

A GRAVE MISTAKE

Jesus had many followers after he started his public ministry. They were disciples such as Peter, Andrew, James and John, who wanted to be his learners or apprentices, Jesus also had others who followed Him for different reasons. They were there right at the start of his ministry and although they were **religious leaders**, they were called out as being a '**brood of snakes**'. Jesus confronted them for their poison of 'self-righteousness', pride of position, love of money and lack of mercy. They could not handle the truth, and continually harassed and sought to kill Jesus and undermine His divine mission. They were like 'hounds from hell'. This continued for nearly 3 1/2 years until they finally had Jesus cornered in the Garden of Gethsemane, a place where He spent time communing with the one who had sent Him to earth over 33 years before. They were aware that he had escaped their plots against him before.

Jesus read a scripture from Isaiah 61:1-2 and then proclaimed that He was its fulfillment. He then said that 'no prophet is accepted in his home town.' "All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way." - Luke 4:28-20

‘Jesus answered, “Before Abraham was, I AM!” At this, they picked up stones to stone Him, but **Jesus hid Himself from them, slipping away** from the temple grounds.’ - John 8:58-59

‘Believe the miracles, that you may understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. Again they tried to seize Him, but **He escaped their grasp.**’
- John 10:39

The Jewish religious leaders took extra precautions for the arrest of Jesus in the garden. They sent Judas with a large crowd and temple guard officers who carried torches, lanterns, swords and clubs. A detachment of Roman soldiers was also present to assist in the arrest. (All these precautions were unnecessary, for Jesus went willingly, even though he could have called for scores of thousands of angels to rescue him).

Throughout his ministry, the religious leaders '**looked for reasons to accuse Jesus.**' - Luke 6:7 He was finally taken before the chief priests and Sanhedrin for a secret and illegal night trial. False witnesses and evidence were brought against Him which also included accusations of sedition against the Roman empire and for the claim that he could destroy the temple and raise it again in three days. However, their most serious accusation against Him was for the blasphemy of claiming to be Messiah, the Son of God. However, neither Herod nor Pilate found sufficient reason for putting Jesus to death, but the Jewish leaders incited the crowd to call for Jesus to be condemned to death by crucifixion, the most vile form of execution ever conceived by mankind. At the place of the skull, Jesus was crucified instead of Barabbas, a criminal deserving of death. Jesus' death was confirmed with certainty as the crowd around the cross would

witness the Roman soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' side after he gave up his last breath. Blood and water poured forth which indicated that his heart had been pierced. As the dead body of Jesus was taken down from the cross, many of the onlookers would have taken their last look at Jesus and the placard that Pilate previously had nailed on the cross above Jesus in three languages of that day which read

JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS

Those were now empty words for the followers of Jesus. Their king was dead and their hopes of a new kingdom. Two secret followers of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, got permission from Pilate, the Roman governor, to take the body of Jesus for burial. They wrapped the body of Jesus with grave clothes encased with 75 pounds of the spices myrrh and aloe. Jesus was placed in the new tomb of Joseph and a large stone was rolled in front of the entrance.

Mark wrote that this stone was 'extremely large' - Mark 16:4

'We know more about the burial of the Lord Jesus than we know of the burial of any single character in all of ancient history. - Wilbur Smith / Bible scholar

Now that Jesus was dead and buried, the chief priests and Pharisees remembered that Jesus had prophesied that he would be raised after three days. They asked Pilate to secure the tomb so that the body would not be stolen by his disciples. **A seal** was placed over the stone entrance and **a guard** was posted there. (some interpret the guard as being the Jewish temple guard whereas others see it as being a Roman one as their primary concern was what Pilate, the Roman governor thought.

Matthew 28:11-14

The Seal - The tomb was sealed in a similar way as was the lion's den in Daniel 6:17.

The sealing was done in the presence of the Roman guards who were left in charge to protect this stamp of Roman authority and power. They did their best to prevent theft of the body, for to break this seal would bring the wrath of Rome and their own death as evidenced by what happened to the soldiers who were on duty when Peter escaped from prison.

Acts 12:18-19.

The Guard = A Roman guard consisted of 4 squads of 4 soldiers each. - Acts 12:4.

'You have a guard' (Matthew 27:65) is in the present imperative in Greek and refers to a guard of Roman soldiers, not mere temple police. A.T. Robertson

We can only imagine how surprised and upset the Jewish leaders were when some of the Roman guards at the tomb returned to report that the body of Jesus was missing. The chief priests gave them money to say that the disciples of Jesus had stolen the body while they were asleep (fake news) and assured them that they would satisfy the governor about the matter. The resurrection of Jesus was different from the one that took place with Lazarus, who came out of the tomb in his grave cloths (John 11). The tomb of Jesus was not totally empty, for the grave cloths were still lying there, much like a discarded chrysalis from which a butterfly has emerged. The disappearance of

Jesus was not natural, but supernatural. The Jewish leaders had accused Jesus of being a 'deceiver', but they were the ones who were deceived.

- * They were **blinded by hate**. They suffered from 'Jesus Derangement Syndrome'. They refused to acknowledge any good that Jesus did but only looked for violations of their laws.

- * They were **blinded by tradition, pride and power**.

Jesus said that they nullified the Word of God with their tradition. - Matthew 15:6. They boasted that Abraham was their father, but Jesus retorted that they were children of their father the devil! John 8:37-47

They had foolishly proclaimed: **'We have no king but Caesar.'** - John 19:15. Caesar was despotic, authoritarian, merciless, perverted, proud, insecure and ruled through force and fear.

- * They thought that the burial of Jesus was the **end** of his life and influence, but it was only the **beginning**. They had ignored the scriptures about him and his power. - Matthew 22:29, Luke 24:44. The Old Testament was filled with prophecies about him. Even today, Isaiah 53 is not read by Jewish rabbis in the synagogue as it is a clear reference to the crucifixion of Jesus, as is Psalm 22.

- * They had **rejected the supernatural power of God**.

It was displayed throughout scripture as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit working in harmony together. They were three in one.....getting it done.

- At creation Genesis 1:1-2, John 1:1-4,14
- At the beginning of Jesus's lifeborn of a virgin
- At the beginning of Jesus earthly ministry and baptism - Matthew 3:16-17
- During the ministry of Jesus, he credited the Father and the Spirit - Luke 4:18, John 5:19
- At the end of Jesus life during resurrection: **God raised Jesus** from the dead
 - * The Father raised Jesus - Galatians 1:1 Acts 2:24
 - * The Spirit raised Jesus - Romans 1:4, 1 Peter 3:18
 - * Jesus raised himself - John 2:19, 10:18

Jesus offers hope of new life and resurrection for those who trust in Him - Romans 8:11
The crucifixion of Jesus revealed the hatred of sinful mankind and the wrath of God towards sin, but it also displayed the sacrificial love of God for all mankind. The empty tomb of Jesus demonstrated the power of God on our behalf and for His purposes. God desires that all would confess **"I have no king but Jesus"**, then submit to his loving Lordship and walk in His love, authority and wisdom. **Those who reject God's love, forgiveness, Lordship and the empty tomb, as did the religious leaders of Jesus' day, are making a grave mistake.**