



Who Are The Apostles? Week #9: Understanding Judas Iscariot

Apostle:

- Those who had witnessed the resurrected Christ.
- Those who were commissioned by Him to spread the gospel into the world.
- Those who had the Holy Spirit work miraculous power through them.

Apostles, symbols of

 In Christian art, symbols assigned to each of the apostles:

- **Andrew:** X-shaped cross because he was crucified on one;
- **Bartholomew:** knife because he was flayed alive with one;
- **James the Greater:** scallop shell, pilgrim staff, or a gourd bottle because he is the patron saint of pilgrims;
- **James the Less:** fuller's pole because he was killed with one;
- **John:** cup with a winged serpent because he drank poison after making a sign of the cross;
- **Judas Iscariot:** bag because he kept money in it;
- **Jude:** club because he was martyred with it;
- **Matthew:** hatchet or halberd because he was killed with it;
- Matthias: battleaxe because he was beheaded with it;
- Paul: sword because he was beheaded with one;
- Peter: bunch of keys because Christ gave him the keys of the kingdom;
- **Simon:** a saw because he was sawn to death;
- **Phillip:** long staff surmounted with a cross because he suffered death by being suspended by the neck from a pillar;
- **Thomas:** lance with which he was pierced through at Mylapore, India.¹

Andrew bar-Jonas

Peter (Simon bar-Jonas)

James bar-Zebedee ("James the Greater")

John bar-Zebedee ("the Beloved Disciple")

Philip

Nathanael or **Bartholomew**

Thomas

Matthew or **Levi** (Son of Alphaeus. James the Less brother?)

James bar-Alphaeus (James the Less)

Thaddaeus or **Lebbaeus** or **Judas** bar-James (Jude)

Simon the Zealot

Judas Iscariot

The order of the list is significant. All the lists of the twelve break them into three groups of four (John does not list them, but tells of their calling in the same groupings). This is clearly consistent with their status within the group.

PATRONAGE:

- A patron was a person who, by their wealth and/or political power, was in a position to bestow favors, protection, and an umbrella of benevolence upon their clients.
- A client was one who received this benevolence and in return owed an obligation of service and loyalty to the patron.

¹ Kurian, G. T. (2001). In *Nelson's new Christian dictionary: the authoritative resource on the Christian world*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



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Matthew 10:2-4

² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, **and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

Mark 3:16-19

¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,^[a] ¹⁹ **and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

Luke 6:13-16

¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, **and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**

Acts 1:13-14

¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

- His call to be Jesus' disciple is not recorded in Scripture.
- Jesus chose Judas. **John 15:16**
You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
- **John 6:71** Iscariot means "Man of Kerioth." Since Kerioth was in southern Judah (Joshua 15:25), Judas Iscariot appears to have been the only non-Galilean disciple.²
- Did Judas feel "left out" being the only non-Galilean?
- Did this affect how he interacted within the group of Disciples?
- Was he always an outsider?

- He followed Jesus willingly.
- Was he a fellow Zealot, like Simon?
- Like the rest of the patriotic Disciples, he wanted Rome out of Israel.

- He left whatever his life was to follow Christ, just like the other Disciples. (Does this mean he gave his life to Christ? Just not his heart?)

- He stayed with Christ after the followers left Jesus in **John 6:66-71**.

- His name appears last in EVERY list of the Apostles.

- Judas's father was named Simon (John 6:71).

² Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Jn 6:71). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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- Every time Judas is mentioned in Scripture, we also find a notation about his being a traitor.
- Eleven apostles = great encouragements to us because:
 - Common people
 - typical failings
 - used by God
 - in *uncommon*, remarkable ways.
- Judas = warning
 - the potential of evil
 - the potential of spiritual carelessness,
 - the outcome of squandered opportunity
 - the results of sinful lusts
 - the trap of hardness of the heart.
- He was a man who drew as close to the Savior as it is humanly possible to be.
- He enjoyed every privilege Christ affords.
- He was intimately familiar with everything Jesus taught.
- YET - He never fully trusted Jesus. He lived in unbelief.

Judas was as common as the rest of the Disciples. No earthly credentials.
He began the discipleship journey just as the other 11.

WHAT HAPPENED?

- Judas's name is a form of *Judah*. The name means "Jehovah leads,"
- What were his parents hopes for him at his birth?
- **John 12:6** informs us that he helped himself to the money in the treasury.
- Why didn't the other Disciples KNOW Judas would be the one to betray Jesus?

Matthew 26:20-25

²⁰ When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve, ²¹ And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²² And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" ²³ He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." ²⁵ Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

John 6:64

But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)



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- The role of betrayal was ordained before the foundation of the world and even prophesied in the Old Testament.

Psalm 41:9 *Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.*

John 13:18 *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'*

Psalm 55:12–14

*For it is not an enemy who taunts me—
then I could bear it;
it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—
then I could hide from him.*

¹³ *But it is you, a man, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend.*

¹⁴ *We used to take sweet counsel together;
within God's house we walked in the throng.*

Zechariah 11:12–13

Then I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter.

Matthew 27:9–10

Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, ¹⁰ and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Judas's role was foreordained.

Judas followed Christ.

Somewhere the attraction to Christ stayed only on human level.

It formed into what can Christ do for me:

Power

Prestige

Worldly Ambition

Gain

Wealth

- How much of Judas' ambition was rooted in the belief the Christ would overthrow the Romans and set up an earthly kingdom that Judas would now be part of?

Since the betrayal was prophesied, was Judas "ordained by God" to be the betrayer?

- No. God knew what evil would do. Judas chose to be part of the evil. Evil was out there looking for, tempting, calling to whomever would answer. Judas answered.



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- Judas had every opportunity to repent—as much opportunity as was ever afforded anyone.
- He heard numerous appeals from Christ urging him *not* to do the deed he was planning to do.
- He heard every lesson Jesus taught during His ministry. Many of those lessons applied directly to him:
 - the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–13)
 - the message of the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11–14)
 - Jesus’ preaching against the love of money (Matthew 6:19–34)
 - Against greed (Luke 12:13–21)
 - Against pride (Matthew 23:1–12).
 - Jesus had even candidly told the Twelve, “One of you is a devil” (John 6:70).
 - He cautioned them about the woe that would come to the person who betrayed him (Matthew 26:24).

Luke 22:22 *For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”*

Again:

Matthew 26:20-25

²⁰ *When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve,* ²¹ *And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”* ²² *And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”* ²³ *He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.”* ²⁴ *The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”* ²⁵ **Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?”** He said to him, “You have said so.”

Did Judas not think his behavior was wrong?

Being Disillusioned:

- It began with hope in the Messiah:
 - Healings
 - Miracles
 - Power over evil
 - Power over this physical world (fig tree)
- The Messiah rules the Kingdom
 - I am a leader in that Kingdom
 - What is my ‘pay’ for this?
 - The other Disciples struggled with this, too.

Matthew 19:27-30

²⁷ *Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?”* ²⁸ *Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* ²⁹ *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold^[e] and will inherit eternal life.* ³⁰ *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*



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- The other Disciples embraced the teachings of Christ that THIS WORLD is not where His Kingdom would be established:

Luke 18:29–30

And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Judas did not.

Judas needed the Messiah needed to fit into his own understanding.

He needed the reward he thought was do him.

It was not just \$.

There was more to what he wanted.

What did Judas want? What was he motivated by?

- Greed (Matt 26:15; John 12:5–6)
 - Satanic influence (Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27)
 - A mistaken understanding of the nature of Jesus’ Messiahship which anticipated His establishment of an earthly kingdom (Matt 20:21; Mark 10:37; Acts 1:6; compare Matt 27:3)
 - A growing understanding of Jesus’ true Messianic mission with which Judas disagreed
-
- Was Judas disappointed with Jesus?
 - Did Judas feel as if though Jesus had stolen two years of his life?

Here is the one time Judas makes a leadership stand within the community of the Disciples.

In the space between Lazarus being raised from the dead and Jesus’ triumphal entry, there was an incident that shows where Judas’ heart was at:

John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said,⁵ “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.⁷ Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

- Did any of the Disciples could see this as an act of worship or as the prophetic burial anointing for Jesus’ imminent death.
- This Oil was worth a years wage.

Was this reprimand the “final” straw for Judas?

- He needed to leave Bethany and travel the 1 ½ miles to Jerusalem
- Meet with the Chief Priest
- Make a deal
- Did Judas betray Jesus for \$ only?



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Matthew 26:14–16

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

That amount was the price of a slave.

Exodus 21:32

If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

The contrast is staggering: Our Lord is anointed with overwhelming love by Mary and betrayed with overwhelming bitterness? by Judas at the same time.

- This is the first time on record that Judas spoke out as an individual
- He ended up with a direct rebuke from Christ
- That was Judas’ tipping point.
- All the bitterness and disillusionment that was bottled up poured out in betrayal.

Judas comes back:

Note the difference in response between Judas and Peter

John 13

*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.² **During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,**³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?”⁷ Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.”⁸ Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”⁹ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, **but not every one of you.**”¹¹ **For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”***

¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?”¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. ¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ ¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

One of You Will Betray Me

²¹ After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³ One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, ²⁴ so Simon Peter motioned to him to



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ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶ Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

A New Commandment

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Whatever disillusionment

Whatever unmet desires

Whatever dreams of prominence

Opened the door for Sin to triumph in his heart. Satan moved in.

I need the Messiah to operate the way I see is best

Supreme narcissistic triangulation? [Jesus, The Disciples and Judas]

They came for him in the Garden:

- Judas arrived in the company of representatives from the chief priests and Jewish leadership (Matt 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47, 52; John 18:3).
- Matthew and Mark identify him as “one of the Twelve” as he hails Jesus as rabbi and kisses Him (Matt 26:49; Mark 14:45, NASB),
- The Kiss is a sign he had prearranged to identify Jesus (Matt 26:48; Mark 14:44).
- In Luke, Jesus inquires whether Judas is betraying him with a kiss (Luke 22:48).
- In Matthew, Jesus replies to Judas’ greeting with the statement, “Friend, do what you have come for” (Matt 26:50, NASB).
- John doesn’t mention a kiss or any action by Judas, but twice records Jesus’ self-identification to the officers while Judas stands with them (John 18:4–8).
- Matthew and Mark, the scene culminates with all the disciples, presumably including Judas, fleeing and abandoning Jesus (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:50).

Judas’ Regret

Matthew 27:3-10 Judas Hangs Himself

³ Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” ⁵ And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. ⁶ But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet



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Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

GROUP QUESTION:

What does Judas' regret teach us about WHY he betrayed Christ?

Acts 1:16-19

¹⁶ "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Difference between **Remorse & Repentance**

Remorse: Deep regret or guilt that his actions did not bring about desired results. Shame. Self-reproach. Self-condemnation. Self-accusation. (He decided he could fix this feeling on his own which led to suicide.)

Repentance: The ACTION of repenting. I am WRONG. I did WRONG. I stepped into trying to be God and 'fix' or 'change' the situation according to what I thought was right. Please FORGIVE me, LORD. I am asking for your Mercy that I do not deserve.

Mark 14:21

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."



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NOTES:

First, Judas is a tragic example of lost opportunity. He heard Jesus teach day in and day out for some two years. He could have asked Jesus any question he liked. He could have sought and received from the Lord any help he needed. He could have exchanged the oppressive burden of his sin for an easy yoke. Christ had given an open invitation for anyone to do so (Matthew 11:28–30). Yet in the end Judas was damned because of his own failure to heed what he heard.

Second, Judas is the epitome of wasted privilege. He was given the highest place of privilege among all the Lord’s followers, but he squandered that privilege—cashed it in for a fistful of coins he decided he did not really want after all. What a stupid bargain!

Third, Judas is the classic illustration of how the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

Fourth, Judas exemplifies the ugliness and danger of spiritual betrayal. Would that Judas were the only hypocrite who ever betrayed the Lord, but that is not so. There are Judases in every age—people who seem to be true disciples and close followers of Christ but who turn against Him for sinister and selfish reasons. Judas’s life is a reminder to each of us about our need for self-examination (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Fifth, Judas is proof of the patient, forbearing goodness and loving-kindness of Christ. “The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9). He even shows His loving-kindness to a reprobate like Judas. Remember, Jesus was still calling him “Friend,” even in the midst of Judas’s betrayal. Jesus never showed Judas anything but kindness and charity, even though the Lord knew all along what Judas was planning to do. In no sense was Judas driven to do what he did by Christ.

Sixth, Judas demonstrates how the sovereign will of God cannot be thwarted by any means. His betrayal of Christ seemed at first glance like Satan’s greatest triumph ever. But in reality, it signalled utter defeat for the devil and all his works (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

Seventh, Judas is a vivid demonstration of the deceitfulness and fruitlessness of hypocrisy. He is the branch spoken of in John 15:6 that does not abide in the True Vine. That branch bears no fruit, is cut off, and is thrown into the fire to be destroyed. Judas was so expert at his hypocrisy that none of the other eleven ever suspected him. But he could never fool Jesus. Nor can any hypocrite. And Christ is the righteous Judge who will render to every person his due (John 5:26–27). Hypocrites like Judas will have no one but themselves to blame for the destruction of their souls.

When Judas bartered away the life of Christ, he was in effect selling his own soul to the devil. The tragedy of his life was a tragedy of his own making. He ignored the light he had been exposed to for all those years, and thus he relegated himself to eternal darkness.

After Jesus’ resurrection, Judas’s office was filled by Matthias (Acts 1:16–26). The apostle Peter said, “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office’ ” (v. 20). Matthias was selected because he had been with Jesus and the other apostles “from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us” (v. 22). Nothing is known of Matthias other than that. His name appears only twice in Scripture, both times in Acts 1, the account of how he was chosen. Thus in the end, another perfectly ordinary man was chosen to fill the place of that extraordinary villain. And so along with the other eleven, Matthias became a powerful witness of Jesus’ resurrection (v. 22)—one more ordinary man whom the Lord elevated to an extraordinary calling.

John 6:71 Iscariot means “Man of Kerioth.” Since Kerioth was in southern Judah, Judas Iscariot appears to have been the only non-Galilean disciple.³

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JUDAS—THE TRAITOR

Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?”

—MATTHEW 26:25

The most notorious and universally scorned of all the disciples is Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. His name appears last in every biblical list of apostles, except for the list in Acts 1, where it doesn’t appear at all. Every time Judas is mentioned in Scripture, we also find a notation about his being a traitor. He is the most

³ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Jn 6:71). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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colossal failure in all of human history. He committed the most horrible, heinous act of any individual, ever. He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money. His dark story is a poignant example of the depths to which the human heart is capable of sinking. He spent three years with Jesus Christ, but for all that time his heart was only growing hard and hateful.

The other eleven apostles are all great encouragements to us because they exemplify how common people with typical failings can be used by God in *uncommon*, remarkable ways. Judas, on the other hand, stands as a warning about the evil potential of spiritual carelessness, squandered opportunity, sinful lusts, and hardness of the heart. Here was a man who drew as close to the Savior as it is humanly possible to be. He enjoyed every privilege Christ affords. He was intimately familiar with everything Jesus taught. Yet he remained in unbelief and went into a hopeless eternity.

Judas was as common as the rest, without earthly credentials and without any characteristics that made him stand out from the group. He began exactly like the others had begun. But he never laid hold of the truth by faith, so he was never transformed like the rest. While they were increasing in faith as sons of God, he was becoming more and more a child of hell.

The New Testament tells us plenty about Judas—enough to accomplish two things: First, the life of Judas reminds us that it is possible to be near Christ and associate with Him closely (but superficially) and yet become utterly hardened in sin. Second, Judas reminds us that no matter how sinful a person may be, no matter what treachery he or she may attempt against God, the purpose of God cannot be thwarted. Even the worst act of treachery works toward the fulfillment of the divine plan. God’s sovereign plan cannot be overthrown even by the most cunning schemes of those who hate Him.

HIS NAME

Judas’s name is a form of *Judah*. The name means “Jehovah leads,” which indicates that when he was born his parents must have had great hopes for him to be led by God. The irony of the name is that no individual was ever more clearly led by Satan than Judas was.

His surname, *Iscariot*, signifies the region he came from. It is derived from the Hebrew term *ish* (“man”) and the name of a town, Kerioth—“man of Kerioth.” Judas probably came from Kerioth-hezron (cf. Joshua 15:25), a humble town in the south of Judea. He was apparently the only one of the apostles who did not come from Galilee. As we know, many of the others were brothers, friends, and working companions even before meeting Christ. Judas was a solitary figure who entered their midst from afar. Although there is no evidence that he was ever excluded or looked down upon by the rest of the group, he may have thought of himself as an outsider, which would have helped him justify his own treachery.

The Galilean disciples’ unfamiliarity with Judas would have aided and abetted him in his deception. The others knew little about his family, his background, or his life before he became a disciple. So it was easy for him to play the hypocrite. He was able to work his way into a place of trust, which we know he did, because he ultimately became the treasurer of the group and used that position to pilfer funds (John 12:6).

Judas’s father was named Simon (John 6:71). This Simon is otherwise unknown to us. It was a common name, obviously, because two of the disciples (Peter and the Zealot) were also named Simon. Beyond that, we know nothing of Judas’s family or social background.



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Judas was ordinary in every way, just like the others. It is significant that when Jesus predicted one of them would betray Him, no one pointed the finger of suspicion at Judas (Matthew 26:22–23). He was so expert in his hypocrisy that no one seemed to distrust him. But Jesus knew his heart from the beginning (John 6:64).

HIS CALL

The call of Judas is not recorded in Scripture. It is obvious, however, that he followed Jesus willingly. He lived in a time of heightened messianic hope, and like most in Israel, he was eager for the Messiah to come. When he heard about Jesus, he must have become convinced that this must be the true Messiah. Like the other eleven, he left whatever other enterprise he may have been engaged in and began to follow Jesus full-time. Judas even stayed with Jesus when less-devoted disciples began to leave the group (John 6:66–71). He had given his life to following Jesus. But he never gave Jesus his heart.

Judas was probably a young, zealous, patriotic Jew who did not want the Romans to rule and who hoped Christ would overthrow the foreign oppressors and restore the kingdom to Israel. He obviously could see that Jesus had powers like no other man. There was plenty of reason for a man like Judas to be attracted to that.

It is equally obvious, however, that Judas was not attracted to Christ on a spiritual level. He followed Jesus out of a desire for selfish gain, worldly ambition, avarice, and greed. He sensed Jesus' power, and he wanted power like that for himself. He was not interested in the kingdom for salvation's sake or for Christ's sake. He was interested only in what he could get out of it. Wealth, power, and prestige were what fueled his ambitions.

It is clear, on the one hand, that he *chose* to follow. He continued following even when following became difficult. He persisted in following even though it required him to be a more clever hypocrite in order to cover up the reality of what he really was.

On the other hand, Jesus also chose him. The tension between divine sovereignty and human choice is manifest in Judas's calling, just as it is manifest in the calling of the other apostles. They had all chosen Jesus, but He chose them first (John 15:16). Judas had likewise chosen to follow Jesus. And yet he had also been chosen *by* Jesus, but not for redemption. His role of betrayal was ordained before the foundation of the world and even prophesied in the Old Testament.

Psalm 41:9, a messianic prophecy, says, "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." Jesus cited that verse in John 13:18 and said its fulfillment would come in His own betrayal. Psalm 55:12–14 says, "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng." That passage also foretold the treachery of Judas. Zechariah 11:12–13 says, "They weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'; that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter." Matthew 27:9–10 identifies that as another prophecy about Judas. So Judas's role was foreordained.



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Scripture even says that when Jesus chose Judas, He *knew* Judas would be the one to fulfill the prophecies of betrayal. He knowingly chose him to fulfill the plan.

And yet Judas was in no sense coerced into doing what he did. No invisible hand forced him to betray Christ. He acted freely and without external compulsion. He was responsible for his own actions. Jesus said he would bear the guilt of his deed throughout eternity. His own greed, his own ambition, and his own wicked desires were the only forces that constrained him to betray Christ.

USE?

How do we reconcile the fact that Judas's treachery was prophesied and predetermined with the fact that he acted of his own volition? There is no need to reconcile those two facts. They are not in contradiction. God's plan and Judas's evil deed concurred perfectly. Judas did what he did because his heart was evil. God, who works all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11), had foreordained that Jesus would be betrayed and that He would die for the sins of the world. Jesus Himself affirmed both truths in Luke 22:22: "Truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"

Spurgeon said this about the tension between divine sovereignty and human choice:

If ... I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

God ordained the events by which Christ would die, and yet Judas carried out his evil deed by his own choice, unfettered and uncoerced by any external force. Both things are true. The perfect will of God and the wicked purposes of Judas concurred to bring about Christ's death. Judas did it for evil, but God meant it for good (cf. Genesis 50:20). There is no contradiction.

From a human perspective, Judas had the same potential as the others. The difference is that he was never really drawn to the Person of Christ. He saw Him only as a means to an end. Judas's secret goal was personal prosperity—gain for himself. He never embraced Jesus' teaching by faith. He never had an ounce of true love for Christ. His heart had never been changed, and therefore the light of truth only hardened him.

Judas had every opportunity to turn from his sin—as much opportunity as was ever afforded anyone. He heard numerous appeals from Christ urging him *not* to do the deed he was planning to do. He heard every lesson Jesus taught during His ministry. Many of those lessons applied directly to him: the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–13); the message of the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11–14); and Jesus' preaching against the love of money (Matthew 6:19–34), against greed (Luke 12:13–21), and against pride (Matthew 23:1–12). Jesus had even candidly told the Twelve, "One of you is a devil" (John 6:70). He cautioned them about the woe that would come to the person who betrayed him (Matthew 26:24). Judas listened to all of that unmoved. He never applied the lessons. He just kept up his deceit.



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HIS DISILLUSIONMENT

Meanwhile, Judas was becoming progressively more disillusioned with Christ. No doubt at the start, *all* the apostles thought of the Jewish Messiah as an oriental monarch who would defeat the enemies of Judea, rid Israel of pagan occupation, and reestablish the Davidic kingdom in unprecedented glory. They knew Jesus was a miracle worker. He obviously had power over the kingdom of darkness. He also had authority to command the physical world. No one ever taught the way He taught, spoke the way He spoke, or lived the way He lived. As far as the disciples were concerned, He was the obvious fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic promises.

But Jesus did not always fulfill their personal expectations and ambitions. To be perfectly honest, their expectations were not all spiritually motivated. We see evidence of this from time to time, such as when James and John asked for the chief seats in the kingdom. Most of them had hoped to see an earthly, materialistic, political, military, and economic kingdom. Although they had left all to follow Jesus, they did so with an expectation that they would be rewarded (Matthew 19:27). The Lord assured them they *would* be rewarded, but their full and final reward would be in the age to come (Luke 18:29–30). If they were counting on immediate, material rewards, they were going to be disappointed.

The rest of the apostles had begun to catch on slowly that the true Messiah was not what they at first expected. They embraced the superior understanding of the biblical promises Jesus unfolded to them. Their love for Christ overcame their worldly ambitions. They received His teaching about the spiritual dimension of the kingdom, and they gladly became partakers.

Judas, meanwhile, simply became disillusioned. For the most part, he hid his disappointment under his blanket of hypocrisy, probably because he was looking for a way to get some money out of the years he had invested with Jesus. The worldliness in his heart was never conquered. He never embraced the spiritual kingdom of Christ. He remained an outsider, albeit secretly.

The few glimpses of Judas that are shown to us from time to time in the Gospels suggest that he had long been growing progressively more disillusioned and embittered but kept it hidden from everyone. As early as John 6, during Jesus' Galilean ministry, Jesus referred to Judas as "a devil." Jesus knew what no one else knew: Judas was becoming disgruntled already. He was still unbelieving, unrepentant, and unregenerate; and he was growing more and more hardhearted all the time.

By the time Jesus and the apostles went to Jerusalem for the Passover in the last year of Jesus' earthly ministry, Judas's spiritual disenfranchisement was complete. At some point in those final few days, his disillusionment turned to hate, and hate mixed with greed finally turned to treachery. Judas probably convinced himself that Jesus had stolen his life—robbed him of two years of money-making potential. That sort of thinking ate away at him until finally he became the monster who betrayed Christ.

HIS AVARICE

Shortly after the raising of Lazarus, and just before Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples returned to Bethany, on the outskirts of the city. This was the place where Lazarus had been raised and where he lived with his sisters, Mary and Martha. Jesus was invited to a meal at the home of one "Simon the Leper" (Matthew 26:6). His dear friend Lazarus was present with Mary and Martha, who were helping serve the meal. John 12:2–3 records what happened: "There they made Him a supper; and



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Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.”

This act was shocking in its extravagance. Not only was it an overt act of worship, but it also had the appearance of wastefulness. Obviously perfume—especially such an expensive fragrance—is designed to be used in small amounts. Once poured out, it cannot be reused. To pour out a pound of expensive oil and use it to anoint someone’s feet gave the appearance of gross excess.

“Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ ” (vv. 4–5). Three hundred denarii was a lot of money for perfume by any measure. Remember, a denarius was basically a working man’s daily wage (Matthew 20:2). Three hundred denarii is a full year’s wages (allowing for Sabbaths and holidays off). I have purchased costly perfume for my wife, but I would never think of spending a year’s wages on one dose of perfume! This was an amazingly lavish act on the part of a family who must have had some means.

Judas’s response was a clever ploy. He feigned concern for the poor. Apparently, his protest seemed reasonable to the other apostles, too, because Matthew 26:8 says they all echoed Judas’s indignation. What an expert Judas had become in his hypocrisy! The apostle John, reflecting on this incident years later, wrote, “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it” (John 12:6). Of course, neither John nor any of the other apostles saw through Judas’s deceit at the time, but in retrospect, and writing his book under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, John told us plainly what Judas’s motive was: sheer greed.

Jesus responded to Judas in verse 7: “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.” Given the circumstances, and since Jesus knew perfectly well what was in Judas’s heart, this seems a rather mild rebuke. He could have blasted Judas with a fierce condemnation and exposed his real motives, but He did not.

Nonetheless, the gentle reprimand seems to have made Judas resent Jesus even more. He did not repent. He did not even examine his own heart. In fact, this incident seems to have been the turning point in his thinking. Three hundred denarii would have been a lot to add to the treasury, offering a prime opportunity for Judas to skim money for his own pocket. Because of Jesus’ willingness to receive such lavish worship, Judas missed a prime opportunity to embezzle funds.

It appears to have been the last straw as far as Judas was concerned, because immediately after telling the story of Jesus’ anointing, Matthew says, “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’ And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him” (Matthew 26:14–16). He crept away, left Bethany, walked about a mile and a half to Jerusalem, met with the chief priests, and sold Jesus to His enemies for a pocketful of coins. Thirty pieces of silver. That is all he could get. According to Exodus 21:32, it was the price of a slave. It was not much money. But it was all he could negotiate.

The contrast is staggering: Our Lord is anointed with overwhelming love by Mary and betrayed with overwhelming hate by Judas at the same time.



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Notice that this is the first time Judas had ever exposed himself in any way. Up to that point, He had blended in perfectly with the rest of the group. This is the first time on record that he spoke out as an individual, and it is the first time he merited any kind of direct rebuke from Christ. Apparently, that is all that was needed to provoke his betrayal. He had kept his bitterness and disillusionment bottled up as long as he could. Now it spilled forth in secret treachery.

HIS HYPOCRISY

John 13:1 begins the apostle John's lengthy account of what happened in the Upper Room on the night of Jesus' arrest. Having already taken money to betray Christ, Judas came back, blended into the group, and pretended nothing unusual had happened. John says it was the devil who put it in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus (v. 2). That is no surprise. Again, Judas did what he did willingly, without any coercion. Satan could not *force* him to betray Jesus. But Satan through some means suggested the plot, tempted Judas to do this thing, and planted the very seed of treachery in his heart. Judas's heart was so hostile to the truth and so filled with evil that Judas became a willing instrument of Satan himself.

It was at this very point that Jesus gave the apostles a lesson in humility by washing their feet. He washed the feet of all twelve, which means He even washed the feet of Judas. Judas sat there and let Jesus wash his feet and remained utterly unmoved. The world's worst sinner was also the world's best hypocrite.

Peter, on the other hand, was deeply moved by Jesus' act of humility. At first he was ashamed and refused to let Jesus wash his feet. But when Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me," (v. 8), Peter replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (v. 9).

Jesus replied, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, *but not all of you*" (v. 10, emphasis added). A buzz must have gone around the room when He said that. There were only twelve of them, and Jesus was saying that someone in the group was not clean. Matthew adds, "For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean' " (v. 11).

In verses 18–19, Jesus spoke even more directly: "I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.' Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He." Of course, He was saying Judas's act was the fulfillment of Psalm 41:9.

All of that seems to have gone over the heads of most of the apostles. So in verse 21, Jesus makes an even more explicit prediction about the impending act of betrayal: "When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' " All the disciples except Judas were perplexed and deeply troubled by this. They apparently began to examine their own hearts, because Matthew 26:22 says, "They were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?' " Even Judas, ever careful to keep up the appearance of being like everyone else, asked, "Rabbi, is it I?" (v. 25). But in his case there had been no sincere self-examination. He asked the question only because he was worried about how the others perceived him; he already knew that he was the one of whom Jesus spoke.

The apostle John concludes his account of this incident:



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Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night. (John 13:23–30)

The day of salvation closed for Judas. Divine mercy gave way to divine judgement. Judas was in essence handed over to Satan. Sin had triumphed in his heart. Satan moved in.

Notice, however, that even though Jesus had just spoken of the betrayer and had given Judas the morsel to identify him, it *still* did not compute in the minds of the apostles. No one seemed to anticipate that Judas would be the traitor. So expert was he in his hypocrisy that he fooled everyone but Jesus, right up to the very end.

Jesus sent him away. That is easy to understand. Jesus is pure, sinless, spotless, and holy. Here was this wretched, evil presence into whom Satan had literally entered. Jesus was not about to have the first communion service with the devil and Judas present in the room. *Get out.*

Only after Judas had left did our Lord institute the Lord's Supper. To this day, when we come to the Lord's Table, we are instructed to examine ourselves lest we come hypocritically to the table and bring judgment upon ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:27–32).

The apostle John says that throughout this entire episode, until Judas left the company of apostles, Jesus was deeply "troubled in spirit" (John 13:21). Of course He was troubled! This wicked, wretched, Satan-possessed presence was polluting the fellowship of the apostles. Judas's ingratitude, His rejection of Jesus' kindness, the hate Judas secretly harbored for Jesus, the repulsiveness of the presence of Satan, the heinousness of sin, the horrors of knowing that the gaping jaws of hell were awaiting one of His closest companions—all of that troubled and agitated Jesus. No wonder he sent Judas away.

HIS BETRAYAL

Judas apparently went straight from the Upper Room to the Sanhedrin. He reported to them that the final breach had been made, and he now knew where they could apprehend Jesus under cover of darkness. Judas had been secretly seeking a convenient opportunity to betray Jesus ever since making his bargain with the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:11). Now the time had come.

Remember, Judas did not act in a moment of insanity. This was not a sudden impulse. It was not an act borne only out of passion. This dark deed was deliberately planned and premeditated. He had been planning this for days, if not weeks or even months. He had already taken the money for it (Matthew 26:15). He had just been waiting for an opportune hour. Along the way, he had continued his campaign of embezzlement, kept up the hypocritical facade, and carried on with the rest of the apostles as if he were truly one of them. But now Jesus had spoken openly to the other disciples about Judas's plot to betray Him. Judas had nearly been unmasked in front of the others. It was time for him to act.



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What had he been waiting for anyway? According to Luke 22:6, Judas had been seeking an opportunity “to betray [Jesus] to them *in the absence of the multitude*” (emphasis added). He was a coward. He knew the popularity of Jesus. He was afraid of the crowd. Like every hypocrite, he was obsessed with concerns about what people thought of him, so he was hoping to betray Jesus as quietly as possible. He was looking for the doorway to hell that was most convenient. And when he found it, he plunged right in.

So at the very moment when Jesus was instituting the Lord’s Supper in the Upper Room, Judas was making arrangements for His capture. He knew Jesus regularly went to Gethsemane to pray with His disciples. Luke 22:39 says it was Jesus’ custom to go there. John 18:2 says Judas “knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.” So Judas knew exactly where to bring the authorities to capture Jesus.

The next time we see Judas is in John 18, when his conspiracy of betrayal reaches its culmination. The evening was at its end. Jesus had gone from the Upper Room to His customary place of prayer in the little olive grove known as Gethsemane. There He poured out his heart to the Father in such agony that His sweat became as great drops of blood. He had left eight of the disciples some distance away and gone deep into the garden with Peter, James, and John (Mark 14:32–33).

“Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons” (John 18:3). The “detachment of troops” was most likely a Roman cohort from the Antonio Fortress, adjacent to the temple. A full cohort numbered about six hundred men. No exact figure is given, but all the Gospel writers say it was a great multitude (Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47)—probably hundreds of soldiers. They obviously expected the worst. They came armed to the teeth.

“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ ” (John 18:4). He did not wait for Judas to single him out; He did not try to hide; He “went forward,” presenting Himself to them, and said, “I am He” (v. 5).

Judas had a prearranged signal to identify Jesus: “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him” (Matthew 26:48). What a diabolical way to point out Jesus! But his wretchedness was so profound and his hypocrisy so malicious that he seemingly had no conscience. Furthermore, since Jesus stepped forward and identified Himself, the signal would have been unnecessary, but Judas—cynic and scoundrel that he had become—kissed Him anyway (Mark 14:45).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’ ” (Luke 22:48). Kissing is a mark of homage, love, affection, tenderness, respect, and intimacy. Judas’s feigned feelings for Christ only made his deed that much darker. It was a devious hypocrisy, trying to keep up the veneer of respect even to the bitter end.

Jesus, ever gracious, even addressed him as “Friend” (Matthew 26:50). Jesus had never been anything but friendly to Judas, but Judas was no true friend of Jesus (cf. John 15:14). He was a betrayer and a deceiver. His kisses were the kisses of the worst kind of treachery.

Judas profaned the Passover that night. He profaned the Lamb of God. He profaned the Son of God. He profaned the place of prayer. He betrayed his Lord with a kiss.

HIS DEATH



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Judas sold Jesus for a pittance. But as soon as the deal was complete, Judas's conscience immediately came alive. He found himself in a hell of his own making, hammered by his own mind for what he had done. The money, which had been so important to him before, now did not matter. Matthew 27:3–4 says, "Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.'"

His remorse was not the same as repentance, as subsequent events clearly show. He was sorry, not because he had sinned against Christ, but because his sin did not satisfy him the way he had hoped.

The chief priests and elders were unsympathetic. "They said, 'What is that to us? You see to it!'" (v. 4). They had what they wanted. Judas could do what he liked with the money. Nothing would undo his treachery now.

Matthew says, "Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself" (v. 5). Judas was already in a hell of his own making. His conscience would not be silenced, and that is the very essence of hell. Sin brings guilt, and Judas's sin brought him unbearable misery. Again, his remorse was not genuine repentance. If that were the case, he would not have killed himself. He was merely sorry because he did not like what he felt.

Sadly, he did not seek the forgiveness of God. He did not cry out for mercy. He did not seek deliverance from Satan. Instead, he tried to silence his conscience by killing himself. This was the grief of a madman who had lost control.

Matthew concludes his account of Judas: "But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.' And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day" (Matthew 27:6–8).

Acts 1:18–19 adds a final note to the tragedy of Judas, with more detail about his death and the acquisition of the Field of Blood: "This man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood."

Some have imagined a contradiction between Matthew and Acts, but all apparent discrepancies are easily reconciled. Matthew indicates that the priests purchased the field with Judas's blood money. Thus it is true that Judas acquired the field "with the wages of iniquity." It was purchased *for* him by the chief priests, but the purchase was made with his money. The field became his possession. His heirs—if he had any—would inherit the field. So it is correct to say that "purchased a field with the wages of iniquity," even though the field was purchased *for* him, by proxy.

Why this particular field? Because it was the very place where Judas hanged himself. Apparently he chose a tree on an overhang above some jagged rocks. (There is a place that precisely fits that description in the field in Jerusalem where tradition says Judas hanged himself.) Either the rope or the tree branch broke, and Judas fell headlong onto the rocks. The biblical description is graphic and ugly: "He burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out" (Acts 1:18). Judas was such a tragic figure that he couldn't even kill himself the way he wanted to. Nonetheless, he died.



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This is virtually the last word in Scripture about Judas: “His entrails gushed out.” His life and his death were grotesque tragedies. He was a child of hell and a son of perdition, and he went to his own place where he belonged. Jesus said these chilling words: “It would have been good for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21).

THE MORAL OF HIS LIFE

We can draw some important lessons from the life of Judas. *First*, Judas is a tragic example of lost opportunity. He heard Jesus teach day in and day out for some two years. He could have asked Jesus any question he liked. He could have sought and received from the Lord any help he needed. He could have exchanged the oppressive burden of his sin for an easy yoke. Christ had given an open invitation for anyone to do so (Matthew 11:28–30). Yet in the end Judas was damned because of his own failure to heed what he heard.

Second, Judas is the epitome of wasted privilege. He was given the highest place of privilege among all the Lord’s followers, but he squandered that privilege—cashed it in for a fistful of coins he decided he did not really want after all. What a stupid bargain!

Third, Judas is the classic illustration of how the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

Fourth, Judas exemplifies the ugliness and danger of spiritual betrayal. Would that Judas were the only hypocrite who ever betrayed the Lord, but that is not so. There are Judases in every age—people who seem to be true disciples and close followers of Christ but who turn against Him for sinister and selfish reasons. Judas’s life is a reminder to each of us about our need for self-examination (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Fifth, Judas is proof of the patient, forbearing goodness and loving-kindness of Christ. “The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9). He even shows His loving-kindness to a reprobate like Judas. Remember, Jesus was still calling him “Friend,” even in the midst of Judas’s betrayal. Jesus never showed Judas anything but kindness and charity, even though the Lord knew all along what Judas was planning to do. In no sense was Judas driven to do what he did by Christ.

Sixth, Judas demonstrates how the sovereign will of God cannot be thwarted by any means. His betrayal of Christ seemed at first glance like Satan’s greatest triumph ever. But in reality, it signalled utter defeat for the devil and all his works (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

Seventh, Judas is a vivid demonstration of the deceitfulness and fruitlessness of hypocrisy. He is the branch spoken of in John 15:6 that does not abide in the True Vine. That branch bears no fruit, is cut off, and is thrown into the fire to be destroyed. Judas was so expert at his hypocrisy that none of the other eleven ever suspected him. But he could never fool Jesus. Nor can any hypocrite. And Christ is the righteous Judge who will render to every person his due (John 5:26–27). Hypocrites like Judas will have no one but themselves to blame for the destruction of their souls.

When Judas bartered away the life of Christ, he was in effect selling his own soul to the devil. The tragedy of his life was a tragedy of his own making. He ignored the light he had been exposed to for all those years, and thus he relegated himself to eternal darkness.



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After Jesus' resurrection, Judas's office was filled by Matthias (Acts 1:16–26). The apostle Peter said, "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office' " (v. 20). Matthias was selected because he had been with Jesus and the other apostles "from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us" (v. 22).

Nothing is known of Matthias other than that. His name appears only twice in Scripture, both times in Acts 1, the account of how he was chosen. Thus in the end, another perfectly ordinary man was chosen to fill the place of that extraordinary villain. And so along with the other eleven, Matthias became a powerful witness of Jesus' resurrection (v. 22)—one more ordinary man whom the Lord elevated to an extraordinary calling.⁴

JUDAS ISCARIOT (Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ, *Ioudas Iskariōth*). One of Jesus' 12 disciples. Betrayed Jesus and assisted the authorities in capturing Him.

Introduction

"Judas" was a common name in first-century Judaism. Seven additional people mentioned in the Gospels and Acts are named Ἰούδας (*Ioudas*)—translated as Judah, Judas, or Jude:

- Judas, son of James, one of the 12 apostles (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13; John 14:22; compare Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18).
- Jude, a brother of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3).
- Judah, the Old Testament patriarch, who is part of Jesus' ancestry (Matt 1:2, 3; Luke 3:33).
- Judah, the son of Joseph, who is also a forefather of Jesus (Luke 3:30).
- Judas called Barsabbas, an emissary from the Jerusalem Council to Antioch (Acts 15:22, 27, 32).
- Judas of Galilee, mentioned in Gamaliel's speech (Acts 5:37).
- Judas of Damascus, to whom Ananias is sent to locate Paul (Acts 9:11).

The story and tradition of Judas Iscariot may be influenced by the Old Testament figure of Judah who participated in handing over his brother Joseph (Meyer, *Judas*; Klassen, *Judas*; Spong, *Judas Iscariot*). Additionally, the similarity between the name Ἰούδας (*Ioudas*) (Judas) and the term Ἰουδαῖος (*Ioudaios*) (Jew) has led to the interpretation that Judas is a symbol for all Jewish people.

The name Iscariot is obscure. It is probably a reference to Judas' place of origin which is shared by his father, Simon (John 6:71; 13:26). Some manuscripts even read "from Kerioth" (John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26 and 14:22). If Iscariot indicates Judas' hometown, the precise location of Kerioth is less clear. The Old Testament identifies a town in Moab with this name (Jer 48:24, 41; Amos 2:2), as well as a location called Kerioth-Hezron (Josh 15:25).

Alternatively, the term Iscariot could be a description of Judas' act, possibly derived from a Greek word for assassin or bandit (σικάριος, *sikarios*) or from an Aramaic term of similar meaning. This rendering, however, would be redundant when it appears in places where the name is further modified with a description of Judas as the one who betrayed Jesus (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16).

Judas' Place among the Twelve Apostles

The Gospels and Acts are the only New Testament books to mention Judas, although 1 Cor 11:23 indicates that Paul was aware of the tradition of betrayal following the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23). The Synoptic Gospels list Judas among Jesus' circle of 12 apostles, placing his name last and identifying him

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). *Twelve ordinary men: how the Master shaped his disciples for greatness, and what He wants to do with you* (pp. 181–198). Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group.



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as Jesus' betrayer (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). John's first explicit mention of Judas also affirms Jesus' choice of him as one of the Twelve, and even highlights his allegiance at a time when other disciples are withdrawing. However, John also simultaneously labels him a devil and references his future betrayal (John 6:66, 70–71). The Synoptics repeatedly identify Judas as one of the Twelve even after the betrayal is underway (Matt 26:14, 47; Mark 14:10, 43; Luke 22:3; Acts 1:17). Judas receives no special treatment from the evangelists until the final days of Jesus' life; as go the Twelve, so, presumably, goes Judas (compare Matt 10:1; 20:17; Mark 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; Luke 8:1; 9:1–6, 12). Only after Jesus' death is Judas notably absent from the eleven (Acts 1:13).

Overview of Judas' Betrayal

All four Gospels indicate that, as the time of Passover neared, the chief priests desired to arrest Jesus (Matt 26:4; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:2; John 11:57). The Synoptics say they were hesitant for fear of the people (Matt 26:5; Mark 14:2; Luke 22:2), while John writes that they could not find Jesus (John 11:57). The Synoptics specify that Jesus had been teaching publicly in the temple (Matt 26:55; Mark 14:49; Luke 21:37; 22:53), indicating the chief priests may have struggled to locate Him away from the crowds.

Interaction with the Jewish Leaders

The Synoptics detail how Judas, specified as one of the Twelve, interacted with the Jewish leadership about their interest in Jesus and his willingness to betray (παραδίδωμι, *paradidōmi*) Him (Matt 26:14–15; Mark 14:10; Luke 22:3–4). Luke explains that Judas' act was a result of Satanic influence, a concept that John's Gospel reiterates (Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27). All three accounts discuss a monetary payment, but only Matthew specifies the amount as 30 pieces of silver and that the payment was tendered (Matt 26:15; Mark 14:11; Luke 22:5). From then, Judas began to seek a time when Jesus was apart from the crowd (Luke 22:6) so that he might complete his obligation (Matt 26:16; Mark 14:11) as "a guide to those who arrested Jesus" (Acts 1:16 NASB).

John's Gospel doesn't record an encounter between Judas and the Jerusalem leaders, although readers may infer some prior contact from John 18:3. John also is silent about the matter of compensation for Judas, despite being the only Gospel to record Judas' responsibility for the money box and his habitual pilfering of it (John 12:6).

The Last Supper

Judas' attendance at the Last Supper, explicit in John 13:27 and Matt 26:25, is also implied in the Synoptics by the company of the Twelve (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17) or of the apostles (Luke 22:14). However, it is debated whether he was present for its entirety, and whether he partook of the bread and the wine. During the gathering, Jesus indicates that one of those present would betray Him (Matt 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:21). This revelation prompts general murmuring among the disciples (Matt 26:22; Mark 14:19; Luke 22:23), who in Matthew and Mark respond, "Surely not I?" (Matt 26:22; Mark 14:19 NASB). In Mark's telling, Jesus reiterates that the perpetrator is one of the Twelve, but doesn't reveal his precise identity. Matthew writes that each one asks this question of the "Lord" (Matt 26:22), a title for Jesus that is spoken by his friends and those who seek Him for healing.

Although Judas' question is no different than the other disciples', Matthew singles out his inquiry, and he distinguishes himself by addressing Jesus as "Rabbi," a designation for Jesus that Matthew generally reserves for strangers and enemies of Jesus. Jesus offers an ambiguous, but possibly affirmative, answer when He replies, "You have said it yourself" (Matt 26:25, NASB). The Synoptics add Jesus' woe for the offender: "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22 NASB).

John's record provides a different perspective on the Last Supper. As Jesus washes the feet of His disciples (John 13:4–11), He intimates that at least one of them is less clean than the rest—a comment



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that John believes is a reference to the one who was betraying Jesus (John 13:10–11). After further teaching, Jesus directly informs His disciples that one of them will betray Him (John 13:21), but the disciples have no idea which one of them it could be (John 13:22). Although John suggests that Jesus reveals it to be Judas (John 13:26), the other disciples still seem unaware. They remain confused when Jesus dismisses Judas from their company, instructing him to act with haste—almost granting permission, if this statement is in reference to His betrayal (John 13:27–28). Though the rest suppose that he is going to buy provisions or give something to the poor (John 13:28–29), the narrator confirms Judas’ true intention. At the outset of the meal, John declares that the devil was already working in Judas to bring about his betrayal of Jesus (John 13:2). John returns to this theme in 13:27 indicating that Satan enters Judas after he eats the morsel of bread Jesus gives him. John likely had a double meaning in mind when he wrote “it was night” when Judas’ departed (John 13:30). In contrast to John, none of the Synoptics record Judas’ departure from the company of the apostles, making it something of a surprise when he enters the garden he had frequented with Jesus separately from the rest (John 18:2).

Garden of Gethsemane

All four Gospels describe Jesus’ arrest in the garden of Gethsemane after Judas arrived in the company of representatives from the chief priests and Jewish leadership (Matt 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47, 52; John 18:3). Matthew and Mark identify him as “one of the Twelve” as he hails Jesus as rabbi and kisses Him (Matt 26:49; Mark 14:45, NASB), a sign he had prearranged to identify Jesus (Matt 26:48; Mark 14:44). In Luke, Jesus inquires whether Judas is betraying him with a kiss (Luke 22:48). In Matthew, Jesus replies to Judas’ greeting with the statement, “Friend, do what you have come for” (Matt 26:50, NASB). John doesn’t mention a kiss or any action by Judas, but twice records Jesus’ self-identification to the officers while Judas stands with them (John 18:4–8). For Matthew and Mark, the scene culminates with all the disciples, presumably including Judas, fleeing and abandoning Jesus (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:50).

Judas’ Remorse and Death

Matthew uniquely records Judas’ remorse when he sees that the leaders have handed over Jesus to Pilate with the intent of having him killed (Matt 27:3). Judas articulates his own repentance and Jesus’ innocence (Matt 27:4) and attempts to return the silver to the chief priests. When they reject the blood money, he throws it in the temple sanctuary, leaves, and hangs himself (Matt 27:5). Subsequently, the chief priests use the money to purchase the “Potter’s Field” as a burial place for strangers, an act in which Matthew sees fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy.

Matthew’s portrayal of Judas’ death is different from Luke’s depiction of Judas falling headlong and bursting in the middle (Acts 1:18). Some have attempted to harmonize these accounts by saying that Judas tried to hang himself, the rope or branch broke, and he fell. Papias, a second-century bishop in Asia Minor, supplied an even more graphically grotesque account of Judas’ death (Fragment 3).

Evaluation

The portrait of Judas that emerges from the New Testament accounts can be probed in many ways. Brown and Klassen argue that παραδίδωμι (*paradidōmi*) should be read in the neutral sense of handing over rather than with a pejorative connotation of betrayal, despite contexts where a negative sense is explicit (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22). Judas’ motivation is also questioned, since the Gospels are ambiguous as to whether he was motivated by:

- Greed (Matt 26:15; John 12:5–6)
- Satanic influence (Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27)
- Obedience to Jesus (Matt 26:50; John 13:27)



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- A mistaken understanding of the nature of Jesus' Messiahship which anticipated His establishment of an earthly kingdom (Matt 20:21; Mark 10:37; Acts 1:6; compare Matt 27:3)
- A growing understanding of Jesus' true Messianic mission with which Judas disagreed

Meyer and Ehrman claim the so-called *Gospel of Judas* presents a Judas who is closer to Jesus than any of the other disciples, who alone understands Jesus' message and intentions, and who acts in obedience to help Jesus attain His death. However, DeConick and Pearson, among others, have challenged this argument.

Additionally, the Gospel accounts themselves create theological tensions, many of which were explored early on by Origen (see Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.11; *Comm. Jo.* 32.240–50). For instance, they raise the question of how Judas can be faulted if his betrayal led to the fulfillment of God's will for Jesus to die on the cross. It is also questioned whether Judas was corrupt from the time of his initial call—and if so, why Jesus chose him if He knew that Judas would betray Him.

The Gospel texts never indicate that the disciples were suspicious of Judas after Jesus predicts a betrayer; instead, they appear to be unaware of the offender's identity (Matt 26:22; Mark 14:19; Luke 22:23; John 13:29). Judas does not express enough outward signs of duplicity throughout Jesus' ministry to draw attention to himself; he appears no less sincere in his commitment to Jesus than the rest of the Twelve.

Passages like, "The Son of man now goes as it has been decreed, but woe to that person by whom he is betrayed" (Luke 22:22; compare Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21 NASB) indicate that the Gospel writers are comfortable with the theological complexity of their accounts. They appear to uphold God's will, Satan's evil influence, and Judas' human responsibility simultaneously in their presentations of Judas' act of betrayal.

Selected Resources for Further Study

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KARELYNNE GERBER AYAYO⁵

Judas. 1. Simon's son, surnamed Iscariot; one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. The derivation of Iscariot is uncertain. In all probability it designated the place of his birth—the town of Kerioth. His childhood home was perhaps Kerioth of Moab, east of the Jordan (Jer 48:24; Am 2:2), or Kerioth-hezron of southern Judah, also known as Hazor (Jos 15:25). A less feasible suggestion identifies Iscariot with an Aramaic word meaning "assassin," a word eventually attached to Judas' name because of his betrayal of Jesus.

Judas Iscariot's name appears last in the lists of disciples (Mt 10:4; Mk 3:19; Lk 6:16), perhaps indicating his ignominy in the minds of later believers rather than his original importance among the 12. During Jesus' public ministry he managed the treasury of the company (Jn 13:29), from which he was

⁵ Ayayo, K. G. (2016). [Judas Iscariot](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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known to pilfer money (Jn 12:4). As betrayer, Judas contracted to turn Jesus over to the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver. He accomplished this act of treachery by singling out Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:14–47; Mk 14:10–46; Lk 22:3–48; Jn 18:2–5).

Various suggestions have been offered to explain Judas' traitorous deed.

(1) In keeping with his patriotic zeal, Judas turned Jesus over to the authorities after realizing that his Master did not intend to overthrow the Roman order and establish a Jewish state.

(2) Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah and planned his arrest in hopes of urging Jesus to usher in his kingdom.

(3) He was a scoundrel who plotted wickedness since the start of Jesus' public ministry.

(4) Prompted by a satanic impulse, Judas betrayed Jesus; however, after recognizing that he was deceived, out of remorse he took his own life.

(5) With a damaged pride and a humiliated ego from Jesus' caustic rebukes, Judas, originally a loyal disciple, turned against him.

(6) Judas, moved by his own greed, yielded to his selfish instincts, not realizing that Jesus would consequently be tried and killed; upon learning the outcome of his betrayal, he repented in despair and committed suicide.

Judas, despondent over his act of betrayal, went out and hung himself in a field bought with his 30 pieces of silver (Mt 27:3–10). Acts 1:18 gruesomely adds that his body "swelled up" (RSV margin) and burst, spilling forth his intestines; for this reason the field was called the "Field of Blood" (Acts 1:19). Matthias later took Judas Iscariot's place among the 12 (Acts 1:26).

See JUDAH (PERSON) #1.⁶

BETRAYAL

Judas Iscariot, the Betrayer

The New Testament never mentions Judas Iscariot without reminding the reader that he was the man who betrayed Jesus (for example, Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19; John 12:4). Consequently, to this day the name Judas is a symbol of betrayal.

Why did he do it? His portrayal in the Gospels suggests that he had a keen interest in money. But the amount that the priests paid him—thirty pieces of silver—was relatively small. Besides, he had access to the disciples' money box and apparently was known for helping himself to its contents (John 12:6).

Some have suggested that Judas thought that his betrayal would force Jesus into asserting His true power and overthrowing the Romans. Others have suggested that Judas became convinced that Jesus was a false Messiah and that the true Messiah was yet to come. Or perhaps he was upset over Jesus' seemingly casual attitude toward the Law in regard to associating with sinners and violating the Sabbath.

In the end, no one knows what Judas' exact motives were for turning against Jesus. He remains a shadowy figure in the Gospel accounts, unknown by his companions, unfaithful to his Lord, and unmourned in his death.⁷

⁶ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Judas](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 1238–1239). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

⁷ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (2001). In *What does the Bible say about... The ultimate A to Z resource fully illustrated* (pp. 32–33). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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Is It Repentance?

- *Regret* is being sorry—mentally (King Saul, for example).
- *Remorse* is being sorry—mentally and emotionally (like Judas).
- *Repentance* is being sorry—mentally, emotionally, and volitionally (like Matthew, among others).⁸

A LAYMAN and his Faith THE RELEVANCE OF REPENTANCE

IF THERE SHOULD EVER COME a time that can truthfully be described as the “post-Christian” era, the reason for it will be that the Church no longer considers valid the things that are basic to Christianity. This trend already exists, so much so that the Church’s emphases are largely on peripheral matters. Like the Pharisees of old, we spend our time washing the outside of the cup while we pay little attention to the inside—sin in the human heart and God’s provision for its cleansing.

Why is “repentance” a lost word in modern theological jargon?

The first reason is that the nature of sin and its offense against a holy God are played down. Excuses for man’s behavior are given in philosophical and psychological terms that completely evade man’s responsibility to God. Our parents, our environment, our physical condition are blamed for what we do, and many who presume to right men’s ills deny or ignore the basic cause of those ills. Our Lord spoke of the religious leaders of his day as “blind leaders of the blind,” and these certainly have their counterparts today. This is harsh language, but it needs to be spoken, for we are convinced that much that goes under the name “Christianity” in our time has not the remotest relation to Christ and his redeeming work.

Repentance, the very gateway to man’s salvation, is rarely mentioned today. Man in his blindness and self-righteousness does not know that he is a sinner in God’s sight, that the effect of that sin is spiritual death, and that God was so concerned about sin that he took the one step by which sin might be cleansed—the death of his Son.

We need to stop and to realize that in the Gospel there are two imperatives: first, God had no way to redeem men other than by the sacrifice of his Son; and, second, man has no other way than to believe and accept what God has done for him.

Those who have had to deal with alcoholics or drug addicts know that first the addict must have a sense of need and of his own helplessness before the process of healing can begin.

But we, in our worldly wisdom and sophistication, have all but eliminated from our Christian vocabulary and preaching any realization of the lostness of man and of his own inability to do anything about it.

Repentance is sorrow for having done something wrong. It is an admission of sinfulness and of its offense against a God too pure to behold evil. It is the realization that against sin there abides the anger of a holy God, an anger that no longer exists where repentance and cleansing have taken place.

David, guilty of adultery and murder, cried out to God: “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” He recognized that basic to all was his offense against the Holy One of Israel.

Job, convicted of his self-righteousness as he became aware of God’s holy presence, cried out: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5, 6).

The New Testament carries the theme of repentance from the ministry of John the Baptist down to the Revelation.

John called on men to repent. Our Lord, did the same. This was the message of the disciples and of the apostles as the early Church came into being, and an emphasis in John’s vision on Patmos.

One day men came to Jesus and told him of Pilate’s killing some Galileans and mingling their blood with their sacrifices. Our Lord’s reply was: “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:2, 3). In like manner,

⁸ Morgan, R. J. (2000). *Nelson’s complete book of stories, illustrations, and quotes* (electronic ed., p. 663). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



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in speaking of a local disaster that had taken the lives of eighteen people, he said: “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Repentance is more than an attitude of mind; it is a reaction of the will against sin. And true repentance carries with it not only a sense of sin against God but the prayer and determination to turn, by God’s grace, away from that sin.

It is easy to be “repentant” for something we have done when we get in trouble as a consequence, but that is not true repentance. Judas “repented” and then event out and committed suicide. We have known many people truly sorry for the consequences of sin, but that is not repentance.

What God requires is contrition for our sins, for he is holy, and fellowship with him has been broken. Paul makes this plain: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10).

The relevance of repentance to man’s forgiveness by God must be understood, for the two are inexorably linked together. Man repents, God forgives. Our Lord indicates this in his explanation of the gospel message to his disciples: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name ...” (Luke 24:47).

We are prone to presume on the love and mercy of God. We trust in grace and ignore his holiness. Paul says: “Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4).

The writer has seen thousands of cases of leprosy. One type attacks the nerves so that local anesthesia results. The unfortunate victims of this often burn themselves because there is no sense of pain. Just so, one of the major problems in every generation is the lack of a sense of sin. As a result, spiritual anesthesia leads men to go on blithely in sin; and those who should warn them seem equally impervious to any conviction of offense.

Christ was unsparing in his denunciation of those who heard and did not repent, telling the people in the cities where so many of his mighty works were done that in the day of judgment it would be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom.

Why has “repentance” become almost obsolete in theological vocabularies? This has not happened in a day, but as religious leaders have turned more and more from biblical concepts and terminology an entirely new philosophy has emerged. Sin is explained as something other than an offense against a holy God. Salvation is not something offered but something man already has—a universal condition.

Why repent for sins for which one is not responsible? Little wonder that the atoning blood of the Son of God shed on Calvary is “spurned” and “profaned” and the Spirit of grace is outraged!

Nowhere is the Church failing more in her God-ordained ministry than in neglecting to preach repentance for sin.

In the medical realm, a physician who denied or minimized the reality of cancer or questioned the necessity for early treatment would be called a charlatan.

Where the eternal destiny of man is at stake, shall the vital place of godly repentance be neglected in making the Gospel “relevant”?

Just that is happening.

L. NELSON BELL⁹

Death of Judas and Election of Matthias (1:15–26)

Acts 1:15–26 in Context

The beginning of the church (1)

Introduction (1:1–14)

Preface to Acts (1:1–5)

Departure of Jesus and response of the disciples (1:6–11)

Narrative summary (1:12–14)

Death of Judas and election of Matthias (1:15–26)

Introduction (1:15)

⁹ Bell, L. N. (1964). [A Layman and His Faith](#). *Christianity Today*, 8(18), 836–837.



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Peter's speech (1:16–22) Election of Matthias (1:23–26)

Before Luke can narrate the fulfillment at Pentecost of Jesus' promise that the disciples will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, he must address what for him is a problem of the first magnitude. The circle of the Twelve has been broken and must be restored (Johnson 1977, 175). Acts 1:15–26 divides into three parts: (1) introduction (1:15); (2) Peter's speech (1:16–22); and (3) Election of Matthias (1:23–26).

1:15. Peter stands in the midst of the believers to address this problem of the fall of Judas from the circle of the Twelve (1:15). The situational irony of this first apostolic speech within the post-Easter community should not be lost, an irony created by the similarities in the pre-Easter actions of Judas and Peter. Judas betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:47), thus fulfilling Jesus' prophecy (Luke 22:21–22). Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before three different persons in the courtyard of the high priest (Luke 22:54–62), thus fulfilling Jesus' prophecy (Luke 22:34). The actions of both Judas and Peter are associated with the work of Satan (Luke 22:3; 22:31). And so in Acts 1:15, we have the ironical predicament of the one who denied Jesus retelling the story of the one who had betrayed him.

Though the actions of both are somehow related to Satan, there is a sharp distinction. "Satan entered Judas" (Luke 22:3) indicates that Judas's actions were under the jurisdiction of the "power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). His act of betrayal and subsequent demise fulfill Jesus' pronouncement of curse: "woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). In the case of Peter, Jesus' warning, "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat," is followed by an exhortation, "when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31–32). The difference between the two is in the revelation of Jesus to Peter: "but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32). The appearance of Jesus to Peter (Luke 24:34; [24:12?]) provides Peter the opportunity to "turn again." The situation of having the "rehabilitated" denier of Jesus speak of the divine necessity for the one who betrayed Jesus to go to his "own place" is certainly justified from the perspective of the narrator. If Judas fulfills the woe of Jesus when he bursts asunder in the field that he has purchased, then Peter fulfills the exhortation of Jesus to "strengthen your brethren" when he stands in their midst and expounds upon the divine imperative of the scripture regarding the fate of Judas and the election of his replacement.

What Would Peter Say?

That Peter's first speech (1:16–22) is in keeping with his character as developed elsewhere in Acts is not surprising given the fact that one of the progymnastic exercises practiced in antiquity was that of *prosōpopoeia*, or speech in character (elsewhere known as *ethopoeia*; cf. Hermogenes, *Prog.* 20, trans. Kennedy 2003, 84; Aphthonius, *Prog.* 34 R, trans. Kennedy 2003, 115), whereby the author attributes to a person words that "are suitable to the speaker and have an indisputable application to the subject discussed" (Theon, *Prog.* 115, trans. Kennedy 2003, 47). In order to present a speech that is suitable, Theon argues that "one should have in mind what the personality of the speaker is like, and to whom the speech is addressed" (Theon, *Prog.* 115, trans. Kennedy 2003, 47).

The narrator uses an aside (see Sheeley 1992) to address the audience directly about the size of the assembly gathered with Peter: **the crowd of people together numbered one hundred and twenty**



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people (1:15). The number is significant since one hundred and twenty is not only a multiplication of the Twelve but also since one hundred and twenty *men* are necessary to constitute a local sanhedrin (*Sanh.* 1.6). Even if Luke is not making the point that the early church is also a “properly constituted” community (see Conzelmann 1987, 10), it is still clear from the narrative that in this newly formed community, women count (see 1:14; also Luke 8:1–3; 23:49).

1:16–22. Because Peter recommends an action in the very near future, namely the replacement of Judas in the circle of the Twelve, his speech (1:16–22) falls into the rhetorical species of deliberative discourse (see “Species of Ancient Rhetoric,” p. 8). The speech turns upon the OT quotation cited in 1:20. The first half of the quotation, taken from Ps 69:25, deals with the demise of Judas; the second half, which is a citation of Ps 109:8, addresses the election of Judas’s successor. The double use of the *dei* of divine necessity is the textual clue to this division. The shift in tense from imperfect to present also supports the view that the first half of the quotation is addressed by Peter’s story of Judas and the second quotation anticipates fulfillment in the election narrative (see Dupont 1961, 41–51).

Peter’s story of Judas’s demise summarizes the bare essentials of Judas’s betrayal found in the Third Gospel and then adds new information presumably not known to Luke’s authorial audience. The contrasts between Matthew’s version of Judas’s demise (Matt 27:1–10) and Luke’s account helpfully instruct regarding the distinct perspective of the Lukan Peter. Matthew’s account includes: (1) Judas repented and returned the money (27:3–4). (2) The priests are responsible for buying the field for burial (27:7). (3) The name of the field is the result of the use made of the money. (4) Matthew cites scripture (Zech 11:12–13; Jer 32:8–9) to explain the price of the land, not to speak of Judas’s fate.

Peter depicts the defection of Judas and his subsequent judgment with the use of money. In the Third Gospel (contra Matthew), Judas does not repent and return the money, but rather, according to Acts 1:18, purchased a **field** (*chōrion*) with the betrayal money. Such a self-serving purchase not only stands in sharp contrast to the way the believers sold their fields and laid the proceedings at the apostles’ feet (see 4:32–35) but also is juxtaposed to the narrator of this story, Peter, who along with James and John “left everything” to follow Jesus (see Luke 5:11). Judas has traded his inheritance (*klēron*) in the apostolic ministry (1:17) for a farm, a symbol of his apostasy from the circle of the Twelve.

Ironically, Judas dies on this same property, according to Acts: **this man purchased a field using the money earned from his unjust deed and after becoming prostrate he burst open in the middle and all his insides poured out** (1:18). The phrase “becoming prostrate” or “falling headlong” (*prēnēs genomenos*) recalls conceptually the prophecy of Simeon that Jesus would be “set for the *fall* and rising of many in Israel” (2:34). There is no hint of suicide here (contra Matt 27); the death is the result of divine judgment and fits into the theme of “the death of the opponent of God” (Conzelmann 1987, 11), and like the account of Herod (cf. Acts 12:20–23) is conveyed in vivid, “ekphrastic” language, meant as much for the eye as for the ear (see Acts 2:1–5). Because Judas meets his death on this property, it is called the **Field of Blood** (1:19). And just as the purchasing of a field symbolized Judas’s defection, so also the fact that his property is doomed to perpetual desertion (1:20) is a sign of his judgment.¹⁰

Basic Christian Doctrines: 29 Repentance and Conversion

The *Chicago Daily News* recently reported that Billy Graham, in talking about what Americans need most, stated: “It is absolutely impossible to change society and to reverse the moral trend unless we ourselves are changed from the inside out. Man needs transformation or conversion.... Our only way to moral reform is through repentance of our sins and a return to God.”

The Old Testament in no uncertain terms reiterates the same truth over and over again. A representative and very specific statement to that effect is found in 2 Chron. 7:14: “If my people, who are called by my name,

¹⁰ Parsons, M. C. (2008). *Acts* (pp. 31–33). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.



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shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

¶ *Meaning of Repentance and Conversion in the New Testament.* Two Greek words are translated as repentance. *Metamelomai* has the basic connotation of feeling differently, or remorse (Matt. 21:29, 32; 27:3). Judas repented only in the sense of remorse, not with the idea of abandoning sin. Paul used this word with such a meaning (2 Cor. 7:8). *Metanoeo* (*metanoia*, noun) is regularly used to express the requisite state of mind necessary for the forgiveness of sin. It means to think differently or to have a different attitude toward sin and God, etc.

For conversion, *strephe* (*strophe*, noun), the root word, is used twice: Matt. 18:3, “Unless you become *converted* and become as little children you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven”; John 12:40, “become *converted*, and I will heal them.” The preposition prefix *epi* occurs on the word in the other passages where the sense of conversion is expressed. The basic idea of the word is to turn, and in most passages, where it denotes conversion, it is used in the active voice.

¶ *The Usage of These Words in the New Testament.* In two passages in the New Testament both of these words occur, and in both cases the word for repentance precedes the other. Acts 3:19, “Therefore *repent* and *turn* (be converted) in order that your sins may be blotted out, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”; Acts 26:20, “that they should *repent* and *turn* to God and perform deeds worthy (i.e., expressive) of repentance.”

In the above quotations we note that both words are used to describe an experience which has two aspects, namely that of turning away from displeasing God to pleasing him. And both words are used to denote the human volition and act by which man, convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, determines to make his life conform to the will of God. Regeneration and justification are terms that denote God’s part in transforming an individual, while the words faith, repentance and conversion are used to express man’s necessary response to Christ and God if regeneration is to be experienced.

Repentance without turning one’s life over to God does not obtain remission of sins, neither does turning one’s life over to God without repentance, as we shall indicate, bring remission of sins. Thus it is obvious that the two words deal with the right commitment of one’s self to God with the definite intent of doing his will as long as life lasts. But before one makes such a life-transforming and epoch-making decision he of necessity must have faith, believing that God “rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6). An example of this is cited in Acts 11:21, “a great number that believed *turned* to the Lord.”

¶ *The Emphasis Placed on Repentance in the New Testament.* Mark 1:4, 5: “John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance [i.e., a baptism expressive of repentance, genitive of description in Greek] for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and, confessing their sins, they were being baptized in the river Jordan.”

Luke 3:7–14: “Who warned you, you serpent’s brood, to escape from the wrath to come? See that you do something to show that your hearts are really changed [*metanoias*!] Don’t start thinking that you can say to yourselves, ‘We are Abraham’s children,’ for I tell you that God could produce children of Abraham out of these stones! The ax already lies at the root of the tree, and the tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

“Then the crowds would ask him, ‘Then what shall we do?’ And his answer was, ‘The man who has two shirts must share with the man who has none, and the man who has food must do the same.’ ”

“Some of the tax collectors also came to him to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Master, what are we to do?’ ‘You must not demand more than you are entitled to,’ he replied.”

“And the soldiers asked him, ‘And what are we to do?’ ‘Don’t bully people, don’t bring false charges, and be content with your pay,’ he replied” (J. B. Phillips’ translation).

Matt. 3:5–12 is closely parallel to the statement in Mark and Luke, except that Luke has gone into greater detail in pointing out how the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers were to demonstrate genuine repentance in their respective spheres of activity in society by using their time, talents, substance, and social position to serve others.



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All three of the synoptic writers, we note, picture John the Baptist as being adamant in demanding real repentance and insisting on the expression of it in everyday living. They made it clear that being a descendant of Abraham was not enough, that fleshly descent would not abate God's wrath. Any Israelite who did not repent became subject to the severe judgment of God. But apparently John also preached the necessity of openly and publicly confessing sins before or at the time of baptism, for both Mark and Matthew state that the baptismal candidates were confessing their sins. Furthermore, the repentance that was demanded was not to be only personal and negative, a cessation of sinning, but it was also to be social and positive.

But we are indebted mostly to Luke for the detailed and specific spelling out of how one's repentance should and can be expressed in helpful acts of service to others. Jesus, like John, stressed the need of repentance and true conversion. "By their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:20, 21).

¶ *Repentance a Prerequisite to Baptism in the New Testament.* Wherever any details are given either by direct statement or by inference, repentance (also faith) was regarded as a necessary prerequisite to baptism, according to the New Testament record. In Acts 2:38 the priority of repentance to baptism is stated very definitely: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." And certainly it can be stated with less fear of contradiction that repentance was always regarded as a necessary prerequisite to forgiveness as the above passage implies. Note also Luke 13:5; 24:27; Acts 8:22; 17:30.

The Philippian jailer demonstrated his repentance before being baptized by his washing and treating the wounds of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:33). And since baptism in apostolic times was a public confession of faith in Christ it was very unlikely that anyone who had not repented and experienced regeneration would submit to baptism. For both among Jews and Gentiles hostility to the point of severe persecution at times was experienced by new converts to Christianity. Social pressure was so intense against becoming a Christian that people would not have had the courage to break with family and community traditions and customs unless the grace of God had been experienced in their lives. And repentance was a necessary prerequisite to that.

A correct interpretation of two expressions in the Greek New Testament throws additional light on this phase of the subject. One, *baptisma metanoias*, baptism of repentance, occurs four times, Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4. The word translated repentance in this phrase is in the genitive case and is descriptive in function. It was a *repentance* baptism, i.e., the baptism was characterized by and expressive of repentance. And without question the Lukan context in which the phrase occurs makes it very definite that baptism was not administered without some evidence of repentance. The Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious and political leaders at that time, who came to John for baptism, were called a "brood of vipers" and were told to "bear fruits that befit *repentance*" (RSV, Luke 3:7-8). Or in other words, John refused to baptize them on the grounds that they were not fit candidates for it. "John demands proof from these men of the new life before he administers baptism to them" (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 8).

The other expression is in Matt. 3:11 and is translated in the RSV, "I baptize you with (*in*, Greek) water for *repentance*." The Greek preposition, translated *for* above, is *eis*, and is used to denote cause at times in the Greek of the first century and in the New Testament. Our word *for* can be used to express cause; for instance, "He was arrested for stealing." In at least four Modern Speech translations *eis* is translated as having causal significance in Matt. 3:11. In Weymouth it is *on profession of*, in Goodspeed it is *in token of*, in Williams it is *to picture* and in Phillips it is *as a sign of*; all of these are causal in force.

(The most exhaustive and recent scholarly discussion on the causal use of *eis* in Matt. 3:11 and in the Greek of New Testament times is found in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Four articles appeared on the subject, three in 1951 in vol. LXX, and one in 1952, vol. LXXI. Two were by Ralph Marcus of the University of Chicago, two by myself. Numerous examples from secular and sacred Greek were cited to illustrate how *eis* was used with causal significance.)

¶ *Repentance and Conversion in Everyday Life.* As is generally known, people do not repent and become converted until they know that they are sinners and that they need the Saviour. Hence as a precursor to salvation, people of necessity must become informed of the salient elements of the Gospel. Until they realize



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that they are shortchanging themselves and are jeopardizing their future, that they have brought the eternal wrath of God upon themselves, there is little likelihood of their becoming convicted and turning to Christ as Savior. Consequently there is urgency that every means available should be used to proclaim and to live the Gospel so as to lay the groundwork for the Holy Spirit to use the truth so disseminated to induce conviction and conversion. Jesus depicted graphically and bluntly the terrible doom that awaits the impenitent: “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46).

Not only do men need to know that their sins will bring the inescapable judgment of God upon themselves, but also that they can never enjoy life in its fullness here and now until they become converted and experience God’s marvelous transforming grace. Jesus offered a better existence when he declared, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). And he promised: “that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full ... and your sorrow will turn into joy ... and no one will take your joy from you” (John 15:11; 16:21, 22). And the Apostle Paul described this experience in these words: “Wherefore if any one is in Christ he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold it has become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

The only normal man is the converted man. Only then is he most free from the tensions and frustrations of life. He is most likely to be at peace with both God and men. Then only does he enjoy in its fullness a clear conscience and freedom from guilt and fear. For the first time he is living in harmony with God’s will for his life. The realization that God’s favor is upon him and that “all things will work together for his good” cheers his spirit and fills his life with joyful expectancy. Like the Psalmist he visualizes as his possession the “goodness and mercy” of God and expects to “dwell in his house forever.”

Erik Routley in *The Gift of Conversion* in describing the benefits of conversion has stated: “Personality is not blurred or made negative in conversion. On the contrary, the converted man is more of a person than he was. The tension between what he is and what he would wish to appear to his neighbors is eased, and the result is a simpler, more direct, more clearly drawn personality. Confusion is replaced by integration and harmony.” In Galatians 5:23 the Apostle Paul has mentioned nine exceedingly precious acquisitions of life and character that become one’s immediate or potential possession when he is truly converted: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” How lovely life would be if we and all our associates always manifested such gracious characteristics!

Sinners, turn, why will you die?
God, your Saviour, ask you—Why?
He who did your souls retrieve,
Died himself that you might live.
Will you let him die in vain?
Crucify your Lord again?
Why, you ransomed sinners, why
Will you slight his grace and die?

—John Wesley

¶ *Bibliography:* W. D. Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance*; R. O. Ferm, *The Psychology of Christian Conversion*; E. Price, *The Burden Is Light*; E. Routley, *The Gift of Conversion*.

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