

Chapter 82

"I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Matthew 27 vv 1 and 2

Mark 15 v 1

Towards morning, just as the Eastern day began to dawn, the Sanhedrin assembled for the second time. All of them are now present. It appears that some members of the Jewish Council had not come during the night. But now, in the early morning hour they are all gathered. At this new assembly of the Sanhedrin Jesus is again condemned to death. All agree that this blasphemer, who dares to say that He is the Son of God, is worthy of death.

Do they all agree? ... No - not all! Just read what is written in Luke 23 vv 50 and 51. One of the counsellors, Joseph of Arimathea, dares openly to say that he is not in favour of the sentence passed upon the Lord Jesus. He votes against it. You will be hearing more about Joseph of Arimathea later on.

And what do you think about Nicodemus? ... Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin. Will he have agreed to the death sentence for the Lord Jesus? ... I believe not. That could hardly be. Though there is no mention in the Bible of Nicodemus in this connection, it is very probable that Nicodemus also voted against it. But, remember, the Bible says nothing about it.

Whatever was the case, nearly all demand the death of the hated Nazarite. There remains however a great difficulty for the Jewish elders. The Jews were no longer allowed to put anyone to death. They had first to ask the permission of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate must

also pronounce the sentence of death upon Jesus. Then, and only then could they put Him to death. Pilate is the Roman judge. There is nothing for it then, but to go first to Pilate. We may be sure that the idea filled them with annoyance.

They hope that Pilate will not investigate too deeply. They hope that Pilate will just quickly give his permission, and then all will be over before the people stir. Yes, that would be fine, because then the thousands of Galileans will no longer be able to help Jesus either.

At this early hour of the morning they leave the high priest's room and proceed to the Roman governor's palace. They do not all go however, for some of them must go to the temple. They must go and open the doors of the Lord's house and prepare everything for the offerings which will be brought that day.

Matthew 27 vv 3-10

Acts 1 vv 16-20

Come, let us first go in our thoughts with these men who are making for the temple. The doors are opened, but since it is so early in the morning there are as yet no offerings. It is quiet and peaceful.

Suddenly they raise their heads and listen. Quiet a moment ... Puzzled, they look at each other. Whatever is that? ... They hear hurried

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footsteps approaching rapidly, inquisitively they look in the direction whence the sounds come.

Soon a man appears, who walks straight up to them. But just look at him, how strange he appears, his hair hangs entangled about his face. His eyes look around frightened and nervously, his face is distorted with anxiety and remorse.

In the utmost amazement the chief priests and elders stare at him. Whatever does this man want? What has he come to do in the temple at this time in the morning? ... Who is this man?

Oh, you know already, don't you? This man is Judas, the betrayer of the Lord Jesus. And what has he come to the temple for? ... Just listen to what he says: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

In his eyes we see terror and despair. How awful! But how does this come about? What has taken place?

You know already how in the garden of Gethsemane he gave his Master that traitor's kiss with the words: "Hail, Master!"

We have also told you that Jesus answered him: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" and "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

Judas had returned with the group to Jerusalem. There he had collected his rewards, thirty pieces of silver. In our money that would be about four pounds, he had been longing for that money. Earlier it had seemed marvellous to him to get hold of such a sum. Moreover he could vent his hatred for this Jesus of Nazareth, who had, he thought deceived him. That was what he imagined anyway.

Strange to say however, now that he has the money it is just as though the joy of possessing it disappears. At least he is not so

happy with it as he had expected. He begins to consider what he has done. Everything which has taken place during the past few years during Jesus' ministry on earth and which he has witnessed, comes back bright and clear to his remembrance. The miracles which Jesus did; the words which Jesus spoke; it is as though he hears that gentle, friendly voice still.

His conscience begins to work. It begins to blame him. How kind and friendly Jesus had always been. Even in the garden Jesus had still used the word "friend" to him. He remembers everything again clearly. He realises that Jesus had known what his plans were. The cloaked warnings, directed towards him, come back to his thoughts. Oh, if only he had not done it. He sees the evil and cruel nature of his deed.

Judas becomes obsessed by these thoughts. They give him not a moment's rest. Remorse for his shameful treachery fills him. No, it is no true, upright repentance which fills his soul, no loving sorrow like Peter had; no supplication for pardon, no bowing low before God, no humbling of heart. With Peter we did see this, but not with Judas. With Judas it is only REMORSE, REGRET.

One thing he still hopes, and that is ...? Perhaps Jesus will still save Himself, or perhaps they will be unable to find anything against Him. Perhaps Jesus may yet be pronounced not guilty. Upon this possibility the traitor lays tight hold.

We may be sure that the hours passed slowly for him that night. All the time he was filled with constant anxiety.

Then at last, he hears that Jesus has been judged worthy of death by the Sanhedrin, for it seems that the traitor did not go into the judgment hall. In any event, Judas gets to know



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that the sentence of death has been passed upon Jesus. The Lord had not saved Himself. It was within His power, but it was not His will so to do.

Judas' last hope is gone. He is overcome by despair. The money which he had received as reward for his treachery, that awful money, that BLOOD MONEY, burns in his pocket. He no longer wants it.

Look, there he hurries towards the temple, and so it comes about, boys and girls, that he is with those chief priests in the temple at this early hour.

"I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood."

Do you hear that? ... He says "innocent blood". Even the traitor, Judas, thus declares openly that Jesus is innocent. He looks at the chief priests with wild eyes, eyes which beg for comfort and support!

What will they answer? ... Will they try to

save Jesus, in view of this admission? ... Perhaps Judas still hoped they might.

No such thing happens though. With cold, hard faces they listen to his words. No pity fills their hearts and they make no attempt to comfort Judas. They do not cheer him up, but on the contrary their answer is heartless and cruel: "What is that to us? See thou to that."

By that they mean: "That is nothing to do with us. What you have done is your business. You are responsible for your own deeds."

How merciless wasn't it? And to think that they were the guides of the Jewish nation; to think that they were the shepherds and teachers, it does not look much like it. Here is someone in need. Instead of trying to save him, they thrust him roughly and cruelly away.

And then? ... Oh, just look! ... Judas takes the money which they had given him and casts it on the ground before the feet of those eminent

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chief priests. He will not hold it for a moment longer. He stands for a moment and looks around wildly. Then he turns on his heel and hurries away. He can endure it no longer in the temple. He can endure it nowhere any longer.

Jesus is lost and it is his fault. The remorse follows after him everywhere. Nowhere can he find comfort, nowhere can he see relief. He sees again the meek glance of his Master, he hears again the words: "Friend, wherefore art thou here?" He shudders at these thoughts. He trembles as though he has a fever.

Look, there he rushes outside. He runs up a hill. He can no longer bear the gnawing voice of his awakened conscience. In the depth of despair he hangs himself. He seeks forgetfulness in death!

Yet, how it came about we do not know, but he crashes down to the ground, and there on the hard rocks he bursts asunder. Did the rope on which he hung himself break or slip undone? We do not know, but we do know that his intestines gushed out upon the earth.

What a terrible end, wasn't it? ... He expected to find oblivion, but he was mistaken, for after his despairing deed he was summoned before God's fearful judgment seat to give an account of his actions. Oh, boys and girls, we shudder as we think upon the fearful end of the traitor. For him it became eternal night.

But ... he was responsible for his evil deeds. He had betrayed his Master INTENTIONALLY. He was warned more than once. He would not listen however to that friendly voice. He went on in blind hatred. Against his better judgment he had wanted to vent his hatred.

For us too this is a solemn warning. Pray God to preserve you from self destruction, for there is no hope for such.

Matthew 27 vv 6-10

Acts 1 vv 18 and 19

The chief priests in the temple looked upon him in amazement. They looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders in contempt.

They gather up the money which had been cast at their feet on the ground. They stand together for a moment undecided. Yes, whatever should they do with that money. It was no use putting it in the treasure chest of the temple, for it is the price of blood. Do you know what they will do? ...

They will buy a field with it. It sometimes happens that a stranger dies in Jerusalem. Well then, from now on they will bury these strangers in that piece of land. They will make it into a cemetery.

Since the field is bought with the blood-money of Judas, the Jews call that field AKELDAMA. That means "The field of blood".

They do not realise however that in this way is fulfilled what the prophet Zechariah had already foretold. Do you want to know what Zechariah actually said? ... Well, for once I am not going to tell you. You look it up for yourselves and read it. You can find it in Zechariah 11 vv 12 and 13. Make sure you do!

Word for word, everything which had been foretold regarding Jesus was fulfilled.