

## Betrayal and Denial of the King (John 18:1–18)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (10/16/2022)

### Introduction

1. Christ came to the “*hour*” toward which His entire life was directed: “*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*” (John 12:23). He deliberately walked into the trap set for Him. This was all part of a spiritual battle begun in the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam.
2. In describing these events, John deliberately contrasts two disciples, showing their part in the Lord’s *hour*. The behavior of both Judas and Peter was already predicted by Jesus. The outcome of their actions, Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial, had very different results for both.
3. When the *cohort* of soldiers (600 men) and temple guards arrested Jesus, He told them, “*If you seek me, let these men go.*” John further explained, “*This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: ‘Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one’*” (vv. 8, 9). Jesus’ spoken words must be regarded as the Word of God (17:12).
4. Judas was controlled by the evil one. On the other hand, Jesus prayed that His *own* be kept “*from the evil one*” (17:15). This is what we see played out in the arrest of the King.

### I. Judas’ Betrayal

1. Who was this betrayer, Judas Iscariot?
  - a. “*Judas*” was a common name in first-century Judaism. *Iscariot* is more difficult to identify. It may refer to his place of origin. If that is the reference, and it is likely so, we do not know with any certainty where that place was.
  - b. John’s first mention of Judas’ treachery is found in John 6 (vv. 66–71). John wanted to make it clear to the reader that Jesus did not choose Judas, hoping Judas would follow Him to the end, only to disappoint Him. Jesus *knew* that Judas was a devil when He chose Him. He was never one of the elect.
  - c. Indeed, Judas was mentioned in the OT as a betrayer (John 13:18, 21, citing Psalm 41:9). The psalm is specifically fulfilled as Jesus took bread and gave it to Judas (John 13:26). When Jesus handed the morsel to Judas, Satan entered his heart, and he went out to find the priests to make a deal. Interestingly, as this betrayal was played out, the disciples remained unaware of it. Either these men were not observant or the Lord deliberately hid Judas’ character from them.
2. Why did the Jews need Judas to betray Jesus?
  - a. Jesus taught publicly and had large crowds that listened. Although the Jews wanted to arrest Him, they feared the people (Matthew 21:46). Jesus just seemed to disappear when He was not openly teaching the people (John 10:39). Thus, they needed someone who could lead them to Jesus when He was alone.
  - b. It should also be asked, what provoked Judas to betray Jesus to the Jews? John gives this information in Chapter 12:5–8. Judas did not really care for the poor either. He was a thief, and now he knew Jesus had found him out. Satan took possession of Judas, and he, now angry and vindictive, sought to get even (Matthew 26:14–16).
3. What became of Judas after he betrayed Jesus?
  - a. Matthew recounts Judas’ regret for his betrayal (Matthew 27:3–10). The quote is actually from Zechariah 11:12, 13. How, then, does Matthew cite Jeremiah as the source? The most credible explanation is that, as is typical of NT writers, the citation is from the book of the prophets in which Jeremiah stands first.
  - b. How can Judas be faulted if his betrayal led to the fulfillment of God’s will for Jesus to die on the cross? If Jesus knew the character and evil nature of Judas, why did He choose him to be one of the

twelve (Mark 14:21)? Both Judas and Peter are guilty of terrible sin against Jesus. Judas' betrayal ended in suicide and his being condemned forever to eternal punishment. Peter, on the other hand, was forgiven and restored. How was that fair to Judas?

## II. Peter's Desertion

1. After the Passover supper in the upper room, Jesus revealed that all the disciples would desert Him, (Matthew 26:31–32, citing Zechariah 13:17). Peter protested, “*Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away*” (v. 32). Jesus informed him that before the night was over, he would deny the Lord three times (v. 33). Again, Peter protested, “*Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!*” *And all the disciples said the same*” (v.35). Here was a pride issue.
  - a. Peter had pridefully asserted his loyalty to Jesus, even to prison and death, but Jesus informed him that Satan wanted to sift him. Jesus would pray for him, and he would be restored (Luke 22:31–33). Observe two things in this revelation: (1) *Satan* personally worked in both Judas and Peter to bring the Son of God to the cross. (2) Peter, unlike Judas, was a true follower as evident in the fact that Jesus preserved his faith and would return to useful service and strengthen his brothers.
  - b. Pride drove both Judas and Peter, but Jesus personally pursued Peter and restored him to fellowship after destroying his pride, as documented by John in Chapter 21. Peter, realizing his horrible betrayal when the rooster crowed, *repented* (Matthew 27:1). Judas, on the other hand, committed suicide—the prideful and cowardly escape from personal responsibility. Suicide is the ultimate rebellion against God.
2. John followed this recommissioning of Peter with an interesting detail (John 21:20, 21). Here is great advice. Each one is obligated to follow Jesus, no matter what others may do. Had Peter abandoned his pride and humbly followed Jesus, he would never have denied him. The very thing that would have protected him in the temptation was clearly given him by Jesus that very night (Matthew 26:41).

## Application

Was it fair that Jesus allowed Judas to descend into eternal damnation but rescued Peter from the same fate? The infinite wisdom of God, who is the supreme Good, is at play. As Abraham said when interceding for Lot (Genesis 18:25).

In the doctrine of election, *fairness* is always pushed to deny this clear biblical truth. Every child of Adam is a sinner, and every sinner is a “*son of destruction*.” It is only the gracious intervention of God that makes the difference—grace none deserve but gloriously makes a difference in many who would otherwise perish. No one's rights are harmed since all are already justly condemned.

The following quote from Monergism's Facebook page explains it all: “When you ask an Arminian friend if it would [be] just if God left us all in our sin and saved no one, most answer *yes*, we are sinners and justly deserve God's wrath. But then turn around and ask, if God decided to pardon a number of these ill-deserving sinners but gave over the others to the justice they deserve, these same people suddenly cry out, ‘That makes God unfair.’ Yet how can the former be okay in their eyes, but not the later? Does not God have the right to do what He wants with His grace? And are not those rebels getting their just deserts? If He were somehow obligated to give it to all, it would no longer be grace now, would it?”

“Remember, we indiscriminately cast the seed of the gospel to all people. God is holding no one back from believing. Their rejection of Christ and His gospel is completely willful and voluntary. They will not have Christ rule over them. Yet God still has mercy on many such rebels, giving them eyes to see, ears to hear and a new heart to believe” (*Monergism*, on Facebook, 10/11/22).