

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

"I Sold The Lord"

by Judas Iscariot

"From the bottom-most pit of hell I lift up my voice in protest against my fate. I do not deserve the punishment which is meted out to me. One would think I were a fiend incarnate. All the dwellers in hell shrink from me as though I had committed the greatest crime in history. My crime was great. It was terrible. I did sell the Lord. But it was all due to a misunderstanding. It was due to a weak moment in my life. It was a sin any man could commit. Let me tell you my story.

"My name is Judas Iscariot. I was born in the Province of Judah in the country of Palestine. My father's name was Simon. He was well known throughout Judea as a man of deep religious convictions and an ardent patriot. It was his ambition to give me a thorough training in the law and prophets. The traditions of the elders also were carefully explained to me.

"The great interest of my father was the coming of the Messiah. It was his talk day and night. He told me that the Messiah would be like King David. As King David drove out the Philistines so would the Messiah drive out the Romans from our country. He pointed out the words of David in Psalm 72 concerning the Messiah: **'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all Kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.'**

"I remember asking father if that meant that our nation would be as powerful as the Romans who ruled over us. My father was angry at that question. He said that the Romans were not to be mentioned in the same breath as the nation of the Jews. The dominion of the Messiah, he said, would be greater and more extensive than that of the Romans. Our wealth would be a thousand times that of the Romans. And the Kingdom of the Messiah would rule over the rest of the world till the end of time.

"You can well imagine how that fired my imagination. I became as anxious for the coming of the Messiah as my father. Often I would wonder if the Messiah would come in my day. With my

father I prayed earnestly that GOD would send the great Deliverer soon.

"GOD answered our prayers. I was nearing the age of thirty when I began to hear of a man by the name of JESUS. At the time I heard about Him He was teaching in Galilee. I heard that He taught in the synagogues and proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom. He had power to heal the sick. People told me that He healed every disease, even that of leprosy. Hundreds followed whithersoever he went.

"I determined to find Him and traveled to Galilee. I first saw Him as He was teaching a great multitude. There must have been at least two thousand people. His teaching was simple and with authority. I had never heard a scribe teach as He taught. He spoke of the Kingdom and the laws of the Kingdom. When He was through teaching they brought to Him the sick. I was amazed to behold Him casting out demons and restoring lunatics to their right mind. It mattered not what the disease was, He had power to heal.

"Upon observing Him it became my conviction that JESUS was the Messiah. He had the bearing of a king and He had the power of a king. Under His leadership surely Israel would be released from bondage to the Romans. I determined that I would become His disciple. It was not an easy decision to make. My business was prosperous. Yet if the Kingdom were to be established sacrifices would have to be made. And to sit at the feet of JESUS was the privilege of a lifetime. There was so much to learn about the Kingdom of GOD.

"It was a proud day for me to be chosen by JESUS to be one of the Twelve. We were especially chosen to be His witnesses and He took special pains to teach us the truths of the Kingdom. It was after He had chosen the Twelve that He delivered the sermon from the mount. It was thrilling to learn that we were to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. JESUS told us, too, that we would even be blessed if we were persecuted for His sake. When JESUS finished His teachings **'the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.'**

"Another proud day for the Twelve was when we were sent out on a mission. We went forth preaching the good news of the Kingdom. We urged people to repent because the Kingdom of GOD was at hand. The Master gave us power to heal. Just by a touch of the hand I gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. Even the lepers were cleansed. By my command demons were cast out. It was not difficult to visualize the establishment of the Kingdom throughout the world.

"Because the Master recognized my business ability He appointed me to have charge of the treasury bag. We received donations from people who felt grateful for what the Master did for them. JESUS could have received much more but He did not seem to be interested in becoming rich. And what He did receive He wanted to give away immediately. Sometimes there was hardly any left to buy food for us. I questioned the wisdom of giving so much for the poor. The Master was over-generous. That seemed to be about His only fault.

"We were on the whole a very harmonious group. There was only once that we had a serious quarrel. John and James stole a march on us. Through their mother they asked the Master to give them the most prominent places in the kingdom. The two brothers wanted to sit on each side of the throne of JESUS. We were angry when we heard about it. After all I was just as qualified and

perhaps even more so than James and John to have the prominent place in the Kingdom. It would require a man who could handle money. Peter and Matthew thought they were the best qualified. As a matter of fact all twelve of us quarreled about it. But the Master soon settled the argument.

"Jesus said to us: **'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.'** This statement bothered me. I thought surely in the Kingdom we as apostles would lord it over others - that we would live as Roman princes. But now the Master spoke of us as being the servants of others.

"Then another thing began to bother me. JESUS was not winning many of the prominent men of Israel to His cause. The scribes and Pharisees opposed Him. It was not hard to see that they hated JESUS. This seemed to me detrimental to the cause. They were men of influence and power in our nation. People respected their opinion. Many feared to join themselves to JESUS because it would subject them to criticism of these leaders of Israel. All this hindered the establishment of the kingdom.

"Other people left JESUS because of His teachings. After He fed five thousand people by a miracle, it was the desire of the multitude to make Him a king. JESUS would have none of it. He also rebuked the people by stating they were following Him only because of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Then JESUS said: **'I am the living bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'** When they asked how He could give His flesh to eat, JESUS stated: **'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.'** When some of the disciples heard that they left Him. One could scarcely blame them when He talked about eating his flesh and drinking His blood. As I was thinking along this manner, JESUS suddenly said: **'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?'** I was startled because it seemed as though He read my mind. But surely He would not call me a devil just because I was thinking that He was not handling the situation right?"

"It must have become apparent to JESUS that He could not overcome the opposition of the scribes and Pharisees. He began to speak about them seeking to kill Him. He spoke about being crucified. That, of course, would be the end of the Kingdom. If crucified how could He lead us to be a mighty Kingdom? What profit would there be in following Him? It was a lost cause. I had wasted my time and opportunities. How had I ever been so foolish as to follow one who would be crucified as a criminal?"

"As these questions entered into my mind, I began to think as to how I could obtain profit out of this situation. My eyes fell on the treasury bag. Ah! Why not keep part of this money? Surely part was mine. I had followed JESUS for several years without wages. I had given up my business and received nothing in return. It was only fair that I should keep part. So I began withdrawing small amounts. I wondered whether JESUS knew. Sometimes it seemed as if He looked right into my heart. I began to resent Him. When He preached about theft it seemed as though He looked at me with a warning. But why should He think it was theft when it was really mine?"

"I began to look for large donations. The more that was given the more I could take. Six days before the Passover we were entertained in the home of Martha and Mary. Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard and anointed the feet of JESUS. What a waste this was for the spikenard was very costly. I cried out: **'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?'** It would mean about a hundred pence for me. But JESUS talked about this being an anointing for His burial. Three hundred pence wasted in a moment.

"This was the climax as far as I was concerned. I knew that the elders and chief priest wanted to kill JESUS but they were afraid of the reaction of the people. They wanted to take Him when He was away from the multitude. So a few days before the Passover I went to the chief priests. They were amazed to see me but when I told them what I wanted to do they could hardly contain themselves for joy. I asked them how much they would give me if I would deliver Him into their hands. We bargained for some time. All that I could get out of them was thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. However, it was better than nothing and it would require very little effort. From that time I sought an opportunity to deliver Him according to our bargain.

"At night we began the Passover Supper. While we were eating, JESUS suddenly said: **'Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.'** Fear struck my heart for I thought that JESUS would uncover me before the others. However, they all began to ask Him, **'Lord, is it I?'** Not one suspected me. JESUS tried to scare me by saying: **'Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born.'** So I said aside to JESUS with a sneer, **'Is it I, Rabbi?'** He said, **'Thou hast said.'** Shortly afterwards He said, **'That thou doest, do quickly.'**

"I went according to plan to the chief priest. I knew that JESUS intended to go into the garden of Gethsemane to pray. He would perhaps take James, John and Peter with Him. That would be a fine opportunity to seize him. The chief priest and elders had gathered quite a sizable mob who were armed with staves and swords. I told them that I would kiss the one whom they should seize. When I saw JESUS in the garden I went up to Him and said, **'Hail, Rabbi,'** and kissed Him. Then the mob laid hands on Him and took Jesus and led Him to the chief priests.

"I did not go along with the mob but went to my lodging. There I counted the thirty pieces of silver again and again. In my mind I tried to figure how this money could start me in business. I had to make up for the three years wasted. I could hardly sleep in anticipation of how rich I would become.

"In the morning I went to the place where the council was held. There was great excitement. They had tried JESUS during the night and condemned Him to death. Now they determined that they would deliver Him to Pilate the governor so that He could be crucified. They bound Him and led Him away.

"As they led Him away bound, suddenly I realized that He was going to His death. They had condemned Him to death. But He was innocent of any crime. He had done no wrong. He had done nothing worthy of death. Yet they were going to have Him crucified as a criminal. And I - I was responsible. I betrayed an innocent man. I had sold the Lord. I had sold the Lord.

"Perhaps there was still time to save Him. I ran to the chief priest and elders and cried out: **'I**

have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood.' But all they said was: '**What is that to us? see thou to it.'** I flung the thirty pieces of silver down in front of them and ran out.

"I did not mean that they should crucify the Lord. Yet I had sold Him. I sold Him for the price of a slave - thirty pieces of silver. Would that I could undo what I had done! I betrayed innocent blood. I betrayed innocent blood. How could I face the future with the knowledge that I had betrayed One who was righteous and innocent? And all for thirty pieces of silver. I could not face the future. There was only one thing left for me to do and that was to end it all. I would enter into the darkness of oblivion. Only by so doing I would escape my burning conscience. By hanging myself I would escape the torment of my mind. And so I hung myself.

"I awakened in hell. Escape? Escape? My conscience burns with a thousand-fold heat. All that goes through my mind is that I sold the Lord. I sold the Lord. I seem to hold in my hands thirty pieces of silver. They burn like hot lead in my hands. For the price of a slave I betrayed innocent blood - the blood of the Son of GOD. And all because I misunderstood the nature of the Kingdom. All because of my love of money. Surely it was a sin that anyone could commit. Why, O why, must I be punished so severely?"

~ end of chapter 8 ~
