

Judas

Message 4 of 5 in the series: "Brought to Life"

A. Some important background information:

At the time of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, many people in Israel were expecting the Messiah (Anointed One) to come in fulfillment of OT prophecies (Isaiah 42:1, 61:1-3; Zechariah 9:9). They expected the Messiah to be a God-ordained, religious/military leader who would victoriously drive out the Romans and rule righteously over a reestablished kingdom of Israel like his ancestor David. This explains why the crowds went wild when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a donkey on Palm Sunday. "Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, 'Praise God for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God in highest heaven!' The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. 'Who is this?' they asked. And the crowds replied, 'It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'" Matthew 21:8-11 (NLT)

The members of the Jewish High Council (Sanhedrin) hated Jesus because He had exposed them as self-righteous hypocrites and because His popularity directly threatened their wealth and status. They were looking for a way to kill Jesus secretly because they feared the crowds might turn on them. "Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words." Luke 19:47-48 (NIV)

B. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, agreed to hand Jesus over to the Sanhedrin secretly.

"The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction. Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren't around." Luke 22:1-6 (NLT)

Note: Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him, but He allowed it to happen so that God's plan to save mankind from sin and death could be accomplished. "I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, 'The one who eats my food has turned against me.' I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I am the Messiah..." Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!' The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean... 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus responded, 'It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl.' And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, 'Hurry and do what you're going to do.' None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. So Judas left at once, going out into the night." John 13:18-30 (NLT) (*Psalm 41:9*)

Life Application: Jesus willingly suffered and died on the cross so that John could become part of His family.

"Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)

C. Judas most likely betrayed Jesus because he became disillusioned over the kind of kingdom Jesus was setting up.

"Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity." John 12:25 (NLT)

Note: Judas and the other disciples had some of the same wrong expectations of Jesus and His kingdom as everyone else in their culture. "Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. 'What is your request?' he asked. She replied, 'In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.' But Jesus answered by saying to them, 'You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?' 'Oh yes,' they replied, 'we are able!' Jesus told

them, 'You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen.' When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant." Matthew 20:20-24 (NLT)

Life Application: We must have right expectations about what it means to follow Jesus.

"But Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" Matthew 20:25-28 (NLT)

D. Judas pretended to be a follower of Jesus until doing so no longer furthered his own ambitions.

"...Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, 'That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.' Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself." John 12:3-6 (NLT)

"Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests and elders of the people. The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss." So Judas came straight to Jesus. "Greetings, Rabbi!" he exclaimed and gave him the kiss." Matthew 26:47-49 (NLT)

Life Application: "Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine." 2 Corinthians 13:5a (NLT)

"You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'" Matthew 15:7-8 (NLT) (*Isaiah 29:13*)

E. When Judas realized what he had done, he ended his life in despair.

"When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he declared, 'for I have betrayed an innocent man.' 'What do we care?' they retorted. 'That's your problem.' Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself."

Matthew 27:3-5 (NLT)

Note: There is a big difference between remorse and repentance. "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV)

Life Application: Rejoice! Jesus came to save us, not condemn us!

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16-17 (NIV)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?
2. Read John 13:17-30. If Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him, why didn't He stop him?
3. Read Matthew 20:20-28. What false expectations did Jesus have about the kingdom He came to establish? What false expectations about Jesus/church/Christians have you experienced?
4. Read Matthew 26:14-16, 47-56 & 27:1-10. Why do you think Judas betrayed Jesus? Why do you think Judas hung himself instead of running to Jesus and asking for forgiveness?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What's the difference between remorse and repentance?
6. Centerpoint will have Good Friday and Easter sunrise services in Prattville and Wetumpka. In Prattville we will also host a Saturday night worship service in addition to our regular Sunday morning worship services. Why do we do this? Who can you invite to join you for worship on Easter weekend? Spend some time as a group praying for people by name who need Jesus and/or a church home.

7. Discuss the following quotations:

“Jesus said, ‘Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?’” Luke 22:48 (NLT)

“Jesus' death was seen by Jesus himself ... as the ultimate means by which God's kingdom was established. The crucifixion was the shocking answer to the prayer that God's kingdom would come on earth as in heaven.” N.T. Wright

“Judas Iscariot was not a greatly wicked person, just a common money-lover, and like most money-lovers, he did not understand Christ.” A.W. Tozer

“Judas heard all of Christ's sermons.” Thomas Goodwin