

THE SECRET OF HIS PURPOSE THE PLAN FOR THE FULLNESS OF THE TIMES
TO HEAD UP ALL THINGS IN THE KING,
EVERYTHING IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH,
IN JESUS....

By – Stuart H. Pouliot

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Love Drove Jesus to the Cross

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Recently, a pastor taught that the Jews did not kill Jesus—we all did! With this announcement, heads nodded in agreement, and this from ones who believe all teaching must be grounded in the "word of God" and interpreted contextually. Apparently, such teaching is grounded in a fear that people will accuse all Jews, especially Jews of our day, of responsibility for the death of Jesus. Of course, scripture makes no such accusation about modern-day Jews, but, as will be shown, scripture does speak very directly and sternly to the generation of Jews in Jesus' day, all the way to 70 AD. To me, the more important question is: *What drove Jesus to the cross?*

Before delving into this question; interestingly, as I began to pen this article, I received a daily word (a quote) from the T. Austin-Spark's web site that read: *Christianity is very largely a built up thing with many Jewish features in it; i.e., outward orders, forms, vestments, titles, buildings and rigidly fixed boundaries of apprehensions of truth. Viewed from a heavenly standpoint, it is all so much nonsense, child's play; albeit so seriously regarded by its children.* Brother Sparks spoke to the generation of the 20th century. Although he fell asleep in Jesus in 1971, his spiritual insight and wisdom rings true in our day as well. Was he too blunt in this quote? Perhaps to some, but consider Paul: *Who has bewitched you?* As we will see, Paul had a blunt word for the Jews of his day as well.

Without going into all that is behind Sparks' words, the point is his discernment of how Jewish Christianity has become. Rather than following the liberty of the spirit of the Lord, which is life, it has become, in some measure and in some quarters, simply another type of formalism along the line of Judaism. He does not state so, but I contend that Christianity (again in some measure and quarters) has taken up a defense of modern-day Jews and Judaism as if, based on their ethnicity, they are still in the economy of God as a chosen people and need to be defended, rather than, as Paul said, made jealous for the good news of Messiah Yeshua who conquered sin and death for the entire human race—without distinction. This all might seem a bit off the track, but actually it plays into the question at hand and why a pastor would claim the Jews did not kill Jesus. The reason—fear of offending the Jew if they were told the truth about their ancestors (if they are truly in the line of Judah).

Before answering the Jewish question, there is one matter that needs to be addressed that deals with whether the Father is complicit in killing His Son. Is He a murderer?

Plan and Foreknowledge of God

This Jesus, ***delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God***, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23 ESV [bold italic added])

Based on this verse, some commentators say that God killed His Son. But Peter never made such an assertion. What he did say is that before there was history itself, God planned to deliver up His Son to the cross. The cross was in the full knowledge of God, even in His plan to rescue, not only the human race, but all creation. Based on what we know today, especially adding Paul's teaching, we could say that it was the fulcrum of His plan to make all things new and bring to birth a new creation (or, restore the original creation to a new creation) centered in His Son, the firstborn of creation.

Some might rebuff this based on Isaiah. After all, Isaiah 53:10 tells us that *it pleased (desired) the LORD to crush (bruise) His Son*. Given the meaning of the Hebrew words (I have read that some aren't easily translated), does this one verse truly make a case for including the Father in the company of murderers? How could God give ten commandments to the sons of Israel, one of which is against murder, and then turn around and murder? Wouldn't He be breaking one of His own commandments that He Himself formed?

Then, what about the predetermined plan of God that called for the death of His Son? Contrary to some who believe they have it all figured out and have developed doctrine and labeled it as truth—I believe there is still mystery behind the predetermined plan that leaves a crack in the door for how and why God, in the first place, developed a plan that required a death. In my view, the arguments and doctrines (more like theories) that try to explain evil and claim the parents of the human race blew it in the garden and God had to step in to fix the mess they left for all of us that followed, don't come close to explaining the predetermined plan. Even redemption—although it has great significance to salvation—doesn't fully explain the plan. All of this is too deep a subject to try to tackle here (even if I could adequately do so, which I can't). It is simply offered to give some perspective on the question before us, suggesting that the box Christian theologians, preachers, and teachers have fabricated around this subject may require some adjustments, if not total obliteration (as in tearing down the walls of the box in order to let the greater light shine in on the subject).

Illustrations and metaphors have their limitations, but one picture that comes to mind is an army general fighting a war and the victory of the war coming down to one hill that has to be taken from the enemy. On top of the hill is a near-impenetrable battery that is pounding the general's troops below. The general knows that the only way to win the battle and thus the war is to send a soldier up the hill to lob a bomb in this battery, knowing full well it is a sacrificial mission. Without doubt, the best soldier in the general's army and the dearest to his heart is his son. Knowing the stakes, he willingly gives the order for his son to take out the battery, knowing his son will not fail, even if he has to sacrifice his life to do so; he's that good. So, he fulfills his mission and dies doing so, and the entire war is won with this one act of bravery.

Of course, the general is none other than God the Father and the son is Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The point is that the Father (the general) knew the risks and the need for a sacrifice and gave the order, and Jesus, God's Son (the soldier), willingly did all that the Father asked Him to do. He did not fail to fulfill the mission. He's that good!

Given this illustration, it should be clear that God the Father is not a murderer any more than this general was. It is an illustration of sacrificial (self-giving) love—a willingness to offer up a sacrifice

of something so dear to one's heart that it might even break one's own heart to do so, but an essential sacrifice to save the many. This is the love that never fails.

When all is said and done with the consummation of the ages (i.e., ages following Calvary), we will discover that at the very heart and core of God's plan are two words: **love** and **new creation**. And these two words will be summed up in God's ultimate purpose that **God may be all in all**. All things new and all in love.

God is love! Behold, I make all things new!

Now, let us consider scripture that answers the question about who killed Jesus. For the most direct answer, we need to start with Jesus' own words and then turn to Peter and Paul—all three emphatically give us the answer.

Jesus' Indictment

The book of Matthew is without doubt the most Jewish of the gospel books. Throughout it, Jesus aimed His arrows of truth at the religious elite (chief priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and their followers) of His day that He often referred to as *this generation*—an evil, adulterous, sinful, unbelieving, perverted generation (Matthew 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:24). He didn't mince words in putting His finger on their pulse, as the saying goes. When He spoke of *the gehenna of fire* (not the notion of a pagan hell), Jesus pointed to the time—the day and hour no one knew—that would come upon this evil generation, climaxing with the arrival (not the so-called *second coming*) of the Son of man in 70 AD and the total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This is what Jesus began to communicate to His disciples as He sat on the Mount of Olives, starting in Matthew 24.

Leading up to the Mount of Olives discourse, Jesus gave two parables that make it clear who would be held responsible for His death. The first one deals with **the owner of the vineyard** (Matthew 21:33-40) who sent his slaves to the vine-growers (Jews) to receive his produce. Instead of allowing them to harvest what was due the landowner, they killed the slaves. So, the owner sent his son, thinking they would respect him. Instead, they saw him as a threat since he was the heir. So, they threw him out and killed him. ***Let us kill him and seize his inheritance!*** Of course, the whole parable speaks of God the landowner and His Son Jesus, the heir who was killed outside the gate (Hebrews 13:12). The vine-growers were the chief priests and the Pharisees who were listening to Jesus speak. We know this because the record says: *They understood that He was speaking about them*. With this, they sought to seize Jesus. Why? Because He passed judgment on them: *Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation (people) producing the fruit of it*.

The second parable is the parable of **the marriage feast** (Matthew 22:1-14). The invitation went out inviting all to the wedding feast for the king's son. All that were invited at first refused to accept the invitation, each having some excuse. The last slaves sent out to offer the invite were even mistreated and killed. Though the wedding was ready, those invited were not found worthy. With this indictment, Jesus declared: *But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire* (verse 7). Here the king is God the Father and

the son is Jesus. The slaves that were mistreated and killed were the prophets. Jesus clearly linked the scribes and Pharisees not only to the murder of the prophets in their day (Matthew 23:29-34), but also to the blood shed on the earth of the righteous from Abel to Zechariah. Simply, they were murderers, and all that Jesus prophesied of the judgment of Jerusalem, the temple, and the Judaistic system the Jews had built would come upon this generation. God was going to send His army (i.e., the Roman army) to destroy all that the Jewish elite held in such high esteem. Why? Because they rejected and killed the prophets but, most egregiously, they also killed the true Messiah of Israel that was promised Israel by all the prophets. Decades later, Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruins, engulfed in flames with blood running in the streets. According to Josephus, 1.2 million died in the land of Judea during the *Jewish Wars* with Rome.

Jesus never let the Jews off the hook and especially never watered down the egregiousness of their act. Why? Because they were judged according to their own standard which was an ***eye for an eye*** (Exodus 21:24; Matthew 5:38). Jesus warned them well ahead of time.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. (Matthew 7:1-2 ESV)

When Pilate presented Jesus before the Jews and even gave them a way to let Him go, they instead demanded His death: *Crucify Him!* They not only condemned an innocent man but most egregiously their very own Messiah sent to rescue Israel and give them life as they had never known. They had pronounced judgment on the Son of God and, according to their standard of measure under the old covenant, a comparable judgment had to be rendered, and so one was rendered in 70 AD—the murderers and their city were destroyed. Their standard did not include mercy and grace, and therefore, none was afforded this generation in return. (By the way; those who were given the faith to believe on Jesus following the cross were kept from the wrath of God that came upon Jerusalem under the Roman army.)

Peter's Proclamation

Turning to Peter, let us consider his proclamations in the day of Pentecost.

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, ***you crucified and killed*** by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23 ESV [bold italic added])

"Therefore, let ***the whole House of Israel*** know beyond all doubt that God has made Him both LORD and CHRIST—***this Jesus whom you crucified.***" (Acts 2:36 WNT [bold italic added])

But there is something we must tell you and everyone else in Israel. This man is standing here completely well because of the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. ***You put Jesus to death on a cross***, but God raised him to life. (Acts 4:10 CEV [bold italic added])

When Peter stood to speak, he addressed the men of Judea and all who resided in Jerusalem, as well as Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5)—Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians. Without getting into a discussion of the difference between a Jew and an Israelite, Peter drew all these together and called them *the whole house of Israel*, meaning that all twelve tribes of Israel were most likely represented in Jerusalem during Pentecost.

What needs to be stressed is the fact that Peter pronounced the same indictment as Jesus did. They, meaning God's own people, **crucified and killed** Jesus by the hands of lawless men. They were guilty of murder under the law of God. Yes: Rome (representing the entire known world of pagans) stood as the lawless executioners, but the Jews (collectively) stood as the lawless prosecutor and judge who passed the sentence of death upon the Messiah of Israel. As Jesus told Pilate, Rome had the lesser sin.

"You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he (Jews) who delivered me over to you (Rome) has the greater sin." (John 19:11 ESV (added))

If there is any doubt about who had the greater sin, John clears it up for us in recording the day the chief priests and Pharisees convened a council: **That day the Jewish leaders began planning to kill Jesus** (John 11:53). Sounds like premeditated murder!

Now, there is one more aspect to the indictment of the generation that crucified and killed Jesus. Jesus was the final and ultimate sacrifice (sacrificial lamb) to close out the ages in which sacrifices of the blood of animals were required year after year (i.e., age of Moses and Levitical priesthood system).

But when Christ had **offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of God, (Hebrews 10:12 ESV [bold italic added])

Nor did he intend to offer himself over and over again, in the same way that the high priest goes into the sanctuary year after year with blood that isn't his own. Had that been the case, he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation [disruption] of the world. Instead, he has appeared once, at the close [conjunction] of the ages, to put away sin by the sacrifice of his own self. (Hebrews 9:25-26 Kingdom NT [CLV; Rotherham]).

Under the old covenant, the priests alone were charged with the slaughter of the lambs. Given this, the priests were the only ones who could have rightfully (under God's law of the old covenant) offered up the final sacrifice to close out the age of Moses (or, all the ages of sacrifices leading up to Calvary). In other words, they had to kill Jesus. However, under Roman rule, the Jews were not allowed to put anyone to death (John 18:31), only the Romans could do it. This is why they called upon Caesar to do it. *Crucify Him!*

So, in one sense, they had to do it (probably unknowingly) and, in another sense, they egregiously did it (plotting to do it, even knowing who Jesus was based on His own testimony and life that was prophesized by the ancient prophets) and were convicted as murderers. Conundrum? Perhaps!

Moving on to Paul (a former Jewish persecutor of Jesus' followers) ...

Paul's Proclamation

For you, brethren, followed the example of the Churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judaea; seeing that you endured the same ill-treatment at the hands of your countrymen, as they did at the hands of the Jews. ***Those Jewish persecutors killed both the Lord Jesus and the Prophets, and drove us out of their midst.*** They are displeasing to God, and are the enemies of all mankind; for they still try to prevent our preaching to the Gentiles so that they may find salvation. They thus continually fill up the measure of their own sins, and God's anger in its severest form has overtaken them. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 WNT [bold italic added])

Paul didn't mince words either in assessing the death sentence given to Jesus. The Jews killed both the Messiah of Israel, King Jesus, and all the prophets that spoke of Him and gave signs of His arrival. They were displeasing to God and enemies of the human race! You can't get much clearer than this.

Did all of us kill Jesus?

At this point, we are left with one more pressing question: Did the entire human race put Jesus on the cross? Or more explicitly, did all of us kill Jesus? The standard answer is yes—as if it is the only spiritually responsible way to answer it. But does this make it correct? It is true that sin and death were defeated through the cross, all in accord with God's plan to rescue, not only the human race, but also all creation. However, does this make us all complicit in driving Jesus to the cross, as if we all are like the Jews who plotted to kill the Savior of the world? Hardly!

I propose that sin did not drive Jesus to the cross—love did. Love drove Jesus to the cross because sin and death had to be defeated in order to rescue all the human race along with all creation. *For God so loves the world!* The cross was the only way for the Son of God to take sin head on, so to speak, even to the point of Him becoming the ultimate and acceptable sin offering (or, sin itself—a mystery), leaving both sin and death in the grave as He rose up from among the dead. There was no other way to accomplish the mission set out in God's plan that was born out of the heart of God. God is love, and His very essence is the very fabric of His plan.

He made the one who knew no sin to become a sin offering (or, to be sin) on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Declaring that all killed Jesus implies criminal intent, as if all of us sat on the judgment seat and charged Jesus with a baseless crime, demanding He be crucified for being exactly and factually who He said He was and proved to be. This might have overtones of a spiritual truth to many, but how could it be so? This is what the Jews and the Romans did, but it is not what the rest of humanity did, especially after the cross. We were not of that generation.

To repeat, without doubt, most would and do say that it was our sin that sent Jesus to the cross; therefore, we are complicit in His murder. Stated bluntly: We killed Jesus because we are sinners.

No: Jesus willingly laid down His life to save and rescue those who were unable to do so on their own and who didn't even know they needed to be rescued. He went to the cross doing the perfect will of His Father, all in accord with the plan of God, in order to rescue sinners.

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and ***I lay down My life for the sheep.*** "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. "For this reason, the Father loves Me, because ***I lay down My life so that I may take it again.*** "***No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.***" (John 10:14-18 NASB [bold italic added])

More than once, Jesus declared that He was given the authority to lay down His own life and to take it up again on His own initiative. The Father Himself gave Him this right. In other words, Jesus went to the cross willingly to rescue all humanity that were enemies and sinners.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NASB)

Jesus knew the desperate condition that had befallen the human race. He grieved over what He saw. *Forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.* He had (and still does have) great compassion on Adam's race that needed to be rescued from their plight, whether they knew they needed to be rescued or not.

Like the illustration of the soldier following orders and sacrificing his life, so did Jesus not only follow orders, but it was well within Him to do so, even if His soul experienced a death beforehand. The Son of God went charging up the hill of Golgotha to fulfill the most dramatic rescue mission recorded in all of known history. He faced the onslaught of all the powers of darkness and evil, including the Jewish and pagan world of the day, and defeated them all—especially sin and death—when He rose from the grave, triumphant and victorious over it all. When we were yet dead in our transgressions, He rescued us! Yes: it can be rightfully argued that the entire adamic race was and is included in what stood against Him in that day, but it does not follow that we all are murderers of the Son of God. Scripture says otherwise. The evil generation of that day was charged with murder.

The point that is being driven home is that one who rescues another does it willingly and deliberately. We call them *heroes*. And, this is exactly what Jesus did when He willingly and deliberately laid down His life for the human race. Besides, we were all born with a death sentence on us that led us down the path of being sinners (Romans 5:12-13; 19). Many will retort from this, but we had no choice in the matter—being sinners was the hand we were dealt. ***Through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners!*** Given this, how can we be held directly accountable for Jesus' death? We were dead in our sins; we did not seek for God; we needed to be rescued; and that is exactly what Jesus has done—all in accord with the predetermined plan of God.

Walk in a Worthy Manner

However, let us be abundantly clear on two vital points. First, do not accuse the modern-day Jews of murdering Jesus; love them as you would love anyone else born of Adam's race. We are to walk in love, and this love is to extend to all. Second, none of this is to imply that we have unfettered liberty to live any way we so desire, as if to say, *I'm a sinner, so I have no choice but to continue as one*. There is such a thing as judgment and rewards and, to this end, our deportment counts, and this only comes through the spirit of the Lord, maturing us as sons of God. By Jesus' spirit, we **walk in a manner worthy of the God who invites us into His own kingdom and glory**. In this way, we cannot and will not live licentiously. The New Testament is full of encouragements and exhortations along this line. We are called to live out King Jesus' life, imaging Him to the world. Those of us who have been given the faith to believe are able to do this, at least in part, through the earnest (down payment) of the spirit that we received when Jesus broke into our lives. This spirit gives us assurance that we will be like our Savior when He comes from heaven to transform and conform us to the image of the glory of His body. Until then, through this spirit, we are to image our beloved Lord to a world, even the Jewish world, that does not know or accept Him.

Conclusion

You see, the question of who killed Jesus has been settled. After Jesus rose from the grave and then, about forty years later, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, the need to even ask the question or conjecture over the answer became irrelevant. Today, it is not a question to resolve. The generation of Jews in Jesus' day were indicted and convicted of murder.

No; dear saints, **we didn't put Jesus on the cross, He put Himself on the cross**. This is how we know love, for this is what love is. *God is love*, and the cross not only proves it but expresses it. This is the glory of God.

The one through whom God created came to do His Father's will to the very letter. In my imagination, as Jesus walked this earth observing the very plight of mankind, I see Him looking off unto the cross, with tears in His eyes, saying: *I must go. I must rescue them. There is no other way*. And so, He did! He's that good!

Let's move on to the good news that rose from the grave in the person of King Jesus and rejoice that our Savior succeeded in rescuing us from ourselves that were caught in sin and death. He has brought us life so that we may know His Father and know Him whom the Father sent on a rescue mission to defeat an enemy we had no power to overcome. He has brought us into union with the living God and creator of all. We are a new creation! Let us look off unto Jesus as we eagerly wait for Him to come from heaven to earth. Very soon King Jesus will return and we will manifest as new creations in His image. Now, this is truly good news.