Sinister Players in the Sovereign Plan of Redemption
Luke 22:1-6
42-267

Open your Bible to Luke chapter 22...Luke chapter 22. I want to read the text before us, the text that we will discuss this morning.

Verse 1, Luke 22, "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread called the Passover was approaching. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the Twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad and agreed to give him money. And he consented and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them, apart from the multitude."

To the superficial reader of the account leading up to the cross of Jesus Christ, it might appear that the architects of this event were none other than the hypocritical religious leaders of Israel, the blackmailed Roman governor Pilate, Judas the betrayer, and behind it all, none other than Satan. To the superficial reader, it might look like this was Satan's plan. And he pulled it off using some of the agents in his kingdom. Remember, Jesus had said in John 8 to the Jewish leaders, "You are of your father, the devil." And Jesus also spoke of Judas as one who was himself a devil.

Was it Satan's plan? Did Satan want Jesus dead? Did God have to scramble to try to make something out of this satanic enterprise? Well, that's exactly opposite the truth. Everything happened within the framework of God's will. Everything happened within the boundaries and the parameters of divine purpose.

The New Testament is crystal clear that everything in the life of our Lord was controlled by His Father...everything. Jesus said, "I only do what the Father wills Me to do. I only say what the Father wants Me to say. I only do what the Father shows Me to do." Everything He did was what God wanted Him to do and everything that was done around Him was what God wanted or allowed to be done. Not only did Jesus do only what the Father willed Him to do, He only did what the Father willed Him to do when the Father willed Him to do it. He did what the Father willed, when the Father willed. In fact, He came into the world in the fullness of time. Which means on a divine schedule, when God's time was exactly right.

And He went out of the world on divine schedule. His death was planned by God before the foundation of the world. That's why He is in the Scripture called the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. It was a divine plan on God's part that Jesus would die even before anything was created. Not only was it determined that He would die, it was determined when He would be born, where He would live, when He would die as to the year, as to the month, as to the week, as to the day, as to the hour.

John in his gospel identifies the time of our Lord's crucifixion as His hour...His hour. Using the term hour to identify the precision with which God works, the very time God had set for Him to be sacrificed. He did not die on the schedule of the Jewish leaders who hated Him. He did not die on the schedule of the Romans who worked Him in to execution on their own timetable. He did not die because Judas planned it. He did not die because Satan planned it. God established His hour.

There were many times that efforts were made to kill Him, even when He was an infant, unsuccessfully. There were times during His life when they wanted to seize Him and kill Him, always unsuccessful. In Luke 4 they wanted to throw Him off a cliff but He disappeared out of their midst.

Finally now, they will kill Him at the very hour they most wanted to avoid because that was God's hour. His death was planned by God. Jesus died as God's lamb. Everybody else brought a sacrifice at Passover, everybody else came and gave their offering to the priests and the offerings were killed as a sacrifice, God brought His sacrifice as well on the Passover at the very time all Passover lambs were being slain in Jerusalem in that year which works back to be 30 A.D. God determined that His Lamb would be slain for the sins of the world, the only sacrifice that ever could atone for sin. All other sacrifices being a picture of that final sacrifice that would come in the Lamb of God.

Jesus' death was no surprise to God. It was not a plan of Satan. It was no surprise to Jesus. He said, "No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down by Myself." Jesus said to Pilate, "You could do nothing against Me if My Father didn't allow you to do it." He is on God's schedule and He is voluntarily yielding up His life for the divine purpose of paying the penalty for the sins of all who would ever believe so that they can be brought to heaven to praise and glorify the Trinity forever.

The Holy Spirit has given us some insight into this pattern by using that term "our" in a kind of progression. Look at the gospel of John for a moment and chapter 2. Here is the first time in an encounter in Cana where Jesus goes a wedding, Cana being a village right next to Nazareth that it probably was a family very, very well-known to them, maybe even relatives. His mother Mary was there. And Mary was still acting like His mother. Kind of hard for mothers to let go. Mary was still acting like His mother and Jesus said to her, verse 4, John 2, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? The relationship we once had isn't going to be that way anymore." This is the very launch of His ministry.

And then He said this, "My hour has not yet come." Here we're introduced to this possessive phrase, "My hour." There is an hour coming that uniquely is designed by God to belong to Him. What is that hour? Chapter 7 of John, verse 30, "They were seeking Him," that means those leaders who wanted Him dead, they were seeking therefore to seize Him and no man laid his hand on Him because His hour had not yet come. There's that same term again, "His hour, My hour." Chapter 8 of John's gospel, verse 20, He was speaking to them in the treasury as He taught in the temple. The treasury was a courtyard section of the temple area. He was teaching there and no one seized Him. The implication is they wanted to seize Him, they wanted to take Him, they wanted to execute Him but no one did because His hour had not yet come. There was an hour predetermined by God, designed by God in which God would turn Jesus over to be killed so that He was killed in the very hour that God wanted Him to die as His Lamb. Until that hour came, no one could lay a hand on Him.

If you look at John chapter 12, now you're coming down to the last week of our Lord's life, the last public ministry of Jesus occurs in chapter 12. Look at verse 23, John 12:23. "Jesus answered them saying, 'The hour has come...the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" And then He goes on to say, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth, it dies, it remains by itself alone. If it dies, it bears much fruit." He's talking about His own death. The hour is the hour of His death. It has finally come. You move in to chapter 13, before the feast of the final Passover, it says in verse 1, "Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father." In chapter 17, as He is still in that same evening of the Passover before He is taken prisoner and crucified, this is Thursday night, it says in verse 1 of chapter 17 that He was lifting up His eyes to heaven and speaking to the Father. He said, "Father, the hour has come."

The death of Jesus Christ was God's plan. Jesus Christ is God's Lamb. He did not die because Stan had a plan. He did not die because the Jews had a plan, or Judas had a plan. He died because God had a plan. He died on schedule, on God's schedule.

Go back to Luke 22 and in Luke 22 notice verse 53 which we'll come to in a few weeks. Luke 22:53, actually verse 52, "Jesus speaks and says, 'He's in the Garden, they're coming to take Him prisoner at night, Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber? While I was with you in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me. But...literally the Greek says...this is your hour and the power of darkness.'" That is a monumental statement. He says to those who have come to take Him prisoner for the purpose of killing Him, this is My hour, so this is your hour. This is God's hour, so this is My hour, so this is your hour. But it's also the hour of the power of darkness. This is the devil's hour, too. God sets the hour, you fit into it. God sets the hour, Satan fits into it. God sets the hour, Judas fits into it. This is your hour and the power of darkness. It is in this hour that all the purposes of God come to pass. It is in this hour that all the hatred and vitriol of all the Jewish leaders who want Jesus dead comes to fulfillment. It is in this hour that Satan moves into Judas, already dominating the leaders of Israel who are His children, according to John 8, he moves into Judas and leads him in the betrayal. All of this is converging to together in perfect accord with God's plan. This is that hour.

Now remember, the Jews' idea was we don't want to arrest Him publicly, we want to arrest Him privately. There could be as many as two million people there at a Passover, they're milling everywhere. When they came into town on Monday, they were there hailing Him as the Messiah. The crowds were massive and they appeared to be in favor of Him. He was popular beyond anyone ever. They were fearful if they were to arrest Him openly, they would start a riot. The people would rebel against them for arresting this very popular healer and teacher. They needed to arrest Him at night and then hold Him clandestinely until the Passover and the following seven days of Unleavened Bread were over. So they needed to capture Him and then hold Him until all the feasting was over, the people dispersed, and then they could exact upon Him the execution they desired when there was less risk of a riot. In Matthew 26 it says they were afraid to do anything openly because they were afraid of a riot.

But whenever they planned to kill Jesus, God planned on Friday. And it wouldn't be ten days and it wouldn't be after ten days. It would be in two days because that's when Passover lambs were slain and that's when God determined He would slay His Lamb.

By the way, the nails didn't kill him. And the sphere didn't kill Him. And the crown of thorns didn't kill Him. And the nakedness didn't kill Him. The blood loss didn't kill Him. God took His life because He

was God's Lamb. Christ died for God to be a satisfactory atonement for sin and to satisfy the justice of God so that God could forgive all those whose sins now had been paid for.

So the chapter begins, Luke 22, and the drama of the death of Jesus Christ begins to unfold. It is obviously the glorious highpoint of the book. Remember now, it is Wednesday night of Passion Week. It is Wednesday night, getting later. Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Olives where He would go every night after the busy day of teaching in the temple. He is there on the Mount of Olives with His disciples, it is now time to put the plan into motion. The next day they will celebrate the Passover together, Thursday. Friday He will die. Sunday He will rise. Ministry, public ministry to the people is over, He is now at the point of His hour. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world will die on Friday at the Passover. This is God's plan.

So, we're looking at these opening six verses and we're saying there are some persons in this drama we need to meet. First, the deity, God, and we've already done that. And I've just repeated what we've learned. God is behind everything, the deity. But there are some other participants that I have mentioned that I want us to look at this morning...the devout, the devil, and the defector.

First of all, let's look at the devout. And I say that with a note of sarcasm because I'm referring to the religious leaders of Israel. They were devout in their own minds, they were devout. In the minds and the eyes of the people, they were esteemed to be the most devout of all. Let's meet them, verse 2. "And the chief priests and the scribes," these are the religious experts and the lawyers and the scholars, namely the scribes, "And they were seeking how they might put Him to death for they were afraid of the people."

They already had clearly indicated they wanted Him dead but they were seeking a way to do it without causing a riot. These are old enemies, folks, these are old, old enemies. In our study of the gospel of Luke, we have met them many, many, many times. In fact, in our study of the gospel of John, we met them. And in our study of the gospel of Matthew we met them. And if you were studying the gospel of Mark which we will some day, you will meet them again. They are the old, old enemies who dog the steps of Jesus. And here they are, the chief priests and scribes, and Matthew 26:3 adds, "and the elders of the people," meaning the members of the Sanhedrin, those would be the people who were non-religious by the fact that they didn't have an official religious status, chief priests, scribes, they had official religious status.

The elders of the people would be the ones who made up the Sanhedrin, they were a part of it as well. You could just throw everybody in there. The Sadducees were there, as well, another religious sect because they ran the temple enterprise and the Chief Priest Caiaphas was a Sadducee. All of the leadership of Israel is involved in this chief priests and scribes identification. And they're seeking how they might put Him to death.

Now they had a lot of different motives. If you're asking about the Sadducees, they were religious liberals. Theology wasn't their big thing since they intended to deny the supernatural. They had much more interest in the political interests. Caiaphas, the high priest, was a Sadducee. He was a political animal. He was corrupt. He was wicked. He ran a temple enterprise that turned the house of God into a den of robbers. He operated a scam everywhere he could to divest poor people of their money. And that's why Jesus said He's going to bring the whole down after He watched a widow give her last two cents. He is saying, in effect, any system that sucks the last two coins out of a woman who is a widow and destitute to send her home to die, she gives her coins cause she thinks

she can buy salvation, goes home to die, that's a corrupt system, it's coming down. They ran that corrupt system.

When He started His ministry three years before, He took a whip and cleansed the whole temple by Himself. When He came into Jerusalem this week, two days earlier on Monday, He did the same thing again, overturning the tables, throwing people out. They hated Him. They hated Him for political and economic reasons, did Caiaphas and the Sadducees.

Now the theologians hated Him for theological reasons. He was tearing up openly and publicly their religious system. So He assaulted them economically. He assaulted them politically. He assaulted them theologically. And they were afraid He was fomenting such unrest that the Romans would move in who already occupied the land and were trying to maintain the Pax Romana, the Roman peace, and they would just take away their power and take away their authority because this Jesus had fomented such unrest. They were all afraid.

So they met in Caiaphas' courtyard...the high priest. And they tried to figure out a way to kill Jesus. If you will look at chapter 11 of John, for a moment, I'll take you to that meeting. In John's gospel he gives us the firsthand account. John 11 verse 47, "Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council." Matthew tells us it was in Caiaphas' courtyard. "And they were saying, 'What are we doing? This man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him. There goes our religious system. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. There goes our power. There goes our money. He's going to do us in on every front.' But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die.'" Why are you quibbling about killing this man? He must die for the people so that the whole nation should not perish.

Look, either we're all going to fall into the Roman sword because He's going to foment such turmoil, or we're going to kill Him. It doesn't do any good to sit around and try to plan for the maximum moment. You're all ignorant. We're going to lose everything.

He made an amazing statement, didn't he, unwillingly? He said it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people. He wasn't talking about the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for sinners, but unwittingly that's what he said. And verse 51 says, "Now this he did not say on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation and not for the nation only but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad." Unwittingly because he happened to be the high priest, God overruled his corruption and put the truth in his mouth. And he spoke that Jesus was going to die not just for that nation but for all God's people everywhere. So from a prophetic statement, out of his ignorance and hatred of Christ, he actually wound up speaking a true prophecy.

Verse 53 says, "So from that day on they planned together to kill Him." We can't wait.

I think it's important for me to say something at this juncture, because I don't want this to be misunderstood. Jews, in general have born blame through the years for killing Jesus. It has been popular in some circles to call Jewish people "Christ-killers." This has been used as a racial epithet by hateful, vicious, ignorant, racists people. It is true that the Jews so Jesus' day rejected their

Messiah. It's unmistakably true. The leaders did, and so did the people. They demanded His death. This is true. But it was the Jews of that generation, living in that place, at that time, in that nation, in that crowd that wanted Jesus dead, and basically blackmailed Pilate into executing Him. This is no warrant for unscrupulous people to brand all Jews as a race as Christ-killers. The truth of the matter is, Jew or Gentile, anyone who rejects Jesus Christ takes a position against Jesus Christ and eliminates any hope of eternal salvation. That's true of anybody. But to use what the people did to Jesus, the people of that generation did to Jesus, as some kind of justification for hate crimes, and holocausts against Jewish people is anything but Christian, anything but Christian. It is satanic. That kind of bigotry doesn't come from God. It doesn't come from true Christians. It comes from Satan. It is anti-Christian. It is true that Israel's leaders bore culpability. The people bore culpability. Every person, Jew or Gentile who rejects Jesus Christ bears guilt. It is true. That is no reason to hate Israel. Even God loves Israel. And one day will save that nation. And even now is building His church of Jew and Gentile. Be reminded that way back in the Abrahamic covenant we are told whoever blesses Israel, God will what? Will bless. Whoever curses Israel, God will curse.

Caiaphas escalated the plan, sped the thing up, we can't wait, we've got to kill Him, we've got to kill Him now.

Now you've got to remember too that with the escalating crowds up to two million during the Passover period, we don't know exactly what the number is, the Roman presence would be escalated as well. So they're all very, very aware that this is exactly the kind of time that if anything starts that looks anywhere near like a riot, the Romans are going to come down hard with military force and change the relationship we currently have with them, which gives us a certain measure of freedom. We've got to arrest Him, we've got to arrest Him now.

But how? Go back to Luke 22. How we going to find Him? We can't arrest Him in the middle of the day because it will start a riot. Well look what happened when He just came into the city, masses of hundreds of thousands of people screaming that He's the Messiah, throwing palm branches under His feet as He rides in. We can't do it publicly. We have to do it secretly. They needed a way to find Him in secret, in the dark.

But how? They needed somebody who knew where He was at night, somebody to be a betrayer. In Matthew 26, "They plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him." Seize Him by stealth and kill Him. Not going to wait any longer. Caiaphas changed that plan...just get Him and kill Him by stealth. How do you do that? All these masses of people around Him in the temple, you can't do it then. At night He disappears, once the sun goes down there's no lights. Once the sun goes down He disappears.

Where did He go? The end of chapter 21 says, "He went every night with His disciples into the Mount of Olives," in that thick dense grove of olive trees which are very bushy at the top, they could be any place and every place and all these people who were there, all these pilgrims were disseminating along with Him, how in the world could you ever find any one in the dark? And you can't go tramping through there with some kind of armed force unless you know what you're doing and where you're going.

They overestimated the commitment of the crowd, don't you think? They overestimated the emotion that the crowd had displayed when Jesus came into the city. They didn't understand the crowd was very fickle. They anticipated that if they arrested Jesus in the middle of the day, would start a riot.

So they thought they have to take Him at night. We can't do that unless we've got somebody who will betray Him. And they were trying to figure out how to pull it off.

Then a most amazing thing happened. Guess who showed up at their meeting? Judas. The best understanding of the New Testament accounts is that Judas walked in to Caiaphas' house into the meeting. "How much is it worth to you if I tell you where Jesus is in the middle of the night?" That's essentially what happened. This is God's time and everything is in motion.

Why would Judas do that? First of all, he was the devil, he was an unbeliever, he was unregenerate. He was a fake. He was a fraud. He was a phony. But why would he do that? He was greedy, filled with avarice, wanted money, stealing from the bag, knew he was going to get out, the thing was going south, going the way he didn't want it to go. He had wasted three years, he wants out but he wants compensation.

But still, how do you get over the hump of three years of exposure to Jesus? Three years of seeing miracle after miracle after miracle? Watching somebody banish illness from the land of Israel, raise dead people, put ears on people that don't have ears, and legs on people that don't have legs, and eyes in sockets that don't have eyes, and how do you do this? Having seen the way He taught, heard everything He said and experiences meekness and kindness and humility and gentleness as well as His power and conviction, truth, how do you do this?

Verse 3 tells you how, and we move from the devout to the devil, "And Satan entered into Judas." Whatever restraint might have been in Judas' mind, whatever held Judas back, didn't hold him back anymore. He was already a child of the devil. Just like the leaders were the children of the devil, John 8, "You're of your father the devil," Jesus said to the leaders. The devil moved them to do what they did and now the devil had another of his own children, Judas, and he moved him to do what he did. In fact, he not only moved him, he not only made treacherous suggestions to Judas, he moved in. There's a progression there.

If you look at John 13, you are now in John 13, Jesus with His disciples and it tells us in verse 2, John 13, during supper Thursday night, "The devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him."

When you come to the supper on Thursday night, the next night the betrayal plot has already been placed in Judas by the devil. Verse 2, "The devil put it into his heart," overruling whatever restraints might have naturally been there because of his amazing exposure to Jesus, the devil put that treachery in his heart before. Sure, at least the night before, probably the very night, Wednesday night is when he went to the Sanhedrin soon after this meeting with the disciples was over.

Turn to John 13, further down, verse 27, they're now eating that Passover meal, that last supper. "And after the morsel had been given to Judas, verse 27, then Satan entered into him." Wow. First he suggests the thought, then he moves in.

We might think again that Satan's behind this whole thing. The leaders are a children of Satan, Judas is a child of Satan, he's behind it all. Then we might ask a couple of questions too. How about this question, why would Satan motivate Judas to betray Jesus to have Jesus crucified when he knew that that was God's plan? What's that about? Wouldn't you think Satan would want to stop

the crucifixion? What happened in Matthew 16? Jesus said to His disciples, “I’m going to die.” Peter said, “No, Lord, that’s not going to happen. You’re not going to die.” To which Jesus replied, “Get behind Me, Satan.”

Satan wanted to stop the death of Christ. Satan didn’t want Christ to die. God wanted Christ to die as a sacrifice for sin. Satan wants Christ not to die as a sacrifice for sin and that leaves everybody in his domain.

You say, “Well then why would he prompt a betrayal?” I don’t know why Satan thinks the way Satan thinks. But I know if you’re the most corrupt being in the universe, even your rational powers are corrupt. So I’m not looking for consistency. But at the same time, I know the devil has a measure of consistency, of reasonableness. And it seems to me that the way it really goes is like this, we know Satan does not want Jesus to die because when Peter said, “You’re not going to die,” Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan.” Satan, you’re not going to stop Me from the cross. So why would Satan enter Judas to press Judas into betrayal if he didn’t want the obvious result to happen that He would then be arrested and executed?

The simple answer, I think, is this, that Satan also overestimated the commitment and the loyalty and the emotion of the crowd. The only thing that I could think of is that Satan thought exactly what the leaders thought. Maybe that’s why the leaders thought it. That if they were to arrest Jesus in a public setting, there would be such a riot that it would prevent His arrest which would then prevent His death. So if Satan can escalate the arrest, if Satan can get it all to happen fast, and all to happen publicly, and if Satan can get Jesus into public trials and open trials, the people will revolt against the thought of killing this great teacher and Satan could thwart the cross.

And additionally, not only is he going to have the crowd working on his side, but he’s going to unleash the full arsenal of hell against Jesus, to stop Him from the cross. He’s going to press Him and tempt Him so much to avoid the horror of the cross that it’s going to cause Him to have a breakdown in His capillary system in the Garden and He’s going to have blood running out of His pores, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood. This is, remember, your hour and the power of darkness. With all of Satan’s unleashed arsenal blasting Christ to keep Him from the cross, to make Him say, “Father, let this cup pass from Me, amen,” and not add, “Nevertheless, not My will but Your’s be done.” He had failed in tempting Christ every other time in His life. He failed when he took Him to the mountain, remember, and tempted Him three times? He was limited then, He was limited to three temptations, then Satan was sent away and angels came and ministered to Christ. There’s always been boundaries on what Satan could bring to bear on Christ. Now, this is the hour of darkness. This is your hour to unleash the full arsenal of hell against the impervious, impeccable Christ.

Satan overestimates the crowd, just like the people overestimated the crowd, thinking that if he could push this thing, push it in the open, get it public, get it in front of Pilate, have Pilate even stand up, as it turns out, and say, “Do you want Barabbas or do you want Christ?” that the crowd is going to take Christ. That seems to me to be a reasonable thing.

And so, Satan moves in. But this is all in God’s plan. Let me say something that might surprise you. As we come to the devil, you need to understand one thing, Satan is God’s devil, he is God’s devil. He operates only within the parameters that God gives him. God is sovereign over Satan, absolutely sovereign over Satan. Look, Satan is who he is because he tried to assault the sovereignty of God.

Do you understand that? Do you understand that if there's any one thing you know to be true about Satan, it is that he cannot overpower God? He cannot rebel against God. He cannot claim equality with God or superiority to God. That's what he tried to do in the rebellion, along with a third of the angels, and he was thrown out of heaven along with all of them and they are permanently demonized and God prepared a lake of fire where they will burn forever and ever and ever, along with all those who reject Christ. The devil tried to operate outside the framework of divine sovereignty and all he got for it was eternal wretchedness and was thrown out of heaven. The devil is God's devil. He works only within the parameters which a sovereign God determines.

If you look down at verse 31, you have an illustration of it at this very time. Now remember, all hell is unleashing all its forces. And the devil is trying to find anything and anybody that he can to stop Christ from going to the cross. Peter has been a useful tool for him in the past. It was Peter who said, "No, no, no," and it was Peter to whom Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan." So he'll try Peter again. But please notice verse 31, "Simon, Simon," calls Peter by his old name cause he so often acted like his old self. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." do you understand that? Satan cannot touch anyone without divine permission. He is not sovereign. He is subject to God. "But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail you, and when you've been turned again, strengthen your brethren."

You know what? Satan came and said, "I want to have Peter." Part of the hour of darkness was for Satan to unleash everything he had not only on Jesus but on Peter..on Peter. Maybe if he got Peter permanently, finally, totally, all the rest of the Apostles would collapse as well. And Jesus seeing that would see the whole scheme fall apart and avoid the cross. He knew Jesus had the power to avoid the cross cause He's God, he knows that. "Let me at Peter." He couldn't touch Peter without divine permission.....couldn't touch him.

By the way, you remember the story of Job? Satan shows up at the throne of God and says, "God, the only reason Job trusts in You is because You bless him. It's all because of what he gets out of it." God says, "Oh? Have at him. You can do anything to him but take his life. Kill his animals, family, take away everything, his health, you can't take his life." And so Satan does what only what God permits him to do. He goes, he does all that, doesn't take Job's life.

And what happens? Job proves to be true in faith. Can't be shattered. Saving faith can't be shattered. It can't be shattered in Job and it can't be shattered in Peter either. But the devil keeps trying, keeps trying. There was an hour when God allowed Satan to blast Job. There was an hour when God allowed Satan to blast Peter. And there was an hour when God allowed Satan and all the arsenals of hell to blast the Lord Jesus Christ. And what Satan wants to do is find any way he can to shut down Christ's redemptive work on the cross because he is adversary to God. That's what the word "Satan" means. He is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-good, anti-truth, anti-the people of God. But he is God's devil.

Now let me just give you a practical footnote. There is a very popular aberrant theology today that says Satan has sovereignty, that Satan works independently of God and God reacts to him. That he has limits that are only very broad and very general. It is an aberrant system that says Satan works his own will and his own strategy apart from God's will, apart from God's purpose, and God reacts to stop him. And God wants to stop him but God can't stop him if you don't have enough faith. Or God can't stop him if you don't claim it and if you don't bind Satan. All that is heretical.

Let me give you a simple principle. The bigger and stronger your devil, the smaller and weaker your God. That's it. The bigger and stronger your devil, the smaller and weaker your God. And if you do not believe in the absolute sovereignty of God over Satan and everyone else, then you believe in some sovereignty of Satan and you've got a problem, cause you're going to live in fear that this sovereign Satan is going to lambast you and all the things that matter to you and all the people that matter to you. And if you don't muster up enough faith and pray the right prayer and bind Satan and bind demons, horrible things are going to happen to you and God can't act unless you can energize these supposed embattlements against Satan. Satan can't do one thing outside the will of God.

Satan did not want Jesus dead. He did not want Him on that cross. He did not want Him being a substitute for sin. God did. God is absolutely sovereign. The time that Satan did rebel, his rebellion was useless. But this is the hour of darkness and Satan is going to give his best shots to shut down the redemptive plan, to halt salvation's work, to stop Jesus from going to the cross.

So we see the player. The big player is God, the deity, the devout leaders and the devil. And finally, the defector...the defector, the despicable Judas. Never met a person anywhere in the world named Judas. Have you? I met one dog named Judas...even that's a bad choice. If you're going to name something Judas, name a snake. Satan now is in total control of the defector, the betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

We don't...we don't have a big characterization of Judas in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John introduce him this way, "Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ." What else do you need to say? John 12:6 says he was a thief. Jesus said he was a devil, an adversary. What else do you need to know about him? Iscariot, from Kerioth. Kerioth is a small village in southern Judea. He's the only one of the Apostles from southern Judea, the rest are Galileans. He comes into the group with complete isolation. They don't know anybody who knows him, this works perfectly in his scheme. He has real anonymity. He's a solitary isolated figure from afar that they don't know and that serves his evil purposes.

The Old Testament prophesies that Jesus would be betrayed by someone who knew Him very well. Psalm 41:9, "Mine own familiar friend has lifted up his heel against Me." That's quoted in John 13:8 as being fulfilled in Judas. Zechariah 11:12 and 13 speak of the same thing, a betrayer who is going to sell the Messiah for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah cited in Matthew 27:9 and 10 as coming true in Judas. There's a reference to Judas in Psalm 55 verses 12 to 14. This is no surprise to God. This is all a part of the plan. It doesn't lessen Judas culpability. Look at verse 22 of Luke 22 again, "The Son of Man is going as it has been determined by God, nonetheless woe to that man by whom He is betrayed."

The fact that it was in the plan of God doesn't remove culpability from Judas. God planned His own treachery into His plan. God by His providential power, supernatural authority, takes every contingency good and evil and plans them within the framework of His own purpose to achieve His own ends. This is the massiveness of the mind of God.

So, Satan entered Judas who is called Iscariot, to distinguish him from other people named Judas, a somewhat common name then, from the town of Kerioth. And then the most chilling statement, I think, made about him, "Belonging to the number of the Twelve." How sad is that? Belonging to the number of the Twelve. Wow. Which means three years with Jesus...three years with Jesus night and day, everywhere, hearing every word, watching every miracle.

You know, the sin of Judas, I think, has only one equal. This is just so heinous, this is such a crime against privilege, such a crime against opportunity that it only has one equal, one parallel and it is the sin of Adam...the sin of Adam. Those two are easily the most heinous of all sins. Why? Because both Adam and Judas walked and talked with the living God every day. Both Adam and Judas lived in the glorious, holy, pure, presence of God. Both Adam and Judas experienced the truth, the beauty, the wisdom, the majesty of God and both Adam and Judas violated Him monstrously. Judas makes Faust look like a children's story. Talk about selling your soul to the devil. Adam recovered, Judas never did. Once Satan moved into Judas, the plan was in motion.

There is the Sanhedrin, chief priests, Pharisees, scribes, all meeting at Caiaphas' house, the courtyard of his house. It's April, balmy evening. Trying to figure out how to get Jesus...in comes Judas. Verse 4, "He went away," probably on that Wednesday night, "and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them." Cold, calculating stuff.

He wanted money. Absolutely wanted money. And they were willing to give it, verse 5, "They were glad." Oh, glad...that's an understatement, they were ecstatic. This solves their problem. Here's a guy from the inside group, one of the Twelve, how could this possibly happen? This is too good to be true. He shows up at our meeting. Unbelievable. They were glad and of course they agreed to give him money.

Matthew describes how rather curt the whole bargaining process actually was. Matthew 26:14, "One of the Twelve named Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests," in that meeting. He said this, here's his introduction. "Hi, guys, I'm Judas, I'm one of the Twelve. What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you? How much? They weighed out to him 30 pieces of silver."

Exodus 21:32 says that's the price of a slave. That's 120 denarii, that's four months wages, denarii a day. You know, he had been hanging around Jesus for three years, you know how much it turned out to be worth to him? Four months pay...that's 44 wasted months, that's how he viewed it. All he wanted was some compensation for three wasted years. The man who he thought was going to become kind and therefore he would be a part of the Kingdom on the inside circle was obviously not going to become King. He kept talking about His death and he knew he wasn't going in that direction. He started stealing and now he wants out, it's over, but not without compensation...how much is He worth to you? Four months pay. To which he responds, "I'll take it." They agreed to give him money.

Verse 6, he consented. That sent the plan in motion on Wednesday night and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the tumult, literally, the crowd, the multitude. That would happen the next night after Passover.

Well for the Jews, everything was going the way they wanted. For the devil, it was going the way he wanted it. The Jews wanted Jesus dead. The devil wanted Jesus not to die. Judas is just a demon, devil-possessed player.

Everything is now in motion. The power of Satan, the greed of Judas, the hypocrisy of the leaders of Israel, they're just players in a divine plan. They're culpable, they're guilty of their own rejection of Christ and their own sin. But they will not thwart the purpose of God, they will bring it to pass. From

the standpoint of the Jewish leaders, it couldn't be better than having a betrayer from the Twelve. For Satan it couldn't be better than escalating the whole thing while all the people were there so that the people would riot and bring to a halt the death of Christ. And Satan, on top of that, was going to have his hour, the hour of the power of darkness against Jesus to take Him to such exigencies and extremes of temptation that He Himself would fail to go to the cross.

But the overpowering reality was that God wanted Jesus to die. And that's exactly what would happen. Poor Judas. Man by himself is priced. For 30 pieces, Judas sold himself, not Christ. But Judas is no solitary figure. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ ends up where Judas ended up. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ ends up where the religious leaders end up. It's wrong to call Jewish people Christ killers. It's wrong to label them with that epithet, some excuse for racism and commit hate crimes and holocausts against them. They rejected Christ, but so do all kinds of people, Jew and Gentile, through all history. And God loves Israel and God will one day redeem Israel. And even now He's building His church made up of Jew and Gentile. And those who bless Israel He says are blessed, and those who curse Israel are cursed.

We all have to look at our own lives and ask the question...where am I in this whole scene? Do I stand with Judas and the false leaders of Israel? Am I member of the kingdom of darkness, rejecting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, though I might not have hammered a nail through His hand or through His feet, I might not have run a sphere into His side, pushed a crown of thorns on His head, I might not have screamed "Crucify Him, Crucify Him." To reject Him is tantamount to that. You will price yourself by what you do with Jesus Christ.

Well, there's one more group that play a role in the preparation...the deity, the devout, the devil, the defector...next time the disciples. We're going to see the role they play.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. It's profound, powerful, clear, consistent. We just thank You, Lord, for taking us there, for Luke and the rest of the gospel writers, making us have a first-row seat in the unfolding of this drama. O God, we thank You that You overrule all men, all councils, all defectors and betrayers. You overrule Satan and his entire force of demons to accomplish Your purpose. When You wanted Jesus on the cross, all hell couldn't prevent it. When You wanted Jesus on the cross on that Friday, all the machinations and plans of men couldn't prevent it. He was Your Lamb to die for the sins of the world, to satisfy Your requirement for the penalty for sin for all who believe.

Lord, as we now move closer to the cross and move through the final hours of our Lord's life, may we see Christ high and lifted up and be drawn to Him. We pray in His name. Amen.

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