

THINKING IT THROUGH:

1. When did God make a plan to send Jesus into the world?
2. Explain whether Christ is a way to get right with God or the only way?
3. What is the proof that Christ was the One that God promised—the Messiah?
4. Who orchestrated the events surrounding Christ's life and death?
5. What was God's purpose in sending Christ into the world?
6. Why did Christ have to be born of a woman?
7. Why did Christ have to be God in order to die in our place?
8. How did Christ solve the dilemma of God's love and justice?

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Jesus is

Day 1: Read the narrative of the fall of man, Genesis 3:1-21. When man sinned, what needed to be killed for his covering?

Day 2: Read the narrative of the first Passover, Exodus 12:1-30. What did you learn about Christ?

Day 3: Read the narrative of Isaac, Genesis 22:1-19. What did you learn about sacrifice?

Day 4: Read the narrative of the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16. What did you learn about sacrifice?

Day 5: Read the narrative of Israel crossing the Jordan, Joshua 3:14-4:18. What did you learn about Christ?

Day 6: Read the prophecy, Isaiah 53. What did you learn about Christ?

Day 7: Read the narrative of Hosea and Gomer, Hosea 3:1-5. What did you learn about Christ?

Memory verse:

Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12 NIV

Lesson 5

God's Solution

GOD HAD A PLAN

Man was given the freedom to choose between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Man chose the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of evil; thus, he chose a life of sin. Before God made the world, He knew man would choose to sin, but He also had a plan to redeem mankind from sin:

*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, **according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** (Eph.3:10-11 NIV)

God knew that if He gave mankind the freedom to choose evil, they would reject and disobey Him. God could have predisposed man to do good; but He did not want to interfere with man's free choice. No matter how God would have created the world, free choice with the knowledge of evil would always lead man to choose sin. However, God still created man with free choice because God had an eternal plan which surpassed man's role as gardeners:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Ro.8:20-21 NRSV)

God's plan was that through Jesus, man could be adopted as His children. Through Jesus, man would be given a second chance to choose between slavery to sin and adoption as His children:

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. (Eph.1:4-5 NKJV)

So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son **in a body like the bodies we sinners have**. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

(Ro.8:3 NLT)

Therefore, before the creation of the world, God knew that man would sin and be sentenced to hell. However, God had a plan. He would become a man, live a perfect life, and die to pay mankind's penalty for sin.

Jesus was exactly God but in a human body:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (He.1:3 TNIV)

Even though Jesus was a man, He was far different from all mankind, for He contained all the fullness of God:

*For in Christ lives **all the fullness of God** in a human body.* (Co.2:9 NLT)

We may not be able to comprehend what the fullness of God entails, but one thing we do know is that Jesus had the very nature of God:

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider **equality with God** something to be grasped.* (Php.2:5-6 NIV)

Jesus was not beneath God, but He was God when He lowered Himself, taking the form of human likeness, assuming the relationship as a Son. Since Jesus was in nature God, His holiness prevented Him from sinning when He was tempted:

*One **who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*** (He.4:15 NASB)

Jesus had to become a man to die in our place, but He also had to be without sin in order to save mankind. In order for someone to be a savior, the person must be in a position to save. If I were drowning and you were drowning, there would be little chance of you saving me. In the same way, I cannot pay your penalty for sin because I am also guilty of sin. Likewise, you cannot pay my penalty for sin because you are also guilty of sin. Since Jesus is the fullness of God—being in very nature the one holy God—He did not sin. Because Jesus was sinless, His death can be applied to our debt of sin, paying our penalty:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that **we could be made right with God** through Christ. (2Co.5:21 NLT)

God loved us so much that He became a man, lived a holy life, and then died in our place in order to appease His perfect standard of justice:

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1Pe 3:18 TNIV)

Christ became a man to die in our place. He took the physical form of a man in order to restore our relationship with God. However, He could not give up the holy nature of God because then He would cease being God:

Creating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life made the choice obvious. Yet God still created man with free choice because Christ was already destined to die for our sake:

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. (1Pe.1:20 NIV)

Before God made the world, Jesus was. He was not part of creation. Jesus was with God when He created everything:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (Jn.1:1-3 NKJV)

The Word, or Jesus, is God; and He created all things. Even though mankind chose to disobey, God still loved man. However, because God is just, His justice must be met to the full extent of the law:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Ro.5:8 NASB)

God resolved His conflict between love and justice by allowing man to live and have children. God allowed man to live because when the time was right, He would put in effect His plan to save mankind:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, **but have eternal life.** (Jn.3:16 NASB)

God does not love the world with its sin; breaking God's law always brings punishment. But God loved the world before the beginning of time. Two thousand years ago, He sent His Son to die—paying our penalty for sin and reconciling us back to Himself. Only after we receive God's Son as our blood payment to restore God's honor can we receive the full expression of His love. Without Christ, man is already condemned by his sin and will experience the full measure of God's wrath:

He who believes in Him is not condemned; **but he who does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (Jn.3:18 NIKV)

Our sin condemns us. Jesus took the punishment for our sin upon the cross, experiencing the fullness of God's wrath upon Himself. If we ask Jesus to apply His death on our behalf, then we will not experience the

wrath of God. To reject Jesus as our blood payment is to remain under the wrath of God:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. (Jn.3:36 NIV)

We do not have to do anything to receive God's wrath; it is our inheritance from our first forefather—Adam, and the just punishment for our own acts of sin. Jesus is the extension of God's love poured out to sinful man, to rescue us from that wrath:

*For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and **how you turned to God from idols**, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, **who rescues us from the wrath that is coming**.* (1Th.1:9-10 NRSV)

The only hope for man is Christ, for apart from Christ, no payment exists for our sins:

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men **by which we must be saved.** (Ac.4:12 NASB)

God had planned that Christ would be the way for man to be reconciled with Himself. Since it was man who sinned, our substitute had to be a man:

*For this reason **he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way**, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and **that he might make atonement for the sins of the people**.* (He.2:17 TNIV)

However, he had to be a perfect man, for only someone without sin could pay the penalty. God became a man:

*Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. **He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.*** (1Pe. 3:18 NLT)

God became a perfect man, Jesus, to take our punishment:

*Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**"* (Jn.14:6 NKJV)

Christ is God's only way for us to inherit eternal life with Him. Therefore, since God is as loving as He is just, He sent Jesus to die in our place so that we might escape the full measure of His wrath.

order to be a sinless man. Isaiah prophesied seven hundred years before Christ's birth that the child would be called Mighty God, Whose reign would last forever:

*For **a child will be born to us**, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; and **His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. **There will be no end** to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and **to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore**.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*

(Isa.9:6-7 NRSV)

Jesus is the only One Who never sinned—in thought, word, or deed; hence, He could be our substitute. Jesus was born of a virgin through the Holy Spirit, but He Himself was God, holy by merit of Who He is:

*Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, **since I am a virgin**?" The angel said to her, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you**, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore **the child to be born will be holy**; he will be called Son of God.* (Lk.1:34-35 NRSV)

Sin came through Adam, the father of all mankind. Man's sinfulness was hereditarily passed through the father. Jesus was not conceived through a man and was, therefore, freed from the sin nature of mankind. Scriptures teach that He was more than just a man:

*Theirs are the patriarchs, and **from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all**, forever praised! Amen.*

(Ro.9:5 TNIV)

Jesus had human ancestry through His mother Mary. But, He was more than just the Son of God; He was God:

*We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true— even **in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life**.* (1Jn.5:20 NIV)

God not only planned a way to save mankind, but He, that is God, was the way—the Creator died for His creation:

*The blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our **great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and **to purify for Himself a people** for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.* (Ti.2:13-14 NASB; Jn.1:1; Jn.20:28)

When Christ finally died, He committed His spirit to the Father:

*And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into **Your hands I commit My spirit.**'" Having said this, He breathed His last.* (Lk.23:46 NKJV)

Jesus experienced everything we do; however, even though He was tempted like we are, He did not sin:

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but **was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*** (He.4:15 NKJV)

Jesus did not sin because He is God. Jesus had the nature of God when He came in the likeness of sinful man:

*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son **in the likeness of sinful man** to be a sin offering.* (Ro.8:5 NIV)

Physically, Jesus was like man in every way. Christ became like man to be born of a virgin. The only exception was that being God, he was holy in nature and, hence, did not commit any sin.

THE SON OF GOD

Jesus always referred to Himself as the "Son of Man," but He allowed others to call Him the "Son of God." Only in His trial did He acknowledge that He was indeed the Son of God:

*The high priest said to him, "**I charge you under oath** by the living God: **Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.**" "**Yes, it is as you say,**" Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."* (Mt.26:63-64 NIV)

Jesus acknowledged under oath that He was the Son of God, knowing that this claim would sentence Him to death. The term "Son of God" does not mean that God had sex with Mary but rather implies that He, God, assumed the relationship of a father to a son:

*And without controversy great **is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.* (1Ti.3:16 NRSV)

God would only accept the voluntary death of a perfect man as a blood payment. Only God is holy; consequently, God had to become man in

GOD'S PLAN REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Throughout the Old Testament, God gave man insight through prophecy into His solution for man's sin. When man was cursed in the garden, God foretold that Christ would come and destroy the devil:

He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." (Ge.3:15.NLT)

Jesus came into the world to destroy the devil's work of leading mankind into sin:

*Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*** (1Jn.3:8 NRSV)

God gave the people hope, for the Scriptures foretold of many signs of His coming. Seven hundred years before Christ's birth, Isaiah prophesied:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

(Isa.7:14 NKJV)

Mary was a virgin; the Holy Spirit miraculously produced the baby in her. The baby was to be called "Immanuel," which meant "God with us." Many doubt whether conception without a father is possible, and yet today science has achieved this feat in cloning. When scientists clone a sheep, for example, they take an egg out of a ewe in heat and remove the egg's DNA. They then take the DNA from a cell of another sheep, say a prize winning ram (Supersheep), and place it in the egg of the ewe. The egg with Supersheep's DNA is then placed within the womb of the ewe and allowed normal gestation and birth. The lamb that is born has no genetic similarities to the ewe but is identical to Supersheep. A farmer may ask to see Supersheep, and the scientist can show him the lamb because the lamb is not like Supersheep; the lamb is Supersheep. In a limited way, cloning is similar to what God accomplished with Christ. God placed Himself in the egg of Mary. The DNA was of God; otherwise, with Mary's DNA, the baby would have been a girl. One day a disciple asked Jesus to show him God the Father:

*Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*** (Jn.14:9-10 NRSV)

When it was time to fulfill the prophecy of a virgin being with child, God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary saying:

*"And behold, **you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son**, and you shall name Him **Jesus**. And Mary said to the angel, **"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"** And the angel answered and said to her, **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.**"* (Lk.1:31&34-35 NASB)

Jesus was not the offspring of God but was called the Son of God. Similarly, Muslims are not the offspring of the same parentage but are called brothers. Muslim's from Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco have a relationship as brothers through their common faith of Islam. Relational terms do not imply a connection through blood. Jesus was called the Son of God because He assumed the relationship of a son to a father when He came down from heaven:

*"You are my Son; **today I have become your Father**"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?* (He.1:5 NIV; Ac.13:33)

There were many prophecies that had to be fulfilled by Christ. Mary lived in Nazareth, but the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem of the house and line of David. About 700 BC, Micah prophesied:

*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the **One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.*** (Mic.5:2 NKJV)

God moved Caesar Augustus to issue a decree, which caused Mary to go to Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth:

*And it came to pass **in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus** that all the world should be registered... So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. **Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem**, because he was of the house and lineage of David, **to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child**. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And **she brought forth her firstborn Son**.* (Lk.2:1,3-7 NKJV)

God prophesied the specific events of His death such as the price offered to betray Jesus—thirty pieces of silver. About 500 BC, the prophet Zechariah foretold:

Mary was not the wife of God, but rather she was selected and used by God to fulfill His prophecy. Jesus grew up in a family; He had step-brothers and step-sisters born of Joseph and Mary:

*"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and **brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?** Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.* (Mk.6:3 NASB)

The New Testament refers to Jesus eighty-four times as "the Son of Man":

*No one has ascended to heaven but **He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man** who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even **so must the Son of Man be lifted up**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* (Jn.3:13-15 NKJV)

Since Christ was man, He could be our substitute and die to pay the penalty for our sin:

*For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the **man Christ Jesus**. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.* (1Ti.2:5-6 NRSV note Ro.5:15,17)

Christ was like us in every way. He felt joy, sorrow, pain, hunger, and temptation:

*Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the **Son also became flesh and blood**. For **only as a human being could he die**, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.* (He.2:13 TNIV; He.2:17-18,-4:15)

When God created mankind, He made them in His likeness, a trinity:

*Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may **your whole spirit and soul and body** be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.* (1Th.5:23-24 NLT)

Jesus was like us in every way. He had a body, soul, and spirit:

*Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for **the body of Jesus**.* (Mk.15:43 NRSV)

Jesus' body felt all the pain, and His soul suffered the separation from His Father when He took our sin upon Himself:

*Then He said to them, **"My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."*** (Mt.26:38 NASB)

disciples. Knowing that Judas would betray Jesus did not change the way Jesus treated him. On the night Jesus was betrayed, when Jesus announced that one of the disciples would betray Him, no one could guess that the betrayer was Judas. Jesus knew that Judas was part of God's plan:

*While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost **except the one destined to be lost, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.***

(Jn.17:12 NRSV)

The Scriptures are clear that man did not do anything to Christ that God had not pre-ordained. God maintained His sovereignty over Christ's death. Everything that took place in Christ's death was according to the purpose and will of God. Therefore, God planned to redeem man prior to the creation of the world, and He carefully orchestrated the events surrounding Christ's death.

THE SON OF MAN

Since we understand that God was the One Who planned to redeem man through Jesus, we must understand two distinct qualities that Jesus had to have in order for Him to die on our behalf. First, since man was the one who sinned, only a man could die in mankind's place. Daniel prophesied about the Messiah, calling Him the Son of Man:

*I was watching in the night visions, and behold, **One like the Son of Man**, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to **the Ancient of Days**, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and **a kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is **an everlasting dominion**, which **shall not pass away**, and His kingdom **the one Which shall not be destroyed.***

(Da.7:13-14 NKJV)

The person described in this prophecy is obviously Jesus in His return to judge mankind. Daniel made the distinction that Jesus was not a son of man but **like** a son of man. Jesus used the title "Son of Man" to align Himself with Daniel's Messianic prophecies. Only the death of a perfect man could pay man's penalty for sin—death. For this reason, God sent His Son to be born of a woman to become a man:

*But **when the right time came**, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, **so that he could adopt us as his very own children.***

(Ga.4:4-5 NLT)

*And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter" --the handsome **price at which they priced me!** So I took the **thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.***

(Zec.11:13 NASB)

When the Jewish leaders sought to kill Jesus, they offered Judas thirty pieces of silver:

*Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" **They paid him thirty pieces of silver.** And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.*

(Mt.26:14-16 NRSV)

Then when Judas regretted his actions, we read:

*"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." **So Judas threw the money into the temple and left.** Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to **use the money to buy the potter's field** as a burial place for foreigners.*

(Mt.27:4-7 NIV)

These prophecies and their fulfillment were very specific. For example, death by crucifixion was not practiced at the time of David, but one thousand years before Christ, David prophesied:

*Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; **they pierce my hands and my feet.** All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. **They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.***

(Ps.22:16-18 TNIV)

After they scourged Jesus, they crucified Him:

*When the soldiers **crucified Jesus**, they took his clothes, **dividing them** into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. **"Let's decide by lot who will get it.***

(Jn.19:23-24 NIV)

There are over three hundred prophecies written long before the coming of Christ that were fulfilled by Christ's life and death. The odds of one man fulfilling just eight key prophecies from the Old Testament is 1 to 10¹⁷ or 1 to 100,000,000,000,000,000. Jesus' life and death was not a coincidence. Everything that took place was part of God's plan to redeem man for Himself.

GOD'S PLAN FULFILLED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When considering the prophecies fulfilled by Jesus, we must establish that Jesus could not fulfill the prophecies of the Messiah by His own design. In the death of Jesus, the timing and the specific nature of the events required many people to be involved. Each person had different reasons for their involvement—some even against their will, but in the end, we must conclude that they all played a vital part in this tragedy. Some think it strange that mankind, the creature, was able to kill its Creator—for the Bible teaches that Jesus is God. Man did not take Jesus' life; Jesus voluntarily gave up His life. For Jesus to be our blood payment, His death needed to be voluntary; He did not oppose crucifixion in any way. Jesus' disciples tried to prevent His arrest, but He commanded them to stop their violence:

*And suddenly, **one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"*** (Mt.26:51-54 NKJV)

Jesus stopped His disciples from any attempt to rescue Him, for He came to die in fulfillment to the Scriptures. At Jesus' trial, He did not give any defense, for the prophecy stated that He came to die:

*The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, "**Aren't you going to answer?** See how many things they are accusing you of." But Jesus **still made no reply**, and Pilate was amazed.* (Mk.15:3-5 NIV)

Jesus' life was not taken from Him; rather, He laid down His life to be a blood payment for our sin. Jesus could have stopped His death because He is God, but He didn't:

*For this reason the Father loves me, because **I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.** I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.* (Jn.10:17-18 NRSV)

For Christians, the fact that the physical part of Jesus, inherited from Mary, was killed by His creation is not a problem. For the Scriptures declare that Jesus' death was according to God's plan:

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures**, and that He was buried, and **that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*** (1Co.5:3-4 NASB)

Christ died according to the prophecies given hundreds—even thousands—of years before His death:

*Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.**"* (Lk.18:31 NRSV; Ac.3:18)

If Jesus died according to the prophetic message, then we must conclude that it was not mankind's will which prevailed over God; but rather, it was God's will which mankind enacted:

*This man **was handed over** to you **by God's set purpose and foreknowledge**; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.* (Ac.2:23 NIV)

God had a plan, and He worked out His plan. Since it was God Who controlled the events surrounding Jesus' death, God maintained His sovereignty throughout Jesus' death—even though it was enacted by men:

*For in this city, in fact, both **Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel**, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, **to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*** (Ac.4:27-28 NRSV)

The Jews killed Jesus; however, they could not do any more or any less than that which God allowed:

***When they had done all that the prophecies said about him**, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead!* (Ac.13:29-30 NLT)

The control of God over the events surrounding Christ's death was clearly seen in Judas—who betrayed Christ. Judas' greed did not cause him to betray Christ; God's will allowed Judas' greed to succeed for God's plan. In the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He knew who would betray Him:

*For **Jesus had known from the beginning** which of them did not believe and **who would betray him*** (Jn.6:64 TNIV)

Jesus knew Judas was going to be the one who would betray Him, and yet, He did nothing to prevent Judas from becoming one of His