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Who Killed Jesus, and Why?



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*All scripture verses should be read within the context of the whole passage: who said it,
to whom was it said, why was it said, what happened before and after. Therefore, the
following verses should be studied from the Bible, within their context.*

Mel Gibson's R-rated* 2004 movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, has caused renewed interest in this ancient question. No careful reader of the New Testament of the Holy Bible has any doubt of the answer to the *who* part of the question:

- The Romans ruled this part of the then-known world with an iron fist. They and *only they* had the authority to carry out a death penalty for any crime, great or small.
- The Jewish religious rulers were upset because Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews and the Son of God. In Matthew Chapter 26:63 we read:

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. 66 What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered.

- The traditional death penalty for the Jews was stoning. Since the Romans reserved for themselves the right to choose and carry out the execution, it would be by crucifixion.
- Jesus *allowed* Himself to be arrested, tried and crucified. In the Gospel of John 18, we read:
 - 3 So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.
 - 4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"
 - 5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)

- 6 When Jesus said, "I am he," **they drew back and fell to the ground.**
- Dr. John Hagee thinks that a detachment was about 500 men. So with the simple phrase, "I am He," Jesus was able to level 500 soldiers. So, the soldiers didn't arrest Jesus, they merely escorted Him to his trial, leading to His execution.
- Jesus wasn't singled out for crucifixion, as shown by the fact that He was crucified with two other convicts who were scheduled to be executed at this time. In fact, the Romans were known for multiple crucifixions on the same day.

So, the answer for *who killed Jesus* is simple. The Romans killed Jesus, at the request of the Jews.

The answer to *why the Romans/Jews killed Jesus* is a lot more complex, and has overtones that are political, religious, and theological.

Political:

- Rome may have ruled the then-known world, but they were spread pretty thin. Judea was several days journey by ship from Rome.
- Therefore, Pilate felt he was responsible for maintaining the *Pax Romana* at any cost. So, he kept the peace of Rome in Jerusalem that first Good Friday by giving in to the Jews' demands that Jesus be put to death, even though he personally saw no justification for the death penalty.

Religious:

- The Jewish religious leaders, the *Sanhedrin*, were more interested in making sure everyone kept the laws of Moses than in really listening to what Jesus was teaching. Since the first commandment was "**You shall have no other gods before me**" [Exodus 20:3], the Sanhedrin claimed that Jesus had blasphemed when he called Himself the *Son of God*.
- The Jewish leaders were also very jealous of the popularity of Jesus with the common people. After all, He was also known as the **King of the Jews**. Therefore they seized on the opportunity to petition Pilate for the death penalty as a means of getting rid of Him.

Theological:

- God told our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, that the penalty for sin would be death. Gen. 2:17 "**but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.**"
- Eve and Adam sinned and incurred the death penalty for their sin on the entire human race. Theologians refer to this as *the original sin*.
- However, God had mercy and set up a temporary means of escaping the death penalty by accepting animal sacrifices, as detailed in the law of Moses.
- But God's long-range plan, from the time of the first human sin in the Garden of Eden, was for His own Son to come to earth in human form for the express purpose of shedding His blood as the ultimate, once and for all sacrifice for everyone's sin. The sacrificial blood of Jesus literally covered everyone from the creation to the Rapture. However, each human must at some point personally accept Christ's sacrifice. It can never be inherited because of family, race, or creed. Our default relationship with God and Jesus is estrangement, until we accept His salvation *personally*.
- Nothing could have prevented the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. If the Romans/Jews hadn't killed Him, he would have had to die a bloody death in some other way.
- Jesus died on the cross so you and I won't have to die for our sins!
- So, who killed Jesus? You, I, the entire human race! He was literally the Lamb of God.
- Most Good Friday sermons I've heard place a major emphasis on the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. And it's true that He did suffer horribly. Although He was the Son of God, He was the Son of Man, also. This means that the whip, the thorns, and the nails were as painful for Him as they would be for you and me under the same circumstances. His central nervous system was identical to ours and His nerve endings worked just like ours work.
- Mel Gibson's movie opens with Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He died. Doctor Luke tells us [Luke 22:44] that while Jesus was praying, He sweat blood in anticipation of the agony He faced the next morning. But it wasn't the physical pain He was thinking about. Not the whip, not the thorns, not even the nails

without benefit of anesthesia. After all, many martyrs since the crucifixion have suffered far more horrible physical deaths than what Jesus experienced on the cross.

- Since Jesus was born to die as the Lamb of God, his appearance on the crucifixion stage was totally voluntary. At any moment, He could have snapped His fingers and called down a Holy angel to rescue Him from the bloodthirsty mob. Luke tells us that an angel was with Him in the Garden while He was praying. You can be sure that this angel was still with Him during the trial, the beating, the trip along the Via Dolorosa, and the actual crucifixion. [Luke 22:43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.] A Roman legion could have been wiped out instantly by just one angel. In fact, a single angel is even more powerful than Satan, himself. [Rev. 20:1 I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, ... He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan ... He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him ...]
- You see, the true agony of the cross was spiritual, not physical. At the point of His death, He accepted on His head the accumulated guilt of the entire human race, from the creation to the [rapture](#). The people that lived before Christ, and had trusted in the blood of sacrificial animals to save them, cashed in that faith at the point Jesus died on the cross. You and I, and all others that lived after Christ's death, receive salvation as we accept Jesus as our personal sin sacrifice, also.
- The guilt for your sins and mine is what really caused Jesus to sweat blood while he prayed "not my will but thine be done" in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He died.

Thank you, Jesus!

[For detailed information on God's Plan for Your Salvation, click this link](#)

By the way, there has been a lot of talk about whether Mel Gibson and his Jesus movie are anti-Semitic and may be used by people around the world to lash out against the Jewish people of our age.

Jesus had the answer to that question, spoken while He was still up on the cross:

Luke 23:34. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." The *them* He was talking about included both Romans and Jews.

The Romans are thought to have executed 250,000 Jewish convicts via crucifixion, but only One lived to tell about it.

*** Rated R because of historically-accurate bloody violence against Jesus Christ!**

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**For background music as you study this page, turn on your speakers, click this link, and listen to Ronnie Hinson's beautiful song,
[When He Was on the Cross, I Was on His Mind](#)
sung by Sue Dodge with the Gaither Irish Homecoming Choir**

**And then, you'll want to listen to His triumph over the cross:
[I've Just Seen Jesus](#)
Sung by Sandi Patty and Larnelle Harris,
with the Kennedy Center Gaither Homecoming Choir**

When He Was On The Cross

By Ronnie Hinson

I'm not on an ego trip...
I'm nothing on my own
I make mistakes, I slip and fall..
Just common flesh and bones
But I'll prove some day, just why I say,
I'm of a special kind
For when He was on the cross, I was on His mind

For He knew me... yes He loved me
He whose glory makes the heavens shine
So unworthy of such mercy
When He was on the cross, I was on His mind

The look of love was on His face
Those thorns were on His head
His blood ran down that scarlet robe
And it stained crimson red
Though His eyes were on the crowd that day
He looked ahead in time
For when He was on the cross, I was on His mind

For He knew me... yes He loved me
He whose glory make the heavens shine
So unworthy of such mercy
When He was on the cross, I was on His mind

For when He was on the cross,
I was on His mind.

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