

## NEW DAY... NEW WAY

### *Unlikely Words of Truth*

TEXT: Mt. 27: 1-5, 27-31, 38-42, 50-54, 57-60, 28:1-7

INTRODUCTION: In Congress on July 4, 1776, elected representatives from 13 states signed the Declaration of Independence. In the opening paragraph, these founding fathers of the United States of America said in essence, the world has a right to know why we are dissolving the political bands that have bound us to Great Britain and why this day we do declare our independence as a sovereign nation under Nature's God.

And as an explanation they wrote, "**We hold these truths to be self-evident...**" What I want us to remember on this God and Country Day, 238 years after God in His Sovereign providence, allowed this nation to be born, is that **to our forefathers, truth was important!**

Sadly, the truth about the importance of truth has at times been forgotten in these United States. And when we forget, both in times past and times more current, we pay a costly price because truth is important to God. Jesus said, "I am Truth." He also said of the Scriptures, "Thy Word is Truth."

As we looked at the culmination of the life of Jesus last week, we noted some of the irony God wove into the story of the end of His earthly life. We saw that Pilate had delivered God's truth that Jesus is indeed King, and when asked to retract or correct his written proclamation, the Roman governor refused.

But in reading the story carefully, we discover that Pilate is not the only one who has lips under the control of the Almighty. In fact, the account shows us clearly while men were at their worst, doing their worst, the Sovereign Creator of the Universe and His only begotten Son were firmly in control and doing their very best.

As we read our text today, portions from Matthew's account of the crucifixion and resurrection, I want you to listen to the places that it sounds like God put words in the mouths of people involved in these events. I call them unlikely words of truth.

Mt. 27: 1-5, 27-31, 38-42, 50-54, 57-60, 28:1-7

<sup>1</sup> When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. <sup>2</sup> And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

<sup>3</sup> Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, <sup>4</sup> saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*"

<sup>5</sup> Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. <sup>29</sup> When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup> Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. <sup>31</sup> And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

<sup>38</sup> Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

<sup>39</sup> And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

<sup>41</sup> Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, <sup>42</sup> "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.

<sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

<sup>51</sup> Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, <sup>52</sup> and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

<sup>54</sup> So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

<sup>57</sup> Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. <sup>59</sup> When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup> and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.

28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*.

<sup>5</sup> But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. <sup>7</sup> And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

## I. BY JUDAS

A. "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." Matthew 27:4

B. He spoke two truths.

**1. "I have sinned."**

- a. Like Judas, we have all sinned.
- b. Judas' sin was not more condemning than ours.
- c. Judas was not saved because he never repented and trusted Christ.

**2. "Jesus was innocent."**

- a. Declared by Judas
- b. Declared by Pilate
- c. Declared by Herod
- d. Declared by the thief
- e. Declared by God!

**II. BY THE PRIESTS AND SCRIBES****A. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." Matthew 27:42****B. He saved others.**

1. They were speaking of the past healings, deliverances, raising of the dead.
2. They unwittingly spoke prophetically of Jesus' work on the cross: He was saving others.
3. Jesus' death was no tragedy of circumstance.
  - a. The Trinity decided it before the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8)
  - b. This was the purpose of His coming to earth.

**1 Tim. 1:15** This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

**C. Himself He cannot save.**

1. On the surface, this seems wrong. Certainly Jesus had the power to come down off the cross.
2. As God intended their words, they convey a deep truth:
  - a. If Jesus was going to save others, He could not save Himself.
  - b. His death in our place was essential for our salvation.

**Heb. 9:22** And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

**III. BY THE ROMAN CENTURION****A. "Truly this was the Son of God!" Matthew 27:54****B. What made the centurion see the truth?**

1. He saw in Jesus the character of God.
2. He heard from Jesus the promise of God.
3. He felt from Jesus the peace of God.
4. He experienced around Jesus the power of God.

#### IV. BY THE ANGEL

A. "He is risen." Matthew 28:6

B. These words are unlikely not because of the spokesman but because it had never happened.

1. Others had been raised from the dead, but only to die again.
2. Jesus was raised "in glory," never to die again.
3. Those who trust in Christ have Jesus' kind of resurrection.

1 Cor. 15: 42-43, 54-55 <sup>42</sup> So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

<sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

<sup>55</sup> "O Death, where *is* your sting?  
O Hades, where *is* your victory?"

CONCLUSION: What do you say about the cross and resurrection?