



Bible Drama Scripts
presents

INNOCENT! THAT MAN WAS INNOCENT!

By Patricia Souder

SYNOPSIS: Plagued by horrendous nightmares, Pilate's wife, Claudia, warned Pilate that Jesus was innocent and pleaded with Pilate to not condemn an innocent man. Now, the day after Jesus has been crucified, Claudia and Pilate share their anguish over the pressures Pilate faced and the agonizing eternal ramifications of Pilate's decision.

SETTING: Pilate's bedchamber the day after Jesus was crucified.

CHARACTERS: PILATE and CLAUDIA. Pilate ruled Judea from 26-36 A. D. He was recalled by Rome in A. D. 37 after being accused of slaughtering hundreds of Samaritans. His final fate is unknown, but some believe he committed suicide. Although not named in Scripture, Pilate's wife is often referred to as Claudia Procula. Some believe she became a Christian and may be the Claudia referred to in 2 Timothy 4:21. Both Pilate and Claudia should wear simple, elegant morning robes that reflect their positions of power.

PERFORMANCE TIME: 5 minutes.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: Characters say lines together when marked with a star.

TOPICS: Power. Pressure. Justice. Injustice. Guilt. Crucifixion.

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES: Holy Week. Lent. Maundy Thursday. Good Friday. Easter programs. Small group Bible studies.

PROPS: Antique pitcher and wash basin on antique table. Ornate chair.

BIBLE REFERENCES: Matthew 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25; John 19:1-27.

CLAUDIA

(Paces and shakes head in anguish.)

INNOCENT! I *told* you that man
was innocent.

But you let them persuade you to release
Barabbas and . . . *(Pauses.)*
And you allowed Jesus to be beaten . . . *(Pauses.)*
And crucified.

(Stops pacing and faces Pilate.)
But it *is* what you allowed!

(Incredulous and angry.)
You're the Roman governor!
You're the one in charge!

I had horrendous, unspeakable dreams
about the Nazarene. They terrified me!
(Shakes head and pulls hair in distress.)
I sent you a note warning you not to
get involved.

PILATE

*(Pours water in wash basin and washes
hands repeatedly.)*

I know.
(Sighs and gasps for air.)
And I told the *crowds* he was innocent.

(Wrings hands in anguish.)
It wasn't what I wanted!

(Shakes head, paces. Wrings hands.)
I . . . I had no choice.

Oh, if only that were true.

And I tried to honor it.
In accordance with a Roman custom at
Passover, I offered to release a prisoner.
(Gestures with open hands.)

CLAUDIA

(Waves arm as if waving palm branches.)

“Hosanna! Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in
the name of the Lord.”

(Closes eyes and shakes head.)

But you were outwitted.

The religious leaders may control the
Jewish people . . .

But they have no power against Rome!

(Firmly.)

Your *job* is to carry out Roman justice.

PILATE

I thought my plan was fool-proof.

(Smiles weakly.)

After all, huge crowds had sung
his praises earlier in the week.

Precisely.

(Raises hands in anguish.)

So, I was sure they'd choose Jesus . . .

Especially since I chose Barabbas, a
notorious, hated criminal, as the other
choice.

(Sighs and shakes head in defeat.)

Yes.

(Grits teeth. Speaks with clenched teeth.)

By their treacherous religious leaders.

That's what you think.

The high priests threatened to tell
Tiberius that Jesus claimed to be a Jewish
king who was causing riots . . .
and I did nothing to stop him.

CLAUDIA

You'll lose your job as governor.

(Shakes her head and sighs.)

But after yesterday . . .

Will you ever really live again anyway?

Or will you walk back and forth . . .

Back and forth . . .

Wringing your hands . . .

Wringing your hands . . .

Forever?

PILATE

(Wrings hands again.)

Ah! Roman justice!

All the Emperor cares about is peace.

I'm to keep the peace no matter what.

The low-down, power-seeking chief priests
have already lobbed three complaints
against me.

Tiberius said that if there are any more . . .

(Paces and wrings hands repeatedly.)

And my life. *(Bitterly.)*

Or have you forgotten that Rome forces
officials seen as failures to commit

suicide to regain an honorable reputation?

Yes, yes. Yesterday.

*(Very agitated. Paces faster. Wrings
hands constantly.)*

*(Stops and rubs head nervously. Then
becomes angry.)*

It shouldn't be this way!

I told them he was innocent!

I asked them what I should do with this

CLAUDIA

So that's it?
The crowd wanted him executed . . .
So you're off the hook?

Is anything the way it should be?
Did you watch them beat him?
Did you see them spit on him?
Did you listen to them mock him?
Did you feel the blood trickling down
his face when they forced the crown of
thorns on his head?
(Shudders and shakes head in agony.)

(Becomes increasingly more agitated.)
Did you see him stumble beneath his cross?

Did you hear him groan in anguish?

PILATE

one who was called the Messiah.
They shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"
(Goes to basin. Washes hands.)
Look, it wasn't my fault!
I told them I was innocent of his blood.
And they yelled back that they would take
all responsibility for his death.
(Keeps washing hands.)

(Angrily.)
That's what they said.
That's the way it should be.
*(Paces and wrings hands with growing
agitation.)*

I'm innocent! I didn't do it. They did.

Innocent! I'm innocent!

Innocent! I'm inn . . .

CLAUDIA

PILATE

Did you notice when the sky turned
black at noon?

(Begins to weaken.)

Innocent! I'm . . .

Did you feel the earthquake shake
Jerusalem when he died?

Innocent!

Did you hear the Roman soldiers say,
"Surely this *was* the Son of God?"

*(Demeanor changes. Straightens up. Eyes
fill with terror.)*

The Son of God . . . ?

Yes. *(Very definite.)*
The Son of God.

(Passionately.) Innocent! Innocent!

(Incredulous.)
You still think you're innocent?

Oh, how I wish I were!
*(Shakes head in despair. Speaks with
remorse.)*
I'll . . . never . . . be . . . innocent . . . again.
(Covers eyes with hands and sobs.)

(Pensively.)
He . . . was the one . . . who . . .
was innocent.
(With conviction.)

★ *(Pensively.)*
★ He . . . was the one . . . who . . .
★ was innocent.
★ *(With conviction.)*

THAT MAN WAS INNOCENT!

★ THAT MAN WAS INNOCENT!