

Judas Iscariot

Matthew 27:1-10

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

Today we are going to finish the sermon series on the Twelve Apostles by examining the life of Judas Iscariot. Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that the book “Twelve Ordinary Men” by John MacArthur was used as the foundation for this sermon series. Judas is undoubtedly one of the most universally known and scorned disciples of all time.¹ Even though he was called and given the same teachings and opportunities to develop an in-depth personal relationship with his Lord as the other apostles, Judas chose to squander his spiritual blessings by loving the things of this world. In betraying the sinless, Lamb of God for a mere 30 pieces of silver Judas demonstrated how depraved humanity can become when we focus on the evil desires of our hearts (James 1:13-15). While finding out that the fruits of Judas’ labor was not wealth, but suicide and eternal damnation might tempt one to say “AMEN” one can’t help but think that his story was placed in the Bible as a plea for us to examine ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5-8)! Just because a person reads the Bible, prays and attends church does not mean that one has obtained salvation and knows their Master (Matthew 7:21-23) any more than Judas did! Without confession of sin, belief in Jesus’ atoning sacrifice (John 3:16) and making Him the Lord of one’s life (Romans 10:9) one simply has not become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) and eternally adopted into God’s family (John 1:12-13)! This sermon is going to focus on the life of Judas and in doing so encourage us to never take our spiritual blessings for granite but instead out of thankfulness examine our hearts and confess our sins so that we might keep our eyes fixed on the perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3)!

Background on Judas Iscariot

Like many of the other apostles there is little that is known about the life of Judas Iscariot. Even though Judas is mentioned in the Gospels twenty times and twice in the book of Acts² his name appearing at the end of the list of apostles (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16) or not at all in the book of Acts³ signifies that except for Jesus’ betrayal Judas was “not a central figure in events portrayed.”⁴ Of his family members only his father’s name, Simon (John 6:31),

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 181.

² William Klassen, “Judas Iscariot,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1091.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 181.

⁴ William Klassen, “Judas Iscariot,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1091.



is known.⁵ Judas' given name is a form of Judah which meant "Jehovah leads."⁶ While his surname "Iscariot" could have meant he belonged to the group of Sicarii, dagger-wielding assassins, most likely his name either meant "false one," "the deliverer" or simply reflected that his home town might have been Kerioth (Joshua 15:25).⁷ Judas was the treasurer of the itinerant group⁸ whom often helped himself to the group's money (John 12:6). While Jesus' calling of Judas is not recorded in Scripture, his role amongst the twelve as "betrayer" is clearly outlined in

prophesies such as Psalms 41:9, 55:12-14 and Zechariah 11:12-13.⁹ In the process of hanging himself (Matthew 27:5) Judas fell headfirst on jagged rocks, his intestines spilled out and he died (Acts 1:18).¹⁰ Unlike the other apostle whom are known for continuing to spread the Gospel message after Christ's ascension, Judas will forever be known as the ultimate traitor.

His Calling – "Lost Opportunity"



Judas being one of the chosen disciples has "posed theological problems since antiquity."¹¹ Jesus specifically stated He chose all twelve apostles (John 6:70-71) and sent them out to the lost sheep of Israel to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons (Matthew 10:5-8). The fact that Judas was chosen by Jesus and did miracles in His name does not pose a theological problem, for even evil people like Pharaoh and the Babylonians were

⁵ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "[Judas](#)," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1238.

⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 182.

⁷ William Klassen, "[Judas Iscariot](#)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1091.

⁸ William Klassen, "[Judas Iscariot](#)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1091.

⁹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 184.

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 196.

¹¹ William Klassen, "[Judas Iscariot](#)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1092.

called to do God’s will, but merely points to Jesus’ warning on the Sermon on the Mount that the outward manifestation of God’s glory is not sufficient proof of one’s salvation (Matthew 7:22-23). For salvation to be realized one must give one’s heart to Jesus and make Him the Lord of one’s life (Romans 10:9). Judas however joined the twelve not to give his heart to Jesus but to share in His power and influence so that he might in turn satisfy the evil desires of his heart for “selfish gain, worldly ambition, avarice and greed.”¹² To those whom have been offered every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3), how are we going to respond to Jesus’ call for us to be His children and to serve Him? Are we going to be like Judas and squander that which we have received to obtain riches we cannot keep or are we going to surrender our hearts to obtain salvation that cannot be lost?

His Treasures – “Loving the Things of this World”

While no one knows for certain why Judas betrayed Jesus his motivation most likely stemmed from the not liking the kingdom Jesus was ushering in. This was to be a kingdom in which Rome was not physically overthrown,¹³ the apostles and other leaders would not hold



traditional positions of hierarchy power (Luke 9:46-48) and none of them would become “worldly” rich.¹⁴ Out of these three I believe “money” was the one that bothered Judas the most. When Mary took perfume valuing at a year’s wages and poured it on Jesus’ feet out of gratitude for having raised Lazarus from the dead and to prepare Jesus for His burial (John 12:1-11),¹⁵ Judas saw this act not as a sweet offering but as a fragrant economic waste!¹⁶ While his statement that selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor seemed sensible, for all the disciples

agreed with his suggestion (Matthew 26:8), he who had been embezzling from the treasury truthfully only wanted access to steel more money.¹⁷ Unlike the other disciples whom were satisfied with one day sitting on the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and inheriting eternal life as rewards for serving Christ (Matthew 19:27-30), with 30 pieces of silver

¹² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 184.

¹³ Merrill C. Tenney, “John,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 123.

¹⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Judas,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1239.

¹⁵ J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 218.

¹⁶ Merrill C. Tenney, “John,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 125.

¹⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 189–190.

in his hands Judas clearly demonstrated his heart's desire was for the material things of this world!

From the life of Judas, one can't help but hear the words of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount: "where your treasure is there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-22). As Judas listened to the best Teacher this world has ever known one can't help but wonder how he could have been indifferent or feel indignation towards the very words of Christ? Lest we use the



heinous crimes of Judas to exonerate our own sinfulness, truthfully is not at least some if not much of our effort in life aimed at storing up treasures here on this earth as well?¹⁸ Out of our need for security, to satisfy our cravings for the things we covet or simply to impress others we tend to work very hard to maximize our earthly possessions.¹⁹ With the occasional reading of Scripture, a few prayers and sporadic church attendance we foolishly assume that the pendulum of our hearts have swung fully towards and are standing firmly on the rock of our Salvation (Psalms 62:6). As it is our love and obedience to God is

being drowned out by the money god of our lives (Luke 16:13). Should not every spiritual blessing in Christ be enough to satisfy our heart's desire or do we truly believe against Scripture that we can serve two masters? Let us learn from the life of Judas that our primary objective is to seek first the kingdom of God in all that we do (Matthew 6:25-33)!

His Betrayal – “Pretender of the Faith”

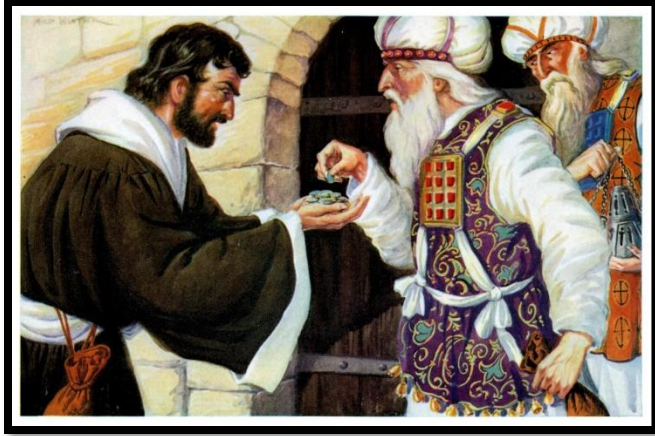
Judas was the ultimate pretender of the faith! In John 13 Jesus tells His followers if they wanted to have eternal life with Him, they had to partake in His flesh and blood. These words were not only “graphic, compelling and confusing” but offensive for many disciples chose to no longer follow Jesus.²⁰ Instead of falling away Judas used this truth as a “catalyst for his own personal rebellion and betrayal (6:70–71).”²¹ To be told that a leader in Jesus’ kingdom would not hold traditional positions of hierarchical power and would not be rich but a servant to all was far more than Judas could accept. Despite hearing “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), against pride (Matthew 23:1–

¹⁸ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 59.

¹⁹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 80.

²⁰ Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 203.

²¹ *Ibid.*



12)” and a warning that the punishment for betraying Him would be so severe that Judas would one day wish he had not been born (Matthew 26:24), Judas refused to repent because he valued the 30 pieces of silver far more than what Jesus had to offer!²² So, he hid his unbelieving, unrepentant and unregenerate heart from the other apostles until he could find an opportunity to get at least some money for all the years he had invested with Jesus.²³ Judas was so good at pretending to follow Jesus that when the disciples

were told that “not everyone was clean” during their foot washing (verse 10) and that one of them would ultimately betray Jesus at the Last Supper the apostles stared at each other, at a loss to know which of them He meant” (verses 21-22).

Judas’ life is an eternal warning to those who believe their works can buy a “salvation of one’s own making.” Unless the outward manifestations of the Spirit such as reading the Bible, praying and attending church is accompanied by a regenerant and submissive heart these



activities are nothing more than exercises in futility! According to Jeremiah the human heart which contains the total inner being and reason of a person can be deceitful, “desperately corrupt and humanly speaking, incurable.”²⁴ So deceitful is the human heart that many who think they are going to heaven simply will not end up there (Matthew 7:21-23). Salvation is not bought through our good deeds but through belief in and surrender to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (John 3:16)! Lest one be like Judas and squander one’s

whole life merely pretending to believe while standing on the sifting sands of indifference to Christ, examine yourself and make sure your heart truly belongs to Jesus (2 Corinthians 13:5-8)! While this examination process is humanly impossible, He who searches all things (1 Corinthians 2:11) is more than capable of not only revealing duplicity within our hearts but when confessed will give us the power to turn from our evil desires and fill our hearts with whatever is lovely, true, noble, pure and right in Jesus’ sight (Philippians 4:8)!

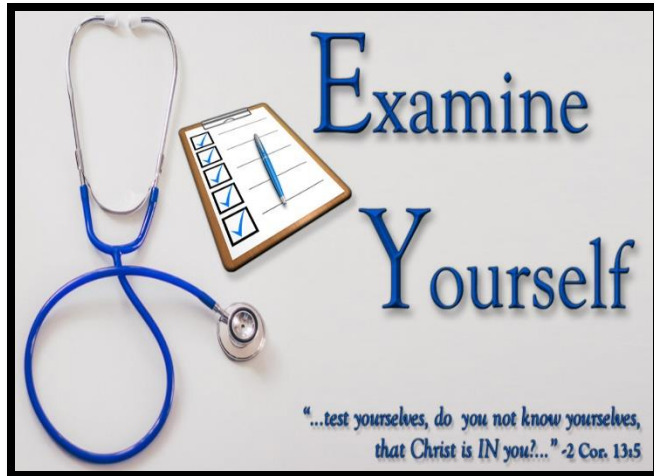
²² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 186.

²³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 187.

²⁴ Charles L. Feinberg, “Jeremiah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 486.

His Death – “A Plea to Examine Yourself”

As soon as Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver his conscience came alive.²⁵ Realizing that he had betrayed innocent blood out of remorse for his sin he tried to return to the chief priests and elders the true desire of his heart, money. Judas’ “remorse” should not be confused with “repentance”²⁶ for while the guilt and “hell of his own making”²⁷ was



overwhelming it did not produce within him a desire to serve Jesus (2 Corinthians 7:8-10). Knowing that he was like the rich young ruler whom could not give up the things of this world and make Jesus the Lord of his life (Matthew 19), Judas felt he had no other way but to remove the guilt and shame of having betrayed Jesus by hanging himself (27:5). I want to finish this sermon by imploring you to not be like Judas. Guilt does not equate to repentance or forgiveness until one not only confesses with one’s mouth one’s sins but also genuinely asks Jesus to help one’s heart to turn to Him! So, please take

some time today to ask God to examine your heart to make sure you have made Jesus the Lord of your life and are saved. If the Holy Spirit communes with your spirit and tells you that you are saved (Romans 8:16) then ask God to further examine yourself and if He finds any sin in your heart to help you to go beyond feeling guilty to confess and turn from this evil so that you might walk rightly in His sight!

²⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 195.

²⁶ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 869.

²⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2002), 195.