

The Crucifixion and Anti-Semitism

Intro: The renewed presentation of the crucifixion in “The Passion of the Christ” has fostered a renewed discussion of the subject of anti-semitism. Let’s take a moment to explain the origin of the term.

The Jewish people are descendants of Shem; thus, they are a part of a larger group of people called “Semites”.

To be anti-semitic is to “against” Jews (in particular).

Anti-semitism then is the attitude of animosity or hatred toward Jews.

The crucifixion has been erroneously used to justify persecution and mistreatment of Jews.

Both Jesus and His apostles had an attitude of love toward those who crucified Jesus.

The Attitude of Jesus

Jesus died to save the Jews.

“And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

God offered the gospel first to them.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

The Attitude of the apostles

They did not refrain from charging them with crucifying Jesus; but they acknowledged that the Jews were fulfilling the sovereign purpose of God.

They acknowledged that the crucifixion had been committed in ignorance and out of a spiritual hardening.

But they urged them to repent and be forgiven and not allow hardness of heart to continue.

Ac. 2:38

Ac. 3:19

Ac. 13:

The NT shows that God’s just wrath was visited upon the Jews who crucified His Son and persecuted His church.

Jesus predicted this day of wrath

The apostles announced the coming of this day of wrath

The book of Revelation announces the fulfillment of this day of wrath on the “harlot”, the city “where our Lord was also crucified” (Rev. 11:

The sins of the ancient Jewish leadership provide no ground for racial hatred or persecution of Jews at any other time.

Racism against Jews violates the principle of personal accountability found in the Scriptures.

It is ironic that it took a Vatican council to clarify this self-evident point of Scripture.

Racism against Jews violates the principle of love for all that Jesus lived and taught. It is ironic that the crucifixion of Jesus should serve as the basis for hatred of Jews.

His message is one of love for all mankind, not racism and hatred.

Conclusion: It is not necessary or proper to re-write history to avoid the undesirable consequence of anti-semitism. Yet it is important to stress to all around us that the historical persecution of Jews “in Jesus’ name” is without Jesus’ authority or sanction. Instead the Lord has taught us to love the sinner and seek to lead him to repentance and salvation.