

Walk Across My Swimming Pool!

1. The Lamb Scrutinized vv66-71
2. The Lamb Silenced ch23:1-12
3. The Lamb Sentenced vv13-24
4. The Lamb Substituted v25

There's going to be a very big event in Adelaide soon. I wonder if you are ready for it? Forget 'Mad March', forget the Fringe, Womad, Clipsal and so on. No, This is a biggie! Are you ready for it? Jesus is coming in June. You heard me. Jesus is coming to Adelaide in June this year!!!

Not the real one of course, he's a replica, an actor. The real Jesus might return before then, we don't know for sure, but for the moment, we can all look forward to the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Jesus Christ Superstar, performed in an arena style on the 4th and 5th of June at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre. Tickets are on sale now.

I am sure there will be a lot of excitement when the show hits town. There are some big names performing in it.

The show stars Australia's own self-confessed atheist **Tim Minchin** as 'Judas Iscariot', former Spice Girl **Melanie C** as 'Mary Magdalene' and

the critically acclaimed new-comer **Ben Forster** in the role of 'Jesus'.

The Australian show even resurrects Judas from the 1970s shows in the role of Pontius Pilate; played by **Jon Stevens**.

There is some great music in the show and people will go away from it no doubt feeling that they have had a 'spiritual' experience.

Unfortunately, the show is a poor reflection of the truth. It's a poor substitute for the real thing. Why? Well, there are a number of inaccuracies and omissions when you compare it to the Gospels but there is one very serious reason. The one that I find most galling is the final song. The words aren't the problem; that's because there aren't any.

What can be so wrong with an instrumental track? The track is entitled 'John 19:41' ⁴¹ *At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.'*

And so, the story ends with Jesus dead and laid in a tomb. The curtain closes and that is the end. The crowds will go away from the show saying "What a shame. He was such a nice man. Did good things but got cut down in his prime".

Friends, without the resurrection, we have no hope. Without the resurrection, we have no gospel. Without the gospel, we might as well go home and do as we please for we are masters of our own destiny.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: ¹⁴ *If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.*

In v 17 he says *'And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.'*

That's a terrible thought really. And that's why the full story is important.

By all means go and see the show if you like, but make sure you have read through at least one gospel account before you do. The stage show is no substitute for the truth of God's Word.

We have a very familiar passage before us today from Luke's gospel. Please have it open at p857 as we look at the events in this last week of Jesus' life that lead to his death on a cross.

There is a sermon outline and room to make notes on the sheet included with the newsletter today.

If you are wondering where the title comes from, you'll have to wait until later in the sermon.

Over the past few weeks we have been following the events leading up to the crucifixion and we have seen a dramatic turnaround in the way Jesus is treated by the crowds and by his own disciples. From the moment we are told that Satan entered Judas just before the last supper, things started going downhill.

The disciples could not even watch and pray with him in the Garden and then Judas arrives to betray Jesus to his face and hand him over to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders who were with him.

At daybreak, we are told in v66, the **scrutiny** begins. The elders, chief priests and the teachers of the law met to secure Jesus' demise.

⁶⁷ "If you are the Messiah," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

This was a clever attempt to make Jesus incriminate himself. But merely claiming to be the Messiah was not enough to condemn him. When he referred to himself as 'The Son of Man' and that he would be

seated at the right hand of the father, they knew fully well what Jesus meant.

And so the follow-up question comes. Note the shift in emphasis. *“Are you then **the** Son of God?”* Not ‘a’ son of the gods as men were sometimes referred to.

Jesus answer has the sense of ‘I wouldn’t put it like that, but since you have, I cannot deny it’. That’s the clincher for the mob. He had claimed to be God’s son. He deserved death.

The farce continues with the angry mob taking Jesus to the Roman Governor, Pilate, with a charge they felt was irrefutable. But they don’t stop there. They embellish the charge by adding the accusation of subversion. Surely the Romans would be outraged.

In ch23 v2 they add to the charge sheet, *“He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar”*. That’s a bald-faced lie. Do you remember a few weeks ago I preached on that very incident where Jesus was asked whether people should pay taxes to Caesar?

He was presented with a conundrum but he threw it back with a deft reply *“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”*.

These people will stop at nothing to have Jesus killed. But they know they can't be SEEN to be breaking any laws themselves.

Pilate is more interested in the question of who has authority. Will this man be a threat to his rule? He asks, *"Are you the King of the Jews?"*

Clearly this man before Pilate was no threat. Far from being an all-powerful conqueror, he looked a mess.

"I find no basis for a charge against this man." Says Pilate.

Luke has a briefer account of the trial but the result is that Pilate takes the opportunity to pass the buck to Herod because, as a Galilean, Jesus was under his jurisdiction. So Jesus gets passed around like the proverbial hot-potato.

Herod had obviously already heard about this Jesus and what he had done. Luke tells us that Herod was greatly pleased when he saw Jesus. It was time for a bit of fun.

If you do go to see the musical version of the story, there is a very amusing song at this point where Herod is goading Jesus to do tricks for him. Herod is not alone in this attitude. Many people say that they will believe only if Jesus performs a sign or miracle for them.

In the song, Herod sings:

So if You are the Christ,

The great Jesus Christ,
Prove to me that You're no fool
Walk across my swimming pool

If You do that for me
Then I'll let You go free
C'mon, King of the Jews

'Walk across my swimming pool'- that's where the sermon title comes from. You won't forget that now will you!

I've even seen churches try to put Jesus on display. A few years ago in Brisbane, I saw a large sign at a park with a huge tent, that proclaimed 'Jesus, tent of miracles' - here 7.30pm every Saturday. Living this side of the resurrection, do we really need to get Jesus to do tricks for us?

I'm not saying that miracles, or signs, don't happen today but that Jesus is not at our beck and call to perform like a side-show act.

Well, Luke records in v9 of Ch23 that Herod plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. No matter what accusations were leveled at him, the Lamb of God remained **silent**. This too fulfilled a prophecy that Isaiah made around 700 years earlier.

Herod and his soldiers had their fun, ridiculing and mocking Jesus. But now it was time for Herod to pass the buck. He sent Jesus back in an elegant robe to make the insult even more obvious.

Luke tells us that Herod and Pilate became friends that day even though they had been enemies previously.

It's been said that 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'. Jesus drew two enemies together that day. Even on his way to the cross, Jesus was reconciling people to one-another.

From v13 we see that Pilate gathers the accusers so that he can deliver the **sentence** he has determined for this Jesus who has been the subject of much to-ing and fro-ing.

Pilate says *"I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."*

The crowd was not happy. They wanted blood. They had whipped themselves into such a fury that crucifixion would be the only way to keep them happy.

In those days, it was customary to release a prisoner at Passover. John's gospel tells us that Pilate said to the crowd *"Do you want me to release the 'King of the Jews'?"* But again, the crowd won the day,

demanding that Barabbas – a guilty man who had taken part in an uprising, and murder – be released.

Pilate tried to reason with the angry mob but caved in so that he would prevent further trouble.

Now, the final verse is the one I want to focus on today because it holds the key to what is really going on here. On the surface, it looks like a travesty of justice. The good guy is sentenced to death and the criminal goes free.

V25 says – referring to Pilate - “He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.”

What is happening in this scene? There is a judge. There is an innocent man. There is a guilty man. Friends, I want to suggest to you that this is a glimpse, a model, a shadow of the gospel being acted out right in front of the crowd. An innocent man was sent to his death to pay the penalty for a crime he had not committed. And the guilty man who was beside him is allowed to go free.

Can you imagine the look on Barabbas’s face when he was

acquitted? I can. What a relief it was for him. This story always

reminds me of the actor who played Barabbas in Mel Gibson's film 'The Passion of The Christ' because he had a huge grin as he walked free, back into the waiting crowd. At one point, he looks at Jesus and he seems to acknowledge that Jesus had swapped places with him. Gibson captured it beautifully and we are going to have a look at that scene from his movie now.

Roll movie.

That scene helps us understand the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. It is a visual representation of the gospel that everyone present could see and probably think about a lot after the resurrection.

Because of the fall, we are all guilty of rebellion. Rebellion against God. We are no better than Barabbas. We deserve death, but Jesus steps in and takes our place. We are allowed to go free having being acquitted of our sin and restored to a right relationship with God.

Have you ever wondered what Barabbas thought about all this later in the day? Or what about after the resurrection when he realised how close he came to being crucified himself, and then this Jesus takes his place! It's even more remarkable when you realise that Barabbas' first name was also *Jesus*. Jesus Bar-Abbas! Bar-abbas literally means 'Son of the Father'.

On the one hand, we have the heavenly Son of the Father and on the other, the earthly Son of the father.

The concept of a substitute paying the price for sin is not a new one. Our Old Testament reading takes us to the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was going to learn a very valuable lesson when God asked him to sacrifice his only son.

Abraham was obedient and took Isaac up to a mountain in the region of Moriah where he was told he would have to sacrifice his son. That too is nothing new in that day and age. It sounds awfully abhorrent to us but, ancient practices among some nations included child-sacrifice.

As we saw in the Old Testament reading, this was another building block in the unfolding divine drama. Just as Abraham was about to execute his own son, an interruption pierces the solemnity of the moment. It says in verse 11...

*...the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham!
Abraham!"*

"Here I am," he replied.

¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

This is a hugely significant statement but it's easy to miss it. Notice it says 'THE angel of the Lord' as distinct from 'AN angel of the Lord'.

When you are reading your Old Testament, look out for such distinctions. I believe we are listening to a manifestation of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said in John 8:58 that he existed before Abraham and it is entirely reasonable to believe that he was active in the world.

In any case, GOD INTERVENES to save a life by providing the necessary sacrifice. Abraham looked up from the horror of what he was about to do and saw a ram, caught up in a bush. God provided the sacrifice.

Abraham substituted the ram for his son and the lesson has now become immortalized in the pages of scripture for us.

After that, Abraham was so moved by the rescue of his son by a gracious God that he named the place, 'Jehovah Jireh' which means 'The Lord will provide'.

Do you see the picture building up now? Isaac was saved from death by a ram which God supplied to be the sacrifice he required.

Jesus swapped places with Barabbas and then went to a cruel death on a cross, not just for one person's redemption, but for all mankind. He was the representative human who could reverse the curse brought about when the original human, Adam, rebelled against God.

That is why John the Baptist can announce “behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”.

That is what we are remembering this week as we lead up to Easter.

That is the plan and purpose of God for the redemption of humanity. It wasn't a tragic misunderstanding like the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical would have you believe.

Well, the last phrase of v25 has an interesting little twist. It says that Pilate *“surrendered Jesus to their will”*, that is, that he gave Jesus over to the will of the mob.

Is that so? Was Jesus a victim?

The whole Bible tells us that God enacted a rescue plan right from the moment of the fall in the Garden of Eden.

God's promised one would come and crush the deceiving snake.

God provided the sacrifice in place of Isaac.

God used the sign of the blood of the Lamb to ‘pass-over’ his people and save them from their oppressors.

It's no coincidence that these events we are looking at over Easter are taking place as the Passover is being observed.

The symbol of the Lamb, became synonymous with substitution, for paying the penalty for sin.

In the great messianic passage from Isaiah in chapter 53 we see another side of the Lamb. Isaiah tells us that he did not open his mouth and that he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And just as the gospel writers attributed these passages to Jesus, so we should be able to see that the unfolding events were under the sovereign control of a gracious, merciful and all-powerful God.

Over Easter, we will hear about the specifics of Jesus' death and resurrection in the sermons Paul and Mike will preach, but if we fast-forward now to the end of time, we can see in the book of Revelation that the Lamb triumphs.

Everything has been made right again and the Lamb is on centre-stage. This would not be possible if the events of Easter had not occurred as they did.

So the question I put to you is this: Which Jesus do you identify with? The Andrew Lloyd Webber one who is safely buried in a tomb and poses no further threat or the Biblical one who rose from the dead and is seated at the right-hand of the Father?

That is the most important question you will ever have to answer. Which Jesus do you identify with? Because if you if you don't accept Jesus as Lord now, you will face him as judge and without a defence counsel.

If you do accept him as Lord, He trades places with you, his blood shed on the cross pays the penalty for your sin and you get to be at peace with God now and forever. You too can say: 'Jehovah Jireh'. God has provided.

This Easter, please take the time to meditate on what that means for you, your family, friends and indeed, for the whole world.

Because when the real Jesus comes to town, it will be great news for those who believe, but terrible news for those don't.

May God grant us strength by His Spirit to proclaim the gospel that all may be saved.

Luke 22:66-23:25

New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Before Pilate and Herod

⁶⁶ At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. ⁶⁷ “If you are the Messiah,” they said, “tell us.”

Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

⁷⁰ They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?”

He replied, “You say that I am.”

⁷¹ Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”

²³ Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king.”

³ So Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

⁴ Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.”

⁵ But they insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.”

⁶ On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. ⁷ When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. ⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. ¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.”

[17] [\[a\]](#)

¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹ But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

²² For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.”

²³ But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided to grant their demand.

²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

Footnotes:

[Luke 23:17](#) Some manuscripts include here words similar to Matt. 27:15 and Mark 15:6.

Genesis 22

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

² Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love— Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

¹² “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

