

PURE PASSION

WEEK 9

AN ATHLETE STUDY

WRONG NUMBER!

If you're watching football on television and a penalty takes place, the referee will go to mid-field to announce the penalty and the player responsible. It's always humorous when the ref calls the wrong number because a few things all happen at the same time—the person whose number was called whips around like, "What did I do?" The person who caused the penalty usually shrinks away as he and the rest of the team know that he is responsible. All the while, the announcers very often catching penalties in real time, begin to sort out how the ref messed up.

Our study has witnessed Jesus entering Jerusalem at the beginning of Passion Week. We spent a few Weeks examining the Upper Room discourse ending with the High Priestly Prayer in John 17. Judas had left to betray Jesus and the rest went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Finally, he gathered his disciples and went to meet his captors.

Jesus suffered the night having endured three "religious" trials of top of the physical beating. Now, facing trumped up charges, he's brought before the Roman governor, Pilate for execution. Pilate didn't want to convict Jesus. He remembered the custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover. The penalty flag is a cross, the referees are the Jewish leaders, and although the announcer, Pilate, understands the mistake they're making, he is unable to persuade them from calling the wrong man's number.

MATTHEW

MARK

LUKE

JOHN

27:21–26

15:12–14

23:13–25

18:39–
19:16

MATTHEW 27:21–26

²¹ The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³ And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

²⁵ And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"I am Barabbas, You took upon my cross, I was that prisoner, Till you bought my bond with blood, I can't run away, From what my accusers say, I am Barabbas your friend."

"Substitutionary atonement" is the fancy phrase that means Jesus took our place, dying the death our sin deserves. Scan the QR code to worship and consider how it must have been for Barabbas as Jesus took his place.



DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you witnessed someone helping another person with no expectation for payback.

ICEBREAKER

1. What fate did the crowd choose for each man? (21-23)

2. How did Pilate respond to their choice? (24)

3. What responsibility did the crowd accept? (25)

OBSERVATION

4. Based on the physical and political setting, how surprised do you think Barabbas was by his release and Jesus' substitution?

INTERPRETATION

5. How does Jesus taking our place of punishment practically change your life on a day to day basis?

6. In what ways has his punishment brought you peace?

APPLICATION

Peace isn't just the absence of conflict. Instead, peace is the believers response in the midst of turmoil. If you need encouragement, talk to your coach today.

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STUDY NOTES

ROMAN PEACE

The Roman Empire ruled the land of Judea and nothing brought more pride to the Roman heart than the ideal of *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace). The cost of peace was high, but the Romans gladly paid the price.

Often in ancient times, the price of peace was extreme brutality. Terror and dread were effective weapons to squelch civil unrest—heads on spikes, skin ripped from bodies and hung on city walls, and in the case of Rome, even nailing seditionists naked from a cross as a public spectacle. Absolutely no credence could be given to anyone who would upset *Pax Romana*.

Under Jewish Law, a blasphemer should be stoned to death. However, if the Jews took Jesus' execution into their own hands, this would upset *Pax Romana*. So, to achieve the death they wanted, they needed the local Roman official to legally have Jesus executed.

Pilate had no love for the Jews. He wasn't a nice guy, but he didn't want to kill an innocent man. Plus his wife had warned him to have nothing to do with Jesus (Matthew 27:19). Looking for a way out, Pilate sent the whole charade over to Herod who, because Jesus wouldn't do any "magic tricks," sent them back to Pilate.

This whole mess landed back at Pilate's door. Jesus' innocence was undeniable. Thus, Pilate thought he might get out of it through an old tradition *during the Passover feast* in which the Roman governor was accustomed to release one prisoner to the crowd, whomever they wanted (Matt 27:15).

GODLY PASSION BRINGS SECULAR CONFIDENCE

In Roman custody sat a well-known criminal named Barabbas. Matthew notes that he was "a notorious prisoner" (Matthew 27:16). This guy was bad news, not only for the Romans, but for the Jews as well. He sat awaiting certain death for sedition—murder and revolt against Rome. It's likely that Barabbas sat in his cell during this entire affair. So, as Pilate asked, "**Which of the two do you want me to release for you?**", let's consider the story from Barabbas' perspective.

It seems very likely that Barabbas heard the crowd outside. He probably didn't hear Pilate, but all of a sudden he heard the crowd shout his name, "**Barabbas.**" He probably perked up at that. Again, he probably didn't hear Pilate ask the crowd, "**Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?**" Instead, all he heard was, "**Let him be crucified!**" Pilate asked the crowd, "**Why? What evil has he done?**" But

in his cell, all Barabbas heard was a louder and more vicious shout, "**Let him be crucified!**"

Although Barabbas had to know his time was short, it's hard to imagine the feeling of having a mob outside calling for your head—or in this case, for you to be crucified. He had seen crucifixions, everyone had. That's the point! Wooden crosses were placed on roadways and thoroughfares so that everyone knew the price of *Pax Romana*. Very much alive, nails would go through your wrists and ankles. He had seen men gasping for breath as they hung there, slowly dying, often taking days. He probably figured his time had come.

SECULAR CONFIDENCE MAY BLESS OTHERS

The agitated crowd noise outside no longer hid the noise of Roman soldiers inside. Boots clicked louder as the guards came closer. The bloodlust of the crowd still echoed in his cell, "Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing as the crowd drew restless and **a riot was beginning**. For a variety of reasons, mainly self-preservation, Pilate couldn't allow another riot to break out. So, **he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."** Perhaps this is when Barabbas was brought out and could finally see what was happening. He heard **all the people answer, "His blood be on us and on our children!"**

Confused, Barabbas' shackles were removed as Pilate **released for them Barabbas**. Instead of getting what he deserved, Barabbas received freedom. And in spite of the fact that Jesus was completely and entirely innocent, he was **scourged** and **delivered to be crucified**. Barabbas was the first of many for whom Jesus took his place as Jesus picked up the cross that was meant for him and carried it to Golgotha.

Rome, like the Greeks, Persians, Assyrians, and Babylonians, made peace through unspeakable violence. They used terror as a tool to make one's enemies think twice before taking up arms. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul decades later writing to believers in Rome, "**Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Romans 5:1). The grandest of ideals for the Roman was achieved on an eternal scale, not through committing violence, but by receiving it. It wasn't just the physical pain that Jesus would endure.

As we shall see, there was unspeakable spiritual and emotional pain as well. All of this, Jesus did so that you and I could have peace.