

## I'll Fear God or I'll Fear Man - Resurrection Sunday, Matthew 28:1-20, Matthew 27:15-26 - April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**Matthew 28:1-20 NIV** After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. (2) There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. (3) His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. (4) The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. (5) The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. (6) He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. (7) Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." (8) So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (9) Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. (10) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (11) While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. (12) When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, (13) telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' (14) If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." (15) So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day. (16) Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. (17) When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. (18) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- In preparing my Resurrection Sunday sermon for today, I've sensed that the Holy Spirit has led me to do something somewhat different.
- To do this I will draw your attention to a most interesting pre-crucifixion and pre-resurrection account recorded in all four of the Gospels.
- Namely, Mark 15:6-15, Luke 23:13-25, John 18:39-40. However, we'll read it in Matthew 27:15-26, where we're introduced to Barabbas.

**Matthew 27:15-26 NIV** Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. (16) At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. (17) So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (18) For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. (19) While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." (20) But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. (21) "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. (22) "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" (23) "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" (24) When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" (25) All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" (26) Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

- If you were to put a title on this sermon it would probably have to be something along the lines of, "Either I will fear God or I will fear man."
- Now, I am keenly aware right about now, you may be thinking to yourself that this is a very unconventional Resurrection Sunday sermon.
- If that's the case, then might I humbly request that you ask for and give to the Holy Spirit your undivided attention in order to hear me out?

- Allow me to point out some interesting peculiarities concerning this Barabbas, whose significance warranted recording in all four Gospels.
- First, we're told in the Gospels that he was a notorious prisoner who was convicted and sentenced to death for murder in an insurrection.
- Moreover, he's scheduled to be executed, by way of Roman crucifixion, along with no less than two other death row inmates next to him.

- For the most part, we really don't know that much about this man, which shouldn't come as much of a surprise given what his name was.
- Let me explain, we know in Middle Eastern culture, even to this day, the name given to a man is characteristic of the nature of that man.
- By way of example, my given name in Arabic is Wahid, which is characteristic of my nature, meaning only begotten, or first begotten son.

- I share that to say this, so too is the name "Barabbas" characteristic of the nature of Barabbas such that it's meaning is, "Son of a father."
- Actually, there is some debate as to other Bible translations rendering his name Jesus Barabbas, which seems to add even more intrigue.
- Be that as it may, the name Barabbas is ambiguous at best this because, any son is the son of a father but whose father is he the son of?

- The reason I point this out is that it's not customary for a name of this nature to be so open ended and generic, particularly for the father.
- Using the aforementioned example of my name in Arabic, Wahid was associated with and identified by who my father was, "Abu Wahid."
- Conversely, I would be associated with and identified by my father's name, which was Faiez, and as such, I would be called "Ibin Faiez."

- We see this father and son association and identification replete throughout scripture, James son of Zebedee, or James son of Alphaeus.
- It's even modern day, Johnson, or Jackson, means the son of Jack, or the son of John as well as MacDonald meaning the son of Donald.
- Here's where I'm going with all of this, why is it that Barabbas has an unnamed father? For all we know, he may be of his father the devil.

**John 8:44 NIV** You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- I would suggest that it's possible the conspicuous absence of his father's name might have been deliberate on the part of the Holy Spirit.  
- Here's why, we are all Barabbas, for a number of reasons chief of which is, the jury is still out, on whom the death penalty is carried out.  
- Perhaps better said, we're all on death row awaiting our execution vis-à-vis death as the wages for our sin of breaking God's perfect law.

- I can't help but wonder what Barabbas is thinking as he's waiting for the guards to come and take him, as yet another dead man walking.  
- I've got to believe that he knows he's a murderer and an insurrectionist who's broken the Roman law and deserving of the death penalty.  
- I've also got to believe he's close enough in proximity to the riot that's about to break out and hears what's being shouted back and forth.

- He must have heard his name being shouted, but did he hear what else was being shouted? Maybe he didn't hear everything they said.  
- I imagine him in his dark prison cell bound with ice-cold chains there in the Antonia Fortress trying to get closer to the window to hear this.  
- I'm sure he had no problem hearing the crowd shout, "Barabbas" however I doubt that he could hear Pilate say, "whom should I set free."

- In other words, it's very likely he only heard the crowd shouting, "Barabbas," and "crucify him," which means he never heard Jesus' name.  
- If that's the case, then can you imagine how much fear he would've had thinking that a mob riot awaits him being crucified for his crimes?  
- I picture Barabbas collapsing to the floor as he listens for the footsteps of the prison guards inside and the screams of the crowds outside.

- There he is, and here they come, with the prison keys in hand to open the cell of this confused convict, this pitiful prisoner, frozen in fear.  
- Just look at him there in the corner all shriveled up, closing his eyes and covering up his ears. If only he knew what he was about to hear.  
- "Barabbas, son of a father good news! The Son of the Father, God Himself, has paid the death penalty in your stead now you're set free!"

One writer in an article titled, "The story of Barabbas," fictitiously though very powerfully captures the profound intensity of this moment, "The footfalls of Deliverance were heard coming along the corridors of time. Grace, heaven's sent turn key, bore the key of divine sacrificial love that turned the lock of condemnation and swung wide the great door of mercy! Mercy and love stepped within the prison cell loosened the bands of despair and broke the power of sin's strong chains! The grace of God called to all mankind, 'Come forth, you are free men, another died in your place. One named Jesus has born your cross, paid for your redemption, oh, COME FORTH, COME FORTH! Oh, trembling soul, why sit longer in the valley of the shadow of chains and darkness, rather than liberty and light?' --- What opinion would you have of Barabbas, if he had been such an ingrate, so void of appreciation, and gratitude, that he did not even take the trouble to climb Calvary, to see and thank this Jesus Who died for him? ...Did Barabbas push his way through the throng, up the hill, never stopping until he reached the foot of the cross? And, as Barabbas gazed into that face, most fair, and saw nails in his hands and feet, the drops of blood streaming down from His brow and, as Barabbas looked into those eyes of unutterable, love, and heard the words fall from anguished lips, 'Father, forgive them,' did Barabbas cry, 'Oh, Jesus Your love has won my heart. There are the two thieves, one on the right, the other on the left, but there, on that middle cross, there's the cross upon which I should have died?'"

[http://www.netbiblestudy.com/00\\_cartimages/thestoryofbarabbas.pdf](http://www.netbiblestudy.com/00_cartimages/thestoryofbarabbas.pdf)

- Please indulge me for the remainder of our time together as I connect the dots from the story of Barabbas, with the resurrection of Jesus.  
- First, I would suggest that the last chapter of the story of Barabbas is metaphorically written by each and every one of us as a Barabbas.  
- The question becomes, will the end of my story have me pushing my way up the hill never stopping until I'd reached the foot of the cross?

- Will it end with my gazing upon and calling upon the name of Jesus Who paid for my salvation on that cross upon which I should've died?  
- Will it end with me pushing my way to the garden tomb upon hearing Jesus Who was crucified isn't there for He has risen from the dead?  
- Or will it end with me dismissing it under the banner of satanic pride thinking I don't deserve the death penalty this is for others not for me.

- I'm of the belief that the litmus test as to how my story ends will be both determined by, and directly proportionate to, my fear of the Lord.  
- Here's how I get there, the end of Pilate's story was determined by, and directly proportionate to his fear of man, not his fear of the Lord.  
- And, Pilate being trapped by man evidences his fear of man, such that he acquiesced to their pressure, and in so doing sealed his fate.

Charles Spurgeon of Pilate writes, "Oh, the daring of Pilate thus in the sight of God to commit murder and disclaim it. There is a strange mingling of cowardliness and courage about many men; they are afraid of a man, but not afraid of the eternal God who can destroy both body and soul in hell."

- However, Pilate's wife does just the opposite, in that she so feared the Lord she tells Pilate to have nothing to do with this innocent man.

Charles Spurgeon of her says, "Whatever it was, she had suffered repeated painful emotions in the dream, and she awoke startled and amazed. ...Most dreams we quite forget; a few we mention as remarkable, and only now and then one is impressed upon us so that we remember it for years. Scarcely have any of you had a dream which made you send a message to a magistrate upon the bench."

**Proverbs 1:7 NKJV** The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Proverbs 8:13 NKJV** The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

**Psalms 138:6 NKJV** Though the LORD *is* on high, Yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar.

- If you were to ask me what one of the main reasons people do not believe in the resurrected Lord, I'd say they have no fear of the Lord.  
- Furthermore, I'd also add that people have no fear of the Lord, because the church for the most part has lost a reverent fear of the Lord.  
- It's for this reason that I will close with a 10 minute YouTube video from Holy Desperation, which is a compilation of powerful preaching.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW9Rul5rNbY>