

ג"פשת נספ

Passover 5783

“Who Killed the Messiah?”

The question “Who Killed the Messiah?” has been a basis for antisemitism and a great deal of poor theology. Some within Reformed theology believe that it was Satan who crucified Yeshua. For example, Mark Driscoll in his article *“How did Jesus Defeat Satan and Demons on the Cross?”* wrote the following–

“Through the cross, Satan and his demons thought that they had finally defeated Jesus. However, crucifying Jesus was the biggest mistake the Devil ever made. Had he understood what was happening, he would never have killed Jesus.”

Similarly, James M. Rochford wrote in his article, *“Why Did Satan Crucify Jesus?”*,

“Those in the reformed tradition often argue that Satan crucified Jesus, because God is sovereign and made him do it (Acts 2:23)”.

An equally poor theological position is stated by those who believe that the Cross was a type of ransom that G-d paid to Satan. What is consistent about these problematic and untrue statements is that they give way too much power to Satan. Although it was Satan who deceived the woman and brought sin into the world, Satan does not challenge G-d and he is no match for Him. Humanity struggles greatly with Satan and he is certainly much more powerful than us in our natural condition, but in no way should one think that G-d must strive against the Devil. G-d is sovereign and only has to say the word and Satan would be destroyed. The passage which people frequently look to regarding this subject is Colossians 2:13-15.

καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας [ἐν] τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ, χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα,

ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ:

ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ.

“And you being dead in the transgressions and with the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us (of) all the transgressions;

having blotted out the handwriting against us in the decrees which was adverse to us, and it was lifted from the midst, being nailed to the cross, (He) cast aside the rulers and the authorities, He made a public example, having triumphed over them in it (the Cross)."

In this article concerning Passover, it is important for one to be reminded that Yeshua went to the Cross on Passover! Remembering the title of this article is, "*Who Killed the Messiah?*", the answer is certainly NOT Satan. James M. Rochford quoted Acts 2:23 in offering support for this heretical view that Satan killed Yeshua. The verse states,

τοῦτον τῇ ὠρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε,

"This One, by the appointed plan and foreknowledge of G-d, delivered by lawless hands, having crucified, you put to death." Acts 2:23

This verse begins with the phrase "*This One*" and it refers to Yeshua. The appointed plan was simply for the Messiah to do the work of redemption. G-d's redemptive plan was based, according to this verse, on the perfect foreknowledge of G-d. This plan was carried out and achieved the eternal redemption that G-d desired. The verse concluded with the words, "...*you put to death.*" Peter said these words and he was speaking to the men of Israel (See verse 22). Does this mean that only the Jewish people killed the Messiah? Even a simple reading of the Gospel accounts shows that both Jews and Gentiles were involved in this act. However, the proper theological answer to the question "Who Killed the Messiah?" is humanity. It was due to our sinful condition that Yeshua was sent into this world for the expressed purpose of doing the work of redemption. Did G-d know how this was going to be carried out? The answer is yes, He always knew it and this is why it was said that Yeshua is the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). In actuality, no one killed the Messiah, as He Himself stated, "*No one takes it from Me, but I lay down it from Myself. Authority I have to lay it down....*" (John 10:18)

A few points must be understood regarding what the Cross accomplished. In Colossians 2:15, it is stated that because of the Cross Yeshua, "*cast aside the rulers and the authorities....*" Most translations render the Greek word ἀπεκδυσάμενος as "*having disarmed*". Such a translation gives the thought of a military confrontation. Although it is most correct to see believers in a spiritual war with Satan and his demons, this is not the case for G-d. As stated previously, Satan is no match for G-d and he does **not** possess any weapons which can be used against G-d. This same Greek word appears only two times in the New Testament and the second time it also is found in Colossians,

μη ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ,

*“Do not lie to one another, **having put off** the old man with his actions.”*

Colossians 3:9

In this usage, there is nothing relating to weapons; rather, simply a setting aside of those things related to the sinful nature. Therefore, the message of Colossians 2:15 is that because of the Cross, Satan and demonic influences have been defeated. The practical application of this verse is that believers do not have to live in fear of the enemy. When a follower of Yeshua walks in faithfulness, the attacks of the enemy will not have power over us. It is through the Cross that we share in the victory of Yeshua.

In his article, entitled *“How Did the Cross Disarm the Devil?”* John Piper asked the question, *“In what sense did the death of Christ strip Satan and his demons of their weapons?”* It is clear from the context from which Mr. Piper is writing that he is commenting in regard to the spiritual benefits which the Cross brings to believers. He begins by quoting Colossians 2:13-15 and states,

“We were dead in trespasses and sins. All human beings are spiritually dead and blind to the reality of the glory of Christ. We are as dead to spiritual truth as a human corpse is dead to being touched.”

It is Piper’s perspective regarding the implications of being spiritually dead that permeates his entire theology and is in agreement with the basis for Reformed theology. The question which each person must answer is this: Is humanity dead as a corpse to all forms of spiritual revelation or does the conscience that G-d created in human beings allow for some understanding of Divine truth? Piper is most clear in his perspective that all human beings are totally unable to grasp any spiritual revelation until a person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. This regeneration is solely a choice of G-d, based only upon G-d’s election of an individual. Piper teaches that G-d’s election of a person brings about regeneration which causes the person to believe in the Gospel and receive the benefits of the Cross. I strongly differ with this understanding. The fact of the matter is that the human conscience does indeed allow for varying degrees of spiritual understanding. I state varying degrees because it is certainly possible for a spiritually dead person (unsaved) to read the Scriptures or hear Biblical truth from another individual and to some degree comprehend spiritual matters. I do not agree that all of humanity is dead like a corpse to all spiritual issues. However, all humanity is indeed absolutely lost, i.e., separated from G-d and unable to save / redeem themselves. I have frequently spoken with people who agree that they are sinners, and have a very basic understanding of right and wrong from a Biblical perspective and who can understand the message of the Cross. Yet they do not receive the Gospel. I have also known professors in theology who have more than a

cursory knowledge of the Bible, but reject the Biblical Yeshua and the only message that leads into the Kingdom of G-d.

Passover itself is a message of G-d's redemptive work. When people are crucified and die as a result of crucifixion, the cause of death is asphyxiation. One simply becomes so exhausted by the process of crucifixion that he becomes too weak to take a breath. Although Yeshua died on the cross, He did not die of asphyxiation. It is written,

Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν, Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.

*“But after seeing, the centurion who was standing opposite Him, **that thusly He breathed**, said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of G-d.’”* Mark 15:39

There was an emphasis on how Yeshua breathed and this is what caused the Roman centurion to confess, *“Truly this man was the Son of G-d.”* This was revealed earlier in the passage when it is stated,

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείξ φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν.

“But Yeshua released a great voice and breathed out.” Mark 15:37

Yes, Yeshua died on the Cross, but what was the actual cause of His death? Paul reveals this to the reader.

τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.

“The One not having known sin, in behalf of us, He was made sin, in order that we should become the righteousness of G-d.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Torah makes it most clear the direct relationship between sin and death. Therefore, it was the sins of humanity being placed upon Him while He was being crucified which caused Him to die. He bore the punishment of our sins so we could *“become the righteousness of G-d.”*

As we observe the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, let us all remember the price He paid as our Passover Lamb and the purpose for which He redeemed us, namely so we could live righteously and bring glory to Him.

Chag Sameach