

ALTERNATE VIEWS OF GOD
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He could expect nothing better than a slow agonizing death. Imagine the surprise of Barabbas when his Roman guards escorted him to the doors of prison and freedom, rather than the judgment hall and scourging. All he could have learned was that the one called Jesus was taking his place on the cross. With no scriptural evidence whatsoever, I believe simple curiosity, if not gratitude, would have placed Barabbas at the scene of the crucifixion. He would have to have been curious what his replacement had done. Because of Jesus, he still lived.

He was as perfect under the Law as a man could be. The one we know only as a rich young ruler had obeyed the Law from his youth, and Jesus loved him. But that love did not prevent Jesus from truthfully answering the man's request for the next step to obtaining eternal life. He was told to give all the vast wealth he owned to the poor and then follow Christ. He went away in sorrow and we never hear from him again.

Skip ahead to the meeting between a risen Christ and his followers or to the upper room some fifty days later. Ask yourself this question. Of these two men, which would have been most likely to be there?

One had done all he could to be righteous. He had denied his base nature his entire adult life to please the God of whom he knew. In one moment, God on earth told him the best he had done was not good enough. His heart needed changed, not just his actions. Again, there is no more reference to the young ruler, but it is hard to imagine him continuing to follow the Law, when his best efforts had not been good enough to earn eternal life. His question revealed the problem, "What must I **do**?"

Barabbas had done nothing to deserve grace. Like ours, his life was full of sin that so disgusts God. Yet, because one man was obedient unto death, he was given life. With no more scriptural reference to Barabbas, I believe he would have been far more likely to follow Christ afterwards.

This is because there are two ways we approach service to God. In one, we earn our salvation through works and the real question becomes, "What is the least I must do in order to please you, God?" In the other, we realize we can do nothing to earn our spot in heaven. In this one, we gaze at a crucified Christ, to whom we owe our lives, and ask, "What is the most I can do to show my love, God?" In one, we obey the Law because we fear the consequences. In the other, we obey the Law because we love the giver of the Law. What a difference is made by obtaining a clear view of a crucified Christ.

Small wonder Paul eventually determined to preach Christ only and Him crucified.