

JUDAS AND HIS PLOT // LUKE 22:1-6

From the series, The Gospel of Luke

This chapter of Luke continues the narrative of the Passion Week. Jesus has concluded his teaching in the temple and also his earthly teaching ministry. The story now turns to the preparations being made for the Passover meal, and the coming betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. In examining this sequence of events, we are faced with the question: Who killed Jesus? Although many agents are involved in his crucifixion, it is important to understand that the cross was Jesus' plan from the beginning. He is not just in town for the Passover—he is there to be the Passover lamb.

The celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover (v.1) was an important yearly event in the life of Israel, commemorating the deliverance of God's people from Egypt and specifically from the final plague, the death of the first born. Every household whose door was painted with the blood of a sacrificial lamb would be passed over and spared. The blood meant freedom.

The chief priests and scribes were still seeking to put Jesus to death—they had already decided that he had to die, as he was an obstacle to their own desires, but they had not yet found the way to do it without creating an uproar because they “feared the people” (v. 2)

They are afforded an opportunity when “Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot” (v. 3). The wording in Greek here is the source of some debate among scholars—does it indicate that Judas is possessed by Satan? Judas is clearly not a true follower of Christ and is therefore open to this kind of spiritual attack. However, the language could also indicate that he is influenced by Satan without actually being possessed. In any case, it is important to remember that Satan tempts, but each individual is responsible for his or her own sin.

Satan's plan in entering Judas probably did not aim at the cross. Satan would not have wanted the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God—he knew enough to know that that would have meant God's victory and his own defeat. Rather, his purpose throughout the gospel accounts seems to have been to derail Jesus, to offer an alternative to the glory of God, to tempt him to abandon his ministry, this time by the betrayal of one of his own disciples.

While Satan's motivations are apparent, Judas' are not. Was he disappointed with the apparent outcome of the three years he had spent following Jesus? Was he motivated by political maneuvering? Regardless of his reasons, his actions are deliberate and pre-meditated, marking a clear progression from his idea to finding the religious leaders, conferring with them, and agreeing on a price (v. 4-5). As Adrian Rogers puts it, “Sin will take you farther than you wanted to go and keep you longer than you wanted to stay.”

The religious leaders form the third party in this conspiracy. “They were glad” (v. 5) when Judas agrees to betray Jesus—an understatement, given their deep desire to see him destroyed, and they eagerly take their part in this pre-meditated, diabolical plot. James warns of the escalating nature of pursuing evil desires: “Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (James 1:15).

But, grace walked through the enemy's plans. Grace, in the person of Jesus Christ, is not thwarted by even the most sinister of plans. Jesus says, “I lay down my life for the sheep.... No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Temptations are often categorized as being of the world, the flesh, or the devil. How do we see each of these categories at work in this passage?
2. Where do we see the progression of desire, sin, and death in other passages from the Bible? Have we seen the progression in the world around us?
3. Jesus has the authority to lay down and pick up his life. How does this impact our understanding of who he is and what he has done for us?