

Mark 15

Saturday, April 19, 2025 8:00 AM

JESUS ON TRIAL

And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged[a] Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. **(Mark 15:9-15)**

Pilate knew Jesus was an innocent man (**Luke 23:14** records him as saying, I have found no fault in this Man). Yet Pilate had a politically explosive situation on his hands. He had the choice between doing what was right (freeing an innocent man) or what was politically expedient (executing a man brought before him by the Jews for treason). In addition, Pilate was no friend of the Jews. He could see through their manipulation, and he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. This made Pilate want to find a way to free Jesus even more.

Amid this, Pilate believed he found a way to do what was right, yet not pay a price for it. Pilate thought Jesus could escape death if He were released according to the custom of releasing a prisoner every Passover season. Pilate figured, “If this man claimed to be king, and was even the slightest bit hostile to Rome, then the crowd will love him. These Jewish leaders don’t want Jesus to go free, but the crowd will sympathize with Him.”

Pilate was convinced the crowd would release Jesus, but instead they chose Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow insurrectionists. Pilate probably hoped that the crowd would be satisfied with a lesser punishment — that Jesus could be beaten and then let go. Pilate was probably surprised and horrified that they cried out more exceedingly, “Crucify Him!” As the crowd rejected Jesus, they embraced Barabbas — whose name means “son of the father,” and who was a terrorist and a murderer. They accepted a false son of the father. Yet if anyone was able to say, “Jesus died for me,” it was Barabbas. He knew what it was to have Jesus die on his behalf, the innocent in the place of the guilty.

This Jewish multitude — mostly Jews from Jerusalem, because most of the visiting

pilgrims stayed out in the country (**Mark 15:21**) and were not in the city this early — didn't like or trust Pilate at all. When he suggested the release of one of two prisoners, they immediately chose the other one, as much as anything just to be "against" the Roman magistrate. As far as the crowd was concerned, it was simple. Their Sanhedrin said Jesus should die, but said nothing about Barabbas. Rome's magistrate said Jesus should be set free and Barabbas executed. They would always side with their Sanhedrin against Rome's magistrate. Pilate was now in a dangerous place. The crowd was almost becoming a riot. If there was one thing that would get him in trouble with his Roman superiors, it was a riot. With both the people and the Jewish rulers demanding the death of Jesus, Pilate was unwilling to oppose them both, so he played it safe. (**Guzik**)

The wickedness of humankind had reached a climax. And this was the beginning of God's redeeming work where the Lord Jesus bore the sins of the world on the cross. How great is our God?

Lord, we are so grateful for love. You demonstrated your love while we expressed the ultimate in human sin.