

# Crying Wolf

by Art Katz

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*The sermon explores the issue of anti-Semitism and the importance of considering the truth about Jesus, highlighting the consequences of maintaining error in our understanding of salvation.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:25, John 8:32, Romans 11:1

**Topics:** "Atonement and Salvation", "Judaism and Christianity"

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## Description

Art Katz addresses the complex relationship between Judaism and Christianity, particularly in light of Mel Gibson's film 'The Passion.' He emphasizes the need for honest dialogue about the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus and the implications it has for Jewish belief. Katz argues that the conflict lies not in the film itself but in the deeper theological issues surrounding atonement and the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. He challenges believers to consider the consequences of their faith and the historical context of anti-Semitism, urging a thoughtful engagement with the truth that could lead to freedom. Ultimately, Katz calls for a reconciliation of faith that acknowledges the Jewish roots of Christianity while addressing the painful legacy of misunderstanding.

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## Transcript

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Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, is quoted by Eric J. Greenberg in a September 19, 2003 article of the Jewish Week as citing Mel Gibson, producer of the film The Passion, as "spouting classic anti-Semitism." My personal fear is that a too frequent reiteration of that cry will ironically serve to provoke the feared phenomenon itself. What astonishes me is that the real issue is not identified. The problem is not the film per se, but the New Testament source from which it is reputed to be fastidiously drawn.

If that account of the trial, suffering and death of Jesus is essentially correct, then there is an issue here of an ultimate kind that presses for consideration, which will continue to haunt us until we have decisively cast it from us or made our peace with Him of whom it speaks. Papal absolution of a Vatican II does not absolve. Nor does 'modern New Testament scholarship' dissolve the issue, however desirous the

ecumenical 'peacemakers' are. That the earliest Christians themselves were Jews and that numbers of Jews in every generation continue to believe in and witness to the efficacy of their belief, brings into question the oft-cited assumption that believing in Jesus is "un-Jewish" and that the definitive Jewish response is the rejection of His Messiahship and Lordship.

Rather what is at issue here is a conflict of alternative 'Yom Kippors': the traditional, a Day of Atonement predicated upon fasting, synagogue attendance, 'Teshuvah' (repentance) and 'Mitzvoth' (good deeds); the other, the sacrificial shed blood of a sinless Lamb of God sent of the Father for the propitiation of our sins. Those who hold to this latter view would defend it as being biblically and Levitically based, considering the former a rabbinical innovation forced upon Jewry with the destruction of the Second Temple, the dispersal of the Priesthood and the end of prescribed sacrifice.

Are we not under some obligation to explain the basis by which we reject the view by which millions purport to have received their salvation without discrediting their faith? Are we not to show them of the error of their assumption? On the other hand, if we be in error, the consequence of maintaining that error has been tragic beyond all calculation and needs desperately to be acknowledged and rectified. The issue retains its stubborn facticity and will simply not go away. Nor indeed should it.

Indeed, Gibson's film might even be considered a mercy given of God to put before our Jewish consideration what we have categorically shunned to read. Now the text comes in a graphic form that will either grip or repulse us. But see and consider it we must. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" Jesus is quoted as saying. What, then, the consequence of an unwillingness to even consider the purported truth, but the bondage from which it might have freed [saved] us?

Perhaps not the least of it is that to which we have been put by the blithe dismissal of our fathers. "Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). Only the Lord knows to what degree the tragic, cruel, deadly, continuing phenomenon of anti-Semitism is itself a result of that statement.

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