

Don't back down!

Jesus and the authorities were never going to get on! Jesus won't stop courageously delivering the Good News of the already present Kingdom of God, and, after his temple challenge, events seem inevitable. The authorities were always going to get rid of him, but they wanted to carry out the operation without causing a major riot. Waiting a few days, they arrest Jesus on trumped up charges with a guilty verdict and execution a forgone conclusion. (Peaceful protesters around the world get similar treatment from 21st century bullies and dictators).

Mark's "Passion Narrative" in the Palm Sunday gospel (*Mark 14:1-15:47*) gives us a complete account of Jesus final days, his trial, death and resurrection. Jesus has opportunities to back down, avoiding suffering, humiliation and death, but he is on a mission.

From this and the other gospels, we know the story with the eyes of faith, but what does history tell us? Serious scholars, whether Christian or not, agree that Jesus certainly existed. Disinterested and non-Christian sources support the bare bones of our gospel accounts and many of the events we Christians attribute to him are historically verifiable.

One thing is certain: he was condemned to death during the reign of Tiberius, by the governor Pontius Pilate. We have that information from Tacitus, the famous Roman historian. Getting rid of the leader should have scared off his followers and sympathisers. But Flavius Josephus (the famous Romanised Jewish writer) "says the same thing, and adds some interesting details: Jesus "attracted many Jews and many people of Greek origin. And when Pilate, because of an accusation lodged by some of our leaders, condemned him to the cross, those who loved him did not stop loving him." (*Pagola p353*). Soon after fleeing in disarray, those Jews and Greeks are back! They (and we) experience an astounding Easter surprise!

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