

Is it I?
Luke 22:1-6

- NKJ Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.
 2 And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people.
 3 Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve.
 4 So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them.
 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money.
 6 So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.

We have now reached the point at which Luke is beginning his account of the Lord's suffering and death. Now in the Gospels, it is Christ's death that is most important and the portion of the accounts that receives the most attention. Consider for instance that two of the Gospel writers, Mark and John, don't even mention the birth of Jesus, but all four gospels contain an extensive description of Christ's death. In fact John who described his reason for writing as "*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*" focuses his attention on the Last week of Christ's Life - he spends 8 chapters discussing 6 days.

The time of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread is now at hand. The Passover was of course the religious feast celebrating the fact that while the Jews were in bondage in Egypt, because their houses were marked by the blood of the lamb, the angel of death "Passed Over" them and did not slay their first born sons. While the feast of unleavened bread, which followed immediately after Passover, celebrated the Lord freeing his people from slavery in Egypt.

Jesus is preaching in the temple in these days, and now thousands of Passover pilgrims who have come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast and sacrifice in the temple, are flocking to hear Him preach every morning.

The Priests and the Pharisees desperately want Jesus dead, but they can't figure out how to get it done. He's right under their noses in the temple every morning, but he's surrounded by all these pilgrims, and they figure if they try to arrest him, the people will rise up against them, and that this might lead to an insurrection, or at the very least to them being stoned to death. So they figure, we'll wait till after the feast, till after everyone goes back to their homes. Then we'll get him.

But they aren't in charge of the timetable, God is, and God has determined that now is the time for the sacrifice of Christ. Now is the time because the Passover was always ordained from its very inception to point forward to Christ. Way back in Egypt, the sacrifice of a lamb was ordained to point forward to the coming sacrifice of Jesus, whom John the Baptist had pointed to and *said "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* The blood of the Passover lamb, when applied to the people of God had saved them from death, but it's real significance was to point towards the only sacrifice that could grant eternal redemption – *Christ our Passover who was sacrificed for us.*

So the fact that none of this is happening by accident, that Jesus isn't being dragged unwillingly to His death, but is going according to the Will of the Father, reminds us of an important fact. Namely that God is control of all things, and that he uses even evil, to bring about what He intends.

You remember poor old Joseph of the coat of many colors? Kids do you know what Joseph's envious brothers did to him? They sold him to be a slave in Egypt! Now wasn't that awful and Evil? And yet you

know the Lord used that to be the means by which Joseph became the second most important man in all of Egypt and then Joseph was able to use his power to save his family and many, many other people from starvation. Years after they had done such a wicked thing to him, Joseph's brothers were scared he was going to get them now that he was so important, but you know what Joseph said to them? He told them not to be afraid, because he knew something very important:

Gen. 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

So we need to remember as we read these awful events, that yes the Devil, the Saducees, the Pharisees, the Herodians, and of course Judas all want Christ dead, but that God was going to use their evil to do the greatest good thing that ever happened. That is why in the first sermon he preached after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus, Peter said this in:

***Acts 2:22 " Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know --
23 "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;
24 "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.***

They meant it for evil, to kill the Son of man, but God meant it for good, to save many from hell.

But how was that going to happen, how could they get Jesus if he was surrounded all day? Well we read in Luke 22:37 ***And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet.***

If someone could show them where Jesus was staying at night, when he wasn't surrounded by the crowd of pilgrims in Jerusalem. Then they could get him without much fuss. But who would do that? Who was close enough to Jesus to know where he stayed in the evening, who would do such an awful thing? Who would betray the Son of man - selling him into the hands of evil men like the brothers sold Joseph? Well almost a year earlier in John 6:70 ***Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" 71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.*** He was to be the Son of Perdition, the traitor included amongst the twelve from the beginning that scriptures like Isaiah 53 that predicted the betrayal and death of the Lamb of God might be fulfilled.

So weren't the priests and officers pleasantly surprised when Judas came to them offering to betray Jesus to them? Now they could take him during the festival after all.

So let's conclude our study of these verses by considering some things about Judas:

First, I want to ask the question, why did he do it? Why did he betray Jesus? And then what applications we can draw from his betrayal.

Sure we can say he betrayed Jesus because he was foreordained to do so from the beginning, and because he was a reprobate whose heart was never really changed. But that's the divine perspective.

What happened in time, that caused a man who heard all of Jesus's sermons, who was with Jesus in the boat on lake when he stilled the storm, who saw him heal the sick, and cure the blind, and even raise the dead, and who was in his innermost circle from the start turn against Jesus? And can you learn anything from him?

Now we can speculate endlessly about that, but I want to try to draw a conclusion from what we know about him, and I think the answer lies in what we are told in John 12 and Matthew 26

John 12: 4 Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said,

5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.

8 "For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

This was Christ's last exchange with Judas before we read that he went to the Chief Priests and obtained 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus:

I want to suggest it wasn't just for the money. That was the part of it, but it was a number of factors all coming together.

- 1) ***First Judas was man, who above all was looking out for his own interests, clearly.*** But that doesn't mean that he was a self-conscious hypocrite following Christ to make a quick buck were he could. No I think R.A. Bruce has it right when he wrote the following about Judas – ***"The false disciple was a sentimental, plausible, self-deceived pietist, who knew and approved the good, though not conscientiously practicing it; one who, in , aesthetic feeling, in fancy, and in intellect, had affinities for the noble and the holy, while in will and in conduct he was the slave of base, selfish passions; one who, in the last resource, would always put self uppermost, yet could zealously devote himself to well-doing when personal interests were not compromised — in short, what the Apostle James calls a two-minded man."***

The kind of Christian Bunyan personified with Mr. By-Ends. One who thought religion good, but only when it was easy, profitable, and honorable amongst others.

You see, Judas being shrewd would have seen how the circumstances had changed, how the end was inevitable, and who loving himself wanted to see to it that in the end Christ's loss was still his gain. How could he squeeze the last few dregs from the ministry of Jesus? Only by being the one who handed him over!

- 2) ***But still how could someone who had walked with Jesus for so long do such a thing? The ointment thing gave him the pretense! Wounded Pride, outrage!***

Why does a shepherd rebuke? That they might ***lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*** But those rebukes will only be of value when the heart has been softened by grace, otherwise its like an iron striking a stone, all it does is produce sparks that set the natural man's pride on fire.

HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT TO ME! DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

Friends, wherein lies the sting of a rebuke? *In its truth.*

Do you know how many people get up and leave churches not because the Pastor is unfaithful, but because he hits that nerve, that pet idol that the person knows is wrong, but won't get rid of and so they run. Were do carnal men stay? Not were the gospel is rebuking their pride and mortifying their sin, but were they are lulled.

Can I give you some advice, I say this because I know most of you will only be here for a few years at most, when you leave this place and seek out another church, look for a place where you do get that "Ouch, that one hurt" feeling every once in a while. Because chances are there you are feeling the surgeons scalpel cutting away another part of the old man that has no place in the kingdom.

So what do I think about Judas? The love of money, pride, shrewdness, and an unregenerate heart all made him a willing tool in the hands of the devil. But there is a value in that, not just that God used his greatest of all evils to bring about the greatest of all goods in our salvation. But also to warn us:

- 1) Never to think that because we are much advanced in religion that we cannot fall.
- 2) Never to love the world more than Jesus
- 3) Never to stop watching, praying, examining yourselves and asking sincerely "is it I?"