

Judas Iscariot

The aim of this study is to see what happened to Judas Iscariot and use it as a warning **not** to follow that same path.

Judas Iscariot is always listed last when the twelve disciples are mentioned. [Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16]

It is easy to overlook the fact that Jesus chose Judas to be His disciple.

We also may forget that while Judas was the one who betrayed Jesus to the authorities, all the other disciples abandoned Jesus and Peter denied even knowing Jesus. [John 18:17-26; Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50; Luke 22:54-62]

All of the disciples shared a persistent misunderstanding of Jesus' mission. They all expected, as did most people in Judah, the Messiah to lead them out from under the rule of the Roman government.

Acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, they all expected Jesus to make the right political moves to bring about the freedom from Rome.

Even after Jesus' death and resurrection this same vision persisted. [Acts 1:6]

When Jesus talked about dying, all the disciples felt varying degrees of anger, fear and disappointment.

All the disciples could not understand why they had been chosen if Jesus' mission, in their eyes, was doomed to fail by His personal death. [Matthew 16:21-23]

We do **not** know the exact motivation behind Judas' betrayal.

What is clear is that Judas allowed his desires to place him in a position where Satan could manipulate him.

Judas was treasurer of the apostolic band [John 13:29] and he was a thief and liar. [John 12:4-6]

These sins could open up Judas' mind to satanic influence.

Eventually this led to Judas being taken over by Satan as influence turned to possession. [John 13:27]

It is possible that Judas was trying to force Jesus' hand.

Would Jesus now, after His great popularity with the crowds, lead a rebellion against Rome? This had been tried before by public heroes and failed, but with the power that Jesus had, no such failure would be possible.

Matthew 20:20-24 [NIV] *“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him. ‘What is it you want?’ he asked. She said, ‘Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.’ ‘You don’t know what you are asking,’ Jesus said to them. ‘Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?’ ‘We can,’ they answered. Jesus said to them, ‘You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.’ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.”*

All the disciples wanted positions of authority in this new Kingdom that Jesus was constantly talking about.

Judas was among the disciples who protested against the moves James and John, aided by their Jewish mother, had made to obtain this future prestige and authority.

John 13:21-30 [NIV] *“After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.’ His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, ‘Ask him which one he means.’ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. ‘What you are about to do, do quickly,’ Jesus told him, but no-one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”*

If we read this passage of scripture carefully, with the knowledge of Jewish customs at a meal, we see just where John and Judas were sitting.

To have the confidential conversation that is recorded John had to be directly on Jesus’ right, and Judas on His left.

To be on the left hand of the host is to be seated in a position of highest honour, also to receive a special morsel of food from Jesus was a sign of true friendship.

This could have been the final appeal that Jesus made to Judas to change his mind about what he had planned to do.

The secret which Judas betrayed was evidently the meeting place in Gethsemane later that night. [Mark 14:32, 43]

The sign of identification, a kiss, was the last touch of irony.

The last days of Judas’ life are difficult to understand from the brief records.

Matthew 27:3-10 [NIV] *“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’ ‘What is that to us?’ they replied. ‘That’s your responsibility.’ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, ‘It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.’ So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ‘They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.’”*

To this account of remorse and suicide we must add **Acts 1:18-19**. It is suggested by Augustine that the rope Judas hanged himself with broke, so both accounts then harmonise.

More terrifying than Judas’ gruesome end to his life is the stark verdict recorded also in Acts.

Acts 1:25 [NIV] *“to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.”*

The potential apostle had become an apostate and had gone to the destiny reserved for such a person, the place he chose himself.

The disciples, meaning followers, became apostles, people sent out with a message, after Jesus had given them their commission. [**Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20**]

Acts 1:20-26 [NIV] *“‘For,’ said Peter, ‘it is written in the Book of Psalms, “May his place be deserted; let there be no-one to dwell in it,” and, “May another take his place of leadership.’ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.’ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.”*

The disciples followed the directive as found in **Psalms 69:25** and **Psalms 109:8** by the method used by high priest when making decisions that he wanted God to decide. [**Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8**]

If what Judas did was his own choice, we are left with questions as to the true character of Judas.

Also how can we reconcile this statement with other scriptures which give the impression that he was predetermined to fulfil the role of traitor, that Jesus chose Judas knowing that he would betray Him. That Judas had stamped on him from the beginning the character of “one doomed to destruction” or “son of perdition.”

Whatever his plain, at some point Judas realised that he didn’t like the unforeseen ways that things were turning out.

Judas tried to undo the evil he had done by returning the money to the priests, but it was too late. [Matthew 27:3-5]

We must also consider three things about Judas’ character before making any judgement.

- a) **We must not doubt the sincerity of the fact that Jesus at the beginning viewed Judas as a potential follower and apostle. Any other view doesn’t give justice to Jesus’ character. Also the repeated appeals Jesus made to His friend Judas.**
- b) The foreknowledge Jesus had of Judas does **not** imply fore-ordination that Judas must inexorably become the traitor.
- c) **Judas, as far as we can tell, never had a genuine relationship with Jesus as the Son of God and Son of Man.**

Matthew 26:25 [NIV] *“Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, ‘Surely not I, Rabbi?’ Jesus answered, ‘Yes, it is you.’”*

Judas’ highest title for Jesus was rabbi, compared with Peter’s response [Matthew 16:16], so Judas remained a person who was lost because he was never saved by faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

What can we learn from Judas?

- a) Evil plans and motives leave us open to being used by Satan for even greater evil.
- b) The consequences of evil are so devastating that even small lies and little wrongdoings have serious results.
- c) God’s plan and His purposes are worked out even in the worst possible events.
- d) Judas is an awful warning to the uncommitted follower of Jesus who is in the company of other disciples but does not share in the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. [**Romans 8:9-11**]

e) Judas ended his life in despair without seeking or experiencing the gift of reconciliation that God could have given him through the One he betrayed, Jesus Christ.

f) Judas betrayed Jesus and committed suicide. Peter denied Jesus three times but repented with bitter tears, then went on to be a powerful apostle of Jesus Christ.

g) In betraying Jesus, Judas made the biggest mistake in history, but Judas was **not** a puppet of God's Will, Judas made the choice that God knew he would. [**Isaiah 46:10**]

h) Judas' betrayal sent Jesus to the cross that gives us the opportunity to choose life instead of eternal death because of our sins. [**Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; 1 John 1:8-10**]

Human feelings towards Judas have always been mixed.

Some have fervently hated Judas for his betrayal of Jesus.

Other people have pitied Judas for being deceived by Satan into not realising what he was doing. [**Revelation 12:9**]

Some have questioned God's fairness in allowing one man to bear such guilt.

I would remind you of certain scriptures before you make a judgement on the life and acts of Judas: [**Matthew 7:1; Romans 2:1; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Psams 139:1-13** – only God has such knowledge!]