

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

Who Crucified Jesus?

by Brian G. Najapfour

So, who really killed Jesus?

1. Was it the Romans?

Let's find out the answer in God's Word. In Matthew 27:35 we read, "And when they [that is, the Roman soldiers] had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots." From this verse we learn that the Romans crucified Jesus. In fact, crucifixion was a Roman way of punishing a criminal. In the eyes of the Romans, Jesus was a criminal. That's why they crucified him.

The Romans led Jesus to a place called Golgotha which means Place of a Skull (Matt. 27:31-33). They set up the cross and hung Jesus there. They pounded the nails through his hands and feet. They pierced his side. They were the ones who murdered the Son of God.

2. Was it the Jews?

In Acts 2 Peter delivers a sermon on the day of Pentecost, addressing the people of Israel. And Peter says to them, "Men of Israel...Hear these words...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (vv. 22-23). In other words, Peter is telling the Jews that they were responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

Indeed, it was the Jews who put Jesus to death. As Paul confirms in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15, "For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets."

3. Was it you and I?

Paul tells us that we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Thus you and I should have been the ones to be crucified on the cross, for we are the ones who sinned against God. Oh, but Jesus took our place!

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
in my place condemned he stood,
sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

Imagine, Jesus died in our place as a substitutionary sacrifice to make atonement for our sin, so that through him we might receive a complete remission of all our sins (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:18).

Nevertheless, let's not forget that it was our sin that sent Jesus to the cross. It is in this sense that we crucified Jesus. The German hymnodist Johann Heermann (1585-1647) puts it well in his hymn entitled "Ah, Dearest Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended":

*Ah, dearest Jesus, how hast Thou offended,
That man to judge Thee hath in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by Thine own rejected,
O most afflicted.*

*Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon Thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone Thee.
'Twas I, Lord, Jesus, I it was denied Thee!
I crucified Thee.*

4. Was it His Father?

Let's read Acts 2:23 again, "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite [determinate] plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." Notice that Jesus died according to the determined and foreknown plan of God. That means that His death was not an accident but was part of God's eternal decree. Jesus was not a victim in the hands of the Romans, or Jews, or in our hands. No! His death was planned by his Father from eternity past. Therefore, ultimately it was God the Father who delivered up Jesus to death, as Romans 8:32 explains, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all [or handed him over to death]."

So, who crucified Jesus? Who crushed him to death? His Father did! Listen to Prophet Isaiah, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.... Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him" (Isa. 53:4-5, 10).

One time a confused atheist said to me, "Do you really believe that it was God who killed His own Son?" "Yes" was my reply. "Why would God do that to His Son?" he added. I simply answered, "He did not spare His Son, so that He could spare me." Commenting on Romans 8:32, John Piper states so beautifully, "Just as Abraham lifted the knife over the chest of his son Isaac, but then spared his son because there was a ram in the thicket, so God the Father lifted the knife over the chest of his own Son, Jesus – but did not spare him, because he was the ram; he was the substitute. God did not spare his own Son, because it was the only way he could spare us."

Conclusion

So, who killed Jesus? The Romans did; the Jews did; you and I did; and, His Father did. Yet, while this is true, we can also say that no one really took His life, because He gave his life voluntarily. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd...and I lay down my life for the sheep...I lay down my life that I may 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 I have authority to take it up again" (John 10:14-18).

Yes, it was God the Father who ultimately brought His Son to Calvary, but His Son went there voluntarily. The Son of God willingly agreed to die on the cross for the salvation of those whom God had chosen from eternity past (Eph. 1:4-5). "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Oh, what a love! Jesus lay down his life for us, so that we might live with Him forever. My fellow believers in Christ, if you ever doubt whether Jesus loves you or not, look back to Calvary and survey the wondrous cross, and don't stop surveying it until you exclaim,

*Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*