

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

WHO KILLED JESUS?

By Jon W. Quinn

Occasionally, in the media, there will be a story about Jesus. It may be in the newspaper, a national magazine, or on television. Experts will be interviewed about what they have concluded about Jesus. Experts do not agree at all on things about Jesus!

Sometimes, there will be a painting of Jesus. We all have seen the typical ways in which He has been represented by artists who have never seen Him. There have recently been several articles about how He probably did not look much like the typical painting of Him. I have to agree with that. But what Jesus looked like is meaningless. It makes no difference at all. The important thing about Jesus is who He is and what He has done for us!

One older news magazine (April 24th, 2000 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*) has a cover article concerning Jesus. The caption on the cover reads, “Why Jesus Was Killed” and underneath in smaller letters: “Scholars find new clues about the Crucifixion.”

The article accurately records a wide variety of thoughts on the matter of Jesus’ death, from the most liberal, modernistic extreme to the Islamic perspective. So many concepts. So much speculation. Finally, there are some, but too few, more or less accurate Scriptural viewpoints.

There is discussed the role of the Jews in the crucifixion. Some, in the effort to be “politically correct” deny the Bible record is correct on this. They deny any involvement of Jews at all. It was all the Romans, they say. But others have referred to Jews as “Christkillers” and persecuted them. What is the truth?

Neither one of these positions is righteous and true. Faith in Jesus demands that we not follow either extreme. Add to that the fact that Jesus also teaches that there is no justification for hating anyone. We are to love our neighbors whether they be Jew or Gentile. And loving others includes not just the way we feel about them, but how we treat them.

As a matter of fact, Jews were involved. Their leaders sent soldiers to arrest Jesus. They tried Him before the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas and declared Him worthy of death. They handed Him over to Pilate. They charged Him. They cried out, **“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”** Those things happened just as the ancient prophets of Israel and Judah had said they would centuries before (Isaiah 53, for example). Then, under the Roman governor’s direction, the Roman soldiers carried out the deed. And as all this was being done, Jesus cried out in prayer, **“Father, forgive them! They do not know what they do!”**

But Jesus was also a Jew. So were Matthew, Mark and John, three of the four gospel writers. The people who mourned along the road to Calvary as the crucifixion squad led Jesus to that awful place were Jews. Paul, who wrote more of the New Testament books than anyone else was a Jew. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were Jews. All the apostles were Jews. Following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the first three thousand converts were Jews. It would be another five years or so before the first non-Jews would obey the gospel of Christ. The first person to die for his faith in Jesus, Stephen, was a Jew.

As Jesus told the woman of Samaria at the well, **“You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews”** (John 4:22). The gospel was a gospel for the Jews before it became a gospel for the Gentiles. Paul wrote, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”** (Rom. 1:16).

This might offend the politically correct on one side as well as haters of Jewish people on the other. Many find Jesus of Nazareth offensive, but He is the hope of the world, to both Jew and Gentile. To hate and mistreat any person using the event of the crucifixion as a pretext is evil and contrary to Jesus' own words. Jesus is Lord.

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:27-29). ■

What the Bible Says About Suicide

By Joe R. Price

Unquestionably, those who commit suicide were troubled in heart. Our sympathy goes out to those whose lives have been affected by the suicide of a relative or loved one. We also want to understand what God's word says about suicide so that we can make godly decisions about it. Everyone of us will face despair and trouble in this life. Is suicide how God would have us deal with despair, pain and trouble in our lives? Are there alternatives to suicide?

The Bible does not paint a pleasant or supportive picture of suicide. While more and more people are openly advocating their “right” to commit suicide, the Bible nowhere offers suicide as an option for the right-thinking man or woman. Life is a precious gift which God has given us. We are neither to murder others, nor are we to inflict a fatal wound upon ourselves. Those who advocate suicide reveal a diminished view of life and humanity, who have been made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27; 2:7). Suicide is an act of selfishness. It does not consider its impact upon those it leaves behind.

Suicide is the result of utter despair. Experts tell us that overwhelming feelings of helpless, haplessness, and hopelessness are the warning signs of suicide. There were people in the Bible who reached a point in their lives that the only option they could see was to kill themselves. Notable among these was Judas (Matt. 27:1-5). His hopeless attitude can be contrasted with Peter, who denied Jesus three times, but repented of his sins and was restored (Luke 22:31-34, 54-62). Life is never as hopeless, and we are never as helpless, as we may think. We must learn to trust in God instead of ourselves!

Suicide is often contemplated when one sees no clear resolution of our troubles. Elijah's life was under the threat of murder from queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-4). The Philippian jailer thought his prisoners had escaped, which meant certain doom for him, so he prepared to kill himself (Acts 16:26-27). The problem is that just because we do not see a solution to our troubles does not mean there is not one — or that God is through with us here on earth. God still had many things for Elijah to do (1 Kings 19:15-18). If the jailer had killed himself he would not have been saved (Acts 16:28-34). Although Paul wanted to be with Christ, he knew there was still much for him to do in this life, so he committed himself to being faithful to Jesus (Phil. 1:21-25).

Physical suffering drives many to kill themselves while they still have life. Although Job longed for death rather than his life which at the moment was filled with pain, agony, and humiliation, he endured, and he was ultimately blessed beyond measure (Job 3; 6:8-11; 7:15-16; 42:10-17). It was not the quality of life which made Job's life precious, it was life itself! He learned (like we must) that there are many things that God does which we must accept in faith (Job 42:1-6). If Job had killed himself he would have shown a lack of faith in God and trust in his own opinion of how things were. We should learn from Job not to think that we have all the answers. Paul did not allow his physical disability to lead him to the depths of despair and suicide, but to the heights of faith and service (2 Cor. 12:7-10)! We must trust God even when things look helpless to us. God is great and does great things for those who fear him (Heb. 13:5-6). Many astounding things have been accomplished by people who would not give up. In Christ we do not have to resort to suicide, we are more than conquerors in Christ! (Rom. 8:37-39). You are important to God, so live for Him! ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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