

# EXECUTED

## TO SUPPRESS HIS MESSAGE



Volume 9

*The Promise to Forgive Judas*

D. A. Taylor

# **Executed to Suppress His Message**

## ***Volume 9: The Promise to Forgive Judas***

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Scripture quotations from the New American Standard Bible (NASB), unless otherwise noted.

Textual emphasis by the author.

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## **Introduction**

Welcome to Volume 9 of Executed to Suppress His Message.

In Volume 1 we saw how money-funded, institutionalized religions suppress the teachings of Jesus Christ, so they can promote their own particular doctrines and beliefs. And now with this volume, we continue to address these suppressed teachings.

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The Bible tells us that God is “holy.” So if we want to go to heaven and dwell with God, we must overcome sin and learn to conduct our lives in a holy manner. But Christian churches have taken this biblical instruction to an unreasonable extreme. Churches tell us that God is angry, jealous and even wrathful toward those who sin. Furthermore, it is said that God will have nothing to do with us and will eventually send us to Hell, unless we accept Christ’s sacrifice and dedicate our lives to overcoming our human nature.

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## 1 — Salvation Promised to All Sinners

Most Christians believe that God waits ready to judge and condemn each of us to eternal torment in Hell, unless we can perform the remarkable achievement of transforming our human nature such that we no longer sin. And this belief has a profound impact on our state of mind and personal well-being, because as long as we are flesh-and-blood human beings, we will never stop sinning.

So Christian preachers try to encourage us, by reminding how God has provided a sacrifice to cover our sins. But after sharing this encouraging information, they will always mention how we cannot rely on Christ's sacrifice forever. Eventually, God will lose patience with our inability to overcome — and then He will condemn us to Hell.

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### But Jesus Had A Different Message

2,000 years ago, Jesus introduced a religion based on unlimited reconciliation between sinful men and women and their God. Regardless of how evil a person had been, they could always repent and build an intimate personal relationship with their Creator. Furthermore, Jesus taught that God was *eager* for such relationships. And this is why early Christians believed and trusted in a gracious, kind, and loving God — a God who is unwilling that any should perish ([II Peter 3:9](#)).

But the Scriptures that explain how God forgives the most evil of sinners are never shared by modern preachers. Instead, they tell us that God is so dedicated to punishing those who sin, that He even condemns those who never had a chance to hear the gospel.

*Christian churches have suppressed the teachings of Christ, so they can preach about a fictitious God of judgment and punishment.*

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## 2 — Christianity Has Changed

Early Christians never heard about the harsh, demanding and punishing God depicted by modern Christianity. Instead, they worshiped a loving and sacrificing Creator: one who empowered Christians to change their lives into dynamos of spiritual energy.

1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians viewed Christ's Church as a spiritual family — a global fellowship of equal brethren who referred to each other as brothers and sisters. Early Christians shared meals together. They prayed, studied, entertained, and relaxed together. And their fellowship took place “day by day,” not just once a week at church ([Acts 2:44-47](#)).

Yet even before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the apostle John was writing about how the church was degenerating into disagreeing sects. The congregation at Ephesus had lost its first love; while those assembling at Pergamos were following the false doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. John then described how the brethren at Thyatira were following a false prophet named Jezebel, while the Lord had pronounced the congregation at Sardis “spiritually dead.” Finally, the brethren in Laodicea were so spiritually lukewarm, that Jesus was ready to spit them out of His mouth! (see [Revelation 2:1-29 through 3:1-22](#))

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### The “Spiritual Family” Concept Lost

And now after 2,000 years of such spiritual degeneration, Christians have no concept of belonging to a worldwide spiritual family. Instead, modern Christianity is divided into thousands of denominational and non-denominational sects<sup>103</sup>, the members of which have no desire to interact with Christians from other churches. The spiritual energy and family atmosphere displayed by 1st Century Christians is virtually unknown to modern churches.

Of course, modern Christians want to end up in heaven. Yet we modern Christians don't pray very much. And we almost never open our bibles in personal study. Furthermore, we've replaced the family-style fellowship of the early church with a one-hour weekly church service, where we sing a few hymns and have an opening prayer, then listen to a 30 to 45 minute sermon.

And then we're done with our Christian fellowship until next week.

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## The Lost Art of Quality Fellowship

In today's world, "Christian fellowship" is defined as going out to lunch after church or participating in an occasional church activity. But when we contrast such activities with 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians — where the brethren fellowshiped day-by-day and gave of their time, money and property to those who had needs ([Acts 2:44-45](#)) — it becomes painfully obvious that modern Christians have little in common with the intimate spiritual families of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

So why has Christianity degenerated to the point where most fellowship is little more than an occasional "hello" at a weekly church service? Some might suggest that our modern society has become more evil and worldly than it was during the early church. But is that really true? During the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, sexual immorality was rampant throughout the Roman Empire, with homosexuality even practiced between grown men and young boys. And while the Romans allowed Jews to practice their religion in the areas around Jerusalem, most of the Empire worshiped pagan gods and goddesses by executing rituals that included erotic dancing and stripping, along with sexual intercourse with female prostitutes-priests.

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## So What Changed Christianity?

Volume 5 of [Executed to Suppress His Message](#) documents how during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, the Catholic Church took control of Christian doctrine. It was during this period that the doctrine of Hell was introduced.

Hell put an entirely new face on God. Now God was portrayed as a stern, score-keeping judge of our spiritual character — an infinitely powerful being who carefully documents every mistake we have ever made. Furthermore, Catholics claimed that God the Father allowed the creation of a special place of torment and punishment, where the Devil eternally tortures those who have not accepted Christ.

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## Hell Becomes Biblical

In the fourth century, the Catholics set about to create a Bible. And so in CE 383, Pope Damasus commissioned the production of the first Bible,



the Latin Vulgate Version.

During the compilation of this Bible, there were many discussions over which ancient writings should be included. The Emperor Augustine called three synods (councils) on this issue: the Synod of Hippo in CE 393, the Council of Carthage (CE 397), and the Council of Carthage (CE 419). And throughout all of these councils there were many arguments and debates over doctrine.

It was during this period that the clergy introduced the Hell doctrine. This was accomplished by mistranslating 31 occurrences of Hebrew and Greek words into the English word "hell." Words that originally meant grave, pit, the name of a Greek god, and even the proper name of a valley outside of Jerusalem were translated into the English word "Hell".

*And this was how hell became biblical.*

This new Hell doctrine turned Christ's God of infinite love and forgiveness into a God of condemnation and punishment. And then during the Protestant Reformation when many Christians left the Catholic Church, the Protestants brought the doctrine of Hell and the God of condemnation along as part of their theology.

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### Hell Changed God's Nature

Notice how Jesus described God the Father in Matthew 5:44-45 (KJV):

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Jesus asked Christians to love their enemies, bless people who curse them, and do good to those who hate them *because* this is what God the Father does.

But instead introducing a kind and loving God who gave His Son so human beings can overcome their sins and learn to dwell in His eternal kingdom, the Catholics and Protestants promoted a stern and judgmental God who constantly monitors humans so He can keep a

permanent record of all our sins and personal faults.

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### Catholic Abuses Continue

During the Council of Trent (CE 1545-1563), the Catholics finalized their sacrament of penance (or reconciliation). This doctrine states that God will not forgive sin, unless a Christian confesses his or her sins to a Catholic priest.

The Catholics also defined two types of sin: venial and mortal. Venial sins were defined as lesser violations such as impatience, ordinary anger, stealing something cheap or getting slightly drunk. But mortal sins are much more serious in nature. They are generally defined as pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and slothfulness. And most interestingly, unless one has a very good reason for not doing so, it's a mortal sin to not attend the weekly Catholic mass.

The Catholics teach that committing even one mortal sin automatically sentences a Christian to the tortures of Hell. Furthermore, Catholic doctrine states that God will not accept a sinner's prayer for forgiveness. Instead, sin must be forgiven by a Catholic priest. And this requirement to be forgiven by a priest remains operative up until the present time, as this recent statement by Pope John Paul II affirms:

“And on the other hand, it is being undermined by the sometimes widespread idea that one can obtain forgiveness directly from God, even in a habitual way, without approaching the sacrament of reconciliation”<sup>100</sup>.

And when you combine the doctrine of Hell with the Catholic doctrine of penance, it's not hard to understand why Catholics believe that most everyone is going to Hell.

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### Christians Become Scared of God

The Protestant Reformation did away with many Catholic abuses. But abuses by the clergy continued unabated. To this day, many Protestant pastors consider themselves “in charge” of their congregations, with some actually believing they speak and act on God's behalf. Such

preachers think they represent 'the will of God' in matters such as a church member's choice of career, the selection of a mate, their choice of employment, where they choose to live, and even where they attend school. And in some of the stricter denominations, preachers will forbid those who disagree with church doctrine from attending their congregation.

Unfortunately, hundreds of years of such abuse by the clergy has served to convince Christians that God indeed is harsh and demanding — and that a place of eternal punishment and torment seems quite appropriate for such a judgmental God. Notice how one retired Episcopal bishop describes the damage done by the doctrine of Hell and an abusive clergy:

“I don't think Hell exists. I happen to believe in life after death, but I don't think it's got a thing to do with reward and punishment. Religion is always in the control business, and that's something people don't really understand. It's in a guilt-producing control business. And if you have Heaven as a place where you're rewarded for your goodness, and Hell is a place where you're punished for your evil, then you sort of have control of the population. And so they create this fiery place which has quite literally scared the Hell out of a lot of people, throughout Christian history. And it's part of a control tactic.”  
— Bishop John Shelby Spong, Year 2016 ([watch the complete interview](#)).

*Thanks to institutionalized religion, most Christians have never heard about the kind, forgiving and infinitely patient God of love introduced by Jesus Christ — the God who has promised to move heaven and earth in order to bring you, me, and every other human being into His eternal Kingdom.*

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### Discovering the God Jesus Introduced

Using the information recorded in this book, we will cut through hundreds of years of errant Christian doctrine that misrepresents the true nature of God. We will accomplish this by studying one of the most evil families that has ever existed on planet earth. This was a biblical family made up of liars, cheaters, thieves and murderers, with several betraying their own relatives to death. And even though this family knew about the true God, they continually and obstinately refused to obey His commandments.

We will follow this family down through nineteen-hundred years of biblical history, until we end up with a 1<sup>st</sup> Century relative who is universally condemned by Christians, theologians, and biblical scholars. Then we will read Scripture after Scripture, proving that God has always planned to save this evil and unrepentant family, starting with what may be the most condemned individual that has ever lived on planet earth.

*Throughout the New Testament Bible, the Greek word translated into the English “gospel” means “to announce good news.” And as you read through this book, you will come to understand why early Christians were willing to give their lives to share the “good news” of Jesus Christ.*

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### 3 — The Most Evil Family Ever?

Let's begin our study with Genesis 29:35:

And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

Here we read about Judah, the fourth son of the biblical patriarch Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel. In Hebrew, the name Judah means "praised." But as we shall quickly see, this man was far from worthy of his name.

Let's continue the story with Genesis 37:18-20, where Judah and his brothers were conspiring to murder their brother Joseph:

When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"

Because of the favor Jacob had bestowed on his favorite son Joseph, his brothers became extremely jealous. And their solution to this jealousy was to kill their brother.

Now watch how Judah handled this situation:

So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, "*What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.*" And his brothers listened to him (Genesis 37:23-27).

The Hebrew word translated into the English "profit" is used in the Bible only 16 times. It's usually translated "covetousness," but also "dishonest gain" and "lucre" (an Old English word meaning monetary gain).

So Judah, unlike his brothers, was not motivated by anger or jealous passion. Instead, Judah wanted to use the situation to make some money off his brother's bad luck. And this tells us something about Judah's character.

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### More Character Flaws

In Genesis 38:1-2, we find another example of Judah's lack of moral character:

And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.

Judah enjoyed associating with foreigners — and especially foreign women. Here we see how he took a foreign Canaanite wife, even though his great-grandfather Abraham told the family to never marry a Canaanite woman ([Genesis 24:3](#)).

Now continue with Genesis 38:3-10, which tells us about Judah's children:

So she (Shua) conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan. She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him. Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

*But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life.*

Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother.

*But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also.*

At this point in biblical history, the Bible has mentioned few individuals that God has outright killed (the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot's wife). But now God has killed both of Judah's sons!

So what was wrong with these men? When stating that Judah's son Er was "evil", the Bible uses the same Hebrew word with which it condemned the men

of Sodom (see [Genesis 13:13](#)). Various English Bibles translate this word as “wicked exceedingly” and “great sinners”. So it seems that God considered Er’s sins as bad as what was going on in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Then sometime later, God killed Onan. The Bible does not specifically state what Onan did to deserve the death penalty. But if Onan was killed simply because he refused to father Tamar’s child, then why didn’t God kill Judah for seeking out, then having sexual relations with the Canaanite woman and making her his wife? The Canaanites were a wicked, idolatrous people descended from Noah’s grandson Canaan, who was cursed because of he and his father’s sin against Noah ([Genesis 9:20-25](#)) — yet God did nothing to Judah for this transgression.

So there must be more to this story than what is revealed in the Bible. Yet one thing is clear:

*Judah’s sons Er and Onan had some serious character flaws.*

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### Problems with the Third Son

Now let’s consider Judah’s third son Shelah:

Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up”; for he thought, “*I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers.*” So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house ([Genesis 38:11](#)).

In Judah’s culture, it was required that men father children for the widow of a deceased brother. And now that Er and Onan were dead, this responsibility fell to Judah’s third son Shelah. But Judah didn’t want his son to carry out this responsibility, because he feared that God might also kill Shelah!

*Are you beginning to see how dysfunctional this family was?*

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### Tamar Traps Judah

Judah never kept his promise that Shelah would father Tamar’s child. So after a long period of time, Tamar decided to address this matter on her own. The story is found in [Genesis 38:12](#):

Now after a considerable time Shua’s daughter, the wife of Judah, died;

and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite (the Canaanite who introduced Judah to his deceased wife).

After Judah's wife had passed away, he decided to pay another visit to Hirah, his Canaanite friend. But Judah was not looking for a wife; instead, he wanted a Canaanite prostitute:

It was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." So she removed her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.

When Judah saw her, *he thought she was a harlot*, for she had covered her face. So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" He said, therefore, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send it?" He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him (Genesis 38:13-18).

We should consider this story from Tamar's perspective. In Hebrew society, children had the responsibility of providing for their mothers when they were old. Tamar had been legally married to one of Judah's sons. So once her husband died, any remaining brothers had the duty of fathering her child. Having a child was a matter of personal honor to a Hebrew woman. Furthermore, a mother's children had the responsibility of caring for her when she was old.

So Tamar set her will to obtain the child she deserved. And when Judah announced that he was going to Canaan to shear his sheep, everyone must have suspected he might be looking for another woman. We can imagine how one of the older women might have come to Tamar and suggested, "Judah is traveling to Canaan. And I'm sure you know why. So this is your chance to regain your honor."

So Tamar dressed up as a foreign prostitute, then traveled to Timnath, where she caught Judah's eye. Judah took the bait and had sexual relations with her,



thinking she was a foreigner. Then Tamar obtained items of Judah's property, which she could use to prove that he had fathered her child (and since Judah could not recognize his own daughter-in-law while having sexual intercourse with her, there is reason to believe he had consumed a great deal of alcohol).

So consider this man Judah. He hatched a plan to gain money by selling his brother into slavery. Then against his father's wishes, he married a Canaanite woman who gave him three children. Two of these children were killed by God, while Judah worried the third would suffer the same fate. Then when his daughter-in-law Tamar lost her husband, Judah refused to allow his remaining son to father her child. And we must not forget how Judah liked to visit foreign prostitutes.

*Judah was not a very nice man.*

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### Tamar Traps Judah

Let's continue the story with Genesis 38:24, where Judah discovers that Tamar is pregnant, but he does not yet know the child is his:

Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry."

Then Judah said, "*Bring her out and let her be burned!*"

Remember, Judah did not know the Canaanite prostitute was Tamar. So in what might be the greatest hypocrisy recorded in the Bible, he ordered his daughter-in-law to be burned alive for being pregnant outside of wedlock!

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It's obvious that Judah's own sexual misconduct had no affect on his conscience; neither did it limit his ability to condemn others who were guilty of the same sin. And later in this story, we will see how Judah's moral hypocrisy became a multi-generational family trait.

Now let's continue with Genesis 38:25-26, where we find an amazing conclusion to this story:

It was while she (Tamar) was being brought out (to be burned alive) that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet

ring and cords and staff are these?”

Judah recognized them, and said, “She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not have relations with her again.

Here we find a most interesting development. When Judah was faced with his wrongdoing, he did not deny or make excuses for his sins. Instead, he admitted his guilt and publicly repented. And later in the story of Judah’s family, we will see how this ability to admit wrongdoing and repent also ended up being a multi-generational family trait.

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## 4 — The Family Throughout History

Judah's family had a long history of morally corrupt offspring who practiced exceedingly sinful behavior. Let's review what some of these people did, so we can understand how evil this family was:

But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel (Joshua 7:1).

Joshua Chapter 6 describes the time when God commanded the Israelites to destroy the City of Jericho. But before the Israelites entered into battle, the Lord specifically commanded that they not take any of Jericho's treasures (Joshua 6:17-19).

Yet one of Judah's descendants, named Achan, violated God's commandment by stealing valuable objects from the city. And numerous Israelites died in battle because of what this man did.



Then a few years later, we find another example of the family's behavior in I Kings 14:21-24:

Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess (another foreign wife).

Judah (the family) did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed. For they also built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim (pagan worship sites) on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree. There were also male cult prostitutes in the land.

They (the family of Judah) did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

The descendants of Judah — the people God rescued from slavery in

Egypt — built pagan altars, idols, and groves. And some of them actually participated in cults based upon homosexuality.

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### Pagan Worship Abounds

Now read II Kings 21:1-7, where the Bible documents how the family's spiritual condition continued to worsen over time:

Manasseh (a descendant of Judah) was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal (the Canaanite god of fertility) and made an Asherah (a worship site for pagan gods), as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

He built (pagan) altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

*He made his son pass through the fire (he burned his sons alive as offerings to pagan gods), practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger.*

Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever.

Manasseh was one of the most evil people who has ever lived on planet earth. Look at how the Bible summarizes his behavior in verse 16:

*Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood **until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another**; besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.*

King Manasseh — a direct descendant of Judah — was a genuine monster!

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## King David — A Descendant of Judah

David was anointed King over Judah, then King over Israel. And in [I Samuel 13:14](#), God called David “a man after His own heart.” David also authored approximately half of the biblical psalms. And many people consider him one of the greatest men of the Bible.

But David was not satisfied with God’s design for marriage. So he married eight wives and kept ten concubines. Wife number eight was called Bathsheba. She had been the wife of Uriah the Hittite — until David ordered him killed in battle. And when a relationship starts out with a man killing his wife’s previous husband, it’s no surprise when the marriage produces little fruit. David and Bathsheba ended up sleeping in different rooms. And over time, they grew so far apart, that Bathsheba had to bow down to David, before she was allowed to ask him a question.

Then in [I Samuel 18:6-7](#), we read how David raised up armies that killed tens-of-thousands of people. And even though he eventually brought unity to the Israelite tribes, David’s family always remained in a ruinous condition.



## King Solomon — A Descendant of Judah

Next we come to King Solomon, who was said to be the wisest man who ever lived. Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon, a wonderful treatise on the joys of a godly marriage. But just as with most of Judah’s descendants, Solomon possessed little in the way of moral integrity.

Here is how the Bible describes Solomon’s relationships with women:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love.

He had *seven hundred* wives, princesses, and *three hundred* concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, *his wives turned his heart away after other gods*; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been (I Kings 11:1-4).

Over a thousand women could not satisfy Solomon's endless lust. So he labored to accumulate vast quantities of silver and gold, with which he constructed a great throne for himself. Solomon also commissioned vast armies, with thousands of horses and chariots equipped with solid gold shields ([I Kings 10:14-27](#)).

And finally after Solomon grew old and tired from attempting to satisfy his endless lusts, he wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, wherein he concluded that life is "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!"

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### The Family Continues It's Evil Behavior

Let's continue with the story of Judah's family, as it moves down through biblical history.

Jeremiah 3:6-11:

Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there." I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, *yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.*"

"Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she (Israel) polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. *Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,*" declares the LORD.

And the LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah."

The Bible documents how Judah's family had absolutely no fear of God. Furthermore, the Lord considered their worship nothing more than a feigned deception.

Now read Jeremiah 11:13-14:

"For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing,

altars to burn incense to Baal (the Canaanite god of fertility).

*"Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster.*

The descendants of Judah were so intensely evil, that God commanded His people to not even pray for them!

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And what you have read here only scratches the surface of Judah's evil. The Bible lists seven other Judean kings who either committed similar evils, or refused to intervene and stop the pagan practices of the people. And yes, there were a few good kings from Judah's family. Josiah and Hezekiah were righteous and praised by God. While the Bible calls Jehoshaphat a good king, even though he allowed the people to continue their evil behavior. But these "better" Jewish kings were few and far between.

Unfortunately for the family of Judah, the sins of the father went much further than the third and the fourth generations ([Exodus 34:6-7](#)).

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## 5 — The New Testament Family

As we move forward into the New Covenant period, Judah's family continues to demonstrate its detestable and abhorrent behavior. At this point in history, the family is known as the "Jews." And they had taken over the Jerusalem temple and controlled most of the religious organizations.

Matthew 23:13-16 relates what Jesus thought of these people:

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites* (there's one of those family traits), because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites*, *because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.*"

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites*, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; *and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell (Greek: Valley of Hinnom) as yourselves.* Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.'"

Almost 2,000 years after Judah sold his brother into slavery, we see the same negative character traits we saw in their distant relatives: hypocrisy, theft, feigned worship and love for money.

Now look at what Jesus said in verses 31-33:

"So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell" [Greek: *Valley of Hinnom*]?

Jesus observed how Judah's family had become progressively worse with each generation. Then He went on to predict how this generation of Jews would be punished for its evil behavior. Here the Greek translated into the English "hell" is the name for the Valley of Hinnom, which is located outside of Jerusalem. And in 70 AD when the Jews rebelled against the Roman Empire, it was in this precise location that the Romans burned most of the Jewish bodies. One defector from the Jewish revolt wrote how the valleys Hinnom and Kidron were filled with



115,880 Jewish corpses<sup>101</sup>. While another 1<sup>st</sup> Century historian estimated that over one million Jews died in this war<sup>102</sup>.

*The descendants of Judah suffered horrible punishments for their wickedness.*

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## 6 —The Most Evil Relative?

Finally, we come to the grand finale of Judah's dysfunctional family: Judas Iscariot — the man who betrayed our Lord and Savior to the Jews.

All around the world, Christians observe customs that condemn Judas as the most evil person that has ever lived. In Latin America, Easter is celebrated by burning an effigy of Judas as punishment for his betrayal of Christ. And in the town of Ermioni, Greece, Christians observe Easter by burning a Judas effigy at sea. While in Mexico, effigies of Judas are subjected to hanging, flogging, and are even exploded with fireworks.

Most Christian scholars agree that Judas was a Jew, being a distant relative of the ancient biblical Judah. They do this for the following reasons:

- 1) After the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered in 930 BCE, only the tribes of Judah (the Jews) and Benjamin were left in the Southern Kingdom around Jerusalem;
- 2) Biblical scholars tell us the surname "Iscariot" is thought to be taken from the Hebrew Ish Kerioth, which means "a man from Kerioth." Kerioth was a town in southern Judah, close to Hebron. And during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century this town was populated by Edomite Jews;
- 3) Modern Bible translations render [John 6:71](#) & [John 13:26](#) as "Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot." Thus Judas' father also had a name suggesting an ancestral line through the Jewish city of Kerioth;
- 4) After Solomon died, Israel and Judah became two warring nations under different kings. And even after the wars ceased, the Israelite and Jewish peoples remained staunch enemies, continuing up until the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Therefore, a non-Jewish Israelite family would have never named their son "Judas," since this is the Greek form of Jacob's errant and troubled son Judah.

And finally, some biblical scholars suggest that Judas might have been the only Jewish apostle, since most of the other apostles came from areas north of Judah, where the other Israelite tribes lived.

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### Who Was Judas Iscariot?

Let's review what we know about Judas:

- a) In [Luke 6:16](#), Judas is labeled a “traitor”;
- b) In [John 12:7-8](#), Judas was rebuked by Christ;
- c) In [John 6:70](#), Jesus called Judas a “devil.” And here the Greek means to slander, be slanderous, or to falsely accuse;
- d) In Matthew 26:24, the Lord said of Judas:  
“... woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born;”
- e) And finally in John 17:12, Jesus said the following about Judas:  
“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.”

Here the Greek translated into the English “perdition” is *ἀπωλεια*, which means *ruin* or *loss*. And failing your Christian calling doesn’t get worse than this.



### What The Apostles Thought of Judas

The apostles had their own problems with Judas. Notice what the apostle John wrote about him:

Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?”

*Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it (John 12:3-6).*

Obviously, John thought very little of Judas.

And then in I [Acts 1:15-20](#), the apostle Peter decided that Judas should be replaced. And all the apostles agreed.



## 7 — Digging A Little Deeper

No one would deny that Judas committed horrible sins — and that he was condemned for those sins. Furthermore, Scripture seems to indicate that Judas was completely lost, having missed out on any chance of salvation.

But if Judas indeed was irrevocably lost, then what about Mark 3:28-29?

“Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

In the original Greek, the word translated into the English “blasphemies” means to *vilify* or *speak of impiously*. But the Scriptures never suggest that Judas was guilty of this particular sin. Furthermore, as an unconverted man who had never received the Holy Spirit, Judas probably didn’t know much about it (especially since the Spirit had not yet been given to Christians).

So did Jesus really mean what He said: that all sins — except one — would be forgiven the sons of men?

And while you’re considering that question, take a look at Matthew 27:3-5:

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, *he felt remorse* and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “*I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.*” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!” And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; *and he went away and hanged himself.*

This is a most interesting passage. Here the Greek translated into the English “felt remorse” is *μεταμέλομαι*. Greek dictionaries define this word as feeling remorse, caring afterwards, changing the mind, and *repenting*.

The American Standard, King James and Revised versions of the Bible all translate this word into the English “repented.” While the English Standard Version states Judas “changed his mind.” And the Common English Version states that Judas was “sorry.”

*So it’s clear that Judas repented of what he did to Jesus.*

And we can be certain that Judas experienced genuine repentance, because he felt so bad, that he went and killed himself. And isn’t repentance one of the character traits of Judas’ family — the same trait we saw in Judah and King

David?

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Now let's return to what we read in Mark 3:28-29, where Jesus said: "Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men ..."

Consider this question: Will everyone who repents of their sins be forgiven? Or did Jesus mean everyone except Judas?

And then, what about Matthew 18:11?

*For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.*

Here the Greek translated into the English "lost" is the same word Jesus used to pronounce Judas "perished" (see [John 17:12](#)).

So did Jesus come to earth to save everyone that is lost? Or did He come to save everyone except Judas?

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### Taking Another Look at Judas Iscariot

Before you decide that this author has jumped the spiritual track, let's consider a few more Scriptures.

First, Luke 6:12-13:

*It was at this time that He (Jesus) went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.*

Jesus communed all night with God the Father before He chose His apostles — and then He chose *Judas* as one of those apostles.

Now look at John 6:64:

*"But there are some of you who do not believe."*

*For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.*

*Jesus chose Judas Iscariot, knowing full well in advance that Judas would betray Him to death.*

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## Why Choose a Betraying Apostle?

So why would Jesus choose Judas as an apostle, knowing in advance that he would betray Him? Some biblical scholars have suggested an “insider” was necessary for the Lord to be betrayed. But there are several reasons why this is probably not true:

- Jesus was a public figure. Thousands upon thousands of people watched Him preach in the Temple and in the streets of Jerusalem. Thus there was no need for an “insider” to identify Jesus;
- Jesus wasn’t hiding from the Jewish authorities;
- Jesus wasn’t dangerous. And He didn’t carry weapons;
- The chief priests had decided to kill Jesus long before they had any contact with Judas.

So why would the religious authorities need Judas to arrest Jesus?

Also consider the following:

- 1) The chief priests never sought help from Judas. Instead, [Matthew 26:14-16](#) tell us that Judas approached the Jewish authorities on his own initiative, offering to betray Jesus.
- 2) Why did Jesus choose a *Jewish* apostle that would betray Him? And keep that question in mind, because it’s key to unraveling the mystery of why the Lord chose Judas as an apostle;
- 3) Why did the prophet Zechariah write about a man accepting 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus, more than 500 years before Judas was born? ([Zechariah 11:12-13](#));
- 4) After His resurrection, Jesus spent at least eight days teaching and visiting with His apostles. And during this time, He and the disciples must have talked about many things. But throughout all these discussions, Jesus never once suggested that Judas should be replaced. Why?

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## 8 — The Destiny of Judas Iscariot

Matthew Chapter 19 describes a time when Jesus and His disciples left the city of Galilee, then traveled out into the country past the Jordan River. A large crowd of people had followed them. So after a period of time, the Lord stopped and talked with these people.

Then when Jesus had finished speaking, most of the people returned home. But a few stayed with Jesus and the disciples. One of these was a young man who asked Jesus what he should do to obtain eternal life. The Lord responded by telling him he should sell his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and then come and follow Him. But since this man was quite wealthy, he became sorrowful and walked away.

After listening to this conversation, Peter began to wonder what he and the other apostles were to gain by following Jesus. So he asked the Lord, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?”

Then Jesus gave a most incredible answer:

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, *you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matthew 19:28).

*Christ called the apostles for much more than just helping to spread the gospel. Their ultimate destiny was to sit on thrones in the Kingdom of God, judging and ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel!*

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### But What About Judas?

In one respect, the Lord’s answer to Peter’s question seems hard to accept. Since Jesus directed His answer at all the apostles, it appeared that Judas Iscariot was included. But how could a man who betrayed Jesus to death be allowed to rule in God’s Kingdom?

But there’s an almost identical conversation recorded in Luke’s gospel. This occurred at the end of Christ’s ministry during the final Passover supper. And on this occasion, only Jesus and the twelve apostles were present.

The incident is recorded in Luke Chapter 22:

*And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him (Luke 22:13-14).*

So this was a private meal with only Jesus and His twelve apostles present — and that's an important fact to remember.

During this gathering, Jesus told the apostles how He desired to share a meal with them before He suffered. Then the Lord described how the bread and wine they were eating and drinking symbolized His body and blood, which He gave for all of us.

But then Jesus changed the subject, by announcing how one of them would betray Him:

*“But behold, *the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table.* For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” (Luke 22:21-22).*

We can imagine how there must have been as few gasps, as the room became quiet and the disciples began to take in what Jesus said. But this silence didn't last long, because the apostles began to question which of them would betray the Lord — a discussion that evolved into a heated debate over which of them should be regarded as the greatest apostle.

Finally, Jesus had to interrupt. And when He got their attention, He looked at all of them and said:

*“You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, *I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Luke 22:28-30).*

And so again, the room must have become very quiet, as the apostles realized that Jesus had just repeated what He said a few days earlier:

- In God's Kingdom, each of the twelve tribes of Israel would have a ruler sitting on a throne, judging the people of that tribe;
- And they — the twelve apostles — were those judges.

And of course, this settled their argument over which of them was the greatest, because Jesus had promised that all of them would become highly respected



rulers in the Kingdom.

*But this also meant that Judas would sit on ones of those thrones.*

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## 9 — Could Judah's Sins Be Forgiven?

We began this book by reviewing how Jacob's son Judah fathered a highly dysfunctional family that used every opportunity to rebel against God. The people of this family routinely practiced every manner of malice, deceit, theft, immoral sex and murder, along with incredible atrocities like burning their children alive as offerings to pagan gods. Nevertheless, Jesus plainly stated that in God's Kingdom, one of the people sitting at His Passover table would rule over these difficult people.

So ask yourself: who would be most qualified to rule over and judge this sinful family?

Perhaps this person should:

- be intimately familiar with the uniqueness of the Jewish mind;
- understand what it means to rebel against God;
- have personally committed major acts of rebellion;
- had genuinely repented of his or her sins.

Can you think of someone who might possess all of these qualifications?

One thing is certain: God must have had a very good reason for not replacing the apostle Judas.

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### Does God Have Limits to His Forgiveness?

Notice what Psalm 103:10-12 (KJV) says about God:

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

This Psalm declares that God's mercy toward sinners is as great as the distance between the earth and the heavenly stars (astronomers tell us the nearest star is 25 *trillion* miles away).

So does God have enough mercy to forgive Judas?

And Judas did repent, did he not?

Furthermore, Judas must have feared the Lord, since he preferred to kill himself rather than have to face Him.

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### All the Apostles Betrayed the Lord

As you think about whether God could forgive Judas, you might also consider these things:

- After Jesus was arrested, all the apostles turned their backs on Him and ran away — yet God forgave them;
- Peter publicly denied Christ three times. And after 3½ years of hearing Christ preach about being a peacemaker, he attempted to murder the high priest's servant. Yet Peter was forgiven;
- The patriarch David had a man killed so he could take his wife. But David was forgiven;
- The apostle Paul persecuted many Christians, and even had some put to death. But Paul was forgiven, and he is now one of Christianity's most beloved apostles.

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### The Process of Repentance

The Bible says that Judas repented. But what generates repentance? Is it just a sudden change of mind? Or is something else involved in the process?

Look at Acts 11:18:

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).

This passage suggests that God must “grant” repentance to sinners. So would not God have had to grant repentance to Judas?

Then in Romans 2:4, the apostle Paul wrote how repentance is the result of God's goodness:

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to

repentance? (Romans 2:4).

According to Paul, God must “lead” a person to repentance. So how was Judas able to repent, if God had not done this?

Finally, read Isaiah 1:18:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.”

Isaiah wrote about the very kind of sins Judas committed against Christ: sins that resulted in blood and death. Yet through Isaiah, God promised that even these kinds of sins will be made as white as snow.

So what do you think? Did God forgive Judas Iscariot?

Well, one thing is certain:

*The Living Word of God told eleven witnesses that Judas would be sitting on a heavenly throne ruling over the Israelites in God’s Kingdom.*

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## 10 — Saving An Entire Family

As we saw in Chapter 3, Judah was one of Jacob's sons. Then about fifteen years after Judah was born, God renamed Jacob "Israel." Therefore, when the Bible uses the term "House of Israel," it means the descendants of Jacob. Therefore, Judah and all of his descendants are part of Israel's (Jacob's) family.

So with this in mind, read Ezekiel 37:9-14:

Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are *the whole house of Israel*; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'"

"Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD, '*Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land.*'"

"Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD (Ezekiel 37:9-14).

This fantastic prophecy tells us that even though God judged and punished the Israelites like the pagan nations around them, this judgment did not affect their ultimate destiny to be resurrected into God's Kingdom and gain eternal life.

And this is not the only prophecy about Israel's spiritual future. God also mentions Israel and specifically Judah in the Book of Hosea (also see [Hosea 1:7](#) and [Hosea 1:11](#)):

"It will come about in that day," declares the LORD, "That you will call Me Ishi (husband) And will no longer call Me Baali (a pagan god). For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more. In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky And the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from

the land, And will make them lie down in safety.”

*“I will betroth (Hebrew: engage for matrimony) you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.”*

“It will come about in that day that I will respond,” declares the LORD. “I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil, And they will respond to Jezreel (Israel). I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, *And I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they will say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hosea 2:16-23).*

Through the prophet Hosea, God said the Israelites — which includes the family of Judah — will eventually be married to their Lord and Savior!

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## 11 — Learning From Judas

In Luke 15:10 Jesus said, "... I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." But unfortunately, most Christians disagree with these angels.

For example, when I searched Google for the phrase "Judas Iscariot damned", I found 66,300 articles concerning this subject. Then when I searched for "Judas Iscariot condemned", I found 105,000 articles. And when I searched for the phrase "Judas Iscariot went to Hell", I found an amazing 334,000 articles! So it seems that most modern Christians believe Judas was forever condemned.

And the apostles were no exception. They knew Judas had repented. And we know this because Matthew wrote about it in his gospel. Nevertheless, they decided that Judas was not qualified to be an apostle. So they took it upon themselves to replace him, even though Jesus plainly told them that Judas would rule in God's Kingdom. Just like the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the apostles refused to accept that God could forgive Judas.

*But if the core and essence of Christianity is repentance and forgiveness of sin, then why do so many people find it hard to accept that God can forgive and redeem any and all of us?*



### Learning From Judas

Eventually Judas became so depressed over his personal failures, that he was unable to believe that God would be able to forgive him. So he committed suicide.

*But would Judas have done this, if he really believed what Jesus told him during the Passover meal?*

Furthermore, all the other apostles heard Jesus' promise that Judas would sit on a throne in the Kingdom of God. But just like Judas, they decided that Jesus was wrong. So Peter created a private interpretation of [Psalm 109:2-17](#), by which he concluded that Judas should be replaced. But Peter's interpretation was grossly incorrect, because this passage was written about one of David's enemies. And we know this to be true, because the psalm describes a man who persecuted the poor and needy, was married, had children and a sinful mother, and then goes on to describe how creditors seized his estate after his death. And

none of this was true concerning Judas.

### Think About This

The apostles trusted Peter's interpretation of the Scriptures more than they trusted the words of Jesus Christ.

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#### Trusting the Words of God

We've seen how Jesus told the apostles their destiny was to be eternally-living kings, ruling over the Israelites in the Kingdom of God. But judging by their actions, not a single one of these men believed what Jesus said.

So Judas helped the Jews put Jesus to death. Then Peter attempted to murder the High Priest's servant. And finally, they all forsook the Lord and ran away, with Peter publicly denying that he even knew Christ.

But God's promises are not dependent upon overcoming sin — or even remaining loyal to Christ. So regardless of what they did, each of these men *will* sit on a throne in God's Kingdom, just as Jesus said.

And we've also seen how God promised to forgive David, Solomon, and even Manasseh — along with the entire sinful family of Judah, the son of Israel.

*But more importantly for you and me, God has promised to forgive and grant great blessings to Christians.*

So regardless of the failures you have had in life or what terrible sins you've committed, you need to gratefully accept God's infinite forgiveness, then rededicate your life to believing and following Christ.

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#### Little-Known Promises to Christians

Read what Jesus promised to those who believe in and follow Him:

*He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21).*

*He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of*



*iron*, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:26-29).

Did you notice how this incredible promise was made to those who are in *churches*?

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### But There's A Requirement

As we just read in the Book of Revelation, only those who “overcome” will be allowed rule in the Kingdom of God. So it's important to determine what Jesus means by “overcoming.”

Many Christians believe that Jesus is talking about conquering sin. But this interpretation cannot be true, because we just read in Revelation 3:21 how Jesus said “as I also overcame.” And as we all know, Jesus never once committed sin.

So let's take a closer look at this concept of overcoming, beginning with Revelation 12:11:

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb ... (Revelation 12:11).*

Here the Greek word translated into the English “overcome” is pronounced *nikaō*. It means to *subdue* or *conquer*. The passage also explains how we accomplish our overcoming through Christ's sacrifice.

But specifically “what” did these Christians subdue and conquer? The above verse plainly tells us when it states: “...they overcame *him*.” So God's people are to subdue and conquer (overcome) a certain *person*.

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So who is this person? The Lord tells us in the previous verse:

*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night (Revelation 12:10).*

Of course, “the accuser” is Satan the Devil. Thus in verse 11 (above), the brethren overcame Satan.

Therefore in Revelation 3:21, where Christians are offered the opportunity of

sitting with Christ on His throne, the requirement is to overcome Satan, just as Jesus did.

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## Conquering Satan

Back in Revelation 12:11, we saw how Christians overcame Satan by Christ's sacrifice. And of course, we all know that Christ's blood was shed to forgive our sins.

But the forgiveness of sins also opens the door for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. And this is most important when it comes to conquering Satan, *because the Spirit imparts the ability to discern between true and false spiritual teaching.*

Therefore, "overcoming" describes the miraculous process by which God opens our minds to His truth, giving us the ability to discern between the truth of God and the lies of Satan, his demons, and the false preachers they inspire.

Notice what the apostle Paul wrote about this in I Corinthians 2:14:

*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them *because they are spiritually discerned* (ESV).*

Without the power of God's Spirit, it's impossible to discern between true and false spiritual knowledge. And this is why those who remain in sin are so easily led away from God's truth.

But once we repent and accept Christ's sacrifice for our sins, God will grant us the gift of spiritual discernment, which will enable us to practice what the apostle John wrote in I John 4:1:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

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## Christian Overcoming

Christian overcoming has nothing to do with conquering sin. Neither does the overcomer completely stop sinning. As the apostle John wrote in I John 1:8:

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

Therefore, overcoming is the process by which we are able to follow and believe the teachings of Jesus Christ, rather than the teachings and false doctrines of human beings.

*The “overcomer” has set his or her will to believe what Jesus said and taught, thereby conquering the false teachings of God’s enemies.*

Such a Christian obeys what Jesus said in John 10:27:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, *and they follow Me.*”

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## **12 — Conclusion**

By studying and following the words of Christ, we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into spiritual understanding. And once we set our will to do this, Jesus promises that we will inherit the reward of ruling in the Kingdom of God.

Let's re-read that promise in Revelation 3:20-22:

*'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*"

Finally, read how the apostle John summarized the rewards God gives to those who obey and follow Jesus Christ:

*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, *And hath made us (Christians) kings and priests unto God and his Father;* to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Revelation 1:5-6 — KJV).*

### **Think About This**

God promised to turn Judas Iscariot into an eternally-living king who will rule over the Kingdom of God. And if you are a born-again Christian, then God will do the same with you — even if you've been a sinner like Judas Iscariot.

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## 12 — Footnotes

[100](#) Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation RECONCILIATION AND PENANCE, dated December 2nd, 1984.

[101 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/war-6.htm>](http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/war-6.htm) Book 6, Chapter 9, paragraph 3

[102](#) The Jewish historian Josephus claimed that 1,100,000 people were killed during the siege; while 97,000 were captured and enslaved.

[103](#) Gordon Conwell University, Status of Global Mission, 2014, in the Context of AD 1800–2025.

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## 13 — Scripture References

[II Peter 3:9](#) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

[Acts 2:44-47](#) And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

[Revelation 2:1-29 through 3:1-22](#) To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent. 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.' And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second

death.' And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 'And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them--I place no other burden on you. 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine



with him, and he with Me. 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[Acts 2:44-45](#) And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

[Genesis 24:3](#) and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live.

[Genesis 13:13](#) Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.

[Josuha 6:17-19](#) "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent." But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

[Genesis 9:20-25](#) Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers."

[I Samuel 13:14](#) But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.

[I Samuel 18:6-7](#) It happened as they were coming, when David returned

from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."

[I Kings 10:14-27](#) King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she requested, besides what he gave her according to his royal bounty. Then she turned and went to her own land together with her servants. Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, besides that from the traders and the wares of the merchants and all the kings of the Arabs and the governors of the country. King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold, using 600 shekels of gold on each large shield. He made 300 shields of beaten gold, using three minas of gold on each shield, and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold. There were six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. Twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like it was made for any other kingdom. All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None was of silver; it was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon. For the king had at sea the ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks. So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland.

[Exodus 34:6-7](#) And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and

abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

[John 6:71](#) Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

[John 13:26](#) Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He \*took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

[Luke 6:16](#) Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

[John 12:7-8](#) Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

[John 6:70](#) Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"

[Acts 1:15-20](#) At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.'

[John 17:12](#) While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled (KJV).

[Matthew 26:14-16](#) Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray

Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

[Zechariah 11:12-13](#) I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

[Hosea 1:7](#) But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.

[Hosea 1:11](#) And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel.

[Psalm 109:2-17](#) For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without cause. In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer. Thus they have repaid me evil for good And hatred for my love. Appoint a wicked man over him, And let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him come forth guilty, And let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; Let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless And his wife a widow. Let his children wander about and beg; And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes. Let the creditor seize all that he has, And let strangers plunder the product of his labor. Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him, Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; In a following generation let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, That He may cut off their memory from the earth; Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness, But persecuted the afflicted and needy man, And the despondent in heart, to put them to death. He also loved cursing, so it came to him; And he did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him.

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