

## 26. Judas Betrays Jesus

John 13:18-30

The Gospel According to John

### God's Story or "His-story"

Every good story starts with an author's bringing a great idea to life. The author will take great care to unfold the story so that it portrays what the author sees in his or her mind. Do you think it is any different from God and His story? After all, it has been called the "Greatest Story Ever Told," and the Lord is the Author. The Creator of all things purposed to unfold the story of His redemptive love. He is the Original Story Teller. There was a time in eternity past when God thought of creating a race of human beings, and He planned how He would reveal Himself to them. At some point, He determined how He would create His Bride, the Church, i.e., a people He would call into an intimate relationship with Himself. The kind of love that God wanted to develop in their hearts was more than an acquiescing, compliant sort of love. It was to be a love that was willingly and readily offered with a thankful heart, i.e., appreciative, self-sacrificial, and ready to give of oneself. Those whose hearts were so in touch with His heart would be the ones who would be the modelers, leaders, and examples to the rest. He is forever calling to His creation, inviting them to be a part of His-Story.

[Question 1\) What's the best story you have ever read? It could also be a film that you watched.](#)

Whatever the story that comes to mind, the chances are that, in your book or film, there is a villain. He or she is known as the antagonist. This person is the one that everyone loves to hate, i.e., someone that, when he or she makes an appearance, everyone likes to boo and hiss. In our study today, we will look at Judas, who makes an appearance as the antagonist in this chapter of New Testament history, viz. the one who was the traitor and betrayer of Jesus. As it unfolds, the story is very real. In the true story of the life of Jesus, we are about to witness deception, betrayal, and ultimately a twist which will beat any ending of any story you have ever read. If you are a Christian, you are probably very aware of this story as you have heard it many times before. I would invite you, as we read through the account of Jesus Christ's last days on earth, that you listen with new ears and see the story with fresh eyes. You will fall in love with our Savior all over again! As we read the next verses in the Gospel of John, the scene is Jesus and His disciples eating the Last Supper while reclining around a low table. Jesus has already washed the disciple's feet and returned to His place at the head of the table. He said that all of them except one had been bathed and that only their feet needed washing (vv. 10-11). In verse 18, He returns to the topic of the one who was not clean:

<sup>18</sup>I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.' <sup>19</sup>I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am who I am. <sup>20</sup>Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me. <sup>21</sup>After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." <sup>22</sup>His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. <sup>23</sup>One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. <sup>24</sup>Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said,

“Ask him which one he means.” <sup>25</sup>Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus 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, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup>As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” <sup>28</sup>But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. <sup>29</sup>Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night (John 13:18-30).

The story God created is all about the Son of God and His wooing of His bride to Himself. He wanted to win the hearts of His people in such a way that they would serve Him forever because they wanted to love Him in the same way He loved them. There is a great mystery to this story, for it bends and twists as it unfolds due to the free will actions of those He created. Each of them has the freedom of will to say yes or no. He had to show them how much He loved them by giving them an example of the kind of love that is of the highest origin in the universe, i.e. self-sacrificing love. But how would He do it? He would allow an enemy into this world that would appeal to their will to walk in the ways of darkness rather than His way, the way of light. He decided to send His Son into the world to model the kind of love He wants people to see. The Lord Jesus became one of the human race so that He could experience all they would experience so that none would ever say to Him, “You don’t know what it is like to go through what I am experiencing.”

<sup>14</sup>Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity** so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— <sup>15</sup>and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup>For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. <sup>17</sup>**For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human 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. <sup>18</sup>**Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he can help those who are being tempted** (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Question 2) How does Jesus’ suffering help us when we are tested, tempted, or in pain?

### Why Would God Allow His Son to Go Through Betrayal?

Have you ever wondered why God allowed into His story a traitor such as Judas? Let’s face it: God could have found someone like a Paul instead of a Judas, couldn’t He? If you have been hurt, Christ had to be hurt even more. Have you suffered pain? He wanted to experience pain so that He could feel what you feel and to be able to come alongside you in your pain. Has someone you loved betrayed you? Ah, now we are getting closer to our passage today. Yes, He had to experience what it was like to be betrayed by someone close to Him—someone He loved. Some of you who have gone through being betrayed by someone you thought loved you, and instead of love, that person put a knife in your back. Jesus had to go through it, too. Yes, He does know all the pain you have experienced at the hands of others. He deliberately allowed someone close to Him to betray Him. Yes, Jesus chose Judas to be one of His disciples, but it was Judas who made up his mind to betray the Lord.

## The Character of Judas

Most of the disciples were from the area around the Sea of Galilee except for Judas. His surname, *Iscariot*, tells us the town that he came from, *ish* (“man”) of *Kerioth*, a small town in the south of Judea, the area around the capital city of Jerusalem. More refined Jewish people were from that area, so he was probably admired and respected highly by the other disciples. He was so viewed that he had responsibility for the money bag, their finances. We don’t know at what time it started happening, but over the three and a half years of ministry, Judas was dipping his hand into the moneybag and helping himself to what was inside for his personal need. He was clever enough to keep it hidden from the other disciples, but Christ knew. A few days previously, when Jesus was anointed with costly perfume by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, Judas had complained about how much money was wasted, saying, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages” (John 12:5). John the Apostle found out later what motivated Judas to criticize Mary: “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” (John 12:5-6).

How frustrating for Judas. He saw a year’s wages for one man flying from his grasp. Would it seem wasteful to see a year’s wages poured on a person’s feet? It wouldn’t be if the person were the Son of God! Somehow, Judas did not get that, or if he did, he chose to ignore Who Jesus was. The Lord had said to Judas, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of my burial. For the poor you have with you always, but me you do not have always” (John 12:8). It is likely that Judas was deeply offended at this criticism and loss of money. Matthew records that, it was after this anointing when Judas went to the chief priests and made a deal with them to sell Christ for the price of a slave that had been gored by an ox, i.e., thirty silver coins (Exodus 21:32).

What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you? So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over (Matthew 26:15-16).

Five hundred years before Christ, the prophet Zechariah spoke of the value at which the corrupt leaders of Israel would price the Messiah: □

<sup>12</sup>I told them, “If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.” So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. <sup>13</sup>And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord (Zechariah 11:12-13).

It’s interesting that, in his guilt at what he’d done, Judas threw the thirty pieces of silver back at the priests. Because the money was spent on the price of blood, the leaders unknowingly fulfilled Zechariah’s prophecy: “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.” <sup>7</sup>So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. <sup>8</sup>That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day” (Matthew 27:6-8).

Question 3) Do you think that Judas was born again of the Spirit but had lost his faith? How can a man live in close relationship to Jesus, as Judas did, and still be a thief?

Judas had been with the disciples and had seen many mighty miracles. He had even been sent out to evangelize with the other eleven (Luke 8:1), but he had never opened his heart and received the gift of God, i.e., new life in Christ. Jesus reached out to Judas, warning him with words such as, “**Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!**” (John 6:70). He didn’t warn Judas by saying that he was becoming a devil, but Jesus said that *he was a devil*. Let’s face the fact that there are people in this world who have sold their souls to be tools of the enemy (1 Kings 21:25). They are the weeds mixed in with the wheat in the Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:38-39).

Judas had the opportunity to repent, but his heart was not changed; therefore, he was not delivered of his sins. Satan was at work in him and prompting him into greater depths of sin by using his unchecked deception of the disciples and robbing the moneybag for his purposes. The Lord was never deceived, though. He knew what was happening. This kind of deception by the enemy is a big lesson for us. The enemy will try to drop thoughts into our minds prompting us into sin in the hope that he can at some time have the door of our hearts open to use us as his vessel. To whose voice will you respond? Is it the Lord prompting your thoughts? Jesus knew early on in His ministry as to who it was that Judas was listening to and where his heart was focused:□

**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).**

John tells us that Judas had never become a believer; he had no heart belief that brought about a change in his life. He had a mental assent to the person of Christ, but at the core level of his being, Judas never received grace and forgiveness for his sin. What do we mean by mental assent? When people give mental approval to the truth, they believe it with their head, that is, they agree with the truth about reality. They approve it and confirm that it is right, proper, and godly, but the truth can still not be engaged by the will of a person. They take no action toward the Word of God that they heard. The facts of the Gospel can have people’s endorsement, but they don’t realize that to believe a biblical truth entails more than head knowledge. There has to be a heart knowledge whereby the person chooses to act on the truth and obey it. Jesus gave a warning to the Jewish leaders about this very thing:□

**<sup>39</sup>You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, <sup>40</sup>yet you refuse to come to me to have life (John 5:39-40).**

A person can read the Scriptures, acknowledge that the truth is therein, and yet refuse to humble himself and come to the Savior. Judas never took action on what he saw about the person of Jesus Christ, Who He is, and what He accomplished. He was a classic hypocrite—an actor on the stage of life.

Powerful deception was at work in Judas, the deceiver, and thief, and each of us must take care that the enemy does not do something similar in our lives. 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 (2 Corinthians 4:4). He seeks to influence all people and prevent them from acting upon the reality that the Holy Spirit would bring to our hearts and minds. Our enemy loves to keep us in a mental assent to the person of Christ and His salvation, but only genuine repentance and turning our lives to the person of Christ will ever bring us out of our spiritually dead condition (Ephesians 2:1).

If you have never given your life to Christ and allowed the Spirit to rule and reign over you, there is no better time to turn around (repent) than the moment you are in right now. Unfortunately, Judas never turned around.

### **The Scene of the Upper Room**

In our last study in John (13:1-17), we talked about the fact that the disciples had gathered around the three-sided U-shaped table called the Triclinium. At the head of the table sat the Host (Jesus) with the two most notable individuals to His right and His left. These were the seats of honor that the mother of James and John wanted for her two sons when the Kingdom of God should come (Matthew 20:20-21). When invited to a formal meal like the one they were having, it was always the prerogative of the host to choose who should sit to the left and right of the host. These places were reserved for the guests of honor (Luke 14:10).

It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, also known as the Passover. Christ had modeled servant leadership to them by going around the triclinium couches and graciously washing the feet of His disciples, including the feet of Judas. The triclinium was three long tables put together that were eighteen inches or so off the ground. Alongside the tables were reclining couches on which the disciples and Jesus rested, leaning on their left elbow and leaving their right hand free to pick food from the table.

### **The Conversation at the Table**

Jesus had just finished telling the disciples that, just as He, their Lord and Teacher, had washed their feet, they also should clean one another's feet (John 13:14). Again, Jesus warned Judas without looking at him, saying, to those listening:

I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: "He who shared my bread has turned against me." (John 13:18)

When He spoke about being their Lord and Teacher, he was not referring to all of them. There was one among them, He revealed, that did not know Him as Lord. He was referring to Judas. He was telling them ahead of time so that, when Judas would appear in the Garden of Gethsemane with the temple soldiers, they would remember that He was still in control. God's plan from the beginning was that the Son of God would experience betrayal.

Verse 21 tells us that Jesus was *troubled* in spirit as He looked around the room, saying, "I tell

you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.” These words are the third time that Scripture records that Jesus was “troubled” in His spirit. The first was when He met Mary after the death of her brother, Lazarus (John 11:33). The Bible says that He was deeply moved in spirit and *troubled*. The second time was when Jesus looked ahead at His separation from the Father as the sins of the world were laid upon Him. The Lord said, "Now, my heart is *troubled*" (John 12:27). John, the Apostle, now records a third time when the Lord was troubled as He shared that He would be betrayed. He said that one with whom they ate bread would fulfill a prophetic Scripture spoken by King David:

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me (Psalm 41:9).

The disciples looked around the room at one another, having no idea who was the guilty one that had planned to betray their Lord and Master. Don't you think that Judas should have repented at that statement? Jesus was reaching out to Judas still at this late hour and saying, in effect, that he can always turn around from what he had planned to do. Although the Lord knew that this part of the plan would be accomplished, Judas still had the freedom to choose whether or not he was to be the pawn of Satan used to perform the act of betrayal. Jesus' words must have convicted him, but Judas decided to harden his heart and carry on with his deception.

Verse 21 shows us again the humanity of Jesus when we think about the phrase “troubled in spirit.” If John, one of those disciples closest to Jesus, could see that Jesus was troubled, then there must have been some outward signs of this. It is easy for us to forget that Jesus had to suffer as a man.

Question 4) Take a moment to think about the emotional pain Jesus was experiencing at the time. What outward signs do you imagine John may have witnessed, thus indicating that Jesus was troubled in His spirit?

Let's consider now the seating arrangements at the table where they were reclining. When Jesus said that one would betray Him, Peter was not in one of the most esteemed places to Christ's left or right; otherwise, he would have asked Jesus who was the betrayer. Instead, Peter asked the disciple proximate to the chest of Christ, the Apostle John. “One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him” (v. 23). Three times, John called himself the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23, 19:26, and 21:7). This awareness of God's personal love for us is the greatest strength of a disciple of Christ. When people come into an intimate relationship of knowing Christ' love, they can endure and be all that they can be in God. Knowing the love of God in Christ is the goal for each of us as believers.

John was to Jesus' right, and Peter was to the right of John. We have a good indication of who was to His left when Peter asked John, “Ask Him which one He means” (John 13:24).

<sup>25</sup>Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus 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, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup>As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:25-27).

Question 5) Verse 27 says that Satan entered Judas. If Satan was motivating Judas' actions, do you think he was responsible for the sin of betrayal?

We are all responsible and accountable before God for what we do in this life, no matter who prompts our thoughts. With Jesus' reclining on His left elbow, it would have been effortless for the Lord to reach to the person on His left in the honored place alongside Him, viz. Judas. Did Judas "pull a fast one" on the disciples and secure for himself the place of honor ahead of Peter? Or do you think Jesus invited Judas close so that He could talk to him privately in the hope that he could be turned from his path of treason? The Lord dipped his piece of bread into the charoset and passed it to Judas. The charoset is a sweet, dark-colored paste made of fruit and nuts, which represents the mortar or mud that was used to make bricks in Egypt.

As soon as Judas received the bread and charoset from Jesus, Satan entered his life. Jesus said to him, "What you are about to do, do quickly" (John 13:27). At this word from the Lord, Judas got up from his reclining position and went out, without the others knowing where he was going. John records at the end of the passage, "And it was night" (v. 30). The darkness closed in on Judas, and I am sure that he is still regretting his act, for he passed into eternity in despair. Only two men are ever called the "son of perdition" in Scripture, Judas (John 17:12) and the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

### **How Do I Get Beyond Being Betrayed?**

Many disciples of Christ have had to walk through the darkness of betrayal. God allows such tests to come to us that in the overcoming of the deception with forgiveness, it might bring fruitfulness to His people. If you have ever said that you would like to be a fruitful bough on the Vine of Christ, then you will go through times of pruning (John 15:1-8). The pain of betrayal digs down deep into the heart. Only the power of Christ and His forgiveness can set you free from a bitter root springing from within. If you have experienced this kind of betrayal, know that being betrayed by someone close is one of the testing lessons the servant of God must endure. It is a very lonely experience and, perhaps, the most emotionally painful one. The pain of injustice and betrayal is something that Satan will use, if possible, to gain a foothold in your life. The response the enemy seeks is for the injured person to retreat and nurse the hurt, thus causing bitterness. We need to take care that this bitter root does not take hold, germinate, and grow. If it does, it will produce the fruit of its kind:

**See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many (Hebrews 12:15).**

Bitterness will not only affect your life, but also the above verse explains that, when it grows, it will cause trouble by defiling many. By definition, defilement means to stain, to soil, to sully, or to contaminate. Bitterness can overflow and take root in others very quickly. This kind of inner wounding is why we must pay attention to the grace of God. If betrayal has hurt you, take it to the Lord and ask Him to remove the pain and bitterness from you. Spend time in prayer and express forgiveness from the heart for the one who has hurt you. When others sin against us, it can take a heavy emotional toll on us. Many in the church have been shipwrecked by a wrong

committed by someone else, only to conclude that they no longer want to be a part of the church. After all, who would wish to willingly join themselves arm in arm with such a dysfunctional, broken band of people? The big problem with that way of thinking is that Jesus does not have a "plan B." The Church is His own, His Bride, and He has given His life for her. □

If we are ever tempted to think that God doesn't know how it feels, that betrayal by a loved one is like your heart being ripped out. He does know because He has experienced human suffering in every way, even the betrayal of friends, i.e., of every friend, in His hour of greatest need and, more than we can imagine, total rejection by God the Father as the wrath of God was poured upon His human form on the cross. This suffering by Christ is a great mystery. We will never have to suffer to that extreme. We are required to forgive, however, any wrong committed against us. However, even this is something that we do not have to do on our own. He offers us His strength, but we must submit our will to Him.

### **Remorse is not Repentance.**

Many have considered the sorrow of Judas, how he ended his life and wondered if he truly repented. I believe that he did not. I draw this conclusion for a couple of reasons. Judas had the opportunity to repent many times, and Jesus gave him many opportunities to do so. Although "Satan entered into him" before he performed his act of betrayal, his heart was elsewhere all along. How else could Judas have lived with Christ and yet continue to deceive the group, stealing from all of them in such a blatant manner? He also ended his life in despair, hanging himself. True repentance leads to life, not death. **"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).** Judas' story has a tragic end.

### **A Way of Escape**

Perhaps, some of you have not been able to forgive someone. The Father does not expect you to lean on your strength, but He offers you His power at all times. If you do not feel able to forgive, submit your will to Him in prayer and ask for His strength. This extending of forgiveness does not mean you condone the actions of the offending person. Indeed, sometimes it may require you to distance and protect yourself from a harmful person. However, you do not need to stay in bondage to a bitter root of not being able to forgive. If you need to forgive, then decide to forgive today and put your emotions into the hands of God. He will watch over His word to perform it and provide for you a "way of escape." Be thankful for His forgiveness and His everlasting love toward you, and let the hurt melt. Sometimes, this will take time, but He is faithful! It begins with an act of your will. You are not able to control how you feel when you are wronged, but you can control your will and your thoughts. You can choose to surrender your pain to the Father Who can heal you. It may take time, but you can start now by moving toward the Father just as you are.

Prayer: Father, forgive me for my sins, and help me to forgive others the way You have forgiven me. I ask you to help me release forgiveness to all who have hurt me. Please help me to see that You have carried this pain for me, too. I give this pain to You and ask for Your healing in my life. For every Judas in my life, I open my heart to bear them no ill will. Please reveal Your love

and mercy in their lives. In each situation, I ask You to work and bring redemption. Amen!

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