

## Who Kissed the Door of Heaven?

Matthew 26:19-25

### *The Rise and Fall of Judas Iscariot*

How do you choose to listen to the Lord's words today? Will it be with a soft heart or a stubborn heart? [In a recent message](#), we explored the concluding warning in Psalm 95: **"Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts ..."** The writer of Hebrews emphasizes these words from Psalm 95 repeatedly. **"Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts..."**(Hebrews 3:7-8). **"Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts..."** (Hebrews 3:15). **"Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts"** (Hebrews 4:7). And woven into these recurring warnings, we find the exhortation, **"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"** (Hebrews 3:12-13).

One would be hard pressed to find a similar repeated warning anywhere else in the Scriptures. This dire warning is in effect for today and all your tomorrows. These warnings alert us to the danger of hardening our own hearts. And they underscore the need to help our fellow members flee from this hazardous hardness. And Hebrews 3:13 shows us that the deceitfulness of sin leads to hardness of the hearts. Judas demonstrates that without tenderness one can become traitorous. That stubborn heart will always lead you in the wrong way. It will always cost you more than you wanted to pay. It will always keep you longer than you wanted to stay. Today's texts pictures a heart hammered into hardness by deceptive sin. You and I can learn a great deal from this study of a truly tragic figure, Judas Iscariot.

The name, "Iscariot" apparently means "from Kerioth" (referred to in Joshua 15:25 as belonging to the tribe of Judah, in the extreme south near Edom). But without question, Judas was chosen to be one of Jesus Christ's 12 disciples. Yet he died by his own hand; he hung himself and after he died his dead body burst apart on the rocks below (Matthew 27:5, Acts 1:18). But his was a fate far worse than death. Jesus referred to him as "the son of perdition" meaning "the one doomed to destruction, the one destined for perishing or lostness."<sup>1</sup> In Peter's words in Acts 1:25, Judas went to "his own place," a reference to Hell. But to go to that place of eternal fire, hard-hearted Judas had to set aside the sayings of Jesus.

Now here is a fascinating way to read the four Gospels. Read them with Judas in mind. Read them with the understanding that Jesus might have been looking right into the eyes of Judas when He said certain things. Read the Gospels, looking through the eyes of Judas to see what he observed. And as you read, consider all the sermons and all the teaching that you have received. Then, with this in mind, consider three traits of the traitor.

### **The First Trait of the Traitor: What the Traitor Knew**

#### **A. The Traitor knew how to get to heaven. John 10:9**

Judas knew that Jesus was the Door to salvation. In John chapter 10, Jesus identified Himself as "The Door of the sheep." Shepherds would often build a circle of boulders, or plant a hedge of thorns with one opening. Then during the night, the shepherd would take up his place at the opening to guard his sheep. Jesus called Himself "The Door of the sheep." In John 10:9, Jesus explained, **"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."** When he betrayed Jesus, Judas kissed the door of heaven and tragically went to hell. But even during the Upper

Room Discourse, Judas heard Jesus teach, **“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man comes unto the Father but by me”** (John 14:6). The traitor heard Jesus explain how to get to heaven.

### **B. The Traitor knew how to prepare for heaven. Matthew 6:19-21**

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus taught His disciples how to prepare for heaven. Just think of it! Jesus might have turned toward Judas when He said, **“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”** (Matthew 6:19-21). Yet Judas would betray the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Matthew 26:15 tells the treacherous story. Judas asked the chief priests, **“What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.”** How much were those silver pieces worth? All we really know is that those coins were used to purchase a small field, which came to be known as “the field of blood” (Acts 1:18-19). You can look in the real estate listings today and make your own estimates of value. But the point is this: what would it take to get you to betray the Son of God?

### **C. The Traitor knew how to see the value of heaven. Matthew 16:24-26**

Jesus had meekly appealed to the conscience of Judas throughout His ministry. For instance, in Matthew 16: **“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:24-26). Here is life’s most important question: “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” If you had to stand before God in His heaven, and He were to ask you that question, what would your answer be? For more than three years, Judas was a close follower of the Son of God who would offer Himself in exchange for the soul of repentant men. To follow Jesus, one must deny himself, take up his cross and follow. But Judas chose the silver and not the Savior. Which will you choose?

### **D. The Traitor knew how to recognize his great danger. Matthew 26:20-29**

As they gathered for that Passover meal, Judas was shocked by the words of Jesus: **“Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me”** (Matthew 26:21). Jesus went on to warn the traitor in the strongest possible terms: **“The Son of man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.”** Jesus, the Teacher, the Creator of souls, confronted Judas, the traitor with the awful truth. It would have been better for Judas if he had never been born rather than go into the Lake of fire forever. Time after time, this Master Teacher confronted His hard-hearted hearer; time after time the miserable traitor listened to his heart and turned away. May I appeal to you with the words of Scripture? Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your heart as Judas did.

Jesus went to die on that cross to do His Father’s will. He died for you; He died for me. He paid the awful penalty for sin and rose again. Will you not trust Him as your Lord rather than be a traitor against Him?

Some may protest that Judas had no choice since his betrayal was prophesied. But even John Calvin, who made much of God’s sovereignty, wrote, *“Neither was Judas therefore excusable, because that*

*which befell him was foretold, seeing that he fell away, not being compelled by the prophecy, but only by the malice of his own heart.”<sup>ii</sup>*

## **The Second Trait of the Traitor: What the Traitor Did**

### **A. The Traitor worked for Christ. Matthew 10:1-8**

According to Matthew 10, Jesus sent all twelve disciples – including Jesus – to preach throughout Israel. According to verse 1, He gave them power to cast out demons and to heal the sick. Consider with awe this remarkable power as described by Jesus. **“And as ye go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give”** (Matthew 10:7-8). Isn’t it startling to realize that Judas was given this kind of power? Judas had the authority to command evil spirits to get out of others, but one day he would allow Satan to come into him! (Luke 22:3, John 13:27). Beware of false prophets who show off their false powers. But above all remember the false preacher who once had power but even now is being punished in the flames. In Luke 10:20, Jesus reminded His preachers in training, **“In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”** Working for Christ is no proof that you are a true worshiper of Christ. Perhaps Peter was remembering Judas when he wrote, **“Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure”** (2 Peter 1:10). Perhaps Paul remembered Judas when he wrote, **“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ...”** (1 Corinthians 15:10).<sup>iii</sup> Forsaking God’s grace, Judas found only futility.

### **B. The Traitor acted as the treasurer for Jesus and His disciples. John 13:29**

In John 13:29, the apostle remarked that Judas “had the bag” (meaning he served as the treasurer). Why would Jesus allow this? Undoubtedly he wanted His enemy to know where every shekel went. When the chief priests would later seek testimonies of wrongdoing by Christ, Judas should have been their first witness. But Judas would have to agree with Pilate who would later say, **“I find no fault in Him at all”** (John 18:38).

### **C. The Traitor betrayed Christ. Matthew 27:3**

**“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hung himself.”** His co-conspirators offered him no solace for his soul. Instead, in the Temple, they taunted him with his treachery. In the place where Jesus had overturned the tables of the money changers, Judas allowed the money to overturn him. If you have made friends with God’s enemies, don’t expect them to comfort you when your conscience screams at you.

### **D. The Traitor confessed, “repented himself,” and committed suicide. Matthew 27:3-5**

Judas made his confession yet without a conversion. A careful reading of 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 will show that Judas was sorry for the consequences of his sinful actions. But he never confessed Jesus as Lord. The thief on the cross entered heaven because he proclaimed the sinless Lord as his King. Judas entered into hell admitting that the Lord was sinless, desperately trying to silence the screams of his own

conscience. Like suicidal King Zimri, Judas died **“For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord”** (1 Kings 16:18-19).

### **The Third Trait of the Traitor: What the Traitor Was**

#### **A. The Traitor was a leader and a thief. (John 12:4-6)**

The treasurer, the man who was considered to be a thoughtful steward, was a sneaky thief. And he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The command to all the leaders of the world is this: **“Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him”** (Psalm 2:12). The psalmist appealed that all would kiss the Son with a loving embrace. Judas kissed the Son in a faithless betrayal. Judas kissed the door of heaven and went to hell.

#### **B. The Traitor was determined to ignore his peril. (Matthew 7:21-29)**

**“Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied [preached] in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”** (Matthew 7:21-29)

In the Sermon on the Mount near the beginning of His ministry, Jesus explained the danger for Judas and all who would be like Him. Judas would preach, be empowered to cast out demons and do many wonderful works. Perhaps he will make his appeal with the many at the Great White Throne Judgment: **“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied [preached] in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”** What is the point? Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your heart.”

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<sup>i</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 198. Note that this is the same description given to the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Borchert notes the play on words in the original, “the perishing one perished.”

<sup>ii</sup> John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 61. (Commenting on Acts 1:16).

<sup>iii</sup> See Grace Not in Vain, <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/grace-not-in-vain/>