

# WHO KILLED JESUS?

By

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**Do not answer hastily.** The modern trend of collective guilt-consciousness could cause us to miss the point of His death.

At this time of year we hear a lot of talk about how we all crucified Him because of our selfishness – like the Roman soldiers; our greed – like Judas; our pride and ambition -like Pilate; or cowardice – like Peter; or because of some other sin demonstrated in the crowd connected with His death.

**But none of these things killed Jesus.**

In spite of the political situation dramatized by Herod and the Jews, with Pilate caught in the middle, it was not the Roman Empire that imposed the death penalty upon Jesus. Herod dismissed Jesus and sent Him back to the local court of Pilate. Nor was it Pilate. When he “washed his hands” of the affair there was far more significance to the act than is generally recognized. It was not the mere act of a coward, as is usually suggested. Jesus had already said to Pilate that the power of life and death was not actually Pilate’s. (John 19:11)

It would have been impossible for Pilate to have saved Jesus from death, although he might have won our respect by putting up a fight. Far back in the ministry of Jesus the plot had been laid to get rid of Him. “And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill him” (John 7:1). “They sought to take him: and no man laid his hand on him, because his hour was not yet come” (John 7:30). The plot had been well laid by the rulers of the Jews and they were not about to let a figurehead like Pilate stand in the way. Of course we cannot excuse Pilate for not at least trying to enforce the Law which guaranteed a fair trial. But he could not have stopped the murder. The hand-washing act of Pilate is indicative of the fact that this man was not dying at the hands of human government by the judgment of a human court.

What of the Jews? Did they really kill him? Many times, according to the record, they cried for the death of Jesus. Jesus knew their evil desires. “I know that you are Abraham’s seed: yet you seek to kill me, because my word has not free course in you” (John 8:37). “The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). At one time Jesus said to the Jews, “You are of your father the devil ... He was a murderer from the beginning...” (John 8:44). After this speech “they took up stones therefore to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple” (John 8:59). After the resurrection of Lazarus, the Jews really became worried about the ministry of Jesus and called a council at which they decided he had to go. “So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death” (John 11:53).

It was the Priests and Pharisees who sought Him out under the dark cover of night and it was the Jewish council that insisted that He must die. They paid for His betrayal and hired men to testify against Him. It was the court of the high priest in which the Jews condemned Him to death, and they were the ones who at the cross cried out, "His blood is on us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25).

Yet, in spite of their evil conspiracy and murderous plan, **it was not the Jews who are responsible for the death of Jesus.**

**Who then? The answer is: God.**

The death of Jesus was a judicial act of God. It was neither Pilate nor the high priest who laid the plans for our Lord's death. God used these wicked men in carrying out the plan, just as in times past He had used men like Pharaoh or Darius, but the penalty of death imposed upon Jesus was there from the foundation of the world. It was in the pronouncement to Adam when God said, "Thou shall surely die," as the end result of sin. It was the gist of the prophecy made in Genesis 3:15. It was portrayed in the brazen serpent in the camp of the Israelites, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up:" (John 3:14). It was repeated in the law and reechoed by the prophets. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4). "By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?" (Isa. 53:8). Indeed, who among those who participated in that shameful trial and murder realized that God was smiting His son for the transgressions of the people to **WHOM THE STROKE WAS DUE?**

**Of course Jesus knew.** He said just prior to that time, "Now is the judgment of this world," speaking of his death (John 12:31-33). The death of Jesus was God's judgment upon the race. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). It was God who condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus His own Son. Death of the sinner is God's law and God's prerogative. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Jesus taught that men should not fear men, but "fear Him Who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna" (Matt. 10:28). Therefore, the death blow that fell on Jesus was the judgment of God upon the representative of man, Jesus, the one who "tasted death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). "He (Jesus) who knew no sin, He (God) made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21). Representing man in sin, He then suffered the penalty for sin: death.

While all men are directly the cause of His sacrifice, God is the one who wrought justice in His execution. It is as simple as A-B-C.

(A) The wages of sin is death.

(B) All have sinned: thus worthy of death. But to execute all sinners would be to wipe out the race.

(C) Therefore, “Jehovah has laid upon Him the sin of us all” and judgment is executed upon Jesus, for He died as the substitute dier for all who receive him.

Therefore we see that God is “just and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

Yet, Jesus did not have to die! As a man He was perfect – not one sin! He said, “**I lay down my life ... no one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment received I from my Father**” (John 10:17-18).

He did not have to lay it down. But being obedient to the Father he was “obedient even unto death, yes, the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). It was only as Jesus willingly accepted the guilt and burden – full responsibility – for sin, that He became subject to the judgment and the judgment, was, is now, and ever shall be: “the wages of sin is death.” So on the part of God the Father, the death of Jesus was a gift, an act of mercy in which He executed His own Son rather than the sinner (you and me). (Just think of the type of Abraham and Isaac). On the part of Jesus it was a gift, an act of willing acceptance of man’s just punishment by giving Himself in death, and, giving himself in obedience to the Father. Indeed, in Him are “justice and mercy met together.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

**One thing more.** Jesus did not remain dead! And this, too, is due to the absolute justness of God. Many times you have heard that the resurrection of Jesus is the proof of His Deity, and indeed this is true. But it is much more than that. The resurrection is the demonstration to man of the absolute and complete justice of God, which works both ways. If Christ had been left in the grave it would have been the greatest stroke of injustice ever known, for Christ was utterly innocent of any sin of His own, and therefore not subject to the penalty of permanent death, eternal death which is due the sinner at the Day of Judgment.

What the resurrection shows, then, is that a person without sins cannot be held in the bonds of death. Peter said concerning Jesus that God raised Him up, “having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be held to it” (Acts 2:24). Once the sin-guilt had been fully met in his substitutionary death, Jesus arose, because the man Jesus was innocent of any sin; thus showing that the person whose sins are eliminated (through faith in Jesus’ death) cannot and will not be held in death, but that he too shall come forth to live again, just as did Jesus.

Just as the death of Jesus is a concrete demonstration of the fact that the sinner must die, so in the resurrection there is the demonstration of the fact that a sinless person (one whose sins are remitted and cancelled by Christ) will live. This, too, is a perfect and total assurance of God’s justice.

Of course the intent of the Jews in murdering Jesus had nothing to do with salvation. Rather it was for the purpose of safeguarding their political aims (John 11:47-53). Their evil intent was used by God for the fulfillment of His law and, plan for man's redemption. Likewise, the modern view of "resurrection" often has little to do with salvation. It is compared to the flowers of spring and the cloud's silver lining. It is mentioned as proof of Deity, proof of prophecy and proof of many things, but seldom as the proof of the resurrection of the human being. Many who teach the resurrection of Jesus deny the resurrection of the believer! For this cause the glow of Easter is short-lived, and even while it is here it is propped up with superficial gimmicks and, propaganda, which have nothing to do with the just act of God in mercy, and the final release of the Christian from the grave. If the resurrection is spiritualized, then the church might very well go Easter-egg hunting, for the hope of life is found in only one fact: the resurrection from the grave. (Unless one is alive when Jesus comes, and therefore has not died).

The power of God lies in the Gospel (Romans 1:16). The Gospel is the good, news about Jesus' death and resurrection. It follows, as day follows night, that if God is to have any power in salvation then men must be made to see the meaning of the death of Jesus and the significance of the resurrection. This was God's own purpose "before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

Great and, marvelous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the age

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