

Was it Murder He wrote?

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth is no doubt the most widely publicized death ever to have occurred in the entire history of the world. Yet from the viewpoint of who did it and why, it may well be the most misunderstood act of all history. The fact that there was a historical Jesus and that he was crucified seemed to be universally accepted as evidenced in numerous secular historical writing as well as the Scriptures. However, who did it and why, are subjects of considerable misunderstanding, which has directly resulted in almost 2000 years of the most tragic and painful aspects in history.

True Christians, well versed in the Scriptures, know with certainty the answers to these questions and are entirely comfortable with their understanding of them. Sadly, however, to the non-believer, the real answers seem either mythical, naive, stupid or foolish, and certainly not logical or believable. Even less informed Christians have difficulty with the issue. Were it otherwise, if blame had not been so wrongly placed, the many tragic flows of history might have been averted. The New Testament narration of the crucifixion and the events leading up to it, as well as those immediately following, are found clearly described in the four Gospels. It may come as a surprise to some, but they are also recorded and described in Old Testament books written hundreds, if not thousands, of years earlier than the actual event! Therefore, in order to really understand the issue, there is only one reliable source, and that is God's own words, the Holy Bible. In using this divine source, context is of paramount importance. Many of the worst tragedies of history have been the result of taking the Lord's words out of, or in the wrong, context. It is only through the ingestion of the whole Word of God, the entire Scripture, that it is possible to draw any safe and sure conclusion regarding God's plans and where we are in them. God's words, as recorded in the Scriptures, must have been taken in the context of the whole Scripture. Anything less is very risky and, as history illustrates, potentially tragic. With this in mind, let us see what the Bible tells us about why He died.

1. *Was this an execution? Yes!!*

All four Gospels tell us that Pilate gave the order, though reluctantly, to have Jesus executed (Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19). Pilate saw no guilt in Jesus, and much preferred to release Him, however, he bowed to what seemed to be political expediency; today we would say he chose to be politically correct, rather than right.

2. *Was this premeditated first-degree murder? Yes!!*

The Gospel cites numerous occasions when certain of the Jews tried to kill Him and failed (John 9: 58). In (John 11:50,53) the chief priest, Caiaphas, speaking of Jesus, reasoned “that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people and the whole nation perish not.” “Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.” The evidence clearly indicates that they wished to and intended to murder Him. Because “the septre had departed from Judah,” they lost the legal right to administer capital punishment. Therefore, murder, or some manner of subterfuge, or murder by proxy, was the only way to be rid of Him. Why did they want to be rid of this man, this great healer, this wonderful messenger who was totally free of sin? For several reasons. First He claimed to be God (John 8:58). “Verily, verily I say to you, before Abraham was I Am” * This claim to be God was blasphemy and punishable by death. Second, the people were beginning to follow Him in great numbers and believing in Him. This posed a serious threat to the whole priestly class, who valued their status, more than their faith. And third, rapidly expanding legions of His followers were seen as a growing threat to the political stability of the region as well. The main policy of Roman rule was maintaining law and order, peace and stability. Anything that threatened to disrupt this was dealt with harshly. While they deeply

resented the Roman yoke, they feared its power and the wrath, which would be readily dispensed on them, should unrest and sedition by the people begin to spread. This, of course, is how they finally prevailed on Pilate, when they said in John 19:12. “If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend: whomsoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.” Clearly, Jesus had also admitted to Pilate that He was the King, certainly at least of the spiritual realm.

Scriptural evidence indicates that Pilate believed Jesus, yet with insufficient moral strength to overcome the curse of expediency and “political correctness.” Thus we see that a conspiracy to murder Jesus did exist. The murder was planned and executed in the only way the conspirator could safely and legally achieve it. That is, to conjure up a false scenario as to His guilt in order that the Roman authority would perform for them this evil act. In doing so, they violated almost every precept and rule of both Roman and Jewish law.

Among the great tragedies that a gross misunderstanding of this Biblical account has caused is the conclusion that the “Jews” killed Jesus. While a casual and narrow reading of the Scriptures might lead to such a conclusion, in the context of the Whole Scripture, this can be seen as extremely misguided. As we have seen, the Jewish leadership alone sought to kill Him because of His popularity and great following, which although not yet spread much beyond the local region or into Gentile country, was growing rapidly among the Jewish population. He healed thousands, and on two recorded occasions, He drew crowds of many thousands who marveled at His words and His miracles (Mark 8, Luke 9:10-17). Where, therefore, would this “multitude” have come from who sought to kill Him? His blessed fame, which had spread throughout the regions, was built on His goodness and His reputation as a healer, a worker of miracles, a true man of God. To a growing number in and around Jerusalem, He was being revealed as the Messiah Himself. The fact is that there was no “multitude” seeking to kill Him. Both Matthew 26:47 and Mark 14:43 speak of “...great multitudes with swords and staves, from the chief priest and the scribes and the elders...” came to arrest Jesus

at Gethsemane. “From the chief priest and the scribes and elders” suggests that the multitude was made up of this leadership class and their immediate agents, employees and followers. Luke 22:52 elaborates with “...and captains of the Temple” while, John in 8:18, describes them as “a band of men and officers from the chief priest and Pharisees.” Thus it is evident that this was a select group of the ruling hierarchy along with what was most likely the Temple guard and others of the ruling cadre, and not “the people” or “the Jews.” Some very credible scholars believe that along with their immediate followers and some “paid” false witnesses, the total number of Jews who called for His crucifixion could have been as few as 13 members of the Sanhedrin. This might have constituted an adequate number of that ruling class counsel, and would, therefore, have been able to officially speak for the whole. Thus contrary to common belief, it seems clear that “the Jews,” the multitude as is commonly believed, were not the ones who called for His death, but instead a very small hierarchy of the threatened religious ruling class who were responsible.

3. *Was it Manslaughter? Yes!!*

How can this be if, as noted above, it was first-degree murder? Manslaughter is defined as the unlawful killing of a human being without express or implied malice. However, the term is also applied to the act by someone not in control of his or her own faculties or not aware of what they are doing. In Luke 23:34, Jesus said from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If you take the Lords Word seriously, as I do, then enough has been said. The case for manslaughter has also been confirmed by the highest authority, both by the Victim and by God Himself.

4. *Was it Suicide / Dieacide? Yes!!*

Now we are getting down to the meat of the real cause and effect of this memorable event. One only needs to read psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 written 500 to

1000 years before the event, to realize that the Lord told us very clearly that He had this whole act in mind and for a specific purpose, even before the beginning of time. The whole issue here was articulated with remarkable insight by Socrates to Plato when he observed to the effect, “Perhaps a just and righteous God can forgive sin, but I don’t see how.” Surely that was a seemingly unsolvable dilemma. God, whose very nature is pure love and righteous, as well as justice, cannot be other than righteous and, therefore, cannot tolerate sin in His heavenly domain. Neither can His just nature let sin go unpunished, yet all mankind is sinful. Not one is, or ever was, free from sin, except Jesus (Roman 3:9-20). Man’s sins had to be punished and righteousness appointed to Him before he could possibly enter God’s presence. But who or what on earth could provide this? Surely animal sacrifices could not, nor could any man by his own works or “goodness” do so. How many good deeds could cancel a bad one? How many truths could cancel a lie? How many whatevers could cancel murder or rape or theft or any other sin? Who would keep score and decide? Could keeping 7 out of the 10 commandments give us a possible passing grade into heaven? Obviously not. If one thinks long and seriously about this dilemma, one must eventually arrive at the same conclusion, as did Socrates. There is no earthly answer. Yet somehow, the vast majority of mankind blissfully tend to conclude that somehow as long as the balance of good deeds during their lives exceed the bad deeds, God will welcome them. Nothing is further from the truth!!!

God, however, in His infinite wisdom and love, had solved the problem before the beginning of the world by choosing to enter His own creation and pay once and for all, for all the sins ever committed or ever to be committed by those who believe in His earthly manifestation, Jesus, and believe that He did die for our sins, was buried and rose again, ascending back to heaven. How perfect the solution! How profound this act of love! How incredible the reward for such a simple acknowledgment of His magnificent act!! Here is the evidence, that this was in fact deicide, God Jesus clearly arranged for His own death. He took on all sins of the world and then deliberately died on the cross that all who believe on

Him could be cleansed by His blood and have eternal life. Careful reading of the events reveals that Jesus was in charge throughout the whole process leading up to and including the crucifixion. He chose the very time and process by which it would take place. That it was all preprogrammed is evidenced by this fact that in doing what He did, He fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies, predictions authored by the Holy Spirit from outside of time and space before the world began, detailing every aspect of that momentous occasion and the events leading thereto.

In summary, we can see that the world's most well known individual death was, in fact, from an earthly perspective, an execution, as well as first-degree murder, manslaughter and suicide. Those who are born-again Christians, however, know with certainty that it was diacide, the ultimate expression and proof of God's love. This was, in fact, the purpose and cause of all history, the crescendo of the greatest orchestrated symphony the world has ever known, the opening of the gates of heaven for those of faith. To the world it was an unfortunate tragedy, the death of a great teacher, perhaps it was a "day of infamy." But again, to the believer, it was the most blessed event of all blessed events. To explain it properly would take volumes, volumes already written many times over. To the world, no suitable explanation is possible and to the faithful none is required. All that matters is that He died and rose again! Praise the Lord!!!!

* In the vernacular of the day, especially in the Scriptures when Jesus speaks, when a statement started "I say unto you," it was meant to be an important statement of fact. When "verily I say unto you" preceded, it was a profound fact. And when "Verily, verily I say unto you" was the preface, this was an exceedingly profound, undeniable fact. Here our Lord is triple exclaiming that He is God, the I AM, the God of the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). The Pharisees, in fact all Hebrews, knew that "I am" was, in fact, the true name of God as He had revealed it to Moses in Exodus3:2.