

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

### STUDY SIXTEEN

## Thoroughly Innocent . . . Totally Guilty

*Matthew 27:1–10*

*Judas didn't start out to be a traitor. Over time, even though he was in the presence of the one who was absolutely innocent, he became increasingly more guilty. Judas was now trapped in his own sinfulness.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE trial at Caiaphas' house proved one thing: Jesus was thoroughly innocent. The trial itself was a sham. It was held in secret at night, Jesus had no representation, and His accusers lied and couldn't agree on anything (Matthew 26:59–60). Caiaphas was prejudiced against the defendant before the trial even started, having conspired with other council members earlier in the week to kill Jesus (26:3–4). The trial was illegal, but the council declared Jesus guilty anyway and condemned Him to die (26:66).

This unjust trial was one of six described in the Gospels—three Jewish trials and three Roman. Review the details of each trial using the chart, “The Trials of Jesus,” at the end of this *Searching the Scriptures* study. With one voice, all four gospel accounts pronounce Jesus “not guilty.” Judas, on the other hand, was totally guilty.

In Matthew 27:1–10, Matthew shifts the focus to Judas for a brief interlude while Jesus was being transported to Pilate's residence. According to the second chart at the end of this study, “Chronology from Gethsemane to Golgotha,” this trial before Pilate occurred at 6:30 a.m., which was about the time it dawned on Judas that Jesus' blood was on his hands. The gavel had come down on Judas, and the verdict in his soul rang out. He was guilty of betraying the Son of God.



[www.insight.org](http://www.insight.org) | [www.insightworld.org](http://www.insightworld.org)

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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Thoroughly Innocent . . . Totally Guilty

*Matthew 27:1–10*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Judas' story serves as a warning, but it's also a reminder of how the Lord persistently seeks sinners to save them, even to the point of bearing our sin on His cross. Let the following prayer guide you as you prepare your heart to study God's Word.

*Father, Your Son never lifted His hand against His most vicious enemies, even Judas. He loved His traitor to the end and grieved over Judas' sin. Thank You for Your unrelenting pursuit of sinners and Your offer of mercy, even to the worst of sinners, through the cross. In His name I pray, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

After condemning Jesus at night at Caiaphas' house, the Sanhedrin held a mock trial in daylight to formalize the verdict they had already reached.

*Very early in the morning the leading priests and elders of the people met again to lay plans for putting Jesus to death. Then they bound him, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. (Matthew 27:1–2)*

Jesus foretold this exact course of events, including the events to follow (20:18–19). He was the Captain standing at the helm of His circumstances steering the ship of God's plan of redemption along its predetermined course. Even Judas' tragic death fulfilled prophecy, as Matthew demonstrated to his readers.



### Observation: Judas' Death and Tragic Legacy

Observation is the first step in *Searching the Scriptures*. We simply look for what's in the verses without attempting to decipher the meaning.<sup>1</sup> How does Matthew describe Judas' emotions and actions in [Matthew 27:3–5](#)? What strikes you about the Sanhedrin members' attitude toward Judas? What tragic action did Judas take in response?



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What irony do you see in the priests' dilemma over Judas' blood money, according to [Matthew 27:6–8](#)? What admission did they make?

Look up the prophecy Matthew cited: [Zechariah 11:12–13](#).<sup>2</sup> How was this obscure prophecy fulfilled by the priests?

*Judas was in no man's land. He couldn't return to the disciples, and the Jewish leaders wanted nothing to do with him. They had used him, and he was trash to them. He had nowhere to turn. Broken, confused, disillusioned, saturated in guilt, filled with shame, he was without hope. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: Judas' Downward Path

Matthew doesn't specify the reasons Judas turned against Jesus, but, from the few Bible references we find, we can create a character composite of a man who would betray his friend. According to [Matthew 26:14–16](#), Judas secretly conspired with the leading priests after Mary anointed Jesus with the expensive perfume. Judas fussed over the waste of money that could have been given to the poor, but according to John's account, Judas was more interested in taking the money for himself than giving it to the poor. "He was a thief," John wrote bluntly (John 12:4–6).

When the leading priests offered him thirty pieces of silver to deliver Jesus to them, greed opened the door to treachery in Judas' heart, and he took the blood money. Skilled at hiding his thievery, Judas was accustomed to dealing in the dark.



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But how could a man follow Jesus for as many years as Judas did and remain so hardened? On pages 274–275 of his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll explores Judas' deeper spiritual issues. What character flaws and misbeliefs do you think may have led to Judas' downfall?

Tragically, Judas went to the chief priests to confess his sin, but they refused to help him. They had what they wanted from him, so he was no use to them anymore. They just tossed him out like worthless garbage. To Jesus, however, every soul has value. He always has compassion and mercy for sinners like Judas, and He died to redeem them. What would you say to give hope to someone today who feels alone and trapped in his or her sin?

*The beautiful truth is that Jesus Christ died, even for the hypocrite. The joy is that we have a message of hope and forgiveness for all of us, and it's called "grace."*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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### Correlation: Additional Details from Acts

Luke, the author of Acts, adds some interesting, rather gruesome, details to Judas' death by suicide. What do you discover in [Acts 1:18–19](#)? Consult page 275 of Pastor Chuck's commentary to correlate this passage with Matthew's account. For an online resource, consult [Constable's Notes](#), at [netbible.org](#).

Perhaps the saddest part of Judas' story is that he had plenty of opportunities to choose a different path. At the Passover table, Jesus placed Judas next to Him, confronted him without shaming him, and warned him of the consequences of his sin (Matthew 26:24). Even at the moment of betrayal, Jesus called Judas, "My friend" (26:50). All the way to the end, Jesus extended His hand of mercy to Judas, but Judas refused to take it. What a tragedy.



### Application: Warning Signs from the Life of Judas

As we sift through the rubble of Judas' life, we can find four warnings to apply.

1. *Secret sin warps our minds and twists our values.* A lifetime of unconfessed smaller sins distorted Judas' whole character.
2. *All acts of cover-up are deceitful—making self-deception the worst.* The more people Judas fooled, the more lies he told himself to justify his own deceitful actions.
3. *The cycle of compulsion and shame drives a wedge between private thoughts and public persona.* Judas probably believed he was different than the other disciples.
4. *When reality ultimately hits, the deceiver is shocked.* Judas was surprised that his betrayal would lead to Jesus' death. Sin blinded him to reality.



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Do any of these flashing lights grab your attention as a warning you need to heed today?

If this study has revealed a deep sin issue within you that you need to address, what can you do to deal positively and constructively with it? Compulsions, cover-ups, and shame need not lead us down Judas' path of despair.

Perhaps you suddenly realize you need help. Consult a Christian counselor. Reach out to your pastor or spiritual friend who can embody the care and compassion of Christ for you. Remember, Christ is your lifeline. Grasp it and find mercy and healing today.



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

*Father, shine Your light in my soul and expose the lies and rationalizations that have led me down the wrong path and kept me doing things I don't want to do. Speak to me in this moment of silence as I look to Your Son for forgiveness, relief, and restoration. I trust in You now as my Savior and Lord, my sole source of light and hope. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*



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The Trials of Jesus						
Trial	Officiating Authority	Scripture	Accusations	Legality	Type	Result
1	Annas, former high priest AD 6–15	John 18:12–23	No specific charges brought.	Illegal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No jurisdiction</li> <li>• Held at night</li> <li>• No charges</li> <li>• No witnesses</li> <li>• Abused during trial</li> </ul>	Jewish and religious	Found “guilty” of irreverence and sent to Caiaphas.
2	Caiaphas, high priest AD 18–36, and the Sanhedrin	Matthew 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; John 18:24	Claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, which they deemed blasphemy.	Illegal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Held at night</li> <li>• False witnesses</li> <li>• No formal charge</li> <li>• Abused during trial</li> </ul>	Jewish and religious	Declared “guilty” of blasphemy and held for sentencing until morning.
3	Sanhedrin	Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66–71	As a continuation of the earlier trial before the Sanhedrin, the charges remained the same.	Illegal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accusation changed</li> <li>• No witnesses</li> <li>• Improper vote</li> </ul>	Jewish and religious	Sentenced to be turned over to Romans for execution.
4	Pilate, governor of Judea AD 26–36	Matthew 27:11–14; Mark 15:2–5; Luke 23:1–7; John 18:28–38	Charged with treason and sedition against Rome.	Illegal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Found “not guilty,” yet kept in custody</li> <li>• No defense representation</li> <li>• Abused during trial</li> </ul>	Roman and civil	Declared “not guilty” and pawned off on Herod Antipas to find a loophole.





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The Trials of Jesus <i>continued</i>						
5	Herod Antipas, governor of Galilee 4 BC–AD 39	Luke 23:8–12	No specific charges brought. Questioned at length by Herod.	Illegal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No jurisdiction</li> <li>• No specific charges</li> <li>• Abused during trial</li> </ul>	Roman and civil	Mistreated, mocked, falsely accused, and returned to Pilate without a decision made.
6	Pilate	Matthew 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:13–25; John 18:39–19:16	As a continuation of the earlier trial before Pilate, the charges remained the same.	Illegal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declared “not guilty,” yet condemned.</li> </ul>	Roman and civil	Declared “not guilty” but sentenced to be crucified to mollify the angry mob.  Simultaneously, a man guilty of murder, treason, and sedition was released.

Chart adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 263. Copyright © 2020 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers. All rights reserved.

Chronology from Gethsemane to Golgotha		
Event	Scriptures	Approximate Time
Prayer and agony in Gethsemane	Matthew 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46; John 18:1	1:00 a.m.
Betrayal by Judas and arrest of Jesus	Matthew 26:47–56; Mark 14:43–46; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:2–12	1:30 a.m.
Irregular, unauthorized interrogation at Annas’ residence	John 18:12–23	2:00 a.m.
Illegal trial at Caiaphas’ residence	Matthew 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:54, 63–65; John 18:24	3:00 a.m.





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Chronology from Gethsemane to Golgotha <i>continued</i>		
Formal but illegal meeting of the Sanhedrin to confirm capital sentence	Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66–71	6:00 a.m.
First interrogation by Pilate at his residence	Matthew 27:1–2, 11–14; Mark 15:1–5; Luke 23:1–7; John 18:28–32	6:30 a.m.
Audience before Herod	Luke 23:8–12	7:00 a.m.
Final judgment of Pilate	Matthew 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:13–25; John 18:33–40	7:30 a.m.
Scourging in Praetorium, mocking by soldiers, and public condemnation	Matthew 27:26–31; Mark 15:15–20; John 19:1–16	8:00 a.m.
Walk to Golgotha and nailing to the cross	Matthew 27:32–35; Mark 15:21–24; Luke 23:26–33; John 19:17–18	9:00 a.m.
Events at the cross, climaxing in darkness over the land	Matthew 27:36–45; Mark 15:25–33; Luke 23:34–44; John 19:19–27	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Jesus' final words, death, and earthquake	Matthew 27:46–56; Mark 15:34–41; Luke 23:45–49; John 19:28–30	3:00 p.m.

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ENDNOTES

1. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](http://insight.org)" at insight.org.
2. "This difficult fulfillment seems to be a quotation from Zechariah 11:12–13, but Matthew attributed it to Jeremiah. Probably Matthew was referring to Jeremiah 19:1–13, which he condensed using mainly the phraseology of Zechariah 11:12–13 because of its similarity to Judas' situation." Thomas Constable, "[Matthew 27:9–10](http://netbible.org)," *Constable's Notes*, netbible.org.

