procure favor with them and please them: he cared little how much he sinned against God and conscience so long as he had the praise of man. Though willing to save our Lord's life, he was afraid to do it if it offended the Jews; and so, after a feeble attempt to divert the fury of the people from Jesus to Barabbas, and a feeble attempt to satisfy his own conscience by washing his hands publicly before the people, he at last condemned one whom he himself called a just person. He rejected the strange and mysterious warning which his wife sent to him after her dream: he stifled the remonstrances of his own conscience. He delivered Jesus to be crucified. We see in this miserable man a lively emblem of many a ruler of this world! How many there are who know well that their public acts are wrong, and yet have not the courage to act up to their knowledge. They fear the people; they dread being laughed at: they cannot bear being unpopular! Like dead fish, they float with the tide. The praise of man is the idol before which they bow down, and to that idol they sacrifice conscience, inward peace and an immortal soul. Whatever our position in life may be, let us seek to be guided by principle, and not by expediency. The praise of man is a poor, feeble, uncertain thing: it is here today and gone tomorrow. Let us strive to please God, and then we may care little who else is pleased; let us fear God, and then there is no one else of whom we need to be afraid. Let us learn from the conduct of the Jews described in these verses the desperate wickedness of human nature. The behavior of Pilate afforded the chief priests and elders an occasion of reconsidering they were about. The difficulties he raised about condemning our Lord gave time for second thoughts. But there were no second thoughts in the minds of our Lord's enemies. They pressed on their wicked deed; they rejected the

compromise that Pilate offered: they actually preferred having a wretched felon named Barabbas set at liberty rather than Jesus. They clamored loudly for our Lord's crucifixion; and they wound up all by recklessly taking on themselves all the guilt of our Lord's death, in words of portentous meaning: "His blood be on us and on our children!" And what had our Lord done that the Jews should hate him so? He was no robber or murderer: he was no blasphemer of their God, or reviler of their prophets. He was one whose life was love: he was one who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. (Acts 10:38 ). He was innocent of any transgression against the law of God or man; and yet the Jews hated him, and never rested till he was slain! They hated him because he told them the truth; they hated him because he testified of their works that they were evil; they hated the light, because it made their own darkness visible. In a word, they hated Christ because he was righteous and they were wicked because he was holy and they were unholy because he testified against sin, and they were determined to keep their sins and not let them go. Let us observe this. There are few things so little believed and realized as the corruption of human nature. Men fancy that if they saw a perfect person they would love and admire him; they flatter themselves that it is the inconsistency of professing which they dislike, and not their religion: they forget that when a really perfect man was on earth, in the person of the Son of God, he was hated and put to death. That single fact goes far to prove the truth of an old saying, that unconverted men would kill God, if they could get at him. Let us never be surprised at the wickedness there is in the world. Let us mourn over it, and labour to make it less, but let us never be surprised at its extent. There is nothing which the heart of man is not capable of conceiving, or the hand of man of doing. As long as we live, let us mistrust our own hearts: even when renewed by the Spirit, they are still deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. (Jeremiah 17:9 ).

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