

Luke 23:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Analysis

He released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison—The guilty goes free. Barabbas, condemned for rebellion and murder (v. 19), receives amnesty while the innocent Lamb faces execution. The Greek construction emphasizes the contrast: *ton dia stasin kai phonon beblēmenon eis phylakēn* (the one thrown into prison because of insurrection and murder) versus Jesus, about whom Pilate thrice declared 'no fault.' The exchange is complete: the criminal receives the freedom Christ deserved; Christ receives the death Barabbas deserved.

But he delivered Jesus to their will (*τὸν δὲ Ἰησοῦν παρέδωκεν τῷ θελήματι αὐτῶν*, *ton de Iēsoun paredōken tō thelēmati autōn*)—Pilate 'handed over' (*paredōken*, the same word used of Judas's betrayal) Jesus to 'their will/desire' (*thelēmati*). Yet in surrendering to human *thelēma* (will), Jesus fulfilled divine *thelēma*—'not my will, but thine, be done' (22:42). This is substitutionary atonement's clearest historical picture: the guilty released, the innocent condemned, the sinner freed because the Savior died. 'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Historical Context

Pilate's delivery of Jesus 'to their will' transferred responsibility while maintaining technical Roman authority—he issued the execution order, but framed it as yielding to Jewish demands. Crucifixion was distinctly Roman (Jews used stoning), so this remained a Roman execution, yet one performed at Jewish instigation. This dual responsibility (Gentile and Jewish) fulfilled prophetic Scripture and demonstrated universal human guilt in Christ's death.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the exchange of Barabbas and Jesus illustrate the gospel truth that Christ took our place?
2. In what ways does Pilate's 'delivering Jesus to their will' paradoxically accomplish the Father's will for our redemption?

Interlinear Text

ἀπέλυσεν δὲ αὐτῶν τὸν διὰ στάσιν καὶ φόνον
he released And to their G3588 him that for sedition and murder
G630 G1161 G846 G1223 G4714 G2532 G5408

βεβλημένον εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὃν ἦτοῦντο τὸν δὲ
was cast into G3588 prison whom they had desired G3588 And
G906 G1519 G5438 G3739 G154 G1161

Ἰησοῦν παρέδωκεν τῷ θελήματι αὐτῶν
Jesus he delivered G3588 will G2307 to their G846
G2424 G3860

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;

Mark 15:15 (References Jesus): And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

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