

The Innocent for the Guilty

John 18:38-19:15

This morning as we continue our study of John's gospel, we meet a very interesting character by the name of Barabbas. Barabbas' story is a unique twist in the Passion narrative, yet it proclaims much to us about the reason Christ was dying on the cross. This morning we swim in deep water, as we consider a doctrinal truth: **penal substitutionary atonement**. This doctrine answers the question, "How can a holy God be reconciled to sinful man?"

- **Defining the terms:** Perhaps these are terms that are unfamiliar to you. So, what do they mean?

Penal - (We recognize this word from our justice system.) "penalty, prescribed or legal punishment" What is the penalty for sin? (Romans 6:23)

Substitutionary – "a person or thing serving or used in place of another" - (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Atonement - "to cover or cancel; to amend for wrongdoing; to satisfy the demands of sin" (Isaiah 53:6)

- **The Innocent Passover Lamb: (Exodus 12:1-13)** This was the most solemn of days for the people of God; every Jewish household celebrated Passover. The Passover is the framework upon which we interpret the death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our Passover Lamb, (1 Corinthians 5:7) and He was thoroughly examined and declared innocent, without guilt and without blemish!

(Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5, and 1 Peter 1:18,19)

The New Testament records seven witnesses who declare and confirm the innocence of Jesus.

- *Judas Iscariot: (Matthew 27:4)*
 - *Pontius Pilate: (Luke 23:4)*
 - *Herod Antipas: (Luke 23:15)*
 - *Pontius Pilate's Wife: (Matthew 27:19)*
 - *Dying Thief: (Luke 23:41)*
 - *Roman Centurion: (Luke 23:47)*
 - *Roman Guards: (Matthew 27:54)*
- **The Guilty is set free. Example: Barabbas. (John 18:39-40 and Matthew 27:15-26)** Remember the events of the crucifixion are being orchestrated by the hand of a sovereign God to the fulfillment of His divine purpose. It is no accident that Barabbas was placed before the people that day!

Barabbas represents each of us in our sinful state of depravity! Let us notice his name. Bar = "the son of" and Abba = "a father," so Barabbas = the son of a father! How generic is that!

Barabbas is guilty and condemned to die. (He was a notorious criminal, guilty of insurrection, murder & robbery.)

J.C. Ryle, "They publicly declared that they liked a robber and a murderer better than Christ!"

- **The Sinless Son of God dies in the place of guilty sinners.** The Orthodox view of atonement, held by most conservative evangelical Christians, involves Christ paying the penalty of sin, absorbing the wrath of God, and doing it in the place of the redeemed sinner. He is our substitute! This is the most consistent with the Scripture:
 - We deserved to die as penalty for our sin. (Romans 6:23)
 - We deserved to bear the wrath of God against our sin. (Romans 1:18)

- We were separated from God because of our sin. (Ephesians 2:13)
- We were in bondage to sin and in the kingdom of darkness. (Colossians 1:13-14)

But Christ! Isaiah 53:12 (He bore the sin of many); John 1:29 (He takes away the sin); 2 Corinthians 5:21 (He became sin for us); 1 Peter 2:24 (He suffered for our sin.)

“Man of sorrows what a name, for the Son of God, who came, ruined sinners to reclaim: Hallelujah, what a Savior! Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood, sealed my pardon with His blood: Hallelujah, what a Savior! Guilty, helpless, lost were we; blameless Lamb of God was He, sacrificed to set us free: Hallelujah, what a Savior!” (Phillip Bliss, 1875)

Question: Where are you in relation to your sin and the Savior? Have you turned from your sin and turned to the Savior? (1 John 1:8-2:2)