

MARK 14:17-21 THE JUDAS FICTION

¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" ²⁰ "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

The death of Jesus was no random event, but rather it was a part of an eternal plan. From the curse in the garden, to the prophecy of Isaiah, to the song of Simeon, to the words of Jesus, the Bible speaks of this event. In the reverse, all the biblical events find their ultimate meaning in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The idea that God has an eternal plan raises the ageless question as to if the players of each of the roles is predetermined. This question goes beyond that of election or predestination to the level of being created to be a special tool for a specific event in the biblical story. Bluntly speaking, we want to know if Judas had a choice. It would certainly be comforting to us if he did not, because then he would actually have obeyed God's will, suffered hell-on-earth, and then been welcomed into the kingdom by the Father. I have heard that message preached. However, for that to be the case we would have to ignore Jesus' words in verse 21. Jesus makes it quite clear that the act of betrayal is never God's will, but a choice made by the betrayer. God does not force us to believe in him, because his will is for us to have a loving relationship with him, and to love is to open oneself up to the possibility of being "not chosen" (rejected). In addition, God is perfect goodness, so it would be against his nature to force a person to do evil. God honors us with the opportunity to choose. With that honor, that opportunity, comes responsibility. God's law of creation dictates that actions and consequences are inseparable. God may have known it would happen, but the betrayer still had to choose to betray Jesus.

We can't hide behind the "Judas fiction" and claim that we sin because of some evil power or because we were made that way. We commit evil because of the habitual choices that we make. With choice comes responsibility. We need to face up to that fact and choose to repent and believe.

I confess, Father, my desire to avoid responsibility for my decisions and actions. As Adam whined that "the woman you gave me made me do it," so too do I reach for the victim card of an excuse. Purge me of my presumption and cowardice and empower me to stand up, acknowledge my sin and repent. Help me, Father, for I am a sinner. Amen.