

Luke 23:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder,
was cast into prison.)

Analysis

Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison—Luke's description of Barabbas emphasizes violent criminality. The Greek *stasis* (sedition) means 'insurrection,' 'uprising,' 'rebellion'—precisely what the Jewish leaders falsely accused Jesus of doing (23:2). Barabbas stood guilty of actual sedition against Rome; Jesus was innocent of it yet condemned for it. The phrase **and for murder** (καὶ φόνον, *kai phonon*) compounds Barabbas's guilt—he was both rebel and killer.

The name 'Barabbas' (βαραββᾶς) means 'son of the father' in Aramaic (bar = son, abba = father). Some manuscripts read 'Jesus Barabbas,' heightening the irony: the crowd chooses Jesus son-of-a-human-father over Jesus the Son of God. Barabbas represents humanity—guilty, condemned, awaiting execution—while Jesus represents God's provision—innocent yet willing to take our place. The exchange is the gospel in miniature: the guilty go free because the innocent dies. This is substitutionary atonement dramatized in real history.

Historical Context

First-century Judea witnessed frequent uprisings against Roman rule. Zealots and sicarii (dagger-men) engaged in guerrilla warfare and assassinations. Barabbas was likely a Zealot revolutionary imprisoned for anti-Roman violence—perhaps connected to an uprising in Jerusalem that Roman troops had suppressed. His

crimes made him a capital case under Roman law, whereas Jesus's 'crimes' were fabricated religious charges reframed as political ones.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Barabbas's release in place of Jesus illustrate the doctrine of substitutionary atonement?
2. What does the crowd's preference for a murderous rebel over the Prince of Peace reveal about human nature apart from grace?

Interlinear Text

ὅστις	ἥν	διὰ	στάσιν	τινὰ	γενομένην	ἐν	τῇ	πόλει
(Who	for	G1223	sedition	a certain	made	in	G3588	the city
G3748	G2258		G4714	G5100	G1096	G1722		G4172

καὶ	φόνον	βεβλημένος	εἰς	φυλακήν
and	for murder	was cast	into	prison
G2532	G5408	G906	G1519	G5438

Additional Cross-References

Acts 3:14 (Parallel theme): But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

