

# Shadows In the Bible

## Barabbas

Sometimes the Bible itself has shadows. Places where it's tough to see what is real. Throughout my study of the Bible and the culture surrounding it, I have been fascinated at the lack of information. History does not keep that good of records. We have so little information on Egypt, Roman, and many other cultures. Half the time is spent deciphering hieroglyphics or studying other ancient texts to find common understanding. In many cases we just don't know.

In comes this story of Barabbas. He does not say a single word. Yet, this man is famous in Christian circles. We virtually know nothing about who he is, where he came from, or what happened to him. The basic story is that Jesus ends up on trial for crimes he did not commit. One of those accusations is that he claimed to be the Son of God. It just so happens that a notorious (at the time) criminal named Barabbas is on trial too. His name could be translated Son of the Father. How interesting is that?

To make matters more interesting is his name. In some old Bible manuscripts, his name is stated as Jesus bar Abbas. Abba can mean father. Bar can mean "of" or "son of." Sometimes a person's name was common like Jesus. Then they added an extension to identify what house you

came from. So, this criminal could be called Jesus “son of” Abbas. Abbas being his father. Just as we have some Vikings called Leif Eric’s son. There is a story floating around that says they removed Jesus from his name to avoid confusion in the story. It’s tough to say for sure why some manuscripts have it and some don’t.

What is also interesting is Barabbas back story. We only have a few hints. The Bible says he was a criminal. It also says that he was part of a revolt. What revolt? The Catholic Bible has a few extra books called the apocrypha. Some of those books give us a history between the last Book of the Old Testament and Jesus era. This period had what was called the Maccabees revolt. It happened in and around 167 BC. Barabbas can’t be in that revolt. However, those revolts against the Roman rule did not stop.

I have read several explanations on Barabbas. Was he and Jesus the same man? Is it an allegory of Jesus? The man set on a revolt? It does not fit very well. There are two men on trial, not one. Secondly, some scholars dispute Pilate allowing this man to go free. Yet, we have the Biblical record. What happened to this shadowy figure? That is why I am glad this story is in the Bible. The Jews would even ask to free a bad man to have Jesus crucified. That is hatred.

I don’t like rabbit trails. Some things are what they are. Barabbas is on trial. He misses the cross by a hair thanks to Jesus conviction. Jesus never mentions this man either. Barabbas slides into history without fanfare. A man in the right place and the right time to be forgiven. Don’t you find it interesting that two men were forgiven that were guilty. The thief on the cross and Barabbas. Jesus however, was not guilty but was killed regardless. The shadowy Barabbas goes silently into history as a pawn in a Bigger game.