

The Cross Was Not a Crime Scene

Why We Must Not Call the Crucifixion of Jesus Murder

There is a well-meaning instinct, when looking at the cross, to call what happened there a murder. The suffering was real. The betrayal was real. The nails were real. But to call the crucifixion murder is to fundamentally misread the most important event in human history — and Scripture will not allow it.

Here are the reasons why.

1. Murder Requires an Unwilling Victim. Jesus Was Not One.

The single most decisive statement on this question comes from Jesus Himself:

"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again."

— **John 10:18**

Murder, by its very nature, is done against the victim's will. Jesus declared the opposite with absolute clarity — no man took His life. He gave it. He walked voluntarily to Jerusalem knowing exactly what awaited Him. He voluntarily surrendered to the soldiers in Gethsemane. He voluntarily carried the cross. At any moment, He retained the power to stop it — *"Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"* (Matthew 26:53). He chose not to. You cannot murder a man who holds that kind of power and chooses to yield it.

2. It Was the Eternal Plan of God, Not a Criminal Act

What happened at Calvary did not catch God off guard. Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, said plainly:

"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."

— Acts 2:23

Notice the careful tension in that verse: the hands that drove the nails were lawless — but the event itself was the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God. Seven hundred years before the cross, Isaiah had already written: *"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin..."* (Isaiah 53:10). What man calls a crime, God ordained as the cornerstone of redemption. A murder is an interruption of life. The crucifixion was the fulfillment of an eternal covenant.

3. Pilate Had No Real Authority — It Was Given From Above

When Pilate threatened Jesus with the power of Rome, Jesus corrected him without flinching:

"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above."

— John 19:11

The governor of Rome believed he was in control of that courtroom. He was not. The Father held sovereign authority over every moment of that trial, that sentencing, and that execution. No human court had ultimate jurisdiction over the Son of God. The cross was not the will of Pilate or the Sanhedrin overriding God's plan — it was God's plan, moving through them, unbeknownst to them, toward its appointed end.

4. He Came as a Sacrifice, Not a Victim

From the moment John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching the Jordan River, the right category was already established:

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

— John 1:29

A lamb brought to the altar is not murdered. It is offered. The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament — every Passover lamb, every offering on the altar — was pointing forward to this one moment. Jesus did not stumble into the hands of His enemies. He was the Lamb, appointed before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:19–20), presented at precisely the right time (Galatians 4:4), to do what no lamb of the Old Covenant could permanently do: take away sin entirely.

5. The Resurrection Settles It

Murder is permanent. The grave is supposed to be final. But on the third day, the tomb was empty — and that changes everything. God the Father raised Jesus from the dead as the ultimate declaration that the cross was not a defeat, not a crime, and not a tragedy

that needed to be undone. It was a mission completed. *"It is finished"* (John 19:30) were not the last words of a victim. They were the triumphant declaration of a Savior who had accomplished exactly what He came to do.

A Word for Our Hearts

When we call the crucifixion a murder, we inadvertently shrink it — we make it a tragedy that happened to Jesus, rather than a sacrifice that Jesus chose for us. The cross is not the place where evil won the day. It is the place where Love made its greatest move, where Justice and Mercy met, and where the Son of God — of His own free will, in perfect obedience to the Father — laid down His life so that we might take up ours.

That is not a crime. That is grace.

Key Scriptures: John 10:18 · Acts 2:23 · Isaiah 53:10 · Matthew 26:53 · John 19:11 · John 1:29 · 1 Peter 1:19–20 · John 19:30