

The most astounding sin that has **ever** been committed in the history of the world... is the brutal murder of Jesus Christ... the morally **perfect**... Son of God! ... And probably the most **despicable** act in the process of this murder... is the subject of our passage this morning in our study through Luke's gospel... the **betrayal** of Jesus by one of his closest friends - Judas Iscariot.

It is incredible that these men perpetrated history's greatest crime during Israel's **holiest** festival. ... During Passover... the Jews were expected to remove all leaven (yeast) from their houses as a reminder that their ancestors left Egypt in haste and had to eat unleavened bread. ... Jesus had warned His disciples about the "leaven of the Pharisees... which is hypocrisy"... and now we see this hypocrisy at work.

The religious leaders had cleansed their **homes** but not their **hearts**. ... For a long time now... they had wanted to arrest Jesus and get Him out of the way... but they had not been able to work out a safe plan that would protect them from the people. **Judas**... now... would solve their problem for them.

But my prayer... as we study this momentous event... is not that we would simply shake our heads at the despicable betrayal ... or the height of hypocrisy seen in Israel's spiritual leaders... but that God would weave chords of **steel** into the fabric of our souls... as we observe that... even this... the most **heinous** acts of evil – ever committed(!)... could not prevent the perfect will of God from taking place. ... You and I need such Christ-exalting **strength** to face the calamities that are in our life. You and I need such Christ-exalting **courage** to face the conflicts... that if they are not already present... they soon will be.

So join me now... as I pray for God's Word to produce this kind of fruit in each of our lives...

**-Prayer-**

**Luke 22:1-6**

Judas was one of the twelve apostles that Jesus had personally chosen and who had been with Jesus during His entire public ministry. ... (Now get this!) ... According to John 13:29... Judas had been entrusted with the moneybag for the whole group... He was **so** trusted... that he was the organization's **treasurer**. And Judas was close enough to Jesus at the Last Supper to be dipping bread with him in the same cup. ... We will see in next week's passage that none of the other disciples had a clue... about the true nature of Judas. He looked and acted just like *them*.

Warren Wiersbe has written:

*We have every reason to believe that Judas had been given the same authority as the other men and that he had preached the same message and performed the same miracles. It shows how close a person can come to God's kingdom and still be lost.*

If someone can physically **live** with... continuously eat meals with... and **be** around Jesus for three years... as He performed undeniable miracles and shut the mouths of His critics... and yet still be as **phony** as a 3.00 bill... just think how **easy** it would be for a person to **fake** their Christianity... as they hang around the church **today**...

In the parable of the wheat and the tares... Jesus warns us that Satan will plant **his** agents in the **church**... and they are unrecognizable. ... ..  
However... neither Judas nor a tare that Satan plants... will **ever** frustrate or thwart the sovereign plan of God.

Notice with me what verse 3 declares... "*Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot...*" . . . . (Then) he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray [Jesus] to them.

When we read that "Satan entered into Judas," at least **three** puzzling questions arise... and I think it would be good for us to consider them... for the bulk of our time in this passage.

Concerning the **first** question... I have already shown you what I believe... but as it rises from the concept of Satan entering Judas... let me ask the question out-loud and then show you how I arrived at my answer. Question **#1)** Did Satan take over inside the soul of a **good** Judas... or was Judas **already** walking in line with Satan... and Satan simply decided to take greater control... at that time. ... I'll deal with this question in just a moment... but first let me acknowledge two others.

**2)** Why would Satan take this action... in light of the fact that Judas' behavior brought on the death and resurrection of Jesus... and this resulted in Satan's final **defeat**...? When we come to this question... I want to show you some strong evidence for why I believe Satan would have **known** that Christ's death and resurrection meant his own ultimate defeat. So... **why** would Satan help in his own demise?

Finally **#3**) ... And this is the most important question: What was God's role or non-role in Satan's entry into Judas and Judas' ugly sin of betrayal?

So let's take these questions one at a time.

**#1** – Was Judas **already** in league with Satan... when Satan influenced him from the inside...? ... I indicated earlier that Judas was **not** an innocent bystander when Satan entered into him. ... In fact John records in his gospel account (in John 12:6) that Judas was a **thief**. ... He had been stealing money out of the treasury box all along. John points this out when he wrote that Judas complained about Mary wasting money... instead of helping the poor... by anointing Jesus with a costly perfume. ... John writes: *“He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.”*

Perhaps even more clear... John 6:64 plainly says that Judas was not a believer.

**John 6:64 (ESV)**

*But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)*

So... as an unbeliever... Judas was in the exact condition that Paul said the Ephesians had formerly been in... when they were unbelievers... Judas... like the Ephesians... were followers of Satan...

**Ephesians 2:1-2 (ESV)**

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.*

Satan does not take **innocent** people captive. ... There are **no** innocent people. ... Satan has power where sinful passions hold dominance. ... Judas was a lover of money... and he covered it with a phony... external relationship with Jesus. ... There are many who are like him... in our good churches today. ... Don't be one. ... And don't be swindled by one.

Now let's talk about our **second** question... The second question is... Why would Satan lead Judas to take the action against Jesus... that would hasten his **own ruin**...? ... Is there any possibility that Satan did **not know** that the death and resurrection of Jesus would result in his final defeat...? ... Not really. Here's why... There is plenty of reason to think Satan knew that it would.

In Matthew 4:1-11 we read that right after John baptized Jesus... Satan took Jesus into the wilderness... where he tried to tempt Jesus. What was it Satan was tempting Jesus to do...? Satan tried to turn him away from the path of suffering and sacrifice. ... The point of all those temptations was: *"Don't walk the path of suffering and sacrifice and death. Use your power to escape suffering. If you're the Son of God, show your right to reign. And I can help you do it. Whatever you do, don't go to the cross..."*

Then in Matthew 16:22 we see another interaction between Jesus and Satan. ... This time it is through the Apostle Peter. Jesus told His disciples that He would **suffer** many things from the elders and the chief priests and be **killed**. And do you remember Peter's response...? ... Peter rebuked Jesus... and said, *"Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you"*. In other words, *"I will never let you be killed like that..."* But Jesus turned to Peter and said: *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to*

*me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*

Hindering Jesus from going to the cross was the effort that Satan was making. Satan did not want Jesus crucified. ... I believe that Satan **knew** it would be his undoing... and that is why we see him trying to stop Jesus.

But now we come to our **present** passage in Luke 22... and we find Satan leading *JUDAS* to betray Jesus... and bring Him to the cross. ... Why the about face? ... Why do we see Satan trying to prevent it... and now... suddenly... he take the **initiative** to bring Christ to the cross?

We simply are not told. ... But I submit **this** possibility to you... Jesus stayed on course... Satan couldn't knock Him off of it... Jesus came here to die... and He set Himself toward Calvary. ... Now... in light of such **resoluteness**... perhaps Satan concluded that there is no stopping Him. ... And if he can't stop it... he will at least make it as **ugly** and **painful** and as **heartbreaking** as possible... betrayal by a friend and death by abandonment.

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This brings us now... to the **third** and final question — which I announced as the most **important** of the three: ... What was God's role... or non-role... in the most **odious**... the most **atrocious**... sin that ever happened — the murder of Jesus Christ?

The way I would like to begin to formulate an answer to that... is to acknowledge how the details surrounding the death of Jesus... had been **prophesied** in God's Word... hundreds of years **before** they happened.

**Psalm 34:20 (ESV)**

*He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.*

**Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)**

*“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*

And not only the Old Testament Scriptures... but Jesus Himself prophesied... down to the details... of how He would be killed.

**Matthew 26:24 (ESV)**

*The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”*

**Mark 10:33-34 (ESV)**

*“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”*

From these... and **many** other prophecies... we know that God foresaw... and included in His plan... that His Son would be rejected... hated,, abandoned... betrayed... denied... condemned... spit upon... flogged... mocked... pierced... and killed. ... All these are explicitly in God's mind **before** they happen. ... They happened according to God's sovereign will.

Look how plainly Isaiah reveals that **God** brought these things to pass.

**Isaiah 53:6, 10 (ESV)**

*<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ...*

*<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

It was the will of the Lord to crush Him; He has put Him to grief.” So behind the spitting... and flogging... and mocking... and piercing... it is the invisible hand... and plan of God... that is at work. The invisible hand and plan of God... are behind the most heinous sins of all time!

In Acts... when Peter and John were released from prison for preaching the Gospel... they went to the believers... and everyone being filled with the Holy Spirit prayed for more boldness. Look at part of how they prayed...

**Acts 4:27-28 (ESV)**

*for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*

What a strange concept! Herod... Pontius Pilate... the religious leaders... the Romans... and the Jewish mob did to Christ... ONLY what God's *hand* and *plan* predestined to happen. ... We don't usually think of God's "hand" predestining people to **sin**. ... But... when we looked at Isaiah 53:10 a moment ago... it hinted of this... "*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him...*" The King James Version sounds even harsher, "*It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.*"

Now... here is why the active role God had in this great crime against Jesus is so important. If God did **not** have the main part in the death of

Christ... then the death of Christ **could not** save us from our sins... and we would perish in hell forever. ... If you break God's activity from the death of Jesus... you **lose** the gospel. This was **God's** doing. It did not just happen. God had full control. Here is the reason why...

God cursed Jesus with the curse that belonged on **us**. So we are free.

God put all of **our** sin on Christ... so that we could go free.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

God wounded Him. God crushed Him. For you and me. And **we** go free.

**Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)**

*But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.*

God's love for you and I doesn't make any sense... does it? It **pleased** Him to crush His innocent Son... by **ordaining** the most heinous sin ever committed... so that He could pour all the sins that you and I commit... onto the perfect and sinless Christ... as He takes the punishment that you and I deserve... ... But on the other hand... I'm glad that I don't understand it. ... There is a strange comfort in **NOT** understanding God's love for us. ... If I **could** comprehend it... it would be a lot **less** divine! God's ways are so much higher than our own!

The most sensational element of our passage today is not the evil of a betrayal. It is the incomprehensible love of God Who ordained it. ... It was no mere **human** conspiracy. This is the work of God and the love of God.