

## **The Traitor's Kiss, Part 1**

Scripture: Matthew 26:47–50a

Code: 2387

### **INTRODUCTION**

Matthew 26:47-56 generates a great deal of emotion in me. I feel both anger and love, a desire for revenge, yet complete trust in the plan of God. I feel that way because this passage relates to us the betrayal and arrest of Jesus Christ. I trust my anger is holy indignation at the way the Son of God was treated. The kiss of Judas is a despicable and repulsive act. It is demeaning, unfair, and unjust. Yet I also find much comfort in the response of Christ, who remained perfectly at peace with the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

If there is a more ugly or repulsive word in the English language than the word traitor, it has to be the name of Judas. Our text brings us face-to-face with the worst traitor of all. The man of sorrows, who was so intimately acquainted with grief, braced Himself for yet another painful experience. He would be betrayed by one of His own disciples and then arrested to be executed on a cross.

Matthew 26:46-56 is narrative, and as we go through it, we find ourselves drawn into the tragedy as well as the triumph of its scenario. As I meditated on how to approach this passage, I thought it might be best to identify the different participants in the scene. So we will examine the attack of the crowd, the kiss of the traitor, the defeat of the disciples, and the triumph of the Savior.

### **LESSON**

#### **I. THE ATTACK OF THE CROWD (v. 47)**

"While he yet spoke, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people."

##### **A. Reviewing the Scene**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that while Jesus was speaking, the mob arrived (Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47). What was Christ saying? Let's look at the setting.

Six days previous, Jesus arrived in Bethany at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Jesus had recently raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44). The next day, Sunday, great crowds went to Bethany to see Him and hear Him teach. On Monday He entered the city of Jerusalem and the people proclaimed Him as Messiah. On Tuesday He cleansed the Temple and threw the money-changers, buyers, and sellers out of the Temple courtyard. On Wednesday He taught the multitudes in the Temple. When confronted by the religious leaders, He condemned them for their hypocrisy (Matthew 23). Late Wednesday afternoon He left the Temple with His disciples, climbed the Mount of Olives, and taught them about His Second Coming (Matt. 24-25). On Thursday the Lord sent Peter and John to prepare for the Passover feast that night. That evening after sunset, He celebrated the Passover with all the disciples in an upper room in the house of an unnamed follower. It was there He washed the disciples' feet, taught them many things (John 13-16), prayed for them (John 17), and instituted the Lord's table, or communion. Near midnight He left the upper room and the city with the disciples. They ascended the Mount of Olives, and He warned them of the impending trial they would face, and their ultimate defection. Although they denied that such a thing could happen, it nonetheless came to pass.

As we approach Matthew 26:47, it is around midnight on Thursday. Jesus and the eleven disciples (Judas having been dismissed during the Passover meal) reached a place they went to often: the

garden of Gethsemane. As they entered the gate of the garden, Jesus told eight of the disciples to guard the entrance. He continued on with Peter, James, and John to a more secluded place in the garden. Then Jesus left the three and went a short distance away so He might be alone to pray. It is then that Satan hurled three great waves of temptation at Him to divert Jesus from dying on the cross for the sins of the world.

Now the prayer time is over. Sadly, the disciples slept instead of praying. After Christ's third session of prayer was complete, He returned to the disciples and said, "Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matt. 26:45-46). As He spoke the crowd approached, climbing up the Mount of Olives. That sets the scene of the phrase in verse 47, "While he yet spoke."

## **B. Identifying the Participants**

### **1. Judas**

a) The mystery of his betrayal In verse 47 Matthew says, "Lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came." The phrase "one of the twelve" was a common designation for Judas. Mark 14:10 calls him, "Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve." In verse 20 Jesus says, "It is one of the twelve, that dipped with me in the dish." Verse 43 says, "Immediately, while he yet spoke, cometh Judas, one of the twelve." Luke 22:3 and 47 also refers to him as one of the twelve. That designation, rather than carrying just disdain and repulsiveness, is surrounded with a profound mystery. It's almost too hard to believe that the man who betrayed Jesus was actually one of the twelve. Judas knew Christ more intimately than anyone other than the rest of the disciples, yet he still betrayed Him. It's inconceivable. "One of the twelve" is primarily a statement of shock. b) The method of His betrayal Judas arrived with the multitude early Friday morning, bringing his plot to a climax. He had left the presence of the disciples earlier Thursday night (John 13:30), before He instituted the Lord's Table. He then concluded his agreement with the Jewish leaders, having previously made a contract with them, saying, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" (Matt. 26:15). So Judas went to the leaders that night and told them it was the right moment, and that they must act quickly to take advantage of Jesus' separation from the crowds. c) The motivation of His betrayal Judas was motivated by greed. He also was possessed by Satan at this time (John 13:27), and thus no longer in control of his behavior. He was compelled to rally the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers to capture Christ. Judas wanted money because He wanted compensation for what he believed were wasted years of poverty. He followed a Messiah who was not going to bring about an earthly kingdom, or exalt him to the glory he had expected. d) The mobilization of his betrayal (1) Gaining Pilate's permission After Judas left the upper room on Thursday night, he was a part of much frantic activity. First, he reported immediately to the Jewish leaders. They had to get permission from the Romans to arrest Jesus. Most likely they met with Pilate himself. Pilate was in Jerusalem at this time, although as governor his headquarters were located in Caesarea. Matthew 27:62-63 says, "The next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that the deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." There the leaders identified Christ as the deceiver, which indicates they must have had some prior conversation with Pilate about Jesus to identify Him in such a manner. To obtain permission from Pilate to arrest Jesus, the Jewish leaders had to convince him that Jesus was a potential insurrectionist and terrorist--that He was planning to lead an insurrection against Rome. The Romans were not anxious for another one; they had just quelled one not long before. Mark 15:7 says, "There was one named Barabbas, who lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection." Barabbas had been the leader of a terrorist revolt against Rome. The leaders wanted Rome to see Jesus as a potential Barabbas, so they said whatever they had to to convince Pilate that Jesus was a threat. (2) Gaining police protection On that pretense, the Roman soldiers joined the Jewish leaders as Judas led the way to the garden of Gethsemane to take Christ captive. They may have checked the upper room first to see if Jesus and His disciples were still there. When they found

He wasn't, Judas knew where He'd be. That made the capture easier because the garden was outside the city. It was still dark, and they could proceed to the garden without being disruptive. Roman soldiers were present throughout the city. Extra troops were necessary to keep peace during the Passover season, so an entourage of Roman soldiers marching through the city wasn't unusual. It also wouldn't be unusual for a group of Jewish leaders to pass through the streets since Passover was one of the highest and holiest of religious celebrations. If the soldiers and leaders convened outside the gate, the populace would not have been aware of what was happening. The right moment had come. Satan knew it and entered into Judas to see the plan to its conclusion. Judas convinced the religious leaders that it was the perfect opportunity, and they in turn convinced the Romans. But for all their secret planning, they were falling in line with the plan of God. All they were doing had been decided previously "by the determinant council and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

## 2. The multitude

a) Their identity Matthew 26:47 tells us that a great multitude accompanied Judas on his God-ordained mission. We have discussed that multitude already to some degree, but let's examine them more specifically. (1) Jewish leaders Matthew 26:47 identifies one part of the multitude: "Chief priests and elders of the people." The chief priests led the religious activity of Israel; the elders were members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel. It is important to remember that the Jewish leaders were behind the arrest of Christ. By no means can we conclude that all Jewish people in the nation wanted Him arrested--they were victimized and misled by their leadership. John 18:3 says Judas "received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees." Present were the Sadducees, who were the chief priests, the Pharisees, who for the most part made up the regular priesthood, and members of the Sanhedrin. The high priest may also have been with them. John 18:10 says the servant of the high priest was with the crowd. He was an important person, serving as an assistant to the high priest, who held the highest religious office in the land. (2) Roman soldiers John 18:3 says there was a "band of men and officers." The Greek word translated "band" is speira, which refers to a cohort of soldiers. A speira was specifically one-tenth of a legion in the Roman army. A legion contained six thousand men, so one-tenth of that is six hundred men. The Roman soldiers were there because they were under the impression that Jesus was an insurrectionist like Barabbas. According to verse 12 the band of Roman soldiers were commanded by a "captain" (Gk. chiliarch), an officer with a rank higher than what we know as a colonel. His troops were stationed at Fort Antonia, which was located just north of the Temple ground. (3) Temple police Luke 22:52 adds one more group to the throng: the "captains of the temple." They were the Temple police. b) Their torches John 18:3 says the Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders came with "lanterns and torches." But they did not necessarily need them just to see their way in the dark. Passover occurred in the middle of the month, and there would have been a full moon at that time. A full moon in that part of the world is very bright. I believe they carried lanterns and torches because they assumed they would have to hunt Jesus down and drag Him out of hiding. c) Their weapons Matthew 26:47 tells us they also carried "swords and clubs." (1) Swords The Greek word translated "sword" is machaira. It was a short sword--a dagger--the kind carried by a Roman soldier. When Paul outlined the armor of the Christian in Ephesians 6, he used machaira in reference to the "sword of the Spirit" (v. 17). Soldiers also carried a large broad sword when they entered into armed conflict with another army. But they would carry the more deft weapon on an occasion like this one, when they were going to make an arrest. (2) Clubs The crowd also came carrying clubs (Gk., zula). These clubs were like the nightsticks that policemen carry. It was a normal weapon of the Temple police. Both the Jews and Romans were armed. What a shocking scene! Instead of welcoming, embracing, and worshiping the long-awaited Messiah, the Jewish leaders sent a group of soldiers and Temple police to arrest Him.

## Characteristics of a Wicked World

The world's wickedness has never been more obvious than in its treatment of Jesus Christ. If you don't think the world is wicked, then ask yourself how it can reject the most pure and lovely person who ever walked on the face of the earth?

### 1. The world is unjust

Did the Jewish leaders have the right to execute Jesus Christ? What crime had He committed? Pilate said, "I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38). There was a man educated in jurisprudence and law. He knew Christ had done nothing wrong.

### 2. The world is mindless

What did the Roman soldiers have against Jesus Christ? Nothing. Many of the priests had nothing against Christ. They were simply following the high priest and the chief priests, who were intimidated by Christ. The priests were supposed to care for the people of Israel, and Jesus did the same. He healed their diseases, restored them to spiritual life, and taught them divine truth. The priests had nothing against Him, but they were mindless. They were caught up in the mood of the mob. One or two perverted leaders can stir up an entire populace. The crowd was as mindless as those who followed Hitler or any other evil dictator. They sold themselves to emotion. They hated the One they didn't know and despised what they couldn't understand. They were hirelings of the high priest, bribed to preserve a peace they imagined could not exist unless Christ was executed.

Today the world is much the same. There are people across our nation who reject Jesus Christ just as mindlessly. All who would reject Christ had better consider His claims before they reject Him. So many people won't receive Jesus Christ because they don't believe any of His claims. My response is: "You must have conducted an in-depth study into the life of Christ to come to such a conclusion." Many people believe the Bible isn't true, yet most would confess they have never read it. Today many people follow the mood of the mob—if their friends or society rejects Christ, so will they. But that response is as mindless as that of the Roman soldiers and the priests. My message to unbelievers is: Don't be mindless. Don't become a victim of someone else's bitterness. Don't reject the Son of God because someone else did.

### 3. The world is cowardly

A thousand men carrying swords, clubs, and torches went to arrest one Galilean. A guilty conscience will make a coward out of anyone. Wicked people fear that they might receive what they know they deserve. They don't want to hear the truth. They shun honest confrontation. Nowhere do we read that even one of them went to Jesus to determine if He was an insurrectionist, or if He indeed was the Messiah, the Son of God. These cowards arrived in great numbers at night, fearing exposure. Cowards are bold only when the odds are overwhelmingly in their favor.

If you can isolate an unbeliever from his support group, he instantly becomes vulnerable. He finds protection with other unbelievers. If he has surrounded himself with enough people who think and live like he does, he is comfortable in his evil. He won't confront truth in a one-on-one situation; he will hide in the cowardliness of the mob.

### 4. The world is profane

The world has absolutely no reverence for what is sacred. Every time I hear the name of Jesus uttered as a curse, I shudder at the profanity of the world. Every time God or Christ is mocked, every time God's Word and will is disdained, and every time Christ is rejected, that is akin to the profanity exhibited in the garden. There the world profaned the most sacred thing in the universe: God in human flesh. What blatant impiety! What unbelievable sacrilege was committed when murderous, sinful hands seized the holy Lord. Jesus said it best: "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Matt. 26:45). It is no different today. Our profane, unholy world mocks Christ, and treats Him with indignity and disrespect.

The world is unjust, mindless, cowardly, and profane. All elements of evil present at the arrest in the garden have not since passed. The world is still the same.

## II. THE KISS OF THE TRAITOR (vv. 48-50a)

### A. The Sign of the Betrayal (v. 48)

"He that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold Him fast."

A signal was necessary. It was dark. There was nothing external about Christ that distinguished Him from any other human being. They needed a sign so they wouldn't grab the wrong person. Perhaps they thought the disciples might try to identify an imposter as Christ. That Judas chose a kiss to signal the betrayal is an illustration of his perverted thinking.

#### 1. Paying homage

A kiss was a mark of homage, such as that offered by a pupil to a beloved teacher as a sign of respect and love. But it could be given only when the teacher offered it first. It was considered brash to offer a kiss to a teacher unless it had been invited by the teacher's initial embrace. A kiss was a sign of affection.

Inferiors kissed the back of their superior's hand. If they were above the level of a servant, they could kiss the palm. Slaves often kissed the feet. Those who sought pardon from an angry monarch would also kiss the feet. Kissing the hem of a superior's garment was an expression of great reverence. But a kiss on the cheek was a sign of affection, love, and intimacy. Thus the kiss of Judas was most despicable.

#### 2. Feigning innocence

Judas could have kissed Christ's hand or the hem of His garment, but he feigned affection for Christ, not only to provide a sign, but also to attempt to deceive Christ and the disciples. "I shall kiss" (Gk. phil[ma]es[ma]o) is the future tense of phile[ma]o, which means "to show affection." Judas was feigning innocence, a weak attempt on his part to conceal his character and treachery. It would be bad enough to betray a friend, but inconceivably Judas sold out the very Son of God! The delusion of thinking he could deceive Him added to his sin beyond description. Judas fulfills this thought in Proverbs 27:6: "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Integral to an enemy's deceit is an exaggeration of his friendship.

#### 3. Selling Christ

The hatred of the priests, the raucous screams of the crowds, the pitiful cowardice of Pilate, and the brutality of the soldiers--Jesus suffered through it all with a quiet spirit. But I can't imagine what He felt in His heart as Judas kissed Him. It is inconceivable that a man could return such treachery for divine love.

An Old Testament parallel to Judas's treachery is in Ezekiel 13:19, where God says, "Will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread?" His betrayal is reminiscent of Amos 2:6, where the Lord says, "They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes." Only in Christ's case, He was sold by Judas for thirty pieces of silver and betrayed with a kiss. Judas is no less guilty because Jesus accomplished redemption-- that didn't mitigate his guilt; it merely overrode his evil. So Judas concluded his betrayal by telling the leaders to seize Christ immediately after he kissed Him.

### B. The Intensity of Judas (v. 49)

"Forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him."

As soon as Jesus came into view, Judas said, "Hail, master." Then he kissed him. The Greek word translated "kissed" is kataphil[ma]es[ma]o. It is phil[ma]es[ma]o intensified. Judas fervently embraced and kissed Jesus. Kataphil[ma]es[ma]o is used of a groom kissing his new bride. It is also used of the woman who profusely kissed the Savior's feet (Luke 7:38).

In the midst of Judas's kisses Jesus said, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Judas profaned an holy act. Psalm 2:12 says, "Kiss the Son." The Son desires a holy kiss, not a profane one. Judas acted like a person who was grieving. Perhaps he hoped to make Jesus

and the disciples think he had come to warn Christ. So he separated himself from the crowd and feigned sorrow and love.

### **C. The Response of Christ (v. 50a)**

"Jesus said unto him, Friend, why art thou come?"

The best translation of the Greek word hetairos is not "friend," but "fellow." Jesus did not address Judas as a friend at this point in their relationship. The word philos was reserved for a friend. It is used in John 15:15 when Jesus tells His disciples, "I have called you friends." By that time, Judas had left the upper room. Judas was not a friend, but a companion in the sense of still being associated with Christ.

The correct order in the Greek text for what Jesus tells Judas is: "On what you are here." The best translation of that is: "Get on with what you are here to do." How could He say that? He just had finished a serious time of prayer with His Father, and He had resolved His commitment. So He endured the betrayer's kisses and said, "Get this over with." That was the farewell of Jesus to the son of perdition. As Judas lives for eternity in hell, he must still have these words ringing in his ears: "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).

### **The Characteristics of a False Disciple**

Judas was a false disciple. I can't imagine anything more wicked than that. What are the marks of a false disciple, as exemplified by Judas?

#### **1. Greed**

Judas loved money. He lived for today--he wanted glory and success. He had a greater regard for things than he did for God. He had a greater desire for self than He did for Christ. Typically, false disciples will follow Jesus to get what they want. But when Jesus doesn't deliver and puts demands on them that they didn't expect, they leave. And they may try to get all they can before they leave. They're like the seed that springs up quickly, but then withers and dies when the sun comes out (Matt. 13:6). Or they are like the seed that falls among the thorns and is choked out (Matt. 13:7)--they follow Christ for a while, but eventually sell Him out for their selfish desires, such as money, prestige, and power. False disciples love darkness. They love what's in the world and they'll sell the Savior for it, like Esau sold his birthright for a pot of stew (Gen. 25:33-34).

#### **2. Deceit**

False disciples masquerade their true character in an attempt to delude others. They pretend to love the Lord. Judas was obviously successful because none of the disciples suspected him. When Jesus revealed that one of them would betray Him, each one asked, "Is it I?" (Matt. 26:22). False disciples are so deceitful that our Lord said believers can't determine for sure who's real and who isn't (Matt. 13:29).

#### **3. Hypocrisy**

Judas kissed Christ to kill Him. He paid homage on the outside, but he hated on the inside.

Judas is no solitary monster--people like him exist in every age, even today. They pretend to love Christ, but in reality are greedy, deceitful, and hypocritical. They follow Christ for what they might receive--a saved conscience, peace of mind, reputation, self-satisfaction, or improved profits in business. If the truth were known, they would sell Christ if they could see greater gain somewhere else.

### **CONCLUSION**

One day we will find ourselves in our own garden of Gethsemane. Will we stand with the crowd? Will we betray Christ like Judas? Will we run away with the disciples? Or will we stand beside the triumphant Savior? Where will you stand? If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you're not bowing at His feet and worshiping Him, He calls you to do so today.

## **Focusing on the Facts**

1. Describe the setting of the betrayal of Christ.
2. What is significant about the phrase "one of the twelve" as it applies to Judas?
3. What motivated Judas to betray Christ?
4. What did the Jewish leaders have to do before they could convince Pilate to give them permission to arrest Jesus?
5. Identify the Jewish leaders who came to arrest Jesus.
6. How many Roman soldiers assisted with the arrest of Jesus?
7. What other possible reason besides seeing at night could the mob have had for carrying torches and lanterns?
8. Describe the swords and clubs that the mob carried.
9. Name some characteristics of this wicked world. Explain each one.
10. Why was a signal necessary to identify Christ?
11. What are some of the various things kissing symbolized in the culture of Jesus' day?
12. What was Judas attempting to show by kissing Jesus on the cheek?
13. Cite two Old Testament parallels to Judas's treachery.
14. In what way did Judas kiss Christ?
15. What is significant about the way Jesus addressed Judas (Matt. 26:50)?
16. What are the characteristics of a false disciple?

## **Pondering the Principles**

1. In spite of all the secret plotting of Judas and the religious leaders, Jesus was delivered to them by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). The phrase "determinate counsel" refers to God's will, and the word "foreknowledge" to God's ordained plan. Knowing that, how would you interpret Acts 2:23? Now look at the rest of the verse: "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." How does that relate to the first half of the verse? What is your responsibility to God's will and plan?
2. Review the section on the characteristics of a wicked world. As believers we remain sinful. Which of the characteristics would you say you exhibit more than you should? Why? Make it your goal this week to isolate one of them. Confess that sin to God and repent of it by asking God to help you become obedient to Him in that area. Make a personal study of that area in Scripture your first step toward consistent obedience.
3. A false disciple is characterized by greed, deceit, and hypocrisy. A true disciple, while wanting to obey Christ always, will still fall into bad habits and exhibit some or all of those characteristics to some degree. Which one is most characteristic of you? Like the previous question, confess your sin to God and repent of it.

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