



## The Death of the Messiah

March 14, 2006

- Historical reservations
- One historiographical reconstruction
- Why?
- Discussion: Gospel accounts and developments

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## Death of Jesus: Historiographical reservations

- General considerations:
  - Divergences between gospel traditions
  - Significance of events for tellers
- Lack of eyewitnesses for some matters:
  - Disciples forsake; at most Peter (and Jn: Disciple) is in courtyard of High Priest while tried
  - Mark (etc.): Crucifixion seen by women (...) **from a distance** (cf. John 19:25–27, Marys and disciple)
- Biblical typology: Gospel writers sought meaning and models in Scripture
  - John: Jesus a passover sacrifice (no bones broken)
  - Psalm 22, e.g.:
    - "Why have you forsaken me";
    - "Let him [God] deliver him";
    - piercing of hands and feet;
    - "they divided my garments"

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## Death of Jesus: One historical reconstruction

- Roman authorities (Pontius Pilate) executed Jesus
- Temple authorities (High Priests) turned over a "troublemaker"

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## Roman authorities execute Jesus

- “King of the Jews”  
A **political and religious** rejection of Roman rule
- Romans executed other prophetic figures in Palestine enacting God’s coming victory
- NB Jesus may be exceptional in that he **alone** and **not** followers cut down
- Note **development** in Gospels:
  - Luke reorders mat’l, so that Jews carry out execution
  - John the Jews carry out execution

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## Temple authorities turned over a “troublemaker”

- **Note:** Not “the Jews.” Synoptics have crowd stirred up by high priests.
- Informal interrogation by priests in John (vs. Synoptics, esp. Luke: Council (Sanhedrin)) Guilt of Jewish contemporaries a **Christian** concern
- John 11:47–50. Logic of collusion:  
“What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. <sup>48</sup>If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.” ... “You know nothing at all; <sup>50</sup>you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.”

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## Death of Jesus: Why?

- Messianic/eschatological claims affront both Jewish and Roman leaderships:
  - Triumphant entry into Jerusalem (“Son of David”)
  - Explicitly of self in Mark 14:62 (“I am”)
  - Accusation: Destruction and rebuilding of Temple (Cf. Jn 2:19)
- Undercurrent of violence in the gospel account:
  - Followers (Jn: Simon Peter!) have a sword
  - Call for swords (Lk 22:36)
  - Overturning tables of money-changers
- Net assessment:  
Roman suppression of a messianic/prophetic figure, with collusion of some of Jewish leadership

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## Discussion: Gospel accounts and developments

Talk amongst your selves ....

- What are some of the major differences between accounts?
  - Events
  - Responsible parties
- Is there significance to these differences?

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