



The Passion of the Christ: Who really killed Jesus?

I have watched with great anticipation as the movie “The Passion of the Christ” nears release. Newspaper, radio and television are filled with editorials, interviews, and exposition on the fall out from Mel Gibson’s new movie.

Why all the media attention? Because we all have an opinion! Each of us at some point in our lives has to deal with the issue of who Jesus was (and is). For some, Jesus was nothing more than a good man who lived a long time ago. For others, He was a mad man who led a revolt against the Roman government which led to His death. And for yet others, He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

One focal point the media has latched on to regarding “The Passion of the Christ” is the concern that anti-Semitic feelings might be kindled in moviegoers. The concern is that after people see such a graphic representation of the death of Jesus, they will blame the Jewish people for “murdering the Christ”.

This is nothing new, what do you think the crusades were all about? People seem to have an insatiable appetite for laying blame and administering judgment, so before we continue, we have to decide who really killed Jesus. There are many possible answers; the Romans, the ever popular Jewish ticket, some say Judas Iscariot is the one to hold responsible... What about you and me? Certainly we are not without blame; Jesus’ death would not have been necessary if we had not needed a sacrifice to cover our sins. (I have heard that there is a scene in the movie where Jesus’ hand is nailed to the cross and in that scene Mel Gibson chose to use his own hand to hammer the nail home... what a statement of personal responsibility!)

So who is to blame? Which of these mortals killed the Son of the living God... Maybe a better question than who is how! Sometimes in our zeal we loose track of reality; how do you kill the Son of the living God!?! Remember the night in the garden when the mob comes to arrest Jesus? Peter makes the same mistake. He draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest’s servant. He is only trying to defend Jesus; but does Jesus need defending? After all, He is the Creator of the universe; one would like to think that it is going to take a little more than an angry mob or a couple of rusty nails and a few sticks of wood to dispatch Him.

Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter that night?

"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"
~Matthew 26:52-54

One thing is certain; the death of Jesus was not the result of the actions or will of mortal men. All of the men in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death could not have fought against even a single legion of angels let alone twelve. No, what was about to happen was not in the hands of men, but in the hands of the Father and His Son.

So if a man didn't kill Jesus who did? Thankfully, in the book of John, Jesus clearly identified who was responsible for His death. There is only one who had means, motive, and ultimately the power to pull it off...

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."
~John 10:17-18

How sad it must make Jesus; for centuries the Jewish people, His brothers, have been persecuted for "their hand" in His death. Unfortunately for His chosen people, nothing could be farther from the truth.

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