

## WHO REALLY KILLED JESUS?

*“Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” (Acts 4:25-28)*

Perhaps you are leaving the movie theater somewhat overwhelmed by what you have just witnessed. Perhaps there was nothing in this world that could have prepared your heart and soul for the gut-wrenching movie "THE PASSION" that was directed by Mel Gibson. Perhaps mere words are insufficient to articulate the height and depth of human emotion that has swept through your entire being.

If you are a Christian, perhaps God has plowed your heart and used this film to call you back to your first love and your first works (**Revelation 2:4,5**). Perhaps your heart broke afresh over the terrible price our precious Savior paid for the redemption of our lost and wayward souls.

If you are an unbeliever and maybe a part of a religious system other than Christianity, perhaps great conviction has come upon your soul for the first time. Perhaps after viewing this film, you are seeing the claims of Christ and the veracity of His word in a more distinct light. After all, the Bible declares that Jesus is the light of the world. In fact, Jesus affirmed this truth in John 8:12, *“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”* It is for you, my non-Christian

friend, that this tract has been written.

Much controversy has surrounded this movie since its inception. All kinds of accusations have flown to and fro. Fears of anti-Semitism have arisen and spread like wild fire. Magazines, media, articles, and debates over this film have grown up like weeds and the number one question upon everyone's lips is "Who Really Killed Christ?"

This is an extremely important question, but unfortunately, our darkened world cannot supply a truthful answer. Human nature being what it is, we cannot but help to politicize the moral, ethical, and spiritual implications raised by this picture. Though we should be grateful that the question has been raised, it is only in the Bible, the Word of God, that one can safely derive authentic answers to life's perplexing questions.

### God's Role In The Death Of Christ

First things first. We must major on the majors and minor on the minors to arrive at our proposed destination. Our beginning passage in Acts points the finger in the right direction if we are to understand the nature of who killed Christ. It clearly states that Christ was first and foremost condemned to die the most agonizing death possible on that cruel cross according to what *“. . . thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”* The hand and counsel referenced here is the hand and counsel of Almighty God. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Bible prophesied of His coming. Holy Writ foretold that God would become a man and the Word of God (Jesus) would become flesh (**Isaiah 9:6, 7:14, and John 1:1-14**). The Scriptures foretold the brutal manner in which Jesus would die (**Psalm 22, Isaiah 53**). Keep in mind, crucifixion had not been invented yet as a method of capital punishment, when King David described our Lord's suffering on

a cross in Psalm 22. The prophets also pronounced Jesus' glorious resurrection, long before His miraculous incarnation (**Psalm 16:10, Acts 2**). In fact, there are over 300 specific prophecies in the Old Testament that concern the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament simply records how Jesus Christ fulfilled each and everyone of them.

The truth is, Jesus Christ was slain before the foundation of the world (**Revelation 13:8**). Before there was a created universe, before our first parents, Adam and Eve, roamed paradise, and before man sinned and committed high treason against God to plunge this earth into death, hell, and the grave, Jesus was already slain in the heart and mind of God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost conspired in eternity past to condemn Jesus to die a bloody, horrifying death in order to redeem lost, fallen, and sinful creatures like you and me.

It is this truth and destiny that burned in the heart of Jesus that amply supplied Him with the courage and humility to honestly proclaim that no one could take His life from Him (**John 10:18**). Jesus received from God the Father the command to lay down His life and the power to take it up again. Jesus knew He was born to die, to bear witness to the truth, and to unleash God's salvation upon this poor-fallen world. Jesus death on the cross could not be avoided.

It was God's eternal decree and no man, no devil, and no government on earth could prevent this most central, tragic, and historical event from taking place. Jesus settles the raging debate once and for all in **Luke 24:25,26**, *“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”*

## Man's Role In Christ's Death

Because many have not perceived God's role in our Lord's death, some throughout history have looked for human scapegoats to blame. The Jews, traditionally, have fit the bill. Throughout history, either misguided genuine Christians or unconverted pagans masquerading as Christians have hurled the railing accusation of "Christ Killer" against the Jewish people. As a result, the Jews have suffered persecution at the hands of the Church, especially in the Middle Ages. They were terribly treated.

Even the Reformation did not completely end the Jew's mistreatment. Martin Luther, at first fought for more freedom for the Jewish people under the Reformation, but as they resisted the Gospel of the Kingdom message, he wrote scathing denunciations against them. In fact, some of his writings became familiar to Hitler. It has been said that Martin Luther later recanted. One can only hope that is true. Obviously, the Jews may have some legitimate concerns when it comes to the handling of our Lord's death in this day.

On a human level, our opening passage of Scripture in the book of Acts implicates several groups that were involved in the murder of Jesus. God's Word implicates Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel. In one sense, God indited the entire known world at that time for the crucifixion of His Son. No one escaped responsibility. On the other hand, the Jews, the Romans, and the political and religious leaders of the day were mere instruments that were unknowingly carrying out the will of God. The Apostle Paul verifies this truth by stating, *"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*

Dear friend, the truth is, it was your sin and my sin that is responsible for the spilled blood and broken body of our loving Savior. The artist Rembrandt sought to convey this truth in a painting called *"The Raising of the Cross."* He painted it as a self-portrait. It was Rembrandt as the soldier that nailed Christ to the cross and lifted up our Lord's tortured and mangled body up as payment for the sins of the world.

Who killed Christ? Rembrandt knew and so does Mel Gibson. You did and I did! It was our idolatry, greed, lust, selfishness, lies, perversions, abominations, and immorality that nailed Him to the cross, but it was His love that held Him there. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe and we owed a debt we could not pay. Though Jesus never sinned, He died a criminal's death. Out of His great love for you and me, He became our substitute for breaking God's Law. He served our sentence for us by enduring the agonizing torture upon a cruel cross. It's by His blood shed on that cross that we can be saved, escape the wrath that is to come, and everlasting destruction. It is through Jesus' broken body that our broken relationship with God can be restored. Please don't delay. Call upon the name of the Lord, repent of your sins, believe in Jesus, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (**Acts 2:38**). Today is the day of salvation!

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