

Heart Attacks

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Some people die from a physical heart attack. Others recover but know they have to be very careful not to have another. Two disciples of Jesus had their spiritual hearts attacked by Satan. One died from it - physically and spiritually. He will experience what the Bible calls "the second death." The other recovered because he was repentant and was forgiven. He will live forever.

Judas is a well-known name even outside of Christian circles. His name is synonymous with traitor and betrayer and is even found in Merriam Webster's dictionary with that very definition:

2: traitor; especially: one who betrays under the guise of friendship

Of all the people who have rejected the offer of salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot stands out as the one who should have known Him best. He was numbered among the twelve apostles. He was witness to His miracles. He heard His sermons and parables first hand.

Judas *tasted the heavenly gift; tasted the good word of God and the powers to come* (Hebrews 6:5-6); but he spit out what he tasted. What his eyes saw and his ears heard never penetrated his heart. His heart, corrupted by the desire for power and for riches, was so hardened that Satan had permission to enter his heart so that Satan's purposes could be carried out. He betrayed the Savior of the world with a kiss. He did not do it simply by enticement from Satan. He chose to do it and knew beforehand that Jesus recognized him as His betrayer. *Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it" (Matthew 26:25).*

When many of Jesus' disciples turned back from following Him and Jesus asked the twelve, *"Will you also go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of life."* Jesus' response to that was telling as He knew although Judas did not walk away, he was not really one of the true disciples. *"Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" - John 6.*

Judas had a god and it wasn't Jesus. It was mammon. His heart was never with the Lord.

What was the difference between Peter and Judas? Peter denied he knew the Lord. Just as Jesus told Judas he would be the one to betray Him, He told Peter he would deny Him three times. Remorseful after Jesus was condemned, Judas brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders and hanged himself. Discouraged and saddened after Jesus' death, Peter went back to fishing. On the surface, both men deserved condemnation and judgment. God never looks on the surface; however. He looks on the heart. *... "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7).*

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21).

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things (Matthew 12:35).

Did Peter sin when he denied Jesus? Certainly, he did. Jesus knew that Peter's heart did belong to Him even though he would sin greatly. *And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for*

you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me" (Luke 22: 31-35). You cannot return somewhere you have never been. Peter belonged to Jesus.

Peter sinned. Peter returned to Jesus. Peter strengthened the brethren. Peter, imperfect though he was, loved Jesus. After His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Peter said, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love you" (John 21:17). Yes, Jesus did know and told Peter to feed His sheep.

What Jesus saw in Peter's heart was not the same thing He saw in Judas' heart. Satan was able to enter Judas' heart because Judas' heart never belonged to Jesus. In every reference of Judas, he was referred to as the one who would betray Jesus. Remorse is not repentance. Judas realized he was guilty, but he was not repentant. He was not able to return to Jesus because his heart never belonged to Jesus in the first place. His heart belonged to mammon - the greedy pursuit of gain.

Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it (John 12:3-6).

What Judas did was premeditated. He was warned by Jesus. "Is it I?" He sought the chief priests in order to betray Jesus for money. He stood with Jesus' captors and betrayed the Lord with a kiss. He never loved Jesus. Even when he brought back the money to the chief priests and elders, his heart did not belong to Jesus. He could not exchange the love of money for the love of Jesus. In the recognition of his guilt, he was an empty soul. He had done Satan's bidding and he killed himself.

In the church, in Christian homes, in organizations claiming to be Christ-centered, there is always the possibility that there are false disciples - a Judas among us. They can be disguised as a deacon, an elder, a pastor's wife or even the pastor himself. Unless Jesus lives in the heart of a person, it does not matter if he goes to church or claims to be a Christian. Satan loves to infiltrate the body of Christ knowing that the reputation of the church is at risk.

It is possible to partake of the bread of fellowship, to sit at the feet of those who teach the true gospel, to be numbered among the faithful, to be counted among the religious and yet have a heart far away from a true disciple. Jesus will do the sorting on judgment day. It is not ours to do.

The caution for a true believer is to guard against a spiritual heart attack. Preventative measures for a physical heart attack include diet, exercise, controlling blood pressure, etc. There are preventative measures for a spiritual heart attack. In John 14-16 - after Judas left the group - Jesus told His disciples how to abide in Him and bear fruit promising to send the Holy Spirit in order to help them. The best medicine we have is abiding in Christ moment by moment - loving Him with all our heart.