

TOPIC: JUDAS? OR PETER?

Never sink into despair; Jesus is calling you back to Himself.

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Matthew 26:69–27:5 presents to us two very bad situations, and neither of the main characters has anything to be proud of.

PETER

- ▶ Peter loved Jesus. **He jumped to Jesus' defense when the soldiers came to arrest Him by grabbing his sword, swinging at a man's head, and cutting off that man's ear** (John 18:10). There is no doubt that Peter loved Jesus and was firmly in His camp.
- ▶ **However, later that same night** it all fell apart. Peter followed Jesus as far as he could, wanting to see what would happen after His arrest. His colleague John got him into the high priest's courtyard where Jesus was being tried. One of the servant girls recognized him as a disciple of Jesus and pointed him out to the group. Peter denied Jesus out of fear, and before long he had denied Him three times (just as Jesus had said he would). He had failed, and failed miserably.

JUDAS

- ▶ There is no doubt that Judas held Jesus in exceedingly high regard. Like all the other disciples, Judas had spent three years with Jesus. He would not have stuck around for that long if he had not loved and respected Him. Judas was greatly trusted by his brethren, to the point where they appointed him treasurer of their group.
- ▶ Judas, however, had one fatal flaw: he loved money more than he loved Jesus. This love for money caused Judas to betray Jesus so he could give himself a very good payday.
- ▶ Jesus was arrested, but unlike previous times in the past, He did not just slip through the crowd and escape. Instead, He was bound and taken for trial to Caiaphas and **Annas**, and having been condemned to death, taken to Pilate for crucifixion.
- ▶ When Judas saw this he ran back to the chief priests to cancel the deal and give them a refund, but it was far too late.
- ▶ This is where the stories go in very different directions.
- ▶ Peter went out from the courtyard after denying Jesus and wept bitterly. It is sometimes very hard to even think in terms of repentance or requesting forgiveness in situations like Peter's. What then do we do?
- ▶ In Peter's case, he dried his tears and made his way back to wherever the rest of the disciples were meeting.
- ▶ When we sin, we should never abandon the house of God or the people of God. Even if we don't feel we can talk to God, or that He won't listen to us, stick close to God's house and God's people! Give God a chance to do what He does best: to reconcile sinners to Himself.
- ▶ Judas did not give Jesus that option. He slammed the door shut on any possibility of redemption or reconciliation. He left the temple, overwhelmed by his guilt and shame, and hanged himself.
- ▶ Which of these characters will you emulate? Judas? Or Peter?
- ▶ Will you give God a chance to save you, to forgive you, even though you don't deserve it? Or will you end it all, now, in a state of self-loathing and despair?
- ▶ Please receive the encouragement of the word of God today. Never sink into despair and deny Jesus the opportunity to do what He does best. He has sent a message to His disciples—and you: He wants to bring you back to Himself.

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 26:69 – 27:5; Mark 16:6-7

Discussion Tools

1. Have there been times in your life when you found it hard to forgive a particular individual? What steps did you have to take in order to forgive that person?
2. What would cause a person to have an unforgiving nature? What are the pitfalls of having such a disposition? Conversely, what are the benefits of having a forgiving nature? Please provide scriptural references.
3. In the instances where you needed forgiveness—whether from another individual or from God—what steps did you take to ensure this?
4. What things can we do to promote the spirit of Peter, where individuals will come back to the house of God even though they may have sinned?

Notes

Prayer Time

Lord, You are the forgiver of sins. Help me to run to You and not away from You. Reconcile me unto Yourself.

