

Who Put Jesus Christ to Death

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon explores the reasons behind Jesus' death, highlighting the roles of the religious leaders, Pilate, and the crowd, and emphasizing the importance of standing for Christ and making our own decisions about Him.

Duration: 34:46

Scripture: Matthew 5:14, Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 27:22, Luke 17:11-19, John 11:43-44, John 19:15, John 21:25

Topics: "Easter"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the strange case of a person who has known and experienced the Lord but is now doubting everything. The speaker highlights the pressure and influence of books and the university campus that can lead to doubts and manipulation. The sermon emphasizes the importance of fitting in with Jesus rather than trying to fit in with others. The speaker also explores the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion, questioning why the crowd and those who had witnessed Jesus' miracles did not come to his defense. The sermon encourages listeners to seek God's illumination and revelation in their lives.

Transcript

In the 20th century, the last century, probably one of the saddest days in American history was the day that President Kennedy was assassinated. If you were alive then, probably remember what you were doing when you heard they've shot the president. To this day, there is controversy on who caused the death of President John F. Kennedy.

Obviously, Lee Harvey Oswald was convicted of it and then shot to death on TV live by Jack Ruby right while he was being handled in Dallas by law enforcement authorities. But the debate rages on. Who caused the death of President Kennedy? Some people believe, and the official verdict was that Lee Harvey Oswald acted on his own, that he was some kind of madman, an anti-American, and hated the president.

Others believe he couldn't have done it by himself and there was another shooter involved, somebody in the grassy knoll there in Dallas where the motorcade passed by, which had the president and his wife, Jacqueline, sitting in the back seat. Others believe it's more nefarious than that and that the Russian government, the KGB, had plotted it, Oswald had been over there in Russia, and that he was an operative trained by the KGB and he carried it out on their orders. They were really behind it.

Others believe that Cuba had something to do with it because they were still upset that President Kennedy had ordered the Bay of Pigs invasion, which turns out to be a debacle for the United States. And then there's other wilder theories that someone American, someone connected to the government, ordered the murder of our own president. I'd like to ask you a question today and we'll have a vote at the end.

Who was responsible for the murder and for the death of Jesus Christ? Don't jump to a conclusion yet. Who was responsible for Jesus dying? We're gonna read a portion of it. We know that at this Easter season, we are remembering Friday, his death, and today, the third day, his resurrection.

We'll cover both, but I wanna bring it before you today. Who was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ? And what fiendish sins, what demonic powers came into play to kill the most perfect human being that ever walked on planet Earth? Think about that. What kind of mentality could have incited you to not just reject Jesus, but to murder Jesus? God in the flesh was on the Earth, and yet it behooved humanity to try to plot doing away with him.

You might be surprised as we find out some of the possibilities and the ordinary nature of the kind of thinking that actually put Christ to death. So let's look up and read the story, shall we? Let's look up and read Mark 15, verse one. Very early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, the teachers of the law, and the whole Sanhedrin, that was the religious ruling body of the Judaism, they reached a decision.

They bound Jesus, they led him away, and handed him over to Pilate, that was the Roman governor. Are you the king of the Jews, asked Pilate? Yes, it is as you say, Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things.

So again, Pilate asked him, aren't you gonna answer? See how many things they are accusing you of. But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. Now it was the custom at the feast of Passover, and then unleavened bread that followed Passover, to release a prisoner whom the people requested.

A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising, and the crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews, asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

What shall I do then with the one you call the king of the Jews, Pilate asked them. Crucify him, they shouted. Why, what crime has he committed, asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, crucify him. And wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

And then, thank God, that wasn't the end. For on the third day, he rose from the dead. Hannah, how many are happy for Resurrection Sunday? Let's put our hands together.

I love to ponder this thought. It keeps coming back to me every year. Because as we analyze the possibility, it tells us a lot about humanity, and in the end, about God.

Obviously, the first possible culprit is the combination that we see over and over again. If you read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as I've been reading this week, the end portion of it, how Jesus ended up on the cross, you find out these words over and over again. The chief priests, the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin.

The religious leaders of that day were the ones who plotted the death of Jesus Christ. You know, even though Judas betrayed him, Judas had very little to do with it. He never concocted the idea that Jesus should be crucified.

He just fulfilled scripture by having been a person close to Christ who betrayed him. But it was the religious leaders, it was the Sanhedrin, who plotted the murder of the Messiah. Let's just think about that for a second.

You could actually say this sentence, religion killed Jesus. Lifeless, self-righteous, traditional religion was the place, the birthplace, of the plan to do away with the Son of God. The very ones who were quoting the Bible the most and who knew scripture the best, they were the ones who concocted the idea, we've got to get rid of him.

That goes to show us that you can be in church, but be far from God. It goes to show that you can be quoting verses and not have a clue of who God really is. You can be an expert in scripture and have the Son of God three feet in front of you and not know it's the Messiah that you claim you've been waiting for.

Of all the deceptions, of all the blindness that can come on someone, the worst blindness is religious blindness. When you're blind to the realities of God and who he is, but you're blind in the context of going to church every single Sunday. This is an amazing fact.

They were quoting the Bible as they rejected the one who the Bible said was to come and be the savior of the world. That puts a warning in all of us, doesn't it? It's not getting your body in church that it's important, is it? It's getting your heart yielded to God and filled with the Holy Spirit. You can be here today, I can be a minister and drift so far away from God that it's incredible.

Now, Pilate was a shrewd guy and mixed in with this plan of why they plotted the murder of Jesus, the religious establishment. Did you notice it again? I think I've mentioned this. I try to mention this regularly because it jumps out to me.

Pilate, when he saw Christ, he realized it was because of jealousy that the religious leaders had plotted his demise. So if you want to understand the sins that caused the murder of Jesus Christ, you got to realize it was religious blindness, hard-hearted church people, hard-hearted Bible professors, hard-hearted traditionalists, self-righteous, judge everybody, look down at the people, and yet they're the leaders of religion. They plotted the demise of Christ.

But notice what provoked them. They were jealous. Jealousy, in a way, was one of the initiating sins that put Jesus on the cross.

And it's so easy for us to be jealous, isn't it? All of us. God blesses somebody, the crowds are being drawn to Jesus, Jesus is performing these miracles, and the religious leaders of that day look and say, we got to get rid of this guy, we got to get rid of this guy, this guy's got to go. May God keep us all from jealousy.

How many say amen? When God blesses someone, help us to praise God and be happy for them. Can we put our hands together and say amen? And this shows that jealousy can exist right with religion, you know? It's hard to get drunk and be a religious leader, it's hard to do drugs from the platform, but you can be jealous right in the front row of the church today. You could sing in the choir, you could be a deacon, you could be a minister and jealous of another minister.

Jealous of another church. Jealousy is a horrible thing because we know now it's the first prime mover that led Jesus to the cross of Calvary. So the first possibility of who did away with Jesus Christ is religion, religious leaders, traditional religion, religion devoid of heart contact with God.

Brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, let's ask God today, God save us from religion. We don't want religion, we want Jesus. We wanna know God, we wanna have tender hearts.

Come on, can we say amen to that? Save us from just going through the motions because you can go through the motions and be so, so, so far from God. The blindness of religion just staggers the imagination. But it was not just them because they had a problem and this is why the focus moves to another person.

The religious leaders of Judaism were not allowed under the Roman occupation to put anyone to death. They could decide religious questions but the Roman Empire said, nobody performs capital punishment except for us. We do the crucifixions.

Nobody has the right to do that. We're the final tribunal of who lives and who dies and that's why they brought Jesus to Pilate. You don't think they just wanted to talk to Pilate, they needed Pilate.

They needed Pilate to give a thumbs up and say crucify him. So that's why they hauled Jesus over to Pilate. And the Bible tells us an interesting thing about Pilate because Pilate was the one who finally said, crucify him.

He didn't concoct the plot but he was the one who gave the final word, wasn't he? And the Bible says that when Jesus was brought to him, he knew something was up. He knew that they were jealous of him and when he examined him and asked him questions, he knew this man hasn't done anything. He knew it.

He talked to him, he examined him. He kept looking for a way to get out. On top of that, his lovely wife, Mrs. Pilate, came to him and said, don't have anything to do with this guy.

Have nothing to do with this man. I've suffered a lot of things last night in a dream and tossed and turned having to do with this man. Don't go near this.

This is not something you should do. And he was looking for a way to get out. Ah, then why did he give the order in the end? Because he compromised.

That's what put Jesus on the cross. Not just dead religion, not just self-righteous legalism. No, compromise.

Not standing for what you know is right because the crowd is against you. That's what put Jesus on the cross. I think I might want to vote for that one in the end.

Pilate could have said, get out of here, all of you religious leaders. This guy's going free. He hasn't done a thing.

Ah, but then he started to think the crowd was roaring. This guy says he's a king and we have no king but Caesar. And then he realized there might be a commotion and he didn't want to be connected to a commotion.

So when he had the choice of looking good and throwing Jesus under the bus, guess what he did? He threw Jesus under the bus. And we're capable of doing that every day, aren't we? We stand for Christ, we get a little opposition, peer pressure from your family, people on the job. You're not really a Christian, are you? And they start telling something that we shouldn't be listening to.

And they invite us to a party we shouldn't be going to. Bad company corrupts morals. You know, there are certain places Christians shouldn't be.

Do I get a witness here? I mean, because there's no good that can be done there. It's not a proper atmosphere to even be witnessing. You know, you hear a lot of people say, oh no, I'm gonna hang out there because I want to be salt and light.

And instead of converting anyone, they get converted themselves. So Pilate, when he had a chance to stand for Christ, who he knew, he knew he was innocent. He knew that Jesus was innocent.

But when push came to shove, he was guilty of compromise. And he tried to get out of it, didn't he? How many know what he did at the very end when he ordered Christ to be crucified? He washed his hands. Ah, but it's not so easy, is it? He washed his hands as if to say, hey, I got nothing to do with this.

Oh yes, you do. You know, in the end, it's that song I heard when I was a kid, what will you do with Jesus? All of you here, listen. What will you do with Jesus? Neutral? You cannot be.

One day your heart will be asking, what will he do with me? Oh yeah, now you have a decision, what are all of us gonna do with Jesus? But one day our heart will be asking when we stand in front of him, what will he do now with me? Oh, I wanna stand for Jesus no matter what. How many wanna lift a hand and say amen to that? I don't care who comes against us, who laughs at us, mocks us, and in our country, the United States of America, it's gonna be harder to be a Christian every year. Obviously that's happening.

Obviously that's happening. All the institutions of the government are more and more anti-Christian. The media, anti-Christian.

Board of Ed, anti-Christian. Everything around us is more and more vehement in their opposition to Christianity. So we're like Pilot almost every day.

What will you do with Jesus? You gonna stand for him? Then stand for him no matter what. Because if you don't stand for him, you end up doing what Pilot did. He caused Jesus Christ to be crucified.

He rejected Christ. Washing his hands, never got him off the hook. Well, that looks like it's pretty good.

I mean, right now we have the ones who plotted it and then the one who pulled the trigger, Pilot. Oh, wait a minute, there's another person. I'm just thinking about it.

If the crowd would have been different then, Pilot could have got off the hook. Because Pilot turned it to the people and said, hey, I'll release to you Barabbas. You know, it's the time of the year.

I release a prisoner to you. I can release Barabbas, this revolutionary, or I can release this religious guy, king of the Jews or whatever. So you want me to release Jesus, right? And they went, no, no, crucify him.

All they had to do was say, let him go. Let him go and crucify Barabbas. And then Pilot would have been happy.

The crowd would have been happy. The story would have had a different ending. Ah, see, in a way it was the crowd because all Pilate was looking for a way out and he was their way out.

Do you realize how unthinking they were? You know, we just found out that traditional religion, self-righteous, judgmental, traditional religionists plotted the murder of Jesus. And we found that political compromise and trying to stay in everybody's good favor also was part of it. But do you realize how sheep-like these people were? Pilate said to them, what did he do wrong? And you know what their answer was? Crucify him.

He said, I got that. What did he do wrong? And they said again, crucify him. In other words, they weren't thinking, they weren't gonna analyze anything.

Why? Because the scripture says the religious leaders had manipulated them and stirred them up. How many people end up rejecting Jesus because someone manipulated their minds and caused them not to give Christ a fair hearing? You know, either Jesus is who he said he is, the son of God, or he's a religious fraud. He's bogus, he's a charlatan, but you can't have it both ways.

And all God asks us to do, everybody here, is to analyze who Jesus said he was. Is he the savior of the world or is he not the savior of the world? Whichever one he is, then go for it. But they were not even gonna investigate it.

They were not gonna investigate it. That's how people get when they're manipulated in their mind, they just give an answer. No, that's stupid.

I don't believe in God. I don't believe in Jesus. Why? Because it's stupid and I don't believe in God and I don't believe in Jesus.

But have you read the Bible? No, but I don't believe in God and I don't believe in Jesus. Do you know anything about his life and what he taught? I'm not interested. I don't believe in God.

I don't believe in Jesus. That's the answer a lot of people give. So it was ignorant, gullible, manipulated crowd that put Jesus on the cross.

Yeah, it was the plotting by the religious leaders. Yeah, Pilate pulled the trigger. But come on, brothers and sister, all the crowd had to do was say, yo, this guy, we've been watching him.

He hadn't done a thing wrong. But they had been manipulated. I hope none of you here are manipulated.

We gotta diligently search a scripture for ourselves and make our own decisions. Don't ever let anyone make a decision for you because when you die at the end of life, they're not gonna be around to help you. Do I get a witness here? Make your own decision.

Search the scriptures. Any of you have doubts, bring them to the Lord. God, I don't understand this.

He will give you light. He'll give you illumination. He'll give you revelation.

Okay, I think we're ready to vote. We got the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders. We got Pilate.

We got the crowd. Wait a minute, the crowd. Wait a minute.

We just said the crowd could have saved Jesus. But they, in one accord, it seems, said crucify him. But wait a minute, how about all the people Jesus healed? How about all the people he fed? You know the loaves and the fishes thing? How about all the people that listened and hung on his words? How about the one who knew that Lazarus had risen from the dead? Where were they? Look at me, everyone.

Where were they? If they would have been among the crowd, Christ would have had a shot. He might have been let go. Where were all these people who he had done so much for? Remember the 10 lepers that had been healed? Where were they? I don't remember hearing anything about them.

Couldn't there be some voices that went, wait a minute, no, don't crucify him. He's the son of God, look what he did for me. How about the centurion whose servant was healed? How about Jairus' whose daughter was healed? How about all these people in the Bible? The Bible says, according to John, that if everything Jesus said and did was put in a book, the world wouldn't be big enough to contain all the things he said and did.

So I'm asking you, where were these people? They were no-shows. Why weren't they there, I wonder? They afraid? Ah, I probably know the reason. They were busy.

They were busy that day. You know, you gotta, you know, American Idol was on, who was gonna win that? They had to check that out. It was called Palestinian Idol, by the way, back then.

Was the same idea. They were just busy. Jesus was going down for the count, and you couldn't find them because like us, instead of standing for Christ when we should, instead of praying for people who need Jesus when we should, instead of witnessing, sharing, inviting, calling, doing the work of the Lord, isn't one of the things that eats up our lives, just busyness, just busy.

Jesus needs someone to stand for him, but they're, I don't know, what were they doing? Going on vacation to the Sea of Galilee or wherever? Isn't that something? Christ went to the cross because such ordinary sins, sins, traditional religion, self-righteous judging, jealousy, compromise, letting someone manipulate into thinking a certain way without even investigating the claims of Christ. These are ordinary things, and maybe for some of those people, I mean, didn't he heal a few people? The Bible says everyone who touched him at one time, all the parents were healed, all the parents who brought the babies, couldn't some of them been there? I mean, where were they? This was in Jerusalem. It wasn't like it was done in the dark.

Probably a lot of them were busy. You know, life has a lot of stuff. You gotta pay your bills.

Oh, I don't wanna be so busy in life that I don't stand for Jesus. Anybody here with me today? I wanna have things with right priorities. Jesus comes first.

How many are with me today on this resurrection Sunday? Let's put our hands together. Jesus comes first. Let's stand for Jesus because he doesn't have a lot of friends in our society as best as I can see.

He's getting fewer each year. So we that believe in him, we need to stand for him. And our religion has to be the true religion full of love and compassion, not judging everyone.

And we can't be full of compromise. And we can't let people manipulate us away. I'm dealing with a case right now.

So sad. Someone graduated college, was brought up in the faith, and some people have gotten around this person and totally turned them away from Christ. It's one of the strangest case my wife and I have seen.

We're trying to help and intercede, but oh my goodness, the sentences coming out of this person's mouth. They've known the Lord, they've experienced the Lord, and now they're doubting everything. And then you find out the books they read and the pressure in the university campus, and you see, wow, it takes guts to stand for Jesus.

It takes courage not to be manipulated. Forget about fitting in. Fit in with Jesus.

And then let everybody else just, it is what it is. But I'm gonna fit in with Christ first. Well, let's do a vote.

Should we do it by eye, or should we do it by uplifted hand? We got the religious leaders, we got Pilate. We got the crowd. And then we got the no-shows.

Because the no-shows could have turned the tide, am I right? Wasn't Pilate looking for a way out? Yeah. Let's do it by uplifted hand. That's how we'll do it.

Those are our choices. Oh, wait a minute. No vote.

I just remembered who's responsible for Jesus's death. Me. It's you.

Because I read somewhere he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised. My bad.

Bad sermon, I'm sorry. Talked about all these things, and I forgot who put Christ on the cross. Wasn't Pilate.

Roman soldiers. He could have called 10,000 angels. And he could have been out in a second.

He could have just called down fire and wiped out the whole Sanhedrin. No, he loves us so much that he died for us. You know what? I don't want any person here in this building to leave this service with any guilt or condemnation.

One of the greatest attacks of the enemy is he imitates the Holy Spirit, and he mentions to you all the stuff you've done and said wrong over the months and years and days and hours. And he keeps holding it up to you, even though you've asked God to forgive you. Remember the promise in 1 John.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. On the third day, he rose again from the dead, proving that he was the son of God and proving that his death on the cross was not the death of an ordinary criminal or a religious leader. He was, he is the son of the living God.

He's the one that God sent as the Lamb of God who would take away the what? The sins of the whole world. Can we just thank God for Jesus today? For Jesus today. Come on, let's thank him for Jesus today.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow. Would you close your eyes with me? Oh, thank you, Jesus, that you're alive. But I have to say, even more to me right now important than that you're alive is that you're full of mercy and love.

Because if you were alive and mad at us, what hope would we have? If you were alive and only a judge and not the savior of the world, what hope would we have? If you remembered our iniquities, who could stand? If you counted every transgression, who would be able to lift their head today? Who could draw near to you, God, if you had a different heart than the heart of Jesus? So, Lord, I thank you that while the religious Sanhedrin did their thing and Pilate compromised and the crowd was unthinking and calling for your death and other people were too busy at no-shows when you needed them most, including your disciples, I thank you that your heart is so big and full of love that you delight in mercy. Judgment is your strange act. What you want to do today, what makes you happy, is to forgive and cleanse and bring peace and bring joy and bring medicine to our heart.

Your great joy is not lashing out and punishing. Oh, we thank you for your love today. Ah, yes, when he was on the cross, I was on his mind.

I confess that Jim Cymbala put you on the cross and we are so happy that you were our substitute. You died so that we could be free, cleansed, forgiven, secure in your love, filled with peace and joy. We just want to, on this resurrection sunrise service, we want to say gracias, senior, por todo, senior.

Thank you for all that you've done for us. Every eye closed, if you're here today and you say, pastor, I needed to hear that because the enemy just tries to bring condemnation, condemnation, condemnation on me, guilt, guilt. Sometimes I walk around like with a cloud over me, like I can never shake the mistakes I've made, the past that I can't seem to get free from.

We know what it is to be cleansed and set free. We know what it is to believe in Jesus and have a new beginning and a new life and cleansing. And if the enemy is attacking, resist him in the name of the Lord today.

Stand on the ground of Jesus Christ, his blood that was shed. Remember what he said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. Claim that blood today.

Say, I'm not gonna live in guilt, I'm not gonna be sad today, I'm gonna be glad. Satan wants me sad, but I will be glad. If you'd like us to pray for you, just stand up where you are and say, pastor, that was for me in a way you don't know, but I'm so glad you reminded us about the love of God and who really put Jesus on the cross.

Just stand where you are and we'll pray for you. Thank you, thank you. Just stand right where you are and say, I needed that and I want someone to say a prayer over me because today's the day, today's Easter Sunday.

I'm gonna have a resurrection Sunday, yes. Old life, God, new life begin. I'm living in my new life.

I'm putting on the Lord Jesus. And I'm gonna defeat the enemy through Christ.

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