

## **Matt. 27:15-26**

### **The Crowd Chooses Barabbas**

**15** Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. **17** So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

**20** Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. **21** The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” **22** Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” **23** And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

### **Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified**

**24** So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” **25** And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” **26** Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Billy Graham described it this way...“God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, ‘I love you.’” It’s because of this sacrificial love that we gather here on Good Friday.

One would be released and the other would go on to experience execution by crucifixion, the type of punishment that was so violent that the legendary Roman orator Marcus Cicero called it “an abomination”. One of these men would experience an almost unthinkable level of suffering on this day.

On the one side we have **Barabbas** and on the other side we have **Jesus**, who had been lauded by this same crowd a week earlier as the promised Messiah, coming into Jerusalem to claim his kingdom.

What a difference a week makes.

I want to begin by attempting to answer a question: who was Barabbas?

- He appears in all four Gospels, but beyond that there is very limited information about him.

- His name has an [Aramaic](#) meaning of “**son of the father**” (*bar abba*). Essentially, we have two sons, one Barabbas, the son of fallen Adam, the other Jesus, the Son of Almighty God. Scripture tells us Barabbas was...
- A **violent insurrectionist**, a religious terrorist and a threat to the Roman authorities. [Mark 15:7](#) and [Luke 23:19](#), tell us “he had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city” against the occupying Roman forces.
- A **murderer** whose hands were stained with the innocent blood of others. That’s how Peter refers to him in [Acts 3:14](#). Murderer= homicidal criminal (deliberate, pre-meditated, unlawful taking of a life)”
- A **robber or thief** who plundered his victims.

[John 18:40](#) They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber. ESV

**Plunder:** One who steal goods from a person typically using force and in a time of war or civil disorder. Think of the looting that takes place during a riot.

- A **notorious criminal. We just read...**

[Mat 27:16](#) And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ESV

Now compare him to the one who stood beside him facing the angry crowd. Let’s answer the question: Who was Jesus?

- Not a violent insurrectionist but the **Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- Not a murderer, but the **One who brings the dead back to life.**

**John 11:21** Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” **23** Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” **24** Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” **25** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

- Not a plundering thief, but the **ultimate giver**, a servant who gave His all for us. **Philippians 2:7–8:** “He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

- Not a Notorious criminal, but one known for healing the sick and oppressed, embracing little children, loving the outcast, and washing His followers' feet.  
**Matt 4:25** And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

You could not find two more radically different people. The violent sinner, the son of fallen Adam, as opposed to the Perfect Son of God

And yet, the Roman Officials and the crowd called for the death not of Barabbas, but of Jesus.

From a strictly human perspective, it should have been Barabbas on that cross. From a worldly point of view they crucified the wrong man. Just look at the bio's. Barrabas was the criminal. He deserved it.

But we know that none of this occurred outside of the divine providential plan of God.  
**Rev 13:8** ... the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

The story of Jesus would not end at the execution. Three days later He would swallow up death, hell and the grave. But the cross was necessary to satisfy the justice of God.

And because of this, Jesus did not have His life taken, He willingly laid it down. **John 10:18**

- He willingly took the lashes on His back that should have been for Barabbas
- He willingly wore the crown of thorns, that Barabbas should have worn
- He willingly endured the public ridicule, the hateful mocking, the abandonment by friends and family, that should have been directed towards the criminal who the crowd set free
- He felt the numbing pain of spikes being driven into His wrists and feet pinning Him to the wooden Cross that Barabbas should have endured. But it wasn't the nails that held him there. It was love.

**Rom 5:8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Because of His love for violent insurrectionist, the murderer, the plundering thief, the notorious criminal, He endured the cross. And when I talk about the criminal, I'm not just referring to Barabbas. I'm talking about you and me. I am Barabbas.

- I am a violent insurrectionist, how many times have I put myself and my desires above God
- I am a murderer, how many times have I held anger and bitterness in my heart towards others

- I am a thief, how many times have I looked upon the gifts that God has given as my own possession, or even them for granted
- I am a notorious criminal, everyone who knows me intimately, knows that I am fatally flawed and in dire need of grace

I am Barabbas. It was my sin that nailed Him to the Cross.

**Rom 3:9** What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

**11** no one understands; no one seeks for God.

**12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good, not even one.”

**13** “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of asps is under their lips.” **14** “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

**15** “Their feet are swift to shed blood; **16** in their paths are ruin and misery, **17** and the way of peace they have not known.”

**18** “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Yet, here is the message of the Cross that makes this Friday good! Jesus, the son of God wrapped in human flesh, took my punishment upon Himself. He bore the cross that I deserved. He satisfied Gods justice by paying a penalty that I could never pay. I am Barabbas, but He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

**Isa 53: 1** Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

**2** For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

**3** He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

**4** Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

**5** But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

**6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**John 19:28-30**

<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” <sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus paid it all, All to him I owe, Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow