

Question: Who was the first person who knew that he was saved because Jesus died in his place?

Answer: Barabbas (referring, of course, to this life, not eternity.)

The thief and murderer Barabbas appears in all four gospels. Some ancient texts give his full name as Jesus Barabbas. Copyists may have omitted “Jesus” because they did not want to associate this disreputable character with the Lord. But *Jesus* was an ordinary name corresponding to *Joshua*. (Actually, recording the name Jesus Barabbas is evidence of the Bible’s accuracy. Someone inventing a fictional character would hardly pick that name for him).

Barabbas was an insurrectionist. He may have belonged to a radical wing of the Zealots known as the

*Sicarii*, or assassins, who are named in Acts 21:38. This may explain why the priests were able to win over the crowd to chant for Barabbas’s release. Under Roman subjection, Israel had lost all political power. People may have felt their culture and even their religion was under siege. They could have seen Barabbas as a champion fighting to restore their land.

This Jesus of Nazareth was a different story. He had spoken of a kingdom but apparently was not going to establish it very soon. Instead, He was delivering teachings about lowliness and humility, putting others first. That seemed unlikely to restore the rights of the suffering children of Israel.

Which would you choose?

**Questions:**

1. Verses 66-71 tell us what is happening to Peter while the Lord is being accused and spit upon by the chief priests and elders. Peter has the opportunity to stand by the Lord and do what he said in verses 29 and 31. Why do you think he fails?
2. Why does Peter weep in verse 72?
3. Why do the chief priests hold a consultation with the elders, scribes and the council in the morning?

4. In verse 2, the Lord answers Pilate's question but doesn't say anything more in response to the accusations by the chief priests in the following verses. Why do you think the Lord remains silent?
5. In the following verses (6-15), we have the interchanges between Pilate and the multitude about Barabbas and the Lord. What do we learn from these verses about Pilate, the multitude, the chief priests, and Barabbas?
6. What do we learn about the Roman soldiers in verses 16-20?
7. What do the thorns represent in verse 17?
8. Why does Simon have to bear the Lord's cross?