

# Better Off Dead

**Introduction.** It was a terrible night in the life of Jesus. Jesus knew He was near the cross. The Scriptures reveal that He would be betrayed by a close friend (Psalm 41:9), and the price of 30 pieces of silver that Judas would receive was also prophesied (Zechariah 11:12-13).

Judas now lives in infamy. There are three lists of apostles (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16) and Judas is always listed last, along with being identified as the one “who betrayed him.” Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray Him (John 6:64), and He warned about the traitor in His midst (John 13:11). Judas was among the first to criticize Jesus (John 12:4-6), and Judas was among the last to ask, “Is it I?” The way that Judas betrayed Jesus showed his despicable character.

The birth of a child brings immeasurable joy, but the Lord said it would’ve been better if Judas had never been born (Matthew 26:23-24). We’re going to talk about four types of people who, in the judgment, would be better if they had not been born.

## ***I. The Traitor Who Sells Him***

- A. Loyalty is admired, even when the person is wrong.
  - 1. The terms “turncoat” or “traitor” are repugnant to us.
  - 2. We remember Marcus Brutus, Guy Fawkes, and Benedict Arnold.
- B. But we’re prone to condemn in others what we allow in ourselves.
- C. What we allow to stand between us and Christ is the price we sell Jesus for.
  - 1. Some sell Him for peace at home.
    - a) Solomon let his wives to turn his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:3).
    - b) Jesus warned that He could divide families (Matthew 10:37).
    - c) Paul warned that husbands can care too much for their wives and not enough about the kingdom (1 Corinthians 7:33).
  - 2. Some sell Him for pleasure.
  - 3. Some sell Him for their career.
    - a) They take jobs knowing that they’ll be absent on Sunday. This eventually weakens them and they fall away.
    - b) The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). We can’t serve God and mammon.
- D. When we sell the Lord like Esau, it’s better if we’d never been born (Hebrews 12:16-17).

## ***II. The Infidel Who Denies Him***

- A. We live in an age of skepticism, but this isn’t necessarily a negative trait.
  - 1. Skepticism forces us to analyze, strategize, and ultimately seek truth. Personally, I don’t want anyone accepting religious truth from me without scrutinizing it (Acts 17:11).
  - 2. Skepticism can be negative because while people rightly question assertions and conclusions, they never actually make a move for various reasons: outright rejection, uncertainty, or fearfulness as to whether they’re making the right choice. They end up being eternal fence-sitters.

- B. There's a God, and evidence abounds that He exists because He put the evidence there (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20).
- C. God's wonders are clearly seen, not just in the design of natural laws, the elements, the stars, DNA, cells, or individual species, but also in the fully functioning systems and relationships necessary for life.
  - 1. A watch's beauty lies not just in the intricacy and craftsmanship of the individual metal parts, but in how well it runs.
  - 2. I can say the same for the Earth itself. I can appreciate that God made this wonderful world by looking at it, just as Psalm 19:1-6 suggests.
- D. Truly, the fool says there's no God (Psalm 14:1).
  - 1. The last word on atheism is said in Romans 1:22, a judgment that's vindicated in the sequence of v. 19 and 28.
  - 2. The assertion of Psalm 14:1 is treated in Scripture, not as a sincere if misguided conviction, but as an irresponsible gesture of defiance.

### **III. The Apostate Who Renounces Him**

- A. There's a difference between the apostate and the backslider.
  - 1. God plead for backsliding Israel to return (Jeremiah 3:12).
  - 2. Peter described the backslider in 2 Peter 2:20-22.
  - 3. At times we all sin (1 John 1:8), but we should repent (Acts 8:20-23).
- B. The apostate has gone further by renouncing Christ and His church.
  - 1. The word apostasy comes from the Greek apostasia meaning "to leave or depart." Apostasia is made up of two parts: apo, meaning "away from," and hístēmi, meaning "to stand." The root apo means "away," "off," or "apart."
  - 2. You can see the destructiveness of apostasy by seeing how's it's described.
    - a) One was once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift (Hebrews 6:4).
    - b) One has a hardened heart (Romans 2:4-5).
    - c) One has given up their sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:26-27).
- C. The grave danger of backsliding is that it can lead to an apostate heart.
  - 1. Sin is progressive and can deaden you (Psalm 1:1-6; cp. 1 Timothy 4:2).
  - 2. The willful sin Paul speaks of follows immediately what he said about forsaking the assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

### **IV. The Hypocrite Who Dishonors Him**

- A. A hypocrite "plays the part."
  - 1. It's been said that a hypocrite is a person "who goes around with two faces under one hat."
  - 2. Someone once said that a hypocrite is simply someone who wants others to see them as holier than they are. To achieve this goal, they hide what's really going on in their life.
- B. Jesus charged the Jews of His day with hypocrisy in Matthew 23.
  - 1. Say and do not (v. 3).
  - 2. Bind heavy burdens (v. 5).
  - 3. Tithe mint, anise, and cummin (v. 23).
  - 4. Cleanse the outside of the cup and platter (v. 26).
  - 5. Whitewashed tombs (v. 27).

- C. We are warned against hypocrisy.
  - 1. Let love be without hypocrisy (Romans 12:9).
  - 2. In sincere love of the brethren (1 Peter 1:10-13).
  - 3. We are to practice pure religion (James 1:27).
  - 4. Faith must be sincere (1 Timothy 1:5).
- D. Hypocrisy dishonors God.
  - 1. The ancient Jew blasphemed the name of God (Romans 2:24).
  - 2. They professed to know God but they denied Him in their deeds (Titus 1:16).
- E. For all those who do evil yet try to play the part of a righteous Christian, don't you think that God's going to let you disrespect Him and His Son. You'd better get to repenting.

**Conclusion.** Which will you be? I hope none of them. No one in the room wants you to be a traitor, an infidel, an apostate, or a hypocrite. Sadly, of all the people baptized into Christ since the days of Jesus, only a small percentage will be in heaven. It's simply that difficult to "hold fast the confession of hope" (Hebrews 10:23).

Let's finish with Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 1:13: "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."