**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Did Judas Repent?**
Scripture: Matthew 27
Code: BQ030813

**Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. (27:3–5)**

We are not told where Judas was during the Jewish mock trials. He doubtless had followed the multitude from the Mount of Olives to Annas's house and was waiting nearby, perhaps in the courtyard where Peter was. It is possible that he was called as one of the witnesses against Jesus, but that seems unlikely. Judas still had the onus of being a disciple of Jesus, and, in any case, the very fact he was a traitor would have made his testimony suspect. Because Judas had fulfilled his usefulness to them, the chief priests and elders wanted nothing more to do with him. He was now a rejected outcast-to them, to the disciples, and to Jewish society in general.

**Then when** could be translated "at that time," which seems to fit the context. Even before dawn it had became obvious to Judas and the others in the courtyard that the foregone verdict of the Jewish leaders had been confirmed. **Now Judas, who had betrayed Him**, saw with his own eyes **that He had been condemned**. Although horao (saw) was sometimes used in the figurative sense of being aware of or perceiving, its use here suggests literal, physical sight. If Peter was able to see Jesus during at least part of the trial (Luke 22:61), then others in the courtyard could have seen Him as well. Judas had seen Jesus maligned, spat upon, beaten, and mocked. Now he watched in bewilderment as his **condemned** Teacher was taken to Pilate.

As Judas watched Jesus being carried away to Pilate, the full enormity of his treachery finally began to dawn on him as he realized the Jewish leaders did indeed intend to put Jesus to death. The one last obstacle was the permission of Pilate, which Judas had no reason to believe would be denied. Once Pilate consented, Jesus' death would be inevitable.

The sight was devastating to Judas, more than even his money-hungry mind, his sordid soul, and his seared conscience could deal with. **He felt remorse** as he began to experience the intense, excruciating pain that is unique to profound guilt.

No man could be more evil than Judas Iscariot. Only eleven other men in all of history have had the intimate, personal relationship he had with the incarnate Son of God, No man has ever been more exposed to God's perfect truth, both in precept and example. No man has been more exposed firsthand to God's love, compassion, power, kindness, forgiveness, and grace. No man has had more evidence of Jesus' divinity or more firsthand knowledge of the way of salvation. Yet in all of those three indescribably blessed years with Jesus, Judas did not take so much as the first step of faith.

In a way that defies comprehension, Judas persistently resisted and rejected God's truth, God's grace, and even God's own Son. Also in a way that defies understanding, he managed to completely conceal his wicked rebellion from everyone but Jesus. His hypocrisy was so complete and deceptive that even when Jesus predicted that one of the disciples would betray Him, Judas was not suspected.

Judas was so totally trapped in the darkness and corruption of sin that he became a willing instrument of Satan. Because this false disciple had totally renounced Christ, "Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot" (Luke 22:3), and it was then a simple matter to persuade him to betray Jesus (John 13:2). Judas's heart was so utterly hardened to the things of God that long before he consciously considered betraying Him, Jesus called him a devil (John 6:70).

Even so, Judas could not escape the divinely designed signal of guilt that reminds men of their sin and warns them of its consequences. Just as pain is an intrinsic and automatic warning of physical danger, guilt is an intrinsic and automatic warning of spiritual danger. It was not that Judas suddenly became afraid of God, else he would have turned in desperation to the One he knew could forgive him. Nor was he afraid of men. Although he was now discarded and despised by the Jewish leaders, they had no reason to harm him. It was rather that Judas suddenly realized the horrible wrongness of what he had done. An innate awareness of right and wrong is divinely built into every human being and cannot be totally erased, no matter how deep a person may fall into depravity or how consciously and rebelliously he may turn against God. This is intensified by the convicting pressure of the Spirit of God.

Judas's **remorse** was not repentance of sin, as the King James version suggests. Matthew did not use metanoeo, which means a genuine change of mind and will, but metamelomai, which merely connotes regret or sorrow. He did not experience spiritual penitence but only emotional **remorse**.

Although he would not repent of his sin, he could not escape the reality of his guilt. Genuine sorrow for sin (metamelomai) can be prompted by God in order to produce repentance (metanoeo), as Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 7:10. But Judas's **remorse** was not prompted by God to lead to repentance but only to guilt and despair.

Because he was a kind of witness against Jesus, perhaps Judas thought that by admitting the wickedness of what he had done he would be punished as a false witness, as Deuteronomy 19:16–19 prescribed. Under that provision, he would have been crucified himself, suffering the penalty imposed on the one he caused to be falsely convicted. Instead of looking to Jesus' for forgiveness and trusting in His atoning death, Judas's perverted mind may have led him to believe that by dying he somehow could atone for his own sin.

Proof that Judas's sorrow was ungodly and selfish is seen in the fact that he made no effort to defend or rescue Jesus. He had no desire to vindicate or save Jesus but only to salve his own conscience, which he attempted to do by returning **the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders**.

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