

RUSSELL SANDERS

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JUDAS ISCARIOT – LESSON 3

JUDAS' BACKGROUND

In Jesus' time, a Hebrew was often identified by the geographical name of the city, which was associated with their family, even if the individual no longer lived there. Examples would be "Jesus of Nazareth" or "Saul of Tarsus" or "Mary of Bethany." Such was also the case with "Judas Iscariot."

"Iscariot" is commonly thought to have been the derivation of the original Hebrew "Ish Kerioth." The word "Ish" means "man" and was first applied by God to Adam. "Isha" was "woman" as applied to Eve. Kerioth was a city, so Is-cariot or "Ish Kerioth" means "man of Kerioth." Where was Kerioth (Cariot)? It was at the far south border of Judah ten miles south of Hebron and about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It is where Judas' family was from, except they had moved away to be close to Jerusalem.

His father was Simon Iscariot, called in scripture "Simon the leper." (John 12:4.) Simon had been a leper, but was fully recovered and was now "clean," however he would always be known and identified by it. It could be one reason why he left Kerioth. He was a very devout man who wanted to study the Torah (the Mosaic Law) and the best teachers were in Jerusalem. He purchased a home in Bethany which was only two miles outside of Jerusalem and moved his family there so that he could receive the best religious training possible. Bethany therefore became Judas' new home near Jerusalem and far away from the crude Galileans.

Simon's move paid off well. He became a respected Pharisee in the Jerusalem area. This means that his son Judas also received the best education that a Pharisee could provide.

The Pharisees and other Jews expected a Messiah who would throw off Roman rule and establish Israel as a free and independent nation forever. Messiah would become their earthly king with an earthly throne in Jerusalem. It is almost certain that Judas, son of a Pharisee, would be totally convinced of that and unlikely to change his mind about it.

Although the "less schooled" Galileans originally thought the same thing, they would have a more open mind about it since they had not been heavily schooled in the Pharisee's dogma.

This radical difference of background between the son of the Pharisee and the "blue collar worker" Galileans would ultimately lead them to differing responses during Jesus' "passion week."

Tomorrow we will look at Judas time spent with Jesus and the others during the years of Jesus' active ministry.