

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 27:15-26 | Jesus or Barabbas**  
Sunday May 10, 2026

**WELCOME:**

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

**REVIEW:**

We have spent the last seven weeks looking at the Passion Narrative.

“The Passion” comes from a Greek term meaning “suffering.”

Not only physical suffering, but also emotional and spiritual suffering.

A major part of Jesus’ suffering is betrayal—in a very real sense, the entire world betrays Jesus.

The poster boy for betrayal is Judas Iscariot.

Last Sunday, we witnessed his demise—Judas didn’t finish life well.

We covered some pretty weighty topics as we looked at how and why Judas finished life the way he did.

As Christians, we are to finish life well.

The Lord tells us how to finish life well through His holy book.

We are here today not only to worship the Lord but also to prepare to meet Jesus face to face.

**2 Timothy 4:6**— *As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near.*

**2 Timothy 4:7**—*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.*

Faithfulness and ambitiousness are opposed to one another.

Judas was ambitious—Judas had his plans for Jesus.

Selfish ambition has no place in our lives as Believers.

Ambitions lead to wicked convictions and false beliefs.

Judas also let his emotions get the better of him—he allowed his emotions to rule his life.

Whenever we allow our emotions to rule our lives—making decisions based on emotions—we live at the lowest point of human existence.

That's why we are to live by *faith* and not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7)

Last week's passage taught us the difference between *remorse* and *repentance*.

We witnessed how Judas was remorseful of his sin, but not repentant.

**LW KEYPOINT 1:**

*Remorse is our conscience gnawing (biting back) at our sins.*

Remorse is a sign—"Turn around, you're going the wrong way!"

Remorse is a sign for us to stop and examine our guilty conscience, because if we don't, we harden our hearts and desensitize our conscience.

Remorse should lead to repentance.

**LW KEYPOINT 2:**

*True repentance involves a full 180-degree turn, 90 degrees away from sin and 90 degrees toward Jesus, resulting in a change of heart and mind.*

**LW KEYPOINT 4:**

*Remorse belongs to humanity (this world), but repentance belongs to God.*

Remorse deals with human feelings, while repentance concerns faith.

Here's a major difference between the two:

**LW KEYPOINT 5**

*You can learn to hate your sinful decisions/behavior without hating yourself.*

The Lord never asks us to be perfect, but he does require us to be faithful.

You can learn to hate your past sins without your past impacting your future.

We closed last Sunday with practical application —by learning how to repent Biblically.

I gave you examples and illustrations on how to do that.

I hope those reflection questions also helped throughout the week.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Today, we continue moving through the Passion Narrative in Matthew's Gospel.

In doing so, we'll meet a new character—Barabbas.

This passage seems to be part two of the Gentile Trial of Jesus with Pontius Pilate.

It is, however, we're going to discover a deep theological truth that is illustrated through this passage today—and see what it means for our lives.

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

### **SCRIPTURE:**

**Matthew 27:15**—At the festival the governor's custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted.

**Matthew 27:16**—At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

**Matthew 27:17**—So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

**Matthew 27:18**—For he knew it was because of envy that they had handed him over.

**Matthew 27:19**—While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of him."

**Matthew 27:20**—The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus.

**Matthew 27:21**—The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"  
"Barabbas!" they answered.

**Matthew 27:22**—Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?" They all answered, "Crucify him!"

**Matthew 27:23**—Then he said, “Why? What has he done wrong?”  
But they kept shouting all the more, “Crucify him!”

**Matthew 27:24**—When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. See to it yourselves!”

**Matthew 27:25**—All the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”

**Matthew 27:26**—Then he released Barabbas to them and, after having Jesus flogged, handed him over to be crucified.

### **The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith 1.6**

“The whole counsel of God concerning everything essential for His own glory and man’s salvation, faith, and life is either explicitly stated or by necessary inference contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Nothing is ever to be added to the Scriptures, either by new revelation of the Spirit or by human traditions.”

### **PRAY:**

*Help me understand the meaning of your precepts so that I can meditate on your wonders.* (Psalm 119:27)

### **EXEGESIS:**

**Matthew 27:11**—Now Jesus stood before the governor. “Are you the king of the Jews?” the governor asked him. Jesus answered, “You say so.”

In other words, *I am, but it’s not how you think.*

**Matthew 27:12**—*While he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he didn't answer.*

**Matthew 27:13**—*Then Pilate said to him, "Don't you hear how much they are testifying against you?"*

**Matthew 27:14**—*But he didn't answer him on even one charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.*

**Matthew 27:15**—*At the festival the governor's custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted.*

We don't know much about this custom.

It seems similar to what we call "presidential clemency."

Presidential clemency is a way for the president to show mercy through a pardon or amnesty.

The Romans instituted this custom to win favor with the general population by demonstrating kindness and compassion.

It involved releasing a prisoner during Passover.

**Matthew 27:16**—*At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.*

Today, we meet a new character in the Gospel story—Barabbas.

Unfortunately, we don't know much about this man either.

Matthew calls Barabbas a "notorious prisoner"—but a better translation is "prominent prisoner"/"famous prisoner."

Why is Barabbas famous? Why is Timothy McVeigh famous?

These men are famous for the crimes they committed.

Both Mark's and Luke's Gospels tell us that Barabbas was involved in a failed rebellion in Jerusalem that resulted in murder. (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19).

Most likely, Barabbas tried to overthrow the Roman government at the local level and failed.

It's possible that Barabbas was a member of the Zealots— a Jewish extremist group trying to overthrow Rome by force.

We do know that the other Simon—not Simon Peter—but the other Disciple Simon was a Zealot.

So Barabbas seemed to be a popular Jewish hero/folk hero because he looks more like a messiah than Jesus does. Why?

Barabbas is a man of action—and the longer he's in prison, the more famous he gets.

He's scheduled for execution along with two other men who were a part of their plan.

That is probably why three crosses were ready for crucifixions.

What's interesting is that Barabbas is his last name—"bar Abba" means "son of Abba," translated as "son of a father."

So if Barabbas is his last name, what's his first?—Jesus.

Ancient manuscripts list Barabbas as "Jesus Barabbas."

The name “Jesus” is very popular in the first century—Iesous (e-sous), Yeshua, Joshua, and Hosea are all variations meaning “rescuer/deliverer/to save.”

**Matthew 27:17**—*So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”*

### **KEYPOINT 1:**

*The crowd has a choice between two Jesuses: One who was the son of a father and one who was the Son of a Heavenly Father.*

**Matthew 27:17**—“Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

As proud as Pontius Pilate is—he hates to ask this question.

Keep in mind, he’s the one with authority.

Remember what Pilate asked Jesus?

**John 19:10**—*Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?”*

Pilate thinks he’s in charge, but in reality, he is the *secondary cause* in God’s sovereign plan of redemption.

So he asks this question to the crowd:

**Matthew 27:17**—*Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”*

In asking this question, he thinks he knows the answer.

It's been well said that politicians don't ask questions that they don't know the answer to.

So Pilate thinks that the crowd will choose Jesus the Christ.

After all, Pilate heard about how Jesus entered Jerusalem five days during His triumphal entry—how the crowd cried out, ***“Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”*** (Matt. 21:9)

How in the world would those same people turn against him right now?

Ordinary people at an ordinary time with an ordinary person would surely side with Jesus the Christ rather than with a criminal—Jesus Barabbas.

But nothing about this moment is ordinary.

Yet at the same time, this question reveals that Pilate is not as powerful as he claims to be.

In a way, Pilate lives in fear—and the fear of losing power/authority has actually made him powerless.

Because we're going to watch him cave in under pressure in a moment.

**Matthew 27:18**—*For he knew it was because of envy that they had handed him over.*

Pilate knows that the Jewish leaders are not concerned with Jesus overthrowing the Roman government.

He can see right through that—Pilate knows that these Jewish leaders are jealous of Jesus' popularity.

**Matthew 27:19**—*While he was sitting on the judge's bench,*

Picture a courtroom scene today, with a judge presiding over a trial.

When Pilate sits down, the conversation turns into a formal, official legal proceeding.

It's like when a judge enters the courtroom today—the bailiff says, “All rise for the honorable Judge Pontius Pilate.”

Interruptions are not welcome during court proceedings, but...

**Matthew 27:19**—*While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of him.”*

Several weeks ago, we met Pilate's wife—Claudia Procula.

She is the daughter of an exiled princess—with a shameful political past—but was then legally adopted by Emperor Tiberius!

Claudia sending this message to Pilate at this moment is highly unusual.

Pilate is acting in his official capacity as a judge and jury— and not even the Emperor's daughter would dare to interrupt—but she does.

Much more awkward than your phone going off in the middle of an important meeting.

So this must have been very important to her. So what's going on?

As you can imagine, the night before, Pilate and Claudia were eating dinner, discussing their day.

Pilate probably told her about Jesus—she's probably heard of Jesus herself.

- His triumphal entry
- His healing miracles, including the recent raising of Lazarus, just outside Jerusalem.
- They probably laughed when they heard the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple and throwing all that money on the ground.

It's possible that Claudia went to bed thinking about Jesus and had a dream about Him.

The Romans were particularly superstitious about dreams.

1. They believed the gods spoke to them in dreams
2. They believed that dreams could be omens/signs/warnings.

Keep in mind that the Romans were polytheists—"poly" meaning many and "theos" meaning gods.

The Romans believed in hundreds of gods.

**Question:** Was this dream from God?

After all, there were many dreams about Jesus' birth. (Matthew 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22).

Some people say, yes—the dream was probably given by God as a sign of Jesus' innocence.

Others say no—the dream was more of a superstitious nightmare.

What we do know is that Matthew doesn't explain the source of the dream—so we can't insist either way.

Regardless, Claudia is scared—and sends this urgent message to her husband.

She didn't want Pilate to have anything to do with Jesus—she's convinced of Jesus' innocence.

She thinks Jesus is not merely innocent but “righteous.”

**Matthew 27:19**—“Have nothing to do with that righteous man,

In other words, Claudia believes that Jesus is a moral man who has done *good things*—not wicked things deserving of death.

While the blind are leading the blind, she alone sees.

Don't you wonder what she actually dreamt about?

What was it specifically that terrified her? We can only guess:

- Did she see Jesus on the cross?
- The veil torn? Earthquake? People rising from the dead?
- Did she see Jesus after the resurrection?
- Did she see Jesus on His glorious throne, as the prophet Isaiah did?

We don't know—All we really know is that she is terrified at this moment.

**Matthew 27:19**— *for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of him.”*

She has suffered a great amount of emotional pain!

As a footnote to Claudia, because this is the last time she's mentioned in Matthew's Gospel, the Coptic Church (Egyptian) believes she became a Christian.

They actually canonized her as a saint!

The Greek church also includes Procula in the calendar of saints.

Evidently, Claudia's message took a few minutes and caused a pretty big interruption during this trial.

**Matthew 27:20**—*The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus.*

While Pilate was distracted by her message—and there's no doubt it rattled him—the Jewish leaders took full advantage of the interruption.

The crowd was not left to make up its mind on its own— it rarely is.

There are always people who try to manipulate public opinion.

We see this today through political commercials.

We especially see online people commenting on blogs and videos.

People have the audacity to call themselves “influencers.” Why?

They want people to repeat their opinions so they don't have to think.

Regardless, during this little time-out, Pilate's problem escalates.

He's caught in the middle of what he knows is right—Pilate knows that Jesus is an innocent man— Claudia's dreams confirm it!

From Pilate's perspective, his legal ruling of innocence was confirmed by his gods!

BUT he knows he's got an angry group of Jews that will make life very difficult if he doesn't concede.

So he asked his question again...

**Matthew 27:21**—*“Which of the two do you want me to release for you?”*

Pilate gives the crowd a choice between the two Jesuses.

Do you want this “son of a father” (Barabbas) or the Son of the Heavenly Father—Jesus the Christ?

- Do you want a man of violence or a man of peace?
- Do you want the man of the sword or the man of salvation?
- Do you want mighty King Saul or the little shepherd boy David?

**Matthew 27:21**—“*Barabbas!*” they answered.

They demand violence. Why?

The common Jewish people wanted a savior/messiah.

They wanted someone to free them from Roman oppression.

They wanted a king they could understand, a king who would make their lives easier and more comfortable.

They did not want a king who spoke in parables and who must first atone for their sin.

They didn’t have time for that—they wanted what they wanted, and they wanted it now.

The crowd's choice of Jesus Barabbas is a powerful lesson for us today.

**KEYPOINT 2:**

*The world will always choose instant gratification.*

The world does not know how to play the long game.

The world has no patience for the King of kings who cannot and will not tolerate sin and demands that people pick up their own cross and die to themselves.

So the world shouts, “Jesus Barabbas.”

Pilate was trapped by his own scheming. He had miscalculated.

He was sure the crowd would choose Jesus the Christ.

So, he’s forced to ask another question...

**Matthew 27:22**— *“What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?”*

That’s the question we must all answer for ourselves.

What am I going to do with Jesus, who is called the Christ/Messiah/King of kings?

- Am I going to believe Him? Or ignore Him?
- Am I going to trust in Him or trust in myself?
- Am I going to accept His grace or try to climb the stairway to heaven myself?

*What are you going to do with Jesus? We know what the crowd does.*

**Matthew 27:22**— *They all answered, “Crucify him!”*

Pilate was not prepared for this answer.

Pilate knows that the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus, but crucifixion is a different matter.

Crucifixion is the method of execution designed to maximize suffering and prolong death for days.

The Romans would nail the victims wrist and feet to a Roman cross.

People died from loss of blood, heart failure, or suffocation.

Crucifixion goes way further than imposing a death sentence.

Crucifixion was as politically brutal as it was physically barbaric.

Crucifixion sends a message to His disciples, the people He healed, and everybody else who believed.

Crucifixion is the most brutal public message imaginable—it's meant to scare His followers, silence His supporters, and shame His holy name.

The Jewish leaders think that crucifixion will discredit Jesus.

The law says “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deut. 21:23).

So crucifixion will please the Jewish leaders—

BUT, do you know who else will be pleased?

God the Father will be pleased— because crucifixion is His ordained means unto salvation for all who believe.

Roman crucifixion was God’s plan from the beginning—see Col. 1:1.

The irony, of course, is that Jesus does suffer God’s curse, but not as the Jewish leaders think.

**Galatians 3:13**—*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,*

**1 Peter 2:24**—*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness.*

So Jesus will suffer the curse, taking on the curse that we, as Believers deserve.

This is called *substitutionary atonement*—

*Substitutionary*: Christ died in place of Believers as our substitute.

*Atonement*—the act of reconciliation between God and man.

That's why the OT sacrificial system is important to understand.

Israel conducted 730 sacrifices per day throughout the year.

During Passover, over 250,000 lambs were slaughtered in just three hours.

All those sacrifices point to Jesus the Christ as the Lamb of God.

But Pilate doesn't understand any of this, so he continues to prevent it from happening.

**Matthew 27:23**—Then he said, "Why? What has he done wrong?" But they kept shouting all the more, "Crucify him!"

They had no answer—they list no reasons—not even one why Jesus should be crucified.

It's like they got tired of making up lies.

All they could do was shout louder, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The world demands the torturous death of God's son—their Savior.

Here's the thing—Because Jesus had been declared "not guilty" by law, Pilate could have legally released Jesus the Christ as well as Jesus Barabbas.

But politically, Pilate knows he can't do that—so he goes against his conscience.

**Matthew 27:24**—*When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead,*

This is not good—we've all seen the foolishness of riots in Minneapolis and Portland recently.

Being in the middle of a riot is scary.

This is a great example of how fearing people prevents us from doing our duty.

There is a divine freedom that comes from fearing God and not people, but Pilate doesn't fear God—nor do the religious leaders.

The crowd clearly wanted blood, not justice.

**Matthew 27:24**—*he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves!"*

Not so fast—two things:

1. As governor, Pilate is responsible for what happens to Jesus the Christ—whether he likes it or not.

Making uncomfortable decisions that go against the latest Gallup poll is why he's the governor.

2. Where have we seen this phrase before, "See to it yourself"?

That's exactly what the priests said to Judas! (Matt. 27:4)

Not only do the Jewish priests fail to do their duty, but so does the Roman governor.

All the water in the world is not going to wash Pilate's guilty hands.

It is ironic, and very intentional, that Pilate chose a Jewish ritual to abandon his legal responsibility.

To the best of our knowledge, this hand washing was not a Roman custom.

As an act of defiance, Pilate uses their own custom against them.

He, of course, takes the ritual out of context (Deut 21:6-7).

**Psalm 26:6**—*I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar,*

Pilate is anything but innocent.

Although he doesn't realize it, he is responsible to God for administering justice.

Renouncing his duties and declaring himself innocent hardly absolves him of sin. After this dramatic illustration, look what happens...

**Matthew 27:25**—*All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"*

There is a way for Jesus' blood to be on them and on their children—to atone/make amends for their sinful rebellion—but that's not what they mean.

Jesus' blood offers forgiveness, mercy, and eternal life.

But they don't want forgiveness—they scorn mercy—mock eternal life.

This is wicked scary.

These people have the audacity to take full responsibility for murdering their Savior—AND, also to put the responsibility on their children?!

These guys have no clue what they're doing.

They cursed themselves and their children.

They abandoned their covenant with God!

Regardless of their stupidity, God the Father heard them—and will hold them completely responsible.

The Father did judge them—more than one million Jews were slaughtered in 70 AD when the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple.

**Matthew 27:26**—*Then he released Barabbas to them...*

I mentioned that we would come across deep theological truths buried in this passage.

*Here it is:*

Jesus Barabbas is guilty and goes free, while Jesus Christ, who is innocent, is condemned.

This is the *Great Exchange*—a picture of substitutionary atonement.

The guilty is freed while the innocent faces death.

In other words,

**KEYPOINT 4:**

*We are Barabbas—guilty, deserving death, and God's wrath because of our sin.*

**Matthew 27:26**—*after having Jesus flogged,*

Once Pilate caves to the Jewish leaders, things go south fast.

Matthew doesn't tell us what flogging is because everyone in the first century already knew.

Keep in mind that the Gospel writers are much more interested in the spiritual meaning of Jesus' death rather than the physical suffering.

However, since we're unfamiliar, let me paint a brief picture of what happened.

Roman flogging was an instrument of torture.

Flogging/scourging was customary before crucifixion.

They used a leather whip called the flagellum.

The whip had a short wooden handle with several leather belts attached.

Each belt was tipped with very sharp pieces of metal or bone.

The man to be flogged (filleted) was tied to a post by the wrists high over his head, with his feet dangling and his body tightly stretched.

Generally, there are two soldiers, one on each side, who took turns lashing the victim across the back because they used so much energy to execute the torture.

The Romans would then lash his back until they were exhausted.

Now, the Jews had a different form of flogging—much more humane—but we're talking about the Roman form.

Many victims died before they even got to be crucified.

**Matthew 27:26**— *handed him over to be crucified.*

In summary: The wrong Jesus was released, the wrong Jesus tortured, the wrong Jesus crucified—but God the Father used all these wrongs to make everything right.

Pilate caves and sets Jesus' execution in motion.

Pilate had prepped three crosses to be ready for Barabbas and his two cohorts.

Jesus Christ was crucified on the middle cross instead of Jesus Barabbas.

This is the bloody story of our salvation.

**Hebrews 9:22**—*According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

**Romans 5:6**—*For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.*

**Romans 5:8**—*But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

It's not only in the dying—but through the resurrection.

And the resurrection comes when people think that all hope is lost.

### **APPLICATION:**

Two main questions come out of this passage.

If you're an unbeliever—"What are you going to do with Jesus?"

- Are you going to believe Him?
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who offers eternal life through Himself?
- Or are you choosing not to believe?

If you believe, then here's your next step:

**Romans 10:9**— *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Once you're saved, you will be changed.

Your next step is to get baptized and start the discipleship process.

Now, if you are a Believer, your question is not "What are you going to do with Jesus?"

Instead, it's "What are you doing with Jesus?"

- If you're a parent, are you raising your children in the ways of Jesus?
- If you're a student pursuing a degree, are you studying, reading, and writing for God's glory?
- If you're working 9-5, are you working that job for the glory of God?
- If you're a business owner, are you leading your business as the Lord leads you?
- If you're retired, are you enjoying the rest that God has given you?

And in the middle of whatever season you're in, are you sharing Jesus the Christ day by day?

Regardless of whether you're a parent, student, employee, business owner, or retired—

Those are just seasons in life—those are just the means of you living out the Gospel.

### **Pop Quiz:**

**1. According to the sermon, what does the word “Passion” (as in Passion Narrative) mean?**

- A. Love and devotion
- B. Victory and triumph
- C. Suffering
- D. Obedience

Correct answer: C

**2. What main distinction did the sermon draw between remorse and repentance? A.**

- A. Remorse is public, repentance is private
- B. Remorse is temporary, repentance is permanent
- C. Remorse is feeling bad, repentance is doing good works
- D. Remorse is guilty feelings, repentance is a 180-degree turn toward Christ in heart and mind

Correct answer: D

**3. What did Pilate offer the crowd according to Matthew 27:17 as explained in the sermon?**

- A. Jesus or Judas
- B. Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ
- C. Barabbas or another unnamed prisoner
- D. Jesus or a full acquittal for all prisoners

Correct answer: B

**4. What significant point did the sermon make about the name “Barabbas”?**

- A. It means “friend of the Romans”
- B. It means “the chosen one”
- C. It means “son of Abba,” or “son of a father”
- D. It means “rebellious one”

Correct answer: C

**5. What key contrast did the sermon highlight between the two “Jesuses” presented to the crowd?**

- A. One was Jewish, the other Gentile
- B. One was a prophet, the other a king
- C. One was popular, the other unknown
- D. One was the son of a human father, the other the Son of the Heavenly Father

Correct answer: D

**6. Why did the crowd, according to the sermon, choose Barabbas over Jesus the Christ?**

- A. Because Barabbas repented publicly
- B. Because Barabbas bribed the chief priests
- C. Because they wanted a political/military savior and instant relief from Roman oppression
- D. Because they misunderstood which man was on trial

Correct answer: C

**7. What key point did the sermon make about “the world” in relation to the crowd’s choice?**

- A. The world usually chooses the most moral leader
- B. The world always chooses tradition over truth
- C. The world will always choose instant gratification
- D. The world never takes spiritual matters seriously

Correct answer: C

**8. What did Pilate’s fear of the crowd illustrate, according to KEYPOINT 3?**

- A. Fear of people can improve our decisions
- B. Fearing people prevents us from doing our duty
- C. Fear of people is worse than any other sin
- D. Fearing people is sometimes necessary for peace

Correct answer: B

**9. How did the sermon describe the scene of Barabbas going free and Jesus being condemned?**

- A. As a tragic mistake with no deeper meaning
- B. As a political victory for the Jewish leaders
- C. As the great exchange and a picture of substitutionary atonement
- D. As proof that God had abandoned His plan

Correct answer: C

**10. When the crowd said, “His blood be on us and on our children,” what did the sermon emphasize about this statement?**

- A. It was a sincere prayer for forgiveness
- B. It was an accidental phrase with no consequences
- C. It was a prophetic statement that only applied to the chief priests
- D. It was a self-imposed curse showing their blindness and responsibility before God

Correct answer: D

**Reflection Questions:**

Below are reflection questions organized by theme. You can select a few per meeting depending on time and context.

**1. Remorse, Repentance, and Finishing Well**

- a. How would you explain the difference between *remorse* and *repentance* in your own words? Where do you see that difference in Judas’s life?
- b. Have you ever experienced strong remorse over a sin but stopped short of true repentance? What kept you from turning fully to Christ?
- c. The sermon said, “*You can learn to hate your decisions without hating yourself.*” How does the gospel make this possible? How does this contrast with the way the world deals with guilt and shame?

- d. Read 2 Timothy 4:6–7. What does it practically look like to “*fight the good fight*” and “*finish the race*” in your current season of life?
- e. Where do you see *selfish ambition* creeping into your life (career, ministry, family, reputation, etc.)? How might that ambition distort your convictions and beliefs if left unchecked?
- f. The sermon warned that allowing our *emotions* to rule our lives is “*the lowest point of human existence.*” Where are you most tempted to live by sight/feeling rather than by faith (2 Cor. 5:7)?

## 2. Two Jesuses: Barabbas and Christ

- a. What strikes you most about the contrast between *Jesus Barabbas* (“son of a father”) and *Jesus the Christ* (Son of the Heavenly Father)?
- b. If the crowd had to choose between a violent political liberator and a suffering Savior, which one did they see as more practical for their immediate needs? How does that mirror the choices our culture makes today?
- c. In what ways are we tempted to choose our own version of “Jesus Barabbas”—a savior who promises comfort, immediate change, or political power—over the real Jesus who calls us to repentance, holiness, and cross-bearing?
- d. How does understanding Barabbas’s release deepen your appreciation for the doctrine of *substitutionary atonement*?
- e. The sermon stated, “*We are Barabbas—guilty, deserving death, and God’s wrath because of our sin.*” How does owning that truth shape your humility, your worship, and your relationships with others?

### 3. The Crowd, the World, and Instant Gratification

- a. Why do you think the same people who cried “*Hosanna*” earlier (Matt. 21:9) now cry “*Crucify Him*” (Matt. 27:22–23)? What does that reveal about the human heart?
- b. The sermon said, “*The world will always choose instant gratification.*” Where do you see this most clearly in our culture? Where do you see it in the church?
- c. Where are you personally tempted to pursue instant gratification over long-term obedience to Christ? How might you begin to “play the long game” by faith in that area?
- d. How can a robust view of Christ’s kingship and His coming kingdom help us resist the pull of instant gratification and short-term comfort?

### 4. Pilate, Fear of Man, and Responsibility

- a. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, yet gave in to the crowd. What signs of *fear of man* do you see in Pilate’s actions?
- b. The sermon said, “*Fearing people prevents us from doing our duty.*” Where does fear of others most hinder your obedience—family, workplace, school, social media, or evangelism?
- c. Read Proverbs 1:7; 14:27; 19:23. How does the *fear of the Lord* practically free us from the fear of people?
- d. Pilate tried to wash his hands and declare himself innocent (Matt. 27:24). In what ways do we try to shift or minimize our own responsibility before God?
- e. How can we cultivate a conscience that is tender before God yet grounded in the finished work of Christ, rather than crushed by guilt or hardened by excuses?

## 5. Substitutionary Atonement and the Great Exchange

- a. How does the image of Barabbas going free while Jesus is condemned help you visualize “*the great exchange*”?
- b. Read Galatians 3:13 and 1 Peter 2:24. What do these verses teach about what Jesus accomplished on the cross *for you personally*?
- c. How does the Old Testament sacrificial system (daily sacrifices, Passover lambs) point forward to Christ as the final Lamb of God?
- d. Why is it important to insist on *substitutionary atonement* and not just a vague idea of Jesus “showing love” on the cross?
- e. In what ways does a clear grasp of substitutionary atonement affect: Your assurance of salvation? Your prayer life? Your willingness to forgive others?

## 6. Human Responsibility, Judgment, and Mercy

- a. The crowd cried, “*His blood be on us and on our children!*” (Matt. 27:25). What does this reveal about human blindness and hardness of heart?
- b. How do we hold together, biblically, the realities of *God’s sovereignty* and *human responsibility* in this passage (Pilate’s choices, the crowd’s cry, the Father’s plan of redemption)?
- c. In what ways does the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 sober us about God’s holiness and judgment?
- d. How should the reality of God’s coming judgment shape the way we evangelize, pray, and live before an unbelieving world?

**7. Conversion: “What Will You Do With Jesus?”**

- a. For unbelievers, the key question is: “*What are you going to do with Jesus?*” How would you explain the gospel simply and clearly using Romans 10:9?
- b. What misunderstandings about salvation do people in our context commonly have (e.g., “be good,” “go to church,” “try harder”)? How does this passage correct those misunderstandings?
- c. If someone in your life asked, “*How do I become a Christian?*” what steps from this sermon and the text would you highlight for them?
- d. How can our church more clearly and consistently call unbelievers to *repentance and faith*, rather than to vague moral improvement or generic spirituality?

**8. Discipleship: “What Are You Doing With Jesus?”**

- a. For believers, the question becomes: “*What are you doing with Jesus?*” How would you answer that honestly about your own life right now?
- b. Think about your season: (Parent, Student, Employee, Business owner, Retiree) How are you currently seeking to honor Christ in that role? Where do you sense you are resisting Him?
- c. What would it look like, practically, to “pick up your cross and follow Jesus” in your daily routines this week?
- d. How intentional are you about *sharing Jesus day-by-day*? What small, concrete step could you take this week to grow in evangelism (e.g., prayer, invitation, conversation, hospitality)?
- e. Where do you sense the Lord calling you to deeper obedience or sacrifice in light of what Jesus endured in your place?

### 9. Worship, Assurance, and Hope

- a. How does meditating on Christ's flogging and crucifixion affect your worship? Do you tend to minimize His suffering, over-focus on its physical aspects, or forget the spiritual meaning behind it?
- b. Read Romans 5:6 and 5:8. How do these verses comfort you when you feel weak, unworthy, or aware of ongoing sin?
- c. How does the resurrection shape the way you face suffering, uncertainty, or apparent defeat today?
- d. Where do you need to freshly rest in *Christ's finished work* rather than in your performance, feelings, or circumstances?

### 10. Group/Application Questions

- a. As a group, where do you see River Bible Church tempted to choose comfort, popularity, or instant results over faithfulness to Christ and His Word?
- b. How can our congregation better reflect a *biblical fear of the Lord* rather than fear of cultural pressure, political power, or public opinion?
- c. What specific practices (family worship, catechism, Scripture memory, corporate prayer, Sabbath rest, etc.) might help our church "finish well" together, not just start well?
- d. After considering Matthew 27:15-26, what is *one concrete change* you believe God is calling you to make this week? How can this group pray for you and help you follow through?

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

### **PREACHING BIBLE:**

*Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020.

### **BIBLES:**

*Greek-English Interlinear New Testament CSB*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2022

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016.

*Legacy Standard Bible*. Irvine, CA: Steadfast Bibles, 2021.

### **STATEMENT OF FAITH:**

Reeves, Stan, ed. *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English*. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017.

### **PARAPHRASE BIBLES:** (Used as Commentaries)

*The New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Tyndale House Publishers. *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.

### **COMMENTARIES:**

Abernathy, David. 2013. *An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 1–16*. Exegetical Summaries. Dallas, TX: SIL International.

Blum, Edwin A., and Trevin Wax, eds. 2017. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Blomberg, Craig. 1992. *Matthew*. Vol. 22. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Boice, James Montgomery. 2001. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Brown, Jeannine K. 2015. *Matthew*. Edited by Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Courson, Jon. 2003. *Jon Courson's Application Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Crossway Bibles. 2008. *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Doriani, Daniel M., Hans F. Bayer, and Thomas R. Schreiner. 2021. *Matthew–Luke*. Edited by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar. Vol. VIII. ESV Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Doriani, Daniel M. 2008. *Matthew 1 & 2*. Edited by Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani. Vol. 1. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

France, R. T. 2007. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

France, R. T. 1985. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 1. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*. Vol. 1. San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2017.

Hendriksen, William, and Simon J. Kistemaker. 1953–2001. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. Vol. 9. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Kasdan, Barney. 2011. *Matthew Presents Yeshua, King Messiah: A Messianic Commentary*. Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1985. *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. 2013. *One Perfect Life: The Complete Story of the Lord Jesus*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Morris, Leon. 1992. *The Gospel according to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Mounce, Robert H. 2011. *Matthew*. Understanding the Bible Commentary Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

O'Donnell, Douglas Sean. 2013. *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*. Edited by R. Kent Hughes. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Rubin, Barry, ed. 2016. *The Complete Jewish Study Bible: Notes*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Bibles; Messianic Jewish Publishers & Resources.

Sproul, Robert Charles. 2013. *Matthew*. St. Andrew's Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Turner, David L. 2008. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Wiersbe, Warren W. 1996. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, ed. Christiane Jurik (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2017–2020), 82.

Chanon Ross, *Gifts Glittering and Poisoned: Spectacle, Empire, and Metaphysics* (New York, NY: Cascade Books, 2014).

Morris, Michelle J. "Barabbas." In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 460–461.

John G. Butler, *Jesus Christ: His Crucifixion*, Studies of the Savior (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2005), 8:180.

R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1238.

Melancthon W. Jacobus, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to Mark*, The Bible for Home and School (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 226.

Paul Douglas Gardner, in *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters: The Complete Who's Who in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 74.

Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Barabbas," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1:263.

Woodrow Michael Kroll and Marvin R. Wilson, *Watching Jesus Die: Getting to Know Calvary's Cast of Characters* (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2023).