



WHY JUDAS MISSED EASTER - PART TWO John 18:1-11

Two weeks ago I shared with you 5 reasons that Bible Teachers and Scholars have offered - as to why Judas - betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ and missed Easter.

Today, I am going to offer three considerations to you as to why Judas - despite his enormous talent - left a tragic legacy and missed the joy of Easter.

FIRST, JUDAS MISSED THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS AND SO DO WE.

Judas spent three years sitting at the feet of Jesus. He saw miracles - but miracles, as Philip Yancey points out - "**do not necessarily produce faith.**" Judas failed to see that everybody, including himself, was inflicted with the Adam and Eve disease: "**my will - not God's will.**" Judas had his own agenda and wanted to baptize it in the kingdom of God.

Judas had very strong objections that the Messiah must carry a cross and die at Calvary. Judas was unprepared to accept the truth that salvation could only be achieved through suffering and sacrifice. Judas knew if Jesus had to carry a cross – he would also. Self-denial is a difficult concept, but a necessary one in the kingdom of God. Judas could not submit to this truth and way. The kingdom that Jesus came to usher in was about transformation – not just trading places with the Roman authorities.

Our culture is filled with all kinds of information tools that can distract us from our personal, intimate relationship with Christ. Let me share just a few: cell phones, pagers, blackberries, ipods, the Internet, digital cable, and the list can go on and on. Our lives are important, we think, if they are fast-paced and full of activities.

However, God's voice is almost drowned out because it is so hard to find the time that we need to spend in conversation with God. We have so many instruments to save time - that we actually lose time. The price we pay is a high price. The price we pay is that of missing what it means to be a full-fledged follower of Jesus Christ. It is so easy for us to become compromised and capitulate ourselves to the demands of culture around us.

The past 25 years has seen a great battle over the Bible in Christian circles. I have known people in local churches who would fight to say that the Bible is the

inerrant, inspired word of God – but yet they never read it - they are never to be found in a Bible study or Sunday School class. As Eugene Peterson reminds us, “You cannot separate the Jesus truth from the Jesus way and life.” You cannot say that the Bible is the inspired word of God and then close yourself off to all the truth that awaits to challenge us in it. Yes, many claim membership in a church – but have never given their heart and soul to Jesus. They sing hymns to King Jesus – but want to sit on their own thrones.

The problem with Judas was not the information - but how to implement the truth that Jesus had poured into his life the past 3 years as a disciple. Remember as J. I. Packer reminds us "**a little knowledge of God - is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about him**". Judas' agenda was just too small for the kingdom Jesus was bringing into the world. God so loved the world - the whole world - not just one race or nation of people. It was hard for Judas to imagine that Jesus loved the Romans as much as he did the Jews. As Jonathan Swift once said: "**We have enough religion to hate - but not enough to make us love one another.**"

Sometimes, when we are in a Bible study or Sunday School class we come across a passage and say "**Jesus didn't really mean it - did he?**" Then we look at the cross and read the full counsel of God's Word and find out - he really did mean it. This was Judas' struggle – and it is ours as well.

Jesus, according to the biblical record left to us, came preaching love - not force. Love would be a different kind of force. He came offering mercy - not only justice. He came to share forgiveness - not seek retaliation. Judas missed the teachings of Jesus that the road to the kingdom of God is by way of the cross - not coercive power. This is why Judas missed Easter. He did not know that the Crucifixion would be followed by the Resurrection! He thought the cross was God's mistake. He did not stick around to see how it could transform a fallen human race.

SECONDLY, JUDAS MISSED THE MANDATE AND UNFORTUNATELY SO DO WE.

I once heard Dr. Billy Graham suggest "**that many Christians have been injected - with just enough Christianity to keep them from getting the real thing.**" Judas missed the mandate or the command - to deny self. In the Bible, the word "mandate" can often times be translated to mean command. Remember how Jesus said in the upper room "**A new command I give unto you.**" Now they have seen Jesus live out that command so many times in his three-year ministry. We often sing the gospel hymn: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way - to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." However, singing it - and doing it - are two different things.

John Calvin was right when he said, “Obedience is the most trustworthy sign of authentic discipleship.” These are challenging words for a generation that sociologists have named the ‘Me’ generation.

So Judas became impatient at the speed at which Jesus was establishing his

kingdom. Judas wanted to manipulate the hands of Jesus - only to learn that Jesus ultimately would control all hands in the world. He wanted Jesus to be on his side - rather than checking to see if he was on the side of God.

There was a famous preacher who was found by a dear friend to be quite agitated at God in his study at the church. The friend asked the Pastor, "What's wrong?" The Pastor said "**I am in a great hurry - and God is not.**"

You see, God is always orchestrating his will according to God's timing - not ours. This is why Judas missed the mandate to do God's perfect will in this circumstance.

Poets and preachers have often compared two dynamic young men who both died at age 33. They were Alexander the Great and Jesus of Nazareth. Alexander had lived a privileged life. As a boy he was tutored personally by the immortal Aristotle. He was a man of great wealth and power. As a military conqueror, he was nearly invincible. Indeed, there came a time when Alexander wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. And yet he died a hopeless alcoholic at age 33.

One unknown poet put it this way:

**Jesus and Alexander died at 33;
One lived and died for self; the other for you and me.
The Greek died upon a throne, the Jew died upon a cross
One's life a triumph seemed, the other's but a loss.
One walked with mighty men, and the other walked alone.**

**Jesus and Alexander died at 33.
The Greek died at Babylon, the Jew at Calvary.
One made himself god, but the one who was God,
made himself less.**

**One lived, but to blast, the other, but to bless.
When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords,
But Jesus died and arose to live forever.
King of Kings and Lord of Lords!**

Judas missed the mandate because he sought a political and military victory, which could have lasted for only a few years - Jesus was building a kingdom that would last forever. This is why Judas missed Easter - and the kingdom that is eternal. If you miss this kingdom - you have missed everything good and beautiful.

FINALLY, JUDAS MISSED HIS MOMENT AND UNFORTUNATELY SO DO WE.

Actually Judas missed two key moments which could have changed his life. If he had yielded to either of them - his name, like Peter's - could have been one of **honor** -

rather than one of **horror**. He could have surrendered his spirit in the upper room or waited around to see what the cross had accomplished - but he refused to do so. He evaded the issues of salvation and forgiveness until it was too late.

Once I saw a cartoon in the New Yorker Magazine which pictured a man seated in front of the desk of an Internal Revenue Service auditor. He obviously was in quite a predicament. His words are classic, "**But in the broader sense," he is saying, "aren't we all evaders of something?"**" I think that the gentleman in the IRS office and Judas in the last days in Jerusalem, was evading the moment of responsibility.

Judas missed his moment of salvation. If he only had accepted the bread of forgiveness at the Last Supper. He ate the bread - but missed its significance.

They were all scared - they were all frightened - not just Judas. But eventually they all were forgiven. The real tragedy with Judas was that he thought his failure was final.

Instead of returning to Jesus to ask for his mercy, he threw in the towel and he took his own life. He did not stay around to hear that Jesus' first word from the cross would be "**Father, forgive them - for they know not what they do.**"

That's the big difference between Simon Peter who denied Christ three times - and Judas who only denied Him once. Peter failed miserably - but allowed Christ to forgive him and allowed Christ to transform him into a bold and courageous disciple. The trouble with Judas was that he would not forgive himself. Please, notice that in Matthew 26:50, when Judas leads the lynch mob to Jesus - Jesus still addresses him as "**friend.**"

If Judas would have allowed the message of the cross to penetrate the lies that Satan had placed in his mind (in John 13:1 - 2) - there could have been the dawning of a new day. Like Max Lucado shares: "**There is no failure that needs to be final - no life that needs to be futile.**" I hope you will place some moral mistake or frustrating failure at his feet today.

Names like St. Paul, St. Augustine, Luther, Wesley, John Newton, Chuck Colson, Joni Erickson Tada are positive proof that no failure or circumstance needs to have the final word in your spiritual journey.

Judas, tragically, was the only disciple whom Jesus could not transform. Judas never opened the door to let him in to be Lord and Savior. Jesus had so much more to offer to Judas - than Judas chose to accept. You can know that forgiveness today. There is no sin that God's grace cannot forgive - remember the thief on the cross.

Just think that a crook made it to the gates of Heaven - and a disciple who worked with Jesus for three years missed his opportunity.

Dr. Bob Russell pastored a very large and growing church in Kentucky. Before his retirement they had to build a new facility. While the church was under construction, he and a few of the trustees went up to inspect the roof of the church. The contract had been given to the Grace Roofing Company. As they went up to inspect the roof – Pastor Russell discovered that every sheet of insulation used on the roof had the word “**Grace**” on it. Everywhere he looked he saw the word “Grace” – “Grace” – “Grace.” It was a reminder to him that every church and every believer had to be literally covered in God’s grace. This was the one thing that Judas missed and never experienced.

I pray that this church is also covered by grace. I further pray that the grace of God is something that you experience. Don’t let the busyness of your life squeeze out the necessity of God’s grace for your life as well.

Let me close today with this well known illustration. I pray you can hear it as though you are hearing it for the very first time.

“Here is a man who was born of poor parents in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty; then for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never **wrote a book**. He never **held an office**. He never put his foot inside a **big city**, except for Jerusalem. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.

He had no credentials but his divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. All of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

His tormentors gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying . . . and that was his robe. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty-one centuries have come and gone and today he is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.”

Don’t miss the message of the cross – or the moment to surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

Amen and amen.

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Resources used in the development and writing of this two-part sermon:

- 1) William Barclay, "**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**," volume 2, The Daily Bible Studies series, Westminster Press, 1975.
- 2) William P. Barker, **TWELVE WHO WERE CHOSEN**, Fleming H. Revel Co., 1967, pages 121-127.
- 3) King Duncan, "Dynamic Preaching Journal," sermon **DAY OF DECISION**, Knoxville, TN.
- 4) "**Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, volume E-J**," Abingdon Press, 1985, pages 1006-1008.
- 5) Herbert Lockyer, **ALL THE APOSTLES OF THE BIBLE**, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, pages 99-115.
- 6) James W. Moore, printed sermon from **THE PULPIT OF ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**, Houston, TX. This sermon utilizes the structure of this writing – but Dr. Moore should not be held responsible for my use of it.
- 7) J. I. Packer, **KNOWING GOD**, Inter-Varsity Press, 1973, 20th Anniversary Edition, page 26.
- 8) Eugene H. Peterson, **THE JESUS WAY**, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007.
- 9) Walter L. Underwood, **THE TWELVE**, Abingdon Press, 1984, pages 117-26.
- 10) Philip Yancey, **THE JESUS I NEVER KNEW**, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1995.