

Barabbas, Jesus, and Me

The overall story of a man called Barabbas is brief and notably lacking in specifics (which typically and in this case fuels rampant speculation and groundless assertions), but nonetheless recorded in all four of the Gospels, and he is additionally referenced in Peter's speech recorded in Acts 3:14ff. Matt.27:16 calls him "a notorious prisoner," Mark 15:7 includes that he "had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection," Luke 23:19 says he "was one who had been thrown in prison for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder," and John 18:40 simply describes him as "a robber." Despite unverified and unverifiable speculations that his name links him to rabbinical family (and possibly the son of a priest), **nothing else is known** of this man called "Barabbas," or of the particulars of his stated crimes of *robbery, murder, and insurrection* (a specific one at this time and place is unknown to history).

So what do we know about Barabbas?

- He was an *infamous prisoner*, and was apparently *guilty* of multiple crimes.
- Outside of what is said in the Gospels, nothing else is known of the stated "*custom*" of releasing a prisoner back to the people at the *feast of Passover* from either Roman or Jewish sources; but obviously, some such *custom* did exist at that time, cf. John 18:39.
- Though the Roman Governor, Pilate, desired and tried to *release* Jesus, "*the King of the Jews*" (Mark 15:9), "*the chief priests stirred up the multitude to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead,*" (v.11).
- Thus, the *notorious criminal* Barabbas was *pardoned* and *released*, while the *innocent* Jesus was *condemned* and *crucified*, quite literally, in his place.

Now, I've been preaching and teaching for over 45 years, but sometimes I am "a little slow on the uptake." So when one of the younger men of our congregation, while speaking on the importance and significance of the Lord's Supper, recently stated that "I am Barabbas, and we all are Barabbas," such had never occurred to me. But he's exactly right- **we are all Barabbas!** We are all *notoriously guilty of and imprisoned by sin*, Rom.3:23; and as such, are *under the sentence of death*, Rom.6:16,23. Or at least we were... until the *guiltless, innocent, guileless* Jesus *took our place*, paid our *propitiation*, and thereby *purchased our release* with His life, Rom.3:24-25! **I am Barabbas!** Assuredly, I should have realized this sooner, but am very grateful to that young brother nonetheless for helping me to see that to which I have been blind.

So the next time you're partaking of the Lord's Supper (and in whatever future occasions He allows), while casting your mind's eye of faith back to see the suffering Savior upon that cross, think not of the forgiven thief hanging beside Him, but of guilty Barabbas who was pardoned and released when an *innocent* Man was crucified, literally and spiritually, **in his stead. We are all Barabbas!** Brother Chase Sibley, thank-you very sincerely for helping me, and others who likewise may not have known, to realize this truth.