

Call to Obedience
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

WE ALL NEED A JUDAS

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.—Matthew 10:1-4 And while he yet spake ... he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.—Luke 22:47.

In these two passages we have both the beginning and the end of Judas' ministry. Our first picture of him is rather uneventful. He like the other 11 was chosen and sent out to preach, to heal and to cast out demons. Our later picture of him is eventful. Here he gave Jesus a kiss that started a chain reaction culminating in the King of kings' death on the cross.

Now, here is the rather startling truth: **as Jesus needed a Judas, so do you.** Remember His words, "*as the father hath sent me, so send I you*" (John 20:21). That includes a Judas, does it not? Or: "*the disciple is not above his master, but it is enough for the servant to be as his master*" (Matt. 10:24, 25). What He had to put up with, you have to put up with. Now, I do not mean by "Judas" somebody who is about to split the church. I'm talking about something personal, about somebody who has the potential to get under your skin, to make things very difficult, somebody who might just nail you to the cross, somebody who has the potential to destroy your ministry, your reputation, etc. You know what (or who) I mean.

So as you need a Peter in your life, a John, a James, a Matthew, an Aquila and Priscilla, you also need a Judas. We can't get by with just eating dessert; we also need to eat the broccoli. You can't have only sunshine all the time; you also need the rain. When Paul said that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22), I am sure he had a Judas in mind as well. Let's face it, just as Jesus could not fulfill His mission without Judas, neither can you without your Judas. Every true man of God will for part of his life (or most of his life) have a Judas.

Of course, your Judas will not be a carbon copy of Jesus' Judas. Jesus' Judas does not fit you. As God created one for Jesus, He has created one for you alone. Don't worry about how to find the right one, Jesus will find him for you. He found one for Moses – his name was Aaron, who made a golden calf (Ex. 32) and destroyed nearly everything that Moses had built up. God had one for Elijah—Gehazi, who was turned into

a leper (2 Kings 5). He had several for Paul, like Alexander the coppersmith for example (2 Tim. 4).

Now one reason for a Judas is so that you can find out *where* you are and *who* you are. We don't know ourselves without a Judas. Through a Judas we find out which one of the three types of men we are. Paul said we are either unconverted sinners, carnal Christians or spiritual Christians. There is a *natural* man, there is a *carnal man* and a *spiritual man* (1 Cor. 2:14, 3:3, and 2:15). John also brings out the three types of men in the book of the Revelation: there is a hot man, a lukewarm man and a cold man (3:16). The natural man is cold, because he has never been born again. He has never had any "heat." All God's children are born hot, none is born lukewarm. The carnal man is one who has been born again, and *he has tasted of the heavenly gift and has once been a partaker of the Holy Spirit*, (Heb. 6:4) but he has cooled off through disobedience and neglect. He is mentioned in the Parable of the Sower as the one who *has become unfruitful* (Matt.13:22).

Now that we understand the three types of men, we are ready for the Judas Test. If you pray, "Lord, crucify my Judas," then you are either cold or lukewarm, either unconverted or a backslider. But if you pray for the Judas to crucify you, you are spiritual or hot. Now you know where you are. That is good even if our discovery is discouraging - because we can never get to our destination until we first know where we are! So the natural man runs from the cross, but the spiritual man runs toward it. He takes up the cross, he embraces the cross. He says with Paul, "*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world* (Gal. 6:4). Jesus did not say, "crucify him or them" but "crucify Me."

The cross is our life. It is our way to glory. You can't get to the throne of God any other way but by the cross. So stop crucifying your Judas. For you to get to the cross your Judas may have to destroy everything that you've ever built up, he may be allowed to take away everything you once cherished so that you will come back to your first Love (Jesus) and never leave Him. In the end it does not matter so much what you've done but who you are. On Judgment Day character counts more than accomplishments. You have to come clean. You must have on that white robe of righteousness.

So, Jesus realized that He needed a Judas to fulfill His mission. He needed the right one that God had predestined for Him hundreds of years ago. Psalm 41:9 says, "*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*" Jesus prayed all night to get this man. Are you praying to get your Judas?

And here is where the wonder of wonders begins: **from day one, although Jesus knew what was in Judas, He never treated him as being less spiritual than the rest of the Eleven.** Now add to this wonder this mystery: as Judas got his way so also did Jesus! Judas got his money and Jesus got His cross. Who was the real winner?

Do you treat your Judas as Jesus treated His? When church is over do you take another exit from the building to avoid your Judas? Do you have to sit at another table at a church picnic? Jesus fellowshiped with His Judas the same way He fellowshiped with the other apostles. He ate with him and He slept with him for three years. And during

those three years Jesus never made a single derogatory remark about Judas being less than anyone else, by using a phrase like this: He's a wonderful man of God but....

Do you know that when you "but" somebody you destroy the good you just said about him? Jesus never uses a "but" with any of His children. I feel safe with Jesus, but am I safe with you? How many people in your church are you safe with when it comes to the "but" word? In the world we need to know all the facts much of the time. There you can use the "but" word. But Jesus said, "*my kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36). You are not called to tell all you know, for *love covers a multitude of sins* (1 Pet. 4:8 Amp.). What would it be like if Jesus spilled out everything negative He knows about you and posted it on the church bulletin board? Would you feel safe with Him? Jesus never violated the second commandment of love which is "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matt. 22:39). Any time we criticize anybody or find fault with any person we violate this second law and we are cut off from fellowship with God. We are in darkness. Yes, your Judas will test you, he will reveal who you are. Of course, you're likely to be a Judas to somebody as well. Keep that in mind. I have enough faults and weaknesses that I do not need to talk about anybody else's faults. How about you? Let us pray one for another. Let us love one another without preconditions. Let us esteem one another higher than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

Jesus washed Judas's feet! To wash someone's feet, you have to go down low and some of the dirt and smell that is on them will get on you. Can you do this to your Judas? John the apostle said that Jesus "*loved them to the end*" (John 13:1). How far is the end? Did *them* include Judas? The most revealing truth about how Jesus protected Judas' reputation comes from the Lord's supper. Jesus said that one of them would betray him (Mark 14:19). Had Jesus made just one negative comment about Judas in their three years together, all fingers would have been pointed at him. But each apostle pointed his finger towards his own heart asking: *is it I?*

Friend, Jesus told the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. In this context Judas was a tare – a weed that imitates wheat. Jesus could have rooted him out at once, but no, He let him grow up with the others until the time of harvest for the sickle of judgment to remove him to his own reward. Let us be as careful as our Master was when it comes to our Judas. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus. As we do so we shall become as He is.

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