

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Who Killed Jesus?

Scripture: Acts 4:27, Isaiah 53:10, Acts 2:23, Romans 8:28

Code: A336

The murder of Jesus was a vast conspiracy involving Rome, Herod, the Gentiles, the Jewish Sanhedrin, and the people of Israel—diverse groups who were seldom fully in accord with one another. In fact, it is significant that the crucifixion of Christ is the *only* historical event where all those factions worked together to achieve a common goal. All were culpable. All bear the guilt together. The Jews as a race were no more or less blameworthy than the Gentiles.

This is very plainly stated in Acts 4:27, a corporate prayer offered in an assembly of the very earliest believers: "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." So there is no justification whatsoever for trying to fix the blame for Jesus' death on any one people group. This was, in essence, a corporate act of sinful humanity against God. All are guilty together.

And yet even that does not exhaust the full truth about who killed Jesus. Scripture emphasizes from cover to cover that *the death of Christ was ordained and appointed by God Himself*. One of the key Old Testament prophecies about the crucifixion is Isaiah 53. Isaiah prophetically describes the torture of the Messiah at the hands of a scoffing mob, and then adds, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10).

God put his own Son to death?

That is precisely what Scripture teaches. Why? According to Isaiah 53:10, it was to "make His soul an offering for sin." God had a redemptive purpose.

The designs of those who killed Christ were entirely murderous. They are by no means exonerated from their evil, just because God's purposes are good. It was still the act of "lawless hands" (Acts 2:23). It was, as far as the human perpetrators were concerned, an act of pure evil. The wickedness of the crucifixion is in no sense mitigated by the fact that God sovereignly ordained it for good. The truth that it was His sovereign plan makes the deed itself no less a diabolical act of murder.

And yet this *was* clearly God's holy and sovereign plan from before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Look again at that prayer from Acts 4, this time in its full context:

Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: "Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ." For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together *to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done* (Acts 4:24-28), emphasis added).

Acts 2:23 echoes the same thought: "Him, *being delivered by the determined purpose and*

foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (emphasis added).

God ordained the murder of Jesus. Or to put it starkly in the words of Isaiah 53:10, it *pleased* the Lord to bruise Him.

In what sense was God *pleased* by the death of his Son?

He was pleased by the redemption that was accomplished. He was pleased that His eternal plan of salvation was thus fulfilled. He was pleased with the sacrifice of his Son, who died so that others might have eternal life. He was pleased to display his righteous anger against sin in such a graphic way. He was pleased to demonstrate His love for sinners through such a majestic sacrifice.

For all the evil in the crucifixion, it brought about an infinite good. In fact, here was the most evil act ever perpetrated by sinful hearts: The sinless Son of God—holy God Himself in human flesh—was unjustly killed after being subjected to the most horrific tortures that could be devised by wicked minds. It was the evil of all evils, the worst deed human depravity could ever devise, and the most vile evil that has ever been committed. And yet from it came the greatest good of all time—the redemption of unnumbered souls.

The cross is therefore the ultimate proof of the utter sovereignty of God. His purposes are always fulfilled in spite of the evil intentions of sinners. God even works His righteousness *through* the evil acts of unrighteous agents. Far from making Him culpable for their evil, this demonstrates how all He does is good, and how He is able to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28)—even the most wicked deed the powers of evil have ever conspired to carry out.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).