

Like Peter or Judas?
Matthew 26:17-35

Introduction:

- I. We like to give Judas a bad name. We like to ridicule Thomas for doubting that Jesus had raised from the dead when told by the other apostles. We often consider these “less spiritual” than the other apostles because of their weaknesses we have recorded in Scripture.
 - a. However, this opinion toward them is not quite fair. All of the apostles had weaknesses.
 - i. Peter had very shaky faith—bold one minute, cowardly the next.
 - ii. James and John had fiery tempers—they wanted to consume a man with fire for heaven for casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Jesus called them the “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17).
 - iii. Simon was a zealot, meaning that he hated the Roman government—zealots in that day were similar to terrorists today (Acts 1:13).
 - iv. Judas was greedy, and Matthew likely was, as he was a tax collector.
 1. All of these had their problems, but they were still apostles, and three of these wrote books that we have in the New Testament: Peter, John, and Matthew.
 2. Why, then do we give Judas and Thomas such a bad reputation?
 - a. The last recorded thing about Thomas is his doubting episode.
 - b. The last recorded thing about Judas is when he committed suicide.
 - i. All of the other apostles show improvement as we read the New Testament. That is the key.
- II. Having seen this, we must realize that we are human, like these apostles were. We have weaknesses, shortfalls, and tempers, and that is normal for a human to have. The difference is how we treat those weaknesses.
 - a. We will deny / betray Christ occasionally. How we react to our mistakes is what divides Peter from Judas.
 - i. Peter denied Christ three times out of fear. Yet he preached the first gospel sermon and was the first to bring the gospel to the Gentiles as well.
 - ii. Judas betrayed Christ out of greed, but only once. He even tried to take back what he did. However, he could not get past his mistake and he committed suicide.
 1. Which one are you?

Discussion:

- I. Reaction with remorse.
 - a. We studied recently from II Corinthians 7, where Paul says that “Godly sorrow brings forth repentance unto salvation.”

- i. This is what is talked about here. How did Peter and Judas deal with their sins with regard to remorse?
- ii. Peter
 1. Luke 22:54-62 – “And Peter went out and wept bitterly.”
 - a. Jesus just *foretold* that Peter’s faith would be tested. Peter replied saying that he was ready to be imprisoned or even put to death if that was what it would take. Jesus then said “You will deny me three times.”
 - b. Now Peter has not only sinned by denying Christ, he has broken his promise to Christ as well, and shown himself how weak he truly is.
 - c. To make matters worse, this passage tells us that when the rooster crowed, Jesus looked right at Peter.
 - d. Talk about remorse!
 2. John 21
 - a. These events are after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He has already appeared to his disciples twice, and this will make the third time.
 - b. Peter and several other disciples are sitting near the Sea of Galilee, and Peter decides to go back to work, the life he had before Christ came around.
 - c. Jesus, after they had eaten, asks Peter, “Do you love me more than these fish?” Peter says, “You know I love you.” He seems to be avoiding the question!
 - i. He must remember promising that he would die before turning away from Jesus. That time, he volunteered to give his life. This time, Jesus is asking him to!
 - ii. He is giving Peter a second chance, and Peter is going to take it. We find that by the time of the events of Acts 4 and 5, he is able to boldly tell the Jews that they could not convince him to deny Christ, even in the face of death.
 - iii. Christian tradition tells us that Peter was threatened with crucifixion because of his Christianity. However, rather than allow himself to be put to death the way his Lord was, he told them to crucify him upside down, because he was not worthy even to die like Jesus did.
- iii. Judas
 1. Like Peter, Jesus told him beforehand that he would betray him.
 2. We sometimes look at the whole situation concerning Judas and think of it as predetermined that he would betray Jesus.
 - a. However, read the statement of Jesus found in Luke 22:21-22.

- i. Truly, Jesus would be betrayed, because that was foretold, but *woe* to him who betrays Jesus!
- ii. This was something that would happen, but it would be the *choice* of the betrayer!
- iii. Notice what Judas said in Matthew 26:23-25.
 - 1. This is another account of the same statement: woe to the betrayer.
 - 2. Judas says, "Lord, is it I?" and Jesus answers, "Yes."
- iv. Judas did not know he was going to betray Christ.!
 - 1. Once he realized what he was doing (Matthew 27:5), what did he do?
 - a. He tried to give the money back. He tried to repent!
 - b. The Jews told him to take care of it himself.
 - i. This is when he felt hopeless and gave up. He threw the money down (still signifying his attempt at repentance) and then made his second mistake. He hanged himself.
 - c. He probably, as Peter did when he denied Christ, was reminded of what Christ said: "Truly, the Son of Man goes as it is prophesied, but woe to him who betrays him."

Conclusion:

- I. How would you like to have spent the last three years of your life with Jesus Christ?
 - b. You quit your job.
 - c. You spent the whole time with him.
 - d. Now, in your last meal with him, he tells you that you will cause him to be put to death, or he tells you that you will deny him three times.
 - i. What do you say to that? You try to deny it.
 - e. Finally, you do exactly what Jesus said you would, exactly what you said you wouldn't, and now what?
 - i. Where do we go from here?
- II. You just saw the example of two of Jesus' closest companions.
 - a. Both of them repented at first and made attempts to right their wrongs.
 - b. Will you, like Judas, first attempt to make things right, and then when it becomes difficult to make it right or forgive yourself, give up and commit spiritual suicide?
 - i. If this is the case you will live out the rest of your days in the sins that you cannot bring yourself to get out of your life.