

Barabbas

Introduction; We often have to make choices in life.

A. Some choices are easy and some are hard.

1. If I had to choose between French silk chocolate pie and sweet potato pie, there would be no problem or question. French silk wins hands down.
2. However if I had to choose between eating at Taco Bell and KFC, it would be a more difficult choice. Both are my favorites.
3. Some have problems with some choices and others don't. Paul had no problem with a choice that would bother many. It was to live or die.
4. *Phil 1:21-24 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.*
5. We all need to be ready to die for the Lord. We can not hold this life too dear.

B. Some very obviously have make foolish choices.

1. Some have a choice of two jobs. One pays better but one is in an area where there is a good church. Many choose the better paying job. This is wrong.
2. Many make choices on the spur of the moment and do not see the big picture. It is often good to make sacrifices while young to have a better life later.
3. When we make a choice we are responsible for it and its consequences. We need to be very careful in the choices we make.

C. Perhaps the most foolish choice in history is the choice of Barabbas over Jesus.

1. The Jews were given the choice of saving the life of Jesus Christ or a robber, Barabbas.
2. They choose Barabbas. We need to see why they did this because many still do this today.

D. We want to discuss the choice of Barabbas over Jesus today.

I. First we will consider who Barabbas was.

A. The account of choosing Barabbas is important.

1. It is one of the few events that all four Gospel writers cover. There are only certain things all four writers write about. Two or three may write about certain things. Sometimes only one will write about a certain event.
2. Since this is important, we need to consider it. We will see that Barabbas is a 'type' of mankind. He was greatly blessed. He was saved by Jesus. Yet what did he do about it?

B. Let's see what the Gospels say about Barabbas.

1. Matthew 27:15 to 26 is Matthew's account of this event. He gives it more space than the other Gospel writers. John gives it the least amount. This event is also found in;
 1. Mark 15:6-15
 2. Luke 23:18-25
 3. John 18:39-40

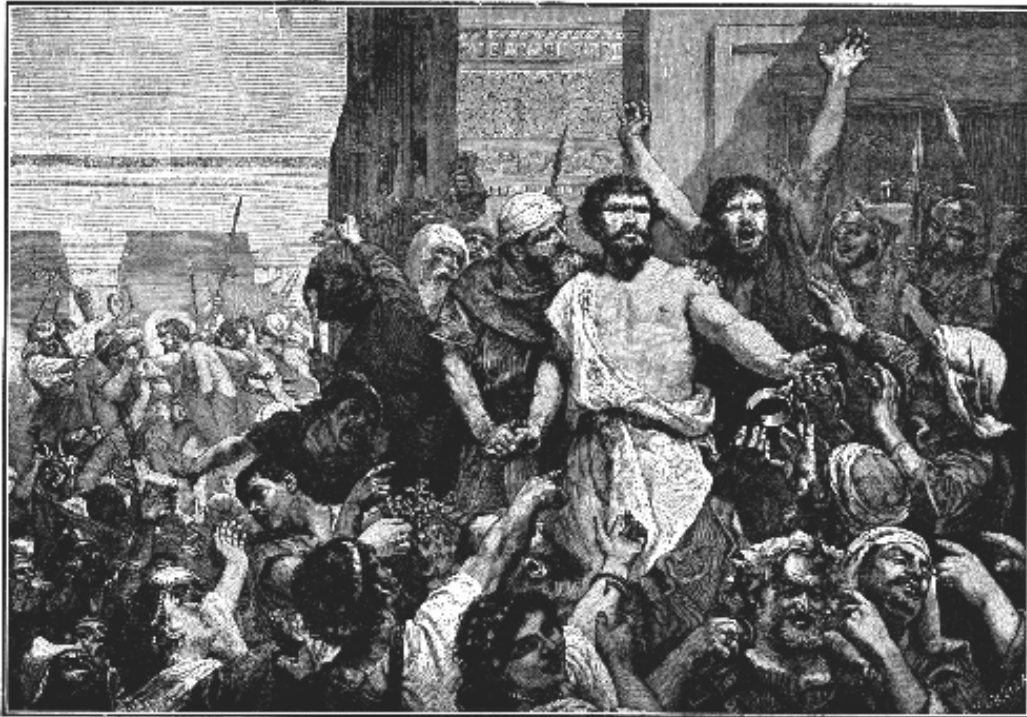
2. **Matt 27:15**; We do not know where this custom of releasing a prisoner came from. It was not a Roman custom. Some suggest it started among the Jews during the time of the Maccabees. The Jews remembered being freed from Egypt during the Passover and so they began to free a prisoner at this time in remembrance. Pilate evidently continued this tradition to please the Jews.
3. **Vs 16-18**; Barabbas was a **notorious prisoner**. Pilate has decided that Jesus is innocent and wants to free Him. Yet the Jewish leaders will not let him. He hopes he can free Jesus by appealing to the people. He knows Jesus is innocent and it is only due to envy that the Jews have brought Jesus to him.
4. **Vs 19**; Before a choice can be made Pilate receives a message from his wife. She was very upset by a dream she had of Jesus. Many think God sent her this dream to make Pilate think about doing the right thing and releasing Jesus. The Romans strongly believed in dreams.
5. There are several instances in the Gospels where Jesus challenges Judas or God challenges Pilate or the people. This is to make sure they are not forced to do this terrible act. It is a choice they make and they are responsible for it.
6. **Vs 20**; Evidently while Pilate considers the message from his wife the Jewish leaders go to the crowd that is gathered to free a prisoner. They persuade them to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus. Many wonder why the people would do this.
7. **Vs 21-23**; Pilate is disappointed that the people chose Barabbas. He is stuck and his plan has failed. Now he must release a notorious prisoner.
8. He asks the people what to do with Jesus. They ask for Him to be crucified. Pilate may have hoped for a different verdict. He has failed to save an innocent man.
9. **Vs 24-26**; Pilate is a true politician. He does the will of the people, even if it is wrong. He releases Barabbas and delivers Jesus to be crucified.
10. A choice is made. The consequences are accepted —vs 25. Both Pilate and the people will have to answer to God for what they did. Pilate will lose his job in about three years —AD 36. The Jews will be destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans.
11. We have no idea what happened to Barabbas after this. The Bible does not say. Even the early church writers do not speculate. This is unusual for they often speculate about people mentioned once in scripture. He completely disappears to history.

C. We wonder about Barabbas and why the Jews would choose Him over Jesus.

1. Matthew only tells us that he was a notable or notorious prisoner. This means he was widely known for something wicked and bad. There is no question that he is guilty. The other Gospel writers tell us what he did.
2. *Mark 15:7 And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion.*
3. *Luke 23:18-19 And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"; 19 who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.*
4. *John 18:40 Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.*
5. Barabbas was evidently notorious to the Romans. However he may not have been so to the Jews. He and other rebels had rebelled against Rome. In the rebellion they had killed and stolen. The two who died with Jesus were probably part of this rebellion.
6. Barabbas may have been a hero to some of the Jews. He may have been a zealot. One of Jesus' disciples, Simon, was also a zealot—Luke 6:15. Barabbas may also have used the rebellion for his own ends. He may have used it as an excuse to steal.
7. In either event he was more a prisoner of Rome than the Jews. It may not have been hard to convince the crowd to ask for him.
8. Still, what did he think when they came and released him. What did he do?
 - a. Did he go off and just disappear and never look back?
 - b. Did he return to his old ways and continue to try to rebel against Rome?

- c. Did he think at all about the one who took his place and died on his cross? We just do not know.
9. Barabbas is completely lost to history. Yet we can learn important lessons from him.

D. In a sense Barabbas represents all mankind.



II. We are all like Barabbas.

A. Barabbas was a sinner. He could not help himself out of his sins in any way.

1. All of us are in sin and can not save ourselves. Even if we stopped sinning now and never did so again, we would still be sinners. We are therefore all lost.
2. *Rom 3:23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
3. *Isa 59:1-2 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.*
4. *Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
5. Barabbas deserved his punishment. He had rebelled, stolen and murdered. He was guilty of these and many more sins. He could not change that.
6. We are all in the same boat. We have all sinned. We all deserve death. And there is nothing we can do about it. In this sense we are no different from Barabbas. He represents us.

B. Jesus helped Barabbas. He died in his place.

1. Barabbas was guilty, Jesus was not. Barabbas deserved to die, Jesus did not. Barabbas lived because Jesus died.
2. This is true of us as well. We deserved to die. But Jesus died for us. Barabbas lived **physically and temporarily** due to Jesus' death. We can live **spiritually and eternally**.
3. *Rom 5:6-8 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

4. *1 Pet 2:22-25 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*
5. Pilate could have stopped Jesus' execution but he did not due to popular opinion. Jehovah could have stopped it. Yet He allowed His only Son to be mistreated and murdered. He could have thundered from heaven as He did at Sinai. He did speak from heaven on several occasions in the Gospels.
6. *John 12:28-30 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." 29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.*
7. Jehovah kept silent because He loved the people crucifying His Son. Life is not always fair but God can take an unfair event and do good with it.
8. *Rom 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*
9. The Lord loves all of us. Jesus died for all of us —John 3:16. We can all benefit from Jesus' death as Barabbas did.

C. We wonder, did Barabbas appreciate what Jesus did for him?

1. We do not know what Barabbas did when Jesus died for him. We do not know if he looked back. We do not now if he tried to find out who it was that died for Him.
2. While we do not know what Barabbas did, we do know what he should have done. He should have been there in Acts 2 with Jesus' followers. He should have believed, repented and been baptized to have his sins forgiven. He should have been part of the 3000.
3. *Acts 2:38-39 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*
4. *Acts 2:40-42 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
5. This is what he should have done and it is what we should do. Jesus died to take away our sins. We need to be grateful and obey Him. Do we think about Jesus dying for us? Would we have looked back if we were Barabbas? Do we look back now?
6. *1 Tim 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*
7. *1 Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,*
8. Paul understood this clearly. He took the death of Christ personally. He believed in what Jesus did and obeyed Him. Paul did not just see Jesus as dying for all of mankind. He saw Him as taking his place on the cross.
9. *Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.*

10. *Acts 22:16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*
11. Many hear the story of Jesus Christ and say, "So what?" What about us? What do we say? What kind of life do we live for the one who died in our place? Are we thankful?

D. We need to see that we deserve death as Barabbas did. But Jesus died for us too.

Conclusion; We have to choose between Jesus and the world.

A. The Jews made the wrong choice in one sense, but the right one in another.

1. If they chose Jesus and Barabbas died on the cross then we would still be in our sins with no hope in the world —Eph 2:12.
2. What did Barabbas do after being freed? Did he find out who saved him and why? Did he become a Christian? If he didn't then Jesus died in vain for him.
3. If Barabbas did become a Christian then one day he would have had to face the cross he missed. He would have had to carry it as Jesus carried His. All Christians have a cross to bear for Christ.
4. *Luke 9:23-25 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?"*

B. What choice do we made today?

1. Do you need to repent and be baptized because you believe today? Will you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior this hour?
2. The people make a popular choice. They made a choice that seemed good at the time. They did not think of the future and eternity. Do we?
3. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
4. *Rom 6:3-7 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.*
5. See also Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-48, John 3:3-5, Acts 8:35-39, 17:30, 31, 18:8, Gal 3:26, 27, Titus 3:4-6, 1 Pet 3:21, etc.

C. If we can help anyone choose the Lord today, please let us.