

HE TOOK OUR PLACE

I. Various Scriptures

A. All four gospels give us an account of a notorious rebel named Barabbas who was released by Pontius Pilate instead of Jesus at the cries of the people. Let's read quickly through these accounts and glean from God's Word all we can...

B. Matthew 27:15-26 (ESV) says: **15** Now at the feast (**Passover**) the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. **16** And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. **17** So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (**Messiah**) **18** For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered Him up. **19** Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man, for I have suffered much because of Him today in a dream." **20** Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. **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.

C. Mark 15:6-15 (ESV) will sound very similar: **6** Now at the feast (**Passover**) he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. **7** And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. **8** And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. **9** And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" **10** For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered Him up. **11** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. **12** And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the Man you call the King of the Jews?" **13** And they cried out again, "Crucify Him." **14** And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him." **15** So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

D. Luke 23:13-25 (ESV) adds some important nuances about the rebel: **13** Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, **14** and said to them, "You brought me this Man (**Jesus**) as one who was misleading the people. And after examining Him before you, behold, I did not find this Man guilty of any of your charges against Him. **15** Neither did Herod, for he sent Him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. **16** I will therefore punish and release Him." **18** But they all cried out together, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"--**19** a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. **20** Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, **21** but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify Him!" **22** A third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has He done? I have found in Him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release Him." **23** But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that He should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. **24** So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.

25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

F. John 18:38b-40 (ESV) finishes up: 38b After he (**Pilate**) had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in Him. **39** But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" **40** They cried out again, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

G. So let's summarize: We have a prisoner, probably one of the Zealots who sought to overthrow the Roman occupation of Palestine. He's released to go free while Jesus is sentenced to die in his place. Here's Barabbas' rap sheet: revolutionary, insurgent, murderer, thief, terrorist. He's let go. But the Messiah, the innocent Son of God, the Righteous One, the Lamb without spot or blemish, is sent to the cross!

H. In the NT, whenever the Aramaic word "bar" is in front of a name, it typically means "son of." [Ben is the Hebrew equivalent.] e.g. Bar-timaeus (the blind beggar) means, "son of Timaeus." Bar-tholomew means, "son of a farmer." Among Jesus many names for Peter was Simon Bar-Jonah or "Simon son of Jonah." Bar-nabas is translated, "son of encouragement." The name Barabbas literally means, "son of the father." And yet it must be said, The One and Only Son of God our Father in heaven, took Barabbas' place on the cross. He took our place too! The Bread & Cup remind us.

I. How often we've heard of a tragic event where a person's killed and someone says, 'That was supposed to be me on that on that ship or in that car, or on that mission or that patrol?' (Waylon Jennings, Buddy Holly's base player, gave up his seat on a plane to an J.P. Richardson-*The Big Bopper*, a plane that crashed right after takeoff. Don McLean's anthem, *American Pie* called it, 'The day the music died.') During the Civil War, on both sides, a person could sponsor someone to be their "substitute" because they were either unable to fight (or unwilling). President Lincoln even had one, John Summerfield Staples, buried in Stroudsburg, PA with a monument upon his grave indicating he was Lincoln's substitute.

J. In a 1961 fictional movie, actor, Anthony Quinn plays Barabbas. He's haunted by the fact that Jesus took his place on the cross. He eventually becomes a believer. But this side of heaven, we don't know what happened to the real Barabbas. He may've gone back to being a terrorist. But we do get to know what happens to us. Jesus paid the price for all our rap sheets--the ones kept on file in heaven. He suffered the punishment we deserved. **1 Peter 2:24-25 (NIV) puts it like this: 24 "He Himself bore our sins" in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by His wounds you have been healed." 25 For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Jesus took our place! The Bread & Cup remind us.**

*** Pray & Officiate Communion...**

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[Matthew 27:15-26 \(ESV\)](#)

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John 18:38b-40 (ESV)

38b After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in Him. **39** But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” **40** They cried out again, “Not this Man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

1 Peter 2:24-25 (NIV)

24 “He Himself bore our sins” in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by His wounds you have been healed.” **25** For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Bonus Rations for Further Nourishment

"In My Place" - Matt Damico - Kenwood Music
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohS-y4i17V8>

Don't Replace the "Substitute" - Trevin Wax - The Gospel Coalition
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/dont-replace-the-substitute/>

Film Clip/The Judgment: “Barabbas” starring Anthony Quinn, Circa 1961
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mTgi4QhFIU&NR=1>

Is the Church I'm Going to A Cult? - Paul Carter (The Gospel Coalition)
<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/is-the-church-im-going-to-a-cult/>

Did Christ Already Return? - John Piper
<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/did-christ-already-return>

Isaiah 53:4-6 (ESV)

4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

1 Peter 2:24-25 (ESV)

24 He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree...”

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

21 God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 John 3:16 (NLT)

16 We know what real love is because Jesus gave up His life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

“There is no doctrine that fires my soul with such delight as that of substitution. Substitution is the very marrow of the whole Bible. It is the soul of salvation. It is the essence of the gospel. We ought to saturate all our sermons with it, for it is the lifeblood of a gospel ministry.”

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

“In one word the great fact on which the Christian’s hope rests is substitution. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the sinner, Christ being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, Christ offering up a true and proper substitutionary sacrifice in the place of as many as the Father gave Him, who are recognized by their trusting in Him. This is the cardinal fact of the gospel.”

Quote by John MacArthur

“...Whether you’re talking about redemption, justification, reconciliation; whether you’re talking about the removal of sin and transgression, whether you’re talking about propitiation or covering--all of those are corollaries in a sense to the great truth of substitution, that Christ took our place on the cross... To put it as simply as I can put it, if Christ is not my substitute, then I still occupy the place of a condemned sinner. If my sins and my guilt are not transferred to Him and He does not take them, then they remain with me. If He did not deal with my sins, then I must deal with them. If He did not bear my penalty, then I must bear it. There is no other possibility. It is either Him or me... The bottom line is this: either Christ took my sins and bore them or I will. Either He paid the penalty for my sin, or I will pay it in hell forever.”

- John MacArthur, Sermon titled, *"The Suffering Jesus: Our Substitute and Shepherd,"* June 11, 1989.

Quote by John Calvin

“This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God... We must, above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life--as if God’s righteous vengeance, which the Son of God has taken upon Himself, still hung over us... To take away all cause for enmity and to reconcile us utterly to Himself, He wipes out all evil in us by the expiation set forth in the death of Christ; that we, who were previously unclean and impure, may show ourselves righteous and holy in His sight.”

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, p.p. 506, 510.

Quote by Leon Morris

"Redemption is substitutionary, for it means that Christ paid that price that we could not pay, paid it in our stead and we go free. Justification interprets our salvation judicially. As the New Testament sees it, Christ took our legal liability, took it in our stead. Reconciliation means the making of people to be at one by the taking away of the cause of hostility. In this case, the cause is sin and Christ removed that cause for us. We could not deal with sin, He could and did, and did it in such a way that it is reckoned to us. Propitiation points us to the removal of the divine wrath and Christ has done this by bearing the wrath for us. It was our sin which drew it down. It was He who bore it. Was there a price to be paid, He paid it. Was there a victory to be won, He won it. Was there a penalty to be borne, He bore it. Was there a judgment to be faced, He faced it."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust Him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits, are imputed to you; all the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Every one of His merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ because Christ stood before God as if He were you--He in your stead, you in His stead. Substitution! That is the word! Christ the Substitute for sinners--Christ standing for men and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin, He "being made sin for us who knew no sin." Man standing in Christ's place, and receiving the sunlight of divine favor, instead of Christ."

Quote by John Stott

"The concept substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices Himself for man and puts Himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone."

Quote by J.C. Ryle

"Christ would have lived, and taught, and preached, and prophesied, and wrought miracles in vain, if He had not crowned all by dying for our sins as our Substitute! His death was our life. His death was the payment of our debt to God. Without His death we should have been of all creatures most miserable."

Excerpt from J.I. Packer (Packer Quoting Luther)

Martin Luther wrote: *"All the prophets did foresee in Spirit that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, blasphemer, etc., that ever was or could be in all the world. For He, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world is not now an innocent person and without sins...but a sinner."* He was, of course, talking about the imputing of our wrongdoing to Christ as our substitute.

Luther continues: *"Our most merciful Father...sent His only Son into the world and laid upon Him...the sins of all men saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor,*

blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them. Here now comes the law and saith: I find Him a sinner...therefore let Him die upon the cross. And so He setteth upon Him and killeth Him. By this means the whole world is purged and cleansed from all sins."

The presentation of the death of Christ as the substitute exhibits the love of the cross more richly, fully, gloriously, and glowingly than any other account of it. Luther saw this and gloried in it. He once wrote to a friend: "Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him, and say, 'Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am Your sin. You have taken upon Yourself what is mine and given me what is Yours. You became what You were not, so that I might become what I was not.'"

What a great and wonderful exchange! Was there ever such love?

- J.I. Packer, *Your Father Loves You*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

George Vandeman on Substitution (The Louis Slotin Story)

It was May 21, 1946. The place - Los Alamos. A young and daring scientist was carrying out a necessary experiment in preparation for the atomic test to be conducted in the waters of the South Pacific at Bikini.

He had successfully performed such an experiment many times before. In his effort to determine the amount of U-235 necessary for a chain reaction--scientists call it the critical mass--he would push two hemispheres of uranium together. Then, just as the mass became critical, he would push them apart with his screwdriver, thus instantly stopping the chain reaction. But that day, just as the material became critical, the screwdriver slipped! The hemispheres of uranium came too close together. Instantly the room was filled with a dazzling bluish haze. Young Louis Slotin, instead of ducking and thereby possibly saving himself, tore the two hemispheres apart with his hands and thus interrupted the chain reaction.

By this instant, self-forgetful daring, he saved the lives of the seven other persons in the room. As he waited for the car that was to take him to the hospital, he said quietly to his companion, 'You'll come through all right. But I haven't the faintest chance myself.' It was only too true. Nine days later he died in agony.

Nineteen centuries ago the Son of the living God walked directly into sin's most concentrated radiation, allowed Himself to be touched by its curse, and let it take His life . But by that act He broke the chain reaction. He broke the power of sin.

- George Vandeman, *Planet in Rebellion*.

Lincoln's Substitute

Author Unknown

Only the precious blood of Christ can cover our transgressions. In Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, there is the grave of a Civil War soldier. The stone bears the date of his birth and death, and then these words: "Abraham Lincoln's substitute." In the woe and anguish of the war, realizing that thousands upon thousands were falling in his place on the field of battle, Lincoln chose to honor one particular soldier as his substitute and make him a symbol, as it were, of the fact that the soldiers who perished in battle were dying that others might live. When you and I come to the Cross of Christ, each one of us supplying his own name, can say, "My Substitute!"

Two Brothers - Substitution

Author Unknown

The story is told of two brothers who once lived completely opposite lives. The older was a God-fearing man, good to everyone. The younger was rebellious, even violent. The older brother tried to influence him, but in vain. "One evening, while the older sat quietly in his home, the younger brother stormed in with blood on his clothes, shouting, 'Save me if you can! I have killed a man, and the police are after me!' "The older replied, 'Quick! Let's change clothes.' "They did so. The murderer donned the white garment, and the innocent put on the blood-stained one. Scarcely had they finished when the police arrived. Seeing the older brother in bloody clothes, they knew they had found their man and dragged him from his home. They had no doubt he was the one they sought. "Brought to court, the accused admitted his guilt. The judge bowed to what seemed clear evidence and sentenced him to death. He had one last wish: 'At the moment of my execution, please give my brother this letter.' His wish was granted. "Later, when the brother opened the letter, he read: 'I died in your place, in your bloody garment, for your guilt.'" Dear friend, this is what Jesus did for you. He died in your place. He took upon Himself your own sins and bloody garment and died in your place. He suffered because of your own guilt. This is the glory of the cross as seen in the Biblical doctrine of substitution.

What is Substitutionary Atonement?

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://www.gotquestions.org/substitutionary-atonement.html>

Question: *"What is the substitutionary atonement?"*

Answer: The substitutionary atonement refers to Jesus Christ dying as a substitute for sinners. The Scriptures teach that all men are sinners ([Romans 3:9-18, 23](#)). The penalty for our sinfulness is death. [Romans 6:23](#) reads, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

That verse teaches us several things. Without Christ, we are going to die and spend an eternity in hell as payment for our sins. Death in the Scriptures refers to a "separation." Everyone will die, but some will live in heaven with the Lord for eternity, while others will

live a life in hell for eternity. The death spoken of here refers to the life in hell. However, the second thing this verse teaches us is that eternal life is available through Jesus Christ. This is His substitutionary atonement.

Jesus Christ died in our place when He was crucified on the cross. We deserved to be the ones placed on that cross to die because we are the ones who live sinful lives. But Christ took the punishment on Himself in our place—He substituted Himself for us and took what we rightly deserved. *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”* ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

“He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed” ([1 Peter 2:24](#)). Here again we see that Christ took the sins we committed onto Himself to pay the price for us. A few verses later we read, *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit”* ([1 Peter 3:18](#)). Not only do these verses teach us about the substitute that Christ was for us, but they also teach that He was the atonement, meaning He satisfied the payment due for the sinfulness of man.

One more passage that talks about the substitutionary atonement is [Isaiah 53:5](#). This verse talks about the coming Christ who was to die on the cross for our sins. The prophecy is very detailed, and the crucifixion happened just as it was foretold. *“But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”* Notice the substitution. Here again we see that Christ paid the price for us!

We can only pay the price of sin on our own by being punished and placed in hell for all eternity. But God’s Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to pay the price of our sins. Because He did this for us, we now have the opportunity to not only have our sins forgiven, but to spend eternity with Him. In order to do this, we must place our faith in what Christ did on the cross. We cannot save ourselves; we need a substitute to take our place. The death of Jesus Christ is the substitutionary atonement.

Recommended Resource: [Making Sense of Salvation by Wayne Grudem](#)

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