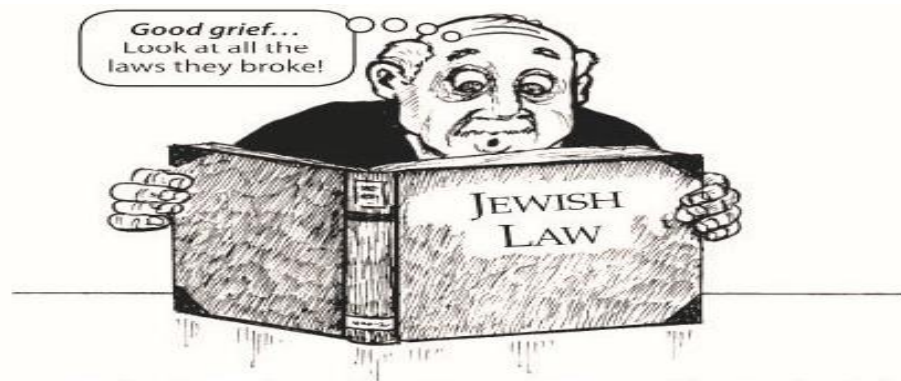


WHO KILLED JESUS – THE ROMANS OR THE JEWS?

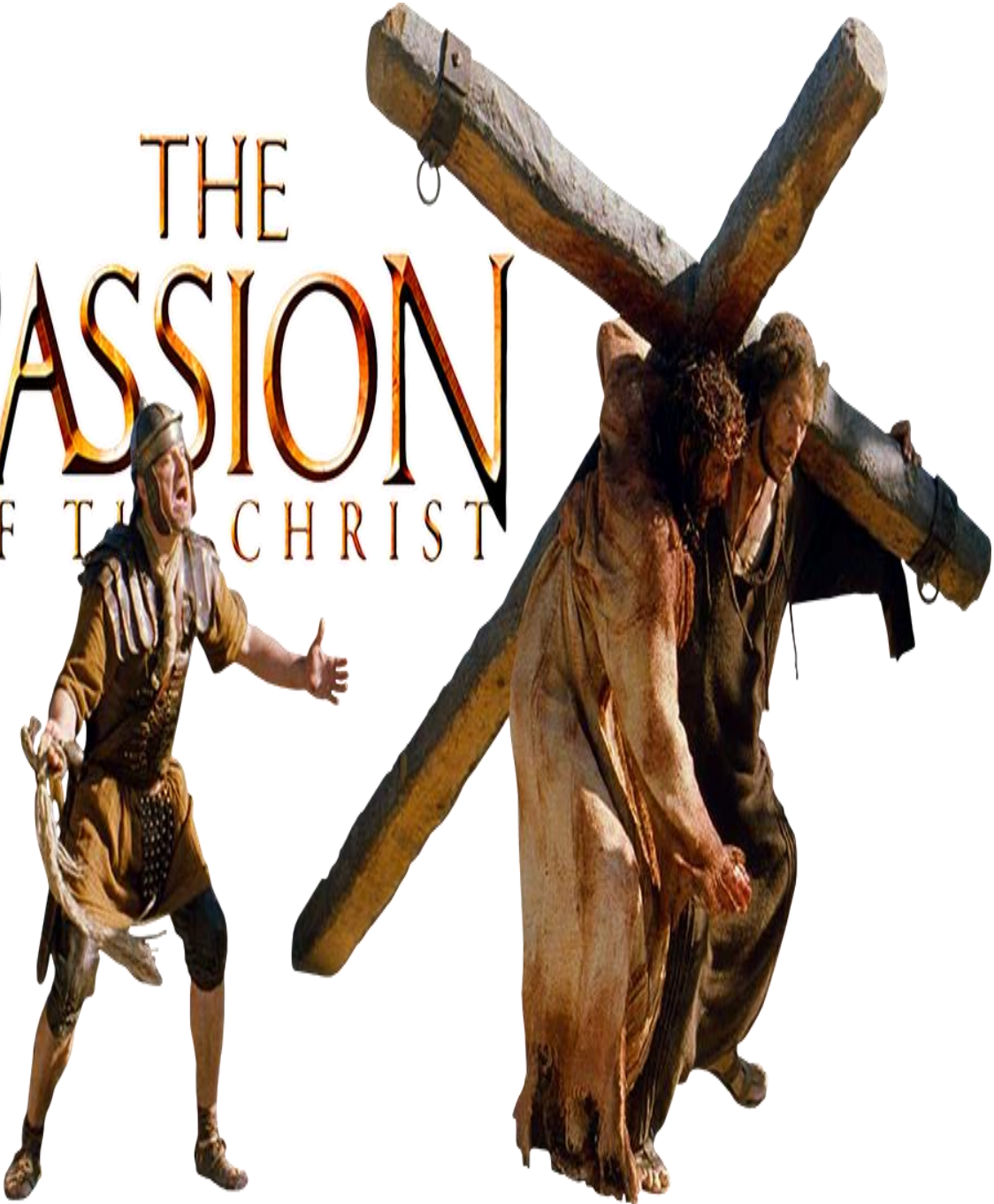
Matt. 27:25 – “His Blood Be On Us & On Our Children!”

By David Lee Burris



1. The arrest was without authority of law, and therefore illegal.
2. Annas, before whom Jesus was first taken for examination, was a mere politician without jurisdiction.
3. The Sanhedrin was unlawfully assembled because Hebrew laws prohibited such a meeting at night, or during the Feast of the Passover.
4. Jesus was first accused of blasphemy, but when He was before Pilate, the charge was changed to sedition, without notice to the Prisoner, or anyone.
5. Jesus was denied an opportunity to obtain His witnesses, who would have testified on His behalf.
6. No person could be found guilty upon his own confession of guilt alone.
7. *At least two witnesses* were required to testify in support of a charge against the accused; and their testimony had to agree as to all the material facts involved.
8. It was not lawful to conclude the trial in a single day.
9. The Roman conquerors had long before taken from the Sanhedrin its authority to sentence anyone to death.
10. A unanimous verdict of guilty rendered on the same day by the Jewish court had the effect of an acquittal.
11. The members of the Sanhedrin were *disqualified* to try Jesus because of enmity toward the accused.
12. The Sanhedrin ignored the merits of Jesus' defense.
13. Pilate, having stated four times that Jesus was not guilty of any wrong, should have released Him instead of delivering Him to the mob for crucifixion.
14. The condemnation of Christ, resulting in His death, was permitted without a lawful judgment of conviction.
15. The Sanhedrin, though learned in the law, ignored every existing Hebrew law that protected the innocent.

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST



**THE KOSHER FILES DEFEND THE
FIRST CENTURY JEWS QUOTING
HISTORIAN WILLIAM NICHOLLS:**

**“The time has come, and came long ago,
for Christians to drop all accusations
against the Jewish people in the death of
Christ. ... There can be no doubt that the
Romans bear the responsibility for Jesus’
death, which they and not the Jews
brought about.**

**If any person is to blame for Jesus’ death,
it is Pilate, so implausibly represented in
the Gospels as his defender. In scholarly
inquiry, many conclusions may remain
uncertain. This is not one of them. The
Jews are innocent of Jesus’ death.”**

Did The Jews Kill Jesus?

By Harold Fite

In the Houston Chronicle, Saturday, May 23, 1997, under the heading, “Roman Catholics Reassess Biblical Portrayal of Christ,” Julia Duin wrote of the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to absolve the Jews of responsibility in the death of Christ.

To believe that the Jews crucified Christ is to be accused by them of anti-Semitism. The Catholics are feeling the pressure, and for the past several years have been withdrawing statements from Catholic textbooks that could be construed as anti-Semitic. Judith Muffs, associate director for interfaith affairs of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith in New York, said, “The major problem is when the biblical text says ‘the Jews,’ here’s one Jew writing about two or three Jews, yet the text says ‘the Jews.’ Almost the whole cast of characters (New Testament) were Jews.”

Dr. Elias Mallon, a Catholic scholar from New York said, “The early Christians altered the Gospels to fit in with the political situation of the times.” Also, “the Gospel writers,” he said, “were presenting theology, not chronology.” He amplifies this by saying, “when you talk about the truth of Jesus, you’re not talking about a historical truth, you’re talking about a theological truth.” He continued by saying, “The words more reflect the situation of where the church lived rather than what actually happened.” He was quick to add, however, that “It’s not like (the Gospels) are false or an absolute lit, but people weren’t concerned with historical accuracy until the Enlightenment (18th century philosophical movement based on rationalism) . . . people back there didn’t write history like we do in the 20th century. They treated details differently than we do.”

It is the opinion of Dr. Mallon that “John was affected by early Christians who were having problems with the Roman authorities and were more inclined to use the Jews as a scapegoat rather than the Romans.”

Let it be understood that I do not believe the modern day Jew can be blamed anymore than I could be charged with the abuse of the American Indian, or be guilty of practicing slavery, even though I have lived in the south all of my life where slavery was practiced. “The son does not bear the iniquity of the father.” Nor do I mean to imply that every single Jew who lived in the time of Christ bore a responsibility for the murder of Jesus (not the apostles, the man born blind – John 9:38, etc.), but the death of Christ certainly involved more than “two or three.” The Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ and consented to his death.

This doesn't mean that the Jews administered the death penalty. They didn't have this authority under Roman rule (John 18:31). But they desired his death, and pressured the Roman authorities to kill him.

Note the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus which finally culminated in his death: they accused him of being seditious, a blasphemer, wine-bibber, gluttonous, of violating the sabbath, and other false charges. They were always trying to catch something out of his mouth that they could use against him. Judas received thirty pieces of silver from them to deliver him into their hands. When Pilate said to them, “take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law,” their intent is clearly seen when they responded, “it is not lawful for us to put any man to death.” **They wanted Jesus dead!**

They pressured Pilate to enact the death penalty (read John 18, 19). From hearts of hatred they shouted, “Crucify him, crucify him! Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” And they told Pilate, “If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend.” **They even allowed a murderer to be freed in order to crucify the Christ.** The Jews got their way. Jesus was crucified.

Now who killed Jesus? When Peter spoke in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), he addressed his audience as “ye men of Judea, and all that dwell in Jerusalem” (v. 14). He later referred to those assembled as “Israel,” and charged them with crucifying and slaying Christ by the hand of lawless men (vv. 23, 24). He called upon them to repent of this terrible sin (v. 38), and about three thousand did (v. 41).

Later, Peter and John stood in the porch that was called Solomon’s and directed their words to “men of Israel” and charged them with having “killed the Prince of Life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are all witnesses” (Acts 3:13-15). Peter said you killed him. We are witnesses.

Stephen charged the Jews with betraying and murdering the Christ, and also killing those who spoke of his coming (Acts 7:43-51). What was the reaction of the Jews to these charges? **They killed Stephen!**

The Word of God leaves no question as to who crucified the Christ. The Scriptures are replete with this cowardly deed. For one to reject this fact of history, he would have to reject God’s word as being fabrication. This is exactly what Mr. Mallon has done that he might curry favor with the Jews. He accuses the Gospel writers as being less than honest in their writings, “having altered the Gospels to fit in with the political situation of the time . . . reflecting the situation of where the church lived rather than what actually happened.”

I must remind Mr. Mallon that “no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

Paul said he and the apostles didn't speak “in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13).

The Gospel writers did not speak of things which originated in their own minds, but that which was given them through the Spirit. They were inspired men and they faithfully discharged their duties as ambassadors of Christ. They spoke the truth!

I have a few relatives who have conducted themselves in such a way as to have brought shame on the family name. The conduct of some Americans have been an embarrassment to the nation, but I can't say these things never happened.

The Jews killed Christ. It is a fact of history. There were witnesses; God said it. I believe it.

Guardian of Truth XXXI: 17, pp. 522-523
September 3, 1987



The Controversy Rages: Mel Gibson's "The Passion"

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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The American public has awaited eagerly the debut of Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ" ("passion" = "suffering"). And as the time of its release approaches, controversy rages in the religious community – fanned mightily by the largely left-leaning media.

Some news outlets have suggested that the actor's feature production is "troubling," perhaps even "anti-Semitic." The popular star, who financed the \$30 million enterprise, produced the movie, and co-wrote the script, denies that allegation. He even capitulated to Jewish pressure by removing a volatile subtitle that reflects the sentiments of a Hebrew mob, "His blood be upon us, and on our children" — which, incidentally, was recorded by a Hebrew, Matthew Levi (Mt. 27:25).

Since we have not seen the movie, this is not primarily a commentary on Gibson's film.

We do take strong issue with the hackneyed charge that when Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John penned the original narratives, they distorted the facts, and fashioned the Gospel records into the molds of their own theological agendas, in a defensive effort to placate pagan Rome.

This is the accusation recently made by Jon Meacham in his warped piece, "Who Killed Jesus?" (*Newsweek*, 2/16/04, pp. 45ff – [Click to read on the web](#)). Meacham, with a superficial knowledge of biblical matters, and the kind of liberal mentality that almost invariably is characteristic of the secular press, wrote:

"But the Bible can be a problematic source. Though countless believers take it as the immutable word of God, Scripture is not always a faithful record of historical events; the Bible is the product of human authors who were writing in particular times and places with particular points to make and visions to advance" (46).

And so, it is not the movie with which we are especially concerned. Apparently, it is a gripping visual. Even so, if early reviews of the film are factual, it is not accurate in some particulars. Certainly, it is not the case that Mel Gibson produced this film as the “Holy Ghost was working through” him, as he has claimed. The Spirit of God is not supernaturally working “through” people today to produce any sort of communicative message — whether by printed medium or a film representation. Nor would the Holy Spirit ever generate any teaching that was at variance with something that had issued earlier under his guidance.

In this piece, however, we simply wish to deal with some fundamental propositions that pertain to this controversy.

Historical Reality

When considering who is really “responsible” for the death of Jesus of Nazareth, it is important to look at the **facts** surrounding this controversy.

Accuracy doesn't equal anti-semitism

It is not “anti-Semitic” to accurately report the fact that a significant element of the Jewish community in the first century was a willing participant in the dramatic events that culminated in the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Centuries before the birth of Christ, Hebrew prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah and his brutal death. The participation of the Jews in this bloody spectacle was prophesied specifically.

The Psalmist spoke of a “rejected stone” (118:22), and Jesus declared that the fulfillment was effected when his Jewish kinsmen rejected him (Mt. 21:33ff; cf. Jn. 1:11). He announced that the kingdom (reign) of God thus would cease within national Israel, and that the divine regime subsequently would be bequeathed to another people — a **spiritual** nation, his church (v. 43; cf. Gal. 3:29; 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Isaiah foretold the hardening of the nation's hearts (6:9; cf. Mt. 13:27; see also Isa. 53:1; Jn. 12:37-41). Indeed, the Messianic prophet lamented: “We esteemed him not” (53:3).

Of course, not **every** first-century Hebrew was of this rebellious disposition, though a sizable portion was (cf. “in part” – Rom. 11:25). The punishment for this rejection of the King’s (God’s) Son was realized in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus himself taught this truth, and that is as clear as anything possibly could be (see Mt. 22:1-7; 23:34ff; 24:3ff; cf. Dan. 9:25-27).

Even *Newsweek* conceded that “the Jewish authorities wanted to get rid of him,” fearing that his “overexcited” followers would ignite the wrath of Rome (p. 48); again, Meacham acknowledges that the “Temple elite undoubtedly played a key role in the death of Jesus” (p. 50). Are these comments anti-Semitic?

A Jewish hero in anti-semitic writings?

If the Gospel writers were driven by an anti-Semitic disposition, they would hardly have represented the hero of the narratives as a Jew (see Mt. 1:1ff; Lk. 3:23ff; Jn. 4:22), and all of his apostles as Jews. The entire thrust of the Old Testament is that Jesus Christ was born out of the womb of Judaism. The Israelite people were especially selected for this role in human redemption (Gen. 22:17-18; 49:10; Dt. 7:6).

It is the epitome of folly to suggest that the Scriptures entertain a bias against the Jews. The book of Hosea stresses the fervent love of the Lord for his people, in spite of their progressive unfaithfulness.

Jesus, the consolation of Israel

There were many devout Jews in the first century who were “looking for the consolation of Israel” (Lk. 2:25). Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary (Mt. 1; Lk. 1), the Bethlehem shepherds (Lk. 2:15), Simeon and Anna (Lk. 2:25ff), the Lord’s early disciples (Mt. 10:1ff; Lk. 10:1), and notables such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were honest and devout Jews.

Those of Jerusalem, all Judaea, and vast numbers of Israelites in the region of the Jordan flocked to hear John the Baptizer, as he heralded Jesus, the Messiah. John immersed these devout believers in the Jordan River, and they became followers of Christ (Mt. 3:5-6; Jn. 1:29).

It is estimated that by the time of Stephen's death (Acts 7:54ff), there were about 20,000 converts to Christ in the city of Jerusalem. Estimates of the population of the city itself range from between 50,000 to 100,000. And every convert was either a Jew, or a proselyte to Judaism!

If the teaching of the early church was so "anti-Semitic," why did it have such an impact within the nation of Israel? This would constitute a strange circumstance indeed.

Christians angry at the Jews?

The charge has been made that "for nearly 2,000 years, some Christians have persecuted the Jewish people on the ground they were responsible for the death of the first-century prophet who has come to be seen as the Christ" (Meacham, p. 47).

Even Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly (who can "spin" things as well as the next guy whenever he is so disposed), made this blunder. In an essay on his web site Thursday, February 19th, O'Reilly wrote:

"For thousands of years Jews have been treated with brutality and disrespect, often by the followers of Jesus."

The allegation is entirely irresponsible. In the first place, Christians are not "angry" about the death of Jesus; they are supremely thankful for it!

But in the second place, any reasonable person ought to know that people can formally "identify" with a movement without actually embracing its principles. Many who have **claimed** an allegiance to Jesus, without being genuinely committed to his teaching, have perpetrated evil in his name. The crusades, for example, (A.D. 1095-1272), initiated under the authority of the apostate Roman Church, boasted an affiliation with Christ, but there was not even a remote practical connection.

There is not a solitary syllable in the literature of the New Testament that would sanction the Christian's abuse of any ethnic group. The teaching of Christ regarding one's enemies, and the benevolent disposition of the New Testament epistles, are too well known to need elaboration.

The letters of Paul pulsate with a love for his Hebrew brethren and a longing for their redemption (see Rom. 9:1-5).

Should modern *professing* Jews be persecuted for *supposed* ancestors actions?

No body of people is morally responsible for sins of their ancestors (Ezek. 18:20). Most assuredly one may have to suffer the consequences of an earlier generation's evil — just as we **all** languish under the consequences of Adam's transgression (Rom. 5:12). We are not charged, though, with the **actual guilt** of our ancestors' crimes (contrary to the popular dogma of "original sin" or "inherited depravity").

Modern Caucasians are not responsible for the enslavement of Africans during the darker days of American history (though some Black leaders now so claim — in their demand for reparations). Modern citizens of Germany are not accountable for the Holocaust. And **modern** Jews are not culpable for what their forefathers did to the Old Testament prophets, nor are they personally liable for the literal murder of their Messiah.

They **are** responsible, however, to the law of God for **their own** sinful conduct, and for their current rejection of the evidence that establishes Jesus as the promised Redeemer of Old Testament literature (Lk. 24:44-47; Jn. 5:46-47; 2 Cor. 3:14).

Gentiles not innocent

The New Testament makes it perfectly clear that the Gentiles were also involved in the death of Jesus Christ. Peter (a Hebrew) declared that the Jews manipulated "lawless men" (Acts 2:23) in the implementation of their heinous plan. The Greek term denotes those who live in defiance of law. The Gentile authorities executed an innocent man. In his acts of humble submission, Christ's "judgment" (of innocence) was taken away from him (see Acts 8:32-33).

The Roman officials were spineless, corrupt men, who were bankrupt of moral character. Pilate is not a figure who elicits sympathy from the New Testament authors, though Gibson is represented as portraying the Roman governor as a "sensible and sensitive" character (Meacham, p. 49). He definitely was not.

In his February 16th ABC interview with Diane Sawyer, Gibson denied the charge that he soft-peddled Pilate; he called him a “monster” — which indeed he was.

We all were “there”

There is a sense — an ultimate and tremendously crucial sense — in which **every sinful person** put Christ on the cross. Had it not been for human sin, the Savior would not have come to earth to die for “all” who have been guilty of violating divine law (Mt. 20:28; 26:28; Jn. 1:29; Rom. 3:10,21ff; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Tim. 2:4). Surely when this point is forcefully emphasized, no balanced person can accuse genuine Christians of focusing exclusively upon the Jews as those who must bear the blame for the Savior’s death. It is tragic indeed that many will view Gibson’s film and weep, not realizing that they still retain a guilt for Jesus’ death — by virtue of the fact that they have not correctly accessed his plan for forgiveness (Jn. 8:24; Mk. 16:16; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Conclusion

There are those in today’s society of spiritual confusion who take pride in generating and maintaining “hot” controversies of this nature. Their motives may be self-justification. They may be operating out of a desire to discredit Christianity — the system that has become every rebel’s “whipping boy” these days. They may simply enjoy “stirring the pot” for the smoke’s sake (as the media moguls do). Such ones are ever anxious to hitch a ride on the back of the crucified Savior whenever they smell a good story. Whatever the motives of misguided speculators, history remains what it **is**. Illusionary revisionists may seek to adjust the record, but it stubbornly remains invincible — long after they evaporate into the mist of historical oblivion.

Finally, one fact is stunningly potent. Here we are, twenty centuries removed from the event, still passionately discussing the “Passion” of the man from Nazareth. This fact, at least, separates the issue from that misguided little group that still insists that Jesus never existed. That whining mantra is totally dead.

Antisemitism & the Crucifixion of Christ: Who Murdered Jesus?

by Dave Miller, Ph.D.

Perhaps you have heard the furor surrounding Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion," scheduled for release in March 2004. The official Web site states: "Passion is a vivid depiction of the last 12 hours of Jesus Christ's life" (Passion Web site). Special emphasis is placed on the physical suffering Christ endured. Throughout the film, the language spoken is the first-century Jewish language, Aramaic, except when the Romans speak their language, i.e., Latin (Novak, 2003). Gibson, who both produced and directed the film, sank \$25 million of his own money into the venture.

The stir over the film stems from the role of the Jews in their involvement in Christ's crucifixion. In fact, outcries of "anti-Semitism" have been vociferous, especially from representatives of the Anti-Defamation League. Their contention is that Jews are depicted in the film as "bloodthirsty, sadistic, money-hungry enemies of God" who are portrayed as "the ones responsible for the decision to crucify Jesus" (as quoted in Hudson, 2003; cf. Zoll, 2003). The fear is that the film will fuel hatred and bigotry against Jews. A committee of nine Jewish and Catholic scholars unanimously found the film to project a uniformly negative picture of Jews ("ADL and Mel..."). The Vatican has avoided offering an endorsement of the film by declining to make an official statement for the time being ("Vatican Has Not..."; cf. "Mel Gibson's..."). This action is to be expected in view of the conciliatory tone manifested by Vatican II (Abbott, 1955, pp. 663-667). Even Twentieth Century Fox has decided not to participate in the distribution of the film ("20th Decides..."; cf. "Legislator Tries..."; O'Reilly...").

Separate from the controversy generated by Gibson's film, the more central issue concerns to what extent the Jewish generation of the first century contributed to, or participated in, the death of Christ. If the New Testament is the verbally inspired Word of God, then it is an accurate and reliable report of the facts, and its depiction of the details surrounding the crucifixion are normative and final. That being the case, how does the New Testament represent the role of the Jews in the death of Christ?

A great many verses allude to the role played by the Jews, especially the leadership, in the death of Jesus. For some time prior to the crucifixion, the Jewish authorities were determined to oppose Jesus. This persecution was aimed at achieving His death:

So, all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, **that they might throw Him down over the cliff** (Luke 4:28-30, emp. added).

Therefore, **the Jews sought all the more to kill Him**, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5:18-19, emp. added).

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because **the Jews sought to kill Him**... "Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek **to kill Me**?" (John 7:1-2,19, emp. added).

"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, **but you seek to kill Me**, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now **you seek to kill Me**, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this." Then **they took up stones to throw at Him**; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by (John 8:37-41,59, emp. added).

Then **the Jews took up stones again to stone Him**.... Therefore, they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand (John 10:31-32,39, emp. added).

Then, from that day on, **they plotted to put Him to death**.... Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him (John 11:53, 57, emp. added).

And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people **sought to destroy Him**, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him (Luke 19:47-48, emp. added).

And the chief priests and the scribes sought **how they might kill Him**, for they feared the people (Luke 22:2, emp. added).

Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and **plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him** (Matthew 26:3-4, emp. added).

These (and many other) verses demonstrate unquestionable participation of the Jews in bringing about the death of Jesus. One still can hear the mournful tones of Jesus Himself, in His sadness over the Jews rejecting Him: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:37-39). He was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the demise of the Jewish commonwealth at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70. Read carefully His unmistakable allusion to the reason for this holocaustic event:

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:41-44).

He clearly attributed their **national** demise to their stubborn rejection of Him as the predicted Messiah, Savior, and King.

Does the Bible, then, indicate that a large percentage, perhaps even a majority, of the Jews of first century Palestine was “collectively guilty” for the death of Jesus? The inspired evidence suggests so. Listen carefully to the apostle Paul’s assessment, keeping in mind that he, himself, was a Jew—in fact, “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5; cf. Acts 22:3; Romans 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22). Speaking to Thessalonian Christians, he wrote:

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from **the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus** and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, emp. added).

This same apostle Paul met with constant resistance from fellow Jews. After he spoke at the Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, a crowd of people that consisted of nearly the whole city gathered to hear him expound the Word of God. Notice the reaction of the Jews in the crowd:

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles...” But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region (Acts 13:45-46,50-51).

Paul met with the same resistance from the general Jewish public that Jesus encountered—so much so that he wrote to Gentiles concerning Jews: “Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake” (Romans 11:28). He meant that the majority of the Jews had rejected Christ and Christianity. Only a “remnant” (Romans 11:5), i.e., a small minority, embraced Christ.

What role did the Romans play in the death of Christ? It certainly is true that Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross. First-century Palestine was under the jurisdiction of Rome. Though Rome permitted the Jews to retain a king in Judea (Herod), the Jews were subject to Roman law in legal matters. In order to achieve the execution of Jesus, the Jews had to appeal to the Roman authorities for permission (John 18:31). **A simple reading of the verses that pertain to Jewish attempts to acquire this permission for the execution are clear in their depiction of Roman reluctance in the matter. Pilate, the governing procurator in Jerusalem, sought literally to quell and diffuse the Jewish efforts to kill Jesus.** He called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and stated plainly to them:

“You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him” (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, “Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas”—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Then he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.” But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So, Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will (Luke 23:14-25).

It is difficult to conceptualize the level of hostility possessed by the Jewish hierarchy, and even by a segment of the Jewish population, toward a man who had done nothing worthy of such hatred. It is incredible to think that they would clamor for the release of a known murderer and insurrectionist, rather than allow the release of Jesus. Yes, the Roman authority was complicit in the death of Jesus. But **Pilate would have had no interest in pursuing the matter if the Jewish leaders and crowd had not pressed for it. In fact, he went to great lengths to perform a symbolic ceremony in order to communicate the fact he was not responsible for Jesus’ death. He announced to the multitude: “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it” (Matthew 27:24).** Technically, the Romans cannot rightly be said to be ultimately responsible. If the Jews had not pressed the matter, Pilate never would have conceded to having Him executed. The apostle Peter made this point very clear by placing the blame for the crucifixion of Jesus squarely on the shoulders of Jerusalem Jews:

Men of Israel...the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, **when he was determined to let Him go**. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and **killed the Prince of life**, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses (Acts 3:12-16, emp. added).

Notice that even though the Romans administered the actual crucifixion, Peter pointedly stated to his Jewish audience, not only that Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but that the Jews (“you”)—not the Romans—“killed the Prince of life.”

Does God lay the blame for the death of Christ on the Jews **as an ethnic group**? Of course not. In fact, the New Testament teaches that ethnicity should have nothing to do with the practice of the Christian religion—which includes how we see ourselves, as well as how we treat others. Listen carefully to Paul’s declarations on the subject: “There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed” (Galatians 3:28-29, emp. added). Jesus obliterates the ethnic distinction between Jew and non-Jew:

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity (Ephesians 2:14-17).

In the higher sense, neither the Jews nor the Romans crucified Jesus. Oh, they were all complicit, including Judas Iscariot. But so were we. Every accountable human being who has ever lived or ever will live has committed sin that necessitated the death of Christ—if atonement was to be made so that sin could be forgiven. Since Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), every sinner is responsible for His death. But that being said, the Bible is equally clear that in reality, Jesus laid down His own life for humanity: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.... Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes 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 10:11,17-18; cf. Galatians 1:4; 2:20; Ephesians 5:2; 1 John 3:16). Of course, the fact that Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself on the behalf of humanity does not alter the fact that it still required human beings, in this case first-century Jews, exercising their own free will to kill Him. A good summary passage on this matter is Acts 4:27-28—“for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy council foreordained to come to pass.”

CONCLUSION

Anti-Semitism is sinful and unchristian. Those who crucified Jesus are to be pitied. Even Jesus said concerning them: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). But we need not deny or rewrite history in the process. We are now living in a post-Christian culture. If Gibson would have produced a movie depicting Jesus as a homosexual, the liberal, "politically correct," anti-Christian forces would have been the first to defend the undertaking under the guise of "artistic license," "free speech," and "creativity." But dare to venture into spiritual reality by showing the historicity of sinful man mistreating the Son of God, and the champions of moral degradation and hedonism raise angry, bitter voices of protest. The irony of the ages is—He died even for them.

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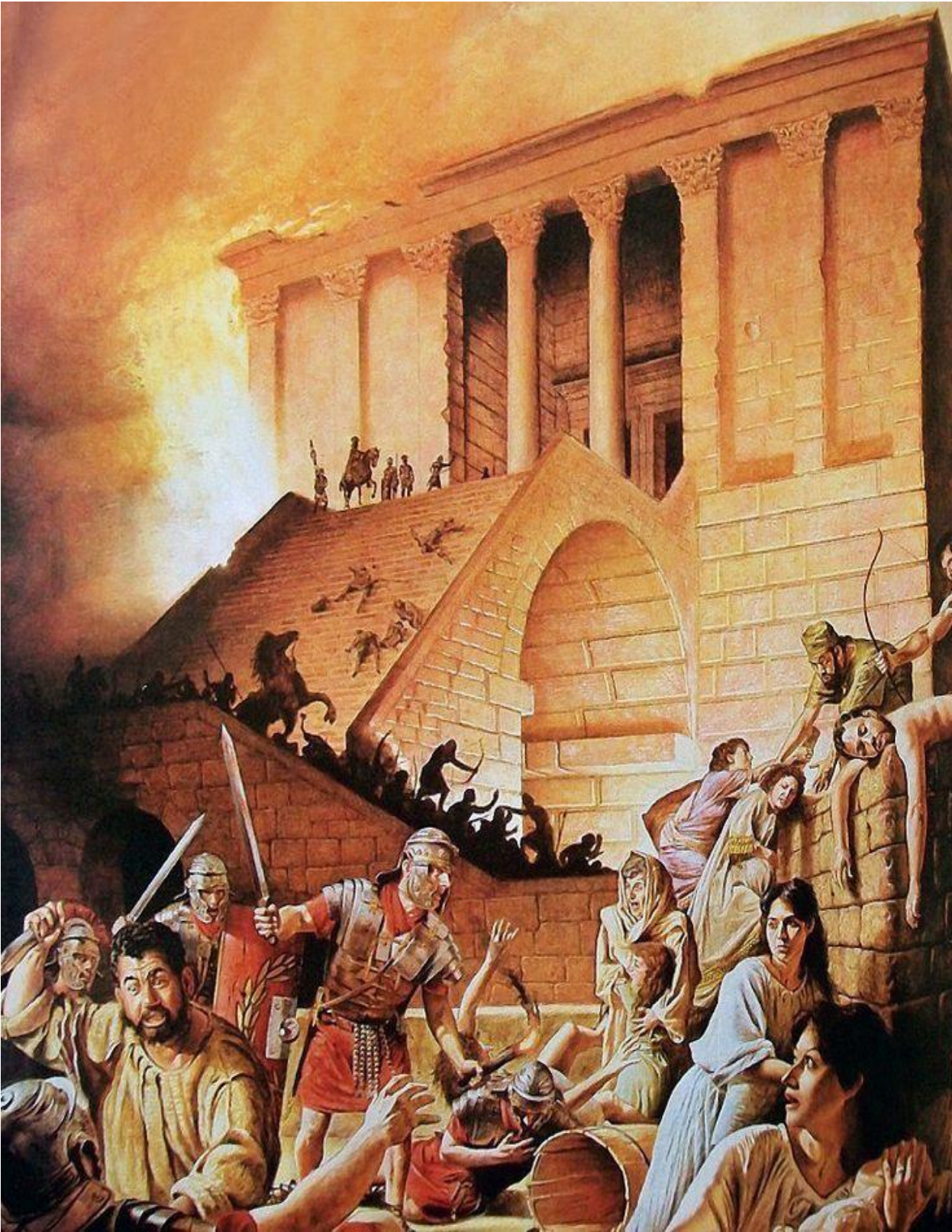
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THERE IS A DIRECT LINKAGE BETWEEN MATTHEW 24 & 27





Barnes' Notes on the Bible

His blood be on us ... - That is, let the guilt of putting him to death, if there be any, be on us and our children. We will be answerable for it, and will consent to bear the punishment for it. It is remarked by writers that, among the Athenians, if anyone accused another of a capital crime, he devoted himself and children to the same punishment if the accused was afterward found innocent. So, in all countries the conduct of the parent involves the children in the consequences of his conduct. The Jews had no right to call down this vengeance on their children, but, in the righteous judgment of God, it has come upon them. In less than forty years their city and temple were overthrown and destroyed. More than a million of people perished in the siege. Thousands died by famine; thousands by disease; thousands by the sword; and their blood ran down the streets like water, so that, Josephus says, it extinguished things that were burning in the city. Thousands were crucified suffering the same punishment that they had inflicted on the Messiah. So great was the number of those who were crucified, that, Josephus says, they were obliged to cease from it, "room being wanted for the crosses, and crosses for the men." See the notes at [Matthew 24](#). To this day, also, the curse has remained. They have been a nation scattered and peeled; persecuted almost everywhere, and a hissing and a byword among people. No single nation, probably, has suffered so much; and yet they have been preserved. All classes of people, all the governments of the earth, have conspired to overwhelm them with calamity, and yet they still live as monuments of the justice of God, and as proofs, going down from age to age, that the Christian religion is true - standing demonstrations of the crime of their fathers in putting the Messiah to death, and in calling down vengeance on their heads.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Then answered all the people,.... They were as unanimous in their imprecations upon themselves, as in desiring the crucifixion of Christ:

and said, his blood be on us, and on our children; not for the cleansing of them from sin, which virtue that blood has, but if there were any stain, blot, or pollution, through the shedding of it, they wished it might be on them and theirs: not for the forgiveness of sins, which that blood was shed for; but on the contrary, if there was any sin and guilt in it, they desired it might be imputed to them: nor for their justification before God, and security from wrath to come, both which are by his blood; but all the reverse of this, that if there were any punishment, and condemnation, and death, due for the shedding of it, they imprecated it all upon themselves, and their posterity: so this phrase is used in [Joshua 2:19](#), and in other places, and in the Talmud (s): and **it is a notion of the Jews, that the guilt of innocent blood, and the blood of that innocent man's children, lie not only upon the persons immediately concerned, but upon their children to the end of the world: and so the judges used to address the witnesses upon a trial, after this manner (t);**

"know ye, that **capital causes**, are not as pecuniary ones: in pecuniary causes, a man gives his money, and it atones for him; but in capital causes, , **"his blood, and the blood of his seed, hang upon him", to the end of the whole world:** for lo! of Cain it is said, "the voice of the blood of thy brother cryeth", &c. his blood, and the blood of his seed."

And this imprecation of theirs, has been notoriously verified in them; for though this blood was shed for many of them, and Christ prayed for the forgiveness of them, and they had the Gospel, and the doctrine of remission of sins first preached among them, which was made the power of God unto salvation to some of them, even of those who were concerned in the crucifixion of Christ; yet, **on the generality of them, his blood was in the sense they wished it; and for the shedding of it, wrath came upon them to the uttermost, in the entire destruction of their nation, city, and temple, and very remarkable it is, that great numbers of them were put to death by crucifixion; and very likely some of those very persons, that were so clamorous for the crucifying of Christ; and if not, at least their children;** five hundred of the Jews and more, were sometimes crucified in a day, whilst Titus was besieging the city; till at length there wanted "room for crosses", "and crosses for bodies", as Josephus (u) says, who was an eyewitness of it: and to this day, this dreadful wish of the blood of Christ upon them, is to be seen in their miserable, abject, and captive state; and will be, until such time that they look to him whom they have pierced, and mourn.

(s) T. Bab. Pesachim, fol. 110. 1. Yoma, fol. 2l. 1. & Avoda Zara, fol. 12. 2.((t) Maimon. Hilch. Sanhedrin, c. 12. sect. 3.((u) De Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 12.

What About the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24:21?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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“If Matthew 24:5-33 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as some contend, how does one explain verse 21 — that this was the worst calamity in history?”

Many scholars have argued the case that the earlier portion of Matthew 24 has to do with the impending fall of Jerusalem (accomplished in A.D. 70 when invaded by the Romans), and **not** with events associated with the Second Coming of Christ as commonly alleged by dispensationalists. However, some suggest that verse 21 of this chapter is a formidable argument **against** this position.

In this text the Savior said: ". . . for then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be."

It is contended that other nations have suffered far greater casualties in times of war. Thus, it is supposed that the prophecy must pertain to the future, and not the destruction of Jerusalem.

We do not believe this objection is valid.

In viewing the destruction of A.D. 70, several factors must be taken into consideration — the guilt of the nation, the intensity of the suffering, the degradation of the victims, and the lingering consequences of this divine judgment. And make no mistake about it; this invasion was a punishment from the Almighty (cf. Mt. 22:7).

Consider the following factors:

The Accountability of the First-Century Jews

No body of people has ever been more culpable of crimes against God than the Jews of the first century. The Jews had the advantages of twenty centuries of divine cultivation in preparation for the coming of the “seed” of Abraham, through whom the world was to be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). **Yet they rejected their own Messiah, and pled: “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25). That petition was granted!**

Their ancestors had seen the mighty works of God on numerous occasions, and the record of those events had been carefully preserved in sacred writings across the centuries. Yet these Hebrews stiffened their necks & for the most part, resisted God at every turn in the redemptive road. Not only so, but they actively persecuted the messengers sent by the Lord to lovingly turn them to repentance. Christ pointedly addressed this very matter.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you witness to yourselves, that you are sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how shall you escape the judgment of hell? Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall you kill and crucify; and some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom you killed between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Mt. 23:29-36).

The judgment of A.D. 70 was, therefore, cumulative in its effect. Should it be argued such a punishment represented an injustice on the part of God, it must be noted that the Lord provided ample warnings of the impending tragedy. Those who heeded his words escaped the city in advance of the horror. So far as the historical record indicates, none of those who obeyed Christ’s instructions perished. The historian Eusebius recorded that the early Christians fled Jerusalem and found refuge at Pella beyond the Jordan river (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.5).

Unparalleled Carnage

The carnage of the siege, which lasted five months, was horrible beyond belief. Thousands died of starvation. When the Romans finally broke into the city, the sight of so many corpses shocked even hardened soldiers. The slaughter of the city's citizens was so terrible fires were extinguished by the profusion of blood (Josephus, *Wars* 6.8.5).

Josephus records that 1,100,000 Jews were killed in Jerusalem, and that some 97,000 others were taken as slaves into captivity. It has been estimated that 1,337,490 Jews in Jerusalem (and in the regions adjacent to Judaea) died — by famine, by the sword, by burning, and by crucifixion (*Wars* 6.9.3-4).

Some scholars believe that even these figures are too conservative. In fact, Josephus himself expressed the view that the suffering of this holocaust exceeded anything known to man previously (*Wars*, Preface, 4; 9.4).

It is worthy of notation that it is at least possible that Jesus' comments of verse 21 might have been restricted to the **Jews'** suffering, and not mankind as a whole, though the facts of history do not force one to that conclusion.

Continuing Oppression

It must be observed also that Jerusalem's punishment did not end when the city was taken in the summer of A.D. 70.

Christ specifically said that “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:24). A good case can be made for the view that the “times of the Gentiles” embraces the whole of that era from Jerusalem’s destruction until history concludes with the return of Christ (see R.C.H. Lenski, *St. Luke’s Gospel*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1946, pp. 1021-1022).

For many years following the events of A.D. 70, no Jew was permitted into the once-sacred city. Only once a year could they assemble on nearby hills overlooking the Jerusalem and mourn their loss.

In A.D. 132, after some Jewish re-infiltration of the city, there was another revolt and the Romans again invaded and demolished the city. The Roman emperor Hadrian, who reigned from A.D. 117-138, then paganized Jerusalem considerably. In the time of Emperor Constantine a so-called “Christian” influence prevailed in Jerusalem, but that came to an end when the Muslim movement took the city in A.D. 637 (see Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956, pp. 528-529).

There is, thus, sufficient evidence to reasonably argue the case that Matthew 24:21 was literally fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem, and with the aftermath of that crushing episode.

The Request of Matthew 27:25 Also Being Granted!

“O’ Jerusalem, Jerusalem!”



