

58. The Betrayal of Jesus

Luke 22:1-6

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

The climax to the drama of crucifixion week was drawing close. The ruling religious elite had murder in their hearts toward Christ. To most people, these men appeared to be righteous men, highly esteemed by others, but in God's eyes, they were held captive by invisible chains. In fact, Jesus calls them out as servants of Satan when He says to them: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

The enemy of our souls might seem to be having his way in the world, but we must remind ourselves that, behind the scenes, God is sovereign over all things and brings His plan to fruition. The enemy could do nothing to the Lord Jesus until Satan's time line intersected with God's plan. Later, just before His crucifixion, Christ was brought before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Pilate said, "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:9-11).

The enemy might think he is in control, but it is only because God has given him enough rope with which to hang himself. God was totally in control of all the drama that was happening. Only at the right time would Christ be crucified, not in Satan's timing but in God's perfect planning, i.e. at the very moment that the sacrificial lambs were being slaughtered at Passover in the temple.

For instance, when Christ's mother told him of the embarrassing situation of no wine left at a wedding and before turning water into wine, He had said to His mother, "Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). There was a certain time that was ahead for Him, and in that hour, not a chronological hour, but an opportune time when He would greatly glorify the Father by paying the sin debt of all who trust Him. Only when the time was near would Jesus say, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23). When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told His captors, "Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns" (Luke 22:53).

Only when God's hour intersected with Satan's plans was he given room to move against Jesus. Darkness could descend, but all that happened was under God's sovereignty. This kind of darkness was also allowed to descend on Job. To fulfill God's purposes, Satan could only do to Job what God allowed him to do. We see an example of the sovereignty of God in that story. (See Job 1:12; 2:6). Even when evil is present, God is still in control, working all things together for His purposes. God's people are to overcome darkness and not be intimidated. In these dark hours just before Jesus is taken, we see how the Father is allowing this plan to unfold:

¹Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, ²and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. ³Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. ⁵They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present (Luke 22:1-6).

Passover Tension

To the Jewish person, Passover is the biggest meal of the year, like the Thanksgiving meal for an American or the Christmas meal for a British person. God had commanded the Israelites to appear before Him at the Temple in Jerusalem three times a year (Exodus 23:13-15), and the Feast of Unleavened Bread called Passover was one of the three times. In the time of Christ, it was difficult to accommodate all the pilgrims that would come to Jerusalem for the annual Feast.

William Barclay tells us that the Roman Emperor Nero belittled the importance of the Passover to the Jew. In order to show Nero just how important Passover was and how many people came, Cestius, the governor of Palestine at the time, took a census of the lambs slain on a Passover, and the number was 256,000. The law stipulated the minimum number of people gathered in a home for a Passover dinner or Seder was ten. If those figures are correct, then it is possible that Jerusalem swelled to over 2,700,000 people during Passover.¹ With such a huge throng of people, we can understand why the disciples and Jesus would sleep out in the open on the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Garden of Gethsemane was less than half a mile from the temple, an easy short walk to arrive early in the morning for all the people to hear Christ teach in the temple (Luke 21:37-38).

Question 1) Verse 2 tells us that the chief priests and teachers of the law were afraid of the people. When one considers the crowds that were in Jerusalem for the Passover, what are some of the scenarios they may have feared?

We have the benefit of hindsight in knowing that Jesus had no designs on taking over the religious government of Israel, but the Priests and the seventy elders of the Sanhedrin did not know that. It is possible that they were afraid of a religious coup against them and that there would be an accounting for their money-making schemes. It is also possible that they were fearful of a riot and losing their positions if the Roman government didn't think them capable of keeping order. With more people arriving day by day, their fear of the people grew. They had to do something before the Passover when religious sensitivities would be at their highest. Their fear may have been heightened when they considered the time when the common people tried to make Jesus king by force:

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself (John 6:15).

¹ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, Gospel of Luke*, Published by Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh. Page 262

But how were they to arrest Him? It had to be in secret. The religious leaders had sent the temple guards once before to arrest Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles, but when the temple guards came back, they had not arrested the Lord. Why not? Because His hour had not yet come. The guards were under direct orders of the High Priest, yet they refused to arrest Jesus. The reason that they gave was even worse; they directly disobeyed the chief priest's orders because they were overcome with Christ's words:

⁴⁵Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?" ⁴⁶"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared. ⁴⁷"You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted (John 7:45-47).

Such influence and spiritual authority over men was scary for the chief priests and teachers of the law. Thousands were attending His teaching from early morning till dark during the days leading up to Passover. No wonder they sought some way to get rid of Jesus (v. 2). (The Greek word *anaireō* is translated into English with the words *get rid of*; it means to kill, put to death.) While they were trying to figure out a way to get Him (apart from the crowd) and to the great relief of the religious leaders, one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, came to them with a plan of how he would betray Jesus.

Judas Iscariot

To understand these verses of Scripture, it will help us if we looked more into the life of this man called Judas. To us in the twenty-first century, the very name *Judas* is a picture of treachery and betrayal, a name that is not given to new-born babies, but in the time of Christ, it was an honorable name. One of the twelve tribes of Israel was named Judah, and King David emerged from that tribe. Judas may also have been named after Judas Maccabeus, an Israelite who led the Jews to victory over the Seleucid Empire, more than 175 years earlier after Antiochus Epiphanes sought to destroy the Jewish faith and Hellenize the Jews. His surname, *Iscariot*, tells us the town that Judas came from, i.e. *ish* ("man") of *Kerioth*, a small town in the south of Judea.

Judas had so mastered the art of hypocrisy and deception that, when Jesus told the twelve during the Last Supper that one among them would betray Him, none of the eleven had figured out which of them was the betrayer:

²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." ²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" (Matthew 26:20-22).

Judas was still trying to hide his treachery from the others by saying, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you" (Matthew 26:25). Judas was more than likely sitting at table in the place of honor to Jesus' left side as he tried to hide what he was planning. We know this because Jesus was in easy reach of Judas to hand him the piece of bread that Jesus had just dipped into the dish. The apostle John gives us more information here:

²¹After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." ²²His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know

which of them he meant. ²³One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:21-27).

The order of seating was John's reclining to the right of Jesus with his head against Jesus chest. Although we do not know for sure, some have assumed that Peter was to John's right because Peter asks John to ask Jesus a question ("Ask Him which one He means.") Does this mean that Judas was at the left hand of Jesus? It would appear that he was close to Jesus as Jesus hands Judas the piece of bread.

How did Judas get to the other seat of honor at Jesus' left? Luke tells us of a dispute that went on at the Last Supper over which of them was considered the greatest (Luke 22:24). It could be that Peter was upset at getting a lesser position around the table due to Judas beating him to the seat alongside Jesus. We don't know more than what we are told; logic can only go so far. Their desires for position could have been driven to the fore due to the fact that there was an expectation that Jesus would soon reveal His kingdom.

Question 2) What could have been the motive for Judas' selling out Christ? What do you think Luke has on his mind when he tells us that Satan entered Judas (v. 3)?

There has been much speculation as to the motive of Judas in betraying Jesus, prompting questions, such as "If Satan was the instigator, was Judas really at fault?" Another question is "If all that happened was meant to be and Jesus knew that Judas would betray him, then did Judas have a choice in the matter?" Furthermore, "Did Judas truly repent and receive forgiveness for what he did?"

Although we may not be certain of these answers, we will examine some of the possibilities. First, we are told in Luke 22:3 that "Satan entered Judas, one of the twelve." Does that mean his actions were totally controlled by the enemy, and if so, was Judas culpable (at blame) for his actions? Even the most demonized person in the Bible, the man of Gadara in whom the evil demon called itself Legion, was still able to run toward Jesus as soon as he saw Christ (Mark 5). If the demon was in full control, he would have run away from the Lord. No, all of us are responsible for the wrong actions and motives we undertake. None of us will be able to say in the Day of Judgment that Satan made us sin. As to Judas' repenting, Jesus said, "**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**" (Matthew 26:24).

Judas could not hide his treachery from the Lord. He was very good at looking like a believer, doing the same things, attending the same meetings, dishing out bread to the hungry, but at the core of his heart, there had been no change wrought in his heart. Jesus made it clear about the need for an inner change, saying, "**Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven**" (Matthew 18:3). Judas had been with Christ for more than three years. In that time, he had seen much evidence of Who Jesus was, yet

his heart had grown darker as he hardened his heart to the Spirit's promptings. In fact, in one place Jesus calls Judas the embodiment of the devil: "Then Jesus replied, 'Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!'" (John 6:70).

The Lord knew early on in His ministry just where Judas' heart was:

"Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him (John 6:64).

Satan's Influence

We are told categorically that Judas did not believe and that he had never placed his trust in Christ, thus leading to a heart belief that brings change to one's life. He had a mental agreement to the person of Christ, but at the core level of his being, he had never received grace and forgiveness for his sin. This is powerful deception at work.

Our enemy, Satan, a very real spiritual being, is at work in the world to keep hearts and minds blinded to the truth concerning Christ. He seeks to influence every person to deny the truth as to the person and work of Christ. One can have an acceptance of the facts of the Gospel, and there may even be an understanding of the great truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, but unless a person receives the person of Christ, there is no change in a person's inner nature. Our enemy loves to hold people in a mental acceptance of the truth, but he works powerfully against them if there ever comes a call to genuine repentance from their spiritually dead condition (Ephesians 2:1). Paul the Apostle writes about this spiritual warfare to keep a person blinded to the truth:

The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

In the invisible realm, there is a war that goes on in the thought processes of the mind and decision center of the inner man, commonly called the heart. All hell often breaks loose when people begin to be convicted as to their sin and need of forgiveness. Paul writes further about the enemy's use of people for his purposes. He says that Satan and his demons are at work in the hearts of those who are against the Spirit of Christ. He calls Satan, "the ruler of the kingdom of the air":

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Satan will even use those we love and cherish to speak words to deter us from following Christ. He will try to use our family and friends as his mouthpiece. Of course, they often do not realize why they say what they say; there is an enemy spirit at work in those who are disobedient to the faith.

Question 3) How do you see this spirit at work in our world today? Why did Judas continue to follow Christ if he did not believe?

Why did Judas continue to follow Christ if he did not believe? We cannot know his motives for sure, but perhaps, it was the love of fame in being one of the twelve. It can be a curse to be famous. Fame will keep a person from the humility of heart that God seeks in His servants. I wonder how many of the “Hollywood stars” will be seen in heaven. Judas was famous as one of the twelve. The “stars” of Israel at the time would have been religious leaders and teachers. There was often a throng of people gathering around and following Jesus and His disciples.

It may have been worldly ambition to be seated on a throne when the Messiah’s kingdom would come. He could have been seeing the Messiah as a political savior only. He might have thought himself well placed as one of the twelve to have money and riches, authority, and a throne upon which to sit next to Jesus and the eleven others when they would finally break the constraints of Rome. (Some of Jesus’ followers were disappointed when Jesus did not chart a course in this direction. They were expecting a Messiah who would liberate them as a nation and lead a successful revolt against Rome.)

Perhaps, it was the money that Judas loved. He oversaw the finances for the party of disciples. When Mary, the sister of Lazarus, honored Jesus by pouring out her treasure (i.e. a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume) on his feet and wiping them with her hair, Judas was incensed at the “waste”:

⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵“Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.”
⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.
⁸You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me” (John 12:4-8).

This event had happened just a few days before the crucifixion of Christ (John 12:1). Perhaps, the gentle rebuke added additional motivation as to why Judas would sell out Christ. There could have been some bitterness harbored by Judas at the gentle rebuke and the fact that he couldn’t get his hands on a year’s wages? He could see no value in someone’s treasure being poured out on the Lord’s feet.

Think of it. If one of your friends was just about to part with a year’s wages on some person’s feet, wouldn’t you see that as a bit excessive? It wouldn’t be if we believed that this man was God in the flesh, which Mary did. The longer Judas was exposed to the truth about Christ and yet remained hard-hearted and unresponsive, the darker his heart became. How can Judas have seen Christ move in a gift of revelatory knowledge in knowing the name of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5) and yet not know he was stealing out of the money bag?

Now, we return to our original questions about the responsibility and the intent of Judas.

What we have learned is that Judas was an unbeliever. A Christian has spiritual armor that is given to him that protects him against demonic attack and control (Ephesians 6:10-18), but

someone who is not yet a believer can be used as a pawn in the enemy's hands. Sometimes, even believers are not mature enough to deflect enemy thoughts and cast them down (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). An immature believer can be the mouthpiece of demonic attack on another. Jesus Himself had to confront Satan working through Peter. After the Lord told the disciples that He would be killed but would rise again, Peter took Jesus aside from the others for a chat:

³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Mark 8:32-33).

Satan could not enter Peter's life as he did with Judas. He had merely cast a thought into Peter's mind, and the ever impulsive Peter had acted on the thought and spoke those words to Christ. Jesus immediately recognized that Peter was being used by Satan to deter Him from carrying out the Father's plan. He rebuked the enemy for using Peter as a mouthpiece, much to the surprise of Peter. The enemy looks for every opportunity to cause disunity, and he certainly does not steer clear of churches. He joins them! He does more harm against God's people by sowing tares in the midst than by pulling up the wheat (Matthew 13:25). If believers can be influenced by Satan, how much more those who have not yet submitted their lives to the Lordship of Christ?

Question 4) In the divine plan of man's redemption, why would God allow His Son to be betrayed by a friend?

How Did Judas Become Influenced to Betray Christ?

There is a natural barrier that prevents spiritual attack. In a time long ago, even before Abraham, Satan had a hard time with a righteous man named Job. He couldn't do anything against Job without God's taking down the "hedge" that protected him.

⁸Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." ⁹"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. ¹⁰"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land"

In this incident, God allowed Satan to go beyond the hedge of protection, not to enter his life, but to test Job's faith by attacking his children, his possessions, and a little later his health as well. The result in this case was that Job's faith was found to be strong, and his blessings were returned and multiplied to him. This passage teaches us that God has a protective hedge that Satan cannot penetrate without God's knowledge and control. If Satan had total authority on earth with nothing to hold him back, chaos would reign completely. After all, he comes to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10).

There are things that can lower our defenses and invite satanic activity in our lives. For example, being involved in the occult opens the door to the enemy, but the main way Satan gets access to a life is through habitual sin. The enemy seeks to get a toehold into the door of our lives, and then

a foothold, and after a foothold, a stronghold. The more territory we release to him through habitual sin, the more he will take. Give him an inch, and he will take a mile. The temptation occurs first in the mind, and the more we yield to the thought, the more ground in our actions the enemy takes. The more we yield our will to sinful thoughts, the more a compulsion sets into our character. God spoke to Cain after he had murdered his brother Abel and said:

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7).

Judas was not coerced into doing what he did. Satan did not use external force to move Judas' feet to the religious leaders. Judas willingly went along with the inner motivations that Satan sowed in his heart. These thoughts came to him over a period that he had listened to the enemy's voice. A person becomes a slave to the one whose voice he obeys:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16).

As Satan had repeatedly whispered and appealed to different motives that he had found in Judas, the disciple had become a willing tool of the enemy, ready to do his will. Jesus had tried through his teaching and through outright warning to the disciples that one of them had been infiltrated by the enemy:

⁷⁰Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"
⁷¹(He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.) (John 6:70-71).

The mind is the seed-bed of our character and actions, and Judas had allowed the enemy to visit and sow seeds of destruction into his heart. To have evil thoughts come at us is not in itself sin. It becomes sin when we harbor those thoughts and act upon them. It has been said by one wise person that we cannot stop a bird from flying around our heads, but we can stop it from building a nest there! Francis Schaeffer once said, "The spiritual battle, the loss of victory, is always in the thought-world." A man is not what he thinks he is, but what he thinks, *he is*. Judas' natural barriers had been worn down through the enemy's nesting in his mind and heart. Let this be a warning to all of us to keep our thought life pure.

Some suggest that Judas was seeking to force Jesus' hand to revolt against the Romans so that a confrontation would take place and Jesus would use His power to overcome Roman rule. Who knows what was in his mind as he walked to visit with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard (Luke 22:4)? What we do know is that Judas was watching for an opportune time and place to betray his master with a kiss on the cheek (verse 6) and that he had already received the thirty silver coins in payment for doing it even before it was done:

¹⁴Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests ¹⁵and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. ¹⁶From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over (Matthew 26:14-16).

Thirty silver coins was the cost of a common slave in the time of Jesus (Exodus 21:32). The supreme servant of all was valued and sold for the price of a common slave. Clearly this was not a rash decision made by Judas. In the verse from Matthew's Gospel above, verse 16, Judas took time to think through how he was going to call the Temple guards and betray Jesus. He waited for an hour of darkness, not knowing that it was also God's hour for His Son to be glorified as the Lamb of God Who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? Many of us go through this test of being betrayed by a friend, business partner, or relative. Has someone very close to you ever hurt you with their words and actions? Have you been betrayed? No one can ever say to God, "You don't know what it's like." Jesus took the worst that this world could throw at Him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when Judas walked up to Christ, greeting Him and kissing Him on the cheek, He could say to Judas, "Friend, do what you came for" (Matthew 26:50).

Whatever you and I go through in life, Jesus has been there and can be sought for help. As our leader, He has endured every fiery trial that can be thrown at us by our enemy and, yet, harbor no bitterness and resentment. His trust was in His Father every step of the way through the pain of being rejected and betrayed. Whatever you are experiencing in life, He has been there before you and is able to come alongside you in every trial and help you to go through it.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

Doctor Donald Grey Barnhouse once told the story of a certain man who had a beautiful estate upon which were some magnificent trees in which this man took great pride. It was his custom to walk among the trees and gaze upon their beauty. This man had an enemy who hated him sorely; this enemy was always seeking ways of annoying the master of the estate. At last, the enemy conceived a plan, which he thought would greatly wound the heart of the estate owner.

He decided to go to the estate in the dark of night and cut down one of the most beautiful of the trees. He laid his plans well. He took with him a saw and an axe and worked energetically. All night, he toiled until his muscles were sore and his hands were blistered. As morning dawned, he saw the estate owner riding with a companion toward the trees where he had been toiling. He redoubled his efforts and finally the great tree began to creak and to totter. As the tree started to fall, the enemy began to shout in triumph. However, one of the branches fell on him and mortally pinned him to the ground in agony.

His hatred, however, was strong, and in his death throes he jeered at the estate owner approaching him. The owner called his companion to him and said to the enemy, "You thought to do me a great harm, but I want to show you what you have done. This man with me is the architect of a beautiful home that I intend to build here in the midst of these trees. In order to make room for the house, it was necessary to cut down one of these trees. Look at this plan. The tree upon which you have toiled all night and which is now the cause of your death is the tree, which must be cut down to make room for my house. You have worked for me without knowing it, and your toil is for nothing, and bitterness is your food in death."

In his opposition to God's kingdom, Satan may be thinking that he is clever, but there will come a time when he will see that he has just been totally out smartened by God. We know because we have read the end of the book!

Prayer: Lord, I pray for healing for those of us who have been betrayed, hurt, and wounded by others. Thank You, Jesus, for being the perfect model to us in the way You responded, turning the cheek to those who hurt You. Would You come and heal us? We pray for those who have hurt us and extend forgiveness to them. Amen.

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