

JUDAS

“While He was still speaking, a crowd came up and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’”. Luke 22:47-48

Although it has been common for Hollywood productions to deal very sympathetically with Judas, the Bible is quite clear that Judas was greedy (Matthew 26:14-15); treacherous (Luke 22:47-48); dishonest and hypocritical (John 12:5-6).

The Traitor

The Bible is very clear that Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ (Matthew 10:4). Judas asked the chief priests: *“What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?”* Matthew 26:14

The Bible records that the chief priests were “delighted” at Judas’ treachery (Mark 14:10).

Far from Judas being a well meaning victim of circumstances, the Bible is quite clear that he was a malicious traitor. John’s Gospel plainly says: *“Then satan entered into Judas”* John 13:27.

The Bible informs us that the walls of the New Jerusalem will have twelve foundations stones and on them will be written the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14). Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot... but the name of one of the original twelve Apostles will be missing: That of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord.

The Failure

Judas Iscariot is the greatest failure in history. Called to be an Apostle, to be one of the founders of the Church of Jesus Christ on earth, he was presented with the greatest opportunities and highest privileges. Yet Judas failed. Jesus described him as: *“The son of perdition ...”*

For three years, Judas had the privilege of fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ, listening daily to His instructions, hearing His prayers, seeing Him heal the sick, raise the dead, casting out demons, multiplying food, walking on the water, calming the storm with a Word.

Judas went out with the other Apostles to preach and to heal in His Name. Yet, after letting the Lord wash his feet at the Last Supper, Judas went out and betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver – the price of a slave. No wonder the Lord solemnly declared that it would have been better if he had never been born. Although the light shone all around Judas, there was darkness in his soul.

John’s Gospel records the significant event at Bethany: *“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was amongst those reclining at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected: ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.’ He 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.*

“Leave her alone’, Jesus replied, ‘it was meant that she should save this perfume for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me.’” John 12:1-8

Greedy, Dishonest and Hypocritical

Here we learn that Judas was greedy and dishonest. He was also hypocritical, pretending a concern for the poor, even while he was stealing from them. Judas therefore illustrates an effective sermon on the teaching of Jesus: ***“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*** Luke 12:15

Ignoring Warnings

No man goes to his doom without warning, and certainly Judas received ample warnings: ***“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”***

Covetousness

Yet, instead of repenting, Judas only hardened his own heart. The Scripture warns us: ***“But Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, have wandered from the Faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*** 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Resentment

Aside from greed, one can also discern jealousy and resentment. Judas was apparently disappointed that Christ did not conform to his expectations of a political Messiah – to free Israel from the hated Romans.

Disillusionment

When Jesus refused to allow the people to make Him King (John 6:15), many of the Jews began to argue sharply amongst themselves (John 6:52), complaining about the hard teachings of Jesus (John 6:60), many of the disciples grumbled, turned back and no longer followed Him (John 6:60-66). ***“Jesus turned to the rest of His disciples and asked if they also wanted to leave. Simon Peter answered: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.’ Then Jesus replied: ‘Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!’”*** John 6:68-70

Desertion

It is from that time that one can discern that Judas resolved to desert Jesus and to get what financial gain he could out of it.

Malice

In the final dark treachery of Judas betraying Him with a kiss, we can see the vindictive resentment that Judas must have felt towards Jesus. His earlier enthusiasm had apparently, by this time, turned to scorn. There were numerous ways that he could have identified the victim, but that Judas chose to do it with a kiss indicates a maliciousness and a contempt. Judas kissed the door of heaven, but went to hell. Jesus declared that He is the door. He is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is the door to heaven. There is no other door, no other way.

Kissing the Door to Heaven – Yet He Went to Hell

After walking with Jesus and working with Jesus for over three years, Judas could kiss the one who is the door to heaven and yet before that very night was passed went into a Christless eternity.

Judas Iscariot had the privilege of being brought up in an orthodox Jewish home, being taught the Law of Moses, and the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He was one of the attentive followers

and zealous adherers of Jesus of Nazareth, so much so that he was selected to be one of the Twelve, and even entrusted with the duties of treasurer. He had the privileges and advantages of the Gospel. And yet evidently the Gospel light never entered his darkened heart. Judas stands out as a beacon of warning, that you can have all the privileges of Christianity, all the advantages of Christianity, all the knowledge of Christianity, all the instruction of Christianity, and never yet have a saving faith in a living Saviour.

Deception

The Lord knew who would betray him, but none of the other eleven disciples knew. When at the Passover meal, when the Lord declared that one of him would betray Him nobody said: "Is it Judas?" They asked: "Lord, is it I?" Judas had totally, utterly and absolutely deceived every one of the eleven disciples. Even at that late stage they did not realise who would be the traitor. Judas had gone with them on their evangelistic tours, he had preached the Saviour's message, he had been amongst them when they had rejoiced that even the devils were subject to them. Judas provides a painful illustration of the truth that church office does not guarantee one eternal salvation.

From the Pulpit to Perdition

Many fall from the pulpit into hell. As Dr. Martin Luther warned: God will pave the streets of hell with the skulls of bishops and cardinals.

Do Not be Deceived

On my first visit to Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, as I was admiring the magnificent building, Dr. James Kennedy admonished me: "Peter, don't be deceived. Nothing is quite as it appears. I wish I could say that all the members of this church were saved, but I cannot. Nor can I confidently assert that all of my staff are saved. I cannot even be sure that all of my elders and pastors are saved. Why, just recently our music minister came to Salvation in Christ! Now you must know, that a Presbyterian music minister does not begin his career in Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. This is the summit of his career. I do not want to tell you how many other churches he has been a minister of music in, before coming here, and coming to Christ." I have never been able to forget that sharp warning from Dr. James Kennedy.

Indeed, time and again I have been forcibly reminded that there are many like Judas in the church today. ***"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father, who is in Heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you, away from Me you evil doers!'"*** Matthew 7: 21-23

Do you know Christ?

Does Christ know you?

Salvation is real. It is radical. It is life-changing and life-transforming. When Jesus comes into a life, old things pass away and all things become new.

A False Brother

Judas walked with Jesus and yet his heart was far from Him. He knew the teachings of the Saviour, but he did not apply them in his life. He was close to the Light of the World and yet his soul was in darkness. He kissed the door of Heaven and yet he is condemned to an eternity in the torments of hell.

True Repentance

Judas also teaches us the difference between repentance and remorse. Thomas doubted the resurrection of Jesus, but when confronted with the risen Christ, he fell to his knees and confessed: "My Lord and my God!" Thomas faithfully served the Lord, establishing churches as far as India, where he died as a martyr for Christ.

The Difference Between Repentance and Remorse

On the same night that Judas betrayed Christ, the Apostle Peter denied that he even knew Him and yet, after the cock crowed the third time, Peter repented wholeheartedly and went on to serve the Lord faithfully, dying as a martyr for Christ many years later in Rome. Repentance leads to forgiveness, freedom, peace and joy. However, remorse falls far short of Biblical repentance.

Judas declared: "I have betrayed innocent blood!" But there was no life saving repentance. Judas went from the Temple to the field that he had long coveted to own, and which he had covenanted to buy. He went to the face of the cliff and standing back tied a rope around the base of the tree, the other end of the rope he tied around his neck and then with one mad rush he ran forward and jumped over the precipice, dangled in the air and hung himself. Then the rope broke and his body crashed against the rocks where the Scripture says "all his bowels gushed out."

But that was not the end of Judas, it was only the end of his life on earth. It was the opening of the dark door into his doomed eternity. And yet, just a few hours before, he had kissed the very door of Heaven.

Pilgrim's Progress ends with a story of a man who, without going through the narrow gate, without bowing before the Cross of Calvary, came to the gates of the Celestial City and was thrown, from there, into hell. And John Bunyan notes that he learnt that there is a way to hell, even from the very door of Heaven. This was certainly true for Judas.

You know the Gospel. Perhaps you have served in the church for years. But the question is are you going to the same hell to which Judas Iscariot has been condemned?

Have you come to the cross?

Have you wholeheartedly repented of all of your sins?

Are you taking up your cross, denying yourself, and following Jesus?

People are lost, deceived and dead, that is why Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Are you walking in His way? Are you loving the truth of His Word? Are you living for Christ?

Boycott hell - repent!

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