

AN UNFAITHFUL TREASURER'S FALL

– ***OCTOBER 25. – MATTHEW 26:14-25,47-50; 27:3-10.*** –

"Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"
– ***MATTHEW 26:24.***

JUDAS hailed from the south of Palestine, while the other eleven of Jesus' disciples were Galileans. It is inferred that because of superior business qualities Judas was made the treasurer of the Apostolic company. The friends of Jesus noted the fact that He and His followers needed to give their entire time to the heralding of the Kingdom. It is not strange, therefore, that we read that some voluntarily donated money for their support.

We cannot imagine Jesus and His Apostles begging for money or even "passing the hat" for a collection. To have done so would have been to discount Jehovah's declaration that all the gold, all the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are His; and to imply that He would have need to ask for assistance. On the contrary, the Scriptures tell us that some voluntarily contributed to the Master's support; for instance, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and others. (Luke 8:3.) Such voluntary donations made it proper that there should be a common treasurer for the company, and that he should be of superior business acumen.

We find no reason for believing that Judas was a bad man at the time of his selection by Jesus to be one of the twelve Apostles. We have every reason to believe that he developed a bad character even under the most favorable influences – in the continual company of Jesus and the other Apostles, and with the Message of the Kingdom continually in his ears. There was, however, a beginning to his deflection; and the intimation of the Scriptures is that his temptation came along the lines of avarice, selfishness, love of money.

"A ROOT OF ALL EVIL"

Alas, how many honest men have been seduced from the path of righteousness by the love of money! We remember that one of the serious charges which Jesus brought against the Pharisees was that they were money-lovers. It would not seem at all strange if it should prove to be true that the difficulty with many Christians today also is along this line of love of money. It is still true that "the love of money is a root of all evil." (1 Timothy 6:10.) The Apostle declares that through this deception many pierce themselves with sorrows – not always so seriously as did Judas, however.

Judas loved money to such an extent that he was willing to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver which, on the basis of labor, amounted to between two hundred and three hundred dollars in value. Others have loved money to such an extent that they have sold their consciences to gain wealth. Some have sold the Truth for money believing that they would prosper in business better by advocating error. Some have sold the Church for money, and have been willing to preach what they did not believe for the hire of money and the approval of men. Some have sold their nation's interests for money, bartering their patriotism.

Surely there is great need for every one to be on guard against the insidious influence of the love of money. But we should clearly distinguish between money and the love of money; for it is the latter which causes ruin and which entraps and ensnares the soul. Money represents toil, labor, accumulation; and as such it should be valued for the good it can do. But to love money, to serve it, to make it an idol and to allow it to alienate our hearts from God, we should not do. Let us not forget that this love of money was the primal cause of Judas' horrible failure.

A FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY

Not at first, but afterward apparently, did the disciples learn that Judas, who carried the treasurer's bag, was a thief. (John 12:6.) Doubtless even when appropriating the moneys contributed to the support of the little company of disciples, Judas could have some plausible excuse; for sin is always deceptive. Doubtless he would have said, "I laid the money away, thinking that the time would come when the Master and all of us would have greater need for money, and when my provident foresight would be appreciated." Brooding on the subject increased his desire for money, and led his active business mind to hatch out the plot for the betrayal of Jesus.

The record is that when Judas perceived that Jesus had been condemned, he had remorse for his action and took back the money to the chief priests, wishing to undo his deed. They laughed at him, declaring that it was no concern of theirs, but his own, if he had betrayed innocent blood. Because the returned money was "blood money," they could not put it into the Temple Treasury again. Instead, they purchased therewith a piece of cheap land, a potter's field, as a burial place for strangers. Thus they fulfilled to the very letter a prophecy which they had probably forgotten: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the Prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and they [R5552 : page 302] gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed." – Matthew 27:9,10.

The account implies that Judas was surprised when Jesus was condemned. Apparently he surmised that Jesus, brought to the crucial test, would assert Himself as the Messiah and would triumph over His enemies. Judas thus probably thought that he would hasten the establishment of the Kingdom, in which he hoped to share. For his apology in the end he could say, "Well, we are ahead just thirty pieces of silver; and you may thank me for having

brought matters to a climax sooner than otherwise." Thus he would have shone as a hero, as well as have demonstrated his financial wisdom and his suitability for the post of Grand Treasurer of the Kingdom. But in addition to all this, apparently he got a little angry at Jesus because the Master had approved of Mary's conduct in respect to the spikenard. It was under the impulse of that resentment that he first sought the priests and the Scribes to negotiate for the betrayal.

OBLIVION – NO HOPE OF A RESURRECTION

We are not hereby suggesting excuses for Judas. There can be no excuse properly offered for treachery to God and His Cause. We are merely pointing out the fact that every transgressor must first consent in his own mind to his wrong course. In other words, the mind, the conscience, must be perverted before each step of sin. Hence the words of Jesus are fully justified: "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born." – Matt. 26:24.

Such treachery, such willingness to hand over his Friend, his Teacher, and the One whom he had accepted as the Son of God and through whom he had expected the Messianic Kingdom, was perfidy of the worst type. With all the other Apostles, Judas had been called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to become a sharer with Him in the sufferings and trials incidental to loyalty to the Truth, misunderstood by the people, and if faithful to receive with his Master a share in the Heavenly Kingdom, which is to bless the world. Judas, with the others, had preached the Kingdom, had cast out demons, and had healed the sick, by the power of God operating through the name of Jesus. He had been constantly with the Savior, and knew of the purity of His life, knew of His loyalty to God. Therefore all these things constituted his responsibility and his guilt.

The fact that he suicided implied a fulfilment of Jesus' words – that Judas wished that he had never been born. Every one who suicides declares the same fact. Yet there may be hope for other suicides, because of their ignorance, and because Christ died for all; and they, with others, must surely have a blessing and an opportunity for everlasting life as a result.

But in the case of Judas, all this was discounted by the fact that he had already enjoyed such privileges, opportunity and knowledge, and had sinned against light and knowledge. The declaration that he went to his own place, his appropriate place, does not signify that Judas or anybody else is to be eternally tortured as a punishment for sin. Rather, his own place was oblivion, hopeless oblivion, without prospect of a resurrection. He died like a natural brute beast, nor could argument be shown why such a character, who had enjoyed such privileges, should ever have any future opportunity.

HARMONY OF TWO RECORDS

As to the fate of Judas, one Scripture tells us that he went and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:5.) Another Scripture declares that his iniquity accomplished the purchase of a field; and that, falling headlong, he burst asunder, and his bowels gushed out. (Acts 1:18.) To harmonize these two accounts is very simple. Both are true. To hang himself, he probably chose the branch of a tree overhanging a precipice, where he could the more easily accomplish his purpose. If under the strain the rope broke, we can readily see how his headlong fall took place.

However, the matter of his death is of slight importance. The important thing is to notice how his soul died, in that he lost his relationship with God and with Christ, and all hope therefore of a future life. Yet the Master was gentle toward him to the very last, giving him every opportunity to relent and to retrace his steps, down to the very last act.

The fact that God had foreknown from the beginning that one of the Twelve would betray Jesus, the fact that the purchase of the field with the blood money had already been prophesied, did not alter the responsibility of Judas for his own fall. It was not God's foreknowledge [R5553 : page 302] that injured Judas, but his own wrong course; and thus it is with all. God's knowing from the beginning whatsoever will come to pass does not affect us, for He merely knows in respect to us what we will do of our own volition, our own yielding to avarice, to sin.

The testimony that Jesus knew in advance who would betray Him does not prove that Jesus knew this at the time when He chose Judas. He knew that the Scriptures intimated that one of His disciples would betray Him; and from the beginning of the deflection of Judas toward sin, toward avarice, Jesus knew that he must be the one who would commit the traitorous deed; yet in no sense of the word did Jesus' conduct lead Judas to the wrong, but rather forewarned him to the contrary.

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