



Peninsula City Church

Good Friday

Who killed Jesus?

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Who Killed Jesus

Introduction

Q. The elephant in the room, “Who killed Jesus, and why?”

So, who killed Jesus? It has been a question asked and fought over for the past 2000 years. Some blame the Jews, others the Romans, and others find both guilty. I do not know where you stand on this matter, but it is an excellent question to be answered. Today on this Good Friday, we will look at this question and see where we land.

The whole matter of Jesus’ death can be pretty spirited. However, here we will briefly look at this matter. We will view it from two perspectives. That is,

- Was it the Jews or the Romans who killed Jesus
- The divine perspective of Jesus’ death

1. Was it the Jews or the Romans who killed Jesus?

Q. What is the historical background here to guide how to answer this question?

Who killed Jesus is the elephant in the room. So, let us try to deal with it. The question of Jesus Christ’s death at the hands of the Jews and the Romans has been debated over the past 2000 years. As a result, sadly, there has been an anti-Jewish sentiment over this time by many Christ-followers and non-Christ-followers alike.

“Historically, the primary responsibility has been placed on the Jewish leadership and the Jews in Jerusalem. Throughout the centuries, this has sometimes had tragic consequences, resulting in anti-Semitism and violence against Jews.”¹

“The myth that Jews collectively murdered Jesus, also referred to as “deicide,” has been used to justify violence against Jews for centuries. Historians, as well as Christian leaders, have agreed that the claim is baseless.”²

“For two thousand years, ‘the Jews’ have been falsely blamed for the murder of Jesus. This charge of deicide is the oldest and most damaging and pernicious of all the ‘blood libels’ spread to provoke hatred and killing of innocent Jews by Christians through the ages.”³

There has even been something of a slight anti-Roman (or Italian) stance by some. For example, a current Jewish site sees that the Romans were more at fault here than the Jews.

“Indeed, according to most historians, it would be more logical to blame the Romans for Jesus’ death. Crucifixion was a customary punishment among Romans, not Jews. At the time of Jesus’ death, the Romans were imposing a harsh and brutal occupation on the Land of Israel, and the Jews were occasionally unruly. The Romans would have had reason to want to silence Jesus, who had been called by some of his followers ‘King of the Jews’ and was known as a Jewish upstart miracle worker.

Jews, on the other hand, lacked a motive for killing Jesus. The different factions of the Jewish community at the time — Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and others — had many disagreements with one another, but that did not lead any of the groups to arrange the

¹ *Who Killed Jesus? The Historical Context of Jesus’ Crucifixion.* <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-killed-jesus-the-historical-context-of-jesus-crucifixion> (5th April 2023).

² *Jews Killed Jesus.* <https://antisemitism.adl.org/deicide/> (5th April 2023).

³ *Who killed Jesus: The Romans or the Jews?* <https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/article-690095> (5th April 2023).



execution of the other allegedly heretical groups' leaders. It is, therefore, unlikely they would have targeted Jesus."⁴

"More recent trends in scholarship have shifted the blame to the Romans."⁵

However, is there any justification for either of these positions? What has the Bible got to say on this matter?

Well, what does the Bible say on the matter? The following are some passages that help us be more specific.

What part did the Jewish religious leaders of the day play in the death of Jesus Christ?

Jesus before the Sanhedrin, i.e., the Jewish high court of the day,

⁵⁹ "Now the chief priests (*Caiaphas*) and the whole Council (*Sanhedrin*) kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus so that they might put Him to death.⁶⁰ They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on, two came forward,⁶¹ and said, 'This man stated, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days (Jn 2:19)."'⁶² The high priest stood up and said to Him, 'Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?'⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, 'I charge You under oath You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.'⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself; nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.'⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, 'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have for witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;⁶⁶ what do you think?' They answered, 'He deserves death!'" (Matt 26:59-66 NASB; cf. also Mk 14:53-64; Lk 22:66-71; Jn 18:19-24).

The religious leaders cry out for Jesus to be crucified,

²² "Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said, 'Crucify Him!'²³ And he said, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they kept shouting all the more, saying, 'Crucify Him!' Matt 27:22-23 NASB; cf. also Mk 15:13-14; Lk 23:21-23; Jn 19:15).

However, what part did the Romans of the day play in the death of Jesus Christ?

Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate, i.e., the Roman high court in the land of the day,

"Then he (*Pilate*) released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified" (Matt 27:26 NASB; cf. also Lk 23:24-25; Jn 19:16).

"And wishing to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified" (Mk 15:15 NASB).

Then the Roman soldiers took Jesus outside Jerusalem and crucified Him.

²⁷ "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him.²⁸ They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.²⁹ And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a staff in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"³⁰ They spat on Him and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.³¹ After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His garments back on Him and led Him away to

⁴ *Who Killed Jesus?* <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/who-killed-jesus/> (5th April 2023).

⁵ *Who Killed Jesus? The Historical Context of Jesus' Crucifixion.* <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-killed-jesus-the-historical-context-of-jesus-crucifixion> (5th April 2023).



crucify Him... ³⁵ And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots" (Matt 27:27-31,35 NASB; cf. also Mk 15:16-20,24-26; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:17-18).

So, it would appear that Pilate and the Roman soldiers were involved in the death of Jesus. However, is he to blame?

So, we see here that some Jewish religious leaders, the Roman governor, and some soldiers of the day were involved. However, are they to blame for the death of Jesus Christ? Are the Jewish people responsible for the death of Jesus ever since? If not, are the Romans who were there, i.e., the Italians, responsible for His death? It could be possible to say that the people who were alive at the time (some of the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and some of the soldiers in 30-33 AD) were part of the death of Jesus Christ and are guilty. However, that does not mean that every Jewish or Roman person is to blame for Jesus Christ's death since that time.

It is the same as saying every Christ-follower since the Crusades of the Middle Ages is guilty of what happened. I know I did not kill anyone then (and neither did you). Some living at the time were guilty as part of the Crusades. So, enough with the blame games and the projected guilt already. It is time to look at the past as it is, the past and not impose it on the present. Otherwise (as we have from history, it only breeds trouble, racism, and death), we may trigger issues like antisemitism or an anti-Roman outlook. So, where to from here? Well, why not look at things from a divine perspective?

2. The divine perspective of Jesus' death

Q. What is the better assessment of Jesus Christ's death?

So, as we have seen, yes, some of the religious leaders, Pilate, and some Roman soldiers of the day were involved in the death of Jesus Christ. So, what is a better way to look at this matter? Why not listen to what Jesus had to say on the subject as He highlights the divine perspective? That is,

¹¹ "I AM the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. ¹⁴ I AM the Good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one Shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason, the Father loves Me because I lay down My life so that I may retake it. ¹⁸ No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father"(Jn 10:11-18 NASB).

Do we see what Jesus Christ said? He would lay down His life, and no one will take it from Him; He laid it down of His own initiative and free will. It was the commandment of the Father to do so. It is worded in Greek because He was active in this process and not forced to lay it down. Literally, He was to lay down His life force or breath.



It is also mentioned in the early days of the young church. We see the divine-human partnership to fulfil the Father's will. See the following passages in Acts,

²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a Man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs, which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know ²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" (Acts 2:22-23 NASB).

²⁷ "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur" (Acts 4:27-28 NASB).

The main point here, by way of application for this Good Friday, is that no one killed Jesus against His will. As a result, we don't believe that we are to blame either the Jewish or the Italian people. The only Good Shepherd chose to lay down His life actively. It was done on behalf of, and instead of, the sheep so they did not have to die. The basis for this action was twofold. That is,

1. It was for the benefit of the sheep (which we are) to live an abundant life.
2. He was willing to obey the Father's command actively.

Therefore, no one took Jesus' life, neither the Jews nor the Romans. They are not to blame for His death. It was the will of God for Him to die at this time of 30-33 AD. It did not catch either the Father or Jesus off guard. It was all seen outside of the time-space continuum in eternity. So, Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, was doing the eternal will of God. As it says in the following passage,

"And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain" (Rev 13:8 NASB).

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. Who killed Jesus, and why?

We can have tremendous confidence in the fact that God is always in control, even during the death of Jesus Christ. Nothing ever catches Him off guard, even the death of Jesus Christ. Despite what the liar might tell us, Jesus Christ thought we were worth dying for, so He laid down His life. Jesus actively and experientially knows us, the only Good Shepherd; we can also actively know Him. We should not blame anyone today (Jew or Italian) for the death of Jesus Christ. Yes, some religious leaders, Pilate, and some Roman soldiers of the day wanted Him dead. They organised His crucifixion. Even though they had Him crucified, a far deeper desire was involved here. It was the will of God.

Therefore, it should give us great encouragement and faith in our daily lives to live because of God's divine control and will. When the accuser tries to kill, steal, or destroy, remember that the Lamb of God came to lay down His life, so persevere actively. We need to see that Jesus knew the divine perspective. We can also learn it; that is why it is essential to read and study the Word of God, which is, in fact, the will of God. So, what would we say to someone about what stands out today from what we have heard? We need to apply this; otherwise, it is simply an intellectual practice. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us here and now.



In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found in the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, “What is God saying to me?”

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond

