

Killing Jesus

A unique book has recently been released titled *Killing Jesus*. It is written by Bill O'Reilly, the host of the television show, "The O'Reilly Factor" on Fox News. Besides being a political commentator, Mr. O'Reilly has been a newspaper journalist and history teacher. He has written several books, including best sellers *Killing Lincoln* and *Killing Kennedy*.

Like those other two books, he does not form an opinion on each subject and lets the reader draw his or her own conclusions about the person. He emphasizes that the books are history books about very complex personalities, the forces aligned against them, and their lasting impact on society.

In "Killing Jesus", O'Reilly draws references from many sources, not just the Gospels. He goes to great lengths to describe the socio-economic and political atmosphere at the time Jesus lived his short life. The Romans ruled with a very strong and ruthless fist all over the world, but especially in Palestine and the very economically depressed region of Galilee. The Romans showed no mercy, but did permit Herod to have a shadow rein. The Romans did also permit the priests to have some leeway, but, as always, they set limits and did not permit free rein. This was mainly to not challenge their Jewish religion and culture to the point of provoking them to rise up in rebellion. Absolute Roman governance was always there and Herod and the priests knew their limits.

Most of the Sadducees and Pharisees masqueraded as "Holy Men", but were corrupt and grew rich from the Temple. They were very apprehensive about any challenge to their status quo, both as keepers of religious law and positions of power. Herod and Herod Antipas were also always wary of any challenge to their power.

So when Jesus started appealing to the masses, they became even more leery of him as a threat, even though he never suggested any civil unrest.

The book did talk at length about his selection of his followers, his teachings and his attracting the masses through his example and teachings. As his following increased, those Jews in power began to fear his influence, especially when he called them out to be hypocrites.

The book was very thorough in the description of his arrest, his trial (not performed under the law), and his execution. The book ends when the women find the empty tomb.

Thus, O'Reilly leaves it to the reader to draw any conclusion about his divinity. O'Reilly does report that Jesus on many occasions referred to himself as God incarnate. This book certainly presents a unique viewpoint to examine the man, without being told that he is the Son of God or God Himself. Those who lived in that day (without the hindsight of history) would be viewing him in this manner. However, it is difficult to draw any other conclusion when Jesus is examined this way.

In the Afterword chapter, O'Reilly goes into great detail about the change in the disciples after Jesus's death. "After the crucifixion, the disciples of Jesus underwent a radical shift in behavior. They were quite positive that they had seen a resurrected Jesus and soon went out into the world and fearlessly preached his message. Known as the apostles, they paid a tremendous price for their faith".

In an age where there are multitudes of perhaps better books written about Jesus, this book, in less than a month, has become the largest selling book in the world. This is evidence that millions of people do want to know about Jesus.