

Judas Betrays the Lord Jesus with a Kiss

Mark 14:43-52

Mark 14:43-52 – *“And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.” ⁴⁵ As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁴⁶ Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. ⁴⁷ And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? ⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”*

⁵⁰ Then they all forsook Him and fled.

⁵¹ Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, ⁵² and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.”

Background Notes

The Lord and His disciples left the upper room after the Passover meal and went to one of their favorite locations—the Garden of Gethsemane. After the sessions of prayer there, Judas arrived with an armed multitude and kissed the Lord with a kiss of betrayal. This was not unusual, because a kiss on the hand or cheek was a common gesture of affection and reverence that a disciple would give to his rabbi. The fact that this betrayal signal had to be made demonstrates that the Lord did not stand out in the crowd. He didn't wear some kind of special white robe, nor did He have a halo, as we sometimes see in paintings or films. That's not what we read in Scripture itself.

The multitude in verse 43 would have included the Jewish Temple guards and some Roman soldiers (we learn that from John 18), as well as some members of the Sanhedrin (we learn that from Luke 22). The Sanhedrin was the governing body of the Jews, and it consisted of the chief priests and scribes and elders of Israel.

“One of those that stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.” In John 18 we learn that it was Peter who drew his sword, and the servant whose ear was cut off was named Malchus. Peter probably aimed for the man's head, but he missed and ended up cutting off this servant's ear. In Luke 22 we learn that the Lord healed and restored the man's ear with a touch. I've wondered about that: Did the Lord reach out and touch the man's head where the ear had been, and a new ear grew back? Or did the Lord pick up the severed ear, blow the dust off it, and stick it back on the man's head? In any case, it was a great miracle! Do you think if Peter had cut off the guy's head

off, the Lord would have been able to put the man's head back on? Of course! No problem. I like to think that Malchus became a believer after the resurrection. I hope that we'll see him in Heaven some day!

You might wonder what Peter was doing with a sword, anyway? Well, again from Luke 22:38, we see that the group actually had two swords when they went to the Garden of Gethsemane. We don't know who was carrying the other one. When the disciples saw that the Lord was not going to defend Himself, they all forsook Him and fled. Verse 51 mentions *"a certain young man followed Him having a linen cloth thrown about his naked body."* Most likely, this young man was John Mark, who wrote this gospel. This little sidelight to the record is only given in the Gospel of Mark.

Now you might wonder – what was the young man doing out there, wearing nothing but a sheet? This is one possible scenario: Acts 12 says that John Mark's mother owned a large house in Jerusalem, where the early Christians met. It's possible that the "upper room" where the Last Supper was held was in her home. If so, Judas would have departed from this house, and then probably returned to the house with those who were going to arrest the Lord. But when Judas got back to the house, the Lord and the disciples had already left for the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas then led the group to the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing that that was one of their favorite places. Meanwhile, John Mark, who was probably sleeping, was roused by the noise of the multitude. Realizing the urgency of the situation, he grabbed the sheet under which he was sleeping and followed them to the Garden of Gethsemane. He arrived after the Lord was arrested, but he followed at a distance until the guards or soldiers tried to grab him, probably as a witness. But he broke free, leaving the sheet in the soldier's hands, and escaped naked.

Doctrinal Points

1. Zeal can be misguided.

In Galatians 4:18 we read that *"it is good to be zealous in a good thing"* - that is, zeal is good as long as it is properly channeled and properly directed. But zeal can be misguided. Peter was certainly zealous when he pulled out his sword and cut off the servant's ear, in defense of the Lord. I wonder if we would have had the courage to try to defend the Lord in that situation? Or would we have taken off as quickly as possible? Would we have been willing to attempt to defend the Lord, as Peter did?

Unfortunately, Peter's zeal was misguided, and we too can be guilty of misguided zeal. Here's a little illustration: A few years ago one of our Emmaus Bible College students was very zealous for the Lord. He and a few other students were in a local restaurant, and they decided to pray right there in the restaurant. Well, that would have been fine if they had prayed quietly and create a disturbance - but no, in their zeal these students began to pray loudly. When the zealous student there saw that some of the customers were getting up and leaving, he said to the other students (can you believe this?!), "Come on guys, let's pray 'em out of here." Now that's misguided zeal! Imagine thinking that you're honoring the Lord by praying so loudly that you're driving people out of a restaurant! That's definitely misguided zeal! This student was really zealous for the Lord, but his zeal was totally misguided. Let's be careful about how we at on our zeal.

We may be doing God's will when we're zealous and bold for God – but remember Peter, because zeal can be misguided. Let's be careful that our zeal is not misguided.

2. Failure can be overcome!

If we follow the lives of the disciples and John Mark into the future, we see that failure can be overcome. Verse 50 says that they all forsook Him and fled, but that was not the end of the story. All eleven came back boldly for the Lord, including Peter and John Mark. Failure can be overcome!

In verse 52, John Mark left his linen sheet in the guard's hands and fled from them naked. Like the others, he was running away scared. Later, however, John Mark was a team member on Paul's first missionary journey. Failure can be overcome. Unfortunately John Mark failed once again when he left the missionary team, and took off back to Jerusalem (Acts 13). But once again John Mark overcame his failure. In both Colossians and 2 Timothy the apostle Paul said that Mark was back! Mark was once again serving the Lord and Paul said he was useful in the ministry. Failure can be overcome! In fact, John Mark was even selected to write this Gospel! It's certainly a great lesson: failure can be overcome.

Maybe as you're listening to (or reading) this Talk, you're feeling that you've failed the Lord in some way – and maybe you actually *have* failed the Lord in some way. Or maybe you think you've failed your fellow believers in some way. You might think that God is done with you. You're shelved. There's no way back. No! Failure can be overcome!

There's a lot more we could say on this doctrinal point, but let's leave it there. However, it's really important to know that while you may think you really messed up badly – and maybe you have - don't get the idea that God has shelved you and can't use you anymore. Do whatever you can to go back and confess your sin to the Lord, and to anyone you may have wronged. Recognize that God can pick up the broken pieces in your life, put your life back together, and use you again. Some lasting scars may remain as a result of your failure, but failure **can** be overcome!

Practical Application

Are you a follower like Judas?

At first Judas looked like a true follower. No one suspected he would become a traitor. The other eleven thought he was trustworthy – they even trusted him to keep the money for the group. Of course the Lord knew that Judas was taking money from the treasury, but no one else suspected him. But Judas had never really put true faith in Jesus, or committed himself to Jesus Christ. Judas was **not** a true follower.

Let's ask ourselves: Am I a follower like Judas? We may look like true followers. Others think we're true followers. We may have taken on responsibilities in ministry and Christian service, just like a true follower would, but down deep in our hearts do we realize that we're not a true followers? Has there ever been a time when, by an act of your will, you've committed your life to Christ, when you've received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord? If you've never done that, it's only a matter of time before you will betray the Lord in some way.

Here's another illustration from the student world of Emmaus Bible College. A number of years ago there was a student who certainly appeared to be a Christian. He said he was a Christian, and the other students thought he was a Christian. He was involved in Christian service; he spoke in the college chapel; he prayed in class as if he were a Christian. But he was a follower like Judas. He ended up denying Christ. A few years ago he was traveling through the Chicago area, and he stopped to see me. He told me that he thought Christianity had brainwashed him, but now he was free of all that religious stuff. Can you believe it? Who would ever have thought that this "model" Emmaus Bible College student was a follower like Judas?

Is it possible that you're a follower like Judas? We need to examine ourselves to be sure we're in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5) – and be sure that we're **not** followers like Judas?