

**Palisades Community Bible Church**

**Online Bible Study**

## **Jesus Was Accused of Inciting a Civil War**

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What were the actual charges against Jesus? Why did the Jewish rulers go to the Romans for help in putting Jesus to death? What was it, really, that put Jesus on the cross?

The Roman government in Jesus' day cared little for the "religious issues" of the Jews. As long as they were peaceful, and paid their taxes, the Jews were tolerated. It was pretty much like today's Christians in the corporate workplace. Your religion is fine and dandy; keep it to yourself. Meanwhile, your employer supports and funds most everything that appalls true Christians. You'll be tolerated as long as you don't make waves.

The Roman governors had a zero-tolerance policy when it came to challenges to their authority. That is why the cross was such a horrific and public form of execution. This is what the Jewish leaders banked on when it came time to rid themselves of God's own Son.

Jesus came to fulfill all of God's Messianic prophecies. He healed, performed miracles and taught the multitudes for one reason: To demonstrate that he is the one, true, son of God. He was NOT there to overthrow the Roman government and "set the Jews free." If there was to be an arrival of a Messiah, the Jewish leaders were looking for another "judge," not salvation from their own sin. The fact that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies seemed to be of little concern to the Pharisees.

The Pharisees and Jewish leaders of the day knew, and cared, too little of their own scriptures to evaluate Jesus' fitness as Messiah. Rather than turning to God's Word, which they had been tasked with maintaining, following and teaching, they were blinded by the quest to protect their own political power. Instead of seeking truth, they turned to the sins of their fathers; persecution of those sent by God. Instead of concerning themselves with God's plan for mankind, they obsessed about their own social status and political power. The Apostle Stephen explained it well to the Sanhedrin....and suffered for it:

**Acts 7: 51 "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."**

The Sanhedrin was a council of Jewish leaders who judged civil cases among, and between, Jews. So long as the Jews took care of their own affairs, and did not disturb Roman affairs, the Roman leadership was content to allow them their own internal government...even to the point of carrying out execution. Think of the Sanhedrin as a 'supreme court' in the Jewish community. Jesus was accused before the Sanhedrin of inciting a civil uprising. He was also charged with Blasphemy (contempt/disrespect for God). Had the Sanhedrin convicted Jesus under their OWN law, he would have been put to death in the manner prescribed by Jewish law; stoning. However:

**Mark 11:18 "they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.**

I wonder what this 'amazement' was like. Could "the whole crowd" in Mark 11:18 have been experiencing, not only amazement, but revelation? Could the leaders have felt threatened because they HAD NOT been teaching the Word of God, and Jesus WAS teaching it? Could the Pharisees have, themselves, come to a revelation that they had been leading their flock in exactly the same manner as the Romans ruled; through force, intimidation, coercion, and fear?

Though the Jewish leaders conspired to murder Jesus, they could not do it under their own law, or by their own means, lest their people rise up against them. So many of the Jewish population had come to know the truth that putting Jesus to death under Jewish law would have revealed their hypocrisy and weakened their authority. So, they had to do it another way:

**Matthew 26: 3 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. 5 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."**

Let's focus on the word "fear" in the Mark 11: 18 passage above. What was it that the Jews in power feared? As we've been learning, all **cults** require an element of ignorance in order for the cult leader to maintain his role. If followers of Muhammed learn the truth about BOTH Muhammed and Jesus, they turn to Christ. If the Buddhist learns the truth of Buddhism and Christianity, he turns to Christ. ETC. So, it was critical for the Chief Priests, Scribes, Pharisees, etc., to preserve the ignorance of the rest of the people. They did not want to know the truth, themselves, and they certainly did not want their followers to know it.

It's very easy to mislead the average person. Laziness, apathy, and stupidity all contribute to the success of a cult leader, and even a tyrant:

**“If you think of yourselves as helpless and ineffectual, it is certain that you will create a despotic government to be your master. The wise despot, therefore, maintains among his subjects a popular sense that they are helpless and ineffectual.”** Frank Herbert

**“Timid men prefer the calm of despotism to the tempestuous seas of liberty.”** Thomas Jefferson

The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were clinging to their position of being "God's appointed" leaders. Yet, they had long since strayed far from God. Do you think the pedestrian Jew in that day was realizing this? What did the very Son of God say about these leaders?

**Matthew 23: 13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation. 15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**

While Jesus was teaching the grace and mercy of God to the public, he was teaching the judgement of God to the Pharisees! Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking what it would take for him to enter heaven...

**Matthew 19:2 1 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in**

**heaven; and come, follow Me.” 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.**

What was this telling all the other rulers within earshot? Pharisees hearing of this, and knowing good from evil, chose evil. As with the wealthy young ruler, they walked away from Jesus.

Yes, they walked away from the Son of God and appealed to the pagan authorities who had no respect for God in the least. They lied and coerced Pilate into sentencing Jesus to crucifixion for plotting to challenge the Roman government. The Jewish rulers accused Jesus of masquerading as “King of the Jews” and organizing a coup against the Romans.

However, Pilate found Jesus to have “no fault” and was disgusted by the Jews’ behavior:

**Matthew 27:23 “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!” 24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”**

LOOK! There was a crowd that the Jewish leaders had incited (maybe paid?) to demand crucifixion. When Pilate asked “what crime has he committed?” even the crowd DID NOT KNOW!! All they knew was to shout “Crucify Him!” when prompted. Further, notice how Pilate relented when he saw that “an uproar was starting.” Is this kind of behavior being played out, today, before our eyes?

You have probably seen enough crime, cop and lawyer shows that you can readily understand how a judge might be forced by a legal maneuver to pass a sentence on a person who does not deserve it. And, many a public official ‘ducks and covers’ when the public starts to

get excited. Pilate may have been backed into just such a position. Is it any wonder why the Jews, so often in their history, became entwined with pagan rulers, and then wound up in slavery?

We don't find out what Pilate did in the following months. I have to wonder, though, if it bothered him to have been manipulated into putting a man to death that he knew was innocent. Did Pilate have a conscience? I wonder if his wife ever brought it up. Remember what she said to him prior to his relenting to the pressure of the Jews?

**Matthew 27: 19 While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."**

I hope the theme I continually try to bring out in these studies does not escape you. The events of thousands of years ago are just as current as today's news. There have always been those whose lust for power eclipses all forms of wisdom. And, once in power, they embarrass and mortify the entire human race with their hypocrisy, inhumanity and immorality. We can talk about history in the Church, but we cannot talk about current events, lest some criticize us for playing "politics." However, those who are not deceived know the truth and we must, therefore, walk in the light.

**Lord, Jesus. You gave your all for our sake. May we never faint in your command to spread the Gospel.**

**Amen**