



BIBLE REFLECTIONS

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Issue 1

This Newsletter

The purpose of this Newsletter is to provide you with answers to certain biblical facts which have been misconstrued or misunderstood.

Q: Who are our readers?

A: Anyone interested in matters of faith.

Q: What will our readers want to know?

A: Timely, helpful, problem-solving information regarding the Bible.

The world of social media has alerted us to the insidious phenomenon popularly known as 'fake news'. This is where an idea is introduced, usually via some unverified video, which is assumed to be true. The video is then shared multiple times until it goes viral. After which it is assumed to be 'fact' and therefore 'true'! A reputable media outlet is governed by higher principles such as fact checking or verifying contents. However, this does not always happen, and the consequences are devastating at both personal and geo-political levels. As we pour through the annals of human, particularly church, history we discover numerous such 'fake news' which became 'tradition' and have impacted the faith of believers for generations. In this monthly Newsletter I explore some significant Christian 'fake news' items which have adversely coloured our understanding of God, gospel teaching and our relationship with him. This phenomenon catches us in numerous guises, theologically significant and innocuous things. Each month, I will highlight a single well-rehearsed sample.

Fake News: 'The Jews killed Jesus.' For Christian leaders from about AD 80 to AD 420, the task was to define, explain and identify this fledgling new religion known to us today as Christianity. The initial Roman Empire view of Christianity as *religia illicita* (illegal religion) compelled church leaders and thinkers to do two things, break off their Jewish ancestry and create a new identity. The most significant effort in this regard was carried out by so called apologists, Christian scholars who wrote voluminously on the subject. The most celebrated apologist was Justin Martyr (about AD 100-165) and his views on this reflected the mood of the church. He vilified the Jews, blasted them for rejecting and 'killing' Jesus, even gloated over the destruction of the Temple as 'just punishment' and inadvertently set in motion Christian anti-Semitism which has survived to this day. We can still hear 'the Jews killed Jesus' trope being preached from 21st century pulpits.

Fact Check: Historical facts tell a different story. The Jewish religious establishment wanted Jesus gone but had no real power to accomplish this, so they blackmailed Pontius Pilate to do their dirty work. Literally, the Romans ordered and carried out the crucifixion of Jesus. The reverse side of the coin tells another story. Jesus was a Jew. All 12 apostles were Jews. Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, was a Jew. The first community of believers (thousands of them) were all Jews. Certain Pharisees (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) and Levites (Joseph Barnabas) became Christians. It is disingenuous to suggest that all Jews were culpable in Jesus' crucifixion.

I am drawn to the following assertion of Paul, 'What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with my understanding.' (1 Cor 14.15 HCSB). I suggest this maxim should be our *modus operandi* when we contemplate theological and biblical truths. In a world filled with 'fake news', the Church should be the bearer of real good news not more 'fake news'.

