

FOUR CONVICTED MEN

Open with Hymn 224 "All Of Thee"

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be arrested, tried, and convicted for a crime of which you were innocent?

I heard the thought once, that if you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Today, we are going to look at the lives of four convicted men to learn who they were, of what crimes they were convicted, and the results of those convictions. Then, we will explore these things again for additional meaning to us.

Our hope is that each of **us** will be convicted -- for the proper reason.

The four men of whom we speak were: Jesus, the two thieves crucified with Jesus, and Barabbas, who was set free.

Let us look first at Jesus.

Let us review those supposed crimes of which Jesus was accused. Let us also note **by** whom he was accused.

In reviewing the Scriptures, we find that Jesus was accused of "*terrible*" crimes, "*capitol*" crimes, such as:

[1] being with His disciples as they picked corn on the Sabbath to satisfy their hunger; -- the Pharisees accused the disciples of doing work on the Sabbath. (Matt. 12:1,2)

[2] He ate with publicans and sinners. (Matt. 9:11)

[3] He cured many -- on the Sabbath -- which brought the wrath of the Pharisees and the rulers of the synagogue insomuch as they wanted to kill Him.

[4] He cast out demons and was accused by the Pharisees of being the prince of demons.

[5] He failed to wash His hands before eating -- again accused by the Pharisees. (Matt. 15:1,2)

[6] He was accused of blasphemy: in healing some, Jesus said that their sins were forgiven; that was blasphemy. In calling God His father, that was blasphemy.

In **all** these accusations, He was not accused by the people or representatives of the civil government. He was accused by the clergy.

In the trial of Jesus, two systems of justice combined to produce a sentence of death for Jesus:

In the Jewish trial, Jewish leaders were determined to seek Jesus' death when they put Him on trial. Mark 14:1 tells us: *After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, **and put him to death.***

And Luke 22:2 says: *And the **chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him;** for they feared the people.*

They held the Jewish trial at night hoping that Jesus' supporters would be afraid, or asleep and unable to protest his arrest. The procedures of the Jewish leaders during Jesus' trial were illegal. Jewish law required that trial for a capital crime begin during the daytime and adjourn by nightfall if incomplete. Sanhedrin members were supposed to be impartial judges. And according to Holman's Bible Dictionary, Jewish rules prohibited convicting the accused on His own testimony.

The Jewish portion of the trial had three separate phases: (1) an appearance before Annas; (2) an informal investigation by Caiaphas and (3) a condemnation by the Sanhedrin.

Annas was father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. He had been high priest himself from A.D. 7-15 and was the most influential member of the Sanhedrin. The details of the interview before Annas are meager as given to

us in John 18:12-14,19-24. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, (John 18:12 KJV)*

And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. (John 18:13) The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. (John 18:14 KJV)

(John 18:19) Jesus answered him [the "him" here being Annas, the high priest], I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. (John 18:20 KJV) Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. (John 18:21 KJV) And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? (John 18:22 KJV) Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? (John 18:23 KJV) Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. (John 18:24 KJV)

The meeting with Caiaphas took place in his residence as we see in Luke 22:54: *Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. .*

Some members of the Sanhedrin worked frantically to locate and train witnesses against Jesus as we learn in Matt. 26:59-60 *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, , but Mark 14:56 tells us that the carefully prepared witnesses could not agree in their testimony For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. (Mark 14:56 KJV)*

Deuteronomy 19:15 tells us why they needed the witnesses to agree: *One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.*

During this, Caiaphas talked with Jesus and put Him under oath. He charged Jesus to tell if He were God's Son. Jesus affirmed that He was God's Son, knowing that this would lead to death. Jewish religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, a capital offense under Jewish law: *And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death. (Leviticus 24:16 KJV)*

Luke 22:66-71 tells us: *"And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." . For them this constituted blasphemy.*

John 19:7 (KJV) tells us *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because **he made himself** the Son of God. --*

Mark 14:64 says *Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.* Note that although the Sanhedrin **condemned** Jesus, they did not **sentence** him to death

After the condemnation the group broke up into wild disorder, some began to slap and spit upon Jesus (Mark 14:65).

Shortly after dawn, the Sanhedrin convened again to bring a formal condemnation against Jesus (Luke 22:66). Jewish law stipulated that a guilty verdict in a capital crime had to be delayed until the next day therefore, the vote for condemnation after dawn gave the semblance of following this requirement.

The procedure at this session was similar to that of the night trial: no witnesses came forward to accuse Christ, Jesus again claimed that He was God's Son (Luke 22:66-71), the Sanhedrin again approved the death sentence and took Jesus to Pilate for sentencing (Luke 23:1).

The Jews, being a subjected people, and knowing Jesus' popularity with the people, feared an insurrection, therefore leading to Caiaphas's remark found in Luke 22:2 *And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.* and also in John 18:14 (KJV) *Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that **one man should die for the people** -- not in the sense of the ransom for all, of which they knew nothing, but in the sense that it is better for one man to die than the Hebrew nation to die at the hands of the Romans in an insurrection.*

The Roman trial of Jesus also had three phases: (1) the first appearance before Pilate; (2) the appearance before Herod Antipas; (3) the second appearance before Pilate. The Jewish leaders asked Pilate to accept their verdict against Jesus without investigation (John 18:29-31). Pilate refused this, but he offered to let them carry out the maximum punishment under their Jewish law, which was probably beating with rods or imprisonment, but the Jewish leaders insisted that they wanted death. Roman leaders allowed conquered people such as the Jews to follow their own legal system so long as they did not abuse their privileges.

The Romans did not give the Jews the right of capital punishment for the accusation of blasphemy, so the Jews had to convince a Roman judge that their demand for capital punishment was justified. The Jewish leaders knew that Pilate would laugh at their charge of blasphemy, so they fabricated three additional charges against Jesus which would be of concern to a Roman governor as found in Luke 23:2 *And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow (1) perverting the nation, and (2) forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, (3) saying that he himself is Christ a King.* Pilate concerned himself only with the charge that Jesus had claimed to be a king because this charge sounded like treason, and the Romans knew no greater crime than treason.

John 18:33 - 38 shows us that Pilate interrogated Jesus long enough to be convinced that He was no political rival to Caesar. He returned to the Jewish leaders to announce that he found Jesus no threat to Rome and hence not deserving of death. The Jewish leaders responded with vehement accusations against Jesus' actions in Judea and Galilee saying in Luke 23:5

And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

When Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Jesus to Herod Antipas of Galilee who was then in Jerusalem (Luke 23:6-12). Herod wanted Jesus to entertain him with a miracle, but Jesus did not even speak a word to Herod. The king and his soldiers mocked and ridiculed Jesus, finally sending Him back to Pilate.

When Herod returned Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor announced that he still found Jesus innocent of charges of treason. Three times Pilate tried to release Jesus: first, Pilate offered to chastise or beat Jesus and then to release him (Luke 23:16); second, he offered to release either Jesus or Barabbas, a radical revolutionary. To Pilate's surprise the crowd chanted for Barabbas' release (Luke 23:17-19). Third, he scourged Jesus. Soldiers flailed at Jesus' bare back with a leather whip which had pieces of iron or bone tied to the ends of the thongs. Pilate then presented the bleeding Jesus with a crown of thorns and a mock purple robe to the crowd as their king. He hoped that this spectacle would lead them to release Jesus out of pity. Again they chanted for crucifixion (John 19:4-6).

When Pilate seemed to waver one more time concerning crucifixion, the Jewish leaders threatened to report his conduct to Caesar (John 19:12). Pastor Russell tells us in R 4172: "They clearly intimated to Pilate that the incident would be reported at Rome, and would have a peculiar light that would reflect against his vigilance as the representative of Roman authority --that a pretender to the dominion of Israel had appeared, and that they themselves, loyal to Rome, had arrested him and brought him to the Governor, who was so slack of his duty that instead of crucifying him he had set him free. Poor Pilate was in a very hard place for one of his character, position and education. He gave way finally under pressure, whereas many a man in his place would not have thought of resisting the popular will in such a matter. He finally gave sentence that the will of the people should be done. And is not this as high a level as is ever attained by earthly law and justice? What human law can stand against the will of the people? Is it not the same with us today? The people make the laws and the people execute them, and Pilate merely hearkened to the voice of Jesus' own countrymen. Here, too, the Scriptures lay the blame, saying, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Here the Apostle also lays the blame, not upon Pilate, but upon the Jews and their rulers."

That threat triggered Pilate's action. After symbolically washing his hands of the entire affair (Matt. 27:24), he delivered Jesus for crucifixion (John 19:16).

So, for these crimes of calling himself the Christ and the son of God, Jesus was convicted. For the false crime of treason, he was executed. He was tried and convicted by the ecclesiastical government and executed, unwillingly, by the civil government.

Let us next look at Barabbas and compare his crimes with those of Jesus. We know little about Barabbas except what we find in the Scriptures.

-- *Mark 15:7 (KJV) And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made **insurrection** with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.* This was an insurrection against the Roman government in which Roman citizens were killed and robbed. Because of this, he was probably popular with the common Jewish people.

-- *Luke 23:19 (KJV) (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for **murder**, was cast into prison.)*

-- *John 18:40 (KJV) Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a **robber**.*

So Barabbas was not only accused but convicted of three crimes: [1] insurrection or sedition -- the Greek word is the same, [2] murder, and [3] robbery. He was in prison awaiting execution. The Civil government was responsible for this conviction. But who was responsible for his release? Let us look at the Scriptures.

-- *Mark 15:11 (KJV) But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.*

Now, what possible motive could the priests have in wanting Jesus dead and Barabbas released? Again the Scriptures tell us:

Mark 15:9,10 (KJV) But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. --

-- *John 19:15 (KJV) But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.*

We see the two motives: [1] envy, and [2] alliance with civil government.

We see also another problem: Lack of faith in God. The Jewish leaders were omitting God's plan and God's timing. They were doing their own plan in their own time.

And why would the civil government comply with the wishes of the priests? Several sources, including John 18:39 *But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?* state that it was customary at Passover for the Roman government to set one prisoner free as a gesture of good-will, but what the Scriptures also tell us is this:

-- Luke 23:7,8 (KJV) *And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.*

-- Luke 23:12 (KJV) *And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

-- Matthew 27:24 (KJV) *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.*

Therefore, two points: [1]political alliance within the civil governments, and [2]avoidance of a riot by the people instigated by the clergy.

So Barabbas was set free. He was tried, convicted and sentenced by the civil government but released by the ecclesiastical government. Now the Scriptures do not say, but unless Barabbas had a total changing of heart attitude, one wonders if he were again, in the future, tried for crimes, and probably met the same fate as if he had **not** been released that day.

We have left the two thieves crucified with our Lord. About these, the Scriptures say

-- *Luke 23:32 (KJV) And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.*

-- *Matthew 27:38 (KJV) Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

-- *Luke 23:39-43 (KJV) And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee today: thou shalt be with me in paradise.*

" *If thou be Christ, save thyself and us*" Can you just imagine the many emotions such a statement could possibly evoke? Yet, Jesus did not in any way respond to this. How could this thief know that were Jesus to save himself, he could not be the savior of the world?

The other thief, realizing his own guilt and Jesus' innocence is the one who responded, then said to Jesus, " *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*" It is interesting to note that he asked for the **Kingdom**, a future kingdom, not heaven. Jesus did respond to this thief, assuring him that he would be in that kingdom. Jesus called it Paradise. Now, in actuality, neither thief was subject to second death, so Jesus could rightly have told them both that they would be in the Kingdom.

So, these two thieves, for their crimes of theft were tried, convicted, and executed by the civil government. Here, the ecclesiastical government did not seem to be involved.

Since in the Scriptures we frequently find shadows and pictures and types, we wondered if there might also be in this story, and if not in actuality, that we might draw some parallels between actual men and events and a larger picture of classes of people. Therefore, using the historical events, we wish to offer for your consideration the following:

If we were to assign classes of people to these figures, what class would we assign to the crucifixion of Jesus? Would any of us doubt that the Church class would be so represented? What scriptures would we have to support this opinion? Turn with me now as we read:

-- *Matthew 10:24,25 (KJV) The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

-- *Colossians 1:13-24 (KJV) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: . . . - And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

-- *Hebrews 10:12 (KJV) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;*

-- *Romans 12:1 (KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

-- *Hebrews 10:19,20 (KJV) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;*

We could offer many more scriptures, and bring in the tabernacle pictures of the sin offering, but this will suffice.

But another thought. The other three men we are considering were all convicted of theft. Is it possible that our Lord also was convicted of theft? Is He anywhere called a thief? No, but we think of the Scriptures which attribute to Him thief-like characteristics:

-- *Revelation 16:15 (KJV) Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

and

-- *Revelation 3:3 (KJV) . . . If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

Also,

-- *Mark 15:28 (KJV) And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. In this case, the two thieves.*

And in what respect is Jesus like a thief?

-- *Luke 12:39 (KJV). And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.*

Pastor Russell tells us concerning this scripture: R3355 : page 124, 125 "The reference here is to a thief-like coming, and the Greek word, translated broken through, would mean literally "dug into." Many of the houses of olden time were not built of stone or bricks but of dried mud, somewhat like what are known as adobe houses in some parts of the West and in Mexico. Entry into such houses could be gained more quickly by digging through the wall than by forcing the door. The goodman of the house or its master does not refer to the Lord, for the house referred to is the "present evil world"--the

social structure as at present organized. It is not necessary to conclude that Satan is meant, although he is in a general way the master of present institutions, "the god of this world," the "prince of this world." We may properly enough understand the goodman of the house to here signify earthly governments, the powers that be, the representatives of the ten toes of Daniel's image and of his fourth beast.

This matter of the second coming of the Lord and the knock which will be heard by those of his servants who are awake, but not heard by his servants who are asleep and overcharged, will be totally unknown to the world. To them his presence will not be that of a master longed for and served, but that of an opponent whose house they have in his absence taken possession of and used contrary to his interests. These, if they knew the time of his coming, would have fortified themselves in some manner and have sought to defend present institutions and to perpetuate them.

The coming as a thief upon the world signifies a quiet coming, unostentatious, unknown, without heralds or any commotion likely to disturb. The breaking up of the strong man's house--the breaking up of present institutions, civil, religious, political, financial-- is already under way, just as the knocking for his servants is in process. The entire social structure is under control of the new Prince. He is marshaling his forces, and will cause even the wrath of man to praise him and to work out his purposes in the overthrow of every known institution built upon selfishness. Great will be the fall thereof--"a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation"; but upon the ruins the King of kings and Lord of lords will rear the grand Kingdom of the Lord, for which all who are his already pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and which, when it shall come to be instituted by the Lord, will be indeed the "desire of all nations."--`Haggai 2:7`."

The difference between the other thieves and Jesus is this:

-- *John 10:10 (KJV)* *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* --that is, the object of our Lord's Return is not to <destroy>, but to <bless> all the families of the earth: and that His Coming would be thief-like, and not in flesh, but as a spirit being, invisible to men; and that the gathering of His Church and the separation of the "wheat" from the "tares" would progress in the end of this Age without the world's being aware of it.

Therefore, Jesus **is** thief-like. But He came not to take away from them that which was rightfully theirs, but to take away those things which they had

gained and longed to hold on to by what ever means, **unlawfully**. Jesus came to give mankind a kingship, lost in Eden, and life that they might enjoy that kingdom forever

Let us next consider the unrepentant thief, the thief about whom it is said:

-- *Luke 23:39 (KJV) And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

What class of people would he represent? Before we suggest an answer, let us look at another Scripture which suggests what this class of people has stolen:

-- *Proverbs 30:9 (KJV) Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Take note of what this says. "Lest I be full" - full of self, full of the cares of this world. "and deny thee"

-- *Matthew 10:33 (KJV). - But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

"and say, who is the Lord?"

- *If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.* " Luke 23:39

or lest I be poor and steal"

-- *2 Corinthians 8:9 (KJV) For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

-- *James 2:5 (KJV). Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

"And take the name of my God in vain." That is the theft. that is the crime of this class of people. This class of people takes the name of Christ, but because of unbelief and the cares of this world, it denies that name, therefore taking it in vain.

This is the class which, having once left the world with all its sin and enticements, considers the sacrifice as too great, the reward not enough, and returns to the lusts of the world.

-- *Proverbs 26:11 (KJV) As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.*

This is the class which goes against God's will and uses their consecrated resources for their own gain. And in doing so, frequently lead others astray.

-- *John 10:1 (KJV) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

This is the class which makes personal gain from their brethren.

-- *Deuteronomy 24:7 (KJV) If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.*

This is the class which follows after Satan, the author of theft.

-- *Philippians 2:6 (KJV) "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: or, a better translation: who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (Philippians 2:6 RSV)*

This is the class of second death. This is not a sacrificing class, this is a condemned class.

Let us next consider the repentant thief. If Jesus represents THE Christ, head and body in the sin offering; and the unrepentant thief represents the second death class; it would seem logical that the repentant thief would represent the great company. But does it fit?

Let us review the words of Jesus:

The thief had requested " *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*"

(*Luke 23:43 KJV*) *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee today, **thou shalt be with me in paradise.*** Why did Jesus not say to him, "thou shalt be with me in the kingdom"? The thief said "kingdom", Jesus said "paradise".

What is this paradise to which Jesus refers? Strong's gives it as: 3857. paradeisos, par-ad'-i-sos; of Oriental or. [comp. H6508]; a park, i.e. (spec.) **an Eden** (place of future happiness, "paradise")!--paradise.

Eden was the typical paradise, a picture of the future paradise - the earthly and heavenly kingdom.

The Scriptures use this word only two other places: once in 2 Cor. 12:4 in which the Apostle Paul is revealing his vision.

The other, **of significance**, is
(*Revelation 2:7 KJV*) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

Only those who overcome will be sharers in that paradise. And who are those overcomers? *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4,5 KJV)* So, evidently, this is a spirit begotten class.

But, again, let us consider the theft.

-- *Malachi 3:8,9 (KJV) Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*

The great company class is a consecrated class, a spirit begotten class, but a class which fails to make its calling and election sure. This class has consecrated its all but it does not sacrifice willingly, or does not sacrifice completely, or does not sacrifice the best - this class holds back. The typical Jewish nation was to give tithes and offerings unto God, the antitypical class is to give their **all**; the great company class gives less than their **all**. This class is lacking in zeal and love. Therefore this class is cursed with the great tribulation and must be brought through by severe tests, trials, and disciplines. They do not suffer more than the little flock, but they suffer unwillingly. They are held back by the fear of death and are all their lifetime subject to bondage -- they fear the sacrificial death. they are the "foolish virgins". They have let the cares of this life keep them from being prepared. [R3599:11; R1669:8; R5270:4; R5460:6; R4078

-- *Ephesians 4:28 (KJV) Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

-- *Ezekiel 33:15 (KJV) If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

Note that in these two scriptures talk about a repentant thief; a thief who no longer steals; a thief who restores that which was stolen. A thief who will live . This thief is an overcomer, but does not have the same reward as he who did not steal, the more-than-overcomer. This thief is the class to whom the scripture applies which says " *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14 KJV)*

But wait. we have an apparent problem here: As I said before, in the actual event of the two thieves, the clergy did not seem to be involved in the convicting or sentencing. In the making of the event into a picture, how can

we justify this with our expectations of a future Church-State union which will partake in the persecution of the True Church?

Three points:

One: Pictures, Shadows, and Types do not constitute the reality in every detail.

Two: Although the church-state union will be active at the end of the True Church, it will have been swept away in anarchy by the time the very **last** of the great company has finished its course, when, in the fiery destruction of the systems, they stand up for Christ and His True Kingdom.

Three: We often think of the class as washing their robes at the end time prophecies. But consider that throughout the Gospel period, there have been unnumbered consecrated who have done this on an individual basis. And that these less-than-faithful have not all been condemned by clergy.

Let us now consider the "Barabbas class". We have covered the "Little Flock", the "Great Company", and the second death classes. What is left? The Ancient Worthies? I think not. There seems nothing in the Scriptures which would support this.

Remember that Barabbas was an insurrectionist - one who fights against the established government, and in doing so commits murder and robbery. Nor was he doing these deeds in the name of religion. He was not supporting either the earthly or the spiritual governments. Basically, he was an anarchist, doing these deeds for his own benefit.

Consider the meaning of the name Barabbas: Bar (son of), Abba (the father) -- he was the son of the father. And who is this son of the father? Who was the first earthly son of the Heavenly Father, but Adam. Jesus took the place of Adam. Jesus took the place of Barabbas.

What we find in the Scriptures is support that this class is represented by the nation of Israel, and by extension, Christendom and the world of mankind. We read:

-- *Jeremiah 2:26 (KJV) As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,*

-- *Hosea 7:1 (KJV) When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.*

-- *Mark 11:17 (KJV) And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

And Isaiah tells us:

-- *Isaiah 1:21-23 (KJV) How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after*

rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Do you see the parallel with Barabbas? We learned that Barabbas was a murderer, rebellious, a thief! Remember also that Barabbas did not die the same day as Jesus and the two thieves, but he lived for some time thereafter. He neither died sacrificially nor as one condemned. Does not this parallel also? Sacrificial death results in a change of nature; condemned death results in non-existence. Israel and the world of mankind die only Adamic death at this time, to sleep in the dust until the resurrection to that Kingdom, and will live for some time hereafter to be judged again when they have experienced good and evil.

Consider now ourselves, for we come to convention not only for the fellowship and the head knowledge, but to hear those things which enable us to change.

With what judgment will we be judged?

-- *Matthew 6:19,20 (KJV) Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

-- *Luke 12:33 (KJV) Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*

-- *Psalms 62:10 (KJV) Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*

Let us strive to be convicted of the theft of which Jesus was convicted. Remember what we read?

-- *John 10:10 (KJV) The thief cometh not, but for to **steal**, and to **kill**, and to **destroy**: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

We are not to steal, our time, abilities, and resources from the Lord; We are not to kill:

-- *Matthew 5:21,22 (KJV) Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:*

We are not to destroy:

-- *James 4:12 (KJV). There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*

We are not to be as a Barabbas, the world of mankind, or either of the two thieves, the second death class or the great company. We are to be as Jesus, The Christ, gladly, willingly, sacrificing our lives in the sin offering.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23 KJV)

I leave with you a mental image: When we see, or remember in our minds, a picture of Jesus and the two thieves upon the cross, consider upon which cross we want to be; because as consecrated Christians, we **will** be on one of the crosses.

Close with Hymn 326 "When I View The Cross"