Who Killed Jesus?
Scripture: Acts 2
Code: BQ42211

This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:23)

In this verse Peter answers an objection that would arise in the minds of his listeners. If Jesus was the Messiah, why was He a victim? Why did He not use His power to avoid the cross? Peter's reply to this unspoken objection is that Jesus was no victim (John 10:17–18; 19:10–11); rather, He was **delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.**

Ekdotos (**delivered up**) appears only here in the New Testament. It describes those surrendered to their enemies, or betrayed. God gave His Son to be the Savior of the world, which entailed delivering Him to His enemies. By the design of God, Jesus was betrayed by Judas into the hands of the Jewish leaders, who handed Him over to the Romans for execution.

Predetermined is from *horiz,* from which we get our English word "horizon." It means "to mark out with a boundary," or "to determine." **Plan** is from *boulomai* and refers to God's will, design, or purpose. Taken together they indicate that Jesus Christ was delivered to death because God planned and ordained it (Acts 4:27–28; 13:27–29) from all eternity (2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8).

Foreknowledge translates *prognsis,* an important and often misunderstood New Testament word. It means far more than knowing beforehand what will happen. Significantly, the word appears here in the instrumental dative case. That shows that it was the means by which Christ's deliverance to His enemies took place. Yet, mere knowledge cannot perform such an act. Foreordination can act, however, and that is the New Testament meaning of *prognsis*.

The idea that God saw in advance that Israel would reject and crucify Christ and worked that into His eternal plan is a implicit denial both of His sovereignty and omniscience (cf. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 68).

Peter strongly emphasizes the point that Jesus was delivered to death by God's eternal plan. That being the case, His death in no way contradicted His messianic claims.

That Jesus Christ was delivered to death by God's predetermined plan, however, does not absolve those who put Him to death of their guilt. Peter goes on to indict them because they nailed Jesus **to a cross … and put Him to death.** They were the instigators of Jesus' execution, which **by the hands**

of godless (Literally, “lawless”) Romans was carried out.

God used evil men to accomplish His purpose, yet never violated their will or removed their culpability by doing so. Peter thus presents the total sovereignty of God alongside the complete responsibility of man. That apparently paradoxical truth is affirmed throughout Scripture and is illustrated in Luke 22:22. Speaking of His betrayer there, our Lord said, “The Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man through whom He is betrayed!” Men are responsible not for God’s plans but for their own sins.

The heinous sin of rejecting Jesus Christ was the blackest moment in Israel’s history. Far from casting doubt on His messianic credentials, however, that betrayal was part of God’s eternal plan. And though Peter does not develop the thought here, the Old Testament clearly teaches that Messiah had to die (cf. Ps. 22; Isa. 53). The death of Jesus Christ, no less than His life, confirmed that He was the Messiah.

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