



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

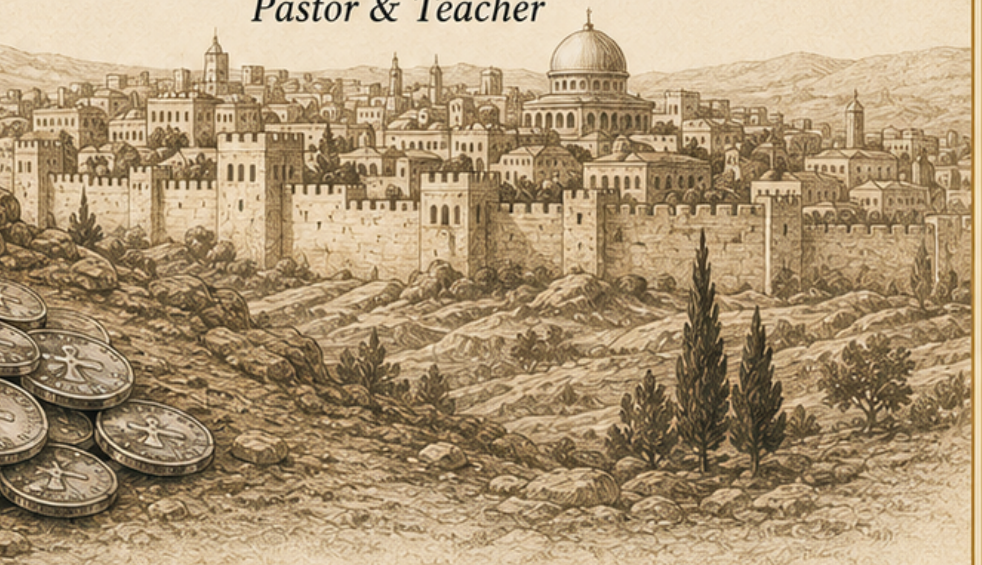
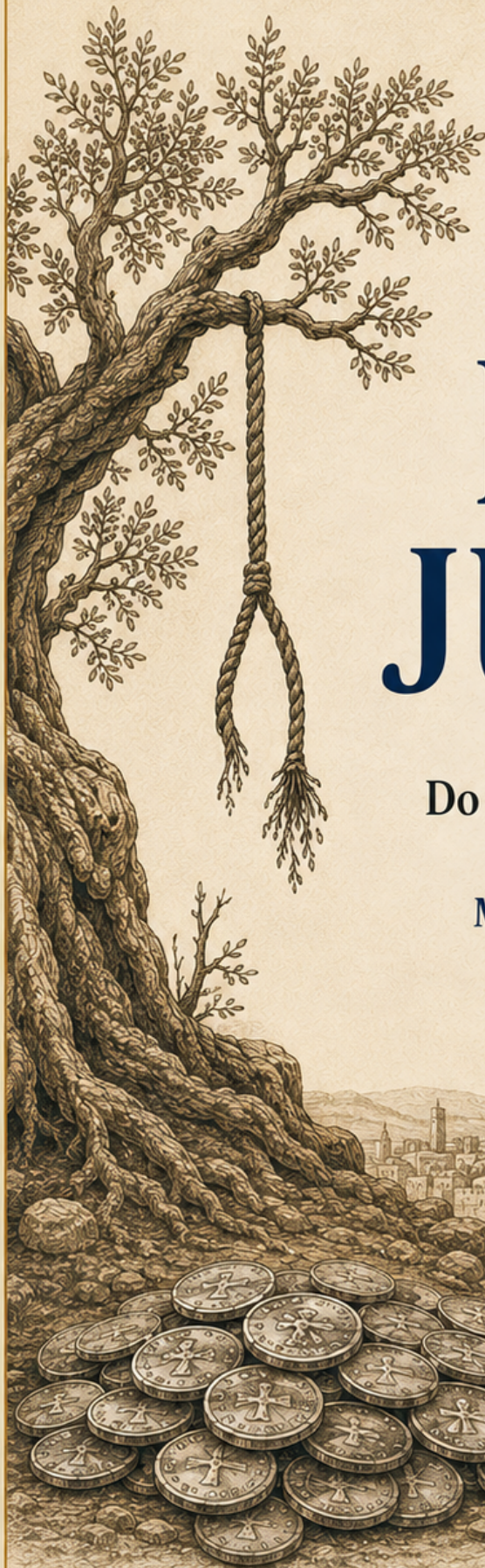
REASON TOGETHER STUDY

HOW DID JUDAS DIE?

Do Matthew and Acts contradict each other?

MATTHEW 27:3–10 | ACTS 1:15–20 KJV

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
Pastor & Teacher



Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

www.ReasonTogether.Church

DID JUDAS HANG HIMSELF OR FALL TO HIS DEATH?

Do Matthew and Acts contradict each other?

Matthew 27:3–10 and Acts 1:15–20 KJV

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Aloha, and welcome to Reason Together Church.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Before we begin, let us pray.

Father, thank You for giving us Your Word.

Thank You that we do not have to hide from difficult questions.

Thank You that truth does not become weaker when we examine it carefully.

Give us humility today.

Keep us from defending an idea merely because we have heard it many times.

Keep us from rejecting an answer merely because it requires us to think.

Help us distinguish between what Your Word says, what it permits us to conclude and what human imagination has added.

Most of all, use this difficult account to turn our eyes toward Jesus Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Our question today is straightforward.

Did Judas hang himself or fall to his death?

Matthew tells us that Judas went out and hanged himself.

Acts tells us that Judas fell headlong, burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

Those do not sound like the same description.

One sounds like death by hanging.

The other sounds like death by falling.

And that is not the only difference.

Matthew says the chief priests bought the potter's field.

Acts says Judas purchased a field with the reward of iniquity.

Matthew connects the name Field of Blood with the blood money used to purchase it.

Acts mentions that name immediately after describing the terrible condition of Judas's body. If someone showed you these passages and said, "Your Bible contradicts itself," what would you say?

Would you become defensive?

Would you change the subject?

Would you repeat an explanation you once heard without knowing whether it came from Scripture?

Or would you be willing to place both accounts beside each other and examine them honestly?

That is what we are going to do today.

We will not begin by assuming that the Bible contradicts itself.

We will also not make up a story merely to rescue the Bible from a question.

God's Word does not need us to manufacture evidence for it.

It asks us to read carefully.

Let us begin with Matthew 27:3–10.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

"And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

"Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

"And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

Now listen to Acts 1:15–20.

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,

"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

"For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

"And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take."

We have now read both accounts.

We have not softened either one.

We have not removed a difficult phrase from either passage.

Matthew says Judas hanged himself.

Acts says he fell headlong and burst open.

Before we try to reconcile them, we need to remember who Judas was.

Judas was not a stranger who appeared in Jerusalem during the final week of Jesus' life.

He had been selected as one of the twelve disciples.

He walked the roads with Jesus.

He sat beneath the teaching of Jesus.

He watched blind eyes open.

He saw people who could not walk rise to their feet.

He watched Jesus touch people whom everyone else avoided.

He saw the waves become still at the command of Christ.

He saw hungry people fed.

He heard Jesus speak of the kingdom of God.

He heard the warnings.

He heard the invitations.

He was not merely in the crowd.

He was numbered among the twelve.

Acts 1:17 says:

"For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."

Judas had a position.

Judas had responsibility.

Judas had access that thousands of other people never received.

The other disciples trusted him enough to allow him to carry the money.

But John 12:6 tells us something they apparently did not know at the time.

It says Judas "was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

Long before Judas publicly betrayed Jesus, Judas was privately stealing from the ministry.

That matters.

The kiss in Gethsemane did not come from nowhere.

The thirty pieces of silver were not the first time Judas placed money above faithfulness.

The visible betrayal grew out of choices that had already been made in secret.

We often imagine that a terrible fall begins on the day everyone sees it.

Usually it begins much earlier.

It begins when we protect a private sin.

It begins when we excuse what we would condemn in someone else.

It begins when we learn to appear faithful while quietly moving farther from Christ.

Judas could walk beside Jesus while hiding what was happening within him.

He could sound like a disciple.

He could be trusted like a disciple.

He could participate in ministry like a disciple.

Yet something was terribly wrong.

Luke 22:3 says:

"Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve."

John 13 also tells us that Satan entered into him.

Those are strong words.

We should neither weaken them nor add to them.

The Bible says Satan entered Judas.

The Bible does not say Judas became an innocent shell with no will of his own.

Before Luke says Satan entered Judas, the Gospels had already revealed Judas's greed and theft.

Judas then went to the chief priests.

Judas asked what they would give him.

Judas agreed to betray Jesus.

Judas watched for an opportunity.

Satan's involvement was real.

Judas's responsibility was also real.

Jesus said in Matthew 26:24:

"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!"

Notice both truths in that sentence.

Jesus would go "as it is written."

God was not surprised by the betrayal.

The cross was not an emergency plan hurriedly assembled after Judas acted.

Yet Jesus also said, "Woe unto that man."

Prophecy did not excuse the betrayer.

God's knowledge of Judas's choice did not turn evil into obedience.

The writer of the material that prompted today's question asked what happened to Satan when Judas died.

But the Bible never asks that question.

It never suggests that Satan was trapped inside Judas's physical body.

It never says that Satan remained there until the body was destroyed.

It never tells us that something flew from the body and returned to an abyss.

Those ideas may make a story sound frightening.

They do not make it Biblical.

We should be especially careful whenever someone uses dramatic language to fill a silence that God chose to leave.

The Bible gives us enough truth to warn us.

It does not need our special effects.

Judas went to the chief priests and asked what they would give him to deliver Jesus unto them.

Matthew 26:15 says:

"And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

That amount was not random.

Exodus 21:32 establishes thirty shekels of silver as the payment connected with the death of a servant.

Zechariah 11:12–13 speaks of thirty pieces of silver and says:

"And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them."

The money is then cast in the house of the Lord to the potter.

Centuries later, thirty pieces of silver were placed into the hands of Judas.
Later still, those same pieces were thrown down in the temple.
And those same pieces were used to purchase the potter's field.
Judas discovered too late that the money could not give him what betrayal had taken from him.
He could return the coins.
He could not return the kiss.
He could throw down the silver.
He could not call back the soldiers.
He could confess that Jesus was innocent.
He could not undo what he had done.
Matthew 27:3 says that Judas, "when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself."
Somebody reading the King James Version may understandably ask another question.
If Judas repented, why was he not forgiven?
We need to handle that sentence carefully.
Judas experienced real regret.
He was not laughing over what he had done.
He was not comfortably spending the money.
He recognized the innocence of Jesus.
He admitted his own guilt.
He returned the payment.
He said:
"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."
His remorse was genuine.
But remorse by itself is not the same as turning to Christ in saving faith.
A person can hate the consequences of sin without surrendering to the Savior.
A person can wish the past were different without placing the future into the hands of Christ.
Judas carried his confession to the chief priests.
They answered:
"What is that to us? see thou to that."
What a cold answer.
They had been willing to use Judas.
They were not willing to help Judas.
They wanted his information.

They wanted his cooperation.

They wanted his kiss.

They did not want his guilt.

The world will often help you enter sin and then abandon you when the bill arrives.

Judas went to the wrong people with the right confession.

He said, "I have sinned."

But instead of running toward the One he had betrayed, he ran into despair.

That brings us to Matthew's account of his death.

Matthew 27:5 says:

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

The statement is simple and direct.

Judas hanged himself.

Matthew does not identify the tree.

He does not describe the rope.

He does not tell us the exact location.

He does not say that Judas went to the Valley of Hinnom.

He does not say how high the body was suspended.

He does not say how long it remained there.

He tells us what Judas did.

Judas went and hanged himself.

If Matthew were the only account, there would be no controversy about the manner of Judas's death.

But Acts gives us another description.

Peter stood among approximately one hundred twenty disciples after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

He spoke about the vacancy Judas had left among the apostles.

Then Acts 1:18 says:

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

That is graphic language.

We should not pretend it is not.

But neither should we add imagined horror to what Scripture says.

Acts tells us that Judas fell headlong.

His body burst open.

His bowels gushed out.

Acts does not say Judas climbed to a high place and intentionally jumped.

Acts does not say that falling was his chosen method of suicide.

Acts does not say the fall happened before the hanging.

Acts does not say the fall and the hanging occurred at the same moment.

It records a fall and the terrible result of that fall.

Now we can ask the central question.

Can a man hang himself and also subsequently fall?

Yes.

There is no physical impossibility in that sequence.

Judas could have hanged himself as Matthew records.

His body could later have fallen as Acts records.

The impact could have caused the body to burst open.

Matthew would then be describing Judas's act of suicide.

Acts would be describing what subsequently happened to his body.

The two accounts would be different, but they would not be contradictory.

Different is not the same as contradictory.

If one person said, "A man died in an automobile accident," and another person said, "The man was thrown through the windshield," the second statement would not contradict the first.

It would provide another part of the event.

If one Gospel tells us what Judas did and Acts tells us what later happened to his body, both statements can be completely true.

This is where many explanations become more confident than the Bible allows.

Someone says the rope broke.

That is possible.

Someone says the branch broke.

That is possible.

Someone says the knot slipped.

That is possible.

Someone says the body was cut down.

That is possible.

Someone says the body had begun to decompose before it fell.

That is possible.

But none of those statements appears in Matthew or Acts.

We do not need to know which one happened in order to know that hanging and a subsequent fall are compatible.

We have established possibility.

We have not established the missing mechanics.

That distinction is essential.

When the Bible is silent, we may propose an explanation.

We must label it as a proposal.

We may say, "This could have happened."

We should not say, "The Bible says this happened."

The most responsible conclusion is not that we have reconstructed every moment of Judas's death.

The responsible conclusion is that the two accounts do not require opposing deaths.

Matthew and Acts can describe consecutive portions of the same event.

There is another apparent difference.

Who bought the field?

Matthew says the chief priests took counsel and "bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in."

Acts says Judas "purchased a field with the reward of iniquity."

Did Judas buy it?

Or did the chief priests buy it?

Begin with what both accounts agree upon.

The money belonged to the betrayal.

The thirty pieces of silver were paid to Judas.

Judas returned them.

The chief priests refused to place them in the treasury because they recognized them as the price of blood.

They then used that money to buy the field.

The priests physically conducted the purchase.

But Judas's money paid for it.

Judas's actions caused it to be acquired.

The field became the permanent result of his iniquity.

We commonly attribute an action to the person whose money, authority or conduct produced it, even if someone else completes the transaction.

If a person leaves instructions in a will and the executor purchases property with the estate, we may still say that the deceased person's estate purchased it.

Judas did not have to stand before a seller and sign a document for Acts to attribute the acquisition to him.

Matthew tells us who handled the money and completed the purchase.

Acts tells us whose reward of iniquity acquired the field.

Again, the perspectives are different.

They are not mutually exclusive.

There is a terrible irony here.

Judas thought thirty pieces of silver would be his reward.

He never enjoyed the reward.

The money bought a burial field.

What he gained through betrayal became a public reminder of blood and death.

Sin often promises ownership and produces bondage.

It promises pleasure and produces regret.

It promises freedom and leaves behind a field you never wanted to purchase.

Then we come to the name of the field.

Matthew says the priests would not place the silver into the treasury "because it is the price of blood."

They bought the potter's field.

Matthew then says:

"Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day."

Matthew connects the name with the blood money.

Acts describes Judas's body bursting open and then says the event became known throughout Jerusalem.

The field was called Aceldama, "The field of blood."

Some people read those passages as though only one connection can be true.

But why must we choose?

The field was purchased with money paid for betrayal.

The priests themselves called it the price of blood.

It was also associated with the violent end of the betrayer.

Both accounts lead to the same name.

The name does not create a contradiction.

It draws the threads together.

There is one more difficulty in Matthew's account that an attentive reader may notice.

Matthew 27:9 says:

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet."

But when we look for thirty pieces of silver cast to the potter in the house of the Lord, we find those words most directly in Zechariah 11.

Why does Matthew name Jeremiah?

This question deserves respect, but it does not require panic.

Matthew's wording is not a simple word-for-word quotation from one verse in Zechariah.

It brings together a group of prophetic themes.

Zechariah gives us thirty pieces of silver, the house of the Lord and the potter.

Jeremiah gives us the potter, innocent blood, judgment associated with the valley and the significant purchase of a field.

Jeremiah 19 presents the potter's earthen bottle in a place stained by innocent blood.

Jeremiah 32 records the purchase of a field under the Lord's direction.

Matthew appears to be showing us the fulfillment of a prophetic picture woven through those passages.

Some interpreters explain the attribution in other ways, including ancient practices for identifying collections of prophetic writings.

We do not need to pretend that every reader will find one explanation equally persuasive.

We can say with confidence that Matthew knew the prophetic material he was invoking.

He was not carelessly confusing two names while constructing his Gospel.

The betrayal price, the potter, the field and innocent blood converge in the events surrounding Judas.

The passage asks us to see the larger picture, not merely match a sentence to a single line in a concordance.

At this point, let us return to the question with which we began.

Did Judas hang himself or fall to his death?

Matthew explicitly says that Judas hanged himself.

Acts explicitly says that he fell headlong and his body burst open.

The Bible gives us no reason to insist that only one of those events occurred.

The most natural reconciliation is that Judas hanged himself and his body subsequently fell.

We cannot prove whether a rope broke, a branch failed, a knot slipped or the body was taken down.

We do not have to prove one of those details.

The accounts are compatible without them.

So, do Matthew and Acts contradict each other?

No necessary contradiction exists.

They report different aspects of Judas's end.

Our confidence should be placed in what Scripture states, not in the imaginative detail of our reconstruction.

That gives us an important principle for every difficult passage in the Bible.

We must distinguish among three things.

First, what does the Bible say?

Second, what can reasonably be inferred from what it says?

Third, what have people added because it makes the story feel complete?

The Bible says Judas hanged himself.

The Bible says he fell headlong and his body burst open.

We may reasonably infer that the fall occurred after the hanging.

The Bible does not tell us why the body fell.

That is the boundary.

Reasoning together does not mean refusing to reach conclusions.

It means making conclusions no larger than the evidence supporting them.

It also means refusing to use sensational language as a substitute for evidence.

We do not strengthen the Bible by claiming that forensic experts proved a scenario they did not witness.

We do not strengthen the warning by inventing a private chamber in hell with Judas's name engraved upon it.

We do not make Acts more powerful by placing Satan inside the corpse.

We do not make a sermon more Biblical by making it more frightening.

The truth God gave us is already sobering enough.

Judas lived close to Jesus and remained far from Him.

That is frightening.

Judas heard the truth from the lips of Truth Himself and still protected his sin.

That is frightening.

Judas held a ministry position while stealing from the ministry.

That is frightening.

Judas recognized his guilt but ran from the only One who could forgive him.

That is frightening.

We do not need decomposing bodies, cursed soil or imagined voices from an abyss to make the account matter.

The spiritual warning is not hidden inside a forensic reconstruction.

It is standing plainly in the text.

Judas had been close enough to Jesus to kiss His face.

He was still not surrendered to Jesus as Lord.

Physical proximity to Christian activity is not salvation.

You may sit in a church every week and not know Christ.

You may carry a Bible and not trust its Author.

You may know the songs and not know the Savior.

You may hold a position and still hide a private rebellion.

You may be trusted by believers and still be deceiving yourself.

Judas warns us that religious access is not the same as saving faith.

There is also a powerful contrast between Judas and Peter.

Judas betrayed Jesus.

Peter denied Jesus.

Judas identified Jesus to His enemies with a kiss.

Peter denied even knowing Jesus, and he did it three times.

Both men failed terribly.

Both men knew they had failed.

Both men experienced grief.

But they did not carry their guilt in the same direction.

Judas carried his guilt to the chief priests.

Peter remained where the risen Christ could find him.

Judas listened to men say, "See thou to that."

Peter heard Jesus ask, "Lovest thou me?"

Judas allowed despair to pronounce the final sentence.

Peter allowed Jesus to restore him.

The difference was not that Peter's sin was harmless.

Peter publicly and repeatedly denied the Lord he had promised never to forsake.

The difference was not that Peter deserved another opportunity.

Grace is never given because the sinner deserves it.

The difference was where the guilty man turned.

Guilt will tell you to hide.

Grace calls you to come.

Shame will tell you that your failure is the final chapter.

Jesus says that He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Despair will tell you to handle your sin alone.

The Gospel tells you that Jesus carried sin to the cross because you could never carry it away yourself.

There may be someone listening today who feels more like Judas than Peter.

You know what it is to say, "I have sinned."

You know what it is to wish you could gather the pieces of the past and place them back where they were.

You know what it is to discover that the people who encouraged your sin cannot heal the wound it created.

Hear me carefully.

The answer is not to minimize your sin.

The answer is not to pretend that nothing happened.

The answer is not to punish yourself until you believe you have paid enough.

The answer is to bring your guilt to Jesus Christ.

Judas confessed innocent blood.

The Gospel tells us why that blood was shed.

Jesus did not die because Judas outmaneuvered God.

Jesus willingly went to the cross.

He died for sinners.

He was buried.

On the third day, He rose again.

The death of Judas is not the center of the Christian message.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the center.

Judas's grave could not provide hope.

The empty tomb of Jesus provides hope for every person who will believe.

Before we close, I want to speak briefly about giving.

At Reason Together Church, we do not pass a plate and we do not pressure guests to give.

If you are visiting with us, please support your home church.

For those who are members of this church and wish to give, the gift box is available and our online giving information is available through www.ReasonTogether.Church.

Giving is an act of worship, not the price of admission and never the purchase price of God's favor.

If this is your first time with us, we would be grateful if you completed a guest card with only your first name and email address.

That allows us to welcome you without asking for a long list of personal information.

After the service, please join us in the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free, it is locally grown and there are free refills on conversations.

Now I want to return to the question that matters most personally.

Not merely, "How did Judas die?"

But, "What will you do with Jesus?"

Judas had a title among the disciples.

He had experiences.

He had knowledge.

He had proximity.

None of those things could substitute for trusting Christ.

Salvation is not received by joining a church, holding a position, performing ministry or trying to outweigh your sins with religious effort.

Salvation is the gift of God received through faith in Jesus Christ.

You do not have to be inside this sanctuary to come to Christ.

You do not have to have a pastor standing beside you.

If you are listening from another island, another state or another country, Jesus is no farther from you than He is from anyone in this room.

Admit that you are a sinner.

Believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried and rose again.

Repent and place your faith in Christ alone.

Romans 10:9 says:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Romans 10:13 says:

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

There is no magical prayer formula.

Prayer does not save because you repeated the correct arrangement of words.

Jesus saves.

Speak to Him in your own words.

Tell Him the truth about your sin.

Tell Him that you believe He died and rose again.

Ask Him to save you.

Place your faith in Him alone.

If you make that decision here today, please speak with me after the service.

I would be honored to pray with you and help connect you with believers who will walk beside you.

If you are participating remotely, contact us through www.ReasonTogether.Church.

We want to help you take the next step in your relationship with Christ.

Let us pray.

Father, thank You for allowing us to bring a difficult question into the light of Your Word.

Thank You that Matthew and Acts can be read honestly without forcing us to choose which part of Scripture to believe.

Teach us to be careful students of the Bible.

Keep us from confusing possibility with certainty.

Keep us from presenting imagination as revelation.

Give us courage to ask questions and humility to accept the limits of what we know.

The end of Judas is sobering.

Help us hear its warning.

Do not allow us to confuse closeness to Christian things with a saving relationship with Christ.

Expose the private sins we have learned to hide behind public appearances.

When guilt comes, teach us to run toward Jesus rather than away from Him.

Thank You that the blood Judas called innocent blood became the blood shed for sinners.

Thank You that Jesus willingly carried our sin to the cross.

Thank You that the tomb is empty.

Restore those who have failed.

Save those who have never trusted Christ.

Comfort those who believe their past has placed them beyond mercy.

Help us leave today trusting not in our position, our knowledge or our religious activity, but in Jesus Christ alone.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

The Bible says in Proverbs 3:5–6:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

May we trust the Lord, study His Word carefully and follow wherever His truth leads.

God bless you.

And to those joining us for the first time, Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

DID JUDAS HANG HIMSELF OR FALL TO HIS DEATH?

Do Matthew and Acts contradict each other?

Matthew 27:3–10 and Acts 1:15–20 KJV

“And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

Matthew 27:5

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION Matthew and Acts do not require two contradictory deaths. Matthew records Judas's deliberate act of hanging himself. Acts records a fall and the rupture of his body. A later fall is a reasonable reconciliation, but Scripture does not tell us what caused the body to fall or how the intervening events occurred.

The apparent difficulty deserves a direct answer. Matthew says Judas 'went and hanged himself.' Acts says he was 'falling headlong,' burst open in the middle and became associated with the Field of Blood. The accounts also describe the purchase of the field from different perspectives and place different facts beside its name.

Different details do not automatically create a contradiction. Matthew never says Judas's body did not fall. Acts never says Judas did not hang himself. The simplest harmony is that Matthew records the suicide and Acts records what subsequently happened to the body. That harmony is sufficient even though the rope, tree, support, timing and exact cause of the fall remain unknown.

The greater warning is spiritual rather than forensic. Judas walked with Jesus, heard the truth and participated in ministry while protecting secret sin. When guilt came, he experienced real remorse but did not turn to Christ in saving faith. Peter also failed terribly, but Peter returned toward the Lord and received restoration.

This commentary therefore addresses both the textual question and the pastoral question. The textual question asks whether Matthew and Acts can be true together. The pastoral question asks what we will do with guilt. Scripture directs us away from speculation, despair and self-punishment and toward the crucified and risen Savior.

1. The Question Must Be Stated Honestly

The Accounts Sound Different

Matthew 27:5 says Judas 'departed, and went and hanged himself.' Acts 1:18 says he was 'falling headlong,' burst open and suffered terrible bodily destruction. A reader does not dishonor Scripture by noticing that these descriptions sound different. Careful reading begins by allowing each passage to say everything it says.

The question becomes distorted when either side is softened. If we mention only the hanging, we have not explained Acts. If we mention only the fall, we have not explained Matthew. The task is not to choose the easier account. It is to determine whether the accounts actually deny each other.

REASON TOGETHER PRINCIPLE A difficult question should be made precise before it is answered. We defend Scripture best when we refuse both panic and pretense.

2. Matthew's Account in Its Setting

Remorse, Confession and the Returned Silver

Matthew places Judas's death after Jesus had been condemned. Judas saw the result of his betrayal, 'repented himself' and returned the thirty pieces of silver. He confessed, 'I have sinned in that I have

betrayed the innocent blood.' The chief priests answered with chilling indifference: 'What is that to us? see thou to that.'

Judas's remorse was not imaginary. He recognized innocent blood, admitted his guilt and tried to return the payment. Yet his anguish did not become a return to Jesus. He went away from the priests and away from the One he had betrayed. Matthew then gives the direct statement: Judas hanged himself.

The Priests and the Potter's Field

The priests refused to place the silver in the treasury because they called it 'the price of blood.' They used it to buy the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. Matthew explains, 'Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.' His narrative connects the name to the blood money used in the purchase.

3. Acts Describes Judas from Another Moment

A Vacancy Among the Apostles

Acts 1 is not written as a second passion narrative. Peter is addressing approximately one hundred twenty disciples before Pentecost. His immediate concern is the vacancy Judas left among the Twelve and the Scriptural basis for selecting another witness of the resurrection.

Peter remembers Judas as one who 'was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.' Acts therefore emphasizes the dreadful contrast between office and outcome. Judas had shared in ministry, yet his chosen path ended in desolation.

The Fall and the Public Knowledge

Acts says Judas acquired a field with the reward of iniquity and, 'falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.' The event became known in Jerusalem, and the field was called Aceldama, 'The field of blood.' Luke's description is graphic, but its purpose is not entertainment. It shows the public and shameful consequence of betrayal.

4. Difference Is Not the Same as Contradiction

What a Contradiction Would Require

A contradiction requires more than two accounts selecting different facts. One statement must affirm what the other denies in the same sense and at the same time. If Matthew had said Judas's body never fell, Acts would oppose him. If Acts had said Judas never hanged himself, Matthew would oppose Luke. Neither statement appears.

Parallel accounts regularly compress, expand or select material according to purpose. One witness may describe the deliberate act that produced a death. Another may describe what happened to the body afterward. Both can be true without either author giving the entire sequence.

CENTRAL DISTINCTION The accounts are different. The question is whether they are mutually exclusive. They are not.

5. The Hanging and the Fall Can Belong to One Sequence

The Minimum Harmony

The most natural reconciliation is straightforward. Judas hanged himself as Matthew reports. His body later fell as Acts reports. The impact or condition of the body resulted in the rupture described by Luke. This sequence requires no alteration of either passage.

The harmony establishes possibility, not a minute-by-minute reconstruction. A body can fall after hanging. Once that simple fact is recognized, the claim of necessary contradiction fails. We do not need to prove which unrecorded event caused the fall in order to show that both statements can be true.

A Useful Everyday Comparison

Suppose one person says, 'A man died in an automobile accident,' while another says, 'The man was thrown through the windshield.' The second statement supplies another portion of the event. It does not contradict the first. In the same way, Matthew identifies Judas's act and Acts supplies a later bodily detail.

6. What Scripture Does Not Tell Us

Possible Does Not Mean Revealed

People often become more confident than the text allows. Some say the rope broke. Others say a branch broke, the knot failed, the body was cut down or decomposition weakened it before the fall. Each may be physically possible. None is stated in Matthew or Acts.

The location is also unknown. Matthew does not identify a tree, cliff, support or valley. Acts does not say Judas climbed to a high place and jumped. Later traditions about Aceldama may be historically interesting, but they cannot become the foundation of the Biblical explanation.

Specific claims about temperature, elapsed hours and bodily decomposition sound scientific, but scientific vocabulary does not turn an unsupported proposal into evidence. A responsible commentary identifies the limit and stops there.

REASON TOGETHER PRINCIPLE When the Bible is silent, we may propose a possibility, but we must label it as a possibility. Imagination must never be presented as revelation.

7. Who Purchased the Field?

Direct Action and Moral Attribution

Matthew says the chief priests took counsel and bought the potter's field with the returned silver. Acts says Judas 'purchased a field with the reward of iniquity.' At first glance, those statements appear to name different buyers.

Matthew describes the direct transaction. The priests handled the money, selected the property and completed the purchase. Acts attributes the resulting field to Judas because his reward of iniquity supplied the money and his betrayal produced the transaction. The field was the permanent result of what Judas had done.

This form of attribution is common. We may say a deceased person's estate purchased property even though an executor completed the documents. We may say a person built a house even when contractors performed the labor. The perspectives differ, but they are not exclusive.

PASTORAL OBSERVATION Sin often purchases something the sinner never wanted to own. Judas's reward became a burial field and a public reminder of blood and death.

8. Why Was It Called the Field of Blood?

Two Associations Can Converge

Matthew explicitly ties the name to money the priests called 'the price of blood.' Acts describes Judas's terrible end, says the event became known throughout Jerusalem and then reports the local name Aeldama. Some readers therefore conclude that Matthew and Acts provide incompatible reasons for the name.

The accounts do not force us to choose. A place name can gather more than one association. The field was bought with betrayal money. It also became connected with the violent end of the betrayer. Both paths lead naturally to the same name.

We should nevertheless preserve Matthew's explicit emphasis. He directly says the field was called the Field of Blood in connection with the priests' purchase. Acts may be adding a second association or may simply be continuing the public account. The central conclusion does not depend upon deciding between those grammatical possibilities.

9. Why Does Matthew Name Jeremiah?

Zechariah Supplies the Closest Words

Matthew 27:9 says the event fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah. Yet the closest Old Testament wording concerning thirty pieces of silver and casting the price to the potter appears in Zechariah 11:12–13. This is a real interpretive question and should not be hidden.

Jeremiah Supplies the Larger Field Picture

Jeremiah also contributes important themes. Jeremiah 19 joins the potter, innocent blood, judgment and a valley associated with burial and defilement. Jeremiah 32 records the divinely directed purchase of a field with weighed silver. Matthew appears to gather these prophetic strands into one fulfillment surrounding Judas, the silver and the potter's field.

Some interpreters explain the attribution through ancient practices of naming a collection by a leading prophet. That possibility may be considered, but the combined-prophecy explanation better keeps attention on the actual Biblical connections. The wording is not a simple quotation from one isolated verse. It is a prophetic picture coming together in the events around Jesus.

10. The Thirty Pieces of Silver

A Deliberately Shameful Valuation

Zechariah presents thirty pieces of silver as a contemptuous valuation. Exodus 21:32 also establishes thirty shekels of silver as compensation when an ox kills a male or female servant. The sermon correctly identifies Exodus rather than calling this a Levitical provision.

Judas asked the chief priests what they would give him, and they covenanted for thirty pieces. What looked like a reward became evidence against him. The money could not restore the fellowship he had betrayed, recall the arrest or erase the kiss in Gethsemane.

The priests' refusal to accept responsibility is equally revealing. They wanted Judas's cooperation but not his guilt. Sin often recruits a person with promises, then abandons that person when the consequences arrive.

11. Did Judas Repent?

Real Remorse Is Not Yet Saving Faith

The KJV says Judas 'repented himself.' The expression describes a change of feeling, regret or remorse. The narrative confirms that his sorrow was genuine. He confessed wrongdoing, acknowledged innocent blood and returned the payment.

Yet Biblical repentance is not measured only by emotional intensity. Second Corinthians 7:10 distinguishes 'godly sorrow' that works repentance to salvation from 'the sorrow of the world' that works death. Sorrow becomes saving repentance when the sinner turns toward God in faith rather than merely turning against himself.

Judas went to the priests, but the priests could not absolve him. He cast away the silver, but the silver could not cleanse him. He condemned himself, but self-condemnation could not atone for sin. The tragedy is not that his guilt was too great for Christ. It is that he did not bring his guilt to Christ.

PASTORAL CAUTION We should neither mock Judas's anguish nor call anguish salvation. Remorse can recognize the wound while still refusing the Physician.

A Pastoral Word About Suicide

Judas's death must be preached with sobriety. Suicide is a tragic taking of human life and is never presented as the answer to guilt, shame or pain. At the same time, this passage should not be used as a weapon against every family who has lost someone to suicide or as permission to make confident declarations about facts God has not revealed.

Judas occupies a unique place in the Biblical account. Jesus spoke directly about his betrayal, the Gospels record his long pattern of unbelief and Scripture interprets his apostolic vacancy. We must not take every statement about Judas and automatically transfer it to every person who dies by suicide. God alone knows the full spiritual history, responsibility and final moments of another human being.

A person presently tempted toward self-harm should not remain alone with that temptation. Tell a trusted family member, pastor, physician or emergency professional immediately. Despair speaks as

though the present moment is the whole future. It is not. Help can be sought, burdens can be shared and guilt can be brought to Christ rather than answered with death.

12. Satan Entered Judas, but Judas Remained Responsible

Two Truths Must Be Held Together

Luke 22:3 and John 13:27 say Satan entered Judas. Those statements must not be weakened. The betrayal involved genuine Satanic activity. Yet the Gospels never describe Judas as an innocent shell whose will disappeared.

Before the final betrayal, John 12:6 identifies Judas as a thief who stole from the common money. Judas approached the authorities, asked what they would pay, agreed to betray Jesus and watched for an opportunity. Satanic influence did not create moral innocence.

Matthew 26:24 preserves prophecy and responsibility in one sentence. The Son of man goes 'as it is written,' yet Jesus pronounces woe upon the man who betrays Him. God was not surprised. The cross was not an emergency plan. Still, Judas's choice remained evil and accountable.

13. 'His Own Place' Does Not Authorize a Horror Story

The Boundary of Acts 1:25

Acts says another apostle would take the ministry from which Judas fell 'that he might go to his own place.' The phrase expresses Judas's departure from ministry and movement toward the end appropriate to his chosen path. It does not describe the architecture of the unseen world.

Scripture does not say Judas received a private cell in hell. It does not say Satan remained trapped in the corpse, escaped when the body burst or returned to an abyss. It does not describe a soul breaking apart. These claims may intensify a frightening story, but they add nothing to the authority of God's warning.

A sermon becomes no more Biblical by becoming more sensational. The canonical account already gives enough truth to sober us. Judas stood near Jesus, served in ministry and hid rebellion. That is more spiritually searching than any invented postmortem scene.

14. Was Matthias Required Before Pentecost?

What Acts Actually Says

Peter applies Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 to Judas's vacancy. The disciples seek a qualified witness who had accompanied Jesus's ministry from John's baptism through the ascension. Matthias is selected and numbered with the eleven apostles.

The passage does not say the Holy Spirit could not come until the number twelve was restored. It does not describe an empty heavenly throne blocking Pentecost. Revelation 21 also distinguishes the twelve gates named for the tribes of Israel from the twelve foundations named for the apostles. Those images must not be blended into an invented timetable.

A separate RTS may examine the selection of Matthias in greater depth. For this commentary, the point is narrower: Acts interprets Judas's desolation and replacement through Scripture, but it does not make speculative claims about Pentecost necessary to explain his death.

15. Judas and Peter Carried Guilt in Different Directions

Two Serious Failures

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. Both men knew they had failed. Both experienced grief. The difference was not that Peter's sin was harmless or that Peter naturally deserved another opportunity.

Judas carried his guilt to the chief priests and then into isolation. Peter remained where the risen Christ could find him. John 21 shows Jesus confronting Peter, receiving his confession of love and restoring him to service.

The difference was where the guilty man turned. Shame says failure is the final chapter. Despair tells the sinner to handle sin alone. Grace calls the sinner toward the Savior who already knew the failure and went to the cross anyway.

PASTORAL APPEAL Guilt must not be hidden, excused or converted into self-punishment. It must be brought to Jesus Christ.

16. The Question Ultimately Leads to Christ

More Than a Solved Difficulty

The study begins with a question about Judas's death, but it cannot end there. A person may understand how Matthew and Acts fit together and still remain far from God. Correct interpretation is valuable, but information alone cannot reconcile a sinner to the Lord.

Judas called Jesus 'innocent blood.' The Gospel tells us that this innocent One willingly shed His blood for sinners. Jesus died, was buried and rose again. The death of Judas is not the center of Christianity. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the center.

Judas's grave offers no hope. Christ's empty tomb offers hope to every person who will believe. Salvation is not received through church membership, ministry position, religious knowledge or self-punishment. It is the gift of God received through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

FINAL CONCLUSION Matthew and Acts can be read together honestly. The remaining mystery should produce humility. The clear warning should produce self-examination. The Gospel should move us toward Christ.

Questions for Personal Reflection

- Have I confused a difference between two Biblical accounts with an actual contradiction?
- Do I label my inferences honestly, or do I speak more confidently than Scripture allows?
- Am I protecting a private sin while maintaining an outward appearance of faithfulness?
- Have I mistaken remorse, embarrassment or fear of consequences for repentance toward God?
- Where do I carry my guilt: toward isolation and self-punishment or toward Jesus Christ?

- Have I allowed religious activity, knowledge or position to substitute for a personal relationship with Christ?
- Do I use dramatic stories because they are memorable even when they are not Biblical?
- Can I acknowledge a hard question without becoming defensive or careless?
- What does Peter's restoration teach me about the grace of Christ after serious failure?
- How should this study change the way I answer someone who believes the Bible contradicts itself?

A Personal Invitation to Salvation

You may identify with Judas's words, 'I have sinned.' You may wish you could return the pieces of your past and place them back where they were. You may fear that the wound is too deep or the failure too public for mercy.

The answer is not to minimize your sin. The answer is not to pretend nothing happened. The answer is not to punish yourself until you believe you have paid enough. The answer is to bring your guilt to Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' It also says, 'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Jesus bore sin at the cross and rose again from the dead.

Romans 10:9 says, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Verse 13 promises, 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

There is no magical prayer formula. Jesus saves. Speak to Him honestly. Admit that you are a sinner. Believe that He died for your sins and rose again. Ask Him to save you. Place your faith in Christ alone.

If you have made that decision, speak with a faithful Christian pastor or contact Reason Together Church through www.ReasonTogether.Church. We would be honored to pray with you and help you begin walking with Christ.

A Closing Prayer

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us a Word that can withstand honest examination. Keep us from fear when we encounter a difficult passage and keep us from pride when we believe we have found an answer.

Teach us to distinguish what Scripture says from what we infer and from what imagination adds. Give us the courage to reach sound conclusions and the humility to stop where the evidence stops.

Search our hearts. Expose any secret sin we have protected behind religious appearance. When guilt comes, keep us from concealment, despair and self-punishment. Draw us toward Jesus Christ.

Thank You that the innocent blood betrayed by Judas became the blood willingly shed for sinners.
Thank You that Jesus died, was buried and rose again. Restore those who have failed and save those who have never trusted Him.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Selected Sources

Primary Scripture

Matthew 27:3–10 and Acts 1:15–26 KJV, with supporting use of Exodus 21:32; Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8; Jeremiah 19:1–13; Jeremiah 32:6–15; Zechariah 11:12–13; Matthew 26:14–16, 24 and 47–50; Luke 22:3–6, 31–34 and 54–62; John 6:64, 70–71; John 12:4–6; John 13:2, 21–30; John 17:12; John 21:15–19 and 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Gospel Scripture

John 3:16–18; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:8; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:9–13; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 and Ephesians 2:8–10.

Representative Secondary Consultation

James Bejon, 'Judas's Demise in Matthew 27 and Acts 1. Do They Contradict?' The Gospel Coalition, January 27, 2020. Consulted as a representative harmonization, not as governing authority. English translation comparisons of Acts 1:18 were consulted to identify the range of interpretive discussion surrounding the phrase translated 'falling headlong.'

Interpretive Cautions

The sequence of hanging followed by a fall is presented as a reasonable harmony, not as an explicit chronology supplied in one verse. No precise rope, branch, location, time interval, decomposition process or postmortem movement is asserted. Matthew's reference to Jeremiah is explained through a combined prophetic picture involving Jeremiah and Zechariah, while alternate explanations are acknowledged.

Pastoral Note

This commentary accompanies the approved Reason Together Study. It does not replace the sermon transcript or internal Study Vault. Its purpose is to provide a readable public explanation of the principal Biblical reasoning, preserve interpretive and pastoral cautions and help readers apply the study faithfully.

REASON TOGETHER Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.