

Who Really Killed Jesus?

Scripture: Luke 13:31-33

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One of the great questions that has been asked through the ages is the question who killed Jesus. I know I have been asked that question in a number of interviews that I've done. Sometimes in somewhat hostile environments, who killed Jesus? It is a potentially very provocative question. In some situations could start a pretty good argument with a biblical answer. But it's a question that needs to be answered. And it is a question that the Bible does answer. And I want us to look at a text that opens that question up for us, Luke 13, verse 31-33.

This is where we are in the gospel of Luke and I just want to look at these three verses that merely at the end of this 13th Chapter because they do bring this issue to the floor. Verse 31 of Luke 13 says, "Just at that time some Pharisees came up saying to Him," that is to Jesus, "go away and depart from here for Herod wants to kill you." And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day I reach my goal. Nevertheless, I must minister on today and tomorrow and the next day. For it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." From His birth, Jesus was the target for murderers. In fact, it seems like almost everybody wanted Him dead. He called for the very best from people and He brought out the very worst.

It really is amazing how many there were who given the opportunity would have murdered Him. And the shock of it is, that He was without sin, He was without evil, He was perfection, He was absolute goodness, holiness, He was compassionate, He was generous, He was gracious, He was benevolent, and He was offering what everybody desperately needs, forgiveness from sin, and eternal life, escape from judgment and eternal punishment. And He offered not as something to be earned or something to be achieved or something to be merited, but as a gift to be received.

He offered the gift of all gifts, eternal blessing, everlasting joy in heaven. But instead of eagerly embracing Him, instead of grasping His salvation with joy and gratitude, which only a few did and only a few still do, those to whom He brought salvation what to kill Him. It really is the most remarkable reality about His life. He was constantly pursued to be killed. It really began with Herod the Great who was the father of the Herodian dynasty, the patriarch that started that dynasty. He was not a Jew, he was an Idumean and he ruled in Israel from 37 B.C. through about the time of Christ. He was the one who rebuilt the temple, third temple. And so we talk about Herod's temple being the temple in existence at the time of Jesus, though it wasn't finished until after He died.

The Jews hated him even though he did get involved in the enterprise of building the temple, they hated Him, because he was not a Jew, he was an Idumean and he had generated many reasons for them to hate him. He was a vicious and murderous man was Herod the great. He was so threatened by anyone and everyone who might take his throne, that he slaughtered his family members and anybody else who was important around him who might sometime be arrival. He was so paranoid that when he heard from the wise man that there was a child born in Bethlehem and the environs that was the king, his paranoia led him to try to find that child, and when he couldn't find that child, he just massacred every male child two and under in the whole area around Bethlehem.

Matthew Chapter 2, verses 13-18 describes that horrible, horrible mass slaughter. Herod the Great wanted Him dead, when He hadn't even done anything. Herod the Great wanted Him dead from the time He was born. When He appeared in His own town Nazareth in Luke Chapter 4, He preached in the synagogue He'd been in every Sabbath of His life, up until when He began His ministry at the age of 30, everybody knew Him, everybody in town knew Him, everybody in that synagogue knew Him, was where His family went and His relatives went and His neighbors went.

He preached one sermon there in Luke Chapter 4, verse 28 and 29, they were so furious they were so enraged Luke writes at the end of that sermon that they took Him out to the brow of a hill and tried to throw Him off a cliff objective being His death. They hated what He said because He said they were too self-righteous to be saved. They were too self-righteous to receive the gospel. And that the Lord was going to have to take it to some other people and not them as He had done in the past. So His own friends and relatives wanted Him dead.

The temple authorities wanted Him dead. In John Chapter 2, He began His ministry by going into the temple and it was Passover season. Jesus went up to Jerusalem, verse 14. He found in the temple, John 2, those who were selling oxen, sheep, and doves and money changers seated there. Made a scourge of cords, drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen. He just emptied the place of thousands of people. Poured out the coins of the money changers, overturned the tables. To those who were selling the doves, He said, "take these things away. Stop making my Father's house a house of merchandise."

He says in verse 19 to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up and He knew what they were thinking." He said, "Destroy this temple," because He knew they were thinking they wanted Him dead. You do that and I'll raise it up. They wanted Him dead because He had assaulted the corruption of their business. It was primarily the Sadducees that operated the temporary concessions and had turned it in to a den of thieves. But it wasn't just the temple authorities that wanted Him dead, the whole leadership of Israel wanted Him dead. It wasn't just those who ran the enterprise, the Sadducees, the chief priests, and the Sadducees as well as the high priest. All the Jewish leaders wanted Him dead. You can include Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, chief priests, high priests,

scribes, they all wanted Him dead because He violate their corrupt perverted apostate religion. He did things on the Sabbath they didn't like. He condemned their works system, their system of merit and earning salvation.

And so He confronted all of them. In fact, they are identified particularly in the gospel of John by the term the Jews. And when John writes about the Jews, He's generally talking not so much about the populous as He is about the leadership. They were the ones who hated Jesus. In John Chapter 5, for example, He had healed a man at the pool of Bethesda who had been infirmed. He had been unable to walk and been that way for 38 years and so Jesus raises Him up and says pick up your bed and walk. You remember the story? And he did. And it was the Sabbath day and the Jews were furious that He had carried His bed on the Sabbath which was a violation and in response to that Jesus basically said I'll do anything I want. My Father is working until now and I, myself, am working. What He is saying is that my Father and I can do what we want on the Sabbath. For this cause, therefore, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him.

They had already been wanting to kill Him. That started back in Chapter 2 when He cleansed the temple. Now they had wanted all the more to kill Him because of what He had done on the Sabbath in direct violation of their tradition. And it says so. They wanted to kill Him not only because He was breaking the Sabbath, but even more He was calling God His own Father making Himself equal with God. The leaders wanted Him dead because they thought this was blasphemy. And they couldn't see Him as anything other than a blasphemer because He was attacking their religion, therefore He had to be perverse. He had to be blasphemer. But it wasn't just the leaders that wanted him dead. It wasn't just the temple authorities that wanted Him dead, it wasn't just Herod that wanted Him dead, the people wanted Him dead as well. And when they had their opportunity, when Pilate brought Him out, Luke Chapter 23, and said "Look take Barabbas and let Jesus go," they screamed "release Barabbas, release Barabbas." Well, what do I do then with Jesus? "Crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify Him," the mass, the mob screamed for His blood.

It is also true that in the end Pilate wanted Him dead because Pilate needed Him dead or there was going to be a revolution on his hands. Pilate could see it fomenting. The people wanted Him dead. He found no fault in the man. He wanted to wash His hands of innocent blood, but finally intimidated by the Jewish people who would report Him to Rome and he would lose His job if another bad decision was made with regard to the way He was treating the Jews and discharging His responsibility on behalf of Rome. He knew he'd lose his job. He'd done it too man times in the past. And so in fear of losing his job, acquiesces and wants Him dead, because it'll quell the crowd and the Romans wanted him to keep the peace.

And obviously he released Him to the soldiers. The soldiers took glee in executing Him. Those Roman soldiers wanted Him dead and they ultimately are the ones who took His life. But we meet here somebody else who wanted Him dead. This is a man named Herod, back to our text in the

gospel of Luke. Herod wanted Him dead and Herod's intentions and Herod's wishes are made known to us as they were made known to Jesus in this passage. Verse 31, "Just at that time at the very time of Jesus' teaching from the prior passage," back to verse 22, "He was passing through from one city and village to another teaching and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem."

And we recall the teaching that he gave there, teaching about salvation entering into the kingdom telling them they had to strive, fight, battle their way in, because they had to be willing to exercise their will against their own sinful pride. They needed a sense of urgency because there was limit on the time, the door would be shut and then they couldn't get in. They had to have a relationship not just an external association with Jesus. Needed to understand that if they didn't receive salvation they would be in a horrible place of punishment where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And they would be left out of the kingdom which would include some Jews and Gentiles, but not them.

It was when He was preaching all of that about salvation that it's a struggle, that it demands urgency, that it demands a relationship, that it demands a perception of eternal punishment. It was when He was preaching that from town to town and village to village that some Pharisees came up and told Him about Herod's wishes. Now why would they bring this up about Herod? What's the point? This is, by the way, Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. Herod the Great as I said is dead. This is his son, but his hatred for the man Jesus was equal to the hatred of his father for the infant Jesus. He saw Jesus also as a threat, just as his father had.

Everybody, as I said, seems to have wanted to kill Jesus. And Herod is among them. And the Pharisees came up and said to Him go away and depart from here for Herod wants to kill you. This indicates that Jesus is in Herod's territory. Get out here. This is where he has jurisdiction and He wants to kill, apokteino, to annihilate, to destroy, to murder. Now let me tell you the scenario. Herod the Great died and he died and left a will and when Herod the Great died, in his will he wanted the kingdom of Israel divided among his sons. Archelaus was one son, he ruled Judea, Samaria and Idumea. That would be Judea in the middle, Samaria at the north and Idumea was at the south. He had that section.

He had another son named Philip. Philip ruled the northeast if you went above Galilee to the north and east. The capitol city of that area Caesarea, Philippi and in the modern will be up on the Lebanese border. And then there was Herod and Herod is called the Tetrarch of Galilee. He was given the Galilee area around the Sea of Galilee and Perea. Perea was east of the Jordan River, east of Judea, so we had Galilee and east, Judea and east. He ruled there for a long time. He ruled there for about 40 years until about 39 A.D. after the death of our Lord.

His real name was Herod Antipas, not to be confused with Herod the Great, his father. The Jews despised the man. They hated all these rulers because they were all Idumeans, none Jews, who had

power over them and over their land. They hated the Romans for that. That hated the Idumeans for that as well. But they hated Herod Antipas for a lot of reasons. One of them was he brought idols in everywhere and they hated idols of course. But also he built his capitol city Tiberius. Tiberius, if you ever go to Israel today, is a flourishing city on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee, been there many times. It's a beautiful place. But he built the capital city of Tiberius on a Jewish cemetery and he put idols in the city, etc., etc. Interesting thing about the ministry of Jesus, Jesus ministered around Galilee for over a year and then during His Judean ministry might have made some little trips into Galilee even from Judea. Never is there any record in all the four gospels that He ever went near the city of Tiberius.

This was the man the Jews hated. He was a puppet of Rome, a puppet ruler. He had murdered John the Baptist. Matthew 14 tells this lurid story about him going to a party and everybody, you know, in an orgy of drunkenness and gluttony and Salome comes out and does this dance and he becomes overwhelmed with lust and says I'll give you anything you want. And she says, "I want the John the Baptist's head on a platter," because John the Baptist had condemned the relationship of the king and his wife. And the wife told Salome, "ask for the head of John the Baptist because he had spoken against their illicit marriage." And that's what he got. So they brought into the party John the Baptist's head on a platter and so this is Herod Anthipas, murderous man who led John the Baptist into being beheaded because of his own lustful desire.

Now the word comes to Jesus that this man wants Him dead. Now this indicates that Jesus has slipped into the Perea area. Probably not all the way up to Galilee, but He's cross the Jordan. And some of the towns and villages mentioned in verse 22 would have been Perea. If you compare this with some of the other gospels, Matthew 19:1, Mark 10:1, and John 10:40, Jesus does have a portion of His ministry in Perea. If you have a study Bible, you'll notice in the outline I did on the gospel of Luke a section there, ministry in Perea before He finally crosses back over the Jordan in Luke 19 and heads for Jerusalem. So He's in the area of Perea and He's apparently going to be there for some months ministering.

So it's when He's in that area that this warning comes. Why did Herod want to kill Him? What was it about Jesus that caused Herod to want His death? Well, we could surmise, because the text doesn't say, He knew that the prophet John the Baptist had come to declare the arrival of Messiah and He could certainly assume that if he had killed the forerunner to the Messiah, if he had killed John the Baptist that the one whom John the Baptist was proclaiming might have vengeance in his heart.

Maybe he wanted Jesus dead before Jesus could get to him. He also knew that Jesus had supernatural power over demons. He knew that He had supernatural power over disease and he knew by word of mouth that He had supernatural power over death and no doubt he feared vengeance. A man like that who has done such a lurid crime would have such vivid memories, such vivid haunting guilt of a man's head on a plate being offered to him in a lustful drunken stupor that he

probably couldn't forget it and it might be something that drove him to a level of paranoia and fear. So maybe he wanted Jesus dead just to make sure Jesus couldn't kill him.

It's also reasonable to know that since he was Rome's lackey since he was beholden to Rome for everything he had, he was only a puppet king. He didn't want any trouble from the Jews that would cause Rome to get upset at his inability to keep the peace and he knew Jesus had massive crowds following after Him everywhere He went. He feared that He might lead a rebellion. That he himself might become a problem for Rome. He also, like his father, must have feared that this potentially could be a rival to my throne. For all those reasons he wants Him dead.

Some day, not too long after this, for the first time he saw Jesus. In Luke 23 and verse 8, Pilate doesn't want to make the decision by himself as to the execution of Jesus. And so he wants somebody else to weigh in on it, so in Luke 23:8, he sends Jesus to Herod, who happens to be in Jerusalem at that time. Now Herod was very glad, Luke 23:8, when he saw Jesus for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he'd been hearing about Him and hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

See he knew of the miracle power of Jesus, and he knew that miracle power could be used for vengeance. He knew that miracle power could be used for a revolution. He knew that miracle power could be used to bring a disturbance that would call Rome down on His own head. For all those reasons he had wanted to kill Jesus. He'd wanted to see Him for a long time. Verse 9, he questioned him at some length, but He answered him nothing. Isaiah said he was silent. He answered him nothing.

And Herod with his soldiers, rather verse 10, the chief priests, scribes were standing there accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe, mockery of His so-called kingship and sent Him back to Pilate. Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day, for before they had been at enmity with each other. Sure, because they were competing authorities. Pilate actually represented Rome. Herod was a petty puppet king. They hated each other, competing rulers. But they could agree on one thing. They wanted Jesus dead, because Jesus potentiated a revolution. Jesus could be a rival to their power and Jesus had miraculous power as well.

It's interesting to me that in all the interrogations of Jesus, by Annas, Caiaphus, Pilate, in all the interrogations of Jesus only one person to whom Jesus did not speak and that's Herod. That is a severe judgment on the state of that man. He didn't say one word to him. He had nothing to say to him. The door really in his case was shut. Herod was happy to join with Pilate because they both had the same thing at stake, their power, their position. He was happy to play a role in the murder of Jesus and to join the fun, the mockery, the contempt.

So with that in mind, we go back to our text. For a long time Herod wanted Him dead. Here we are back a few months before that and some Pharisees came up saying to Jesus "go away and depart from here for Herod wants to kill you." This is really strange. The Pharisees hated Herod too. Herod is a non-Jew. He's a puppet king in their land. But now they come because somehow they've gotten word, and there were Pharisees all over the land of Israel and even in Perea, they've gotten the word that Herod wants Him dead and they come to tell Jesus that and one wants to ask the question, why in the world are they warning Jesus.

I suppose you could say there were a few good Pharisees around, but I don't think that's the point here. I think they warned Him because they wanted to intimidate Him. They wanted to silence Him. It's another way of saying if you don't stop this you're going to get killed. They brought the threat to bear on Jesus to silence Him or to perhaps to force Him back into Judea out of Perea where the Sanhedrin had its authority over Him. And the Sanhedrin were already plotting His death. As I said, Luke is a little vague on geography because His readers were not necessarily familiar with Israel, but this is the time according to Matthew, Mark, and John that Jesus went into Perea and He's in the territory of Herod.

And with impure motives the Pharisees say you better get out of here. You better go away and depart from here or you're going to get killed and Herod's going to do it. Herod was the big stick. So right after Jesus' very strong words on the Jews being banned from salvation, the Jews being banned from the kingdom because they will subdue their pride and their self-righteousness because they will not repent because they have no sense of urgency because they have no reasonable fear of eternal punishment. Because they believed they're already fit for the kingdom they do not need to repent. After all of those powerful words, they certainly would be even more offended. They want to silence Jesus. And the way they choose is to threaten Him or intimidate Him with the biggest stick that exists in the area He's in and that that's Herod.

Herod is serious. He wants you dead. Get out of here. They don't want to hear anymore from Him. They'd rather have Him in Judea where the Sanhedrin can get after Him. That's a reasonable approach to their motivation. Verse 32, He said to them, this is really interesting, "Go and tell that fox." Now that's a very unusual thing for Jesus to say. With absolutely no hesitation, absolutely no fear, completely without being intimidated, unresponsive to the threat, Jesus shows contempt and disdain for Herod. And He says, "Go and tell that fox," that's very, very unusual for Jesus to call somebody a name. It really is. Fox, alopekis, just what we know as a fox. He chose His animal very carefully. He could have called him a lot of things. He could have...but He called him a fox and I'll tell you why. Fox were known for destructiveness, but they were destructive, you know. The Scripture talks about the fox, the little foxes that spoil the vines.

They were destructive. They were also kind of cunning, wiley, sneaky. They were fast, they were quick. They were in, they were out. This is where He could be referring to his destructiveness. He could be referring to his cunning, but that really isn't the main idea with the fox. In the ancient times, the fox was viewed as insignificant. The fox was viewed as a sort of third rate nuisance. To call somebody a fox would be demeaning and contemptuous. To call somebody really powerful, really destructive would be to call them a lion.

To say he's a fox would be in the English vernacular to say he's a varmint. He's just a nuisance. Neither great nor powerful. He doesn't have the strength to kill. A fox couldn't kill a human being. He's no lion. He has neither honor or nobility nor strength. He is nothing but a petty nuisance. You tell that petty nuisance, you tell that varmint; this is so unusual. Herod is the only person in the New Testament to whom the Lord showed such contempt. He didn't show that kind of contempt to the high priest. He didn't show that kind of contempt to Pilate. He didn't show it to other leaders on other occasions. This is really very unusual. And of course, the Old Testament lay down a law that causes some people to think that Jesus is out of line here because in the Old Testament God said that you're not to speak evil of a ruler, Exodus 22:28. Ecclesiastes 10:20, you're not to speak evil of a ruler. You're not to speak evil of a king.

The people are told that and in the 23rd Chapter of Acts you remember that Paul responds to the high priest, Paul said to him, "God's going to strike you, you white-washed wall." But the bystander said "Do you revile God's high priests?" And Paul said, "Oh I wasn't away brethren that he was a high priest for it is written you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people." And he quotes Exodus 22:28, so it was unusual to do that, but it was done. When it was appropriate it was done. It wasn't to be done willy nilly and at random and because you were mad and just because you felt like doing it in the heat of anger. But there were plenty of times in the Old Testament when the prophet of God speaking for God could rebuke a ruler.

When God wants to rebuke a ruler, God can rebuke a ruler. Isaiah Chapter 1 reminds us "Your rulers," wrote Isaiah, "are rebels, companions of thieves, everyone loves a bribe, chases after rewards, they do not defend the orphan nor does the widow's plea come before them." There were times when God had something to say through His prophets to the rulers because of their iniquity and their sin. In Ezekiel they are called princes who are wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain. In the 7th Chapter of Hosea is a whole section against them.

Public rebukes against the prophets...against the rulers did come from the prophets. Jesus has every right to say no varmint is going to come into God's field and kill me. He was going to die, but He wasn't going to die at the hands of this man. And His response is further, "Go tell that fox this, behold," exclamation, "I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third I reach my goal." What does this mean? This is colloquialism. He is simply saying this, I'm going to do what

I've been doing today, tomorrow, and until I'm done.

The third day was used among the Jews as an expression. Colloquialism, poetic language for completing something. In fact, back in Exodus 19:10, you have the same phrase that when someone says I'm going to do this today and tomorrow, they don't mean just today and just tomorrow, but it's just going to continue. It's a way of talking about continuation. If I said do you know...you know what today and tomorrow and until I'm done, I'm going to do what I'm doing. We understand that. We know it's not limited to today and tomorrow. But this is day to day to day. So He says look I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing.

There's a short time implied here. It's not going to go on for a long, long time. It's not year after here. It's today and tomorrow and the third day, poetic language for something completed a Semitic idiom indicating the Lord is going to continue His ministry until that third day, that last day, there's only today and tomorrow and then it's done. That's the idea of the idiom. There's only three possibilities. It's today, it's tomorrow, the future, and then it's over. Until I reach my goal, literally until I'm finished.

What is the goal? We said on the cross when it was all over and He had purchased us by His sacrifice. He said, "It is finished." The goal is the work of redemption and Jesus is going to do what He's going to do until that hour and Herod is not the sovereign over that nor is anyone else. Jesus said He came to do the Father's will. That's exactly what He would do and nobody could cause Him to do any other than the Father's will. No one, He said, could take His life from Him. He said, "I lay it down by myself," John 10:17-18. "No man takes my life from me."

So He responds to the threat of Herod by saying it's not going to change anything and He goes on to minister Perea for several months. And Herod never does kill Him. In fact, we never hear about him again until finally we meet him where we did before in Luke 23 in Jerusalem at the trial. So as regards to threat of Herod, the Lord pays absolutely no attention to it because He is on a divine timetable and He will continue to do exactly what He's been doing, healing and casting out demons until His work is finished.

Now with regard to His death He says in verse 33, "Nevertheless, I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day." I'm going to keep on track, on schedule. I'm going right on on the divine timetable. I must. It's day in the Greek. It's called the divine day. The divine necessity. I keep moving day by day toward my goal, determined by God, the completion of my work and it's not going to be here in Perea. I'm not going to die here. And then He quotes what must have been a Proverb. "For it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." That's a strange statement, isn't it?

Why would He say that? This is likely a Proverb that just grew up among the Jews. I mean, it would almost be like a...almost like a kind of a joke. Kind of something you would say with a smirk on your

face, because so many prophets were killed in Jerusalem that it almost became an authenticity of a prophet to be killed in Jerusalem. Back in 2 Kings 21, talks about the prophets and then it talks about Manasseh, that evil king, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. And then over in the 24th Chapter of 2 Kings it talks about Jehoiakim, another evil king, who filled with Jerusalem with innocent blood. The Jewish people throughout their history had massacred innocent blood. That is people who before God were righteous, not by their own righteousness, but because they were true saints of God and had received righteousness from Him. They were then in His view innocent.

Tradition, and Jewish tradition, says one of those that was killed there was Isaiah who was put in a hollow log and then saw in half to dramatize what happens to those who say what He said and Hebrews 11:37 talks about someone who was sawed in half. And that accords with that tradition. But there were others, in fact, if you were a prophet there was every real possibility that you would eventually end up prophesying in Jerusalem because that's where the temple was. That's where the people were. That's where the leadership was. That's where the message had to go. For example, in 2 Chronicles 24:20, the Spirit of God came on Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest.

Zechariah the prophet stood above the people and said to them, "Thus the Lord has said why do you transgress the commandment of the Lord and do not prosper because you've forsaken the Lord, He's also forsaken you." They didn't want to hear it. Verse 21, they conspired against him at the command of the king. They stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord. They killed him in the temple. And we learned earlier in the 11th Chapter of Luke that He died between the house of God and the altar. They killed him right in the place where they were worshipping. Supposedly the very God who had sent him with the message.

So it wasn't unusual for a prophet to die in Jerusalem even in the temple. Jeremiah writes about this in Jeremiah Chapter 26 and verse 20. There was a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Uriah was his name. He prophesied against the city, against the land. Words very similar to those of Jeremiah. King Jehoiakim, all his mighty men, the officials heard his words, they sought to put him to death. And it says essentially they did that, verse 23. They slew him with a sword, threw his dead body into the burial place of the common people.

Now Jerusalem was the city of God. Jerusalem was the place of the temple. But it wasn't...you know, the interesting thing, it wasn't the enemies of Israel that killed their prophets. No, it wasn't the pagan nations around them that murdered their prophets. It was them, they killed their own prophets. It's like the parable Jesus told in Matthew 21 and Luke 20, God has a vineyard, the vineyard is Israel and God comes to an accounting for Israel with regard to the blessing and opportunity they've had. He wants that accounting. He sends His servants, they kill the servants. That's the prophets. He sends His son, they kill His son, that's Christ.

Now Jerusalem literally was filled with the blood of the prophets. And those are just some illustrations. They weren't killed by the enemies, they weren't killed by the pagans, they were killed by the people themselves. So often that it became proverbial the prophet should...it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem. Almost a sort of sarcasm, an irony. The capitol of Israel, the center of worship, the city of God was where they killed the spokesman for God. Bitter irony here really you know.

Herod can't be greedy. Jerusalem has first claim on the blood of God's messengers. It almost be a badge, as I said, of authenticity to be killed by the Jews in Jerusalem. And that's why the Proverb says it cannot be. It cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. Indekumia, it is not allowed. It is inadmissible. Jerusalem is the place you have to die. And for Jesus it was really the place you have to die because it was where all the sacrifices had been made and He was the final sacrifice. There were no sacrifices made outside of Jerusalem. They were all made there in the temple and the final sacrifice, Jesus would die in Jerusalem as well. The perfect and complete sacrifice.

Well, they finally got Him. It wouldn't be Herod in Perea. It wouldn't be here. It wouldn't be then. But the question then is the question we began with. Who kills Jesus? In the end, who did it? Well, they all came together basically. The Jews over the years have carried the stigma. They've carried the blame and very often have been called Christ killers by hateful people. And sadly really the charge of killing Jesus has frequently been used to justify everything from hate crimes to holocausts on Jews. That kind of bigotry is satanic. There is, however, a very real sense in which the Old Testament and the New Testament holds Israel, those Jews who lived at the time of Jesus, guilty for the murder of Jesus.

Listen to Isaiah 49:7, "It speaks of the holy one, the coming Messiah as "him whom despises, him who the nation hates." Isaiah 53:3, which I read earlier to you, says "the Messiah would be despised and not esteemed by His own people who would as it were hide their faces from Him in the hour of His death." Psalm 22:6-8 warns of His treatment at the hands of His own brethren as He hangs on a cross. It says "I'm a worm and no man, a reproach of man despised by the people. All those who see me, ridicule me. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head saying he trusted in the Lord. Let Him rescue Him, let Him deliver Him since He delights in Him, mocking Him.

Well, in the New Testament, we read the same thing. Very clearly in the New Testament the Jews rejected Jesus Christ and bear the responsibility of that. I mean the chief priest and the Pharisees, John 11:47, convened the counsel concerning, Caiaphas the high priest said "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish." We're going to lose this whole nation if we don't kill this man. It all was hatched out of that plot. And from that day on they planned together to kill Him, Sadducees, scribes, Pharisees, high priests, chief priests, including the counsel of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling counsel wanted Him dead.

But the people are also guilty. They cried, "crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify Him, we will not have this man to reign over us." They stood there in Luke 23 in front of Pilate and screamed for His death. That's why Peter, when he preaches on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, says "men of Israel, you have taken Christ by lawless hands and crucified Him and put Him to death." You did it. Acts 2:22-23 says that. Listen to this, Acts 2:36, "Let all the house of Israel know," Peter says, "for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." And he said that to that population of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

You killed Him. Listen to Acts 3:12, Peter again preaching, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this and why do you gaze at us as if by our own power or piety we made Him walk after He'd healed the lame man. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His servant Jesus the one whom you delivered up and disowned in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release Him, but you disowned the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and you put to death the prince of life.

They cannot escape that, that's the truth. In the 4th Chapter of Acts in the 10th verse, "Let it be known to all of you," again Peter, "to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified." There's no question about it. But were they alone in this? No. Pontius Pilate, a Gentile Roman governor sentenced Him to die in collusion with Herod Antipas, who by the way, also called himself king of the Jews. Another reason he saw Jesus as a rival, though he wasn't himself a Jew. In the end, it was Roman soldiers that actually pounded the nails and the thorns on His head and ran the spear into His side.

It really was a vast conspiracy that everybody could agree on. I don't know how people get the idea that somehow Jesus is supposed to be popular. He wasn't then and even when He was here in all the glory of His person. He's so divisive. It was a vast conspiracy. It involved the Jews. It involved the Romans. It involved Herod, Gentiles, the Jewish Sanhedrin, diverse groups who had great barriers between them all. They all didn't get along with each other. They had no common ground, except they all wanted Jesus dead.

That's why Acts 4:27 says this, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant, Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel to do whatever thy hand and thy purpose predestined to occur." They all did it. They all did it, but did you catch that last line? "To do whatever thy hand and thy purpose predestined to occur." Wow. In the end, the question then is who really killed Jesus? Back to Acts 2 again in verse 23, "This man delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God you nailed to a cross." "This man delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."

The secondary cause, sinful people. They all got together, they were all in on it, they all did it. That's the secondary cause. The primary cause, God, God. So the ultimate answer who killed Jesus? God, God killed Jesus. Isaiah 53:10, which I read earlier, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." Why? To make Him an offering for sin. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." Yes, you did it. Herod did it. Pilate did it. The Gentiles did it. People of Israel did it. But they did whatever your hand and your purpose predestined to occur. So Jesus really goes to Jerusalem to die as a sacrifice to God who has chosen Him as an offering for sin.

The great irony of this is found in the familiar words of the apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 2. He says, verse 8, "The wisdom," that is the wisdom of God, the wisdom of the gospel, the wisdom of the cross that he's been talking about, "The wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood." Pilate didn't understand it. Herod didn't understand it. The Jewish leaders didn't understand it. Verse 8, "for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Wow, is that a providential irony? If they had accepted Him, they wouldn't have killed Him. And if they hadn't killed Him, there would be no salvation. Are they less guilty? No. They bear eternal guilt for what they did, but the great providential irony is that if they had accepted Him, they would not have killed Him. If they had not killed Him, there would be no salvation. They killed Him out of their own will and their own hatred. And in so doing, they fulfilled the will of God. It isn't that what they did was right. It was wrong. It is that our great God overruled it for salvation. In the end it was God who put Jesus on the cross for us. Let's bow in prayer.

This is, our Father, the great, great heart and soul of the gospel that You sent Your son to be an offering for sin. The greatness of this is found in Your purpose, Your loving, compassionate, merciful, gracious purpose toward us who are so undeserving. We thank You oh God for the gift of Christ. We are grieved and heartbroken over rejection and hatred of Him. We are saddened over the hostility of the Jews, the Gentiles, the leaders, the rulers of Israel and the leaders and rulers of Rome. They're all tragic figures who, although they hated each other, could agree that hating Jesus collectively was more important.

And so it is that He continues to be rejected and hated by leaders and rulers of all kinds. How amazing it is, how ironic it is that if they had known they would not have crucified Him so that even their hatred and their ignorance You use to our salvation. How wonder if Your providence to overturn the worst that men can do and achieve the best and provide a Savior even for those who plotted His death if they would only believe. The world is full of people today who would stand with the crucifiers putting Christ to open shame, rejecting Him. Who would have no regard for Him and yet it is for them that He died. We know it's true that anyone who rejects Christ takes the side of the crucifiers.

And only those who embrace Him as Lord and Savior affirm the truth and receive salvation. Thank You for the way in which You overrule the worst to produce the best. May none of us be guilty of

standing along side the Christ haters and the Christ rejecters, but may we fall in adoring worship at the foot of the cross to embrace the Savior who in three days came out of the grave having satisfied Your justice and purchased our eternal redemption. We thank You for the gift of Your son.

Now Father, we pray that You'll send us on our way with hearts that are filled with gratitude and joy over this gift of salvation. Had it not been for Your grace to us, the wonderful work of Your Holy Spirit, we would stand with those who reject, but we stand with those who believe and we give You all the praise in our Savior's name, Amen.

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