

MARCH 24, 2024 – JUDAS

Today we're going to talk about the difference between Judas Christianity and Jesus Christianity.

So let us begin with Judas, the betrayer, the son of perdition.

Judas betrays Jesus.

Not only does he betray Jesus, but he does it with a kiss.

So today we are going to ask the question, "Why?" Why

would Judas ever do such a thing?

Now, some might speculate, "Well, he did it for the money."

They will say that Judas was motivated by greed, 30 pieces of silver, which oddly enough, was the exact amount a slave was worth in the eyes of the courts in the ancient world, 30 pieces of silver, about three month's worth of wages.

But **I don't**, you know, I don't know about the greed. I mean, maybe it played a little part of it, but I'm thinking that the motivation was much deeper and much more complicated than money.

Judas, a name associated with treason, and of course, throughout the centuries, it's assumed by many that Judas is burning in hell, right? Sold Jesus for a few coins, and that name has been forever cursed, which is why you don't see too many people naming their kids Judas. And given the fact that Jesus did say, "Woe to the man of whom the son of man is betrayed, it would be better for that man had he never been born."

That does seem to make a good case that Judas is in the smoking section.

But you know, I, it's not my call, first of all.

And second of all, **I don't** think it's that simple. I think that there's some mitigating factors here.

Like I said, I'm not putting him into heaven or hell. I'm just trying to figure out why he did it. What could have possibly motivated Judas to betray Jesus?

We need to learn this so that we don't do the same thing. Remember, Jesus chose Judas. He was one of the 12.

In the nineteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said, "I assure you that when the world is made new and the son of man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel."

Judas was there when he said that.

He was one of the 12 that he was talking to. And then remember when Jesus sent them out on their first mission trip to proclaim the good news, two by two, and he gave them power and authority to cure illness, and to cast out demons, power over the enemy. Nothing will harm you. And remember when they came back, they were all excited, jumping up and down in celebration.

Well, Judas was jumping up and down too. He was part of that celebration.

What happened? Well, you know, talked about this many times, but it's important to keep in context that all these disciples, certainly not just Judas, all of these men, have been raised on the stories of a promised Messiah that was coming. And as I have said, ad infinitum, they had a particular idea of what that promised Messiah would look like.

So, when Jesus shows up and he is doing these incredible miracles, speaking this radically new message, they're convinced, well, he's the guy. I mean to the point then when Jesus came out and just asked them, "Who do the people say that the son of man is?"

And of course, after several suggestions, he turned to Peter and said, "Well, who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "You're the Christ. You're the son of the living God." Judas was standing right next to Peter when he said that, and he agreed with that assessment. Judas was convinced that Jesus was in fact the coming Messiah. But the problem that Judas had with Jesus, same problem everybody else had with Jesus, including John the Baptist, is that Jesus was not acting like the Messiah they were looking for.

He was no warrior king. Instead of devising plans on how we can defeat the enemy, he's talking about loving your enemy. Instead of organizing a secret war council to try to attack and undermine Rome, Jesus says, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's," suggesting that they should pay taxes to Rome. Instead of attacking the enemy, he says, "Turn the other cheek," suggesting that somehow, we're submissive to Rome and that is not in the playbook.

So, everybody's confused. Even John the Baptist. A guy, from utero was leaping, pointing his whole life, pointing to Jesus. He sends his people out and says, "Are you the one? Or should we be looking for another?" This is John the Baptist. What happened? I'm confused.

Now, we are talking about the confusion that was surrounding Jesus at the time. Dare I say it is a confusion that continues to surround Jesus today. And it really all started with Jesus when he was talking

about having to go to Jerusalem, and how he had to be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes and to be put to death, and then rise on the third day, whatever that meant.

There was no theology or belief system in which this scenario made any sense. Dying at a cross was not on the resume of a messiah, at least not the messiah they're looking for. As I had mentioned time and time again, there was a heightened messianic expectation at the time. And with Judas in particular, I mean consider his name, Judas Iscariot.

Now, of course, today names are names, they don't really mean much, but not so in the ancient world. No, not so.

A name was like a title, denoting whose family you were from, and your clan, and what you did, like shoemaker. And Iscariot, the Greek word, identifies with the most zealot, militant, and messianic group in all of Israel. I mean, these were the guys that slept with a sword under their pillow.

Okay, so Judas, more than most, is waiting on a call to arms.

That's his expectation.

But that call never came.

So maybe, and I don't know, I mean we're just talking here, I could be wrong, but maybe, Judas in his mind thought, "Well, you know, maybe I can kind of help things along." You know, sort of like when John the Baptist went after King Herod, you know, forced the hand of Jesus.

Here's what I'm thinking, this is my theory. In his mind, I'm talking about Judas now, if Jesus is going to be the Messiah, which starts with taking over

the authority of Israel, which of course was the Sanhedrin.

That absolutely has to happen first. Now speaking of the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 or so men, kind of like the Supreme Court, Congress, and the House of Representatives all rolled into one.

They're not fans of Jesus at all. He has no respect for the law, He has no respect for elders, He has no respect for them, He has no respect for the traditions of the church. And frankly, He was bad for business. But they had a problem. And it was a big problem. Jesus was attracting huge crowds, and they knew that if they tried to arrest him in front of those crowds, they would have a riot on their hands. And given the fact that Rome was putting them in power, only requires two things.

Number one, keep the taxes flowing.

Number two, keep the peace.

A riot is not in their best interest.

So, like I said, this is pure speculation.

We're just talking here.

But I'm thinking, what if Judas was thinking to himself, "Okay, I'm gonna get these two together. I'm gonna see what happens." Maybe Judas was thinking, "Okay, I'll bring you Him, but boy, you're gonna face a man you do not expect. And He's gonna prove himself to you. And if you don't fall in line, you're gonna feel His wrath. I have personally watched Him heal a man born blind, even raise a man who've been dead for four days."

As a child, Judas, along with the other Messianic Jews, had been raised on the stories of King Jehosaphat, and how he was surrounded by three armies and horribly

outnumbered.

And as they were climbing the hill to slaughter the Jews, God got involved, and he created such a confusion among the enemy that they ended up killing themselves. Israel didn't even have to fight.

This is their perspective.

And now they're looking at the miracle man, Jesus, and they're thinking, "He's the one. He's the one who's going to restore Israel." This is a huge part, I think, of what motivated Judas. But not all of it. Remember a while back when, when Mary took that expensive perfume and was anointing the feet of Jesus and wiping his feet with her hair? Remember that? Judas didn't like that. He said, "Why is this woman wasting this expensive perfume? It could have been sold and the money given to the poor." The Gospel of John notes that Judas was complaining, not because he was concerned about the poor, No, he was complaining because he was a thief. And as keeper of the treasury, he would've kept that money. He would've kept that money and used it as he wanted. Because as keeper of the treasury, he had position. And with position comes power. And with power comes pride. Judas thought he was something special. And that pride opened the door, which Satan walked right through. Judas had decided to take matters into his own hands because you know, he had created a God of his own understanding, and he was going to kind of help it along. Of course, it didn't work out the way he had planned. Jesus does not bring a legion of angels down to fight for Him.

Israel's warriors do not rally around their messianic king. And after Judas saw what happened to Jesus, he deeply regretted what he had done. And he threw the silver coins at the religious leadership, and he went off and hung himself according to one tradition. Judas didn't get it.

He was so sure that he knew the will of God, and he was just trying to help it along a little way. You know, they all felt that way. Even at the Resurrection, they still didn't get it. We read in the Book of Acts that the disciples say, "Lord, are you going to now, at this time, restore the kingdom of Israel?" I mean, after all that, they're still looking for war.

Have you ever been so absolutely convinced you were right, only to find out that you were wrong? You would think that after this happened a couple of times, we would learn, but no, we don't. It's just a sad reality that as human beings, we have a very hard time even considering the possibility that we might be wrong.

The lesson of Judas is this, Judas Christianity is when you think you know, you absolutely think you know the will of God. Somehow, you've got it all figured out. Jesus Christianity begins with understanding that you don't know, you do not know the will of God, but you're seeking. The first step to seeing God is coming to the understanding that you can't see Him now, that you are blind. "Whoever loves Me will keep My commandments and I'll ask the Father to send the spirit of truth to teach you all things."

We have spoken about this many, many times, the

comforter.

The comforter is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And it is the one that will teach you all things. And what will it teach you? It will teach you wisdom. We live in a world that's got a whole lot of knowledge, and the answer to every question is just a click away. But we have very, very little wisdom. Of course, God knew this from the beginning. It all goes back to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We were told to stay away. God knew that we do not have the foresight or the hindsight to determine what is good and what is evil, and we are left with nothing but a bunch of opinions. This is our world. This is Judas Christianity. This idea that we've just have to figure it out. We cannot rely on hearsay, but rather we need to seek for ourselves. We need to become an eyewitness as we put our face in scripture and ask God to reveal his wisdom to us.

You can know a lot about Jesus. You can acquire a whole lot of knowledge about Jesus, but the only way you're going to ever really know Jesus is when you meet Jesus. And the only way you're going to meet Jesus is when you seek Jesus. And you can't seek Jesus on hearsay. And you can't seek Jesus when you think you got it all figured out. Let us not rely on Judas Christianity. Let us turn to Jesus Christianity and accept the fact that we don't know. We don't know, or we're looking. We're seeking the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Not my wisdom. Not your wisdom. No, no, the wisdom that God will reveal to you. The Book of James puts it so well. It says, "Let any man ask for wisdom and it will be freely given."

How does that look? Is that just me saying, "God give me wisdom?" No, you open up this book and you seek God's wisdom. And if you approach scripture with an attitude of "Wow, you know the Bible is just written by man and interpreted by man, and it contradicts itself and full of problems." You know, if you approach scripture with that kind of attitude, then you will prove them right. But if you truly seek, this book comes alive, the living word, Jesus Christianity.

Clear your mind and ask the Spirit to whisper the wisdom of your Father into your heart today as He shows you how to be a human being and guides you day to day, hour by hour, and ultimately to bring you home.

So, is Judas in heaven or hell?
I don't know, but I'll say this.
If the criteria for hell is betraying Jesus, we all got something to worry about.
What's the lesson of Judas? Well, I think the lesson for us is simply this: Judas had the habitual sin of **greed and pride**, *[those big sins we talked about for six weeks in Lent by audio and powerpoint]* and that opened up the door for Satan to walk right through and into his heart, begging the question, "What is your habitual sin today? What doors are you leaving open in your life?"
I'm not talking about that thing you did so many years ago. No, no, I'm talking about that thing you keep on doing over and over and over again.
You left the door open, and it's a door that you cannot close. Trust me, many have tried before you, but I know man.

-Rev. Katie Dailey, in process