

AM I GUILTY?

by Audrey Surma



CHRISTIANPUBLISHERS

Copyright Notice

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Christian Publishers. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Christian Publishers. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Christian Publishers.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Christian Publishers.

AM I GUILTY?

By Audrey Surma

CAST OF CHARACTERS

READER 1

READER 2

READER 3

READER 4

READER 5

READER 6

MARY MAGDALENE

While the Word of God (NRSV) inspired the monologs listed here, much of the content comes from the author's imagination.

*This perusal script is for reading purposes only.
No performance or photocopy rights are conveyed.*

PRODUCTION NOTES

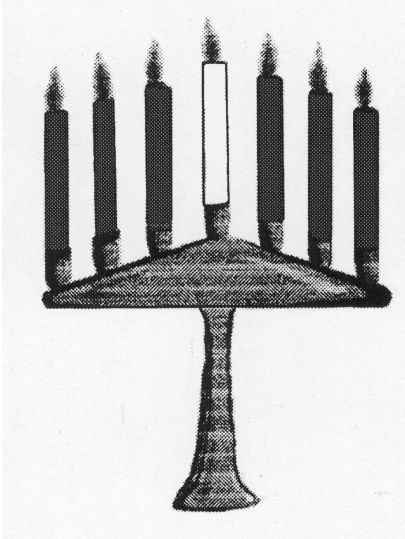
These readings were designed to impart some biblical truths of Easter to your listeners while asking them to reflect on their own lives. Is there a little part of these characters in all of us?

There is a marked contrast between the readings for Lent and Easter. The different approaches serve to distinguish between the solemnity of Lent and the triumph of Easter. The six readings for Lent are third-person accounts (and your pastor or worship leader may wish to set them up as such). The readers should not wear costumes. This will help to draw a parallel between each biblical character and modern-day believers. Each week the reader snuffs out one purple candle following the reading. On Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene presents a first-person story of her joyous discovery of the empty tomb. She should wear a biblical robe, headpiece and sandals. She lights the large white candle following her reading to symbolize the resurrected Christ, the Light of the World.

Approximate Playing Times for Readings

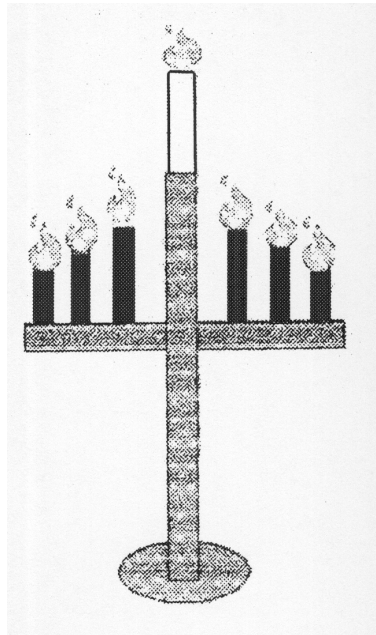
- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Caiaphas, the High Priest | (3 minutes) |
| 2. The Moneychangers | (3 minutes) |
| 3. A Voice from the Mob | (4 minutes) |
| 4. Claudia, Pilate's Wife | (4 minutes) |
| 5. Barabbas | (5 minutes) |
| 6. Cornelius, a Centurion | (4 minutes) |
| 7. Mary Magdalene | (3 minutes) |

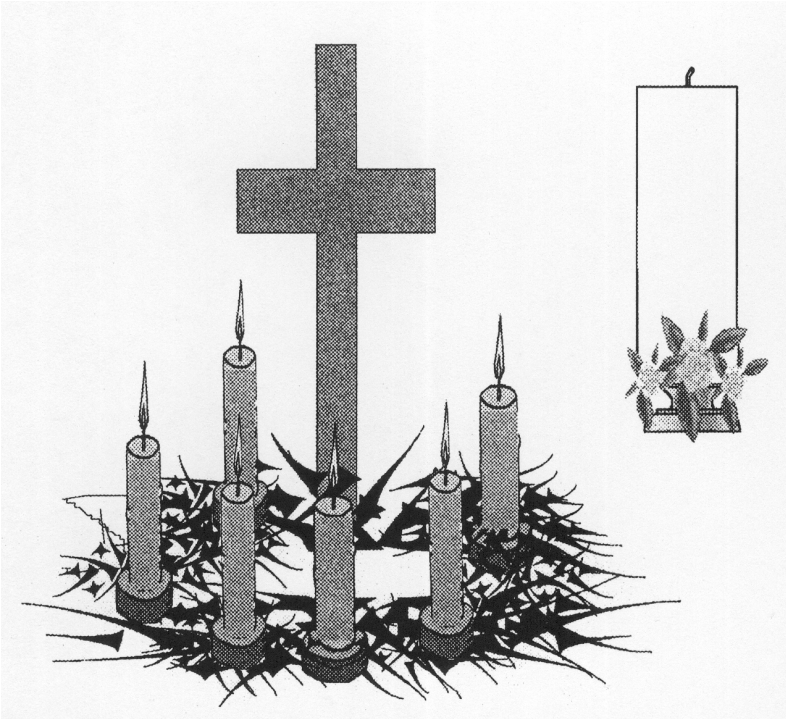
Candles: Suggested ways to use the seven candles are offered here. Light all the purple candles before the initial service begins, leaving the white candle unlit. One will be snuffed each Sunday as the weeks progress. The white candle will be lit on Easter Sunday by Mary Magdalene. You will need a candle snuffer for Lent and matches for Easter. Any arrangement of candles is acceptable as long as the white candle, the Christ candle, is the center of attention.



Most churches are equipped with a candelabra which should hold the candles for the seven Sundays of Lent — six purple and one white — the white candle for Easter Sunday.

Another suggestion might be to construct a simple cross to hold the seven candles.





We bolted the cross and candle holders to a round wooden base strictly for ease in movement. We added a black drape under the wreath on Good Friday. For Easter Sunday, we changed the drape to white, decorated the wreath with purple flowers and added a large white pillar candle in the center of the wreath and in front of the cross. We also decorated it with flowers.

NEEDED: 18-inch grapevine wreath (or larger)

Wooden cross about 16-18 inches tall with base

Six purple candles (10-inch suggested)

One large white candle (12-inch suggested)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Caiaphas, the High Priest**
- 2. The Moneychangers**
- 3. A Voice from the Mob**
- 4. Claudia, Pilate's Wife**
- 5. Barabbas**
- 6. Cornelius, a Centurion**
- 7. Mary Magdalene**

Caiaphas, the High Priest

(First Sunday of Lent)

Matthew 26:3

(All six of the purple candles should be lit. READER 1 speaks from the pulpit.)

READER 1: Caiaphas, the high priest of Jesus' time, was feeling threatened. His authority was being questioned. Why?

First it was that rabble-rouser, John. Screaming out in the desert. Living on locusts and honey. What an idiot! They didn't give him much credibility — just another of those malcontents who rise up occasionally.

Caiaphas and all his minions, his officials — they were *priests* and *they* were in control. At least ... at least until some claimed they saw a sign from heaven when John baptized that fellow Jesus! Rumors spread quickly and were believed too easily by the common, ignorant folk.

The people said this Jesus claimed to be the Son of God! They had seen his miracles: the blind could see, the lame could walk — even those who had never walked before. Suddenly they were well and whole like everyone else.

The council was asked what they thought of all this. The priests just laughed at the fools! But with the stories of his healing on the Sabbath and his turning water into wine, Caiaphas began to get worried. His power over the people was in jeopardy. They had to do something about this blasphemer!

(Pause) What about me as one of the leaders of the church? What about us as the faithful? Am I interested in what power I might have over the people in the pew? Do I have false pride in my membership on committees? Do I call my position a place of service? Is that what it

really is? Am I threatened by the commandments given
in the Bible? Do I really love my neighbors as myself?
(*READER 1 pauses for reflection, then crosses to the candles
and snuffs out the first purple one.*) **Am I guilty?**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

The Moneychangers

(Second Sunday of Lent)

Matthew 21:12-13

(Five of the purple candles should be lit. READER 2 speaks from the pulpit.)

READER 2: Jerusalem was packed with Jews celebrating the Passover, ready to make their sacrifices. It was supposed to be a celebration time ... a time to reflect on God's having the Death Angel pass over the oldest son in each Israelite family. The safe flight from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea ... God had been with them all through their forty years of wandering in the desert and their journey into the Promised Land.

It was each family's responsibility to make a sacrifice to commemorate the Passover time. The businessmen were having a field day. They brought into the temple cage after cage of small animals, doves mostly, for those who couldn't afford better. Some brought in lambs, goats, even larger animals. These were for the rich. It was a profitable business.

Of course there was a lot of confusion, with every merchant trying to make the best deal. The frightened and confused animals were noisy and dirty, but it was the merchants' job — a good one — a job sanctioned by the priests, and it had to be done.

Then one who claimed to be *the Christ* came into the temple and began to turn over the tables of the moneychangers. He took a whip and chased the animals and their owners out of the temple. The men were furious! This was their business, their livelihood — sanctioned by God. This Jesus was ruining their business — taking food out of the mouths of their children. He claimed the temple was supposed to be a house of prayer and nothing else.

1 They wanted revenge. Perhaps there would be a time
2 when they could cause him trouble. It would serve him
3 right!

4 *(READER 2 pauses for reflection.)* What about my
5 dealings with the public? Do I always follow the
6 standards of honesty? Do we in business sell good
7 quality products — never shortchanging our
8 customers? And my employees, do I treat them fairly,
9 giving fair wages for good work? Am I interested only in
10 what I can get from the public? Or am I as guilty as the
11 moneychangers?

12 *(Walks to candles and snuffs out the second.)* Am I guilty?
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

A Voice from the Mob

(Third Sunday of Lent)

Matthew 27:22-24

(Four of the purple candles should be lit. READER 3 speaks from the pulpit.)

READER 3: Yes, Jerusalem was packed with Jews from all over the region celebrating the Passover. People stood at the gate of the fortress and watched as soldiers and priests made their way inside. Someone whispered that there would be a trial. Many did not even know who was accused, and of what, but they were enjoying the excitement. Someone pointed to a very ordinary-looking man, bound and being dragged along. They said it was the Nazarene ... that rabbi who was always making outlandish statements. Evidently he had caused a lot of trouble for the priests. They said he claimed to be the Son of God. Some said he had made the sick well and they had seen the crippled walk. Some claimed he even raised the dead. Who could do this? No one had before!

The night grew long and cold. Some stood near the fire. Some pushed and shoved to make sure they didn't miss anything. When the soldiers brought him back out into the courtyard, the people followed, carrying torches. They went toward the governor's palace. What would he do? Perhaps the soldiers would only whip him and let him go.

They brought him before the Roman governor, who said he could find no fault with Jesus. But that didn't satisfy the crowd. They wanted blood. Pilate had him whipped, and the crowd roared in triumph.

The custom was to free one prisoner during the Passover, so Pilate offered to free him. "What shall I do with him?" Pilate asked. Someone shouted, "Kill him,

1 kill him.” Like wildfire, the chant spread through the
2 crowd. “Crucify him! Crucify him!” The mob worked
3 itself into a frenzy, shouting for his death. Caught up in
4 the excitement, even some of those who had witnessed
5 many of the wonderful things Jesus had done joined in
6 the outcry.

7 (READER 3 pauses for reflection.) What about me? Do I
8 get caught up in situations where everyone else is doing
9 something, and so I go along? Do I ever stand up for
10 what is right, even if it means I stand alone? Have I ever
11 gone along with the crowd, only to be ashamed and
12 remorseful later, when I realized what I had done?

13 (Snuffs out the third candle.) Am I guilty?
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

Claudia, Pilate's Wife

(Fourth Sunday of Lent)

Matthew 27:19

(Three of the purple candles should be lit. READER 4 speaks from the pulpit.)

READER 4: Claudia was a Roman citizen who had everything she ever needed or wanted, except the respect of her husband, Pontius Pilate. "He doesn't listen to me," she complained. "He is so weak — can't make a simple decision without agonizing over and over."

Claudia and Pilate had moved from Rome when he received the appointment from Caesar to come to Judea as its governor. What a disappointment that was! The Romans were intelligent, well-educated and prosperous. She found the Jews to be rebellious and fanatical — she opined that they were like children. Jews thought only of their traditions. They hated Romans. They hated Pilate, and they hated her.

Claudia felt this appointment was not as prestigious as they expected — it was more like *ridiculous*! Pilate told her he hoped that the Passover would be a time of celebration for the Jews with no problems. Wrong! This young Galilean was creating a stir among the common folk. Many of them believed he was the Messiah. That upset the Sanhedrin, and they were vehement in their desire to get rid of him.

Late in the festival, they came knocking on the gate to the palace, screaming for Pilate — claiming their prisoner was a threat to Rome. Pilate sent them away. Since Jesus was a Galilean, he was in Herod's jurisdiction. Everyone knew Herod was the biggest fool in the land. Of course, he saw Jesus as competition for his power. When some said he would be the King of the

1 Jews, Herod mocked the prisoner and sent him back to
2 Pilate. He knew full well that they must have Roman
3 approval to kill him.

4 A dream about the prisoner convinced Claudia that
5 something dreadful was going to happen. By this time
6 she was terrified and tried to tell Pilate to be careful.
7 Instead of listening to his wife, Pilate had the man
8 whipped. The fool couldn't find any fault with him, so
9 he offered to let him go. But he listened to the crowd
10 and gave him back to the soldiers to be crucified.

11 *(READER 4 pauses for reflection.)* Am I like Pilate? Do I
12 turn away from what I know I should do as I read the
13 Bible? Do I make wrong decisions, not listening to
14 warnings from Christian friends and family? Do I follow
15 my own foolish desires and live to regret it?

16 *(Snuffs out the fourth candle.)* Am I guilty?

Barabbas

(Fifth Sunday of Lent)

Matthew 27:15-16, 26

(Two of the purple candles should be lit. READER 5 speaks from the pulpit.)

READER 5: A man sat in chains, both hands and feet, in a dirty, cold and damp prison. He had robbed. He had also murdered and received great pleasure from seeing his victims die. He laughed in spite of himself. He knew someday he would be caught, but until recently, he had always been able to slip through their fingers. He had friends on the outside; maybe there would still be a chance for him. And he began to plot just how he might have an opportunity to escape again.

He had no idea what was transpiring up on the streets of Jerusalem. Little bits of information filtered in from time to time. The jailer was an old gossip, an old *religious* gossip. He kept telling Barabbas about the man some called the Christ who was making the blind see and the lame walk — even raising the dead.

Barabbas laughed at him. “You old fool,” he said. “You believe that? No man can do that.” And he swore and shook his chained fists at the jailer. But the old man persisted. He told of the miracle he had seen himself — a friend of his cured of leprosy. But his words fell on deaf ears. Barabbas had lived a life of crime and believed nothing unless he saw it himself. “If you would only believe, you could be saved,” the old man begged.

“Look at me, you old fool! I’m in chains. They surely will try to kill me, but maybe I’ll find a way to escape again.” His words caught in his throat as he tried to hide his fear from the jailer.

In the corner, one of the other prisoners shouted, “Why don’t you both shut up? We’re all going to die.”



CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

AM I GUILTY?

by Audrey Surma.

*For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script,
please contact us at:*

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

P.O. Box 248 - Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-844-841-6387 - Fax (319) 368-8011

customerservice@christianpub.com