

Satanic Wednesday



Satanic Wednesday. The fourth day of Passion Week was Yom R'vi'i (which we call Wednesday from the Latin dies Mercurii', or day of Mercury). Satan inspired Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus this Wednesday.

No mother wants to name her son, "Judas" because his name is synonymous with betrayal or treason. Goat herders use a Judas goat, an animal trained to associate with other goats and lead them to the slaughter. Jesus knew early on that Judas would betray him but called him to be one of his twelve disciples anyway to fulfill the prophetic word.

Even my close friend,
someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread,
has turned against me.(1)

Earlier, in a conversation with Peter at Capernaum, Jesus said, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)"(2) The Passover was approaching.(3) Jerusalem's Passover was the temple leaders' most significant annual event, drawing large numbers of Jewish pilgrims to the city. The leaders wanted all eyes on them during this crucial occasion, but Jesus drew attention away from them, which they deeply resented. His triumphant arrival, the enthusiastic crowds, his insightful and popular teachings in the temple each day, and their inability to refute his compelling arguments frustrated them enormously.

(1) John 6.64, Psalm 41.9.

(2) John 6.70-71.

(3) Luke 22.1.

Two days before the Passover, that is, on Satanic Wednesday, the chief priests and elders met in Caiaphas' palace. Caiaphas was the High Priest.(1) They had already decided that killing Jesus was the only way they could defend their position. But they faced a conundrum. If they didn't arrest him soon, his popularity would continue to grow. But if they arrested him publicly, the crowds might come to his defense and a riot might break out.(2) Rome occupied Jerusalem. Rome loved law and order. Rome did not like riots. A riot might bring the wrath of Rome down on the temple leaders. So, they hoped to wait until the festival was over and the crowds had left the city to arrest Jesus.

But Satan jumped the gun. Earlier, Satan had influenced Peter. Now he saw an opportunity to motivate Judas as well. Luke's gospel says, Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.(3)

So, on Wednesday, Satan entered Judas, and in doing so, inadvertently, played right into God's predetermined timetable for the liberating sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Centuries prior, Moses provided detailed instructions regarding the timing and manner of the Jewish celebration of Passover. He stated, "The LORD's Passover commences at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month, the LORD's Festival of Unleavened Bread begins..."(4) The Jewish people were directed to observe Passover in Nissan, the first month of their calendar, which corresponds to mid-March through mid-April today. Moses and Aaron gave these instructions to the Israelites while they were still living as slaves in Egypt,

This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household... The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect... Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.(5)

The Book of Genesis marks the start of world history, just as the people of Israel's journey began with the first Passover in Egypt. From that moment, the month of Nissan was established as the beginning of their freedom and became the first month in their calendar. For the Jewish people, Nissan symbolizes new beginnings.

Moses was specific about the timing of the Passover. Each family was to select a lamb without defect on the tenth day of Nissan. They were to slaughter it at twilight on the fourteenth day of Nissan. This first Passover celebration was a prelude to their liberation from slavery.(6)

Satanic Wednesday was the twelfth day of Nissan. Judas approached the temple leaders and offered to betray Jesus for a price. They were delighted because Judas was an insider, one of Jesus' twelve. As an insider, he offered the possibility of catching Jesus alone, away from the crowd. So, they paid Judas thirty pieces of silver. He began looking for a chance to betray Jesus to them.

(1) Matthew 26.3ff.

(2) Matthew 26.5.

(3) Luke 22.3-6.

(4) Leviticus 23.5-6.

(5) Exodus 12.1-7.

(6) Rabbi Toba Spitzer.