

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 395

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with Prov. 14:12: **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death”**. Please prayerfully consider this warning! Forgetting God inevitably leads to death! There is a “theory” that Judas Iscariot thought he was actually doing Jesus a favor by betraying him. Yes! Judas was a thief (Jn. 12:6) but so are many politicians. Of the 530 members in the U.S. congress there are 207 millionaires, yet they make only \$174,000 per year. So the theory is that Judas was merely a political crook who wanted to overthrow the Roman Government so that Jesus would become king and he could get his hands on some real money. Judas knew that the Maccabean revolt that overthrew the Seleucid Empire began in 167 B.C. with a single family. Judas possibly believed that surely the many followers of Jesus would start another revolution before they would allow Him to be crucified. A clue to the “good intentions” of Judas involves the “kiss” he gave Jesus in the garden. The Greeks had at least two different words for “kiss”. The normal kiss of greeting is “philesen” but “kataphilesen” means to “kiss fervently”. Two times we are told that Judas betrayed Jesus in the garden by “kissing him fervently” (Matt; 26:49 and Mk. 14:45). It is almost as if Judas wanted to assure Jesus by this “fervent kiss” that everything was going to turn out all right! This “betrayal” was apparently planned to trigger the revolution. When Judas realized that it didn't work, and that Jesus was actually crucified, he returned the money and went out and hanged himself (Matt. 17:3-10). Judas was obviously deceived! He should have known that selfish intentions do not come from God! Truly it had been good for Judas if he had never been born (Matt. 26:24). Truly, Judas died and went to the place where he belongs (Acts 1:25). Judas did what seemed right in his own eyes and it resulted in death (Prov. 21:2). Please don't be like Judas! The deception and death of Judas ought to be a warning to everyone about doing things our own way!

A more modern story of deception and selfish betrayal involves the murder of Abraham Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth. The following information comes from the thousand page biography of Lincoln by David S. Reynolds.

The devil apparently began grooming Booth for his infamous betrayal when he was young. Booth told his friends, “I must have fame, fame, fame”! Obviously such an ambition does not come from God. By the 1860s he had achieved some fame as an actor. He was only 5' 8" tall but some considered him the most handsome man in America. He was physically fit with dark hair and perfect teeth. Women flocked to the theater to see him perform. He was also an athlete who was skilled in shooting, fencing, boxing, as well as other sports. In August 1864 the deception of Satan gained momentum and he abandoned his acting career to concentrate on real fame by killing Lincoln. Booth loved slavery but hated Lincoln. In his demented mind Lincoln was responsible for all of the nation's ills. The depth of his deception is revealed by the fact that he actually felt that God wanted him to kill Lincoln! In the months leading up to the assassination he proudly told several people that he would do “something which the world would remember for all time”.

Over the next months Booth carefully assembled a circle of at least eight conspirators. Booth would kill Lincoln and Gen. Grant. Lewis Powell would kill Secretary of State William Seward. George Atzerodt was told to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson. This resulted in a heated disagreement. The original plan involved only kidnapping and Atzerodt balked at the idea of murder. Booth, however, threatened to kill him if he did not follow orders. Booth believed that killing these four men: the President, the Vice-president, Sec. of State Seward, and Gen. Grant, would plunge the

nation into anarchy and destroy the government. He was wrong! In Booth's unhinged mind a new version of *Julius Caesar* was about to take place and the whole drama would revolve around him. Like Judas Iscariot, however, he had allowed himself to be deceived. He got infamy and not fame!

The Lincolns arrived at Ford Theater at around 9:00 p.m. They came to see the play *Our American Cousin*. Booth knew the play well as he had performed in it twelve times. He waited for a really funny moment when he knew the audience would be distracted. That moment came around 10:13 p.m. in Act 3 Scene 2 when the play's bumpkin hero declares: "*Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal – you sockdologizing old man-trap*". As the audience exploded in laughter Booth pulled the trigger on a 44 caliber pistol and shot Lincoln behind the left ear. He was only about 4 feet away. The lead ball went through Lincoln's brain and lodged behind his right eye. The president never regained consciousness and died at 7:22 the next morning – April 15, 1965.

While this was happening at Ford's theater, Lewis Powell stabbed and seriously wounded William Seward in his home about a mile from the White House. Fortunately, though Seward was seriously wounded, he was not killed. General Grant escaped death by declining the invitation to be with the Lincolns at Ford Theater and instead went with his wife to New Jersey to visit relatives. George Atzerodt made no attempt to kill Andrew Johnson but got drunk instead. George was so deeply involved in the conspiracy, however, that he was captured and hanged along with three other conspirators. Two conspirators were sent to prison for life and another was jailed for six years.

After shooting Lincoln Booth viciously attacked Henry Rathbone's and slashed his arm with a knife. Then he mounted the rail and jumped 12 feet down to the stage. He landed awkwardly and apparently broke his left leg. He proudly hobbled across the stage, brandished his knife, then turned to the audience and dramatically said, "*Sic semper tyrannis*" (Thus always to tyrants). Booth then joined David Herold, another conspirator, and the two fugitives were on the run for 12 days before their rendezvous with destiny. After Dr. Mudd set Booth's leg they fled through the forest lands and swamps to Virginia. Surrounded at the Garrett Farm, Herold surrendered but Booth believed that dying in a gun battle would enhance his fame. He was not only wrong about this, he was wrong about everything. Predictably, doing what was right in his own eyes ended in death. Biographer David Reynolds explains Booth's failure on p. 921 of Lincoln's biography: "*Anarchy, destruction. That's what Booth hoped for. Ironically, his effort to create chaos by murdering Lincoln had the opposite effect. No death in history did more to unify Americans than did that of Abraham Lincoln*". Ironically, as you know, the death of Jesus which Judas sought to avoid, is the very foundation of the Christian faith.

Judas Iscariot exchanged the will of God for his own will! John Wilkes Booth did the same. Both traitors died as a result to doing what was right in their own eyes! PLEASE DO NOT SUBSTITUTE YOUR OWN WILL FOR THE WILL OF GOD! You are always safe when you obey Jesus! He said: "**If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and abide in His love**" (Jn. 15:10). Please don't be deceived! "**There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death**".

I love you and Jesus loves you too!

Grandpa Boyce