

DEATH



Who killed Jesus? Like a loaded gun, this question was bandied about in anticipation of the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. From pinstriped preachers to politically correct pundits, experts took aim at the age-old question.

Isaiah tells us Jesus was “smitten of God” and, in fact, that “the LORD was pleased to crush Him” (Isaiah 53:4, 10 NASB). How can this be? How could God smite His own Son, and take pleasure in doing so? To grasp this, we must survey the sweeping scope of the gospel story, one that began before the foundation of the world.

In the beginning there was only God, the eternal Other so grand and glorious that He took supreme delight in displaying and exalting His own beauty. In need of nothing, He created a world, and made man in His image that we might know the joy of experiencing and extolling His worth. But instead, we scorned Him, seeking to satisfy our souls with things like sex and success and cars and clothes and careers and a multitude of other, lesser loves.

What shall a God, who loves His glory *and* the sinners who disdain it, do? His holiness demands He exact a price commensurate with both the magnitude of the offense and His extravagant worth. And so, in a mystery humankind will never completely understand or fully appreciate, Almighty God crushes His own Son, the only feasible propitiation.

The joy set before Jesus as He endured the Cross, and His Father’s pleasure in putting Him to death, was the vindication of His honor while saving the sinners He loved, the very ones who had sullied that honor. May the wonder of this settle upon us as we journey with Jesus these final moments.