

The Traitor's Kiss, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 26:50b–56

Code: 2388

REVIEW

The events traditionally known as the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are those encompassing His death on the cross. We are presently studying two of those particular events: the betrayal and arrest of Christ in Matthew 26:47-56. In them we see the climax of Judas's plot to acquire compensation for what he thought were wasted years in following one who didn't turn out to be the earthly king he hoped for.

Bethlehem gave the world its most honorable citizen, Jesus Christ. A small town twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem named Kerioth gave the world its most despicable character, Judas Iscariot. Jesus confronted Judas about the betrayal to come Thursday night while He was celebrating the Passover with all His disciples. After sending Judas away to carry out his plan, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, taught the remaining eleven, and prayed to the Father on their behalf. Then He departed with the eleven to the garden of Gethsemane, located on the Mount of Olives. There the Lord entered into prayer and staved off three waves of Satan's temptations. Jesus was strengthened by an angel and resolved His commitment to go to the cross. After His third time of prayer the Lord woke up the sleeping disciples to inform them that the time of His betrayal was at hand. In the distance He could see the torches and lanterns carried by the mob led by Judas coming to arrest Him.

Perhaps the best way to understand Matthew 26:47-56 it is to look at the participants. We will study the attack of the mob, the kiss of the traitor, the defection of the disciples, and the triumph of the Savior.

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."

The chief priests and elders engineered the plot to arrest Jesus after Judas sold out. But they weren't about to go alone. They tried that once before: the temple police went to capture Jesus and came back empty-handed (John 7:32, 45). So they enlisted the help of the Romans, convincing them that Jesus posed a clear threat to Roman security.

That scene is a good illustration of the wickedness of a Christ-rejecting world. Today a world of people will attack Christ and reject Him as their Lord and God. They see Him as a threat to their comfortable life-styles.

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

"He that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, why art thou come? [better: "Fella, do what you have come to do"]."

Judas is the epitome of lost opportunity. No one has ever had a greater opportunity to be saved. But he loved money—he sold the priceless Christ for thirty pieces of silver. He was also a hypocrite. He is a classic example of a false disciple: he wasted his privileges, loved money more than he loved the Son of God, and was the hypocrite of hypocrites. Today many false disciples fill church pews. They

feign love for Christ, but at any given moment would sell Him for whatever was more valuable to them.

LESSON

III. THE DEFEAT OF THE DISCIPLES (vv. 50b-54, 56a)

A. The Action of the Multitudes (v. 50b)

"Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him."

After Judas identified Christ with a kiss, the authorities didn't waste any time grabbing Him. John 18:12 says, "Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him," as they would with any prisoner. But before they could tie Him up, Luke 22:49 says, "When they [the disciples] who were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" There's nothing in Scripture to indicate that the Lord had the chance to answer before Peter acted.

B. The Arrogance of Peter (v. 51)

"Behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword [Gk., machaira], and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear."

Neither Matthew, Mark, or Luke tell us who drew his sword, but John does. Since John wrote his gospel long after this incident, it was safe for him to identify the assailant, who was Peter (John 18:10). When the other authors penned their gospels, Peter might have been exposed to reprisal from either the Jewish leaders or the Romans. John also identifies the high priest's servant: his name was Malchus. He served as an assistant to the high priest. Peter cut off his ear, but I am sure he was aiming for his head and missed. Obviously Malchus ducked. If Peter had his way, he would have fought his way through the mob.

What made Peter so bold? As the mob arrived in the garden and said they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord said, "I am he," and they all fell to the ground (John 18:5-6). So perhaps Peter thought that if he got into trouble the Lord would knock them all down again. In addition, he may have felt like he had to fight to maintain his boast that he would never deny Christ even if he had to die.

Peter's impetuous nature reacted violently to Christ's arrest.

Where did Peter get a sword? Luke 22:38 says, "[The disciples] said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough." Some people think the Lord meant that two swords were enough to win the battle, but I don't think so.

C. The Approach of Christ (vv. 52-54, 56)

1. The declaration of non-violence (v. 52a)

"Then said Jesus unto him [Peter], Put up again thy sword into its place."

When the Lord told the disciples "It is enough" in reference to the two swords (Luke 22:38), He meant they were not to respond to their enemies by using those swords--as if to say, "Now that's enough of that kind of talk." What prompted the disciples' response in Luke 22:38 was Christ's statement in verse 36: "He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his bag; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." There the Lord was speaking in spiritual terms, but the disciples didn't understand that--they usually maintained a physical perspective on everything. Our Lord wanted them to understand that they would need extra spiritual resources when the time came to defend their lives.

a) The principle Second Corinthians 10:4 tells us, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal [physical], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." So when the disciples said that they had two swords and the Lord said, "It is enough," He was implying that Christianity makes no advances with conventional weapons. There is no such thing as a holy war. Any so-called holy war in the name of Christ is utterly unholy. The Kingdom of God does not advance by using fleshly weapons, but by using spiritual weapons to tear down the dominion of Satan that reigns in the hearts of men and women. Peter was out of sync with spiritual reality when he started swinging his

machaira around like a Roman soldier would swing his rhomphaia (a four-foot broad sword). In John 18:36 Jesus tells Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." What did He mean by that? That His kingdom is of another world. Christianity gains nothing by military might. Anything like the Crusades or the terrorist activities today in Ireland are an affront to Christ.b) The practice In John 18:11 Jesus tells Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" After Peter cut off Malchus's ear, Jesus "touched his ear, and healed him" (Luke 22:51). That is the only miracle recorded in Scripture where Jesus healed a fresh wound. Yet as far as we know Malchus exhibited no faith in Christ. Jesus' miracles were sovereign: He performed them for people who showed faith in Him and for those who didn't. At a time when a battle could have broken out between the mob and the disciples, Christ intervened. The Lord knew His work would be for nought had the eleven disciples been killed. In Luke 22:51 He says, "Permit ye thus far," which is better translated as "Stop! No more of this" (NASB). It is then that Christ gave Malchus a new ear.

2. The reasons for non-violence (vv. 52b-54, 56a)

The Lord gives us some very important reasons for avoiding violence.

a) Violence is fatal (v. 52b) "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." People who use a sword for personal acts of violence will be executed. In that verse our Lord is advocating capital punishment. (1) Genesis 9:6--"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." If you kill someone, you will die. That's God's law, and Jesus reiterates it in Matthew 26:52. When someone takes a life, the government has the right to take his life. God established that divine law to preserve society and the sanctity of human life. (2) Romans 13:4--"[The government] beareth not the sword in vain." God has given the government the right to take the life of murderers. When the apostle Paul was held captive by the Romans, he appealed to the law, saying, "If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die" (Acts 25:11). He upheld the law of God. It is unacceptable for anyone, except the authorized executioner, to take a life. It doesn't matter if something is unjust, inequitable, or ungodly; no one has the right to personal vengeance because of it. That's what Christ was telling Peter. If he were to kill one person in the mob, he would forfeit his own life. Under no circumstances does a Christian have the right to decide on his own to take a life, even if his intent is to defend Christ's honor. That doesn't mean you don't have the right to defend yourself or your loved ones from someone who's trying to kill you. But any act of vengeance against someone should bring about the penalty for murder.b) Violence is foolish (v. 53) "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Do you see how foolish vengeance is? Peter didn't have to fight; if Christ wanted help He could have asked God to send Him more than twelve legions of angels, or more than 72,000 angels. According to 2 Kings 19:35 one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians by himself. Imagine how much damage 72,000 angels could do! Peter didn't need to defend the Kingdom of God because the Lord is not without His own resources. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now [Gk. arti, "immediately"]" means Jesus could have asked the Father for help and He would have responded immediately. But Christ wouldn't ask for help because He didn't need it. Christianity does not conquer that way. God will conquer in His own time, by His own way, and in His own power. Jesus yielded voluntarily to the murderous plot. The arrest itself was not outside the law since the Jewish leaders worked within some semblance of a legal framework. They weren't going to lynch Him in the garden--they were going to give Him a trial. The government brought Jesus to trial, but the entire affair was unfair and illegal. Nonetheless, it was an act of government, and Peter had no right to take personal vengeance against it. If God wanted to defend Christ, He would have. When governments do things that are unfair, or when people do things in the name of the government that are unfair, we have no right to retaliate. If the Lord wants to deliver us, He will. But if we retaliate with violence, we will bring the death penalty on ourselves.c) Violence violates the plan of God (vv. 54, 56a) "How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?... But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the

prophets might be fulfilled. "According to Scripture, Jesus had to be taken captive and led away like a sheep to slaughter. Sheep do not battle the shepherd; they are led to slaughter quietly and peacefully. Christ had to be betrayed, as Psalm 41:9 says: "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Zechariah 11:12 says, "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." It had to happen like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 said it would. Peter boasted too loudly, prayed too little, slept too much, and acted too fast. And he was still off base when he tried to fight against the mob.

D. The Abandonment of the Disciples (v. 56b)

"All the disciples forsook him, and fled."

The Greek word translated "all" is emphatic. Matthew 26:56 becomes a fulfillment of verse 31: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." The disciples fled out of fear. The Lord didn't fight back, and He wouldn't let Peter fight. Once the Lord was tied up, they became afraid. And although the Lord forced the Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders to admit that they were interested in arresting Jesus of Nazareth only, the disciples were sure they would come after them eventually. They didn't trust Jesus to deliver them, so they ran.

A Mysterious Young Man

I'm not sure how Christ would have rescued the disciples had they not run, but I do know that one man was delivered. Mark 14:50-51 says, "They all forsook him, and fled. And there followed [Jesus] a certain young man." We don't know the identity of this young man. Obviously he was someone who cared about Christ. Verse 51 says he had "a linen cloth cast about his naked body." That doesn't mean he was stark naked; he undoubtedly was wearing a loin cloth over which he had thrown a linen cloth. That means he probably had come hurriedly. Perhaps he had seen the crowd moving through the streets and suspected something. Some believe he may have lived in the house where Christ and the disciples celebrated the Passover. There are those who conjecture that the house belonged to John Mark, and that the young man was John Mark. We don't know for sure, but we do know that after the disciples fled, this unidentified person followed Christ. The narrative continues, "The young men [in the crowd] laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked" (Mark 14:51-52). Some in the crowd assumed he was a follower of Christ, so they seized him. But he got away by running out from under his linen cloth.

Why the Holy Spirit included that incident in Mark's gospel is difficult to understand. One thing we can know is that since the Lord allowed this man to escape, He would have planned some way to deliver the disciples out of the clutches of the crowd if they had remained faithful and followed. But the disciples never experienced that deliverance because they fled.

The disciples couldn't handle the pressure of their trial. They claimed they would follow Jesus to death if need be. They claimed they would never be offended by Him or deny Him. But that didn't happen. When the trial arrived and their lives were on the line, they ran. As we look at that incident we wonder how they could have done that to the Son of God. But once we look at our own faithfulness we realize we too have run from trials and abandoned Christ. Have you been unfaithful, refusing to stand with Him when there was a price to pay?

Characteristics of a Defective Disciple

1. They are unprepared

The disciples slept instead of praying. Why? Because they thought they were safe. They confused their good intentions with strength and courage. Being overconfident, they didn't think they needed to pray. They didn't take to heart the marvelous promises Jesus gave them in John 13-16. They didn't listen to His prayer in John 17 as He asked the Father to keep them and uphold them. By ignoring the Word and prayer, they were unprepared. If you ignore those two things, I'll guarantee that you'll

be unprepared, too. People will defect when they're weak in the Word and prayer.

2. They are impulsive

The disciples acted on impulse rather than reason--on emotion rather than revelation. They didn't think through what was right or reason what was best. So they reacted to the moment. Out came Peter's sword, and there went Malchus's ear. The next thing you know, they ran. They were completely impulsive with no sense of how to respond properly.

My fear is that many Christians are unprepared. They do not have a biblical mindset and are not in consistent communion with God. Every believer should develop an open line of communication with God. They need to be in tune to what God would have them do in any given situation. People who aren't communicating with God react to situations impulsively and emotionally. They are constantly dependent on how they feel. Every believer must so develop his Christian walk that his involuntary and immediate responses are godly. But that can happen only when you're controlled by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. If you're a victim of your own anxieties, you're going to have problems.

3. They are impatient

Defective disciples can't wait for God's deliverance. The young man in Mark 14:51 was almost captured, but God freed him by His providence. Had the disciples waited on God, they might have seen a great miracle delivering them from harm. Many Christians act like that today. Rather than wait for God to deliver us, we take the easy route of escape and bring reproach upon the Savior because we weren't up to the task. If we endured each trial to its conclusion, we would see God's deliverance and offer Him praise as a result.

4. They are carnal

Disciples who are likely to defect rely on their fleshly power and weapons. But when they lose those fleshly resources, they don't know what to do or whom to trust.

In summation, defective disciples are inconsistent. They promise all kinds of things, but they just don't deliver.

IV. THE TRIUMPH OF THE SAVIOR (v. 55)

Matthew's special joy is to preserve Christ's glory no matter how ugly the scene appears. Look at what Christ endured: the world hated Him and wanted Him dead. One of His disciples, who spent three years with Him, sold Him for the price of a slave. His other disciples fled when their lives were threatened. At first glance that doesn't say much for Christ. A sequence of events like that appears to tear down Christ's glory and rob Him of any majesty. But on the other hand, by looking carefully at the words of the Spirit of God, we see that the opposite is true. In spite of all that happened, Christ was triumphant.

A. In His Confrontation with the Crowd

1. He established His power (John 18:4-8)

Sometime near the moment when Judas arrived and kissed Christ, a remarkable event occurred.

John 18:4 says that Jesus "went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?" A kiss was unnecessary--Jesus wasn't hiding. Jesus stripped Judas of any satisfaction over having accomplished anything meaningful. The narrative continues, "They answered him, Jesus, of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon, then, as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (vv. 5-6). A thousand people hit the ground flat on their backs. With one response Christ showed who was in control. Initially you might think of Jesus as a victim, but He wasn't. They were able to stand up again only because He allowed them to. Verses 7-8 continue: "Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus, of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." Even then Jesus was working out the disciples' deliverance. He had total control over that mob. But the mob was so mindless that they stood back up and continued with the arrest as if nothing had happened. Judas was possessed by Satan, and the hour belonged to him

and the powers of darkness Luke 22:53). Hell's plan was allowed to work for a time, but Jesus was always in control.

2. He exposed their evil (Matthew 26:55)

Matthew said, "In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief [lit., "robber"] with swords and clubs to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me." There are some powerful implications in what Christ said in verse 55. He questions their wasted opportunities to arrest Him on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and possibly Thursday when He was with them in the Temple. Why didn't they seize Him then? Jesus, by asking them that question, is revealing that they are the robbers. They could have taken Him any day during the week had they justification to do so. But they knew they had no right to. They feared the people, who believed Him to be the Messiah. Jesus unmasked their evil motives. He wasn't the robber; they were. They were being led by Satan, which Christ affirmed when He said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). God, by His sovereign design, gave hell its moment-- from early Friday morning until just after dawn on Sunday when Christ left the tomb.

The leaders didn't take Christ earlier because it wasn't the right time. But when the time was right, the mob served as hell's agents. Christ had a two-fold intent in verse 55: to show the mob that what they did was evil (which they knew or they would have arrested Him in public) and to affirm that they were acting under Satan's direction.

We see Christ triumphant as He faces the crowd. God controlled everything. The crowd was a victim, falling down when they were confronted by the Son of God.

B. In His Confrontation with Judas

Jesus told Judas to get on with what he came to do (v. 50). Christ offered no struggle, anger, or wrath. With absolute calmness, commitment, and trust He put Himself in God's hands. He didn't react like a criminal would. He didn't react like an innocent man would and proclaim His innocence.

C. In His Confrontation with Peter

Peter had no trust--he didn't understand His spiritual resources. Christ did, which is why He was totally calm. Jesus placed Himself in the Father's hand. His heavenly loyalty was unfamiliar to Peter and the disciples. They were disloyal, and ran as a result; He was loyal and stayed despite a temptation that was infinitely stronger than theirs.

CONCLUSION

Where are you in the scene? Do you identify with the rejecting mob? Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). Do you belong with the unjust, mindless, cowardly, profane group of people who deny Christ? Perhaps you're a false disciple who pretends to love God and Christ, but the truth is you're after what you can get. If you can't get it, you'd sell Jesus if something better came along. Or do you identify with the disciples, who were so weak that once the temptation became fierce, they ran and lost the battle? Or, do you stand victorious with the triumphant Savior, willing to endure whatever comes along?

Focusing on the Facts

1. How did the disciples initially respond to Jesus' arrest (Matt. 26:51; Luke 22:49)?
2. Why did Peter cut off Malchus's ear?
3. What caused Peter's initial boldness?
4. Explain Christ's response in Luke 22:38 when the disciples told Him they had two swords.
5. How did Christ remedy Peter's action (Luke 22:51)?
6. What was our Lord advocating in Matthew 26:52? Why?
7. Is there ever justification for taking the life of another? Explain.
8. According to Matthew 26:53, why didn't Christ need Peter's help?
9. How should all believers respond to the government when it does things that are unfair?

10. How did the Old Testament indicate that Christ's capture would take place?
11. When did the disciples become afraid? What did they do (Matt. 26:56)?
12. What is the significance of the events surrounding the young man referred to in Mark 14:50-52?
13. What are the characteristics of a defective disciple? Explain the significance of each one.
14. How did Christ demonstrate that He was in control of the events surrounding His arrest (John 18:4-8)?
15. How did Christ expose the mob's evil motives (Matt. 26:55)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Read Romans 13:2. In light of Christ's command to Peter in Matthew 26:52, how should you respond to the government when you disagree with its decisions? Perhaps you have experienced unfair treatment from your government. How did you respond? Read Acts 16:20-25. What lesson can you learn from the response of Paul and Silas to the injustice they experienced? How will you respond the next time you're treated unfairly?
2. Review the section on the characteristics of a defective disciple (see pp. 7-8). Are you unprepared for the temptations you might face in the future? Are you impulsive--reacting emotionally to a situation before determining how God would want you to react? Are you impatient, wondering when God will answer your prayer or deliver you out of trouble? Are you carnal, depending on your own resources rather than trusting in God? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you are in danger of abandoning the Lord. Look up the following verses: Psalm 27:11-14; Matthew 26:41; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Colossians 1:9-12. Match each of those passages with the characteristic it addresses. Determine what you must do to change.

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