

BRIBERY

The Ethics of Giving and Receiving Gifts

by

Beth Johnson
2008

(All scripture quotations are from the King James Version.)

© 2008
Beth Johnson
1228 Pet Sites Road
Chapin, SC 29036
All rights reserved

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beth Johnson began teaching children's Bible classes when she was fourteen years old and has taught as many as five classes a week for ladies and/or children for more than 40 years. During those years, she also served as a preacher's wife and missionary. Since January 1962, Beth and her husband Dennis have worked with congregations in 4 states of the USA and Canada and served the Lord in Thailand, Malaysia and India. She also taught English in public school (K-12 and university level) while they were in the US. Two of her numerous special class assignments were teaching parenting for AFDC mothers and daycare recertification classes in the communities where they have lived. She has appeared on lectureships in Alabama, Texas, North and South Carolina. Her articles and lessons have been used for classes online and for daily devotional mailing lists. They have also been published in the USA and India. Beth and Dennis have five children (2 boys and 3 girls) and 17 grandchildren.

Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my dear husband who belongs to the Lord with every fiber of his body and mind and who has inspired me to reach greater heights through his own example as a faithful Christian soldier.

I also dedicate this work to our children who have patiently borne the “heat of the day” while I searched for answers to questions. It goes without saying that I am indebted to the many Christian sisters who made suggestions for changes and helped me to purify my thinking. They have been as “iron to iron.”

My heartfelt thanks go to Shanle Johnson of Jade Studio for the cover design and page illustrations. Thanks also to Barbara Hannah for last minute proofing and to Nelda Clarke who encouraged me to publish.

CONTENTS

Lesson	Page
SYLLABUS	6
INTRODUCTON	8
OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES:	
Lesson 1: Delilah	11
Lesson 2: Balaam	14
Lesson 3: Samuel's Sons	18
Lesson 4: Shemaiah	22
Lesson 5: Asa Bribed Benhadad	27
Lesson 6: Haman Bribed Ahasuerus	31
Lesson 7: First Review	34
NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES:	
Lesson 8: Judas Takes a Bribe to Betray Christ	37
Lesson 9: Judas Takes a Bribe to Betray Christ [Part 2]	41
Lesson 10: Chief Priests Bribed the Roman Soldiers	45
Lesson 11: Simon Attempted to Bribe the Apostles	49
Lesson 12: Felix Seeks a Bribe from Paul	52
Lesson 13: Second Review	57
APPENDIX:	
Addendum to Lesson 10	61

BRIBERY

SYLLABUS FOR THE COURSE

Many nations are known for their corrupt money dealings in the private sector as well as in government. Particularly in third-world nations, it seems that fraudulent money dealings have become a way of life.

Can God's children participate in bribery even if it is intended to bring about justice for the innocent (Acts 24:26)? Is there a difference between bribing someone to do something he should not do and in paying a "tip" for doing something that is his duty to do? On a larger scale, some nations officially recognize the latter system as "speed money"—money paid to get someone to act quickly to do the job that should be done. Even though they get a regular year-round salary, most shipping companies (or their union employees) will not move to unload a ship's cargo if they are not paid a "tip" to do it. We have to consider whether speed money is paid to put someone ahead in the queue and whether that would violate scriptures about loving our brother, seeking his best good, doing unto others as we would have them do to us, etc. **During our study for this course, our intent is to see how God views the principles of bribery at any level and for any reason.**

What is bribery? One of the Old Testament words used to describe bribery is translated as "gift" in the King James Version. In Hebrew, this word literally means a "donation." As our study will show, a gift is not always used to describe what would constitute a bribe. A donation or gift can certainly be used in a good way. For example, **Proverbs 21:14** says, "*A gift in secret pacifies anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.*" But a donation can just as obviously be used in a bad way as in the case of a bribe. **Proverbs 17:23** says, "*A wicked man takes a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.*"

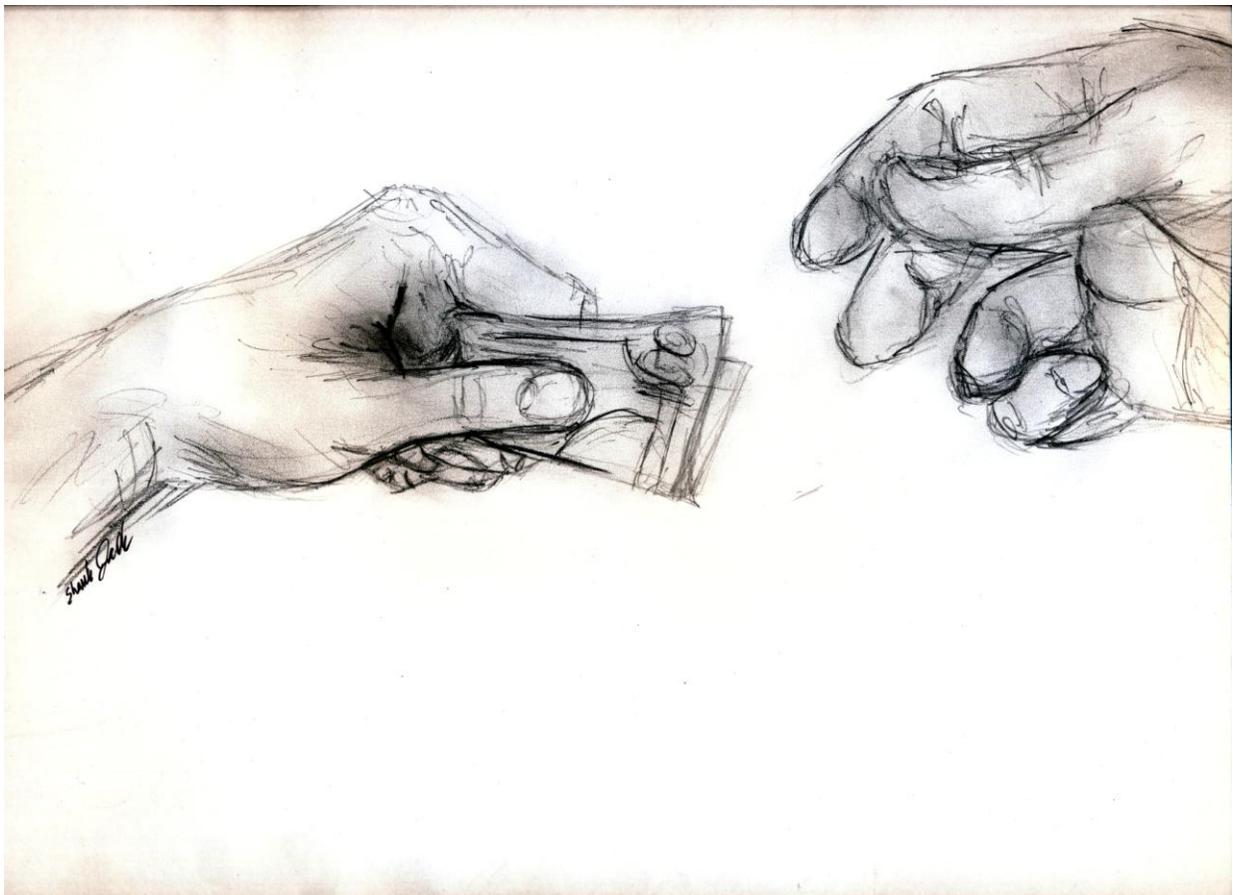
Are donations effective? Whether for good or for bad, they are extremely effective. **Proverbs 17:8** says, "*A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that has it: whithersoever it turns, it prospers.*" A gift will prosper the giver whether his donation

is made righteously or unrighteously. Who would deny that bribery is a very effective tool? Let us go to God's word to study His teachings on the subject of bribery so we can be sure to understand what constitutes a bribe or improper donation and what God thinks about it. We need to be certain not to violate His will in any way.

If you are doing research using Strong's Concordance, suggested search words are *bribe, bribery, take a gift, gifts, present* or *reward*.

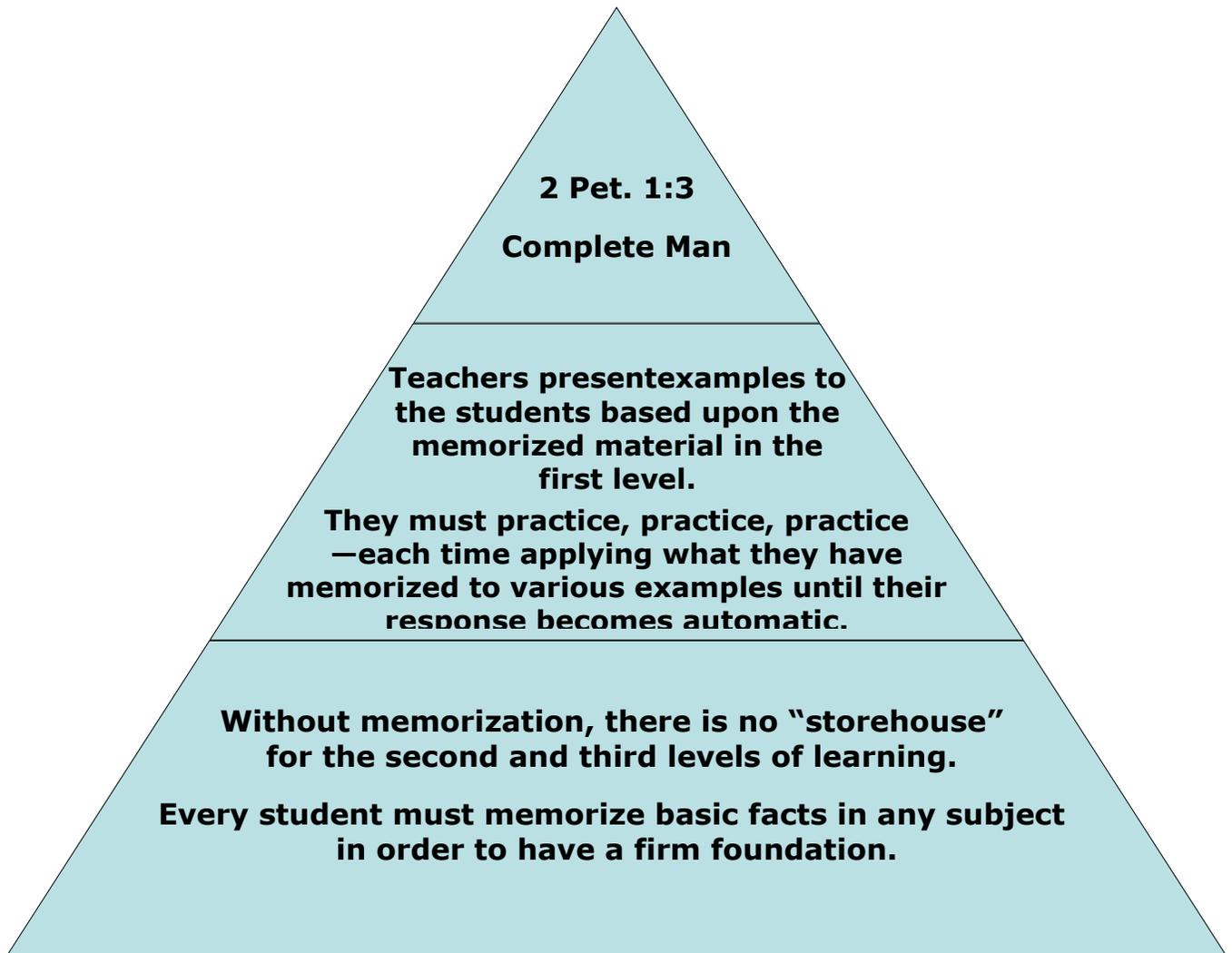
Thanks,

Beth Johnson



INTRODUCTION

Consider the following diagram and explanation for its use. Level one begins in the bottom section of the triangle.



We know that the lowest form of learning any subject is memorization, and leaving a student at that level leaves him with useless information. He must learn to implement the memorized material by practicing at the second level and then to

originate (show understanding with application) at the third level before it can be said he has attained true academic achievement.

The student of God's Word goes on to spiritual maturity and is able to exercise himself in the area of discerning both good and evil (Heb. 5:14). He becomes skilled in the word of righteousness and goes on to perfection in the sense of having Christ formed in him (Heb. 5:13-14; 6:1; Gal. 4:19). We apply the principles of truth we have learned to the various facets of life and show understanding as we produce godly fruit in the face of testing and persecution.

The disciple grows spiritually to recognize that he can never be better than his master and perfect example (John 13:16; 1 Pet. 2:21). One of the things he learns as he grows in the grace and knowledge of God's Word is his own standing in the presence of the Almighty. The knowledge he has gained from his study causes him to tremble at the Word and eliminates any false pride that might make him think that he can originate or go beyond to improve upon the written words of the Bible that he has learned (Isa. 66:1-2).

Another truth that could be pointed out at the top of the triangle, is that we grow and mature by learning the facts and applying them. God, by this knowledge, equips us to stand on our own two feet and have our own faith. Just like Timothy, the genuine faith might dwell first in parents, elders or Bible class teachers, but eventually it must become our own so that we are established and can stand on our own like Joseph, Daniel and his friends (2 Tim. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:5-12; Gen. 39:7-12; Dan. 1:8; 3:16-18).

For the third (top) level in the triangle:

"...all things that pertain to life and godliness"

...through the knowledge of Him

2 Peter 1:3

Lessons for this class will be generally based on this learning triangle:

- First we will have some basic Bible facts to memorize. These will be our "tools" for giving the right response when the teacher asks questions in level two.
- Second, we will be asked to apply those memorized facts to problem solving. You may be asked to give answers with or without scripture references, but your memorized facts should come to mind.

- Third, you should be able to take the things you have learned and apply them to everyday life. This is where understanding comes into play.
- This should work well with any "Think on these things..." lesson. Students would memorize the basic scripture reference or application scriptures and then list ideas from day-to-day life which would apply. The application of learned facts is what brings about spiritual growth and eventually the complete man.

BRIBERY

LESSON 1

DELILAH

And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver (Judges 16:5).

As you can see from the quoted passage, each of the five lords of the Philistines gave eleven hundred shekels of silver to Delilah for the capture of Samson. The amount of the bribe offered to Delilah, 5,500 shekels of silver, nearly two talents..., shows how important it was for the Philistines to capture Samson. Deluding Samson into believing she loved him, Delilah persuaded him to tell her the secret of his strength. Because the symbol of his Nazarite vow was his long hair, his covenant with God forbade him to cut it. While Samson slept at her home in the Valley of Sorek, the Philistines entered, cut his hair and easily captured him. Then, with his strength gone, Samson was imprisoned, blinded and made to grind in the prison house (Judges 16:21). The money was promised. The secret was out. The deed was done.

Delilah's eyes were blinded in a different way—to everything but the silver she had been promised. Although many assume Delilah was Samson's wife (after his first wife died), several modern day scholars (Fausset, Barnes, Clark, McGarvey and others) say she was a harlot, no doubt poor and living from day to day on what she was given. With the bribe money, she could dream of security and of buying land, houses, sheep and oxen. Money blinded her eyes to whatever ways of truth and righteousness she might have known. Apparently she was a Philistine woman whom Samson visited on at least four different occasions. Each time he visited her she tempted him to tell the secret of his power. On the third occasion Samson dared to suggest that his seven consecrated locks should be woven into a web and fastened to a beam. After this, Delilah challenged his "love," "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?" (Judges 16:15). Her daily importunity, the persistent demands and nagging,

finally wrung the secret from him. His strength lay in his dedication to God and in his vow, with his Nazarite locks being the sign.

Surely, Delilah was among those who watched Samson's destruction (Judges 16:30). She may have died rich, but where is she now? The Lord asked the rich fool who would get all his money when he lost his soul in torment (Luke 12:20-21). No doubt she had many second thoughts about accepting a bribe. Money is so fleeting one wonders why anyone would corrupt judgment for money. The wisdom of God teaches against any such thing. The holy scriptures teach us that the acceptance of any bribe is against God's will. Wise people will reject any offer of a bribe in order to enter God's eternal rest (Isa. 33:15). May we be wise and refuse to pervert judgment and justice for any amount of reward.

MONEY

Silver generally was used in real estate transactions. Omri purchased the village and hill of Samaria for two talents of silver (1 Kings 16:24). Gold was sometimes used, along with silver, in the payment of tribute, such as Hezekiah's payment to Sennacherib of Assyria (2 Kings 18:14). Abraham bought the Cave of Machpelah for 400 shekels of silver (Gen. 23:15-16). David bought the threshing floor of Araunah for 50 shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24:24). Solomon purchased chariots and horses with silver (1 Kings 10:28-29). Judas was paid for his betrayal of Jesus with 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). Silver was so commonly used as money that the Hebrew word for "silver" came to mean "money" (Gen. 17:13).

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

These ancient weights were sometimes used as money. Instead of referring to a talent of gold or silver or a shekel of gold or silver, people would merely refer to a talent or a shekel (2 Kings 7:1; Matt. 25:15-28). A talent was the heaviest unit of weight in the Hebrew system. It was used to weigh gold (2 Sam. 12:30), silver (1 Kings 20:39), iron (1 Chron. 29:7), bronze (Exod. 38:29) and many other commodities. The common talent weighed *about* 3000 shekels or the full weight that a man could carry (2 Kings 5:23). In Rev. 16:21 giant hailstones are described as heavy as a talent.

QUESTIONS:

1. **RESEARCH QUESTION:** Approximately how much money would a shekel of silver be worth today? Use your Bible dictionary or any reliable source to find the answer to this question.
2. Tell me how much silver (talents) Delilah would have gained by betraying Samson. One good source for your answer might be a Dickson edition of the KJV Bible, page 1463, if you have access to one.
3. Once the agreement for the bribe had been made, could Delilah have backed out? Consider what might have happened to her if she had.
4. What caused Delilah to make the agreement with the five Lords of the Philistines in the first place (1 Tim. 6:10)?
5. What causes men to covet money or to bribe people with money (Eccl. 10:19)?
6. How may a bribe be described or defined (Prov. 17:23)?
7. Will there be any temptation to bribe someone or take a bribe if we obey God's direction in (1 John 2:15)?
8. Quote and explain the New Testament scripture which describes the desires of the flesh (1 John 2:16).
9. When Paul speaks of the sowing to the flesh or sowing to the spirit (Rom. 8:1-13), what is he talking about?
10. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Compare or contrast the following three passages in relation to Delilah's work: Dan. 1:8-16; Isa. 40:30-31; Prov. 7:6-27.



BRIBERY

Lesson 2

BALAAM

(Read Num. 22-24)

Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee (Deut. 23:4).

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core (Jude 11).

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:14).

Slowly and carefully, read the scripture references (Num. 22-24—all three chapters). Also read Deut. 23:4; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14 to understand what happened to the children of Israel because of Balaam.

The seemingly innocent ending in Numbers 24:25 appears to bring closure to the account of Balaam's life; however, we know well from other scripture references that it did not. The two subsequent chapters in Numbers tell of the departure of the Israelites into idolatry and their adultery with the women of Moab. "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people **began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab**. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: **and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods**. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel" (Num. 25:1-3).

Whether used in a good or a bad sense, the meaning of the word *prophet* in the Old Testament will be one of the three shown below:

1. OT:5030—nabiy' (naw-bee'); from OT:5012; a prophet or (generally) inspired man:

2. OT:5012—naba' (naw-baw'); a primitive root; to prophesy, i.e. speak (or sing) by inspiration (in prediction or simple discourse): KJV - prophesy (-ing), makeself a prophet.
3. OT:5197—nataph (naw-taf'); a primitive root; to ooze, i.e. distill gradually; by implication, to fall in drops; figuratively, to speak by inspiration: KJV - drop (-ping), prophesy (-et).

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

Balaam has been variously described as a prophet, a magician or soothsayer (Josh. 13:22). He was summoned by the Moabite king, Balak, to curse the Israelites before they entered Canaan (Num. 22:5-24:25; Deut. 23:4-5). Balak said of Balaam, "Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: **for I wot (know) that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed**" (Num. 22:6).

First it is said: "And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth..." (Num. 23:5). Then in chapter 24 we read the remarkable sentence: "And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments..." (Num. 24:1). Next, we read "...the Spirit of God came upon him..." (Num. 24:2). This terminology is important when we compare it with Num. 24:3-4 "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open" etc. The inference is plain enough: Balaam knew the Lord, the Yahweh of the Israelites, but his knowledge was dimmed and corrupted by heathen concepts and greed for the money he might gain by cursing God's people. He knew enough about God to obey Him, yet for a long time he hoped to win God over to his own selfish plan (Num. 23:4).

The New Testament mentions Balaam in three passages. Peter speaks of false teachers who "...have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). Jude speaks of backsliders who "...ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward..." (Jude 11). Balaam's error was greed or covetousness, and obviously he was well paid to bring a curse upon the people of Israel.

The nature of Balaam's curse is made clear by John in the Book of Revelation. It refers to some members of the church in Pergamos who held "the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14).

Before leaving Balak, Balaam apparently told the Moabite leader how Israel could be defeated if its people were seduced to worship Baal, "...to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:14). This was exactly what happened. Israel was strong while she remained faithful to Jehovah, but she incurred the curse which Balaam could not inflict, the moment that the men of Israel committed whoredom with the daughters of Moab (Num. 25:1, 6; 31:15-16). In condemning "the way of Balaam," the New Testament condemns the greed of all who are well paid to tempt God's people to compromise their moral standards.

~~~~~

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What was Balak's original offer to Balaam (Num. 22:16-17)?
2. Why did King Balak send more honorable men to Balaam the second time?
3. Whose idea was it to get money (a bribe) for cursing Israel (Num. 22:16-19)?
4. What was in Balaam's mind from the beginning? (Num. 22:18)?
5. Was Balaam sincere in his desire to speak only what the Lord had put in his mouth (Num. 22:38; 23:12)?
6. Why did Balaam ask God the second time with the same question when he already knew God's answer?
7. If Balaam had known that God would soon kill him for failing the temptation to receive a bribe, would he have given King Balak evil counsel?
8. What did Balak offer to give to Balaam (Num. 22:16-17)?
9. Can we prove that Balaam got a reward (bribe) from King Balak (Jude 11)?

#### **LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

10. Briefly tell what happened with Balaam's donkey. How should Balaam have viewed this incident?

11. After God turned Balak's curses into blessings, why would Balaam give advice to king Balak to send his girls to tempt Israel (Rev. 2:14)?
12. How could Balaam possibly justify himself that he had not cursed Israel nor done any evil directly, but only given advice for which he could not be condemned? Could a court of law convict him?
13. Give the context and teaching about those who are like Balaam (Jude 11).
14. Think of as many kinds of people in the world today as you can who might be paid to seduce God's people to do wrong. Pay particular attention to the last paragraph in the lesson text. You might reference how King Saul was enticed to disobey because he feared the people.
15. Give specific references and details of what happened beyond the account of Balaam (Num. 22-24).
16. If Balaam were not an Israelite, how did he know God would curse Israel for worshipping idols and committing fornication (1 Chr. 16:24; Psa. 96:3; Ezek. 39:21)?
17. Although not an Israelite, how do we know Balaam was a prophet?
18. **RESEARCH QUESTION:** How did God use prophets in the Old Testament? Just to get you started, try these verses (1 Sam. 9:9; Neh. 13:2; Jer. 14:14; Jer. 23:21, 35, 37; Jer. 25:2-3; Jer. 28:7-9; Jer. 36:4, 8). Or perhaps use the words "prophet + spake" in your search. **Compare what happened when Balaam or some other false prophet spoke and what happened when one of the faithful prophets spoke.**

# **BRIBERY**

## **Lesson 3**

### **SAMUEL'S SONS**

**And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. ... And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment (1 Sam. 8:1, 3).**

The Law of Moses condemns everything that would remotely thwart the impartial administration of justice, particularly the giving and receiving of gifts or bribes, in order to pervert judgment.

**And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous (Exod. 23:8).**

**Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous (Deut. 16:18-19).**

**Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen (Deut. 27:25).**

**Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts (2 Chron. 19:7).**

Several rulers were said to be involved in the taking of gifts: "...fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery." (Job 15:34; 1 Sam. 8:3; Psa. 26:10; Isa. 1:23; 33:15; Ezek. 22:12); however, Samuel spoke of never taking a bribe: "...of whose hand have I received any bribe [kopher, "covering"] to blind mine eyes therewith?" (1 Sam. 12:3). The prophet Amos warned Israel to seek the LORD and stop seeking after other gods. "For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: **they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right**" (Amos 5:12). Consider also: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel,

and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because **they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes**" (Amos 2:6).

Even though Samuel himself appears to have had a sterling reputation from his childhood, his sons were said to seek after money, take bribes and pervert judgment. Almost the same things were said of Eli's sons, but Eli was condemned for not restraining his sons while Samuel was not.

Why did God condemn Eli for his wicked sons but count Samuel righteous when his sons were wicked too? First, Eli was a high priest while Samuel was only a judge. Eli had both the responsibility and authority to restrain evil in the nation of Israel no matter who did that evil. Eli was the ultimate authority over the nation of Israel, his own sons included. Eli's sons had left home many years before, and as a father he could chide but not physically restrain them; however, as high priest he had the responsibility to enforce the Law of Moses on both the criminal and the immoral. God condemned and cursed Eli because "**his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.**" (1 Sam. 3:13-14).

Secondly, Eli not only did not restrain his sons, but he also accepted the illegal booty from his sons and honored them above God Himself (1 Sam. 2:29). Samuel did neither of those things. The high priest at the time could have restrained them as God expected Eli to do when he was high priest, but apparently no one restrained them. Jesus warned us in Matt 10:37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Eli obviously loved his children more than he loved God. In contrast to Eli, Samuel was a father, but after his sons left home the only influence he had was to chide them. A judge has power over those who come to his court, but for those who refrain from coming to him, he can do little against them. If Samuel had more authority than a judge and a prophet, it is not revealed. What is revealed is that God counted Eli unfaithful because he did not fulfill his responsibilities and counted Samuel faithful because he did fulfill the position God gave him.

According to 1 Sam. 8:1-2, Samuel's sons were appointed judges in Beersheba, which is at the southern border of Israel (combined nation including Judah—actually at the bottom of the state of Judah). This is strong evidence they were not judges over all

Israel, but only of one city. They obviously had corrupted the city, but past that, we don't know what influence they had.

We read that Israel considered who would be judge of Israel after Samuel died and they did not want Samuel's sons. Often a judge would appoint his children as judges, which Samuel did. However, they were not qualified and Israel did not want them to judge the whole nation as Samuel had been doing. The elders of Israel had a strong argument in asking for a king to judge them—someone else besides Samuel's two sons. “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:4-5).

Even though Samuel felt sad and rejected by the people he had served all his life, he considered their request to have a king and sought counsel from God before he anointed Saul. “And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: **whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand**” (1 Sam. 12:1-4). What a wonderful commendation for Samuel.

No one, except the criminals who bribe them, wants a judge who accepts bribes. Even today, any man or woman who is known for taking bribes is despised. However, we should not turn from bribery because of what men think, but because we belong to God and are responsible to Him. We should shake our hands from holding bribes (Isa. 33:15) and refuse to be an abomination to God. We should deal truly and righteously and judge in righteousness like He does.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Give the names of Samuel's two sons. Be sure to include the scripture references.
2. In what city did they do their work? Give a scripture reference.
3. What were Samuel's sons accused of doing? Include a scripture reference with your answer.
4. How might Samuel's sons have kept themselves from such wickedness? You will need to use a New Testament command here.
5. List at least three laws given by Moses, which forbade the giving of gifts or bribes.
6. How did the people answer when Samuel asked if he had ever taken anything from them unlawfully?
7. Give one reason the people of Israel thought they needed a king to rule over them after Samuel died (1 Sam. 8:4-5).
8. God told Samuel another reason the people wanted a king. What was it (1 Sam. 8:7-9)?
9. Were Eli's sons faithful to God (1 Sam. 2:12-17; 1 Sam. 8:3)?
10. Give at least two reasons why Eli was held responsible for the behavior of his sons?
11. How had Eli participated in the evil his sons were doing? Did Samuel participate in the evil his sons were doing? Give a reference to prove your answer.
12. As a result of Eli's evil actions, what did God tell young Samuel to say to him (1 Sam. 3:11-14)?
13. Samuel was an assistant to Eli, the high priest. What was the designated lineage of the priests assistants (Num. 3:5-9, 12, 17, 32; Num. 4:46-47)?
14. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Besides Samuel, there were other righteous fathers who had bad sons. Name as many as you can remember and tell what they did wrong.
15. **RESEARCH QUESTION:** Samuel was known both as a prophet and as a judge of Israel. Explain the difference between the two types of work.

# **BRIBERY**

## **Lesson 4**

### **THE FALSE PROPHET SHEMAIAH**

**(Neh. 6:10-14)**

**An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered (Prov. 11:9).**

**They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak (Psa. 12:2).**

**The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming (Psa. 37:12-13).**

**Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue (Psa. 120:2).**

**Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).**

In an effort to stop the building of the walls of Jerusalem, Shemaiah determined to deceive Nehemiah and put him in fear. Here we have another example of how bribery was used to achieve an evil purpose. Shemaiah agreed to receive money to try to pervert justice so that the Jew's work to rebuild their city would be destroyed. Whether a person is paid to do evil or is bribed to do evil, it is the same. The action is bribery no matter which word we use.

Sometimes the historical setting surrounding a particular event is so rich it is difficult to ignore in order to focus on the topic under consideration. Such is the case of Nehemiah's experience with Shemaiah. Shemaiah was bribed to oppose and deceive Nehemiah into fearing for his life and doing something the Lord would not have him do. The account not only involves Ezra, but also several famous kings known in secular history.

## SHEMAIAH WAS BRIBED TO DESTROY NEHEMIAH'S WORK

**Neh. 4:1**—But it came to pass, that when **Sanballat** heard that we builded the wall, he was **wroth**, and took great **indignation**, and **mocked the Jews**.

**Neh. 4:7**—But it came to pass, that when **Sanballat, and Tobiah**, and the **Arabians**, and the **Ammonites**, and the **Ashdodites**, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

**Neh. 6:1-19**—**Now** it came to pass, when **Sanballat**, and **Tobiah**, and **Geshem** the Arabian, **and the rest of our enemies**, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

2 That **Sanballat** and **Geshem** sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4 **Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.**

5 Then sent **Sanballat** his servant unto me in like manner **the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;**

6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 **Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.**

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

10 Afterward I came unto the house of **Shemaiah** the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

**12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.**

**13 Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.**

14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.

16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

**17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them.**

18 For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

**Neh. 13:23-31—In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:**

**24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.**

25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

**28 And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.**

29 Remember them, O my God, because **they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.**

**30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;**

31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits.  
**Remember me, O my God, for good.**

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. What is the sequence of Persian kings from the books of Daniel through Nehemiah (Dan. 5:31; Dan. 7:1; Ezra 1:1; Ezra 4:5, 6, 11, 24; Ezra 4:23; Ezra 6:6-7, 15; Esther 1:1, 3; Esther 4:6; Ezra 7:7; Neh. 2:1)? The prophets Haggai and Zechariah are mentioned as being there in the second year of Darius (Ezra 4:24). Notice that some of the same kings are called by different names. Sometimes two kings are called by the same name and come from different nations.

### **SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

1. Under which king did Ezra and Nehemiah both serve (Ezra 7:1; Neh. 2:1)?
2. The situation in Jerusalem makes two major leaders (Ezra and Nehemiah) very sad and frustrates the people of Israel when they return from Babylonian captivity. Describe that situation.
3. What was Ezra trying to do and what happened to the people during Ezra's time (Ezra chapters 3 & 4, especially 4:4-7, 23-24)?
4. Who was Ezra (Ezra 7:1-10)?
5. About the same time, what was happening where Esther was queen?
6. Approximately fourteen years later, what was the situation in Jerusalem just before Nehemiah went back to Jerusalem (Neh. 1:1-4)?
7. Nehemiah called himself (or was called) the Tirshatha several times (Neh. 8:9). What was a Tirshatha?
8. Read Nehemiah's prayer and tell who Nehemiah was praying for and what he was asking (Neh. 1:5-11).

9. Nehemiah prayed again under different circumstances; the next time what was his prayer (Neh. 2:1-7)?
10. What was Nehemiah's request to the king (Neh. 2:5-7)?
11. Who were these governors to whom the letters were to be given (Neh. 2:8-10) and why did Nehemiah need them?
12. What did Shemaiah accept that perverted justice (Neh. 6:10-14)? How did Nehemiah handle that situation? Give his answer.
13. Give more than one reason why it would it have been wrong for Nehemiah to hide in the temple. What was his position? What did Nehemiah mean by the expression "...such an one as I?" What was his lineage? Could this have another meaning?
14. Were the Jews united in their support of Nehemiah? Name the various groups of people (including Jews) who were against Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem.
15. What wickedness had some of the Jews done? What was the result (fruit) of that disobedience?



# **BRIBERY**

## **Lesson 5**

### **ASA BRIBED BENHADAD**

**(1 Kings 15:15-22; 2 Chr. 16:1-10)**

Asa was the third king of Judah (911 BC - 870 BC) and the son of Abijam, also king of Judah. He was a grandson of King Rehoboam and Maachah (1 Kings 15:8-24). Benhadad I, (900-860 B.C.), was the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria (1 Kings 15:18). Benhadad I was king of Damascus during the reign of Israel's King Baasha (909 BC - 886 BC).

The first ten years of Asa's reign were peaceful and prosperous. He led many religious reforms, took away the sodomites out of the land, and even removed his mother from being queen because she made an idol in a grove (1 Kings 15:12-13). When he received further direction and encouragement from the prophet Azariah, Asa became more zealous in his call for revival. He restored the altar and called upon the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to renew their covenant with God at Jerusalem. When Israelites from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon saw how God had blessed Asa, they joined him in renewing their loyalty to the covenant.

Asa had two major confrontations with foreign nations. When the Ethiopian king, Zerah, attacked Asa with superior forces, Asa put his trust in God and dealt the Ethiopians a humiliating blow (1 Chron. 14:11-12). However, his second confrontation did not yield such glorious results. When Baasha, king of Israel, fortified Ramah in an attempt to blockade Asa and prevent anyone from traveling to or from Jerusalem, Asa hired (actually bribed) Benhadad, king of Syria, to leave off his threat against Judah and thwart Baasha's plans (2 Chron. 16:1-6). As a result, Benhadad invaded northern Israel and forced Baasha to withdraw from Ramah. These two kings, Baasha and Benhadad, had originally joined in an alliance to invade Judah, but King Asa persuaded Benhadad to change sides by paying him to invade Israel instead (1 Kings 15:19-20; 2 Chron. 16:1-4). This forced Baasha to withdraw from Judah to protect his own interests at home.

The two Hebrew kingdoms had been feuding ever since their division under King Rehoboam. Baasha had pushed his frontier southward to Ramah, within 5 miles of Jerusalem, and proceeded to fortify this intimidating presence. The danger of a hostile fortress overlooking his capital and the humiliation of his rival's occupation so near were more than Asa could bear. It was at this juncture that Asa thought of bribing Benhadad. Taking all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasury of the house of the Lord as well as the treasury of the king's house, he sent them to Benhadad with a request for an alliance. He begged him at the same time to break off the league he had with Baasha and thus enable Asa to dislodge his enemy.

At the same time, Benhadad saw an opening for the enlargement of his own kingdom and broke off the alliance he previously had with Jeroboam and Baasha. By an invasion of Northern Israel he forced Baasha to withdraw from Ramah and confine himself to his own capital (1 Kings 15:16 ff). Judah obtained relief, but the price paid for it was too great. Asa had surrendered his treasures, and obviously some of his independence.

Knowing that Benhadad had a league with the King of Israel, Asa offered Benhadad money to break the league (covenant). Many scriptures tell us we must be faithful to our promises and our covenants. Benhadad had absolutely no right to fight against the king of Israel when he was not actually at war with him. Because of Asa's offer of money, Benhadad was unfaithful to his covenant and became an enemy to his friend, both of which were wrong. Had Asa not offered Benhadad money, his covenant would not have been broken.

For his shortsightedness in laying himself under obligation to Benhadad and relying upon the help of Syria rather than upon the Lord his God, Asa was rebuked by the prophet ("seer") Hanani (2 Chron. 16:1-10). Enraged at the rebuke, Asa put Hanani into prison. At the same time, Benhadad had extended his territories by the transaction and seems to have exercised from that time forward some sort of sovereignty over both the Hebrew kingdoms.

Asa later contracted a disease in his feet in the 39th year of his reign. After such a hard lesson and a rebuke, he still did not seek the Lord, but consulted with the physicians instead (2 Chron. 16:12). Shortly thereafter, he died and was buried in

Jerusalem. What a sad ending to such a glorious beginning! One wonders how Asa could have forgotten all the times God protected him and caused him to prosper when he put his trust in Him. Are we like that? Like Asa, we need to remember the Lord's admonitions when it comes to our time of trouble (2 Kings 18:21; Psa. 40:4; Psa. 56:11; Psa. 118:8; Psa. 146:3; Prov. 29:25; Isa. 36:6; 2 Cor. 10:7; Phil. 3:4). He will not fail.

**Before you attempt to answer the questions, always read the scripture references under the lesson title first.**

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Benhadad was the son of \_\_\_\_\_, who is called "the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus" (1 Kings 15:18).
2. Who was Asa?
3. List as many good things as you can find that Asa did for the kingdom when he first came into power.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was king of Damascus during the reign of Israel's King Baasha (909 BC - 886 BC).
5. Benhadad joined with \_\_\_\_\_, King of Israel to invade Jerusalem.
6. King \_\_\_\_\_ of Judah persuaded Benhadad to change sides.
7. How long had Baasha and Asa (Israel and Judah) been fighting (1 Kings 15:16-22, 32; 2 Chron. 16:1)?
8. Explain what Baasha was doing and why and the resulting temptation that Asa must have been under when he considered what to do about his enemy (1 Kings 12:27; 2 Chron. 11:13-17; 2 Chron. 15:5; 2 Chron. 16:1).
9. Asa, King of Judah, paid Benhadad to invade \_\_\_\_\_ instead of Judah (1 Kings 15:19-20; 2 Chron. 16:1-4).

10. This move forced \_\_\_\_\_ to withdraw to protect his interests at home.
11. What did Asa give up to get his enemies to leave their invasion?
12. What did Asa do with the stones and timber left after Baasha stopped building Ramah?
13. According to the prophet Hanani, what did Asa fail to do (2 Chron. 16:7-9)?
14. What was the result of relying on man rather than God (2 Chron. 16:9-10)?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

15. Explain how and why the following scriptures would be good counsel for Asa as well as us today (2 Kings 18:21; Psa. 40:4; Psa. 56:11; Psa. 118:8; Psa. 146:3; Prov. 29:25; Isa. 36:6; 2 Cor. 10:7; Phil. 3:4).

# BRIBERY

## Lesson 6

### HAMAN BRIBED AHASUERUS TO DESTROY THE JEWS

If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and **I will pay ten thousand talents of silver** to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries (Esth. 3:9).

Haman was the evil and scheming prime minister of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), king of Persia (485 BC - 464 BC). When Mordecai refused to bow to him, Haman plotted to destroy Mordecai and his family, including all the Jews in the Persian Empire who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. If Esther had not intervened to save her people, what a holocaust that would have been! Demonstrating the righteous justice of God, Haman was eventually hanged on the very gallows he had constructed for Mordecai (Esth. 3:1-9:25). Although wickedness and evil appeared to prevail for a time, God was in control of events to bring about His purpose.

During the reign of Ahasuerus, Mordecai was a resident of Shushan, the Persian capital. Although nothing specific is said about Mordecai's position, we may assume he was a servant like all the other Jews in the kingdom. When Mordecai's uncle, Abihail, died (Esth. 2:15), Mordecai took his orphaned cousin, Hadassah (called Esther by the Persians), into his home as her adoptive father (Esth. 2:7). Years later, while in the line of duty, Mordecai overheard two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, conspiring to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Mordecai exposed the plot, thereby saving the king's life (Esth. 2:21-22). Even though it basically went unnoticed at that time, Mordecai's good deed was recorded in the royal chronicles of Persia (Esth. 2:23).

Because Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, the official second to the king (Esth. 3:2, 5), enmity and a desire for vengeance grew in the heart of Haman. Nowhere in the book of Esther are we told why Mordecai would not bow, but some have surmised it was because of his religious convictions as a worshipper of the one true God of heaven. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, when the Persians bowed before their king, they paid homage as to a god. Mordecai, a Jew, could not condone nor participate in such idolatry.

Spawned by his hatred for Mordecai, Haman's plan was to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire (Esth. 3:6). When the news surfaced, Mordecai reminded his cousin, who had become Queen Esther, of her God-given opportunity to expose Haman to the king and to save herself and her people (Esth. 3-4). The plot turned against Haman, who ironically was hanged on the same gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai (Esth. 7:10).

Haman's property ("house" Esth. 8:7) was given to Queen Esther and his position was assigned to Mordecai, who now was second in command to the most powerful man in the world. Through Esther, King Ahasuerus granted Mordecai to encourage the Jews to defend themselves against the slaughter planned by Haman. Persian officials also assisted in protecting the Jews, an event celebrated by the annual Feast of Purim (Esth. 9:26-32). One interesting point only slightly mentioned is that some Persians became Jews for fear of the Jews (Esth. 8:17).

**Be sure to read all the scripture references. In fact, the best thing to do with this lesson is to read the entire book of Esther before (or as) you do the questions.**

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why were Jews living in the Persian Empire (Esth. 2:6; also see Lesson 4)?
2. What king and nation had originally taken the Jews into captivity (Esth. 2:6; also Lesson 4)?
3. What appears to be Haman's reason for hating Mordecai (Esth. 3:5)?
4. Who caused Haman to notice that Mordecai was not bowing (Esth. 3:1-5)?
5. How did Mordecai save the king through Esther (Esth. 2:21-23)?
6. Who suggested to Haman that he should build gallows for Mordecai (Esth. 5:14)?
7. Who sought to kill all the Jews because of envy (Esth. 3:6)?
8. Describe Haman's inflated pride and his envious plan (Esth. 5:9-14).
9. How much money did Haman promise to put into the King's treasuries if he would destroy the Jews (Esth. 3:9)?
10. Compare Haman's proposed bribe money with the money promised to Delilah for betraying Samson in Lesson 1.

11. In your own words, describe Esther's favorable petition to the king and the hanging of Haman (Esth. 7:1-10).
12. How was justice served to Haman in the end (Esth. 9:24-25)?
13. How was Esther honored with Mordecai (Esth. 8:1-2)?
14. How did God get vengeance on Haman for his evil?
15. Esther was a deliverer of the Jewish people in Shushan. During this same time period, what two Jewish men were instrumental in bringing groups of Jews back to Jerusalem?

# BRIBERY

## Lesson 7

### REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES OF BRIBERY

#### LAW OF MOSES

- **Exodus 23:8**—And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.
- **Deuteronomy 16:18-19**—Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.
- **Deuteronomy 27:25**—Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

~~~~~

THE PROPHETS:

- **Job 15:34**—For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.
- **Psalms 26:9-10**—Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.
- **Proverbs 15:27**—He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.
- **Proverbs 17:23**—A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.
- **Proverbs 29:4**—The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.
- **Ecclesiastes 7:7**—Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

- **Isaiah 1:23**—Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.
- **Isaiah 5:22-23**—Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!
- **Isaiah 33:15-16**—He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.
- **Ezekiel 13:19**—And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?
- **Ezekiel 22:12-13**—In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.
- **Amos 2:6**—Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;
- **Amos 5:12**—For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.
- **Micah 7:3**—That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

~~~~~

## **NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING:**

- **Jude 11**—Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.
- **Revelation 2:14**—But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. Under the Law of Moses, what was the main reason God said that bribery was wrong (Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:18-19; Deut. 27:25)?
2. How many people did Balaam's greed for money cause to die (Num. 25:9)?
3. Which of the Old Testament prophets spoke against giving or receiving a bribe?
4. To “live” before God, what must our mind be toward bribing others or being bribed (Prov. 15:27)?
5. Do those who bribe or who accept a bribe want everyone to know what they have done (Prov. 17:23)?
6. What happens to the man's heart that gives or receives bribes (Eccl. 7:7)?
7. What is a major reason for judges condemning the righteous (Isa. 5:22-23)?
8. What does the Lord expect us to do if someone puts a bribe into our hand (Isa. 33:14-16)?
9. How large does the gift have to be before it is considered a bribe (Ezek. 13:19)?
10. Can greed for a bribe become so great that a man is willing to shed innocent blood (Ezek. 22:12-13)?
11. How are the poor of the land made to suffer because of bribes (Amos 2:6; Amos 5:12; Mic. 7:3)?
12. Should we fellowship those who bribe others (Psa. 26:9-10)?

# BRIBERY

## Lesson 8

### JUDAS ACCEPTED A BRIBE TO BETRAY JESUS

Matt. 26:14-16; 47-58; Matt. 27:1-10; Mark 14:10-11; 41-52;  
Luke 22:5; John 18:1-16

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me (Psa. 41:9).

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he (John 13:18-19).

And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15).

But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? (Luke 22:48).

The name Judas Iscariot inspires no one. The other apostles accepted Judas as their equal for three years, and it appears that none of them suspected his wicked heart and actions. Judas masqueraded as one of Jesus' closest friends. He not only posed as a friend but pretended to be a faithful and zealous disciple and apostle. Jesus made him a part of the inner circle of twelve, letting him serve as treasurer. He took him everywhere He went teaching and healing the people, but in reality, Judas was a thief and a traitor. He stole from the bag of money intended to feed the poor, and he will always be remembered as a traitor of the worst kind in his final wicked act. Because of covetousness, Judas accepted a bribe from the chief priests to betray Jesus.

We gain deeper insight into Judas' heart in Psalm 109. Peter identified the subject of this prophecy in verse 8, "Let his days be few; and let another take his office," as Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:20). We can easily recognize what was in Judas' heart as he condemned Mary for anointing Jesus' body for the burial. The Psalmist declared "**Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart**" (Psa. 109:16). The Lord further revealed Judas' heart in that he loved to curse! In fact, the Lord testified that he

“...clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment...for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually” (Psa. 109:18a-19b). Like the Pharisees, Judas was a great hypocrite!

Judas easily concealed his true nature from the other disciples for the entire three years. No doubt he was the one who incited the other apostles to have evil thoughts and bad reactions at times (Mark 14:4). Immediately, after Jesus rebuked Judas, he went straight to the chief priest and volunteered to betray his Master! Solomon warned us that if we rebuke a wicked man we will get ourselves a blot (Prov. 9:7b). Judas caused righteous men to have wicked thoughts against a righteous woman. A root of bitterness can easily arise and defile many. But what was the cause of his bitterness? Covetousness! Judas had 300 pence in mind (the value of the perfume), and Jesus blocked his greed! Furthermore, Judas stole from God himself, but God said “...vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Rom. 12:19b). Jesus sorrowfully noted: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). I don't know of a soul who would want to stand in Judas' place on Judgment Day.

Jesus showed a beautiful attitude toward his enemy. He knew what Judas was in the very beginning, but said nothing for three years. Only when it was necessary to defend one of God's children from Judas did He oppose him. To show the apostles that He had the power of God to foretell the future, He warned the apostles about Judas. Only then did He differentiate between Judas and the rest of the apostles. Jesus said, "Ye are clean, but not all," and "He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me," (John 13:10b, 18b). Even then Jesus did not name him. It seemed as if He wished to give Judas every opportunity to repent.

Then for the last time, when they sat down to eat, Jesus appealed to him saying, "One of you shall betray me" (Matt. 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:21). And at the end, in answer to His disciples' questions, He revealed his betrayer, not by name, but by a sign: "...He it is, for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it him" (John 13:26). All the love Jesus bestowed on Judas seemed to have no effect. He quickly left the upper room; the opportunity he longed for had come (John 13:30; Matt 26:16). He soon found himself with the high priests, leading the mob to Jesus as He prayed in the Garden of

Gethsemane. He dared to betray his Master with a kiss for a mere thirty pieces of silver! (Matt. 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-44; Luke 22:47 and John 18:2-5).

After the wicked deed was done, Judas suddenly realized the enormity of his sin, but rather than turn to righteousness, he committed still another wicked act. Matthew testified that "... he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matt. 27:5). His last act on earth was in keeping with the rest of his life. He began, lived and died in his wickedness! It seems to be very fitting that the chief priests purchased the potter's field and called it "the field of blood." The prophecy (Zech 11:12-14) was fulfilled. The last thing we hear about Judas simply states that he "obtained a field **with the reward of his iniquity**; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1:16-20 see vs. 18).

"The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! **good were it for that man if he had never been born**" (Mark 14:21).

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How was Judas' behavior a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9?
2. What New Testament reference shows the connection between Judas and Psalm 41:9?
3. Jesus was sold (betrayed) for 30 pieces of silver. What other well-known Bible character was sold for 20 pieces of silver? Was the end result the same?
4. What signal did Judas use to betray Christ?
5. How do we know Judas was of the inner circle of disciples who followed Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16)?
6. What would make Judas angry enough at Jesus to go to the temple priests to covenant with them to betray his master (Matt. 26:6-14)?
7. How did the chief priests receive Judas and what plans were made (Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:5)?
8. Whom did Judas bring with him when he came to betray Jesus (Matt. 26:47, 57; John 18:3)?

9. Who else was involved in the mock trial that Jesus had to endure? What was their plan (Matt. 27:1-2)?
10. Did Judas finally understand that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood? Give a scripture reference to prove your answer.
11. Was his “repentance” genuine? How do you know?
12. What kind of fruit would true repentance bring forth (John 5:14; John 8:11)?
13. The chief priests said that blood money could not be given to the temple. Besides giving it back, what could Judas have done with it?
14. What happened to the bribe money that Judas received? Answer with a scripture reference.
15. What was purchased with the money? Answer with a scripture reference.

# BRIBERY

## Lesson 9

### JUDAS ACCEPTED A BRIBE TO BETRAY JESUS (part 2)

**Matt. 26:14-16; 47-58; Matt. 27:1-10; Mark 14:10-11; 41-52;  
Luke 22:5; John 18:1-16**

#### **Ps 109:5-20**

- 5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.  
6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.  
7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.  
8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office.  
9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.  
10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.  
11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.  
12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.  
13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.  
14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.  
15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.  
16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.  
17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.  
18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.  
19 Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.  
20 Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

The basis of bribery is covetousness that is great enough to cause a person to behave in an unethical or sinful way. Unlike a bribe, a tip is gratuity paid to reward those who have done a job well. A bribe is not paid to cause a person to do right but is paid to cause someone to do something illegal or unethical. Judas is a sad example of that very principle. Judas no doubt wanted to do what was right (Prov. 16:2; 21:2; 30:12),

but his desire for money caused him to sink lower and lower into the depths of evil (John 12:6; 1 Tim 6:9-11).

His covetousness overcame his own best judgment when he saw a chance to get three hundred pence from the ointment Mary gave to Jesus (John 12:2-5). The ointment could not have been restored to the bottle and sold even if someone had tried. Judas must not have considered that the ointment was given to his Master and that Jesus had already received it. On the other hand, Judas may have considered such, but his greed made him angry when his Master received the ointment and did not agree with his judgment. His greed caused him to rebel against his Master. Knowing Jesus' impending death, Mary's heart mourned as she gave the perfume to prepare His body for burial (Matt. 26:12). Judas may have had a soft spot for her sorrow but his covetousness overcame any desire to do good and caused him to persecute her (Psa. 109:16-18). The perfume was already gone before he spoke, but his covetousness caused him to be angry enough to complain bitterly about the lost treasure (John 12:5-6).

Jesus gave Judas the powers to cast out demons, heal the lepers and raise the dead (Matt. 10:1-7). No doubt he appreciated the powers, but his covetousness again overcame his gratitude and caused him to value money more than the miraculous power of God. His covetousness caused him to steal from his own Creator and God (John 12:6). Notice Paul's description of how Judas was drowned in destruction and perdition (1 Tim. 6:9-10). Along with the other apostles, he had marvelous spiritual powers which were the envy of the entire Jewish nation (Acts 8:14-19). However, his desire for money overcame even his desire to use those powers for good or even for the praise of men they might have brought to him. He was drowned in destruction and perdition because of his foolish and hurtful desires.

Judas' covetousness caused him to pretend to love the poor (John 12:5). God inspired John to testify that Judas did not love the poor, but loved money more than souls (John 12:6). Many of Jesus' disciples loved Him and gave money for His work (Luke 8:1-30). In spite of the fact that Jesus provided Judas with food (John 13:18), Judas was ready to destroy Christ for money.

Judas went to the high priests with the full intention of betraying Jesus. Initially his motive was his own covetousness and reaction against Jesus' rebuke. Jesus rebuked him for his greed and for his attack against Mary in the matter of the ointment (Matt. 26:8-13), and in the verse immediately after the rebuke, Matthew bears witness that he went to the chief priests. His motive was not only to have revenge for Jesus' rebuke, but also a strong desire for money he knew they would give (Matt. 26:15). At the last supper, when Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to Judas, He told him, "What thou doest, do quickly," so Judas went to bring the mob from the priests (John 13:27, 30; John 18:3).

Having his eyes opened after he saw that his covetousness had caused him to be condemned (Matt. 27:3), Judas tried to undo his folly by returning the bribe money (Matt. 27:3-4). Rather than truly turning to serve God, he was sorry he was condemned and, yet, committed another sin in hanging himself (Matt. 27:5). Judas' covetousness was so great that Jesus described him, not as 'having' a devil, but He said, "One of you **is a devil.**" (John 6:70b). Truly, Judas' covetousness caused him to be the son of perdition (John 17:12).

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What is at the root of bribery? Why would anyone feel the necessity of paying a bribe?
2. Why was Judas angry at Jesus (John 12:2-5)?
3. We see Judas causing trouble for Jesus when He accepted Mary's anointing for his burial (Matt. 26:12). What was his complaint?
4. How do we explain why Judas would think it was wrong for Jesus to accept her "gift?"
5. In what way did Judas persecute Mary (Psa. 109:16-18)?
6. Covetousness dominated Judas' thinking from the beginning. Tell the bad things it caused him to do and also the good things it caused him to give up or neglect to do.
7. Why would the chief priests not accept the money from Judas? Cite a reference from the Mosaic Law (Gen.-Deut.) if possible.

8. Use the following laws to explain what they may have understood in relation to this event (Lev. 19:16; Deut. 19:10; Deut. 19:13; Deut. 21:8-9; Deut. 23:18).
9. Did Judas ever understand what he did wrong? Was his repentance genuine? How can you tell?
10. How did God respond to those who shed innocent blood (2 Kings 21:16; 2 Kings 24:4; Prov. 6:17; Jer. 22:17)?
11. Judas no doubt gained a great deal of this world's goods, but what did he lose as a result (Matt. 16:26)?

# BRIBERY

## Lesson 10

### CHIEF PRIESTS BRIBE THE ROMAN GUARDS TO DECLARE THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY OF JESUS

(Matt. 27:50-66; 28:1-11; 28:12-15)

#### **MATTHEW 27:50-66**

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.<sup>51</sup> And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;<sup>52</sup> And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,<sup>53</sup> And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.<sup>54</sup> Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.<sup>55</sup> And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:<sup>56</sup> Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.<sup>57</sup> When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:<sup>58</sup> He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.<sup>59</sup> And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,<sup>60</sup> And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.<sup>61</sup> And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.<sup>62</sup> Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,<sup>63</sup> Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.<sup>64</sup> Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.<sup>65</sup> Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.<sup>66</sup> So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

#### **MATTHEW 28:1-11**

28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.<sup>2</sup> And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back

the stone from the door, and sat upon it.<sup>3</sup> His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:<sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.<sup>5</sup> And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.<sup>6</sup> He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.<sup>7</sup> And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.<sup>8</sup> And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.<sup>9</sup> And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.<sup>10</sup> Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.<sup>11</sup> Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

#### **MATTHEW 28:12-15**

**12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,**

**13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.**

**14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.**

**15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.**

#### **WE NOTE THE FACTS RECORDED BY EYE WITNESSES:**

- The angel who looked like lightning came and moved the stone.
- The guards fainted and became like dead men because of the angel (Matt. 28:4).
- When they checked, they saw the grave clothes in the tomb (John 20:5).
- They were astonished that the grave clothes were empty (John 20:6-8).
- Because of the angel's appearance, the guards knew this was an act of God, not a work of men (Matt. 28:2-4).
- If they had told the truth, all men would have believed in Christ.

## **WE NOTE THE RESULTS OF THE BRIBE:**

- The soldiers would normally have told exactly what had happened, but the bribe stopped them from telling the truth.
- The lie they told was more than an ordinary lie because the chief priests and elders did not just give an ordinary bribe, but 'large money.' (Matt. 28:12)
- The guards also feared for their lives if they told the truth, because any Roman soldier who failed in his job was liable to be killed (Acts 12:18-19).
- The bribe included lying to their earthly master about the body of Christ. (Matt. 28:14).
- The bribe caused the soldiers to tell unbelievable lies, because if the guards had been asleep, they could not have known who stole the body.
- The soldiers' lies caused many to lose their souls because they did not believe in the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10).
- The soldiers' lies caused many to be cursed by God because they taught against the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9).

**Why would the chief priests feel the need to bribe the Roman guards?** The Jews' primary desire was to prevent Jesus' disciples from making any claims of a resurrected Savior. Their desire to cover up the true events inadvertently served as one of the strongest evidences supporting those claims. Go back and read Matthew's witness (Matt. 27:62-66).

As you can see from the account, **the guards were terrified when the angel moved the giant stone away from the tomb.** They left their post and some of them returned to the city to report the incredible event. Obviously fearful of what would become of them for letting such a thing happen, they went to the Jews to plead for their lives. The record continues (Matt. 28:12-15). **Contrary to the desire of the chief priests and elders of the Jewish religion, everywhere the Roman guard's false report traveled, so went one important fact...THE TOMB WAS EMPTY!**

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. What did the soldiers tell about the facts before they were paid to lie?
2. What would the soldiers have told the Jews if they had not been bribed?
3. Because of the bribe, what did the soldiers tell that they were doing?
4. Who would believe the soldiers knew who stole the body if they were asleep?
5. What kind of lies did the soldiers tell because of the bribe?
6. What did the bribe cause God to think of the soldiers (Pro. 6:16-19)?
7. Did the Jews believe the soldiers' lies (Matt. 28:15)?
8. Could the Jews who believed the soldiers' lies be saved (Rom. 10:9-10)?
9. What did God do to the soldiers who taught falsehoods to the people (Gal. 1:6-9)?
10. What did God do to the Jews who believed and taught the soldiers' fabricated tales (Gal. 1:6-9)?

# **BRIBERY**

## **Lesson 11**

### **SIMON THE SORCERER TRIED TO BRIBE THE APOSTLES (Acts 8:18-26)**

Sorcery and witchcraft were forbidden under the Law of Moses (Exod. 22:18; Deut. 18:10). Both Simon (Acts 8:9-25), and Elymas (Acts 13:6-8) were sorcerers, and their daily business was to fool the people with their tricks. So impressive were Simon's feats of magic that all the people of Samaria, from the least to the greatest followed him, declaring, "This man is the great power of God" (Acts 8:10). However, among those who believed and were baptized when Philip the evangelist preached the gospel to the Samaritans was Simon the sorcerer.

Later, Peter and John went to Samaria to lay their hands on these same believers to give them the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, which included the miraculous gifts, signs and wonders. When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was bestowed by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he attempted to buy the power. Peter rebuked him saying, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:20-21).

At first glance Simon's offer of money does not appear to be bribery, yet we see ignorance and also a bad attitude on his part. Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, upbraided Simon for trying to "bribe" the apostles with money. Condemned for thinking it was possible to buy the gift of God with money, Simon's soul was in jeopardy. His lust for the power of the Holy Spirit had caused an egregious sin. Just as Felix assumed Paul would give him money to be released from custody, so Simon assumed Peter would take money to give him the powers he witnessed that day. Both intentions appear to be involved in covetousness and ultimately bribery.

Why would Simon offer money (a bribe) for the apostles' power to give Holy Spirit by laying hands on people? Many reasons may be put forth, not the least of which was ignorance of the facts. As a new Christian, Simon could not be expected to know much

about Christianity or Christian principles. Formerly, his life had centered in worldliness and deceit, and he knew it. Simon's motive was not revealed, but that doesn't change the fact that he was condemned. We can only imagine what he planned to do with the power, but attempting to bribe the apostles was wrong regardless of motive. Simon obviously did not comprehend the reason for the apostles' power nor the source. The power was God's witness that they were inspired by His Holy Spirit (Heb 2:3-4).

If Simon had asked for the power to give the manifestation of the Spirit, he would not have been condemned. Because he was not an apostle, his request would simply have been refused. He was condemned because he offered material wealth for spiritual qualities. Why was it wrong to offer the money for the gift of God? Spiritual things are worth far more than silver and gold. Spiritual gifts cannot be purchased with money. The price of wisdom is far above rubies, but that price has no material value (Job 28:18). Solomon directed us to seek wisdom and knowledge **rather than** (not as well as) gold and silver (Prov. 8:10).

Simon made several serious mistakes the day he offered money for the gift of God. First, he did not know Peter. Simon's offer was an insult to Peter because he assumed that Peter would do for money what he would not do otherwise. Concerning the use of the power to do miracles, cleanse lepers, raise the dead and heal the sick, Jesus said, "...freely you have received, freely give..." (Matt. 10:7-8). Simon might have been able to persuade Judas to give him these powers in exchange for money, but Peter was not to be bought.

Second, Simon possibly did not know the source of the power. Peter had no power (authority) to give the power (or to give the manifestation of the Spirit), much less to sell it. If Simon had understood that the gift of God (Acts 8:20) came only from God, he might never have offered money. He probably assumed that Peter was the source of the power to give the manifestation of the Spirit. God was the source of the power to give the manifestations of the Spirit. He gave it to Christ (Matt. 3:16) and the apostles (Acts 2:1-4) directly from heaven. Simon should have known that no ordinary man ever had that power.

Third, Simon had no concept of the value of the "gift of God" or he might never have offered money for it (Acts 8:20). There is nothing on earth that is equal to the power of God's witness (Heb 2:3-4). Not one of the nine manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:7-10) could be valued by anything material, much less the power to give the manifestations. Simon's judgment that the gift of God was of no more value than filthy lucre was a crowning insult to God and His Holy Spirit. Peter had no authority to sell any one of the spiritual gifts, much less the special power to give all the gifts. First of all, Simon's offer to give money suggests that he assumed he could not get the gift simply by asking, and thus he felt the need to offer added persuasion of monetary value. He also thought Peter was the one with the authority or power to give the power.

Fortunately, Simon repented and asked forgiveness for his sin. When Peter rebuked him, he said, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me" (Acts 8:24).

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Read the account of Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1ff) and locate the verse that tells whether they understood to whom they were lying. Copy that verse here.
2. Did Simon the Sorcerer understand whom he was trying to bribe? How do you know?
3. What is a sorcerer? Why is it wrong for anyone to be such a person?
4. How believable was Simon? Give a scripture to tell what the people thought of him.
5. Who had preached in Samaria and converted many (Acts 8:12)?
6. Why did Peter and John need to visit the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17)?
7. Why was Simon's offer to bribe Peter such an insult to Peter?
8. How was this also indirectly an insult to God?
9. Explain why Simon was condemned (Acts 8:20).
10. When Peter rebuked Simon, what did he say would happen to him if he did not repent (Acts 8:21-23)?

# BRIBERY

## Lesson 12

### FELIX SEEKS A BRIBE FROM PAUL

(Acts 24:26)

**For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken (Amos 5:12-14).**

**And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound (Acts 24:24-27).**

Bribes, either to give or to receive, are wrong under any circumstances: Shall we do evil that good may come? God forbid! One of the best proofs of this understanding is Paul's response to Felix in a situation where a gift in secret could have done much good for a great many people. Paul had done no wrong; instead, he was imprisoned for upholding the truth of Christ's resurrection! Surely it would not have been impossible to collect from many Christian sources even a handsome amount of money to buy Paul's liberty. Using this purchased freedom, he could have gone on for many more years preaching the gospel. But understanding God's judgment of bribes, Paul ultimately gave his life to uphold this truth: that under no circumstances may we offer or receive a bribe and be pleasing to God.

It appeared that, in Paul's case with Felix, a quiet "gift" might be justified. After all, he was imprisoned, not for any wrong he had done, but for the desire that the Jews had

to silence his indisputable witness of Christ's resurrection. In Paul's appearances before the Jews (Acts 23), before Felix (Acts 24), Festus (Acts 25) and Agrippa (Acts 26), he explained this as the true cause of the problem the Jews had with him. While on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians and deliver them to death, Paul had seen Jesus and was forever changed by Christ's appearance. From that time on, he preached what he had seen and heard. The Jews denied Christ's resurrection. What would a resurrected Christ prove to the Jews and to the world? According to Romans 1:3-5, it proved that Jesus was the Son of God. Knowing the logical conclusion to that fact, the Jews could not admit Jesus' true identity or they would be forced to follow His doctrine and leave their positions under the Old Law. If they allowed anyone to preach such things, they feared they would lose both their place and their nation (John 11:48-50).

The chief priests were willing to pay a bribe to the Roman soldiers to tell that the apostles had stolen the body. They wanted to make sure nobody believed Jesus had risen from the dead, and later they were willing to imprison and even kill an innocent man whose faith in the truth of God drove him to teach about the resurrection. Under this unfair trial, Paul may have been tempted to rationalize that he would be paying Felix a "tip" and not an actual bribe. He might have excused the action, thinking that if it were something that would simply facilitate an honest and just work, surely it would not be classified as a sinful action. However, we can see clearly from this passage that this was not the case.

An actual "tip," which is given openly for good service, violates no law and gives no advantage over another, is not a bribe. If Paul had given a "gift" of money to Felix, it would not have been a tip, because it was not something that could have been given in accordance with the Roman law. Felix only *hoped* that he would have been given money of Paul, he did not plainly ask for it. ***Hinting*** for a gift by bringing Paul before him more often, Felix indicates secrecy, one of the primary traits of dishonesty and often a clear signal that labels something as a bribe, not a tip. Because of this, even though Paul had done nothing wrong, he refused to give any gift to Felix in order to get out of jail. Notice also from this example that if it is wrong to take a bribe, it is also wrong to

give a bribe. Getting out of jail to preach the gospel did not justify bribery. It must be emphasized over and over how we cannot do evil that good may come. This is one of the most overlooked commands when it comes to justice. People believe that if certain things are right that the end justifies the means. It is not so.

Consider a few cases demonstrated by some church members today that exhibit this type of rationalization resulting from a lack of faith. We know from our past lessons that any payment that violates a law of the land is a bribe. In Thailand some visiting missionaries have paid bribes to get otherwise illegal visas. The rationalization that it was good for the spread of the gospel violates the law of God (Rom. 3:8). We also know that any payment of money that gives one any advantage at someone else's expense is a bribe. In Russia and the Ukraine, there is a waiting list for surgeries. The rich pay money to be put high on the list. In India, there is a waiting list for gas cylinders; money is often paid to advance on the list. This type of rationalization is undeniably wrong. Paul's example should be a clear illustration to us that whether or not we create an attractive excuse for ourselves, it is still a violation of the law, **God's law**, to offer a gift in secret to gain advantage.

Though God needed workers in His kingdom and especially faithful, dedicated, responsible workers like the apostle Paul, it was *His decision* that Paul be allowed to be shut up in prison for several years (Acts 24:24-27; Col. 4:2-4). Being human, we sometimes do not comprehend God's plan in the overall scheme of things, but we must accept that He is in control and that His way is best. When we cannot see Satan's darts, we do not always have a defense against them. Knowing that he had not violated any laws of the government, Paul was obviously placed in a situation where he was tempted to pay a bribe for his freedom. But Paul saw the dart and resisted the temptation. Every Christian must learn to "stand" in the day of trial and to have faith in the Father's "working all things" (Rom. 8:28, Eph.1:11) in order to be a true child of God. Paul was no exception.

In our own trials we learn faith, patience and endurance too. We learn that we cannot gain spiritual strength by buying our way out of trouble. Patience comes from

trial. Three primary reasons bribes may be offered are a lack of faith in the power of God over Satan, a lack of patience in well-doing and the desire not to suffer. Rather than take matters into our own hands to buy our way out of a situation, we must learn to wait on the Lord, We must be willing to suffer in order to reign with Him (1 Tim 2:12) and know that we can, through faith and patience, inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12).

He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off (Isa. 33:15-17).

=====

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. In Paul's appearances before the Jews (Acts 23), before Felix (Acts 24), Festus (Acts 25) and Agrippa (Acts 26), Paul explained the true cause of the problem the Jews had with him. What was the disagreement?
2. What does the resurrection of Christ prove (Rom. 1:3-5)?
3. Notice that there was no time when Paul "shaded the truth" to gain advantage as some others did. Read the accounts of what Tertullus and Paul said. Give two major differences between the testimonies of the two men before Felix (Acts 24).
4. See Acts 22:24-29; Acts 21:31-33; Acts 23:10; Acts 24:7. What lie did Claudius Lysias tell in his letter to Felix (Acts 23:26-29)?
5. What did Paul teach Felix and what was Felix' response? Was it dangerous for Paul to teach the truth to his judge and jury?
6. In the Bible we read about two types of fear. One is understood in 1 John 4:18; Acts 5:11 and Acts 24:25. Another type of fear is described in Psalm 34:11-19; Prov 8:13 and Heb 5:7-9. Explain both of these in detail.

7. Why should we fear to do wrong (1 John 4:18; Col 3:22-25; Phil 2:12)? SEE ALSO Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10; Matt. 10:28 or Luke 12:5.
8. How will knowing the difference between good and evil help us when we are tempted to do wrong (Prov. 4:19; Rom. 12:9; Heb. 5:14)?
9. Should any Christian be able to give or take a bribe with a clear conscience? Explain why or why not.
10. Some Christians say it is acceptable to God for us to pay bribes if such action can enable us to accomplish God's work. Use Romans 3:8 and Acts 24:26-27 to show how this thinking is wrong.
11. Why would a high official like Felix want an innocent man like Paul to give him a bribe for doing work he should have done in the first place? How would the first two scriptures in this lesson apply in Paul's situation?
12. Why would Paul not give a bribe to Felix to let him out of prison?

# **BRIBERY**

## **Lesson 13**

### **A REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES OF BRIBERY**

**The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it (Prov. 29:4).**

**Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them (Isa. 1:23).**

**In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD (Ezek. 22:12).**

Up to this point in our series of lessons, we have learned how men or women have taken bribes to get some evil work done. Applying the principles learned in past lessons, we see that greed for money can take precedence over friendships, love of family and even loyalty to God's chosen people and the Lord of Heaven and earth. Judas is a prime example of a man who let his greed overcome his faithfulness to a friend and to God. Judas Iscariot felt no indebtedness, no gratitude to Jesus for anything He had done. Jesus did His good works without expecting any monetary payment, but Judas thought to get money for everything he did. Still, only the lowest of the low will take a bribe to betray someone into danger or death.

Today, some doctors are known to take a kickback for referring a patient to another doctor friend. They may send sick people to have multiple scans or tests they know are not needed and will not show any positive results. For this, they accept "gratuity" from the owners of the lab or scanning equipment. They may tell themselves it is not an injustice to the person because their insurance will pay or their employer gives benefits. Consider that this practice is the main reason for the various Medicaid and Medicare investigations in the last few years. Insurance companies and doctors may collude to prey on the poor unsuspecting patients in order to pad their pockets.

Bribes and kickbacks are a way of life for others who are following the same pattern that Judas followed. Some may stoop to take a kickback every time they do some small favor for anyone. They think, "Who is going to know?" "I am doing what they cannot do for themselves, and so I deserve to get something extra." "These people can afford to pay more and I may as well make a little profit."

We could go on and on citing examples, but the point is that taking any kind of "black money" is wrong. **Payments should be made "up front" for services or goods and anything more than that is not only illegal but sinful as well.** Those who bribe or take a kickback may even rationalize that nobody suffers or that they have not hurt anyone; however, Judas could not say that. A sin has still been committed even if nobody we know of suffers physically.

#### **CONSIDER THIS STATEMENT FROM WIKIPEDIA:**

All forms of government are susceptible to political corruption. Forms of corruption vary, but include bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. While corruption may facilitate criminal enterprise such as drug trafficking, money laundering, and trafficking, it is not restricted to these organized crime activities. **In some nations corruption is so common that it is expected when ordinary businesses or citizens interact with government officials.** The end-point of political corruption is a kleptocracy, literally "rule by thieves".

What constitutes illegal corruption differs depending on the country or jurisdiction. Certain political funding practices that are legal in one place may be illegal in another. In some countries, government officials have broad or not well defined powers, and the line between what is legal and illegal can be difficult to draw.

**Bribery around the world is estimated at about \$1 trillion (£494bn) and the burden of corruption falls disproportionately on the bottom billion people living in extreme poverty.**

**PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO COPY, DISTRIBUTE AND/OR MODIFY THIS WIKIPEDIA DOCUMENT UNDER THE TERMS OF THE GNU.**

#### **QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:**

1. You are an employer and you send a paid employee to do a job for you. The employee bargains with the people you do business with for a price to charge you (his

boss). Is it right that your employee tell you that the company charged a bigger amount than the company actually charged him? Why would he not give you the benefit of the discount the company gave instead of taking it for himself? Why would there be a “bill” for the higher amount when in fact a lesser amount was paid?

2. A “friend” says he will help you find a bargain on a product you have been trying to buy. He takes you with him to find a good, reliable shop and you make the purchase. As the final bill is being written, he quietly covenants with the shop owner to give him a “kick-back” for bringing his friend to shop there. The shop owner makes the bill for a higher amount and gives him the kick-back instead of giving you a discount on the product. Is that fair? Is it honest? Why would the “friend” not tell you what he is doing? Why would he want to make money at your expense?

3. Would our insurance payments be so high or would our government need to consider socialized medicine if there were not corruption in charging by doctors interested in getting kickbacks?

4. How is bribery different at the government level than it is on a personal level? Does the amount of the bribe make a difference?

5. Why should all Christians see the need for knowing what is good and what is evil (Heb. 5:14)? What must we have to be able to discern the difference?

6. Can we do “evil that good may come?” Why or why not? Cite a scripture here.

~~~~~

Appendix

BRIBERY

Lesson 10 (addendum)

CHIEF PRIESTS BRIBE THE ROMAN GUARDS TO DECLARE THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY OF JESUS

(Matt. 27:50-28:15; 28:12-15)

We learn certain facts about Christ's death from the eye witnesses.

- He died.
- The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom.
- The earth quaked.
- His body was wrapped up in a linen cloth.
- He was buried in a borrowed tomb (Matt. 27:57; Mark 15:43-45).
- A great stone was rolled in front to seal the tomb.
- After the tomb was sealed, and a Roman guard was placed before it.
- On Sunday morning, according to many witnesses, the tomb was empty.
- Dead people arose from their graves and went into the city.

Many witnessed Jesus' appearances after the resurrection.

- The three women at the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10)
- Mary Magdalene alone (John 20:14-18)
- Two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-)
- Ten of the apostles, without Thomas (John 20:19-25)
- Eleven apostles, with Thomas (John 20:26-29)
- Several disciples fishing (John 21:1-)
- "Seen of Peter" (1 Cor. 15:5)
- Seen of over 500 brethren at once (1 Cor. 5:6)
- Seen of James, the Lord's brother (1 Cor. 15:7)
- Seen of 11 apostles together just before His ascension (Matt. 28: Mark 16; Luke 24; Acts 1)
- Seen of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:8)

=====

QUESTIONS:

1. Joseph of Arimathaea and _____ hurriedly prepared the grave clothes and entombed the Lord's body (John 19:38-39).
2. Their activities were observed by _____ _____ and _____ (Mark 15:46-47).
3. How do we know Jesus was dead before they buried Him (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:44-45; Luke 23:46; John 19:32-34)?
4. Who proclaimed loudly that the tomb was empty on the day of Pentecost in the presence of literally thousands of Jews who most certainly would have denied it if they could have (Acts 2:24-36)? What was the Jews' reaction to that message?
5. What proves without a doubt that Christ is the son of God (Rom. 1:4)?
6. How did Jesus fulfill the prophecy of David (Psa. 16:1-2; Acts 2:24-36)?
7. How many different times did Christ appear after His resurrection?
8. To whom did Jesus appear first?
9. How many different witnesses were there to the resurrection of Jesus?
10. How many attested to the empty tomb?
11. What did they find in the tomb that further proved the resurrection?
12. Some say the body of Christ was stolen. Who told that story and who do they claim stole it?
13. How would the Roman soldiers know who stole the body when they claimed to be asleep when it was stolen?
14. Why would anyone steal a body and not the grave clothes?
15. Why would it be important for the Jews and the Romans to prove there was no resurrection?
16. Where is this "theory" believed today and why?
17. Why would the Roman soldiers be willing to take the bribe to tell a lie?
18. What did the apostle Paul say about our lives as Christians if there were no resurrection?
19. What was Paul's statement to King Agrippa and Festus (Acts 26:8)?
20. What was Paul's outstanding statement about the proof of Christ's resurrection (Acts 26:26).