

Matthew 27:15-23 ¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. ¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. ¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him." ²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹ The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" ²² Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" ²³ Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

What can we say? The murder, the rebellious, the sinner gets to go free. The righteous Son of God is condemned. Here we have the perfect parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Does Barabbas really get off scot free just because Christ is condemned in his place? Yes absolutely. He is released without consequence or punishment. In Barabbas of course we are speaking of an earthly judgment and an earthly freedom, but he is the parable, the earthly story that has a heavenly meaning.

The Bible makes it clear that what is true for Barabbas from an earthly stand point is true for us spiritually.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Universal Objective Justification

Justification – means that the judge has made the declaration that we are innocent just as Pilate did for Barabbas

Universal – means the whole world, but it also means all sin. God doesn't do things half way or partially. He doesn't say I'm going to forgive this one, this one, and this one but not this one. When God says you are forgiven he means you are forgiven, past, present and future. You stand forgiven in the presence of God

I tried to explain this once in Ghana in Africa to a small group of Baptist Christians. They would not accept it.

Objective – without any reference to ourselves, always true. Here I would always explain this with reference to my translator, usually D Paul. He would be standing there next to me. And I would ask who is more handsome. Than I would ask who is taller.

So too Barabbas is justified, declared innocent and free to go purely because Jesus takes his place, without any reference to his person or his crimes. The blood of Jesus sets him free.

But the blood of Jesus, although it always first offers forgiveness, does also condemn, as it did for the crowd who choose to remain in their sin rather than to accept Christ as their Messiah. Jesus warned in the gospel of John

John 16:8-9 ⁸ "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ "of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

If God had not revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ, If Jesus had not died for our sins, than perhaps we might have a reasonable excuse before God's throne. But now what excuse can anyone give?

We did not know that you existed. I became Man, I did many incredible miracles, I rose from the dead and I told you everything you need to know about God. How can you say you did not know?

We could not keep your law no matter how hard we tried. I died for the forgiveness of all your sins.

Why would anyone reject such a gift? Pilate is a coward but he recognizes what motivates both the Jews and us, they condemned Jesus out of envy.

The boy who gets straight As is hated by his class. The worker who works hard and does his job well is ridiculed. Men don't want the free gift of Christ's forgiveness because it means admitting how badly we have failed. And so the Jews revel in the blood of Jesus, not in the forgiveness it offers to them, but in the condemnation that they bring upon themselves.

So we are left with the choice, we can consider ourselves on level with Barabbas , confess our sins and rejoice in our freedom as we see Jesus condemned in our place – Or we can lift ourselves up in our hearts, sneer at Christ and the free gift he offers and receive only condemnation we so justly deserve.