

# I am Barabbas

This article is from the "Edifying the Body" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's Web site, [churchofgodbig sandy.com](http://churchofgodbig sandy.com). It was posted for the weekend of July 31–Aug. 1, 2010.

**By Lenny Cacchio**

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—He sits in the dungeon, knowing that before the day is over he will be executed in the most brutal manner that Roman law allows. He'll be scourged within a hairsbreadth of death, and then nailed to a stake to die slowly and painfully, paying for his crimes of insurrection and murder against the powerful Roman occupier.

Less than a half mile away, a powerful Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, fearing for his own career and life, struggles between the demands of expediency and justice. An obviously innocent man has been railroaded into his presence. The religious leaders, for whatever reason, want Him dead, a gruesome task that Roman law won't let them carry out themselves, and hence their invitation to Pilate to do the deed for them.

Over Pilate's head is a threat. This man claims to be a king, but we have no king but Caesar, say Jesus' accusers. If you don't do something about Him, you're no friend of Caesar. We'll make sure Caesar knows that you took no action against one who claims to be a king and is trying to usurp Roman authority. Caesar already has suspicions about you. Do you want to risk this?

Pilate vacillates, but he believes he sees a way out. At the Feast of Passover it is customary to release one criminal, granting him a complete and unequivocal pardon. Why shouldn't that prisoner be Jesus?

Earlier in the week the people of the city welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with hosannas and shouts of praise. Surely they would demand the release of Jesus called Christ and not the release of a murderer and thief.

"Whom do you want me to release to you?" asks Pilate. "Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:17).

"Barabbas!" they shout back.

"What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

"Let Him be crucified!" (verses 17-24).

"Why? What has He done?"

"Crucify Him!"

Less than half a mile away is Barabbas. He is close enough to the activity taking place down the street to hear the rabble yelling his name, but far enough away that he cannot hear Pilate pleading for the life of Jesus. He can hear only one side of the conversation. When he hears his name on the lips of an angry mob, he has hope that his supporters are coming to rescue him.

“Barabbas! Barabbas!”

His fellow revolutionaries are coming to his aid!

But the very next words he hears freeze him with fear and dread, because what he hears is, “Barabbas! Crucify him! Crucify him! Barabbas! Crucify him!”

The guards rush into his cell and drag him off the floor. After the shoving and dragging and struggling, the murderer and thief finds himself in the street among the mob, now a free man. But a completely innocent man takes his place on the instrument of death.

Did Barabbas feel any twinge of remorse when he saw Jesus carrying his cross? Did he watch as Jesus and two of Barabbas’s compatriots slowly expire as they baked in the sun?

We don’t know. But I do know this. I am Barabbas. I was in bonds because of my crimes. I deserved nothing less than the penalty that had awaited Barabbas.

I am Barabbas because one day I found myself free of the guilt, completely pardoned because Someone for no reason that I deserved stepped forward and took my place. My guilt gone, my life restored, I now have the chance to live, and this time truly live.

Life: the gift to Barabbas and to me. For I am Barabbas.