

learned that in determining to save their political life they had forfeited it, and higher blessings. *Barabbas*, "Son of a [great] father" (?), probably a title given to him when he came out as a pretender, Origen's reading "Jesus Barabbas" is striking, but seems due to a mere scribe's accident. *With 1 cor.* Including no doubt, the two "robbers" who were crucified with Jesus. They had thought killing no murder in so good a cause. VER. 8. Only Mark mentions the initiative of the mob. They are described as surging up into the space in front of the pretorium. VER. 9. The proposal really yielded the point: if Jesus was innocent, as Pilate had already declared, he could not make his release a matter of favor. *King*. As in the title on the cross, this was intended as an insult to the Jewish leaders, a reminder of their national degradation. We can understand these constant and varied testimonies to the Kingship of Jesus recurring throughout that awful day. VER. 10. *Ecce*, of a Teacher who had succeeded in reaching the masses. VER. 11. To explain the case with which the hierarchs persuaded the fickle multitude, we must remember what a revolution must have been caused by the refusal of Jesus to follow up his triumphal entry by leading a revolution. The mob who had cried "hosanna" could cry within a week "crucify," when Jesus had thus ablicated the one duty which the populace demanded of their Messiah. The converted saying about the temple was freely circulated (comp. ver. 29), and the patriotism of Barabbas extolled. VER. 12. Pilate takes another step downward in asking the people their will; he, the Roman Judge, so conscious of his supreme power (John 19, 10) and of the Prisoner's perfect innocence. VER. 13. John (18, 31) has recorded the veiled hint by which the chief priests prepared the way for this infernal yell. VER. 14. The mob have no answer to Pilate's question. "*Stet pro ratione voluntas*," This we have an unbroken confession of the sinlessness of Jesus. VER. 15. John records (19, 12) the argument which finally clinched Pilate's wavering purpose, and Matthew the fearful scene in which the people of God accepted the responsibility for themselves and their children—ay, to sixty generations; as thousands even now are made to feel in Europe's great cities. *Scourged*. Luke and John show that this horrible punishment, the usual antecedent to crucifixion, was inflicted at an earlier stage, after a definite acquittal, in the hope that a reaction would be produced thereby. Of course the concession only confirmed the Jews' purpose. VER. 16. *Court*. The open quadrangle round which was built the splendid palace of Herod the Great," used by the procurators when in Jerusalem. In this space were the tents of the Roman cohort brought by Pilate from Cesarea, whence the name *pretorium* (that is, military head-quarters) is applied to it as well as to the palace. *Cohort*. (Marg. so read), a regiment in a Roman legion, averaging some six hundred men. VER. 17. *Purple*. Some cast of *ergum* or general's cloak. *Thorns*. Some flexible prickly shrub was used, but we cannot identify it. The object does not seem to have been the infliction of physical pain, but ultimately mockery of the subject people who called this poor crushed man their King. VER. 19. *Red*. Which they had offered him for a scepter. Again a mark of contempt, and not cruelty. Throughout these brutalized Roman legionaries showed nothing of the fiendish savagery of the previous mocking shared by subalterns and their minions. VER. 20. These wanton insults occupied the time required for preparation. *Let him out*. Compare Heb. 13, 12, indicating the rejection and isolation which were among the bitterest pangs in the Redeemer's death.

## Lesson Word-Picture.

"Ho, they're coming, these vile Jews!" says Pilate, looking up in contempt. "Here they are, those villainous elders and scribes and priests, and there is that poor, harmless Nazarene, bound and held fast. King of the Jews, is he? No harm in him, the fanatic. I would like to help him. Yes, all here, I'll ask him if he is that King. Yes, he says he is. The harmless maniac!"

The trial begins. Such a trial! There stands the accused, restrained like a felon, but in silent, uncomplaining dignity. The chief priests fling at him their charges, but he makes no reply. They charge again and again, louder, fiercer. Still no answer. Then Pilate says a word. No reply. "That is strange. Why is it?" Pilate wonders. "Other accused people have much to say."

Pilate is perplexed. In his uncertainty he looks around. There are the Jews, contemptuous and clamorous, shouting and jeering. The Roman soldiers look carelessly on. Before the vacillating Roman ruler is the bound one still silent.

Let him go, Pilate!

But these Jewish priests and rulers—they want like it. Pilate knits his brows, twists his fingers, wishes all the Jews were at the bottom of the great sea.

Let him go, Pilate!

Suddenly he smiles. He has a lucky thought. There is his custom of releasing a prisoner. In prison is that abominable Barabbas. If he say, shall it be Barabbas or Jesus? the people—not the rulers and priests—the people will shout for Jesus! Yes, they will decide it for themselves and relieve Pilate. A lucky thought. He smiles again. He always was shrewd. He makes his proposition—Barabbas, or Jesus?

What? His face darkens. They really want—Barabbas? It can't be. Pilate will ask again. What about the King of the Jews? the irresolute, perplexed, disappointed ruler is asking concerning that silent, bound One. O, the mob's reply! It is a shout, a howl, a yell, a dem-on-clamor, all bawling, shaking their fists, flourishing their arms, insisting, "Crucify him!"

How silent, dignified, majestic in the midst of it all is Jesus! The weak face of Pilate is irresolute.

Let him go, Pilate!

He hesitates. He makes one more effort. He pleads. He questions. What is the harm this poor, inoffensive King hath done? Hark! What a wild, fiendish clamor there is now, "Crucify him!"

O shame! O sorrow! O infamy! The blows of the bloody scourge are soon falling on the sacred body of Jesus, and then he is hustled away.

"Clear out the hall!" orders Pilate. "Rid me of these Jews!"

The hall is empty, and we seem to see the Roman ruler lingering on his throne, gloomy, vexed, mad, to think how the Jews outwitted him, and how he sent an innocent man to the cross. He never meant to do it.

And next it is the pretorium. "Ha, ha!" some soldier is saying, "the Jews have got a King at last; a King for all the rebellious set! Now we will crown him!"

Such sport! A Jew-king! They crowd about him. They throw over him the mockery of royal purple. They make him a crown of thorns. They roughly laugh and jeer at him. They bow before him. They shriek, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Ha, ha! such a festive hour! Who ever expected to see a Jew-king? Their mood changes. They smite him in anger. They spit at him in scorn. They prostrate themselves in mockery. And then in awful earnestness they tear off the purple and dress him for his cross. Bleeding, faint, drooping, but uncomplaining, silent, and a King, the Son of God is led forth to die.

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