

**LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #48**  
**"The Battle of the Cross" (Part Two)**  
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Acts 4:23-28:

***And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:***

***'Why did the nations rage,  
And the people plot vain things?  
The kings of the earth took their stand,  
And the rulers were gathered together  
Against the Lord and against His Christ.'***

***'For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done..''***

I Corinthians 2:7-10:

***But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.  
But as it is written:***

***"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."***

***But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.***

**INTRODUCTION:** In our last lesson, we began to look at the time line of the events leading to the battle of the cross. In doing so, we looked at how Satan tried to have Jesus killed on at least four occasions before His hour would come for His death on the cross. There Christ would die under the curse of God's law. We also saw how Satan would tempt Jesus to depart from His obedience to His Father's will and embrace the principles of Satan's kingdom, thereby bringing Him under the curse of God's law.

While the multitudes were sympathetic to Christ's ministry, the Jewish leaders were not only offended, but enraged, and began to try to come up with a plan in which they could dispose of Jesus without losing the support of the people. As the ordained hour of His death was approaching, Jesus began to repeat several times the prediction of His impending death. In so doing, He was adding certain details as time went on. He finally said He would not only suffer and die, but He would die through the means of crucifixion,

which was the Roman method of execution.

We left off with the betrayal of Judas. Before we proceed to follow on with the chronology of events within the Passion week, I wish to give the evidence that Satan was involved as the instigator of the Jewish plot or conspiracy. I am doing so because of those who hold to the belief that Satan did not want Jesus to go to the cross because he knew it would be his doom if He did. They support their view by saying that the Scripture is silent on the matter and that what I am teaching is pure speculation. I welcome their concern and accept their challenge.

## A. THE SATANIC ORIGIN OF THE JEWISH PLOT

1. The question restated: Did Satan want Jesus to go to the cross, or not to go to the cross? There are only two possible answers, yes or no.

2. Position One: Satan did not want Jesus to go to the cross. This is the majority view. It is the view held by John MacArthur, a most prominent Bible teacher, and one in whom I hold in high esteem. In his *Commentary on Matthew*, Vol. 4, pp. 171, 172, he states his case. I agree with most of his statements. He does acknowledge Satan's activity in the life of Jesus. He affirms that Satan's purpose was singular in that he wanted Jesus to disobey God wherein He would not be able to be the Savior of sinners. Thus, this position holds that all of Satan's attacks were only designed to prevent Jesus from going to the cross.

a. First quote: MacArthur affirms the Satanic activity in the death of Christ.

He says:

Although Satan's activity is not mentioned in this event by the gospel writers, his evil presence is fully evidenced by the fact that he entered Judas (John 13:27), who went out from the upper room to carry out the betrayal. His words and activity are not recorded, but we can be certain of his participation and of his intent.

b. Second quote:

Satan sought to make Him disobey God and to rebel as he had done. He knew that in Christ's obedience to the Father was his (Satan's) own destruction. Therefore the intent of every temptation of Jesus was to lead Him away from the cross God had planned.

c. Third quote:

Jesus told the chief priests and the officers of the temple when they came to arrest Him. **"This is your hour, and the power of darkness."** (Luke 22:53). That was Satan's hour, and by the Father's permission he attacked

the Son with the full power of his malevolence (ma-lev'-e-ence). Satan's purpose was to induce Jesus to compromise His holiness and to relinquish submission to the Father and thereby deflect Him from the cross. God's purpose, on the other hand, was to prove the Son's righteousness and to demonstrate the Son's power over the severest temptations Satan could devise. Scripture nowhere teaches that Satan plotted to kill Jesus; rather His death was by God's foreordained plan (cf. Acts 2:22,23), which Satan wanted to thwart. Once it became apparent that he could not prevent the Lord's death, Satan did all he could to make that death permanent. And when he failed at that, and Jesus arose, he inspired a conspiracy to deny His resurrection. (See Matthew 28:11-15).

3. Position Two: (My position) Satan did want Jesus to go to the cross, and at a certain point in the latter part of Jesus life, Satan began to devise a plot or conspiracy to bring about the crucifixion by putting it into the hearts of the Jewish and Roman leaders to do so in the similar manner in which he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him.

a. Here are some observations on MacArthur's position:

(1) He and I agree that Satan was actively involved in Christ's plan to suffer and die on the cross.

(2) We disagree when he says that "all of Satan's attacks were designed to prevent Jesus from going to the cross." I believe that some of his attacks were designed to put Jesus on the cross so He would be placed under the curse of God.

(3) I disagree completely with MacArthur's statement that "Scripture nowhere teaches that Satan plotted to kill Jesus, rather His death was by God's foreordained plan which Satan wanted to thwart." I will show from Scripture that this statement is incorrect.

(4) MacArthur acknowledges that Satan is having to devise and change the details of his plan as time develops. This is seen when he says, "Once it became apparent that he could not prevent the Lord's death, Satan did all he could to make that death permanent, and when he failed at that, and Jesus arose, he inspired a conspiracy to deny His resurrection."

b. Here is my rebuttal of MacArthur's position:

(1) When he states that Satan was not plotting to have Jesus crucified, He completely ignores the passage in Acts 4:23-28.

***And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all***

***that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' 'For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done..'"***

(2) Here is clearly a plot devised by the Jewish rulers (people of Israel) along with the Roman rulers, namely Herod and Pontius Pilate. It is said they were ***"gathered together."*** The Greek word for "gathered together." Is used for:

(a) the gathering of the harvest - Matthew 25:24 ***"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed."***

(b) The gathering of powerful groups determined to put Jesus to death - that is the Pharisees - John 11:47 - ***"Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.'"***

© The gathering of the chief priests - Matthew 26:3 ***"Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas."*** NOTE: It is translated "assembled" here. It comes from the word translated "synagogue" a place of assembly.

(d) The band of soldiers who arrested Jesus - Matthew 27:27 - ***"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him."***

(e) Then it is used in another informative text as it applies to the Jewish plot. It is found in Revelation 16:13-16 which describes a battle known as Armageddon. ***"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 'Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.' And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."***

NOTE: that the kings or rulers are powerful men who are activated by Satanic or demonic

powers. It is said they were "gathered together" in a plot to overthrow the Being of God! While this text does not describe the Jewish plot, it certainly shows what would be going on in the greatest conspiracy ever devised in the history of men and angels! Can we even imagine that Satan had no part in this Jewish plot to put Jesus to death? Is it not Satan who put it in the minds of these rulers to plot the death of Jesus on the cross? If Satan had nothing to do with the death of Jesus, would he not have been at least aware of the plot, and try to disrupt their plans? I submit that the Acts 4 passage supports my position.

(3) Next step in my rebuttal. MacArthur operates on the premise that Satan understood the meaning of the cross and sought to prevent Jesus from going to the cross. But then MacArthur makes this statement - *"Once it became apparent that he could not prevent the Lord's death, Satan did all he could to make that death permanent."* The expression *"when it became apparent"* is a statement which indicates that Satan is unaware of some future events and is having to change the details of His plans as events transpire. This raises the question: Did Satan understand the nature of the cross? How could he understand the outcome of the cross, and not understand the events leading up to the cross?

I believe that it has become apparent to Satan that he cannot get Jesus to disobey, and at this point, He devises the plan to bring about the crucifixion of Christ in order to have Him cursed by God in that manner. If the Jewish conspiracy is but the carrying out of the Satanic conspiracy, then all we have to do is observe how the Jewish rulers developed their plans. In doing so, we are following the beginning and development of the Satanic plot, because the two plots are one in essence. Satan is putting it into their minds how to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus.

c. Other questions relating to my position.

(1) If it be granted that Satan plotted the crucifixion of Jesus, and he now knows what happened to him at the cross, would he have ever embarked upon his plan? If we say no, then we are confessing that he did not know what the outcome of the cross was going to be! I believe this was the case. His proud heart had blinded him from knowing what the secret will of God was in the death of His Son. While Satan and the Jewish and Roman rulers were carrying out their plan, they were unaware that God was carrying out His plan. It is at this point that we connect Paul's statement in I Corinthians 2:7,8 with the Satanic and Jewish plot. There we read, ***"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*** NOTE: Paul clearly states that the rulers did not

know or understand the crucifixion of Jesus. If they had, they would not have carried out the act. Why did they not understand? Because it was hidden from them by God! It was hidden in the same manner as it was hidden from Judas leading to his betrayal. It was only after Judas realized that his motive in betraying Jesus did not work out as he planned, that he became remorseful and hung himself.

(2) I believe that Satan believed that he had conquered Christ and His kingdom when Jesus was hung on the cross and died. In reality, I think it can now be said that Satan "hung himself" when Jesus died on the cross. He thought he was bruising the head of Christ, but instead, he was only bruising Christ's heel, for it was upon the cross that the Seed of the woman bruised the head of the Serpent! The plan of the world's greatest deceiver was thwarted and the deceiver was deceived! He, who thought that if Jesus was cursed by God on the tree, now knows that Jesus was cursed, not for His own sin, but for the sins of others. Satan did not understand that in Christ's resurrection, He would be declared not guilty, since He has paid the sin debt of others, and now the law has no charges against Him.

(3) Now Christ has ascended to His throne at the right hand of God, and Satan has been cast down. Now Satan must look to the glorified God-man who is holding the office of the Moral Governor of the universe, and be tormented day and night as he realizes that he once held that position. This is what Satan's torment shall consist of when he is cast into the lake of fire, which God has prepared for him and his angels.

(4) Satan did not grasp how God could be just and punish sin, and yet be able to show mercy to guilty sinners wherein He can justify them based on the Person and Work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Satan did not understand the great doctrines of substitution, satisfaction, imputation and propitiation. But he understands them now! If he had understood them when he plotted the crucifixion of Jesus, he would certainly never have crucified the Lord of Glory.

## **B. HOLY AND UNHOLY HANDS: ACTS 4:27; 2:23**

1. Hands are the mechanism of the body which carry out the plans and purposes sent to them by the brain. In the crucifixion of Jesus, we see both the hands of God and the hands of men at work. This shows how God can predestinate (pre-determine) the future, and yet men are both accountable and responsible for their actions. God's hands remain holy and men's hands are unholy as they relate to sinful acts.

2. Acts 4:27, 28 reads in the NKJV - ***"For truly against Your holy Servant***

***Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*** Other reliable translations are:

a. KJV 4:27, 28 reads: ***"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."***

b. NASV 4:28 reads: ***"to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."***

c. ESV 4:28 reads: ***"to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."***

d. NOTE: God's hand is a predestinating hand. It carries out the predetermining plan of God.

3. Acts 2:23 reads in the NKJV - ***"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."*** Other reliable translations are:

a. KJV 2:23 reads: ***"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."***

b. NASV 2:23 reads: ***"this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."***

c. ESV 2:23 reads: ***"this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."***

d. NOTE: Although wicked men, both Jews and Gentiles, had by their wills put Jesus to death, their actions were within the sovereign determination or will of God. While God ordained the death of His Son, the immediate offenders bear the guilt for crucifying Jesus. God ordains the means, as well as the ends, of human actions without violating human freedom and responsibility. The failure to understand these two doctrines

and yet, at the same time, affirm their inter-connection, has led to much unnecessary strife among Bible teachers. Hyper-Calvinists deny the free agency and moral accountability of man, and Hyper-Arminians deny the absolute sovereignty of God in ordaining all things which come to pass.

4. John MacArthur sets forth the harmony in which the Bible presents these concepts when he says:

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. (MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary Acts 1-12*, p. 63).