



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 13:18-30

“The Departure of Judas”

TRANSCRIPT

[AUDIO BEGINS]...13 for the second of our series of studies in the Upper Room Discourse. The Lord’s ministry of foot washing was designed to inculcate humility in the disciples, and in Peter’s case at least it surely worked. Later, many years later, Peter was writing the 1st Epistle and in the 1st Epistle in the 5th chapter, in the 5th verse, he said, “Ye younger men, likewise be subject to your elders, and all of you cloth yourselves with humility toward one another.” Now that could be rendered, “Put on the apron of humility.” And the term that Peter uses is a term that suggests that he got the idea of being clothed with humility, or putting on the apron of humility, from the illustration of the Lord Jesus, laying aside his garments, taking up the linen towel and washing the disciples’ feet.

Now we also notice, however, in the 13th chapter that the work of the Lord Jesus did not work on Judas. Judas was a man who experienced, evidently, the same ministry that Peter did but in Judas’s case it did not have its proper effect. In some ways, this particular section that we are looking at is a section that has to do with Judas. He is the principal character in verses 18 through 30 aside, of course, from our Lord.

If you have ever bought diamonds, I’ve not bought many I grant, if you have ever bought diamonds and I haven’t bought any in years and years, you may remember that at

least in the old days when they brought out their diamonds they usually put the diamonds on a piece of black velvet because diamonds show up that much better when they are seen against the background of black velvet. In other words, the beauty of the diamonds is accentuated thereby. I think in the case of this particular chapter we have the Lord Jesus as the diamond but the ministry of the Lord Jesus is seen against the black velvet of the treachery and sin and apostasy of Judas Iscariot. And so we are looking at the background of black velvet when we look at what John has to say about Judas.

One of the strange things about this passage is something that I was lecturing on just a few weeks ago in Toronto, Ontario. And it is the fact that in the 13th chapter in the 18th verse the Lord Jesus refers to a passage in the Old Testament and says that it has to do with Judas. We read, “I do not speak of all of you I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He who eats my bread has lifted his heel against me.”

Now he says that that passage is fulfilled in this particular occasion and we know from this passage that it has to do with Judas, and so what he has done here is to turn to Psalm 41 in the Old Testament and say that that Psalm had to do with Judas. That raises a lot of interesting questions. I remember so many years ago when I first came across one of the outstanding psalms of imprecation, the 109th Psalm. And in looking up parallel passages in the New Testament was startled to discover that it was said that that Psalm had to do with Judas in the first chapter of the Book of Acts. Peter cites that Psalm in the passage dealing with the selection of a man to take Judas’s place. He cites specifically from Psalm 109 and also Psalm 69, and both of these are imprecatory psalms. That is, psalms in which the psalmist utters very strong curses against the enemies of God.

Now Peter cites both of those psalms and he says that the Holy Spirit spoke concerning Judas in them. Now I had always thought of Judas as being a rather unfortunate kind of person. I thought he was caught in the web of circumstances over which he did not have a great deal of control and I must confess up until that time, at

least, I felt a little sorry for Judas. I saw these passages that had to do with him, the terrible things that were said about him, and I felt a little sorry for him. So that caused me to do a little bit of study in the life of Judas in order to find out what it was about Judas that caused the psalmist and our Lord to agree that those psalms of imprecation had to do with him. And I learned a great deal about the man Judas. Some of the things will appear to night in the message as we discuss this particular passage but it is a striking passage in that this passage in the Old Testament is said to have to do with Judas.

So now let's look at a few of the verses and I want to say a little bit more about this. But let me read verses 18 through 20 in which we have the Lord's modification of the evaluation of the disciples. In verse 18 he says,

“I do not speak of all of you I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He who eats my bread has lifted his heel against me. From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me. I do not speak of all of you; I know the ones I have chosen, but that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

Did the Lord Jesus err when he chose Judas to be one of the apostles? Did he make a mistake? Because this says, “That the Scripture might be fulfilled, He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” Well no, of course, we know the Lord Jesus did not blunder. You will notice that in the context of the New Testament when the apostle's choice is referred to, it is said, “Just immediately preceding the selection of the twelve that he went up on a mountain and he prayed all night.” Now the Lord Jesus would not make a mistake because he is the Son of God and impeccable. He cannot sin. But added to that is the fact that as the human Son he went up on the mountain and he prayed all

night. So we have his divine personality, his impeccability, he prayed all night, it cannot be that he has erred in the selection of Judas as one of the apostles.

Scholem Asch, a well-known Jewish man wrote a book called *The Nazarene*. In it he presents an interpretation of Judas, which some liberal theologians have also picked up, and I think it illustrates the inability of the natural man to understand the word of God. To some extent, based on this particular chapter, John chapter 13, Scholem Asch presents Judas as the only one of the disciples who understood that in the purpose of God, Jesus must die. The rest of the apostles, he thinks, were blind; they did not understand. But Judas did understand. He understood that the Lord Jesus was going to die.

So Jesus chose Judas to accomplish this objective by delivering him into the hands of his enemies, says Scholem Asch. And Judas, therefore, in reality fulfilled the will of God by what he did. Now that does illustrate the fact that there are quirks in human nature that beautifully present the truth that men are blind.

One thing we can say right at the beginning is this, that the fact that Judas was chosen by the Lord Jesus as one of the apostles. Think of it, Judas Iscariot, apostle of Jesus Christ, that was his title. It does illustrate the fact that evil penetrates even to the inner circle of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that in a local church, for example, evil may exist in the inner circle where there is a true testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should not think that it is impossible for an elder to be an apostate. We should not think it is impossible for a deacon to be an apostate. We should not think it's impossible for a Sunday school teacher to be an apostate. Well, I'm not inviting you to be suspicious of all of the elders and deacons and Sunday school teachers and our Christian friends in Believers Chapel, but do not be so gullible as to think that it is impossible for a person to penetrate into the inner most circles of the friends and companions of the Lord Jesus as an apostate. That is true of Judas.

Now it is rather striking that the Lord Jesus says that the Scripture is fulfilled. Now if you turn back to Psalm 41 -- we don't have time to do that I suggest, incidentally, that you do it in your spare time -- you will discover that that is a psalm in which Judas's name is not mentioned. His name is not there. And yet the Lord Jesus says that Scripture is fulfilled in Judas's treachery. Now the Psalm has to do with David and the Psalm has to do, evidently, with someone who acted treacherously toward David. Now who was the person who acted treacherously toward David? Well one of the persons was a man by the name of Ahithophel, do you remember Ahithophel. Well Ahithophel was actually a counselor of David. He was one who stood for Absalom and really was on Absalom's side, and Absalom's rebellion against David. But he gave counsel to David himself. But finally Ahithophel recognized that Absalom's rebellion was going to fail and therefore he left, and do you remember what happened to Ahithophel? Well, he committed suicide. Do you remember specifically how he committed suicide? He hanged himself. Isn't that interesting? Here is David, here is his counselor by the name of Ahithophel, very close to him in the inner circle of the king and yet he turns against the king as a traitor, as an apostate from the truth of God. And then, seeing the way things were going, he commits suicide by hanging himself. Do you see any parallels?

Well now, let me ask you this question, how does David relate to the Lord Jesus Christ? Well David was the king of Israel, wasn't he? As a matter of fact, the Old Testament makes it very plain that David was what we call a type of Jesus Christ. He is the messianic - he's the type of the messianic king. He is the king of Israel and David is the type of the one who is to be the messianic king. He has his experiences or experiences of rejection and acceptance just as the messianic king will ultimately be when he comes.

Now is it not a reasonable thing that in the light of the fact that David is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ that David's enemy should be also illustrative of the enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ? It's very reasonable. And in fact, when Peter speaks in the 1st chapter

in the Book of Acts and says that those passages have to do with Judas, where Judas's name is not mentioned in the Old Testament in those psalms that have to do with David, it's clear that Peter has learned his hermeneutics from the Lord Jesus. And so the Lord Jesus looks at the 41st psalm and reads there, “He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me,” and sees in Judas's treachery toward him the fulfillment, the anti-type of an Ahithophel in the Old Testament who did just that against his king, King David.

It's a rather striking illustration of the way in which the Lord Jesus handles the word of God and it shows you the depth of understanding that he and then that the apostles ultimately developed. They read the Bible as it was in truth the word of God and consequently they thought deeply about it. They sensed these great hermeneutical principles and consequently the Bible became an open book to them. One of the reasons that we don't find the Bible easy to understand is that we don't ponder it as we should and learn the principles by which it should be interpreted.

Now we read in verse 19, the Lord Jesus goes on and says, “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he.” So he lets them know in order to encourage them what is going to happen so that they will sense that he really is the messiah when the things come to pass that he prophesied.

Will you turn now to the plain declaration of the betrayal in verse 21, “When Jesus had said this he became troubled in spirit and testified and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray me.” I've often thought that this is probably very similar to the kind of feeling that you get when you are reading a murder mystery or at least seeing an old movie of one in which almost everybody in the film is a suspect is a possible perpetrator of the crime. And near the end of the movie the detective who is going to solve it will ask everyone to come into the living room. And as you look around you see all of the suspects, they're all there. And then the detective stands up and says something

like this, “The murderer is in this room.” Now that is very much the way the Lord Jesus speaks here when he says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray me.”

Now notice the response. In the case of the disciples there’s great perplexity, the disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one he was speaking. Isn’t that interesting? It’s a tremendous revelation of the love that the twelve had for one another. They don’t suspect one another. In fact, they look around, perplexed that the very idea could be discussed. I think that is revelatory of the attitude that they had toward their brethren. You’ll notice that they do not think, “Ah, I was suspicious of John from the beginning,” or one of them will say, “I thought it might be Thomas, ever since he did such and such to me,” but rather, instead they are perplexed and then they start saying as the gospel accounts make very plain, they went round the circle, “Lord, it isn’t I, is it?” In other words they were more suspicious of themselves than they were of the others in the group, isn’t that interesting? They sensed their own weakness so much that they turned and asked, “Lord, it is not I, is it?” They went around the circle and the striking thing also about it, not to have brought out in this particular passage but in one of the other gospel accounts, is that when it came around to Judas he said, “It isn’t I, is it master?” They say Lord, he says master.

There is a text that Paul uses in 1st Corinthians chapter 12 in which he says, “No man calls Jesus Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.” That’s an interesting text because it tells us that to truly call the Lord Jesus Christ Lord, now he doesn’t mean just to have the name on your lips, but to truly call him Lord, get down on your knees and speak truly, genuinely to him, “Lord,” you can only do that by the Holy Spirit, that’s very important and very interesting, and it also illustrates too that there is no spiritual activity possible apart from a previous working of the Holy Spirit. “No man calls Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.” When we say constantly in Believers Chapel men are unable of themselves to turn to the Lord, you cannot truly call Jesus Lord apart from the enablement of the Holy

Spirit because we are unable to do spiritual good; they of them that are in the flesh cannot please God.

So the disciples, they look within. They know something about the wickedness of their own heart. Now let's read on, the disciples began looking at one another at a loss to know of which one he was speaking. There was reclining on Jesus' breast one of his disciples whom Jesus loved, that we know to be John, the author of this particular book, “Simon Peter, therefore, gestured to him and said to him, Tell us who it is of whom he is speaking? He leaning back thus on Jesus' breast said to him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus, therefore, answered, This is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him. So when he had dipped the morsel he took it and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.”

In the case of the disciples they were, of course, perplexed but one disciple was curious. Now Peter was evidently sitting across the table from the Lord Jesus, the table was in the form of a horseshoe. The guest of honor sat on the second seat on one side of the horseshoe, let's see if we can make sense out of this. Most of you know this, but the table would be like this, the place of honor would be here, that would be the second seat. There would be one person here and then, of course, on the other side would be Peter. Now the Lord Jesus is sitting here, John was leaning on his breast because they are all reclining on their left side, so John's head is upon the breast of our Lord. This is the place for the guest of honor, that was Judas. It is only because Judas is here that we are able to understand how Judas is able to ask, “Master, is it I?” and the Lord Jesus answers him, “You have said,” and the others not clearly hear what was said. Someone has said, “If Peter heard it Judas would never have left the room alive.” [Laughter] It may well be so, that he did not hear it. And when Judas got up to leave they thought, of course, he was going to buy something for the poor.

So here is the Lord Jesus, John is leaning on his breast and Peter across the way. So Peter is curious. There's a kind of unhappy tension in the room but Peter acted characteristically. Isn't it interesting, too, that the future pope [laughter] approaches the Lord Jesus through John, through a mediator [laughter]. I just throw that out free of charge, nothing to worry about there [laughter]. Now in verse 26 the Lord Jesus replies, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” It was the custom for the guest of honor - for the master of ceremonies, the one who was holding the feast, in this case the Lord Jesus, he was what was called the pater familias, that is the “father of the family”, and of course in the Passover service when the time came to expound the significance of the Passover it was the Lord Jesus who gave the sermon at the table the last Passover, I would love to have heard it. But it was customary for the one who was in charge of the meal to reach into the common pot, which would be out here on the table, and with a sop, a little piece of bread, he would reach down into the common pot and take out the choicest piece of meat and then he would hand it to the guest of honor to begin this part of the Passover supper.

Now Judas is in the place of the guest of honor and so it is to Judas that the sop is going to go. It's almost as if when our Lord Jesus handed it to him it was a final appeal to Judas to turn aside from the scheme that he had intended to perform. Well we read on, now, in verse 27, “And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus, therefore, said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” So Judas, instead of responding to the giving of the sop to him by the Lord Jesus rather turns and is leaving because Satan has entered into him. Instead of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ he receives Satan. He prefers money to our Lord Jesus Christ, he prefers sin to salvation, and of course his actions will ultimately lead him to experience the agonies of eternal hell fire rather than the bliss of heaven in the presence of God.

Now the Lord Jesus speaks to Judas in verse 27 as he leaves and says to him, “What you do, do quickly.” In other words, he tells Judas to finish his work, “I'm ready to

finish mine, you do your work. What you do, do quickly.” Now isn’t that a striking statement, and I want to reflect upon it just a moment. “What you do, do quickly.” I suggest to you that first of all this is the voice of despairing love abandoning the conflict with Judas. We read, “Jesus, therefore, said to him,” after Satan has entered into him. Here is, from the human standpoint, our Lord abandons the attempt to appeal to Judas, “What you do, do quickly.” So it is the voice of despairing love abandoning the struggle over the soul of Judas. There does come a time, you see, when all of the activities of God are evidently rejected by men and there is nothing left but retribution. Now we must recognize that doctrine in the word of God.

The second thing that we notice about this is that it is a voice of strangely blended majesty and humiliation. When we think of the last supper and what is going to happen we tend to think of the Lord Jesus as the victim and Judas, outwardly at least, as belonging to those who were victors because were not they the ones who were really responsible for our Lord’s death? But here, the victim commands the apparent victim, “What you do, do quickly.” Isn’t that strikingly ironic? Every Judas is ultimately the servant of the one who is betrayed and Judas, betraying the Lord Jesus, carries out the commands of the one that he is going to hand over into the hands of the Jews.

You know, when you read the gospels there is something that comes through to every sympathetic reader that I must say something about. In the gospels -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John -- we have two aspects of our Lord Jesus that are woven together in such a marvelous way that it could only be done by divine inspiration. It is the combination of utter lowliness and on the other hand, transcendent loftiness. Did you ever think of how strong an argument this combination is for the truthfulness of the word of God and the historical veracity of these accounts in the gospels? Here we have on the one hand one who is called the Son of God, he’s called the Lord, he’s sovereign, he’s supreme, and on the other hand he is presented in the most lowly fashions. The Son of man hath not where to lay his head, he’s the servant of men. He gets up from the table

here, lays aside his garments, takes a towel and washes the disciples' feet. Utter humility and humiliation in circumstance; majestic, sovereignty and elevation above all circumstances: and these two threads of the character of the Lord Jesus are woven together in such beautiful harmony that you have to think about it to distinguish them.

Now I want you to know that to do this would be a literary task beyond the capacity of any human author. A Shakespeare could not possibly have done it, an Escalus could not possibly have done it. None of the great men of literature could have done what these simple men, the apostles, have done. And one must ask the question, how is it possible that these, some of them uneducated men, certainly not [unintelligible] ignorant men, they were very intelligent men, but they were uneducated men in the sense that they had not been to the schools. How was it that these uneducated men were able to do it? Well it's really very simple, they didn't invent anything. They acted as reporters. They saw our Lord and they observed him in the things that he did, the things that he said, and they acted just like reporters; they put down on paper what they saw and heard and the transcendent sovereignty and the utter lowliness were beautifully combined in their rankings because they saw them in our Lord Jesus in his personal life. So they just communicated them to us as reporters, they didn't invent anything and we shouldn't think of them as great authors. It was our Lord who combined within himself all of these things.

So we have the voice of strangely blended majesty and humiliation, and finally we have the voice of the willing sacrifice because he says to Judas, “Judas, what you do, do quickly, bind the sacrifice with cords to the altar,” and Judas goes out in order to prepare our Lord Jesus to become the sacrificial lamb. Now we read in verse 30, “And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately and it was night.”

Now we've been trying to stress that our Lord Jesus was really in control of things here, but notice the active voice, “And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately.” That's active, Judas went out, it was voluntary self-excommunication, if we

may put it that way. We do not read the Lord Jesus forced him out, but he went out. Why did he go out? Well, of course, Judas was not one in spirit with the eleven. He was not really of them. Do you remember what John says in 1st John chapter 2, in verse 19, he says, “They went out from us because they were not of us.” If they had been of us they would have continued with us.” In other words the person who is truly in faith with the Lord Jesus Christ he will persevere in the faith. But a person leaves because he is not of us. If they had been of us they would have continued with us.

Judas goes out because he is not one with the apostles in the possession of the new life. So he went out and John adds, and I think this is so interesting too, so typical of the Gospel of John, “And it was night.” John occasionally adds these notes back in the 1st chapter, in the 39th verse, when he’s describing the time when he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal savior, he adds, “And it was the tenth hour.” Because he remembered, he was giving his personal testimony, he remembered all about that, and so he added that little note and here he says as Judas left that little company of people who were in the upper room in the midst of the light and went out of that room he went on into darkness. And I do want to say to you, my dear Christian friends, and some who may not be Christians, that when a man leaves the presence of the Lord Jesus he does go out into darkness. And in the case of Judas, the man who made great professions, when he left the presence of the Lord Jesus he went out into darkness and so far as the Scripture is concerned, the Scripture seems to be rather plain on this, Judas ultimately shall find himself in the blackness of darkness forever. And John, writing about this many years afterwards, senses how significant it is that as he saw that figure of Judas leaving the light of the upper room he went out into darkness, so symbolic of his own spiritual destiny. Later on in the Book of Acts it is stated that he went to his own place, Judas became one of those wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever as Jude puts it. Augustine, who had an eye for this kind of thing, also said, [Latin indistinct], he was, it was, however, night and he himself who went out was

night and so he identifies that darkness outside with the darkness of the soul of Judas who left the presence of the Lord Jesus.

I know that when we think about these incidents we are sometimes inclined to ask the question, “How could Judas desert Jesus Christ?” Three years in the presence of the Lord, how is it possible for a person who had heard him preach all of those wonderful sermons, had known him, had seen him, and furthermore had been the recipient of all of the love of God in Christ. There are people, you know, who think that you come to know Christ providing you come to know the love of God. And they really think, too, that it is possible to win people through love and that if you truly love they are bound to come. That, of course, is not biblical. I do not suggest that you do not love those to whom you are sent, you should. But people are converted not through love but through the gospel. And Judas had had an experience of the love of God in Jesus Christ, he had known his sermons, he had heard him preach, he had company with him, he had no doubt had slept many times with him out on Judean hills, how could Judas desert Christ? How could Adam desert the Lord God in the Garden of Eden? It's because the heart of man is wicked, that's how. There is none but seeketh after God know not one. There is none that doeth good do not one. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. The mind of flesh is enmity of graced God. It cannot know God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are stupidity to him, neither can he know them, they are spiritually discerned.

My dear friend, the problem is not how Judas could desert Christ, the problem is how you could come to Christ, that's the problem. And the Scriptures make it plain; you come only because you are the recipient of efficacious grace, isn't that great? Isn't it great? Just think, God has put his hand upon you and through the Holy Spirit he has brought you to himself, now that's enough to make the faintest weep with joy.

Well let me close with just a comment or two. The Bible says Judas went to his own place. The Son of man goeth as it is written concerning him,” Jesus said, “but woe

to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.” Judas went to his own place, separating himself from the Lord Jesus Christ, he separated himself from all true society of men. There’s no fellowship in hell and that is where Judas shall ultimately find himself. What is the lesson of Judas Iscariot? Well, one of the lessons is that the extreme punishment meted out to Judas is because of the extreme privilege that Judas had; he had accompanied with the Lord Jesus for three years. And Paul speaks about him in 1st Timothy chapter 6, that’s one of the lessons, of course. There’s also a warning in this and the warning is simply that the same thing that happened to Judas may happen to someone here today, tonight. As far as privileges are concerned we have greater privileges than Judas. We have a friendly government, we have the Bible, the completed revelation. We have teachers of the word of God, we’ve seen Christian experience down through the years, our responsibilities are greater than Judas’s. And our privileges are greater than Judas’s and, of course, that’s a tremendous lesson for us. But it seems to me that the greatest lesson of the story of Judas, the greatest message is bound up with the fact that Judas was one who was in the inner circle of the Lord Jesus.

Do you know that the story of Judas in the Bible, if that is true and it certainly seems to be true, the story of Judas is a message not for individuals outside the church, it’s a message for those who are in the professing Christian church. It’s a message to us. It’s a message to us here. It’s a message to us who meet on Sunday. It’s a message to all who have made a profession of faith in Christ who have identified themselves with him outwardly. Judas is a message for insiders, not outsiders. It’s a message of the wickedness of the human heart and what a great profession people can make when it really is not real at all.

I trust that tonight, in this audience, there are not any here who have had the experience that Judas has had, a kind of experience of being identified with the profession of the Lord Jesus Christ as savior, identification with other Christians but yet no real vital, heart relationship to the Lord Jesus. If that should happen to be your status let

me remind you that according to the word of God the Lord Jesus has offered the once and for all sacrifice through which we may have life, through which we may truly receive a relationship with him that stays, enabling us to get down upon our knees and truly call him Lord and then for those of us who are believers may God help us to worship him in the way in which he should be worshiped because of what he's done for us.

Next week we come to a section of the Upper Room Discourse which is extremely important; it's The New Commandment. How fitting, incidentally, that it should be given after Judas leaves. We'll talk about that next Wednesday night, the Lord willing. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God and we thank Thee for the lessons that do come home to us. We recognize, Lord, how important it is that we have a true relationship to Thee. Deliver us from a profession of faith that is not real. May the message of Judas truly speak to us. We thank Thee and praise Thee for him who loved us and released us from our sins. We thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit by which we have come to call him Lord...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]