

The 'Robbers'

by Robert Wurtz II

Jesus' teachings were seen as a threat to the Zealots' goal of rebellion against Rome, leading to His crucifixion and our need to be cautious in our interpretation of prophecy.

Scripture: Matthew 5:39, Matthew 5:41, Mark 12:17, Mark 14:48, Mark 15:7, John 18:40

Topics: "Jesus Teachings", "Messianic Prophecies"

Description

Robert Wurtz II delves into the significance of the term 'Robbers' in the context of the Jewish Freedom Movement, shedding light on the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' teachings opposed the Zealots' doctrines, emphasizing love, submission to authority, and non-resistance to evil, which directly conflicted with the Zealot cause. The misinterpretation of Messianic prophecies by the Zealots serves as a cautionary tale for believers today, urging them to be cautious about dogmatically predicting the timing of the Lord's return and avoiding personal agendas. Through the example of Barabbas, who was released instead of Jesus, the sermon explores the profound irony of Jesus dying for the sins He preached against, highlighting the sacrificial nature of His death.

Transcript

The "Robbers" (Gk. les-tes) as we touched on in the previous study was the preferred term to describe participants in the Jewish Freedom Movement by Josephus. This sheds much light on the Gospels and the crucifixion of Jesus. When the temple guards came to get Jesus He asked them the question "48 "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled"(Mark 14:48, 49 NIV). Literally the passage says "have you come out against a ROBBER?" The NIV captures the meaning though. The teachings of Jesus were well contrary to the doctrines of the Zealots (Robbers, Sacarii, Barjone, etc.). He taught the people to love each other and not to rebel against Rome. He will be shown to die for the very sins and behaviors he TAUGHT AGAINST. In fact, He said if you are asked to carry a load for a mile carry it two miles (Matthew 5:41). And again... render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars and to God the things that are God's (Mark 12:17). And again I say unto you that you RESIST NOT evil (Matthew 5:39). Many like teachings that were totally contrary to the Zealot cause. Jesus did MUCH to squelch the Zealot uprising! We will see what they did with Him.

Many wanted to force Jesus into the mold of their own interpretation of prophesy and Messianic concepts of that day. The application I make of this fact for today in my life is thus: There misinterpretation of key

Messianic passages proved to be deadly dangerous in the end for the Zealots and others and speaks to us today that we ought to use caution in how dogmatic we are about the TIMING of the Coming of the Lord. The Jews had the timing... they were in the dark as to the details and purpose of the first coming (and most of them blew it because of their own agendas). We as the Church have the details, but are in the dark concerning the timing and could be in danger of our own agendas causing a similar plight (no need for me to defend this comment... its my own personal position).

Martin Hengel comments on this saying "His enemies, however, had him condemned before Pilate

as a messianic pretender who endangered the state and, together with two "robbers", who may have been real Zealots, he suffered the same death as som many members of the Jewish Freedom Movement before and after Him." (Martin Hengel, The Zealots, Edinburg 1989)

In John 18:40 we find Barabbas being referred to as a "robber." And again... A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. 9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. (Mark 15:7-11 NIV) What madness is this? To condemn with lies a man for doing the very thing you know the man you are asking the release of is guilty of? Yes, I believe, Jesus was condemned in Barabbas' place-- the truly guilty one. Barabbas was released as was common with the scapegoat and Christ bore our sin dying for the very things He preached and taught against. Talk about a riddle? How did that riddle Peter's mind? The whole situation was insane. Not only did he have to come to terms with what he thought the Messiah was supposed to do; but He watched Him die for the very things He preached against. Only by the prayer of Jesus and the sovereign grace of God did Peter (Petros i.e. "the rock") not watch his faith be dashed into powder.

* None of this information on this page is from Internet sources (not that that is always bad). It is original information in which I have utilized Josephus' Complete Works and Martin Hengel's scholarly work "The Zealots" T & T Clark EDINBURG c1989 among other sources as well as recollections from past lectures of Dr. Ron Moseley of the AIHLS (American Institute for Holy Land Studies).

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