

"BARABBAS: FROM PRISONER TO FREEMAN"

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Introduction:

The Apostle John has been introducing us to a number of people who played a part in the greatest drama in human history.

John 18:39-40 "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

- Barabbas had the unique distinction of being the first to be able to literally say with first-hand knowledge, "Jesus died in my place."
- Barabbas represents the spiritual condition all of sinful mankind.
 - Like Barabbas, we all stand guilty of breaking the moral law of God
 - Like Barabbas, none of us can do anything to earn our pardon
 - Like Barabbas, our freedom can only be purchased by the blood of the innocent Son of God who died in our place

The Substitutionary Atonement of Jesus Christ

- "He was wounded for our transgression." (Is, 53:5)
- "...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mt. 20:28)
- He "gave Himself as a ransom for all..." (1 Tim. 2:6)
- "He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." (2 Cor. 5:21)
- "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross..." (1 Pet. 2:24)
- Christ "...gave Himself for our sins..." (Gal 1:14)
- "Christ died for our sins..." (1 Cor 15:3)

I. THE CUSTOM (John 18:39)

- John 18:39a "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover..." (cf. Mk 15:16)
- John 18:39b "...do you wish then that I release for you (lit. to you) the King of the Jews."
- Matt. 27:17 "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"
- Lk 23:20 - Pilate's personal desire was to release Jesus who he considered innocent

II. THE CHOICE (John 18:40)

- John 18:40 "Therefore they cried out again saying, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas.'"
- Who was this man, Barabbas?
 - His name is Aramaic for "son of a father".
 - "a notorious prisoner" (lit. the notorious prisoner) (Matt. 27:16) "...imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection." (Mk 15:7; Lk 23:19)
 - John 18:40b "Now Barabbas was a robber (lit: bandit)."
- To these twisted and confused Jews, the notorious, murderous, political bandit, Barabbas had acted more like the kind of Messiah they wanted than this Jesus of Nazareth!
- The crowd of people had been stirred on by the envious Jewish leaders who were there in the background, fueling the fire of hatred for Jesus (cf. Mk. 15:10-11; Mt. 27:20).
 - "And wishing to satisfy the multitude Pilate released Barabbas for them..." (Mark 15:15)
- The Jews were asking for Barabbas to be pardoned for the very thing that they were now wanting Jesus condemned and executed (i.e. sedition and insurrection against Rome)

III. THE CONSEQUENCE

Question #1. How did this decision to release Barabbas affect Barabbas himself?

- Barabbas knew fully well that he had been set free and that an innocent man would take his place on a cruel Roman cross!
- Whether he chose to acknowledge it or not, Barabbas' life was overshadowed by the cross

Question #2. How did this decision to release Barabbas affect the Jews?

- Many of their hearts were hardened even further (cf. Acts 3:13-15, 17-19), but not all of them (cf. Acts 4)

Question #3. How does the decision to release Barabbas affect us?

- Barabbas represents all people who have broken the law of God and stand before Him guilty and deserving of death.
- Romans 3:23 "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."
- Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- "He was the only man in the world who could say that Jesus Christ took his physical place. But I can say that Jesus Christ took my spiritual place. For it was I who deserved to die. It was I who deserved the wrath of God should be poured on me. I deserved the eternal punishment of the lake of fire. He was delivered up for my offenses. He was handed over to judgment because of my sins...Christ was my substitute. He was satisfying the debt of divine justice and holiness. That is why I say that Christianity can be expressed in three phrases: I deserved hell; Jesus took my hell; there is nothing left for me but His heaven." (Donald Grey Barnhouse)

Concluding Challenge:

"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood.
Sealed my pardon with His blood
Hallelujah, What a Savior!