

QUESTION

Why did the Jews reject and kill Jesus?

ANSWER

The overwhelming majority of believers in the beginning of the church were Jews. Jesus was a Jew. All of his disciples were Jews. Almost all of the New Testament writers were Jews. Christianity is Jewish. The Jewish nature of Christianity is often overlooked. It is not completely accurate to say that the Jews rejected Jesus because of the fact that many, many Jews did receive Jesus as their Savior. It is interesting to note that, at first, the Jewish believers had trouble accepting the non-Jews who placed their faith in Christ. (See Acts 15). This helps to show just how Jewish Christianity was at its beginning stages.

Once this is understood, then we can say the Jews did “officially” reject Jesus. The national leadership in power at the time rejected him. So, in that limited sense, it can be said that the Jews rejected Jesus. However, we must be careful not to cast aspersions on the Jews who rejected Jesus any more than we do on people choosing to reject Jesus today.

With all this in mind it should also be noted that, technically, the Jews did not kill Jesus. The Romans did. It should be further noted that it was all in God’s plan. Peter (a Jew) was quick to point this out as he told his people that Jesus was handed over to the crowds to be killed “by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23). Jesus himself said, “No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (John 10:18).

This question of the Jews needs to be answered because it can be used as a smoke screen to avoid the inherent responsibility carried by all of humanity regarding the death of Jesus Christ. To foist blame on any one people group is to miss the central issue of the gospel itself. Jesus said, “I have come not to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, paraphrased). It is very certain to me that no one kneeling at a church altar for the first time to receive salvation from sin would ever imagine to cast blame on anyone for killing Jesus. Instead the thought would be, “Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross for me.”