

2. Why Did They Crucify Jesus?

If Jesus didn't do anything illegal or immoral, why did they crucify him?

To better understand, Let's put ourselves in the place of a Pharisee.

You, the Pharisee, have studied and practiced Jewish law your entire life. (**Scripture 1 - Paul as a Pharisee**) You are well respected in the Jewish community. People admire you greatly and you are an avid spiritual leader. People look up to you for guidance. You've worked hard all your life to obey all the Jewish laws and traditions. You often pray boldly. You are the picture of godliness and righteousness, which is well earned and deserved.

You hear that there is a man named Jesus, from Nazareth, that is preaching and stirring up people. Though he is just a carpenter from a low income family, you are hearing that he is performing miracles and is attracting a lot of people. He is claiming to be the messiah. There is a significant number of people following him. So it is your duty to go and check him out. You believe he is a fake and you want to stop him.

You find him and listen to what he is teaching. He is teaching horrible things about you (Pharisees in general). He is humiliating you and he is going as far as to tell the crowd of people that you are snakes, and hypocrites, condemned to hell. (**Scripture 2 - Jesus Spoke About Pharisees**). You are so insulted. He must be stopped!

Even though this man is doing unlawful acts like healing someone on the sabbath, you still struggle with catching him so you can arrest him. He has so many followers that hang on his every word. You are afraid that the large crowd of followers will attack you if you try to arrest him (**Scripture 3 - Pharisees Plot to Arrest Jesus**). You must find a way to catch him alone, with only his few disciples, so you can arrest him.

You finally get a break when one of Jesus' disciples agrees to turn Jesus in for money (**Scripture 4 - Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus**). You were finally able to arrest him, but now you have another problem. You must somehow convince the government officials to crucify him. Much to your delight, all of Jesus' followers and disciples scattered and denied him. You were able to round up a crowd of people that would protest to crucify Jesus. It took some time and effort, but you did succeed and Jesus was crucified.

Finally, you got rid of this thorn in your side. Jesus is dead. You thought your problems were over. But now that Jesus is dead, you have even worse problems. Jesus' followers and disciples are gathering and preaching and performing miracles in Jesus' name. Now even ordinary people suddenly have this power. And this movement is moving so fast. Thousands of people are joining this movement every day (**Scripture 5. Believers of Christ's Resurrection Grew Fast**). It is out of control. You (the Pharisees) put forth a lot of effort to stop this to no avail. It's too strong; too big; too powerful.

So the Pharisees missed it. They didn't realize that loving and serving is so much more important than following and obeying the laws. They let their pride and self-righteousness get in the way. What about you? Are you prideful? I know I struggle a bit with that and I see a lot of pridefulness in people these days.

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Scripture 1. Paul as a Pharisee

Philippians 3: 3-7 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Scripture 2. Jesus Spoke About Pharisees

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Matthew 23:13-33 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Luke 16:14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.

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Scripture 3. Pharisees Plot to Arrest Jesus

Matthew 12:14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they know he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Mark 3:6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

John 7:32 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

John 11:57 But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Scripture 4. Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

Matthew 26:14-16 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Mark 14:10-11 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Luke 22:1-6 Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

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Scripture 5. Believers of Christ's Resurrection Grew Fast

Acts 4:1-4 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.