



Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: The Turning Point in Western History

David Klinghoffer

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Why did the Jews reject Jesus? Was he really the son of God? Were the Jews culpable in his death? These ancient questions have been debated for almost two thousand years, most recently with the release of Mel Gibson's explosive *The Passion of the Christ*. The controversy was never merely academic. The legal status and security of Jews—often their very lives—depended on the answer.

In **WHY THE JEWS REJECTED JESUS**, David Klinghoffer reveals that the Jews since ancient times accepted not only the historical existence of Jesus but the role of certain Jews in bringing about his crucifixion and death. But he also argues that they had every reason to be skeptical of claims for his divinity.

For one thing, Palestine under Roman occupation had numerous charismatic would-be messiahs, so Jesus would not have been unique, nor was his following the largest of its kind. For another, the biblical prophecies about the coming of the Messiah were never fulfilled by Jesus, including an ingathering of exiles, the rise of a Davidic king who would defeat Israel's enemies, the building of a new Temple, and recognition of God by the gentiles. Above all, the Jews understood their biblically commanded way of life, from which Jesus's followers sought to "free" them, as precious, immutable, and eternal.

Jews have long been blamed for Jesus's death and stigmatized for rejecting him. But Jesus lived and died a relatively obscure figure at the margins of Jewish society. Indeed, it is difficult to argue that "the Jews" of his day rejected Jesus at all, since most Jews had never heard of him. The figure they really rejected, often violently, was Paul, who convinced the Jerusalem church led by Jesus's brother to jettison the observance of Jewish law. Paul thus founded a new religion. If not for him, Christianity would likely have remained a Jewish movement, and the course of history itself would have been changed. Had the Jews accepted Jesus, Klinghoffer speculates, Christianity would not have conquered Europe, and there would be no Western civilization as we know it.

WHY THE JEWS REJECTED JESUS tells the story of this long, acrimonious, and occasionally deadly debate between Christians and Jews. It is thoroughly engaging, lucidly written, and in many ways highly original. Though written from a Jewish point of view, it is also profoundly respectful of Christian sensibilities. Coming at a time when Christians and Jews are in some ways moving closer than ever before, this thoughtful and provocative book represents a genuine effort to heal the ancient rift between these two great faith traditions.

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