

# Countdown to Easter

## *Who Killed Jesus?*

March 22, 2026 am

HDBC

**In two weeks** people around the world will celebrate Easter, remembering the resurrection of Jesus. It is the most important single event in human history. But that single event did not happen in a vacuum. It was part of a trio of events, which the N.T. writers called the gospel . . . the good news.

Those three events were the **death, burial** and **resurrection** of Jesus. And those three events will get more attention in the next two weeks than at any other time of the year. **This is a good thing! We want people talking about Jesus.** But we want them to know the truth.

Misinformation about some things can simply be annoying.

Misinformation about other things can be dangerous.

Misinformation about Jesus can be eternally deadly.

**I want us to be ready** to discuss these things truthfully. This series is designed to help us to do that. Five important questions that need to be answered correctly. We've considered the first two questions:

**Is Jesus really the Son of God? Why did Jesus die?**

This week: *Who Killed Jesus?*

Let's work through five options. The first three are obvious. The last two, not so much.

### **1. The Romans?**

This is the most obvious answer. The Bible and history make it clear that it was at the hands of the Romans that Jesus was crucified.

**Rome controlled most of the known world** at that time, including Palestine. The Jewish people lived under the heavy hand of the Roman empire. Roman governors ruled the various regions on behalf of the

emperor. So, it would make sense that they would ultimately be responsible for what happens under their rule. The Bible makes it clear that they were not only responsible for the death of Jesus, but were directly involved. Listen to Matthew's account. **Matthew 27:22-31**

It was a Roman **governor**, Pilate, who ordered the execution.

It was Roman **soldiers** who **placed a crown of thorns** on his head.

It was a Roman soldier who opened his skin with the scourge.

It was Roman soldiers who **led him** to the place of the skull.

It was a Roman soldier drove nails through his hands and feet.

It was Roman soldiers who **placed the sign above his head**.

It was Roman Soldiers who pierced his side to make sure he was dead.

**Were the Romans the ones who killed Jesus?** Yes.

But were they the only ones responsible? Let's consider others.

## 2. The Jews?

From the very beginning of Christianity orthodox Jews have bristled at the notion that they were responsible for the death of Jesus. Following the release in 2004 of Mel Gibson's movie, ***The Passion of the Christ***, Abraham Foxman, Dir. Anti-Defamation League had this to say about the movie.

*We were saddened and pained to find that "The Passion of the Christ" continues its unambiguous portrayal of Jews as being responsible for the death of Jesus. There is no question in this film about who is responsible. At every single opportunity, Gibson's film reinforces the notion that the Jewish authorities and the Jewish mob are the ones ultimately responsible for the Crucifixion.*

*In the film, the Jews and a group of sadistic Roman soldiers are the only ones portrayed as evil. The Jews make blood-thirsty calls for Jesus' death on a continuous basis, and by the end, the Roman soldiers feel compassion, whereas the Jews never feel compassion for Jesus and his suffering.*

**Those who have a problem** with this portrayal of the part that the Jews played in the death of Jesus, really have a problem not with the movie but with the Bible, for that is exactly what the Bible teaches.

**Jewish Scribes & Pharisees** worked to find a reason to condemn him.

**The Sanhedrin**, a Jewish religious group **condemned Jesus**.

The **Jewish high priest examined** and condemned Jesus.

A **Jewish mob** cried for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Listen to the words of Peter in **Acts 2:22-23**:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, **you crucified and killed** by the hands of lawless men.

**Peter clearly indicted the Jewish people** for the death of Jesus. But remember, that Peter himself was a Jew. He was not indicting all individual Jews, nor Jews of other generations. He was specifically pointing to the hard-hearted Jewish leaders who rejected the truth which Jesus taught and lived. So, did the Jews kill Jesus? Yes. But they were not the only ones.

### 3. **Judas Iscariot?**

What about Judas Iscariot. He was a disciple of Jesus who betrayed him into the hands of the Jewish leaders. **Matt 26:14-16**

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup> And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

**If there is** any one man who could be implicated in the death of Jesus, it had to be Judas. He was a traitor to Jesus. His actions led directly to the arrest and execution of Jesus. Judas was certainly guilty when it came to the death of Jesus.

Did Judas kill Jesus? Yes. But he was not the only one.

#### 4. God?

This may surprise you, but God the Father, was clearly involved in the death of Jesus. Listen to what the Bible says about this.

**John 3:16:** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

**Isaiah 53:3-4:** *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

**Matt 26:39:** *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

**The record of the Bible** is clear. The death of Jesus was part of the plan of God. This plan was formed even before the first thing was spoken into existence. It was part of God's plan, for Jesus to die. Let that truth sink into your minds.

**The death of Jesus** was part of the will of God. God planned it, willed it and desired the death of Jesus, **because of His great love for us.** **Jesus did not die without a purpose.** The purpose was to redeem us. To make a way for you and me to be forgiven. His death was **gruesome, violent, degrading and obscene.** But it had a **noble, merciful and gracious purpose.** He died so that we might live!

Did God, the Father, kill Jesus? In a sense, yes. He was willing to allow His son to die in payment for our sins. I'll share more about that another day.

## 5. You and me?

What about you and me? Are we responsible for the death of Jesus? Did we kill him? How could we? We live 2000 years after the fact. How could we possibly be responsible for his death?

**1 Peter 2:21-24:** *Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross.*

**1Thessalonians 5:9-10:** *For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.*

**Because His death was a substitute death** for you and me, in a sense, we killed him. It was my sins and yours that put him there. Without our sins, there would have been no need for a crucifixion.

**Because He has suffered and died,** we can live eternally. Not in these physical bodies. But our soul, our spirit can live forever, in Heaven, with him. Because of his death, we can have eternal life.

There is an interesting story from the time of the Civil War that illustrates this truth. I have read it from multiple sources but I do not know for sure if it is true.

During the civil war a man named **George Wyatt was drafted for service**. He had a large family and had he gone there would have been no one to provide for them. A young man named **Richard Pratt**, who had no one to care for, agreed to go in the place of George Wyatt. He was paid for that service. He did so, bearing the name and number of George Wyatt. Richard was killed in action, bearing the name and number of George Wyatt.

Later the authorities once again attempted to draft George Wyatt. But he protested, saying ***You can't draft me. Why not?*** they asked. ***Because I'm dead***" he answered. ***What are you talking about?*** they questioned.

He then instructed them to look in their records. When they did the record read, ***George Wyatt died in identification with his substitute and is there exempt beyond the claims of the law from further service.***

**That's what happened** for you and me when Jesus died. He died for us, so that we would not be bound the laws of death.