

An Innocent Man



by Robert Prins

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A glob of spit splattered over the guard's sandals and oozed between his toes. The struggling prisoner was a menace. Even the common people were terrified of him. The chains that bound him strained against his strength. On death row for murder and stirring up a revolution, the prisoner had been called out of his cell by the governor. He had knocked one of the guards unconscious. The other seven, struggling to contain his wrath were bombarded with curses as they led him to the balcony.

Thousands of people had gathered for the spectacle in the courtyard below. Someone was going to be executed.

Other than an overkill of guards, three men stood on the platform. On the far left was the murderer in chains and prison clothes, writhing, spitting and screaming curses. Another in well worn clothes, surrounded by guards, stood calm and at peace on the far right. And in the middle, dressed elegantly in royal robes, stood the governor.

It had been an early morning for the governor. He had spent hours agonising over what to do with the preacher who had been accused and brought to him. His calm confidence and even silence had unnerved the governor. He had never seen a man like this. After a personal interrogation the governor was convinced that the preacher was innocent and should be released, despite the serious accusations that had been brought against him. And when the governor's wife

disclosed her dream and warning about the man, it made him even more afraid.

Now that the second prisoner had arrived, the governor put his plan into action. It was a tradition at that time of year to release a prisoner. Looking across at the murderous rebel and then back at the harmless preacher, he considered it a safe bet. The crowd would never choose the hated and murderous Barabbas over the preacher Jesus.

“Which one should I release to you?” he asked.

Recoiling in shock when the crowds asked for Barabbas, Pilate asked, “And what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

Then the chant began. “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

“Why? What crime has he committed?”

But instead of hearing reason, the crowd worked themselves into a frenzy, chanting, “Crucify him!”

Pilate released a hated rebel and murderer into the community, while an innocent man was mocked, beaten, and then willingly staggered to his murderous death under the burden of a cross.

It was not for his own crimes that Jesus died. It was the sins of others that led to his painful death on the cross. Our sins.

He was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

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A violent, murderous rebel and an innocent preacher man. One of them had to die. One of them would be set free. The choice seemed obvious – but was it really?

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