



*the*  
**Doomed  
Disciple**

**Study  
Guide**

*a novel*

GOD DOESN'T WRITE TRAGIC ENDINGS

**Paul Campbell**

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## **The Doomed Disciple**

### **Part 1 Reference Section:**

#### **Chapter 1**

As infamous as his name has become, almost nothing is known about the early life of Judas Iscariot. The same is true of all the figures from the New Testament. To blend these few facts into a convincing story, much of it must be based in assumption or simple imagination, but always with care to make it as reasonable and believable as possible. Although it is unlikely that Judas worked for Joseph of Arimathaea, it is plausible. As the appointed keeper of the money for the disciples (John 13:29), it is likely that Judas had experience as an accountant, so it is possible that he worked as a steward for a rich landowner like Joseph of Arimathaea.

#### **Chapter 2**

It is possible that many of Jesus's parables were based on real events and people. There is no evidence to indicate that the parable of the Unjust Steward, recorded in Luke 16:1–13, was based on the history of Judas Iscariot, but placing Judas in the story brings realism to both the parable and the characters of Judas and Joseph of Arimathaea while also keeping it solidly based in scripture.

#### **Chapter 3**

Some may balk at the idea that Jesus would even owe any debt, let alone that he would let Judas erase it without his master's consent. Some might even say that Jesus was complicit in the act, since he allowed Judas to escape. Although it is certain that Jesus would never lie on anyone's behalf, it is not unprecedented for Jesus to allow things that others considered sinful. And just because Jesus allowed the swindle does not mean he condoned it. The conversation between Jesus and Joseph is left to the reader's imagination, since this book is focused on Judas's perspective, but some hints about the conversation will be seen in chapter 10 and show that Jesus was not complicit in any deceit.

## **Chapter 4**

Chapters 4–10 are based on the account in John 1:19–40. The Gospel of John does not name the other disciple who was with Andrew when they first saw Jesus, though it can be narrowed down some by process of elimination. We can be certain that it was not Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, or Matthew, who did not meet Jesus until later. Most scholars believe it to be John, but this is not directly stated. Though it was most likely a fellow Galilean traveling with Andrew, and not even one of the twelve, the possibility remains that it could have been Judas.

## **Chapter 5**

According to Rabbinical tradition, men could not become teachers until thirty years of age. Since John was born six months earlier than Jesus (Luke 1:24–26), it is likely that his ministry started in the spring of 27AD, six months before the start of Jesus's ministry in the early fall. This timetable also matches the four Gospel accounts.

## **Chapter 6**

The character of Herod in the four Gospels is a bit confusing at first glance. Herod the Great was the first Herod: the same Herod who met the wise men on their way to Bethlehem and who later murdered all the male babies in that city, as recorded in Matthew 2. It was he who rebuilt and expanded the Temple of Jesus's day (known as Herod's Temple). Herod the Great had several sons, three of whom he killed, fearing a coup. These were Antipater, Alexander, and Aristobulus. His surviving sons included Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee; Herod Archelaus, who ruled Judea until 6AD when he was deposed by Rome for misconduct and replaced by Pilate as the Roman governor; and Herod Philip, who ruled Ituraea (Not to be confused with the disciple, also named Philip). It was Herod Philip's wife, Herodias, whom Herod Antipas stole, and which led to the terrible events with Herodias's daughter (Antipas's niece), Salome, as recorded in Matthew 14 and Mark 6. In the four Gospels, “Herod” is used

for both Herod the Great, who reigned during the time of Jesus' birth, and Herod Antipas, who reigned during Jesus's adult life.

## **Chapter 7**

Like Americans today, the beliefs of the Jewish people ran the gamut from the extremely conservative to the very liberal, but the three prominent philosophies were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. One can make a loose comparison between Pharisees and modern conservatives, Sadducees with liberals, and Essenes with ultra-conservative outliers like the Amish and the doomsday preppers. Essenes were rarely seen and stayed to themselves, believing all other Jews to be corrupted by pagan culture. Pharisees desired a return to traditional values and were popular in rural communities. Often, they were seen as the ideal Jew. They kept the Law strictly and harshly judged any who failed to uphold their standards.

Sadducees held sway in large cities like Jerusalem, were often rich and influential, and saw the Law as merely a loose guideline which they could bend for personal gain. They often rubbed shoulders with the pagan Greek and Roman elites and worked to minimize or erase completely the dividing lines between Jew and Gentile. Essenes are not mentioned in the four Gospels, but Jesus made enemies on both sides of the Jewish political spectrum, condemning the false ideas of both with equal vigor. If we dare to follow His example, we will likely also receive hatred from both sides.

## **Chapter 8**

The phrase “go the extra mile” comes from an ancient Roman law which Jesus alludes to in Matthew 5:41. Today, we see this as merely meaning to do more than is expected, but in ancient times, this phrase had a far harder meaning. To put this in perspective, imagine Jesus telling a Jew from the 1940s that when a Nazi Gestapo officer demands they carry his supplies and ammunition, the Jew was not to resist, but to carry these articles of war even further than necessary.

The Romans were an occupying force of enemy soldiers, hated by the Jews. The only group of people who invoke such a reaction today are the Nazis. The revulsion and shock this message would have brought only comes into perspective when compared to Nazi Germany. The idea that a Jew was to carry the very weapons their enemies used to oppress them was repulsive beyond measure, and Jesus's message that they should carry these weapons even further than absolutely necessary would have been received with horror. Yet such was the message of our Messiah. It is unlikely His message would receive any better reception today.

## **Chapter 9**

The scripture which predicted, or at least inspired, John the Baptist's ministry comes from Isaiah 40, written seven hundred years before his life began. We can safely assume that John the Baptist, who was the son of a priest, was extremely well-educated, and came from a family that was, if not wealthy, at least not poor. This means that his odd wardrobe and habits were likely intentionally used to summon the imagery of an ancient prophet. Isaiah 40 is an excellent chapter to summarize John's ministry, both visually and as a call to repentance in the face of a Holy God. Interestingly, Isaiah 40:15 is also where the common phrase “drop in a bucket” originated and is still in common usage twenty-seven hundred years later.

## **Chapter 10**

Since Andrew and his companion met Jesus directly after his forty days of fasting in the wilderness, it is certain that Jesus would have appeared emaciated. This reconciles the account of John 1 with the account of Matthew 3 and Mark 1. As usual, John's Gospel fills in a few details which the other Gospels neglect to add, clarifying what might otherwise appear as contradictory accounts. The fact that the four Gospels sometimes disagree on minor details is often used as evidence of their unreliability, but is ironically one of the greatest proofs of their authenticity. In fact, all truthful

eyewitness accounts are contradictory, as any police detective will readily confirm. If the Gospels agreed on every particular, skeptics would be just as quick to point out (and rightly so) how impossible it is for genuine witness accounts to be identical.

## **Chapter 11**

The *Sicarii* were the silent fourth philosophy of Jewish politics. They could be called terrorists or freedom fighters depending on your perspective. They focused mostly on silent assassinations of Roman political figures and influential Roman sympathizers. Although the *Sicarii* are not mentioned by name in the Gospel accounts and did not become a widely known force until after the life of Jesus, it is plausible that they formed far earlier and kept hidden until they had attained the support and numbers necessary to fight in the open. It was mostly their attacks which prompted the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his army in 70AD. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the last of the *Sicarii* took refuge in Herod's fortress, Masada. When the Romans finally breached the walls of Masada, the *Sicarii* had all committed suicide, preferring a quick death rather than falling into the hands of the Romans for crucifixion.

## **Chapter 12**

The text which Judas recalls in chapter 12 comes from Isaiah 7:14, the context of which is a conversation between Isaiah and King Ahaz, the great-great-great-grandson of the infamous King Ahab. Ahaz is offered the opportunity to pick any sign he wants to prove the truth of the prophet's words, but Ahaz declines, not wishing to tempt God (unlike the Pharisees, who constantly demanded signs from Jesus). God responds by picking His own sign, mentioned in verse 14: "the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." This beautiful name which God chose for His own Son means "God with us" and has been a popular name ever since. In the next chapter, God instructs Isaiah to name his son "Maher-shalal-hash-baz," which means "plunder speeds, spoil hastes"

and has gained no popularity whatsoever. We feel your pain, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. We feel your pain.

## Chapter 13

In 1<sup>st</sup> century times, a Roman soldier was paid one silver *denarius* per day. All coins were based on weight. Bronze coins were worth one eighth their weight in silver and were minted by local rulers, while silver coins were minted only by Caesar. The *denarius* was the lowest denomination of silver coins, and therefore the lowest denomination of coins bearing the likeness of Caesar. As the lowest, it was the most common coin bearing Caesar's likeness. This is why Jesus specifically asked for a *denarius* (called a penny in the KJV) in Matthew 22:15–22, Mark 12:13–17, and Luke 20:20–26.

The silver shekel was worth two *denarii*. The infamous “thirty pieces of silver” paid to Judas was likely paid in silver shekels. These thirty pieces would have been worth about sixty days' wages (based on fifteen dollars an hour and eight-hour days, this might have been worth about \$7,500 today). One *denarius*, or half-shekel, was the cost for the yearly Temple tax which the collectors asked Peter about in Matthew 17:24–27, so the coin Peter found in the fish's mouth to pay for himself and Jesus would have also been a silver shekel.

## Chapter 14

There is no record of exactly when or how Judas was called to be a disciple, possibly because Judas was already following Jesus when Matthew, Peter, and John were called. Given his plausible background, it is possible that Judas was a money changer and witnessed the first cleansing of the Temple, recorded in John 2:13–22.

There is some controversy over whether Jesus cleansed the Temple once or twice, since each Gospel account only records one cleansing. However, John places the cleansing near the beginning of Jesus's ministry and includes certain details which indicate that this was a separate event from the accounts of Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19, which all place the cleansing at the end of Jesus's

ministry. It is probable that the first three writers did not feel the need to include both events, as similar as they were. John commonly included details that the other writers did not, while passing over that which had already been written. He places the Temple cleansing at the beginning of Jesus's ministry—totally separate from his account of the Triumphal Entry. This placement was likely intentional, indicating that these were two distinct events.

During the Temple cleansing, there were two policing forces at the Temple which Jesus would have needed to avoid: the Levites, which were Jews of priestly lineage and carried batons for ordinary policing matters within the Temple, and the Roman soldiers garrisoned at the Antonia Fortress. Records indicate that a legion of Roman soldiers was under the command of the Sanhedrin and remained near the Temple, likely in the Antonia Fortress, which was attached to the Temple's northwest corner, in case of riots or attacks from terrorist cells like the *Sicarii*.

## **Part 2 Reference Section:**

### **Chapter 15**

There are several possible meanings for the name “Iscariot.” It is far likelier to be a descriptive title rather than a familial surname, and one interpretation is “Man of Cities.” It is impossible to say when Judas adopted this title, but since Judas is often considered the only disciple not from rural Galilee, it is possible that he was given this title by his less urbane peers to distinguish him from the other Apostle Judas (also called Thaddaeus Lebbaeus), hence his nickname in this book: City Boy.

The divisive reading which nearly got Jesus stoned in his hometown (as recorded in Luke 4:16–30 and specifically in verses 18–19) can be compared to Isaiah 61. Luke records Jesus's reading of Isaiah accurately for this very purpose. The city of Nazareth was extremely traditional and looked forward eagerly to the Messiah's destruction of Rome, as did many Jews of the time. For Jesus—a local carpenter—to claim this title while also deliberately skipping the vengeance against their enemies which they so fervently desired was a direct insult to everything they believed. Such a slap in the face, however innocent the words seem to us today, would have certainly been enough to cause the outrage which followed.

### **Chapter 16**

Most scholars agree that Bartholomew (mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and Nathanael (mentioned only in John) are the same person. “Bartholomew,” a bastardization of “Bar-Tolmai,” meaning “son of Tolmai” may or may not be connected to Tolmai, King of Geshur, but it is a striking possibility. Other than what little is recorded in John 1, and a mention in John 21 that Nathanael did live in Cana, Nathanael's history is unknown to us. Artistic license is used here to give further significance to his calling. The events surrounding the Capernaum nobleman, however, are taken directly from the eyewitness account recorded in John 4.

## Chapter 17

The calling of the four fishermen is recorded in Matthew 4, Mark 1, and Luke 5, while John's account skips over this event entirely. Matthew and Mark neglect to include the miracle of the fish, leaving Luke the only writer to record this event in its entirety. It is possible that Mark (which was likely taken from the eyewitness account of Peter) and John neglected to include the miracle out of humility or to avoid the accusation that they followed Jesus merely for personal gain. Matthew was not yet called when this miracle occurred and likely did not record it because he was not a witness to it. Luke saw fit to fill in the details of this important event and provide logical reasons behind why the disciples felt so compelled to give up their careers at the request of a perfect stranger.

It must be remembered that most Galileans were uncivilized blue-collar workers, in contrast to Judas's gentrified education. They were rough around the edges and had a penchant for coarse language. It is probable that some colorful words were borrowed from their Greek and Roman neighbors, as is common among linguistically diverse workmen, even today. So do not be surprised to find a smattering of Greek and Latin profanity in this book. In my defense, the Apostle Paul also uses Greek profanity in Philippians 3:8, and Jesus himself uses the feminine word “*shū'āl*” to describe Herod in Luke 13:32: “Go ye, and tell that fox...”. The context and cultural research both agree that this was an intentional insult. We have a similar insult in modern English based upon the term used for a female canine. Jesus also uses very insulting language throughout the Gospels, including fun terms like “generation of vipers,” “whited sepulchers,” and “you are of your father, the devil.” Even though Christians should be careful in our language, perhaps there are times when coarse and even colorful honesty supersedes polite nicety.

## Chapter 18

Like all melting pots, Judea was filled with people from other cultures: Greeks, Romans, and Samaritans, to name a few. Romans were polytheistic and often adopted the gods of the cultures they

ruled to ensure peace with their subjects. Historical records show that some Romans kept the feast days and Sabbaths as the Jews did, while others even went so far as to denounce the gods of Rome and worship only the True God. These Gentiles were known as God-fearers and were welcomed in the outer court of the Temple. It is likely that the centurion mentioned in Matthew 8 and Luke 7 was such a man, especially since he funded the building of a synagogue in Capernaum. The Jews he ruled would have respected him, but he would still have been seen as an outsider. Even as a God-fearer, who kept the whole Law, he was still a gentile.

## **Chapter 19**

The first known incident between Jesus and a demon is recorded in Mark 1:21–28 and Luke 4:33–37, and took place inside a Capernaum synagogue. These demons recognized Jesus instantly for who He truly was. It is often forgotten that these fallen angels were former coworkers of Jesus, and it is likely that they were once personal friends. Whether Jesus, as a mortal man, would have remembered them or not is a question which cannot be answered here, but they certainly recognized Him. We can also be certain that the same limitless love extended to fallen humanity is also extended to fallen angels, even though they refuse to accept it, for God *is* love.

## **Chapter 20**

One point often repeated in the four Gospels, which is often lost in the retelling, is the vast number of people who constantly followed Jesus. We often see him depicted with twelve nondescript followers wearing nondescript beards and maybe a few hecklers—but this is not the picture the Bible paints. Mark 1:45 indicates that Jesus was so constantly swarmed that he could no longer visit any city, but had to hide in the wilderness, and people still came to him from everywhere. This level of fame is exhausting. It is likely that Jesus had precious little time to himself in the last three years of his life.

## **Chapter 21**

Nain is a small village nearly twenty-five miles south of Capernaum. As with all genuine eyewitness accounts, the events recorded in the four Gospels do not match perfectly, and it is impossible to say how close together many of these miracles were, but Luke 7 records that Jesus arrived in Nain the day following the healing of the centurion's servant. If this date coincides with the events in Mark 1 and Matthew 8, it is safe to say that some extraordinary event must have driven Jesus to travel the twenty-five miles to Nain so early in the morning after such a long night of healing. Perhaps Jesus wished to escape the crowds or, as is imagined in this book, one of the disciples realized the level of exhaustion Jesus was enduring and tried to get him as far away as possible from the crowds in Capernaum. Whatever the case, we can be certain that the events recorded in the Gospels are accurate, even if the timeline is less certain.

## **Chapter 22**

Leprosy was the most feared disease of the first century. Watching this first leper be healed was certainly a memorable event and is recorded in Matthew 8 and Mark 1. Luke chose to record an even more memorable event regarding ten lepers in Luke 17. Leprosy was highly contagious and terminal, and the response to it was mandatory social distancing and face covering. Jesus ignored the social distancing requirements of His day because He did not fear this disease. Likely knowing the censure He would receive from breaking these health and safety guidelines, He always cautioned the former lepers to not reveal how they had been healed. Even in the face of such miraculous healing, some still feared the disease more than they trusted the Healer.

## **Chapter 23**

The calming of the storm is recorded in Mark 4:35–41 and Luke 8:22–25. Mark 4 records many more details, such as the time of day and the fact that there were other boats with them. The additional

details make sense if this account is based on the observations of Peter, as many scholars think. This event would have certainly been more memorable to him, as a fisherman who lived his life on the sea of Galilee. This account also displays the level of exhaustion Jesus was under after dealing with such large crowds. The violent storms which the sea of Galilee is known for are not the type of weather that would induce sleeping. For Jesus to sleep through such a storm, He must have been exhausted.

## **Chapter 24**

After Jesus calms the storm, Mark 5 and Luke 8 record a confrontation with a demoniac who lives in the tombs on the opposite side of Galilee in the land of the Gadarenes. Matthew's account obviously records the same event, since both are directly after the calming of the sea, but Matthew mentions *two* demoniacs in the country of the Gergesenes. Gadara and Gergesa were in the same area, and were likely used interchangeably to refer to the general region, but the number of demoniacs seems irreconcilable. However, Matthew often recorded details which the other writers might have left out to protect the individuals. Whether Mark and Luke simply forgot this second demoniac or whether they left him out to protect his identity, we cannot be sure. Inserting a memorable entrance for Simon Zelotes remedies this discrepancy and also provides an interesting history for an otherwise unknown disciple.

Like Judas Iscariot, the meaning of the title “Zelotes” or “the Zealot,” which differentiates Simon Zelotes from Simon Peter, is unknown. It is actually unlikely to indicate his attachment to the order of Zealots (which did not become well known until later), and more likely that it simply indicated a level of enthusiasm that was impossible to miss, but we cannot know for sure. Also known as Simon the Canaanite, we can assume that Simon had some Gentile blood in his history. The full extent of this title's implication regarding his status as a Jew is entirely unknown, but there is no indication in the Bible that he was considered anything other than a Jew.

## Chapter 25

The account of the healed paralytic is included in three of the four Gospels. Matthew 9:1–8 neglects to include the interesting fact that this paralytic was let down through the roof of a house, but this detail is included in Mark 2:1–12 and Luke 5:17–26. The texts do not say whose house it was that had its roof torn open. It could have been Jesus's own house. Matthew 4:13 indicates that Jesus had already made Capernaum his permanent home, and 9:1 indicates that this miracle happened in “his own city,” which Mark identifies as Capernaum in 2:1. Often, the owner of the house is identified, as in Matthew 8:14 (Peter's house), Matthew 26:6 (house of Simon the Leper), Mark 1:29 (house of Simon and Andrew), Mark 5:38 (house of the ruler of the synagogue), Mark 14:3 (house of Simon the Leper), Luke 7:36 (the Pharisee's house), and Luke 22:54 (high priest's house). Several texts however, (Matthew 9:28, 13:1, and 17:25; and Mark 2:1, 9:28, 9:33, and 10:10) simply refer to “*the* house”—not “a house,” but a singular specific “*the* house,” whose owner is not specifically mentioned. All these texts seem to refer to a house in Capernaum, and no owner is mentioned. Since Jesus is already the prominent figure of the story, ownership is automatically applied to Him.

Despite the modern idea that Jesus was homeless, this is highly unlikely. Based on a simple reading of these eyewitness accounts, it is reasonable to conclude that Jesus owned a home in Capernaum. However, He did travel extensively and was probably forced to escape His home on many occasions to avoid the multitudes that followed Him everywhere. Perhaps He even gave up living in His home entirely, simply to escape the crowds that constantly swarmed Him. This might explain the remarks in Matthew 8:20 and Luke 9:58: “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” Even so, there is clear indication that Jesus did own a home in Capernaum.

## Chapter 26

The accounts of Matthew 9:9–26, Mark 2:14–22, and Luke 5:27–39 all place the dinner with Matthew (called Levi in Mark and Luke) directly after the healing of the paralytic. Matthew places the healing of Jairus's daughter directly after this dinner, while Mark and Luke place it after the healing of the demoniac (Mark 5:21–43, and Luke 8:41–56), placing the calling of Matthew much earlier in the narrative. Matthew, a Jew working as a Roman *publicanus*, was likely hated by his fellow Jews and viewed as a traitor to his race. He was likely denied entry to synagogue and most other aspects of Jewish culture. Even though he did not witness the healing of Jairus's daughter personally (of the twelve, only Simon, James, and John were present, which is why this book does not include the end of Jairus's story, since Judas did not witness it), it was likely the first miracle Matthew ever experienced, and therefore would have made a huge impression on him—especially considering that Jesus had just dined with him. This unbelievable act of solidarity with a *publicanus* would have received the same level of shock as a southern white minister dining with a black family during the height of the race riots of the 1950s and '60s. It is Matthew's timeline of events, therefore, which is likely the most reliable in this case.

## Chapter 27

Even though women often take a backseat in modern depictions of the Gospels, the number of women mentioned in the Gospels is remarkably high for manuscripts of the time. Jesus taught parables which were inspired by (and related to) the daily lives of men *and* women. Some of His parables were about women. Women were recorded as the first witnesses of His resurrection, even though women were not considered reliable witnesses in Jewish culture. If the Gospels had been faked, the writers would have selected more reliable witnesses (men) to discover the empty tomb. Although women did have more rights under Roman law than Jewish law (especially free, unmarried women), conservative Jewish culture at the time saw women as hardly more than creatures designed to lead men into sin.

Married women were kept at home if possible, and the most pious Jews would not even speak to a woman in public. Jesus ignored these traditions and often spoke to women—indeed, had women disciples. Luke 8:3 records Joanna and several other women as helping fund the ministry of Jesus and traveling with him. These were women of means, likely in positions of political power and more able to act autonomously through their connections to Roman and Greek culture, as opposed to the women married to more orthodox Jewish husbands. Most Pharisees did not even speak to their wives or mothers in public. To present one extreme example of Jewish views on women, there was even a sect of Pharisees known as “the bleeding ones” who would close their eyes in public to keep from even catching a glimpse of a woman, to avoid the risk of sinning by lusting after her. This often led to accidents and injuries as they would walk into obstacles or walls in their blind wanderings—hence the name.

Not all Pharisees kept such strict standards or had the same hatred for Jesus as their brethren from Jerusalem. Many of the local rabbis in the more rural towns welcomed Jesus. Capernaum and Bethabara are two examples of this, but in Jerusalem, Pharisees were stricter. The *Haberim*, or “Brotherhood,” was the strictest and most militant sect of Pharisees in most matters of the Law. They kept themselves apart from all things which they thought might defile them and were likely Jesus's main antagonists during His ministry. The Apostle Paul was likely of this more militant and stricter sect of Pharisees, as he names himself a “Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” in Acts 23:6.

## **Chapter 28**

There were three annual feasts which required attendance in Jerusalem for all able-bodied males. These were Passover in the spring, Pentacost seven weeks later, and Tabernacles in the fall. The feast mentioned in John 5 is likely Passover. It is interesting to note that John mentions the Pool of Bethesda as “near the sheep-market.” It is possible that the sheep which had been sold in the Temple the previous year had been moved near the pool to prevent further incidents like the one Jesus had caused.

It was a Roman tradition for the sick to be brought to pagan Temples where they could get some shelter at night. These were often removed to some less-noticeable spot during the day to keep the sick from driving off worshipers (and their donations). This explains why the paralytic does not simply stay near the pool constantly. His complaint that none will carry him to it makes far more sense under this realization.

The claim that an angel stirred up the water is a footnote inserted into the Gospel accounts later to explain local legends around the pool and isn't intended to be seen as a direct claim of divine intervention at this location. This claim was possibly invented to help reconcile Jewish and pagan beliefs about the pool, but there is no evidence to indicate that John (or Jesus) believed in the direct involvement of an angel at this scene. The fact that Pharisees were present at the pool is indicative that the site was not considered a de facto pagan site, but it is likely that Jews and Gentiles both frequented the area for different reasons.

## Part 3 Reference Section:

### Chapter 29

The accounts in Mark 3:1–8 and Matthew 12:1–21 both describe the healing of a man's hand in synagogue as the incident which decidedly turned the Pharisees against Jesus. Luke 6:6–11 adds a bit more detail, even though it does not specifically mention a plot to kill Him, it does say that the Pharisees were filled with rage and discussed what to do with Him. The exact placement of this event is unknown, but it is likely around the second Passover of Jesus's ministry, in April or May, when barley is ripe, since Matthew and Mark both link this event with the disciples' eating of grain on the Sabbath. For the next two years of His ministry, Jesus was an enemy of the religious leaders, although Nicodemus is proof that He had at least one ally within their ranks.

### Chapter 30

The identity of Judas's father will be explained more fully in the notes for Chapter 41. Although he is referred to in Matthew and Mark as “Simon the Leper,” he is not treated as a leper, indicating that he is a *former* leper. His healing is not recorded, and it is entirely possible, therefore, that it was not Jesus who healed him, but a disciple. Matthew 10, Mark 3, and Luke 9 all clearly tell us that the twelve disciples were given power to heal disease, and this included Judas Iscariot. Knowing that Judas was given power over disease, it is quite possible that the healing of Simon the Leper happened through his own son, Judas.

The death of John the Baptist is recorded in Matthew 14:1–12 and Mark 6:17–29, and the surrounding texts indicate, along with a brief mention in Luke 9:6–9, that this happened during the time that the twelve were sent out in pairs. We know that this event had to happen fairly early in Jesus's ministry, because Matthew 14:2 and Mark 6:14 indicate that Jesus's fame had not yet reached Herod (Herod assumed Jesus was John the Baptist returned from the dead). If Herod had heard of Jesus before John's death, he certainly wouldn't have made this assumption.

## Chapter 31

John had many disciples and was well-loved among the people. His death came as a shock and must have angered many against the injustice and cruelty of Herod Antipas. Their natural response was to look to John's cousin and named successor, Jesus. Matthew briefly mentions this in 14:12–13, while Mark elaborates further in 6:30–34 by saying that Jesus was too busy even to eat. Jesus escapes in secret but is found again almost immediately and, despite his fatigue, prepares an answer for their many questions that is both memorable and striking.

## Chapter 32

The Feeding of the Five Thousand is possibly the most famous miracle of Jesus, but the cultural implications are often overlooked. Though it is called “The Feeding of the Five Thousand,” this number only includes the men. Jesus provided food for far more people. Women and children were not counted, but the reason behind this simple fact is rarely discussed. Matthew 14, Mark 6, and Luke 9 all link the Feeding of the Five Thousand with the death of John the Baptist. Many in Israel viewed John as a prophet and knew that John believed Jesus to be the Messiah. As John's cousin, Jesus had the legal right by Jewish law to kill Herod in retribution, and many expected Jesus to dethrone Herod. This banquet in the wilderness was Jesus's response. Jesus separates the men and organizes them into companies of fifties and hundreds. Mark 6:39–40 includes this key detail, and the original wording is the same wording used for military formations. Jesus is assembling an army. It is no wonder that the crowd wanted to make him king, as recorded in John 6:1–21. Jesus clearly displays his ability to rule, provide for his subjects, and organize an army. Jesus was an heir to the Jewish throne by birthright, and John's murder gave Jesus a legitimate legal excuse to execute Herod and take his place on the throne. But Jesus's kingdom is not of this world, and his servants do not fight (John 18:36). This banquet sends a clear message to both Herod and the disciples of John in a profound and unforgettable manner: *Herod's throne is mine for the taking, but I am not here to take Herod's throne.* Unfortunately, the

disciples do not get the message, and Jesus had to send them away so he could calm the overzealous crowd on His own.

### **Chapter 33**

The cannibalistic remarks referenced in this chapter are recorded in John 6:47–60. They directly follow the Feeding of the Five Thousand and drive away many of the men who wanted to make Jesus king not long before. Jesus leaves Israel for a city that no Jew would ever dare enter—Caesarea-Philippi—likely so He can finally get a respite from the crowds of Jews still eager to make Him king. Matthew 15:21–28 and Mark 7:24–30 record the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, but they do not indicate any specific location. We do know that Jesus visited the pagan temple at Caesarea-Philippi, but it is unknown if the Syro-Phoenician woman met him here or in some other town in the area of Tyre and Sidon. This novel combines Jesus's discussion of the Gates of Hell recorded in Matthew 16:13–27 with the account of the Syro-Phoenician woman for simplicity's sake. All details of the pagan temple site have been gleaned from archaeological records of the area, which have confirmed the types of worship performed there. It is interesting that Jesus chose this site, surrounded by false gods (Zeus, the king of the gods, and Pan, a shepherd-type deity) and a supposed entrance to the underworld, to question His disciples about His identity as the true Shepherd and King of Kings, and also to predict His future victory over death.

### **Chapter 34**

Luke 10:1–20 is the only account which mentions the sending of the seventy disciples. The exact timing of this in relation to the events of John 7 is unknown, but it is possible that Jesus sent the seventy out while He remained in hiding, as is mentioned in John 7:1. The conversation between Judas Iscariot and Judas, the brother of Jesus (Jesus's siblings are mentioned in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3), as well as the other events surrounding Tabernacles, is inspired by the record of John 7. Ancient

traditions regarding the Feast of Tabernacles help to shed greater light on the significance of Jesus's words and their timing on the last day of the feast.

## **Chapter 35**

John 8 is the only account we have of the woman caught in adultery, and it is a late addition to the original text. However, this does not mean that it is fictional. There are many reasons (especially if the woman in the story is Mary, Lazarus's sister) to keep this story quiet. The woman's reputation would have been tarnished considerably if this story was widely published. Later, after her death, it would have been safe to include it. There are several details in the story that indicate its validity, including the specific fact that Jesus wrote in the dust and that the Pharisees left eldest first. The exact message which Jesus wrote in the dirt was not recorded. We can only guess at what message would make these Pharisees abandon their quest. My personal theory is included in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 36**

Like the previous chapter, this account is mentioned only in John. Perhaps, as Jesus had been in hiding, his other disciples were not present for these events and only John witnessed them. Perhaps they simply found other events more significant, or they thought the story might tarnish the reputation of one of Jesus's followers. John 8:13–59 and 9:1–12 relate the argument between Jesus and the Pharisees which led to him nearly being stoned for blasphemy, and the following healing of the blind man. Jesus clearly teaches that following God's Law is required to claim the lineage of Abraham. Being part of “God's Chosen People” is dependent on obedience, not bloodline—despite what many church leaders claim today. The men with whom Jesus was arguing were Jewish, yet Jesus boldly stated that their father was the devil, not Abraham.

## **Chapter 37**

The identity of the man from the parable of Matthew 20:1–16 is unknown. Perhaps the story was not even based on a real person, but it provided another excellent backdrop for the fictional history between Judas and Joseph of Arimathaea. Is it likely that the parables from Mathew 20 and Luke 16 were both inspired by Judas's history? Perhaps not, but it is plausible, and adds biblical flavor to otherwise unknown personalities.

Traditionally, the high priest was to serve for the duration of his life. There is some confusion regarding the roles of Annas and Caiaphas. John 18:13 does reveal that Annas was Caiaphas's father-in-law, but their official roles are less clear. Luke 3:2 notes that both Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, while John 11:49 and John 18:13 seem to indicate that Caiaphas was made high priest in that year. Several theories exist. Annas could have retired and been considered high priest after his retirement, much like presidents in America still retain the title after completing their term. It is also possible that a schism had occurred and that the Pharisees and Sadducees each recognized their own high priest, or that Annas was ousted by Rome and replaced with Caiaphas. If this was the case, the conservative Jews would see Caiaphas as only a usurper and still consider Annas as the legitimate high priest despite his inability to make legal rulings, while the more liberal Jews would recognize Caiaphas as high priest in all respects. History sheds no light on this subject, but perhaps time will reveal the correct explanation.

## **Chapter 38**

This chapter fills in the details regarding the blind man who was healed in chapter 36. The account in John 9:1–34 describes the healing and the man's excommunication as a single event, but verse 35 indicates that Jesus only heard about this later, so the later part of this story (John 9:35–10:21) has been placed in this novel with the account of Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication, or Feast of Lights) in John 10:22–39, directly after the account of the blind man's excommunication. Again, Jesus upsets the

religious leaders to such a degree that he is nearly stoned to death. In my personal opinion, John 10:32 is evidence that Jesus possessed not only a sharp wit, but a rather snarky sense of sarcasm—and He is not the only Biblical character to have one. Matthew's mention in Matthew 2:23 that Jesus's home in Nazareth is prophetic because “He shall be called a Nazarene” is believed by some scholars to be an intentional pun. John specifically mentions in John 20:4 that he outran Peter on their way to the tomb. There is no reason to include this senseless bit of trivia unless it was intended as a playful jab among friends. Jesus consistently spoke in cuttingly sharp riddles, clever turns of phrase, and yes, direct insults, which are all so often lacking in modern retellings.

## **Chapter 39**

Jesus's ministry beyond the Jordan is mentioned in Matthew 19:1 through 20:16 and Mark 10:1–31, and both texts indicate a slightly better reception from the Pharisees in this area. Since this is where most of John the Baptist's ministry happened, it is likely that his presence had some softening effect on the local synagogue leaders. Jesus was exceptionally well-received here, as John 10:40–42 also indicates. John gives us the most specific date for this ministry, placing it between the Feast of Dedication in December and before the Triumphal Entry during Passover week in the spring. Luke is unclear if the healing of the hunchback woman (Luke 13:10–17) or the odd remarks regarding Jesus's mother's reproductive organs (Luke 11:27–28) happened during this time, but the placement is plausible, especially since his rebuke to the ruler of the synagogue is taken with humility, rather than rock-throwing.

It is unknown what motive made Luke place the strange remarks of Luke 11:27 into scripture, but he felt them striking enough to gain a place. Perhaps they are intended as a divine reproof against the modern veneration of Mary to nearly—and sometimes equal to—divine status. Jesus treated His mother with love and kindness but was quick to counter any claim that she held any right to divinity.

## **Chapter 40**

Again, John is the only account which includes any mention of Lazarus. In John, Jesus hears of Lazarus's death directly after the mention of his ministry beyond the Jordan, so it is evident that Jesus was near Bethabara when he heard the news. John 11:1 through 12:11 cover the entire story, including the dinner in Bethany at the house of Simon the Leper (see next chapter's notes). It is evident that the raising of Lazarus and the dinner with Simon the Leper are intrinsically linked. It also explains the extreme gratitude which Mary displays in John 12:1–8, which remains unexplained in the other Gospel accounts. John 12:9–11 also explains why Lazarus is not mentioned by the other Gospel writers: there was a plot to kill Lazarus. This plot would have certainly increased after Jesus's ascension. Mentioning Lazarus in the earlier accounts would have put him and his family in grave danger. By the time John wrote his account (which is clearly designed to fill the gaps of the other preexisting records rather than present an entire story on its own) there was no longer danger in mentioning names, so John includes these key details that help make sense of the other accounts. Lazarus and his family had either escaped Jerusalem or already been hunted down and killed by the time John wrote his account.

## **Chapter 41**

A brief mention of James and John's request via their mother to gain the chief positions in Jesus's kingdom is included in this chapter. Both Matthew and Mark seem to place this either on the way to Jericho or while staying in Jericho on Jesus's last return to Jerusalem, likely only a few days before the dinner at Simon the Leper's. Matthew 20:20–28 includes the fact that it was their mother who made the specific request, while Mark 10:35–45 leaves her out of the narrative.

Simon the Leper is a character that must be pieced together from all four Gospel accounts. He is mentioned only in connection to this singular dinner. The accounts in Matthew 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, Luke 7:36–50, and John 12:1–8 all record the same event. Even though there are some differences, as is expected with eyewitness accounts, there are far too many similarities to assume they are separate

events. This is the first appearance of this complex character, but from these four different accounts we learn that this man is called “Simon the Leper” (from Matthew and Mark), meaning he was a leper for some time, but his presence hosting a banquet indicates that he is a leper no longer, even though his healing is never recorded. Luke informs us that the host of this dinner was a Pharisee, but inadvertently gives us Simon's name in Jesus's reply (it is obvious from the text that Jesus is speaking to the master of the house). We can conclude then that Simon was both a Pharisee and a former leper—a difficult combination, to be sure.

Again, John's account fills in some of these gaps. He explains that Lazarus is partially the reason for this dinner, and John is the first to reveal the woman's identity. It is likely that the other writers wished to protect Mary's identity in connection to the history of this “sinner” who exposes herself publicly. By the time John wrote his account, Mary could have already been killed, or perhaps John simply decided that enough time had passed that hiding her identity was no longer an issue. It is impossible to say for sure. The last vital clue to Simon's identity is also in John, where Judas Iscariot is revealed to be Simon's son. The host of the dinner is not named in John, and some have wrongly assumed Judas to be the son of Simon Peter, since Simon–Peter is the only other “Simon” mentioned in John's account. It is only when we take all four Gospels together that the true picture is revealed. John neglects to mention Simon the Leper by name, but the other Gospels do. Jesus had upset and insulted countless Pharisees by the time of this dinner. The betrayal by Judas Iscariot makes far more sense when we realize that it was Judas's *father* who was publicly humiliated at his own dinner party, rather than some unknown Pharisee. Whether this is the true reason behind Judas's dreadful decision or not, it is evident that the writers of both Matthew and Mark considered the events of this dinner to be adequate reason for Judas to betray Jesus and make specific mention of it (Matthew 26:14–16 and Mark 14:10–11).

## Chapter 42

The exact words of Jesus, as recorded in Luke 13:31–35 seem innocent to us today, but what meaning did they have in Jesus's day? The word for “fox” used here is “*shū'āl*” and is feminine in the original text. It is certainly not used in a polite sense. Jesus was not saying that Herod was “foxy” or “clever” as we understand the word today. The most accurate comparison in modern English is a word which means “female dog,” and when used insultingly, the modern version has a similar meaning. I have elected not to use it. The indication of the phrase is that Jesus considers Herod to be a weak, worthless impostor with delusions of grandeur and that Jesus has far more important things to worry about than a pretend king's impotent threats. He expresses this with colorful language that likely shocked the Pharisees just as much as similar language would shock good churchgoers today.

The Parables of the Good Shepherd, the Good Housewife, and the Good Father (briefly mentioned at the start of this chapter), as recorded in Luke 15:4–32 are a complimentary set. The first was intended to resonate more with men, the second with women, while the third sums them up and adds more depth and personality. It is likely that Jesus reused His parables often, which would explain why they are recalled so well in the Gospel accounts.

Despite them often being called the Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Prodigal Son, the true focus of the parable is on the finder/rescuer, rather than the lost/rescued. In the last parable, the elder son has a right to be angry; the prodigal son's choice to abandon his family and spend his inheritance is not to be celebrated. But the prodigal son is not the focus of the story. The father does not ask his elder son to celebrate the son's poor choices but to celebrate the father's joy in his son's return. It is not because of anything the sheep has done that the village celebrates with the shepherd, but for the successful conclusion of the shepherd's search. It would have been an act of justice to punish the prodigal son for his poor choices and let him receive his “just desserts.” The elder son is angry that justice is not served upon his younger brother, but doing so would also hurt the father, which would be

equally unjust. Faced with two seemingly unjust solutions, Jesus profoundly and brilliantly presents mercy as the highest form of justice.

## **Part 4 Reference Section:**

### **Chapter 43**

The triumphal entry would have been a memorable event in the minds of the disciples, who expected Jesus to ascend the throne like all Israel of the time. Its record can be found in Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–19, and Luke 19:28–44. Matthew and Luke leave no gap between the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the Temple, but Mark makes note that the Temple cleansing was the following morning.

The names of the two disciples sent to fetch the donkey's colt are unnamed, but they could have been Justus and Matthias. Peter indicates in Acts 1:21–23 that Justus and Matthias had been disciples of Jesus since His baptism by John. Although Jesus is typically pictured with only twelve disciples, He had many more. He ordained twelve, and later sent out seventy others, who must have been selected from an even larger group. Matthias and Justus were certainly of this number.

### **Chapter 44**

The exact sequence of events during the final week is not completely certain, but most historians agree that the triumphal entry occurred on Sunday, five days before the Passover on Friday, which coincides with the Rabbinical tradition of selecting the Passover lamb five days before the Feast. Jesus would have then cursed the fig tree and cleansed the Temple on Monday, the following morning (Mark 11:12). Jesus must have left Monday night after dark, because the disciples discovered the withered fig tree Tuesday morning (Mark 11:20). The conversations with the scribes and Pharisees are harder to pinpoint, as Jesus taught in the Temple from Sunday through Thursday.

Remember that the Jewish day starts at sundown, so the Last Supper would have happened late Thursday evening, which was the very beginning of the first day of Unleavened Bread (Passover). The lamb would traditionally be killed the next day (Friday), to be eaten Friday afternoon before sunset, at the end of Passover Day, rather than the beginning. We can rationally conclude that Jesus ate the

Passover dinner a day early (though still technically on Passover), because the scribes and Pharisees had not yet eaten the Passover lamb at the time of Jesus's trial on Friday (John 18:28).

## **Chapter 45**

The second cleansing of the Temple is recorded in Matthew 21:12–17, Mark 11:15–19, and Luke 19:45–46. Mark gives us the most information and includes the fact that Jesus did not allow anyone with wares to enter the Temple (verse 16). This small piece of information tells us much. The many doors leading into the Temple Mount would have taken a significant force to continually guard. Jesus must have had many of His close followers nearby to enforce these rules, which would not have been possible at the beginning of His ministry, further indicating two separate Temple cleansings.

Another indication of two Temple cleansings is the remarkable similarity to the rules of cleansing a house of leprosy in Leviticus 14:33–57, which include an initial cleansing and emptying of the house, followed by an inspection, then a second inspection and a replacement of the unclean parts with new parts seven days later, and finally, if the plague still persisted, the complete destruction of the house. These same events happened in the same order with Jesus's first cleansing recorded in John 2, the inspection recorded in Mark 11:11, followed by the second cleansing the following morning. Jesus spent the rest of the week teaching in the Temple, but the hatred of the religious leaders persisted. Jesus then pronounced the house desolate in Matthew 23:37–39, just before predicting its destruction in 24:1–2, even alluding to the removal of the stones with similar phrasing as Leviticus. At Jesus's death, the House of God was condemned and its Occupant evicted, as displayed by the Temple veil being ripped in two. The final destruction happened 37 years later when Titus's forces completely demolished the Temple to its very foundation—exactly as required by Levitical Law.

## **Chapter 46**

The Last Supper is recorded in all four Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:17–35, Mark 14:12–26,

Luke 22:7–38, and John 13:1 through 17:26), and each includes some details not included in the others. John, in typical fashion, only mentions the supper briefly, but includes the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet after supper and an extensive record of Jesus's final words, which the other accounts leave out.

Judas did not witness Jesus's prayer in the garden, and so it is not included in this novel, but the account in the garden of Gethsemane can be read and compared from Matthew 26:36–46, Mark 14:27–42, and Luke 22:39–46. John does not mention Jesus's inner struggle in Gethsemane but cuts directly to Judas's entrance, which will be covered in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 47**

Mark includes an odd piece of the story in 14:51–52 by mentioning a young man who fled naked. It is not mentioned who this man was, but if it was John, it would explain his absence during the trial and later appearance at the cross with Mary, Jesus's mother. He would have needed to return to wherever he had some spare clothes, and if this location coincided with where Jesus's mother was staying, he would have certainly informed her of the tragic abduction of her Son. However, this is all speculation and is impossible to know for certain. Jesus had many disciples, and it is possible that this young man was not even one of the twelve.

Because of the traditional ideas of “gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” most Christians find Peter's attack on Malchus shocking, but it is interesting to note that Jesus specifically told his disciples to sell their coats and purchase swords at the Last Supper, only a few hours before (Luke 22:36–38). Two of the disciples already had swords, and Jesus agreed that two were sufficient. With this conversation fresh in their minds, it is no wonder that Peter was ready to put his weapon to use. The disciples asked Jesus if it was time to attack (Luke 22:49), and failing to receive a response in time, Peter takes the initiative to defend his master (Matthew 26:47–56, Mark 14:43–52, Luke 22:47–53, John 18:1–11). Jesus intercedes to prevent further violence, but does not specifically condemn Peter's defense.

It is also interesting to note the incorrect ideas tied to the phrase “he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword,” which many assume to be a scriptural tenet, and which pacifists use to support their beliefs. However, this phrase is not found in scripture. The phrase which *is* in scripture is: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” Matthew 26:52. This was not meant as a principle to be applied to all situations, but a direct command to Peter and the other disciples who wished to save Jesus through violence. Jesus knew that an attack against the angry mob would turn into a bloodbath, and Jesus commanded His disciples not to resist in order to prevent more bloodshed. It is not a principle which we must apply to all situations. Luke 22:38 is proof that Jesus expected his disciples to be armed and ready for combat, while Matthew 26:52 shows the importance of recognizing the right time to fight—and the wrong time.

## **Chapter 48**

The trial at the high priest's house—if it can be called a trial—is recorded in Matthew 26:57–75, Mark 14:53–72, Luke 22:54–65, and John 18:12–27. John is the only account which mentions another disciple other than Peter, but this disciple is unnamed. Most scholars agree that this disciple is John, since it is found in his account. However, it seems unlikely that John, as a peasant fisherman from Galilee, would be known to the high priest, as John 18:16 indicates. It is therefore possible that this disciple was, in fact, Judas—especially since Judas was the entire reason that Jesus was there in the first place. As painful as the memory of Judas must have been to the other eleven, it is no wonder that he is mentioned only when absolutely necessary by the Gospel writers. It is possible that John wished to explain how Peter managed to gain entrance to the high priest's house but was reluctant to credit the feat to Judas. It is also possible that Peter only knew that a fellow disciple had gained him entrance and did not know his helper's identity. We can only speculate, but it seems likelier that Judas (who had already established contact with the high priest) would have been this unknown disciple rather than a fisherman from Galilee.

## **Chapter 49**

The mockery of justice which happened at sunrise is recorded briefly in Matthew 27:1–2, Mark 15:1, and Luke 22:66–71. The exact details between the night trial at Annas's house and the official trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin the following morning are somewhat blurred. It is entirely unknown if any of Jesus's disciples witnessed these events firsthand, or if they had to piece together the account from other witnesses (including Jesus, perhaps). As is common among truthful eyewitness accounts, the words and actions are remembered vividly, while other details, like the sequence of events, tend to be remembered with less clarity.

## **Chapter 50**

Herod's involvement in the trial of Jesus is recorded only in Luke 23:6–12. It is possible that Herod was staying in the same palace as Pilate, since he was only visiting Jerusalem (as he ruled Galilee, not Judea), and any eyewitnesses would have been unable to enter. They would have therefore not known of Herod's involvement. However, it is far likelier that Matthew and Mark did not wish to risk Herod's anger by calling attention to his involvement. Luke, writing to “Theophilus,” (meaning “friend of God,” though it is unknown if this name was a personal title or a generic Greek term for any Christian man) was the only one who felt safe enough to indict the Jewish monarch, since he was writing to Greek Christians rather than his fellow Jews. The politics and social turmoil of the time were complex; if the other Gospel writers neglected to include Herod's involvement intentionally, we can be certain that they had good reason.

## **Chapter 51**

Matthew 27:2–31, Mark 15:1–20, and John 18:28 through 19:16 place all the blame on Pilate and his soldiers for this cruel treatment, while Luke 23:1–25 seems to indicate that it was Herod's troops—not Pilate's—which mocked and abused Jesus. Luke does not mention a crown of thorns, but

the other gospels all connect the crown of thorns with the purple robe (Matthew calls it a scarlet robe) which Luke does mention. Luke's account makes more sense, given Pilate's reluctance to sentence Jesus, but the exact details remain unknown. It is also possible that both Herod's and Pilate's troops mocked and abused Jesus. If so, Jesus would have endured this cruelty three times: in Annas's palace, Herod's palace, and Pilate's palace.

## **Chapter 52**

The exact identity of Barabbas (or “Bar-Abbas,” literally meaning “Son of the Father”) is unknown. Some scholars claim that his name was also Jesus (“Jesus” in Greek or “Yeshuah,” in Hebrew), which was a fairly common name of the time. The only information we have about Barabbas is mentioned in Matthew 27:15–26, Mark 15:6–15, Luke 23:13–25, and John 18:39–40. The most we know is that Barabbas had been charged with murder and “a certain rebellion made in the city” (Luke 23:19) while John 18:40 merely states that he was a robber. It is unknown if he was the founder of the *Sicarii* or simply some rebel, but he was notorious enough that all four Gospel accounts seem to expect the reader to know his identity by these scant facts. It is extremely likely that the other two thieves crucified with Jesus were co-conspirators with Barabbas. If Barabbas was the founder of the *Sicarii*, the possibility remains that the destruction of Jerusalem and the following massacre at Masada were direct results of Barabbas's release. This is mere speculation, but the Jews' bold promise of “His blood be on us and on our children” (Matthew 27:25) becomes far more significant if this critical choice between Jesus Barabbas and Jesus Christos is the direct cause of the miseries which fell on these same people and their children thirty-seven years later, in accordance with their wishes.

## **Chapter 53**

Historians tend to agree that lashing was considered part of the punishment of crucifixion. Josephus mentions that scourging was part of a condemned criminal's punishment. It is possible that

Pilate, knowing a man condemned to crucifixion was to be lashed anyway, suggested the lashing in the hope that it would be enough punishment. It is Jewish tradition that gives us the number of lashes for a condemned man, but the exact number is not recorded in the Gospel accounts. It is safe to assume, however, that in their demonic fury, the mob would have demanded the highest legal number of lashes.

## **Chapter 54**

Criminals were sometimes tied to the cross and sometimes nailed to it. We know Jesus was nailed to the cross from the Gospel accounts (John 20:25), but tradition often displays the two thieves tied with ropes. This is unlikely, since the crucifixions would have been done by the same executioner, and it stands to reason that he would have used the same method on all three. The accounts of Matthew 27:32–56, Mark 15:21–41, Luke 23:26–49 agree that Jesus was crucified about the third hour (9:00am) and died about the ninth hour (3:00pm). John 19:17–37 mentions neither the timing of Jesus's death nor the three hours of darkness which preceded it. John mentions that the Sabbath was approaching (Friday evening), and that to prevent the men from suffering on the Sabbath, the soldiers were to break their legs. This would have prevented the sufferers from being able to raise themselves enough to take a breath, and they would have quickly suffocated. Pilate was shocked to hear that Jesus had died before this, since crucifixion was a very slow, lingering death (Mark 15:42–44).

Joseph of Arimathaea is only mentioned in connection with Jesus's death (Matthew 27:57–61, Mark 15:42–47, Luke 23:50–56, and John 19:38–42). From these scant facts, we know Joseph was from Arimathaea, he was rich, a disciple, a “prominent council member” (on the Sanhedrin), and a “good and just man.” John tells us that Joseph had kept his allegiance to Jesus a secret for fear of the Jews, but that at Jesus's death, Joseph boldly went to Pilate to ask for Jesus's body. By Roman law, any crucified criminal was denied the right of burial, so this was indeed a daring request—but Pilate agreed. Joseph donated his own tomb, while Nicodemus brought about a hundred pounds of spices for the burial. Both of these remarkable gifts could only be provided by very rich men. These few details—

along with two of Jesus's parables—are the framework upon which the character of Joseph of Arimathaea is built within this novel.

## **Chapter 55**

There is precious little information about Judas in the four Gospel accounts. He is mentioned only as one of the twelve (Matthew 10:2–4, Mark 3:14–19, Luke 6:13–16), or in connection to the betrayal of Jesus. Even in the lists cited above, he is named a traitor and mentioned last of the twelve, included only because he had to be. The shock of such a betrayal from one of their own must have been extremely painful for the disciples, and it is natural that they speak of it only when necessary. But what of Judas? The perspectives of the Gospel accounts are clearly seen, but little attention is often given to Judas's perspective. As a close disciple of Jesus, and after such personal proofs as Judas must have seen, it is absurd to imagine that Judas had any doubt about Jesus's identity as the Messiah. What motive, then, could have pushed Judas to betray the One who could save Israel? Greed is often cited as the source, since John 12:6 incriminates Judas for stealing money from the disciples' mutual funds. This claim of greed falls apart under careful scrutiny. Thirty pieces of silver was a pittance for such a betrayal, and Judas did not even keep the money. If greed was his only motive, his actions following Jesus's condemnation make no sense. Why Judas took money from the disciples' mutual funds is unknown. It is human nature to assume the worst of someone who has betrayed us, and the disciples were, after all, human. We can only view Judas through their eyes. As Nicodemus rightly said in John 7:51, we should not judge a man until we have heard his explanation. Sadly, Judas's perspective is lost to history. We can only speculate about Judas's true intentions, and ironically, many Christians today condemn Judas without ever considering his perspective.

The Jews expected their Messiah to defeat Rome in battle. They expected a warrior. It is ridiculous to imagine that Judas did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah, but like most Jews at the time, Jesus was not what Judas expected. It is entirely logical to conclude that Judas fully expected Jesus to

retaliate—or at least survive. It is only after Jesus's condemnation that Judas vehemently returns the money. If he had truly expected Jesus to be killed from the offset, such a violent reaction to His sentencing would not have happened.

Judas's response, then, is unsurprising. The only person who might have forgiven Judas had been sent to die by his own actions. His close friends saw Judas as worse than an enemy, and the enemies with whom he had bargained saw him with only hate and disdain. Judas loathed himself for what he had done and knew there was no remedy. He was responsible for the death of his own Savior and the death of God's Son. From Judas's perspective, he had become the enemy of everyone: his friends, his Master, his enemies, himself, and even his God. Judas had murdered the only friend who might be crazy enough to forgive him. A man placed in such a terrible position is truly, inescapably lost. It is no wonder that Jesus calls Judas the “son of perdition” in John 17:12.

## Chapter 56

The noun “perdition” is often associated with the idea of hell, or a state of evil which is impossible to remedy. Christians often use this phrasing as proof that Judas is forever lost and beyond hope of redemption. However, such is not the case. In essence, “perdition” simply means “a state of lostness,” and is related to the French *perdu*, meaning “lost,” or the infinitive form *perdre*, meaning “to lose.”

Is this word proof that Judas is unsaved? No. The sheep, the coin, and the prodigal son are also lost. The coin is inanimate, but the sheep and the son are similar in that they do not wish to be lost. The son returns home. The sheep cries out. It is practically impossible to find a sheep in the wilderness if the sheep does not call out to its shepherd. The fact that the sheep is found indicates that it, like the son, desires to return. They are lost, certainly, but they do not *stay lost*.

Many people point to Mark 14:21 as evidence that Judas will not be saved, but this turn of phrase is used to express misery, not status of salvation. Job 3:3–13 uses this same imagery, and though

Job suffered much, no one questions his salvation or the fact that his misery came to an end that was blessed “more than his beginning” (Job 42:12). John 17:12 may indicate that Judas is lost, but John 18:9 contradicts this. The most logical reconciliation between these two verses is that Judas *is lost*, but like the sheep and the prodigal son, he does not *remain lost*.

Matthew is the only disciple who records the end of Judas's life. Precious little is stated in Matthew 27:3–8, but these few details shed a light on Judas that is often overlooked. 1 John 1:9 clearly states that confession is the only requirement for salvation. The other Gospel accounts present only negative perspectives of Judas, but Matthew presents an interesting account of Judas's final act. Matthew clearly indicates that Judas expressed remorse (Matthew 27:3), openly confessed his sins (27:4), and made restitution (27:5). It presents a striking contrast to the chief priests, who respond to this heartfelt plea with disdain. They show no remorse, *but Judas does*.

An unrepentant and remorseless man would not have returned the money, and certainly would not have felt such guilt as to kill himself from intense regret. Is Judas's suicide enough evidence to condemn him? Tradition tends to make suicide into an “unpardonable sin,” but there is no biblical foundation for this. Indeed, offering salvation for a man who kills another but denying it for a man who kills himself is neither fair nor just.

Is there a time limit on suicide? Is a man lost because he kills himself quickly with a rope or gun, while another man can be saved because he kills himself slowly with poor diet and lack of exercise? Both are fatal, and both a free choice, yet the typical church only condemns one of these. If a person knowingly drinks a liquid which they know will eventually be fatal, does it matter if it is arsenic, alcohol, or soda? Is God's ability to save reliant on the speed at which a poison kills? No, to place limits on God's ability to save is illogical and blasphemous. The only condition necessary to be saved by God is a desire to be saved by God. Judas's final acts appear to meet these requirements.

## Epilogue

There is no absolute proof that Judas will be saved or that he desired to be, but based on the little information we have, there is a distinct possibility that Judas will retake his place among the twelve after the resurrection of the dead at Christ's second coming. The other eleven were no less sinful than Judas. All have sinned (Romans 3:23). We all require a savior, and although it is comforting to point to another as being worse than ourselves, we are just as guilty as Judas. Judas was called the "son of perdition," but we all fall into this category. We have all gone astray (Isaiah 53:6). We are all lost. But this is not the end of the story. Judas died without hope because his Savior was dead.

But Jesus didn't stay dead. And the lost sheep didn't stay lost.

Our hope is alive, and Judas's hope is alive as well, even though he doesn't know it yet.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

(Luke 19:10)

## About the Author:



Paul Campbell is the author of *The Doomed Disciple* and the *Callahan Chronicles* series, as well as several short stories. He has many more books inside his head just itching to get out. Like most authors, Paul enjoys overused tropes like drinking coffee, reading mystery novels, playing a musical instrument, and writing about himself in the third person. He also has less popular hobbies like origami, collecting Lego® sets, and keeping the squirrels off his flying machine, which he hasn't flown since he crashed it. For more information about Paul Campbell or to order his books, please visit his website at [www.traitorbooks.com](http://www.traitorbooks.com).