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The Shepherd of Israel



One day, when I was a young teenager, I was standing in front of my house talking to a friend when a neighborhood boy approached me. Apparently he had heard that I was Jewish. He slapped me in the face and yelled, "You killed Christ!"

I was confused and hurt but it seemed pointless to try to explain to him that I was only 13 years old and couldn't possibly have killed someone almost 2,000 years before. Instead I went to talk to my parents about the incident.

My mother sadly told me that she had many similar experiences while she was growing up. She explained that segments of the Christian population believed that anti-Semitism was justified because the Jews were to blame for the death of Jesus.

"Did our people kill him?" I asked. She told me that she didn't know. . . .

The question of anti-Semitism, the controversy over Jesus' death, continues. As a Jew I am concerned about all roots of anti-Semitism and have looked deeply into this question. Ultimately it is the Bible, God's Word, that provides the only definitive

answer to the question, who really killed Jesus.

I began my search in the New Testament. Each of the four Gospels gives an account of the death of Jesus. The evidence was overwhelming.

The Pharisees were the leaders of the Jewish people at the time of Jesus. They were supremely ritualistic and self-righteous. Thus, when they heard Jesus say that he was the Messiah who had come to save *sinners*, in accordance with Isaiah 53, they were infuriated. They were awaiting a deliverer from Roman rule not a deliverer from sin!

Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth. This happened on the Sabbath. The Pharisees declared that Jesus could not be the Son of God because he "broke" the Sabbath. It was this and similar incidents that led the Pharisees, who had more regard for legalism than for humanity, to bring Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and demand his death.

As I read I wanted to shift the blame to the Roman government, but the facts would not allow it. Pilate asked

Who really killed Jesus?

by CAROL PERRY



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the Jewish leaders to reconsider their request but they insisted that Jesus deserved death because he had blasphemed God. Pilate finally agreed and Jesus was executed by the Roman government.

Despite all the evidence that I found I was still unable to understand why my people were still held responsible for Jesus' death. Jesus commanded forgiveness even for those who were responsible for his death (Luke 23:34).

It was the Tenach that finally answered my question. There I learned that every member of the human race is a desperate sinner in God's sight.

"There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psalm 53:3

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 17:9

"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Ecclesiastes 7:20

The Bible also says that our good works don't wipe out our sins—even our goodness is like filthy rags to the Lord (Isaiah 64:6).

Scriptures also teach about heaven and hell. I was surprised to find that these were not gentile or Christian inventions. The Jewish prophet Daniel wrote:

"And at that time thy people shall be

delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:1-2)

And God tells us in Ezekiel's prophecy:

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4)

I was shocked to find this kind of language in the Jewish Bible!

But how did what I read in the Holy Scriptures explain who killed Jesus?

I began to see that Jesus was the climax of the Temple sacrificial system. I knew from many years in Hebrew school that only the death of a perfect animal could make atonement for the sins that separated us from God. So God, in His mercy, had sent His perfect Lamb to die for our sins. He had given us His own Son to pay the price of redemption for all who would believe. Jesus alone lived without sin or blemish and therefore was the only one who could serve as that sacrifice.

When Jesus silently and defenselessly stood trial before Pilate he was innocent and yet he had taken upon himself all the sins of mankind. He was punished for our sins.

Just as there is no one so righteous that he doesn't need God's forgiveness, there is likewise no person so despicable and no deed so sordid that it cannot be covered by the Messiah's sacrifice. God has given us this beautiful promise:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

The pieces of the puzzle had begun to fit. My question was fully answered when I read the 53rd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah:

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of the dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath

borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the

transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The sixth verse of Isaiah 53 clearly tells us who killed Jesus. We read, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Anyone who believes that the Jews or the Romans killed Jesus does not understand God's plan: God sent His Son to die. No one could kill the Son of God Who was God Himself. Jesus declared:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10:17-18)

Over the years many Jewish people have learned to associate Jesus with anti-Semitism, and yet it is obvious that Jesus' life and death and all his teachings deny this association.

If you are a Jew who has allowed counterfeit "Christianity" to keep you from discovering the Jewish Messiah, Jesus the Son of God, we challenge you to read the Scriptures for yourself and learn who Jesus really is.

He is far more than a "wise" man. By his own declaration he is "the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

God has many blessings waiting for you, including eternal life. "How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3) Won't you ask God for yourself?

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"Liar"

RABBI JACOB EMDEN wrote in his *Seder Olam we-Sutta u-Megillath Taanit*, "Jesus. . . fully supported the Torah of Moses, as already shown, for not one of our sages spoke more fervently about the eternal duty to fulfill the Law."

Baruch Spinoza declared in his *Tractatus Theological-Politicus*, "(Jesus) was not so much a prophet as the mouthpiece of God. . . sent to teach not only Jews, but the whole human race."

Israeli scholar, Pinchas E. Lapid (former senior lecturer at Bar Ilan University near Tel Aviv) stated, "I have the suspicion that Jesus was more loyal to the Torah than I am as an orthodox Jew."

And so it goes. Scholar after scholar within Judaism has called Jesus a great teacher, a prophet of God, a righteous and holy man.

But is this *really* the truth, the total and complete truth, about Jesus? Are these statements really acceptable in the light of the assertions he made about himself? Was Jesus just another great moral teacher comparable to the great rabbis, Hillel, Gamaliel and Akiba?

Jesus claimed to be God Himself in the flesh of a man: "I am Alpha

and Omega, the beginning and the ending. . . the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).

He declared himself to be the only avenue of approach to God, the only way to Heaven, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

He stated that all *must* honor him, even as they must honor the Father in Heaven (John 5:23), and he further claimed for himself the Divine privilege of forgiving man's sins against God (Mark 2:5-10).

Too many people hold Jesus up as a great man without addressing themselves to the weight of these and similar statements!

If Jesus lied when he declared these things of himself, he was a hypocrite as well as a liar. He commanded honesty of others no matter what the cost.

If Jesus lied he was also a charlatan. He claimed that the eternal destinies of all men rest upon their relationship to him as the Lord of their lives.

If Jesus lied he could not be considered a good man, a moral teacher or a true prophet of God.

But what if Jesus did not lie? If he told the truth then he IS the Messiah and Lord of Israel and of the world. Our eternal destiny does depend upon

the decision we make in this life concerning him.

It's really as simple as that. We are faced with only two alternatives. We must each choose one—God did not intend to offer any others. The implications of our choice are of eternal seriousness.

The prophet John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (atonement) for our sins. . . . Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God. . . he that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

I am convinced, along with tens of thousands of Jewish people today, that Jesus is truly the Messiah of Israel. The Tenach bears witness to this. Jesus' resurrection bears witness to this. His uncontested miracles bear witness to this. Personal experience bears witness to this. WHO DO YOU SAY HE IS?

—Richard Maffeo

The Shepherd of Israel

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