

# Episode-205

## Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. We've been getting a ton of questions about something. It's super hot in popular culture and the news and in law and the United States government around the world. What's going on in Israel right now is specifically related to Gaza and the Palestinians has stirred up a new wave of anti-Semitism around the world. We did an episode specifically on anti-Semitism, I think it was around episode 181, so I invite you to go back and watch or listen to that one as well because that'll provide a lot of the background things we're going to talk about today.

## Shea Houdmann

But specifically I'm going to talk about what's going on here in the United States with possible new anti-Semitism laws being put into effect, basically outlawing the right to say that the Jews killed Jesus. And this has resulted in, of course, a hostile reaction in the other direction of saying, one, that violates free speech laws. Two, you're basically outlawing the New Testament because the New Testament says that the Jews killed Jesus.

## Shea Houdmann

So joining me today is Jeff, the managing editor of BibleRef.com, and Kevin, the managing editor of GotQuestions.org. So we're going to be tackling the issue, first of all, what actually does the Bible say about who killed Jesus, and then also how should Christians be thinking through laws like this or even the thought process behind them. And also just something to make you be aware of, the phrase, Christ is King, which up until recently I thought was just a wonderful way of expressing that Jesus was the Messiah, that he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, as the book of Revelation says, but now it's thus carrying a kind of a side meaning of the United States is a Christian nation, not a Jewish nation. This phrase, Christ is King, is actually sometimes being used in sort of an anti-Semitic way, which is a travesty, but the statement itself is beautiful and entirely biblical. So Jeff, what are you hearing out there, and specifically, what does the Bible say about who killed Jesus?

## Jeff Laird

You see me rolling my eyes and shaking my head, so full disclosure, transparency behind the scenes, whatever people want to call it, we decided to do this particular taping in response to seeing these things happening. And I frankly have not been super duper up on those happenings, so some of what you are saying right now is actually news to me.

### **Jeff Laird**

The specific Christ the King aspect, that's why I'm sort of shaking my head. It's like we can turn anything and everything into something offensive and then people just take the offensive thing. So I'm glad you got me to crawl out of my garbage can and talk about this because it's probably a good thing for us to discuss.

### **Jeff Laird**

The issue that I see with some of this stuff when it comes to the crucifixion of Jesus and Judaism and the word Jews is that there is a sort of a cultural, a raw nerve around that word, those phrases. So as an example, in our ministry's Bible Ref Commentary, there's a lot of times in the Gospel of John where John specifically refers to the Jews and he says, the Jews did this or the Jews said that. In that context, when you read it and we explain this in the commentary, John is really talking about the religious and political leaders of Jerusalem. That's who he means when he says that he doesn't mean all of Israel or all Jewish people. But because that phrase sort of just instinctively carries that we don't typically use that when we are writing commentary, not because there's something ultimately wrong with it. We just respect and understand that when you hear somebody say a sentence where you say the Jews, this or that, people tend to react to that with this sort of instinctive assumption that there's something racist behind it. And there may be some truth to the way that that's been used.

### **Jeff Laird**

So I think in this entire issue, we do have to be careful to remember there are going to be some things we have to be culturally careful about. We don't want to be callous. We don't want to be cavalier about how this goes. But the fact of the matter is that, as you said, Scripture does assign certain levels of responsibility to Jesus's death. But as we go through here today, we're going to talk about how those responsibilities start with God. They include Jesus.

They also include the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jerusalem. They include the crowd that was there when Pilate was giving his sentence. They include Pilate, who had a responsibility that he did not fulfill. And it includes all people around the world because of who we are and what we've done and the reason that Jesus had to be sacrificed in the first place.

### **Jeff Laird**

So scripturally, yes, we do see that there are times where people like Peter are telling the Jewish people, you crucified Jesus. You did this. And in a very real sense, in that way, yes, the Bible does say that the Jewish people quote unquote killed Jesus. But what it doesn't do is it doesn't say Jewish people, ethnically, racially, are uniquely responsible for the death of Christ and they should be punished for it forever and ever and ever. It is a little bit more nuanced than that. It's not something that's just as black and white and clear as saying, oh, if you're a Jew, it's your responsibility that Jesus died.

### **Kevin Stone**

Yes. So Jeff mentioned that there are plenty of people complicit in Jesus's death according to Scripture. I mean, there's plenty of blame to go around if we want to start assigning blame for the crucifixion of Christ. And I'm going to go ahead and just start with the religious leaders that were complicit in Jesus's death. The religious leaders of the day, when Jesus was alive and in Jerusalem, they had plotted to take Jesus's life. John 11 verse 53, they were planning ahead of time, before the trials even, you know, before they had even arrested him. They're already plotting to take his life because of the things he was teaching, because of what they perceived as his violations of the law, his claim to be equal with the Father. And then the cleansing of the temple, that was probably the straw that broke the camel's back. They saw him as taking authority in their temple. So that got the Pharisees and the Sadducees involved and the Herodians. And there were a lot of people that came together to go against Jesus and to try to put an end to his ministry.

### **Kevin Stone**

The Romans, of course, were complicit in Jesus's death. I mean, crucifixion was a Roman form of execution. The cross was constructed by the Romans. The execution was led by Romans. It was Roman hands that nailed Jesus to the cross and Romans that kept guard and a Roman soldier that pierced his side and all the rest. And then Pilate, of course, being a Roman and also the one in

charge of a couple of the trials that Jesus was forced through, he was complicit and he had the responsibility to administer justice. He fails miserably and for whatever reason, Pilate lets Jesus be executed. Even after Pilate says at least three times that this is an innocent man, he says, I find no cause in him worthy of death. There's nothing that he's done that would necessitate a crucifixion. And yet he has him scourged and then delivers him over to the soldiers to be crucified. So Pilate bears a big responsibility in all of this as well.

### **Kevin Stone**

Then there was the mob, the crowd that was there on hand when Jesus was being tried before Pilate. And Scripture says that the religious leaders stirred up that crowd in order to get what they wanted, which was Jesus' crucifixion. So the mob starts crying out, crucify him, crucify him. At that point, the mob mentality takes over, but it was stirred up again by the religious leaders that were there that hated Jesus and wanted to see him dead. And so the mob is complicit as well in all of this.

### **Kevin Stone**

And then as Jeff mentioned, God was the one who allowed all of this. In fact, Peter brings this out in his sermon in Acts chapter two, the day of Pentecost. Peter says, this man, speaking of Jesus, was handed over to you, speaking to a Jewish crowd, gathered at Pentecost. This man, Jesus, was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. And you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. That's Acts two and verse 23.

### **Kevin Stone**

So Peter kind of fingers a lot of different people here. He says there was the crowd in Jerusalem, there were wicked men, that's a reference to the Romans. But also he mentions that this was God's plan. This was God's deliberate plan of salvation being enacted as Jesus was led away to be crucified. And this plan went back before the foundation of the world, Scripture says. The Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. It was always God's plan that his perfect son would provide that sacrifice needed for sin. And of course, Jesus went to this cross willingly. He prayed about it in Gethsemane. Father, if there's any other way, if it is possible for the redemption of the world to happen apart from all of this suffering, all of this

pain, then I would choose that. Jesus ended the prayer three times with, not my will, but yours be done.

### **Kevin Stone**

And then Jesus says to his disciples, I can call the armies of heaven to come and rescue me. And you can bet that those angels were wanting to come and rescue Jesus. They didn't like what was happening down there, but Jesus refrains. He was going to do the will of the Father. So Jesus willingly laid down his life and fulfilled the Father's plan, and it involved a lot of wicked people.

### **Kevin Stone**

When I say there's a lot of blame to go around, I mean, there's a lot of blame to go all around because ultimately, it also comes down to every person in this world. We're all sinners, and it was sin that sent Jesus to the cross. It was Jesus bearing the sins of the world that led to his crucifixion. And so we are all culpable, we are all to blame, we are all complicit in the death of Christ simply by the fact that we are sinners, and our sin needed to be atoned for by a God who loves us.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Kevin, well said. That's an excellent summary of there's a lot of blame to go around. In the movie, The Passion of the Christ, in the scene where Jesus is actually being crucified with the nails being driven through his hands and feet, the director, Mel Gibson, actually had his hands were the ones you see holding the hammer and driving the nails. And he said, I did that because I wanted a reminder to me that ultimately it was my sins that crucified Christ.

### **Shea Houdmann**

And so with all the blame to go around, whether the Jews, the Romans, it being the Father's will, etc., ultimately, it was our sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. It was our sins that crucified him. And ultimately, we're to be grateful for that. I mean, in the church history, there's a time in the Crusades where the European Christians were coming down, their ultimate goal was to free the holy land of Muslims, but they ended up persecuting and killing and murdering Jews as well. And they say, well, because you were the ones who crucified Jesus.

### **Shea Houdmann**

And so like this, I can see how this thing has been used throughout history. But to me, that concept is so ridiculous because were it not for Jesus

being crucified for our sins, we would not have salvation. So to me, the whole anti—using the Jews killed Jesus for anti-Semitism doesn't make any sense because we know, one, it was Father's will, and two, ultimately, we know it resulted in our salvation.

### **Shea Houdmann**

That doesn't mean we have to be thankful, like, yeah, I'm so glad the Jews crucified Jesus, but at the same time, we are to be very glad. And when I look at maybe a single verse to kind of summarize all of this, for me, it's Genesis 50, 20, where it says, As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. And so, yes, the Jews, the Jewish leaders, the Romans, the crowds, they meant this for evil. Crucifying, murdering Jesus was an evil act, but behind the scenes the entire time, God meant it for good. So to use something that God meant for good as an excuse for persecuting the people who crucified Jesus, it doesn't make any sense. It's not biblical at all.

### **Shea Houdmann**

And then ultimately, you have to remember, Jesus was a Jew. His twelve apostles were Jews. The very early church was predominantly Jewish. Were there not for Jews, the church would not exist. Salvation would not exist. God's plan throughout the whole Old Testament revolved around the nation of Israel. Jesus, again, he was a Jew. Paul, the one who wrote the epistles in the New Testament that we rely on for our doctrines, I was the Jew of all Jews. So anti-Semitism is foreign to the Bible. There's not a hint of we are to be angry or hostile towards Jews because of Jesus' crucifixion. It's just completely antithetical to the gospel, to the message of the Bible, Old and New Testament. There is no excuse, biblically speaking, for there to be even a hint of anti-Semitism among followers of Jesus Christ.

### **Kevin Stone**

Jews are, in fact, a blessed people according to Scripture. Paul asks the question in Romans chapter 11, did God reject his people, by no means? And then he says, I'm an Israelite myself, descendant of Abraham, Isaac, tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people whom he foreknew. Of course, we've got the Abrahamic covenant all the way back in Genesis where God blesses Abraham and his descendants. The Jews are not a cursed people, they are a blessed people, and he has not in any sense rejected them.

### **Jeff Laird**

Not only has he not rejected them, but we can see how absurd some of these anti-Semitic concepts are. For example, Paul in Romans 11 saying, I'm a Jew, God has not rejected Israel. We have all these historical things, and yet it's strange that there would even be an assumption that when somebody says something like, the Jews killed Jesus, that that would immediately strike to somebody in a racist or a hateful way.

### **Jeff Laird**

I'm sure historians will jump all over me if I make the tiniest mistake, so fire up your keyboard warrior keyboards. But if I say something like the Chinese invented gunpowder, I don't know of anybody who would sort of instinctively think that that means that every person of Chinese descent I meet, I'm crediting with the invention of gunpowder. Or if I say the Spanish or the Portuguese or the British took over Native American tribes in America, that doesn't mean that I'm looking at somebody living in Portugal and saying, I hold you accountable for whatever. And we sort of just instinctively recognize that. Nobody just takes it that way.

### **Jeff Laird**

But for some reason, this world has been so irrationally hateful to Jewish people that a statement like the Jews killed Jesus just seems to lend itself to something that it doesn't really even mean. And that as we've established, scripture does not support. There's nothing in Christianity that actually does that.

### **Jeff Laird**

But in history, you see a lot of that with antisemitism. The concept of blood libel was an issue for a long time where people would accuse Jewish people of stealing children and draining their blood to use them in their cooking and things like that, which is mind blowing when you consider how adamantly against drinking or eating blood the Old Testament is. That is something that's literally contrary to the entire history of the nation. But people were so rabidly hateful of God's people that they wanted to find some reason to do that.

### **Jeff Laird**

So I can understand why we're trying to take steps to to sort of curb or to move away from these antisemitic ideas, because it is it is pervasive. It is hateful. It is terrible. So many awful things in history have been connected to an antisemitic attitude. I suppose that what I would be concerned with is

exactly what we do and how we do it. And I, I suppose that gets a little to the political side.

**Jeff Laird**

And we are not a political ministry, but there are times where things sort of overlap. And the comments that I was making here about things like the Chinese and gunpowder, the Portuguese and that, I would find it hard to to automatically assume if I heard somebody say, the Jews killed Jesus, I might wince a little bit because I know how some people are going to take that. But I would not assume that that is somehow a racist statement, because in the context, we understand what it means. So I get that it's a complicated thing. It's it's it's going to become interesting for us to try to sort of handle this issue with tact.

**Kevin Stone**

That's good.

**Shea Houdmann**

No, and that's exactly right. Jeff, what you talked about the very beginning to me is like it's really standing out to me is that how do we not say anything that would lend itself to racism? So in any way, promote anti-Semitism, knowing that some people can take almost anything and make it a motivation for evil at the same time of speaking the truth. And the New Testament, as we've gone through, ascribes some guilt for Jesus' crucifixion to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They were part of the blame to go around.

**Shea Houdmann**

Were they the entirety of it? No. And ultimately, this was God's will. You could blame the father, the eternal God of heaven, more so than you could blame the Jews, because he he allowed it. He willed it. He ordained it. He could have prevented it at any moment. And he didn't. So how do you how do you speak the truth on something like this without lending itself to that? One, with the governmental laws, like you said, Jeff, we're not a political organization. We're definitely not a political podcast. But the idea of, well, you can't say that, that's that's exceedingly dangerous. We never want to endorse certain things you can or cannot say, especially when the statement is factually true to an extent, obviously, with the limitations we've been discussing. So how can you do it? I don't know that the three of us are going to come up with the perfect

solution, but I know banning people from saying the Jews killed Jesus, that is not the solution.

### **Shea Houdmann**

I think ideally, let's have a conversation of what Jesus' crucifixion really meant, who was responsible, who was involved, who shares the blame and ultimately what was the result, which is the salvation of everyone who believes in him.

So I would love for that to be the focus of this conversation. But as we all know, that's not ultimately going to be the focus of this conversation, especially in a political sense.

### **Jeff Laird**

And I'm also the type who I tend to think we want to be careful to resist the abuse of something. So if some group tries to co-opt some symbol or picture or sign and we decide to say, oh, well, now that that's associated with them, every use of that ever is always evil. Again, we are not political, but I do remember it wasn't that long ago when the the sign that used to be referred to as OK, you make a circle with your thumb and your forefinger and the three other fingers were up. That my entire life growing up just meant OK is what it meant. At some point in time, people of a certain political persuasion decided to start sort of using that or it was more that they were blamed for that. They weren't even the ones who were doing it. But somebody said, oh, that's a symbol of this thing. And then that group sort of took it on and said, yeah, this is part of it. And then all of a sudden, every time a single human being ever did that, it was somehow associated with all of the terrible things that people associated with that group.

### **Jeff Laird**

It's the same kind of thing I think we want to be careful with. So, Shea, you were mentioning a phrase like Christ is king. You know, I understand culturally where somebody would try to say you can't say the Jews killed Jesus. I don't think I would agree. Like you said, it's dangerous to go that route. But I think any of that sort of falls in that same category. You're you're you're taking something that bad people have corrupted and co-opted and you are deciding that you're just going to punish everybody for using it when the context doesn't even have anything to do with that. And I get there's limits to the things that we can and can't say for safety reasons and things like that. But it's it's concerning as a believer to think that things that we could say that are

very biblical and are not meant with any ill intent could wind up being illegal in some misguided effort to protect somebody.

### **Kevin Stone**

It's like in a conversation, sometimes you have to start off by defining terms, make sure we're all on the same page. We have to do that with symbols now. And I think in this age of of the soundbite era where everything wants to, you know, people try to reduce everything to like one little sentence, you know, and then people are communicating back and forth with soundbites as if that is the whole discussion. If that is all the information, that's all there is to know on the subject, that that is dangerous because especially like in an issue like this, things really do have to be discussed. Things have to be delved into. We have to understand the contextual meanings of these different phrases that we're using that the Bible uses. And I think we just need to get back to the place where we're engaging in conversation and having having real and meaningful discussions and not just trying to, you know, go by slogans and and assign meanings to those.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Kevin, well said. Defining terms. If you're going to say in our current culture, the Jews killed Jesus, probably wise for you to clarify what you do and don't mean by that phrase. Same thing. Sadly, if Christ is King continues to be used in an anti-Semitic sense, that would require some clarification. It's a travesty that it would. But ultimately, if we're speaking the truth, we need to make sure people are using the same definitions of terms that we are.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So in summary, and then I would again invite you to go back and watch our episode on anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism ultimately is satanic. You look through the history, world history, how many times the Jews have been under attack, under threat of annihilation. You can go back to the days of Esther where Haman decided, I want to wipe out all the Jews. You can look at more recently in the Holocaust. Satan has tried this again and again and again. Obviously, there's no direct attempt at another Holocaust right now because Israel is well equipped to defend itself. But this anti-Semitic fervor that's going around the world could very well lead to another event like that. And it's just an example of Satan attempting to do this again and again and again, and God defeating him again and again and again, because God has a

plan for the nation of Israel. God has a plan for the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We believe that Christ will reign over a thousand year kingdom from Israel. Nothing is going to thwart that. But the anti-Semitism we're seeing, it's not a matter of who killed Jesus or who was responsible for Christ's death or who crucified Jesus. That is a biblical issue. That is ultimately a theological issue that it's true. But as Kevin so eloquently said, there's plenty of blame to go around. The Jews are not to blame for Jesus' crucifixion.

### **Shea Houdmann**

Ultimately, our sins are to blame for Jesus' crucifixion. My sins, Jeff's sins, Kevin's sins, your sins are what nailed Jesus to the cross. So we're ultimately responsible. Remember, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Remember that Christ could have prevented this. Christ could have called 10,000 angels at any moment to rescue him. But no, he willingly sacrificed himself to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, that includes your sins and my sins.

### **Shea Houdmann**

So this whole, the Jews killed Jesus, ultimately is not an anti-Semitic statement. But with that said, let's just be careful to define our terms when that statement is said to clarify what we mean and what we don't mean. Because God loves the nation of Israel, God has a plan for the nation of Israel, and that plan will never be defeated.

### **Shea Houdmann**

I hope our conversation today has been helpful, encouraging, and educational for you about what's going on and how maybe we can process it in a biblical way. Got questions? The Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.