

Mark 15:6-15 Our King Was Beaten Falls Ch. PM 9/22/2024

In the previous passage, Jesus was accused of being a revolutionary-type of King like a military general causing a Jewish uprising against the Roman Empire.

In this passage, we contrast Jesus the supposed rebel with a real rebel.

**Our King suffered in our place when He was beaten and handed over to be crucified.**

### **1. Which is chosen to be released - Barabbas or Jesus? (v.6-9)**

Verse 6, each year during Passover, Pilate would always release one prisoner for the Jews, whichever prisoner they requested.

Verse 7, we are told about a prisoner named Barabbas, a murderer.

In verse 8a, a crowd suddenly entered, *“And the crowd came up...”* In order to reach Pilate, that crowd would have to climb the hill, to literally come up in elevation, since the government palace was built on the high point overlooking the lower parts of the city and the temple area.

What did the people of the crowd do when they arrived? Verse 8b, the crowd asked Pilate to do as Pilate usually did for them – to release one prisoner.

In verse 9, Pilate asked whether the crowd wanted Pilate to release the King of the Jews? Now the whole point of releasing one prisoner at the annual religious feast, was what we today call pardon. The driving goal behind a pardon was to gain the crowd’s approval towards Pilate. If Pilate were interested in the defense of the Roman Empire and the preventing of uprisings, Pilate would release Jesus, and keep the violent Barabbas in prison. Barabbas was more of a threat of a violent uprising against Rome than Jesus was.

Pilate was interested in pleasing the crowd. Pilate thought Jesus was popular with the people of Jerusalem. Pilate knew that just a few days earlier the crowd honored Jesus with palm branches on the road and shouts of Hosanna!

All of this was behind Pilate’s suggestion that the crowds select Jesus to be released. Pilate’s suggestion was not taken. We learn that Pilate was not the one controlling the scene, nor was Pilate determining what would happen to Jesus.

It was God who was orchestrating these events. Acts 2:23-24, *“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by [death.]”*

To choose between Jesus and Barabbas, as if both were condemned criminals, one of whom would now become the object of Pilate’s mercy, was an outrageously unfair scene. The fact that Jesus submitted Himself to this outrage, rather than calling down more angels to respond and report to one location than anyone has ever seen on earth, shows with what devotion Jesus was committed to the task His Father had assigned to Him, to suffer in our place.

### **2. The dark driving force of envy. (v.10-11)**

It was obvious to Pilate that the chief priests were not acting out of loyalty to Rome. So, why were the priests trying to kill Jesus? In verse 10, we see Pilate make an observation and conclusion that did not require a lot of special wisdom, “*For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered [Jesus] up.*” Envy is a displeasure aroused by seeing someone else having what you do not want him to have.

Pilate had learned what made people do what they did in order to appear in Pilate’s courtroom. Envy explained the response of these religious leaders to the popularity of Jesus with the crowds. Why was Jesus popular? We were told back in Mark 11:18, “*...the chief priests and the scribes heard [the teaching of Jesus] and were seeking a way to destroy Him, for they feared Him, because all the crowd was astonished at His teaching.*” Again in Mark 12:12, “*...they were seeking to arrest [Jesus] but feared the people, for they perceived that He had told the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.*”

Here in Mark 15, verse 11, we read that “*the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have [Pilate] release for them Barabbas instead*” of Jesus. The chief priests were more influential in the scene than Pilate was. The chief priests used their influence so that the crowd would ask for Barabbas to be released, with the end result that Jesus would remain in Roman custody. These steps would move the chief priests ever closer to their goals against Jesus.

### **3. The conscience-deadening effect of the sin of crowd-pleasing (v.12-15)**

Moving ahead to verse 12, since the Jewish crowd did not want their own king released, then what did they want to be done with their own king?

In verse 13, the crowds who had previously shouted for Barabbas to be released, now shouted again. This time, the crowd shouted their answer to Pilate’s new question – what to do with Jesus? The crowds shouted to Pilate, *Crucify Him!* What a surprise that must have been for Pilate to hear! Just six days earlier, on Palm Sunday, he heard shouts of ‘*Hosanna!*,’ and now on Friday, ‘*Crucify Him!*’

Even though it was Pilate’s only realistic option as the standard Roman penalty for violent political rebels, it was still disconcerting to hear a shouted demand for crucifixion coming from a Jewish crowd towards one of their own rabbis, who was also claiming to be their own king. Death under official auspices in Jerusalem could only mean death by the full rigor of a Roman cross. No other form of execution was contemplated for Jesus.

In verse 14, the surprised Pilate, still wondering why a Jewish crowd would ask for a Jewish rabbi to be crucified for being the king of the Jews - asked why they would like Pilate to convict Jesus and why they were shouting that Pilate give the order to crucify Jesus? Pilate asked it succinctly, ‘*Why, what evil had Jesus done?*’ But the crowd, rather than stating any evil that Jesus had done, instead

ignored the legitimate question of Pilate, and shouted all the more what to do with Jesus – namely, to Crucify Him!

The fitting questions by Pilate about crimes and wrongs are questions that serve to provide us, as we read Mark's Gospel, the additional confirmation through the voice and mind of Pilate, that the execution of Jesus was a tragic and colossal miscarriage of true justice. Pilate became guilty of making what was literally the worst action of injustice in the history of the world.

Why would Pilate do such a thing? Verse 15 gave us Pilate's reason. "...*Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd...*" Pilate desired to please a crowd of people! Pilate let the opinion of a crowd of people rule his own mind and therefore his own actions. Pilate no longer followed his own conscience, which would have led to the opposite verdict. Pilate let his conscience die, through the sin of prioritizing a group of people over what Pilate knew was right.

Pilate caved twice. 1) the crowd's first demand was for Pilate to release Barabbas. 2) the crowd's second demand was for Pilate to find Jesus guilty.

Just as certainly as a pardon from Pilate meant that Barabbas must be released, so also a guilty verdict from Pilate meant that Jesus certainly must be handed over to be crucified. Here again, the verb *handed over* was used once more - the same verb again in verse 15 translated with the phrase "*delivered Him*" just as it had been previously in verse 10 when the chief priests also had "*delivered Him*" up into Pilate's hands. Back in verse 10, it was for envy that the priests handed Jesus over. Here in verse 15, it was for wanting to satisfy the crowd, that Pilate turned Jesus over to be crucified.

Jesus was now officially a Roman prisoner on a formal accusation of treason. We remind ourselves of the words of Jesus in Mark 10:33, "...*we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be [handed] over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and [hand] Him over to the Gentiles.*"

The same verb "*hand over*" was used throughout Mark's Gospel. It was the same verb for the action of Judas, (to betray Jesus = to hand over Jesus), and the same verb Mark used repeatedly to signal the progressive fulfillment of the predictions of Jesus.

Invariably for The Roman Empire, a beating always came before every crucifying. So here at the end of verse 15, there came an additional beating of Jesus, over and above the beating that Jesus had just received overnight by the chief priests in chapter 14:65. This was a beating fit for an enemy of Rome, that Roman soldiers accomplished with whips of leather, sometimes weighted on the ends with pieces of metal, or pieces of bone.

This flogging of Jesus was a brutal process, which inflicted severe injuries on Jesus. It was a beating so injurious to the person's back, that the Roman

flogging itself could sometimes prove fatal. Our innocent Savior was now severely injured, and suffering immensely. He would be bleeding profusely, and coming close to the point of losing consciousness.

At that point, we are told the very last thing for this Bible passage. The last thing we are told is that, rather than Jesus receiving first aid treatment by the best medical professionals that ancient Rome had to offer, or rather than Jesus being released into the custody of the Jews to see whether Jesus would survive His injuries if He received excellent and loving care, rather than Jesus being released to His family for them to care for Him in their own ways or to offer him some convalescence or final wishes for it was now irreversible that He would die soon, what actually happened was that Pilate, “*delivered [Jesus] to be crucified.*”

Pilate would later wash his hands in full view of the public as a symbolic gesture, but that did not cleanse Pilate. In fact, the only thing that could cleanse Pilate of his guilt in rendering a wrong verdict about Jesus, would be the blood of Jesus! After the wrong verdict, and the obligatory beating, our bleeding Jesus was handed over to be crucified next. This too, was part of the prediction of Jesus. Jesus had prophesied that He would be rejected by the Jews, handed over to the Gentiles, and killed. That is exactly what happened. Jesus predicted that He would rise again. That is exactly what happened.

### **Concluding applications:**

When we consider the suffering of Jesus, what do we see?

Did He simply irritate the wrong people? Was He just the victim of the pragmatism of Pilate to get rid of Him and please a holiday crowd?

Or, was this Jesus actually the sinless Son of God, who suffered in our place? Is this the Greatest King who ever lived, who showed His greatness best in these moments when He became the sacrifice for us sinners?

What did Barabbas see? How would Barabbas react – when he learned that Barabbas did not have to go through Roman torture, whipping, and crucifixion? Did Barabbas ever think “That should be me, not Him?”

That is the only right way for us to see the cross. We must think “That should be me, not Him!” The name Bar – abba means son of the father. He was sinful and guilty, but he was set free. Jesus became the substitute for Barabbas. The true son of the Father was killed, so that the guilty son of the father Barabbas, could be rescued.

We are in the position of Barabbas. We are guilty, deserving of condemnation. But when we were without hope in the world, Christ the innocent died for us.

Pilate was unjust. But God the Father is always just. And God the Father was right to justify us, and release us by faith in Jesus who died for our wrongs.

As surely as Jesus suffered, it is equally certain that He did it for us.

As surely as Jesus suffered, it is equally certain that we are set free.

The death and resurrection of Jesus has cleansed us from sins of envy, from sins of injustice, from sins of wishing to please people, the sins of wishing to harm people, from sins of handing over people, from sins of condemning the innocent and releasing the guilty, from sins of beating an innocent man, from sins of following a murderous crowd, and from sins of murder and hatred.

Jesus has cleansed us from all of our sins.

We are fully released, and we become true sons of God our Father.

1 Peter 2:24, *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.”*