

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 9

JUDAS ISCARIOT - "The End of the Betrayer"

BBB NOTE: It is the opinion of this writer that Judas was actually the seed of the serpent, a son of Satan - and as such - was not savable at all.

Please read the following study on this site for more information:

COULD JUDAS ISCARIOT BE THE ANTICHRIST?

This study looks at the issue from a different perspective - and though I believe in error concerning Judas the man, still has merit in regards to humanity as a whole. Even today, many "repent" and "confess sins" to a priest - while failing to fall on their face before JESUS. To that end, this writer considers this an important study.

So, as you read this chapter in the study "*the Six Trials of CHRIST*," please bear in mind that what is said concerning the sinner's salvation could apply to a Hitler, a mass-murderer, or any other sinner - but in my opinion, not to Judas Iscariot.

The HOLY SPIRIT gives us one final glimpse into the life of Judas Iscariot before He continues with the trials of CHRIST. There are a number of reasons why the SPIRIT desires us to have this final portrait as we shall see as we uncover what He has recorded.

Two passages deal with Judas' death.

Matthew 27:3-10

Acts 1:16-19

These two accounts are not contradictory, but complementary.

Matthew is speaking in general terms in regard to the suicide of Judas, while Dr. Luke in the book of Acts is recording the specific statement of Peter with its details "**known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem.**"

JUDAS' REPENTANCE

Let us look first at Matthew's account.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him . . . brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders."

There is no reason to seek to place this incident as occurring other than where it is placed in Matthew's account. Morning has come. The Sanhedrin have completed their trial of JESUS and condemned Him. They now lead Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. As they are taking Him, Judas then came to the chief priests and elders. After this event (which Matthew carries to its completion for the sake of clarity) JESUS stood before the governor.

Mark and observe carefully: When Judas met the members of the Sanhedrin, they were traveling with JESUS to take Him to Pilate. JESUS CHRIST was in their midst.

Did Judas repent to the Lord and plead for mercy and forgiveness? Not at all. Scripture says, **"he repented himself."** What does this mean?

In order to answer this we must understand that Scripture uses two verbs "to repent." The word translated here **"repented"** (*metamelomai*) is used only six times in Scripture. This word is in contrast with a much more frequently used verb and noun (*metanoew* and *metanoia*) used 34 and 24 times respectively. The last two words involve in Scripture the idea of a change of mind and, consequently, of action and life. It is the only word used when we are commanded to repent (Acts, Revelation).

The other word translated also **"repent,"** used here of Judas and five other times, has more of a connection with emotion, and thus remorse and regret. Let us look at each occurrence in Scripture.

USES OF THE WORD "REPENT" IN SCRIPTURE MEANING MERELY REMORSE AND REGRET

***Matthew 21:29: **"He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented (he regretted it), and went."**

***Matthew 21:32: **"For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."**

That is, the Sanhedrin had no regret for not believing in John's message even though the publicans and harlots did believe him. The reason they did not regret it was that if they had believed John, they would have had to accept the One of whom John spoke -- JESUS CHRIST -- and this was to them unthinkable. Thus they never regretted not believing John. (This shows the meaning of the repentance mentioned in verse 29 -- i.e., Scripture interpreting Scripture).

***Hebrews 7:21: **"(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an**

oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)"

Here repent is not the idea of a change of mind, but a change of feeling, of remorse, of regret. This will never come to pass. The Lord gave this prediction in Psalm 110:1 and He will never regret this prediction because the Lord JESUS CHRIST will be all that the Father has anticipated.

****II Corinthians 7:8-10: "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same Epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."**

Here the verb is used twice and stands in context in contrast to the other word for **"repentance."**

"For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent [regret it], though I did repent [repent it at first] . . . Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance [i.e., to a true repentance or change of mind. It wasn't just an emotional response only, but also a change of action and life]: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance [i.e., not to be regretted. True repentance will never cause regrets or remorse or heart or action. Amen and Hallelujah]: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Judas is an example of this. His sorrow, his regret, his **"repentance"** was more than he could bear, and it worked death -- it brought him to his act of suicide.

JUDAS ONLY REPENTED TO MAN -- NOT GOD

Judas regretted he had betrayed JESUS when he saw Him condemned by the Sanhedrin and taken bound to Pilate for execution. This whole thing had not worked out as he had thought. Perhaps he had calculated that JESUS would not have allowed Himself to be captured and condemned. If this or something similar was his thinking, he is still without excuse for over and over again CHRIST said what was going to happen in minute detail. Judas' problem was that he was an unbeliever. But he is still an unbeliever. He never falls before the Lord and asks forgiveness for his deed. Why? Because he is an unbeliever, and he died an unbeliever (Acts 1:25: "that he might go to his own place"). Had Judas fallen before the Lord he would have been forgiven. It was Ambrose who said: "If only Judas had said, 'I have sinned,' to JESUS, instead of to the priests, he could have been saved."

The issue for Judas was salvation. This was his one need.

Now notice what took place concerning Judas:

1. He had a feeling of guilt (conscience).

Remember the words that CHRIST had spoken to him in the garden? They seem to be eating into his soul.

2. He had a great emotional response.

He was sorry for his sins, and would have given anything if he had not done this one act.

3. He gave up his sin and made restitution.

He brought back the silver to the priests, and when they refused to take the money back he forced it upon them for he wanted no reminder of this deed.

4. He confessed both his sin and CHRIST's innocence.

After all, someone will say, you cannot ask a man to do much more than this.

5. He would have done penance had someone told him what to do to try to relieve his guilty conscience.

But he still would have been lost. The reason is because none of this is salvation. The Lord JESUS CHRIST is salvation.

SORROW IS NOT SALVATION

It is possible for a man to feel the full depth and consequences of his sins, and be grieved for them so as to be under a strong conviction of guilt with a great emotional response and distress of mind and deep remorse -- all of this -- and yet never experience true repentance and salvation.

The reason is because there is a wide gulf between remorse and repentance. True repentance leads to the light; remorse leads away from it. Many a person has had remorse because of their sins, but never repented of them. True repentance leads the sinner to the Saviour. That which is false and wrong leads the sinner away from his only means of salvation, and it seeks to destroy his life so that he cannot come to the Saviour. The end of following Satan is death, but before death, comes remorse. Everyone who follows Satan ends up his life with the testimony, I played the fool. Yet this confession in no way saves him at all.

Beloved, if one should be reading these words and you have been remorseful because your life has been controlled by Satan and you have done things that you ought not, do not allow him to seal your doom in the Lake of Fire. Flee to the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Many others have fled for refuge before you and no one has ever been turned down: **"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the**

hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). All that will come unto Him He will in no wise cast out. The Lord JESUS is the only Saviour.

IS ANYONE TOO BIG A SINNER TO BE SAVED?

Someone may say that Judas was too big a sinner to be saved by the Lord. We need to pause here and meditate for a moment, for the Poet Dante and all medieval writers considered Judas to be in the lowest part of the pit where the worst of all sinners are.

There is no question that this act of Judas was a great sin.

None other than CHRIST Himself said so: "**And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!**" (Luke 22:22). In fact, He said: "**It had been good for that man if he had not been born**" (Matthew 26:24).

But what Judas did in reference to CHRIST, Paul did as an unbeliever to the body of CHRIST. Paul addresses himself as the chief of sinners: "**And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting**" (I Timothy 1:12-16).

Notice the words "**mercy,**" "**grace,**" "**all longsuffering.**" Paul realized that had he not obtained this grace and had he gone to hell, he would have had the greatest punishment of anyone born of woman. The reason is because punishment is in reference to a person's works against the truth: "**Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works**" (II Timothy 4:14) and "**And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works**" (Revelation 20:12). No wonder Paul loved the Lord so much, for the Lord forgave him so very much: "**Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little**" (Luke 7:47).

Could Judas have been saved then? Yes, because Paul was saved, and Paul was a greater sinner than Judas. But why had the Lord worked to lead Paul to salvation and not Judas? There is an indication given to us in I Timothy 1:13, "**I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**" Judas was not in ignorance though he was in unbelief. Judas had light and rejected light because his deeds were evil. He refused to come to the light lest his deeds would be manifested that they were wrong. He hardened his heart and rejected light. The love of money is the root of every kind of evil:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). How true this was in the life of Judas. It caused him to finally sell the Lord JESUS for 30 pieces of silver. Oh, how we need to be on guard in our culture against **"covetousness, which is idolatry"** (Colossians 3:5). Paul, on the other hand, was not so controlled. Paul was in ignorance, not in sin. Touching the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless (Philippians 3:6). Paul never sinned wilfully, that is with full knowledge that he was rejecting truth and light: **"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"** (Acts 23:1) and **"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"** (Acts 26:19).

Why are we going into this? Because it brings out one of the basic truths concerning salvation. From the human standpoint men are unsaved because they refuse to come to the light, because they reject the light and by an act of their volition harden their hearts against it. Consequently, every man is saved or lost because of himself, not GOD. GOD has provided salvation for everyone. He is not willing that any be lost. No one will ever stand before the Lord and say: "But I could not have been saved because you didn't choose me." Not at all. Judas will never be able to say this. Judas is lost because Judas chose to be lost and refused to come to the Saviour. It is choice that determines our eternal destiny. It is "sin" that hardens the heart. This is a law that operates in both the unbeliever and the believer.

The HOLY SPIRIT is the only one who can soften the heart and bring the sinner to the Saviour. He leads no other place than to CHRIST: **"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged"** (John 16:8-11). If we are being driven any other place, look out -- it is the devil.

SALVATION IS NOT AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO TRUTH

But there is one more practical point that needs to be emphasized today. Satan is a master at causing us to have an emotional response to truth when we hear a soul-searching message. This is **"to repent"** -- as Scripture uses the term six times -- with emotion and "regret" that we haven't lived for the Lord as we should, etc., etc., and etc. If this is all we have -- and usually it is -- it accomplishes nothing. True repentance goes beyond the emotions to the mind which thus activates the will. Until the will is activated, there is no true repentance. Let us take two examples: one, the message preached to the unsaved, and the other, our own response to revelation as saved.

Acts 2:38: **"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ."** That is to say, on the basis of the fact that your sins have been remitted, be baptized as the response of an obedient heart.

Verse 37 shows they had an emotional response. Peter tells them to go on and repent, i.e., change your mind about JESUS CHRIST that He did not blaspheme when He

claimed to be the Son of GOD. **"And be baptized."** Seal your faith in action by being identified through water baptism with the believers in the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

What do we mean when we say to a sinner, "**repent**," or "repent of your sins." The last phrase is anything but Scriptural. If we mean by "**repent**," be sorry for your sins, this is completely wrong. Judas was extremely sorry for his sins. Being sorry for sins does a person no good whatever. If we mean, "change your mind about JESUS CHRIST. He died for your sins and rose again from the dead," then we are right. It is best never to even use the word "**repent**" in dealing with an unsaved person because his concept of the word is "to be sorry for his sins," but this is not the Scripture's concept.

For example, in Revelation 2:5: "**Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent,**" this is a message from the Lord for believers. "Repent" is to change our mind about the essentials and then "act" accordingly. We are to "repent and do." Now let us apply the word to our own lives and be doers of it and not hearers only, having merely an emotional response.

WHAT WAS THE FULL EXTENT OF JUDAS' COVENANT WITH THE SANHEDRIN?

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he [Judas] saw that he [CHRIST] was condemned, repented [had an emotional reaction in] himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders."

Many Bible scholars feel that when Judas covenanted with the chief priests and elders to betray CHRIST that it involved not only his arrest, but also involved Judas actually testifying against CHRIST, as a witness. Judas, however, was nowhere to be found during the trials before the Sanhedrin. Thus the Sanhedrin was forced to try to secure others to witness against JESUS. Judas' conscience would not permit him to testify against CHRIST for he knew He was innocent.

Now the Sanhedrin's chief witness steps forward, not to testify against CHRIST, but, because of a stricken conscience, testifies for Him. He testifies of CHRIST's innocence first by action and then by word.

1. He brought again the thirty pieces of silver.

This silver, which was so dearly covenanted, brought Judas no pleasure when it was in his possession.

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing" (Proverbs 10:2).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven" (John 3:27).

Oh the times we saw something that we thought would be the one thing that would us

happy only to gain it and have it bite like an adder. Sin's pleasures are but for a season if they are enjoyed at all. The wages of the sin nature is death, but before death is that bitter agony of sorrow, remorse and shame: "**What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death**" (Romans 6:21). They that sow to the flesh always reap in the end corruption.

Amnon felt he just had to have Tamar. Nothing would satisfy his heart but her. He said: "**I love Tamar.**" Amnon sowed to his flesh and reaped corruption.

"Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her"?(II Samuel 13:15).

The end was death for Amnon. Look out for the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. These things never satisfy the unbeliever, let alone the believer.

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

"The folks who spend their days
In buying cars and clothes and rings,
Don't seem to know that empty lives
Are just as empty filled with things."

A WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE OF JESUS APPEARS

2. Judas testified to the members of the Sanhedrin: "**I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.**"

Now just stop and think what is involved in this testimony. Here is the Sanhedrin's chief witness testifying to them, but he is testifying of what? He is testifying for CHRIST's innocence. I remind you again: This is the highest court in Israel whose code of jurisprudence was the finest ever developed of any nation. They have the responsibility of administering justice, and after a criminal trial, when a man was condemned to death, they were to remain in their seats in case any witness might appear to speak in the criminal's defense they would call back the prisoner and hear the evidence of the witness.

Is this what is happening here? Not at all. The entire Sanhedrin is moving as a body to go to Pilate in order to secure from him the verdict of death. Will they go back and retry the case hearing the new witness that has come before them? Not at all. They reply to Judas: "**What is that to us? see thou to that.**"

What do they mean: "What is that to us?" Why, it is everything to them. It is their responsibility and it cannot be side stepped. In fact, this is the very reason that Matthew brings in this incident of the Sanhedrin with Judas. He is writing to the Jews, and in his account he is bringing a legal indictment against the Sanhedrin which would be valued in any court for their impeachment.

The testimony of Judas, being the very one who in the first betrayed Him, should have been more valuable to the Sanhedrin than any other man. It stands today as a monument to the Lord's innocence.

"What is that to us? see thou to that," not only has a bearing concerning JESUS, but also against Judas himself. If Judas had sinned by betraying innocent blood, it is the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to retry the case in order to condemn Judas and let JESUS go free. Legally, the one that should have been crucified that day was Judas, not JESUS.

The law says: **"Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person"** (Deuteronomy 27:25). If Judas was guilty of this, it was the Sanhedrin's responsibility to show it. If Judas had witnessed against CHRIST by his betrayal of Him, as he had, he deserved to bear the punishment that was to be given to CHRIST according to the law: **"If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you"** (Deuteronomy 19:16-19), and it was the Sanhedrin's responsibility to so punish him. Why didn't the Sanhedrin reopen the trial? Because the very evidence that would condemn Judas would also condemn themselves.

THE SANHEDRIN'S GREATER SIN

But here is their answer to Judas. When Judas came to them and he could be used by them in their scheme to apprehend JESUS, they were his bosom friends. Now that he has done what they want they have no more use for him but cast him aside. He finds himself despised by those whose tool he was. This has been repeated over and over again in time. The world loves for what it can get, and after that is obtained for which they were seeking, they have no more use for the victim of their desires.

The Sanhedrin have no grace for this man that has come to them in desperation. The guilty can never comfort the guilty. So the world can give no help to the sinner.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST is the only One who can give grace to the sinner regardless of his sin, and it is never too late to come to Him. Judas failed to come to the only One that could help him.

One penitent thief did come in the last hour before he died to show us this mercy seat is open to all, yet there was only one so saved lest any man might presume on the grace of GOD and so wait until the last hour. Now is the day of salvation. GOD has promised no one such an opportunity to repent.

MATTHEW 27:5

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and

hanged himself."

Evidently the Sanhedrin were just in the process of leaving the Temple, and with JESUS being bound, Judas knew immediately the decision they had reached. Since they refused the money, he forces it upon them: **"and he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed."**

The price of treason is thrown into the Temple. The expression Matthew uses for Temple is "*naos*", and is always used in the New Testament of the Sanctuary itself where only the priests could enter, not of the outer courts: **"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body"** (John 2:19-21).

Judas does not leave this money just any place, but the one place in all the world where the priests must decide what to do with it.

They have refused to hear the witness; they will now try the case in absentia. Judas has forced them to it through the providence of GOD. In all probability Judas may not even have realized why his impulse was to cast this money into the Sanctuary. Had he left it at his home, it would have become the possession of his heirs. Had he left it on the street, it would have become the property of the one who found it. Had he put it into the treasury in the Temple, the Sanhedrin would undoubtedly had left it there saying it was his to do with as he desire. But, having left it in the Sanctuary, it becomes an issue for the chief priests to meet and decide what to do with it. Let us follow the money as Matthew traces it, and then come back to the suicide of Judas.

MATTHEW 27:6

"And the chief priest took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."

Whether they met immediately or a little later in the day is not the issue. It all probability it was later in the day after their encounter with Pilate had been entirely successful, for without this, what happened to the money meant little. Matthew, however, traces the money through to completion, and then he resumes the trial.

"It is the price of blood" -- Notice this! They, the chief priests, witness the truth concerning this money, and thus concerning the whole trial. It was the price of life. A man died, not because he was guilty, but because of thirty pieces of silver -- the price of a slave. Here was the legacy of a crime and the chief priests know it. Their consciences would not allow them to put it into the treasury, nor to keep it for themselves.

But this money could just as honestly have gone back into the treasury as it came out. Yet those who unscrupulously take it out cannot decently put it back in.

These chief priests have just committed the greatest travesty of justice that the world will ever see without one quail of conscience. Now on this little thing their consciences

are religiously scrupulous. What irony! Of a truth, CHRIST spoke of them: "**Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to the leave the other undone**"? (Matthew 23:23).

Many pinch pennies and spend dollars. Many are very scrupulous in small things and commit the greatest felonies before the Lord in gossiping and sins of the tongue which things really count.

But do you understand what the chief priests are testifying here? They are meeting in council of their own group: 24 chief priests. What they are doing is far more than deciding on 30 pieces of silver. It is an issue that is at stake. This money is blood money and the chief priests testify to this fact. But when they so testify to this they are testifying to the Lord's innocence! They are saying clearly His life was bought, not justly condemned. He was innocent, but He died anyway. This money caused His death, and thus it is blood money.

MATTHEW 27:7

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in."

Someone among them has an idea. Why not use this unclean money for unclean people in an unclean place. The old potter's field is no longer of any value for making pottery as the land has been completely worked over. It is of such a nature that nothing will grow on it either. It is available today on the market, and could be purchased for this very sum of money. We could use it to bury the heathen that die in the city of Jerusalem and thus solve the problem of what to do with them. Motion seconded and passed. Meeting adjourned. The purchase was made.

Whether they were cognizant of it or not we cannot say, but it is very likely that they realized also that this land had the curse of GOD upon it, placed there through Jeremiah. They will use this unclean money to buy an unclean place in which to bury unclean people. "Strangers" refers to those outside of the nation.

Many times money gained in an unjust way has sought to be cleansed by using it for charitable purposes.

MATTHEW 27:8

"The potter's field."

The Sanhedrin desired it to be called: A field to "**bury strangers in.**"

The people called it correctly: "**The field of blood**" (*Aceldama, Haqal Dema*).

This thing was not done in a corner. The people knew that blood money was used to

buy this land and they so nicknamed it accordingly and the name persisted in spite of all attempts to wash it away. At the time of the writing of the Gospel of Matthew, about 30 years after the events took place, the name for the graveyard was still "the field of blood." Here, Matthew says, is the historical reason why. It is not a name that would normally be attached to a graveyard, even of a heathen one. Thus the people also testify to the Lord's innocence for they know it was purchased with blood money. But the only way this money could have been blood money was for the Lord to have been innocent.

Here was erected a perpetual monument, not to Judas, but to the Sanhedrin and to the infamous deed that they had committed. They have tried the case in absentia and have found the Lord innocent. "They" are the ones who act the decision of their own council, as Matthew says in the following verses, and so seal their decision in deed. By this very important act they stand self-condemned.

It is a very important principle of Scripture that the Lord allows each man to pronounce his own sentence.

"And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow" (Luke 19:22).

"If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20).

"So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away" (Psalm 64:8).

MATTHEW 27:9

Matthew's quotation is full of meaning at this point and yet it presents some problems. The quotation is said to be from Jeremiah and yet the idea comes from Zechariah. Here then is a problem. Various solutions have been offered.

1. Some feel that Jeremiah originally gave the prediction but that it was not written down. It was transmitted orally until Zechariah recorded it. This would be similar to our Lord's statement in Acts 20:35 recorded by Paul: **"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."**
2. Some think that Matthew originally wrote the words "the prophets" without giving any name, and that some early scribe placed the name Jeremiah by mistake. In favor of this view the Syriac version which is one of the oldest, reads simply "the prophet." The Persian version also omits it.
3. Some hold that Matthew originally wrote the words "Zechariah the prophet" and that an ignorant transcriber very early changed the word into Jeremiah. In favor of this position is that in manuscripts, names were often written in a shortened form in which

only the initial letter would be different (IRIOU and ZRIOU). By the change from Z to I the mistake easily have been made.

4. Some contend that originally the former prophets began with Joshua in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the latter prophets began with Jeremiah rather than the present day arrangement which finds Isaiah first. Since each division in the Old Testament canon was known by the first book in the section (e.g., Psalms refers often times to the entire third division - Luke 24:44). Jeremiah would then stand in place of the prophetic prophets which would include Zechariah.

The solution offered by Augustine is no solution at all. He said: "Matthew forgot what he was doing and made a blunder. He quoted from memory, and inaccurately. He meant Zechariah and not Jeremiah." If writers of the New Testament can make blunders, then we can never know what is truth and what is not. We have no word of truth.

My own position is this. Matthew wrote Jeremiah and he meant Jeremiah, but he also quotes from Zechariah the essence of his prediction. Matthew is not confused; he knows what belongs to Jeremiah and what belongs to Zechariah having quoted Zechariah less than one chapter before (Matthew 26:31). In Matthew's thinking, Jeremiah is the more important of the two, while Zechariah is the specific.

THE VALLEY OF TOPHETH

Jeremiah 19 is devoted to this area of ground of the Potter's Field. It was "**the valley of the son of Hinnom**." He owned the ground. It had been called Tophet in the King James, but Topheth is the Hebrew word signifying the place of burning. It is first mentioned in 2 Kings 23:10 at the reforms of Josiah. Topheth was where the idol Molech had been set up and where the Israelites were sacrificing their infant sons and daughters, placing them in the brass arms of this god that had been heated to destroy whatever was placed there. Jeremiah gives a prophecy against it first in Jeremiah 7:31-32. He then enlarges upon this in Jeremiah 19.

This place will no longer be called Tophet nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, and it wasn't. It will be called: "**The Valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place**" (7:32; 19:6, 11). Now in the enlargement of the prophecy Jerusalem receives the curses of the land of Tophet (Jeremiah 19:12-15).

This is what is behind the thinking of Matthew. "God so ordered it that the elders of Israel purchased the field on which the curse of Jeremiah rested, thus making it the property of the Jewish State. By so doing, they transferred that curse to themselves and the people." The curse of Tophet becomes the curse of the city of Jerusalem. GOD will make this city as Tophet, till there be no place to bury.

The chief priests of the nation as heads of State have purchased the land of Tophet and with it its curses to themselves and the people of Israel by this act. It will be fulfilled to the letter in A.D. 70 under the siege and destruction of Titus. The city will be laid "**even with the ground, and thy children within thee**" (Luke 19:44).

GOD will not be mocked. They have set their own judgment by this act.

ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY

Zechariah's prophecy gives us added detail. In Zechariah, chapter 11 we find the true SHEPHERD coming and ministering to the nation. But the Lord tells the SHEPHERD that it is "**the flock of slaughter**" that He is ministering to (11:4, 6-7).

In verse 12 the SHEPHERD asks the nation to price His ministry. How faithful and how wonderful do you consider my ministry as the SHEPHERD? "**So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver**" (Zechariah 11:12).

Is there anything significant about this? Most certainly there is. In Exodus 21:32 this is the price of a slave gored by an ox. This is their utter repudiation and contempt for the ministry of the Lord's SHEPHERD. But with it the nation in truth becomes the flock of slaughter. To prove this, the very money with which they valued the SHEPHERD was cast to the potter. According to Zechariah this transaction was carried out in the house of the Lord (Zechariah 11:13). This is an amazing prediction. The nation valued the Lord, and then bought the potter's field with this same money they used to value His ministry.

Jeremiah gives the curse; Zechariah shows the price; Matthew records it was transacted just as predicted.

JUDAS' SUICIDE

Having traced through the money and the purchase of the land with it, we need to go back and take a final look at the death of Judas. Matthew records only that Judas went out and hanged himself. Dr. Luke in the Book of Acts enlarges upon the details of the death of Judas.

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5).

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood." (Acts 1:18-19)

Only two men in all of Scripture commit suicide by hanging: Ahithophel in the Old Testament, and Judas in the New. Scripture had pronounced anyone hanging on a tree as cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Ahithophel was the counsellor and friend of David. He betrayed his master and went with Absalom in his rebellion against David, only to have his own words rejected. This led to his ignominious end (II Samuel 17:23). In all of this Ahithophel is a type of Judas.

Suicide is treated by Scripture as being one of the most contemptible acts of which

mankind is capable. In it all reason is cast to the wind. The law of self-preservation becomes deadened. Unbelief takes over as the person's master. The individual reasons it is better to leave than to stay and cope with life, failing to realize that it will be worse in death than life, for after death is the judgment.

In such an act the person seeks in effect to strike back at GOD.

It is a way of saying to GOD that He has not been good, righteous and loving; that it is impossible for the person to cope with the circumstances of life; and that there is no source of strength or place of help. Such an act, then, denies the goodness of GOD to all men. It denies the providence of GOD that He is seeking our repentance and turning to Him through the events that happen unto us. It denies the love of GOD that GOD loves me and the Lord JESUS CHRIST gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Socrates said that GOD has placed us here, as at some military post and, until He recalls us, it is our business to hold it. In this he is in line with the revealed truth of Scripture.

Peter tells us: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity." How is this possible when Matthew tells us that it was not Judas at all that bought the land, but the chief priests? The point of law is this: The money was still considered to be Judas', and to have been applied by him in the purchase of that potter's field. It is very frequent in the Word to represent a man doing that which he is merely the cause or occasion for another to act. Acts 2:23 is an example. Speaking to the men of Israel, Peter says: **"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."** The men of Israel had crucified Him through their leaders and through the Roman soldiers, yet the act was theirs. So with the property. The Chief priests would have made the act of valuing, selling, and purchasing all Judas'; but they themselves were equally guilty for all that transpired.

Looking at what happened to Judas, we find him dying a double death. Judas hung himself on a tree, but either the rope he used broke, or the branch of the tree, so that having suspended himself over a cliff he falls, not feet first, but he is thrown head first, perhaps caused by a slight incline in the slope. In this manner he hits at the bottom of the cliff a sharp rock that pierces his intestines and he dies an aggravated death. Only too late did Judas learn that the Lord JESUS CHRIST, whom he failed ever to call "Lord," holds the world and all things therein together.

Those who have visited Palestine tell us that there is a precipice over the valley of Hinnom where trees still grow quite near the edge. A rocky pavement exists also at the bottom of the ledges. Dr. Luke records the vivid account of his death from the lips of Peter which was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem. He tells us further that at that time, some 43 days after the events took place, the people had called the place the field of blood (Acts 1:19). Thus we find that the name "The field of blood" has a dual significance. In Acts it is so called because it was the place where Judas died a horrible death. In Matthew the name is used thirty years later as an indictment against the Sanhedrin because blood money was used to buy this field. Both accounts are right but are approaching the events from a different point of view.

"**Judas by transgression fell**" from the ministry and apostleship to which he was appointed. He fell because of unbelief in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and he went "to his own place." He refused mercy so there was only judgment left. He spurned coming to the only One who could extend mercy to him, so now he will receive justice for all eternity.

Friend, though "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", we may be "**justified freely ("without a cause", John 15:25) by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood**" (Romans 3:23-24).

The word propitiation may also be considered as "mercy seat." There is one place where GOD may show His mercy and manifest His grace to the vilest sinner. It is at the cross where the blood becomes the basis of GOD showing mercy to the sinner.

If you come -- mercy.
If you spurn the invitation -- justice.

You make the decision, but eternity is in it.

~ end of chapter 9 ~
