

Yale Prof: Jesus Was Crucified Because Disciples Were Armed

Jesus may have been crucified because his followers were carrying weapons, according to a scholarly analysis of New Testament books.

Dale Martin, a professor of religious studies at Yale University, says that this aspect of stories about Jesus, as told in the gospels, has received too little attention, but could alone explain Jesus's execution and also show that the man from Nazareth was not the pacifist he's usually made out to be.

The biblical books of Mark and Luke both state that at least one (and probably two or more) of Jesus's followers was carrying a sword when Jesus was arrested shortly after the Last Supper, at the time of the Jewish festival of Passover. One disciple, Simon Peter, even used his sword to cut off the ear of one of those arresting Jesus, according to the Gospel of John.

This militant behavior almost certainly wouldn't have been tolerated by the Romans, led by the prefect Pontius Pilate, Martin tells *Newsweek*. For example, historical documents show that it was illegal at the time to walk about armed in Rome and in some other Roman cities. Although no legal records survive from Jerusalem, it stands to reason, based on a knowledge of Roman history, that the region's rulers would have frowned upon the carrying of swords, and especially wouldn't have tolerated an armed band of Jews roaming the city during Passover, an often turbulent festival, Martin says.

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