



### **Reaching for Two Worlds but Not Getting Either**

Matthew 26:25 **Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. Surely Not I, Teacher?**

Those are the words of Judas as he was about to betray Jesus.

#### **What We Know About Judas**

Judas was one of “the twelve” whom the Bible tells us Jesus designated as His Apostles. Judas was present even when Jesus said, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (John 6:70) Judas was “from Kerioth” which is a small town in southern Judah - that’s what “Iscariot” apparently means. So Judas was from Judah, and not a Galilean as were the other Apostles.

But he was one of the twelve, and this means that Judas was present for all those amazing things Jesus did - all the signs and wonders He performed. He was present when Jesus fed the thousands. In fact, must have done some amazing things himself, for we read in Mark 10:4 that Jesus “called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”

Judas was very familiar with Jesus’ teaching. He was present to hear “the sermon on the mount.” He was present for Jesus’ teaching in parables. Not just that, but he was also there when Jesus gave a private explanation of the parable of the sower in Mark chapter 4. I find this especially ironic. Was Judas like the hard path where the seed that is the word of God falls and then is taken away by Satan? Was he the rocky place where the seed grows a little but then dies out from lack of depth? Or was Judas that thorny ground where the seed tries to grow but is choked out by, as Jesus said, “the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things.”?

That last one is more than a little intriguing, is it not? For there came a time near the end of Jesus’ life when Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (whom, by the way, we have to presume Judas saw Jesus raise from the dead!) opened a bottle of expensive perfume and poured it onto Jesus. While she did this to honor Jesus, John’s gospel tells us that Judas especially objected. “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?” said Judas. “It was worth a year’s wages.” John goes on to tell us (12:4) that Judas did not say this because he really cared about the poor. He said it because he was a thief who was the “keeper” of the treasury (and John uses a play on words here) who would “keep” some of the money for himself. Did Judas cringe a little when Jesus spoke of “the deceitfulness of wealth”?

It is interesting, is it not, how Judas is mentioned in the gospels without acrimony. When the lists of the Apostles are given in the gospels, all that is said of Judas is “the one who betrayed Him

But the point is this: Judas did not lack knowledge of Who Jesus really was and what Jesus stood for. He was as acquainted with Jesus as it was then possible to be. And yet he betrayed Jesus.

Judas, we are told, went to the chief priests. They didn’t come to him; he went to them. According to Matthew, Judas asked the chief priests “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” The Jewish leaders offered Judas thirty silver coins. Yes, Judas had a money problem, as we have seen. But he is with Jesus, who can make all the food you need. What motivated Judas? Was it just money, or something more?

I believe that Judas wanted both worlds.

Perhaps you have heard of “The Jesus Seminar.” This is a group of New Testament scholars who have been meeting periodically since 1985. The initial two hundred has now dwindled to about seventy-five active members. The goal of the Jesus Seminar is to determine which things in the gospels were “really said” by Jesus. They actually take a vote on every “saying” of Jesus by dropping little colored beads into a box. Red: Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it. Pink: Jesus probably or might have said something like this. Gray: Jesus did not say this, but the ideas are close to His own. Black: Jesus did not say this; it represents a later tradition.

By this means, the Jesus Seminararians create their own Jesus. Their version of Jesus is simply a sage, a spinner of one-liners, a teller of parables, a clever preacher. That’s very intriguing, except that this Jesus of the Seminar is a Judas Jesus.

Gen 13: **10** And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar**11** Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other**12** Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.**13** But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

Gen 19:**24** Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;**25** And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

**26** But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

**2 Tim 4:10** For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;

1 John 2: **15** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. **17** And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Matt 19: **16** And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

**21** Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.**22** But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

## 1. The Lukewarm Heart of King Amaziah II Chronicles 25:2

He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly. II Chronicles 25:2

So the prophet stopped but said, “I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel.” II Chronicles 25:16b

The rest of the story goes downhill fast. The COLD-HEARTED King lurches from one disaster to another. First he attacks the northern nation of Israel and gets trounced. The Israelites capture him, then plunder the temple and the palace. After 10 years, Amaziah is released and returns to his ruined country of Judah. But, after a while, he is chased from his own palace and assassinated by his own people.

I Corinthians 10:6 tells us that these Old Testament accounts were recorded examples for us. So we need to ask: What can we learn from Amaziah’s example?

If nothing else, Amaziah teaches us that a lukewarm heart is a dangerous thing. If left unattended, it will ultimately grow stone cold.

When we talk about the heart, we usually just think of our feelings. But when the Old Testament talks about the heart it includes not just our feelings, but our mind, our will, our entire spiritual nature. It embodies the whole life of a person. Jesus said this was the greatest commandment: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul,

mind, and strength. Matthew 22:37, Deuteronomy 6:5

Rev 3; **16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

VERSE 16, IS NOT A PORTRAIT OF A PERSON LOSING THEIR SALVATION, THIS IS A PICTURE OF A PERSON TRYING TO STRADDLE THE FENCE BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD. IT'S LIKE THE LITTLE BOY WHO PRAYED ONE NIGHT BEFORE HE WENT TO BED, "DEAR GOD, MAKE ME GOOD BUT NOT TOO GOOD, JUST GOOD ENOUGH SO I DON'T GET A WHIPPING"

Putting together what we find in Matthew 27 and Acts 1, we get this picture of the end of Judas. He cast the pieces of silver at the Jewish leaders from whom he had received them. Being piously hypocritical as they were, they would not put this money back into the treasury because it was "blood money." So they used it to buy a field, perhaps in the very name of Judas Iscariot. There Judas hanged himself. His dead body - and a suicide at that - was unclean to the Jews, so no one touched it. Instead, that partially decayed body fell and burst open.

It was a messy end of a very messed-up life. That life was messed-up when Judas tried to reach for two worlds and in the end he did not get either. There is no way to do that, then, as now, without making a horrible mess.

**Matt 6:24** No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Jer. 20:8 ... But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones