

# Christ—the Key to the Future

## “CHRIST MEETS ANTICHRIST”

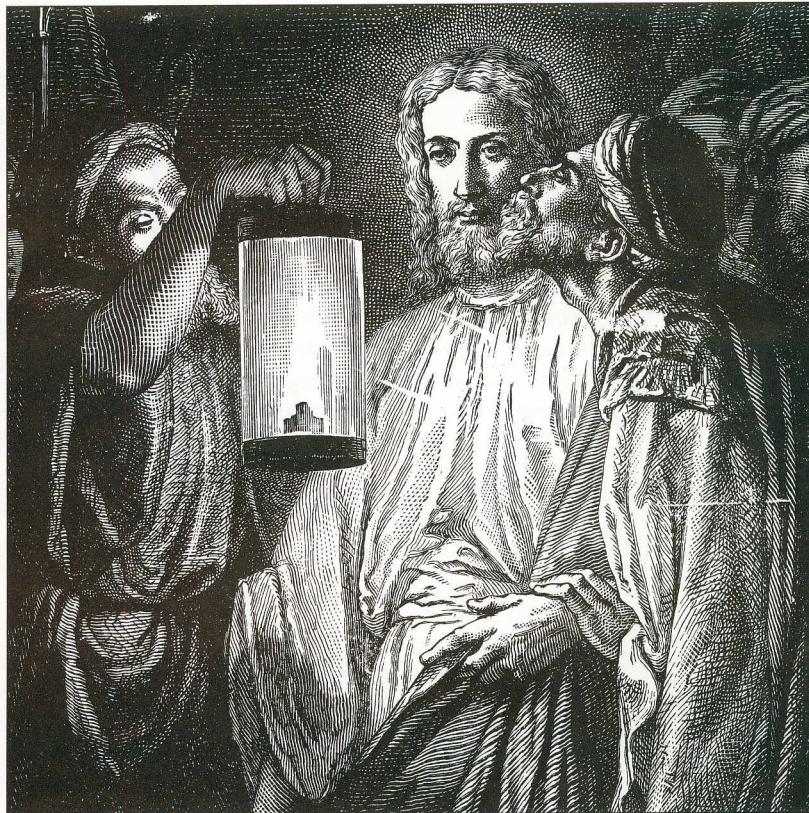
by Desmond Ford

*Judas is Jesus' Antichrist.*

*Judas professes Christ, then betrays him—the essence of Antichrist.*

*Peter fails Jesus too. But Peter looks to Christ while Judas refuses.*

*Antichrist takes good and makes it bad. Christ takes trouble and makes it good.*



**T**he main thing I would have you think upon in this study is the way Christ spoke about this matter of the Antichrist:

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. (John 17:12 KJV)

This is the only place apart from 2 Thessalonians, that we find the expression “son of perdition.”

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God

sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

### **Jesus Said Judas Is Antichrist**

Who does Jesus mean, here in John, when he says, “None of them is lost, but the son of perdition?” Who? Judas!

Ah! Here’s our key! This is a most important point.

We all know that Martin Luther,



that great pioneer of Protestantism, strongly opposed the papacy in the Middle Ages. That does not mean, however, that the papacy is the only Antichrist, and the Antichrist for all times. Martin Luther said, "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals." Yes, Martin Luther did oppose the medieval papacy—and I do want to emphasize that word "medieval."

Never forget, dear friends, that since Vatican II, the modern Roman Catholic church is not the same as the medieval Roman Catholic church. When Pope John opened the windows to change in 1962, a metamorphosis began for the Roman Catholic church.

In this country, the vast majority of the cardinals are quite Protestant in some areas of their thinking. Only about 20 percent of them hold to the strict doctrines taught upon the Tiber in Vatican City. Never confuse modern Catholicism with medieval Catholicism. Modern Catholic leaders decry what happened during the Middle Ages. Many Roman Catholics today rejoice in the gospel taught by Martin Luther.

I believe the present Pope is a very fine Christian—a man of principle, a man of courage. I don't agree with all of his theology, but I'm sure he loves the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. He obviously loves his fellowmen.

Jesus did not say our modern Pope is Antichrist. Jesus said Judas is Antichrist!

### **Antichrist Professes, Then Betrays**

Here's the point: Judas professed to follow Christ, but then denied and betrayed him. This is the point about Antichrist. **The essence of Antichrist is to profess to follow Christ, but then betray him.**

John 13 helps us understand. Notice in verse 18, it's the time of the Last Supper. The Supper begins with the Lord washing the feet of the Twelve. I say the Twelve, not the eleven.

If I'd been in charge, it would have only been eleven. I wouldn't allow Judas to have his feet washed, knowing what he was about to do. I would have scolded him.

But the Lord Jesus washes the feet of Judas. Please notice what it means.

As a tide continually surges onto the beach, so the love of Christ repeatedly comes against the heart of the traitor. Christ washes the feet of the man who is going to sell him as a slave.

Friends, I find the utmost encouragement in this account. If Christ could wash the feet of Judas, if the tide of his redeeming love could beat against that hard heart again and again, will he ever give us up because of our weaknesses and our follies? However weak we may be? The more we know about ourselves, the more weak we know ourselves to be. That person who thinks he is very, very strong is an ignoramus. None of us is strong.

If Christ could plead with someone so set on evil as Judas, the traitor of the Twelve, is he going to give us up? (Judas' name is always at the end of the list of the Apostles, wherever the twelve are listed.) If Christ could love like that, dear friends, his compassions fail not for us who are weak and often foolish—and too often straying.

Remember the hymn that says, "Prone to leave the God I love." We all are prone to do that, dear friends. We're a weak lot. But Christ's love for Judas encourages me. Even when I make a mistake, even when I've been stupid, Christ won't give me up.

### **Sin Without Passion**

Jesus says:

I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' John 13:18 (NIV)

Jesus quotes from Psalm 41: "He who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (verse 9). Judas is about to treat Jesus as though he is a servant or slave.

The quotation is an allusion to Genesis 3:15, where the serpent tries to crush the seed of the woman, but is himself crushed. Judas is going to treat Jesus Christ as a devil, as something that is dangerous and must be stamped upon. Judas will lift up his heel against Jesus. That's the spirit of Antichrist.

"He who shared my bread." Judas partook of the Lord's Supper. He took the emblems of Christ's broken body. The essence of Antichrist is to be initi-

ated into the mysteries of Christ, to partake of the emblems of his death, and still betray him.

What was the trouble with Judas? Dante in *The Inferno* put Judas in the lowest hell. I would have thought Judas belonged in the highest hell. But Dante put him in the lowest hell, because that was freezing. Again, I would have thought Judas should have been in the hot part, but Dante had more sense. The trouble with Judas was that he was so deluded, so deceived, his sin was not passionate. His sin was not impulsive. He was cold, cruel, calculating, arrogant. He was so deceived he could sin without passion. That's the worst sin.

### **Peter and Judas**

This same chapter, John 13, tells us the end of the matter. Peter is also going to betray his Lord, through denial.

There are two great sinners in the Calvary account. Not Annas and Caiaphas—sinners enough—but two disciples of Jesus!

One is Peter and one is Judas. They both do terrible things. Peter, as a fisherman, had quite a vocabulary. He used that vocabulary to swear and curse and profanely deny that he knew the arrested Jesus, the Man of pure and holy lips. But Peter was not like Judas. Peter sinned impulsively—out of fear.

Earlier, Peter vowed emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Mark 14:31). Then, when confronted by a slip of a servant girl, he was scared to death. We're not much, are we, we humans? Peter, impulsively, did the wrong thing.

Yet Peter is not like Judas. When Peter swore his curses, the Scripture says, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.... and he [Peter] went outside and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62). Jesus looked at Peter, and Peter looked at Jesus, and Peter's heart was broken.

If Peter hadn't looked, there'd have been another suicide that night. Not just Judas, but Peter.

Judas never looked. Judas had never been broken, and unless you're broken, you're useless.

### **The Secret to Understanding Trouble**

This is the secret to understanding





trouble. Why do saints have so many problems? Why does God make his people jump through flaming hoops? Why does the Lord put his people through the meat grinder? Because unless you're broken, you're useless.

When God wanted to make a world, he began with chaos. If you think your life is pretty chaotic, God's doing something with you and for you.

Judas had never been broken. He was whole. Only two people in the Bible are ever said to have kissed Christ. One was Judas in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:49). Who's the other? Mary (Luke 7:38, 45). When Mary broke that precious alabaster box, dear friends, it was a symbol of her heart. She had been broken. She had met the Savior, and in the light of his purity and goodness she'd seen her own moral deformity. That broke her. The break-

ing of that box symbolized her broken heart.

That broken box, or jar, also symbolized the greatest gift of all time—God's gift of his Son at Calvary. There Jesus' precious body would be broken for us. Remember what it says in John 12? When the box that contained about a pint of expensive and pure nard was broken, "the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (John 12:3). When Christ, that precious gift of God, was broken on Calvary, the fragrance filled the universe.

The angels in heaven adored Jesus. Here on earth, when the word goes out about the divine sacrifice at Calvary, many people ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" (see John 12:4-5).

When saints understand it, it breaks our hearts. We're no longer self-assured, self-confident, self-righteous.

We know ourselves as sinners. A true Christian always acknowledges he is a sinner. Not "was." but "**Is.**"

### Willful Sin Has No Penitence

Not a **willful** sinner, of course. But, my friends, the perfect law of God requires that in thought, word, and deed, in every matter, I must choose the greatest good. Not just in the all important choice between Christ or Barabbas. Every time I choose a lesser good in any area, **that** is choosing Barabbas instead of Christ. That is sin.

You and I do it hundreds of times a day. Not willfully, but out of ignorance. We should be broken. Luther was right: "The Christian is **always** a sinner, **always** a penitent."

I wish that penitence could simply be something I did when I first became a Christian 50 years ago. But, no, penitence is a continuing, daily experience. You never get beyond penitence in this life. A Christian is always a sinner, though not a willful one.

We are always a penitent, and, because of the gospel, always right with God. Because of Christ, God does not see in us the vileness of the sinner. God sees in us the likeness of his Son in whom we believe. We are complete in him.

### Whole Only in Christ

Remember, Jesus said to the disciples after he washed their feet, "You are clean" (John 13:10). What? I would have said, "Lord, one of them is going to betray you, another will curse you, the rest will run away from you when you are taken. Why do you call them clean?"

How encouraging, that Jesus looks on us in our weakness, and says, "You are clean."

In his prayer to the Father, Jesus said, "They have obeyed your word" (John 17:6). What? I would have pointed out, "Lord, that seems to me a distortion of the truth. I don't think they did obey your word." "Ah, friend," Jesus would reply, "I see them only clothed in my righteousness." What a wonderful thing.

### Our Only Hope Is in Christ

You know, life's very tough. Life is a battle.



If I weren't a Christian, I wouldn't give you a fig for it. Not a fig. I've said, many times, the older you get, living in this world is like living on an island that's contracting. As you get older, you give up certain things you took for granted earlier. If you don't give them up, they're taken from you. That's what it is to get older.

We live in a sin-cursed world. The curse affects all of us. Forever our island is shrinking. What you don't give up will be taken away. You can have hope only if you have Christ and know that this world merely borders on eternity.

Even if things are tough down here, you have the best company in the universe: the Son of God, his indwelling Spirit. That's what makes life worth living, you see.

While you and I are trusting in ourselves and in anything we've achieved, anything we've done, anything we are, we're outside of Christ.

Only the broken are in Christ. Mary was there. Judas was not there.

#### **Antichrist Makes Good Bad**

Let's read a little more in John 13. This story is sketching for us what it means to be an Antichrist, to be a Judas, to profess to follow Christ but actually deny him.

Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the

dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him. (John 13:26-27)

Please notice: When a good thing was given to a bad man, it became bad, it did bad.

What Jesus did was a loving gesture. He would take some bread, dip it in the sauce or gravy, and offer it to a friend as a testimony of love. But a good thing given to a bad man does bad. As soon as Judas received the morsel, Satan entered into him. Judas was confirmed in his treachery, because if you don't respond to love, you become hardened.

The same sun that melts wax hardens clay. You either become better or bitter when you hear the gospel. There's no neutrality. "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23).

Please observe that something very good, that love gives (the morsel dipped in gravy) became bad to Judas because Judas was bad.

It confirmed him. It steeled him. "He went out. And it was night" (John 13:30).

#### **Christ Makes Bad Good**

The sweetness of this is the other side.

Something bad that happens to a good person becomes good.

Don't forget that, dear friends. Jesus said to Judas, "What you are about to do, do quickly." What a revelation!

Judas thought he was going to be the master of Christ. Judas planned to hand Christ over to the religious authorities. Christ would then be forced to use his miraculous, messianic power to free himself and seize the throne. Judas would become his prime minister—and so on.

Judas thought he was running the show, and suddenly Jesus says, "What you are about to do, do quickly." Jesus is giving the orders! Judas suddenly finds that he's the servant!

Christ is Lord over evil. He's in charge. "The demons begged Jesus, 'If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs'" (Matthew 8:31). The devil can't move an inch without the Lord's permission.

That's why something that is very bad can happen to a Christian and become good—because Christ is in charge. You don't have to pretend or be a liar and call a broken leg a good thing.

No, Christ is in charge of bad things. Christ controls Judas, Christ controls the devil, Christ controls the demons, Christ controls all evil.

Because our loving Savior is in charge, something bad happening to a saint becomes good. ❖