

Christ or Barabbas

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[0 : 00] Verses 21 and 22 of Matthew chapter 27. The governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two will ye that I release unto you?

They said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus? Who is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. This is one of the most convicting encounters that an individual could ever have had with the Christ of God.

For Pilate, the Roman governor, was increasingly being convinced of the innocence of the person who had been arraigned before him.

And Pilate could not banish from his mind the majesty, the un-authenticous majesty of this mysterious person who claimed to be the king of the Jews.

[1 : 39] We see in these narratives, in the four gospels, Pilate's vain and futile attempt to rid himself of the dilemma in which he was placed.

He wanted to get rid of Christ. This is the supremest challenge which he ever experienced in all his governorship.

First of all, he resorted to the simple fuse of ascending the Lord Jesus to the palace of a Herod, hoping thereby that Herod would dispose of him.

Ah, but when Herod had satisfied his personal curiosity concerning Christ, he returned the Lord to the judgment hall of Pilate, much to Pilate's consternation.

For Pilate, there was no escaping the personal challenge of the Lord Jesus.

[3 : 25] The gospels are filled with narratives relating to individuals who found themselves in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Challenged by his holiness. Challenged by his claims. Confronted by him who laid claim to being the son of almighty God.

and my dear friend, I wonder have you ever had that experience of being personally challenged and confronted encountered and encountered by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be that this very evening this will happen to you. you cannot keep on attempting to evade the Lord Jesus.

Attempting to shelve the question, the issue of your personal salvation. Leaving it until a more convenient season as Felix desired to do.

[5 : 09] Ultimately, individuals must face up to this crucial issue of personal salvation.

and my dear people, in my pastoral experience, I have had to minister to individuals, individuals who were lying at the point of death when human health was totally unavailing.

Sometimes, those of sick people filled with medicines and drugs could not concentrate to listen to the words of mercy and of salvation.

One individual told me in brokenness sentences that there was a time when he could have listened to such words but now no longer.

Pilate to his consternation was once again confronted with the Savior of sinners.

[6 : 58] And his great dilemma was this, what shall I then do with Jesus who is called the Christ?

Christ is either to be received or rejected.

The mind of Pilate was undergoing extreme torture. This man was in a mental agonist and it wasn't the fact that he had to give an account of these proceedings to the emperor in Rome but rather there was dawning upon his darkened soul this conviction that he must give account of himself to almighty God.

And what is he to do? Whose counsel is he to consult whose advice is he to request?

He is altogether solitary in his dilemma. And so are we in this matter of the salvation of the soul.

[8 : 26] we must face up to this individually and personally. We cannot place the responsibility of our own personal salvation on any other human being to tell us what to do or to do it for us.

This is something that is crucial critical to ourselves. Only we can resolve this.

And Pilate's mental agony and torture is increased by the sharp prying of conscience for he knows that the accusers of Christ have arraigned him before Pilate art of sheer endless.

Multitudes you see had followed the Nazarene the teacher come from God. They had incredulously watched his miracles.

They hung upon his words. Increasingly many were receiving the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

[9 : 54] This infuriated the chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees. And they deliberately concocted false accusations against the sinless Savior.

And Pilate saw through them. he knew that the accusations were groundless and that it was out of envy and spite and jealousy that they had brought forward the Lord Jesus on a trumped-up charge. but all at once Pilate in the subtle workings of his own mind saw another glimmer of light and hope by which he could dispense with this problem.

He remembered that according to Jewish custom and law. The people at the time of the Passover feast day usually asked for the release of some offender from prison.

They did this because it reminded them of their release from captivity in the land of Egypt. On the night of the Passover you remember they were released from the task masters and the fury of Pharaoh.

[11 : 47] And so the Jews without any divine approval they did this off their own bat. They established this trust that any offender held in captivity in Israel could be chosen to be released as a reminder of their own redemption out of the Egypt.

And all at once Pilate remembered this custom and he grasped at us as that which might deliver him from his own terrible dilemma in which he found himself.

and so he said to the Jews you have a custom that there should be released unto you a prisoner.

And in his mind Pilate went over those offenders prisoners those wretches who were held in custody especially those who were awaiting execution and the most notorious of them was Barabbas who had been condemned for political crimes for treason and for felony So Pilate brought up his name before the multitude and he said in accordance with your custom whom shall I release unto you Barabbas or

Jesus Pilate reckoned that these righteous religious leaders would never according to right thinking ever choose to release such a notorious criminal as Barabbas and therefore the alternative would be the release of Jesus and an end would be put to Pilate's personal mental torture but he reckoned without the chief priests and the elders of the people who were totally determined that

[15 : 07] Jesus should be condemned to death and they go to the multitude to ask for the release of Barabbas and to destroy and crucify Jesus and here the faith of the Savior is no longer in Pilate's hands for he himself has become a mere tool in the hands of the Jewish rulers may I remind you again that Pilate stands as a warning beacon that we cannot obey both the voice of conscience and the voice of the world Pilate stifled his conscience calling upon him he allowed it to be drowned by the voice of the multitude what shall

I do then with Jesus who is called Christ a most momentous question which requires a destiny sealing answer it was just at this juncture that a messenger breathlessly arrived in the judgment hall of a Pilate bringing with him a message from Pilate's wife containing a solemn warning to Pilate which made far more acute the agony of his distracted mind for his wife told him have thou nothing to do with this just man for I have suffered many things in a dream because of him do you think of that here is a pilot undergoing such agony of mind and his wife also in the dead of night in the slumber of sleep she is profoundly disturbed by the spirit of

God impressing upon her heart and mind the innocence of Jesus of Nazareth undoubtedly the Lord Jesus had been a topic of conversation within the household of Pontius Pilate and his wife dwelling upon this subject strangely kept her awake disturbed her sleep disturbed her conscience but Pilate so far gone was he in stifling the voice of his own conscience was heedless to the warning of his wife he allowed the mob to take the matter out of his hands and although he had the power of Rome behind him and was therefore able to enforce his own decision over the voice of the people he did not do that he yielded to the mob God instead of listening to the voice of conscience which is indeed the voice of God he listened to the voice of man he yielded to the multitude calling for a

basin of water he symbolically washed his hands in it told the multitude I wash my hands of this see ye to it you cannot get rid of the

Lord Jesus in that manner there's no such thing as washing your hands of Christ he cannot be disposed of in that fashion let us turn from that unhappy man Pontius Pilate from his dilemma let us turn for a moment to the consideration of the prisoner that was named to be released let us consider Barabbas the people's choice now Barabbas as we regard him in the gospel narrative becomes a representative figure of the whole human race for as

[21 : 15] Barabbas was a condemned Thilon guilty and vile and rebellious and captive and bound in fetters under the curse of a broken law without escape no ransom being offered for him and in a desperate plight such is the condition of the human race such is the condition of mankind such is the divine estimate of mankind for before the bar of God we are found guilty and every mouth is stopped we can say nothing in our own defense guilty and vile condemned and helpless and held fast bound in fetters of sin and of sin and under the curse of the broken law our plight is desperate and it is that plight that

Barabbas represents here we come back again to this momentous question whom will ye that I release unto you Barabbas or Jesus the king of the Jews we have seen the choice that the people made they said let Christ be crucified release unto us Barabbas now here we see the amazing inspiration of word of God and God's way of salvation unfolded to us for the very release and deliverance of beloved which was made possible by the condemnation of another one in his place teaches us in a very striking way the substitutionary character of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus in the place of a sinner if Jesus had been set at liberty Barabbas would have died under judgment he would have been immediately ruined for eternity but if Jesus is condemned to death then Barabbas is free he is redeemed he is saved he is set at liberty my dear friends all of us stand in that relationship we are all transgressors condemned to eternal death and the separation from God the penalty and the curse of a broken law must be visited upon the sinner sinners are all in the condition and the position of the condemned

Barabbas but it is Jesus the son of God the lamb of God who is put to death who is condemned and it was Barabbas who was freed and saved and as things turned out so favorably for Barabbas so they turn out favorably and graciously and savingly for the individual who trusts in Jesus who died for him in his place if the people and Pilate had agreed to liberate the Lord Jesus and if they had executed

Barabbas then that would have spelt the funeral knell of the whole human race but God so ordered it that the affair took a different turn for the outcry of the people to crucify Jesus became the trumpet sound announcing God's way of salvation and how sinners could be redeemed from the penalty of the sins Barabbas and Jesus exchange prayer and both mutually inherited each other's situation and for Barabbas in place of his guilt he received grace and his guilt was transferred to the person of

[27 : 28] Jesus of Nazareth oh let it burn through our souls tonight this truth of the gospel that Christ was made sin for us he who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him see in Barabbas' liberation the possibility of your own redemption for left to ourselves we are hopelessly lost but when position is exchanged with Christ our redemption is sealed let us then see our reflection in Barabbas no matter how vile the sinner it is written

Christ died for that is in the place of the ungodly this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a savior the rabbis was released because Jesus entered into his place and it is this that invests the gospel with such grace and blessing and glory that there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in

Christ Jesus and to the soul that trusts in the Lord Jesus who died in the place of sinners against that soul no accusation no allegation can ever be raised or leveled because of Christ's rejection sinners who trust in him can now be admitted into the favor of God Almighty substitution was made for sinners upon the cross of a salary but think for a moment of the messenger who went to the dark dungeon in which Barabbas was held can you hear those rusted bolts being drawn back and the dungeon door swinging open with some noise and the messenger proclaiming liberty to the captive Barabbas can you see that man shielding his eyes against the sudden surge of sunlight that enters his dungeon lighting up the darkness in which he was shrouded and the voice of the messenger telling him you are at liberty you are free you may go another has taken your place another has

accepted the condemnation that belonged to you another is going to die in your place do you see the truth of that upon a life I did not live upon a death I did not die another life another death I stake my whole eternity the prophet

Isaiah tells us prophetically of the anointing of Christ to preach the gospel and to proclaim liberty to the captive and reflect that this is a picture of the evangelist and minister of the gospel declaring and preaching and proclaiming the glad tidings that Christ has died in the stead of sinners■ Gabriel says if the son therefore shall make you free you shall be free indeed may God help you to see clearly this the truth of the gospel that Christ entered into your place and he suffered the condemnation that should have fallen upon you and upon me he took it to himself and he died under the stroke of God's wrath that we might not die eternally ah but to get the benefit of that we have got to believe in Jesus Christ we have got to go to him we have got to receive him we have got to identify ourselves with him we have got to call upon him for his mercy and his grace but Jesus gives to us this reassuring message all that the father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh unto me

[33 : 46] I will in no wise cast out it is my privilege to tell you tonight that if you thus recognize the Lord Jesus as your savior as the one who died for you and if you believe into him savingly it is my privilege to tell you as the messenger told Barabbas you are free you are saved condemnation has been lifted from you you are at liberty you may go let us pray O God our father how can we ever sufficiently praise thee that thou hast loved us with a redeeming love and that the Lord Jesus the son of thy right hand the Lord of glory should have laid aside his own place in heaven to have come to earth to stand in our place to stand condemned for us and to die for us under the sentence of thy wrath exposed against sin help us to understand this clearly

O God not only understand it but to receive the truth and to believe it heartily and warmly and to acknowledge the Lord Jesus into our hearts and lives as our own personal savior and redeemer bring home this word with all its power and force by the applying ministry of thy Holy Spirit bring it home to our souls causing those who already know Jesus as savior to rejoice all the more in thy saving grace causing those who hitherto have not known thy forgiveness and thy salvation to close now with the offer of mercy and this we ask in Jesus name and for his glory amen dear and die Thank you.