

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part sixteen - Sunday, May 26th, 2024
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JUDAS - The *Inward* Steps Leading to *Outward* Moral Disaster

1) **SOME BACKGROUND ON HOW HIS MINISTRY BEGAN**

- a) ***While I know it raises difficult issues, it's still important to remember Jesus is the one who chose Judas* (see Luke 6:12-16 - "In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. [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."**

Jesus prayed all night for direction as to whom He should chose to work with Him. Judas filled exactly the ***same office*** as Peter, James or John. In Acts 1:17 Peter makes it clear that Judas ***shared in the same ministry of the Kingdom*** as the other Apostles - "For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

This is an important point to remember. There is no indication in the New Testament that Judas saw any fewer people saved under his ministry or performed fewer miracles than the other Apostles. He was an equal in every way.

- b) ***Judas showed the same eagerness to follow Jesus.*** As far as we can tell, he too left everything he had and immediately followed when Jesus called. True, he became greedy for dishonest gain latter on, but, as far as we know, his initial response to Jesus was passionate. How many people ***don't*** show that kind of obedience to Jesus when He speaks to them today?
- c) ***Initially, the other Apostles thought highly of Judas*** - This is made clear by the fact that they had put him in charge of the funds of the group (see **John 13:29** - ***“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).*** And you don't trust just anyone with your wallet.
- 2) **WHERE DID JUDAS GO WRONG?** - While not a great deal of direct statements are given, some important clues arise from several texts:
- a) **John 6:66-70** - ***“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. [67] So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” [68] Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, [69] and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” [70] Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.”***

First, Jesus began to give some pretty hard teaching on what it meant to consistently follow Him - 6:54-60 - **“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. [55] For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. [56] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. [58] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” [59] Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.[60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’”**

These words were both **hard** and **confusing**. Discipleship, then and now, must always come to terms with the times Jesus doesn't say what we want to hear. This was not sounding like the kind of kingdom these disciples were anticipating Jesus to establish.

Second, the crowds were starting to thin out around Jesus - John 6:66 - **“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.”** Following Jesus had seemed like such a popular thing to do initially. Now many were having second thoughts. Perhaps Judas was not as excited about what his place in Jesus' kingdom might be if that kingdom started to shrink.

See also **Luke 14:26-27** - “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. [27] Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

How are we to understand those words, “....*whoever doesn't hate his own life,*” and “....*bear his own cross and come after me*”? We've always taken them in a very figurative sense. Like a general call to self-denial. And certainly this we must do. But I fear we haven't done justice to what Jesus was getting at. The only other place where Jesus talked about hating his own life. And it's right in the context of His own physical death on the cross:

John 12:23-27 - “And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [24] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. [26] If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. [27] “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.’

The point to notice is that Jesus' words about hating our lives and taking up our cross was in the context of His *literal death*. He was preparing His disciples for what would, in fact, happen to all but one of them in the end as they followed Jesus.

- b) **John 12:5-6 - "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."**

This incident takes place just before *Palm Sunday*. This is just a few days before the actual act of betrayal. Something starts to snap in Judas' mind *as he watches an extravagant act of worship and devotion* on the part of Mary. Judas feels the act is a stupid waste. *But that is not what singles him out from the others.*

Take a look at **Matthew 26:6-10 - "Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, [7] a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. [8] And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? [9] For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." [10] But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me."** Many of the disciples felt the same way about Mary's reckless worship.

The important point is found in **verse 6 of John 12** - “**He (Judas) 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.**”

Years later, as John writes his gospel, he has learned something about Judas that none of them knew at the time of this incident. Judas was a thief. ***He had been living a double life.*** He had been ***faking concern for the poor*** as a covering for his own greed.

Perhaps this is Judas' fatal flaw. ***He is a man of mixed motives and loves.*** He looks like he's concerned about the poor when he's really just ***covetous***. He goes through the outward motions of discipleship, but inside he's all ***compromised and weak in devotion to Jesus.*** A ***divided*** heart is a dangerous way to follow Jesus. You never know where you'll end up. I've often wondered if, just before he killed himself, Judas replayed the words of Jesus from His most famous discipleship sermon - ***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”***

- 3) **WHO CAUSED JUDAS TO BETRAY JESUS?** - Perhaps the most difficult text is **John 17:12** - “**While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.**” Jesus indicates Judas fell away in accordance with the ***Scriptures.***

Another difficult verse speaks about a time when Satan entered Judas' heart - **John 13:27** - **"Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."**

Regarding **John 17:12**, it is clear God knew in advance that Judas would betray Christ in accordance with the prophetic declaration of the Scriptures - probably **Psalms 41:9** - **"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me."** But, while being *faithful* to the intent of the text, we must not say *more* than the text actually says. The text *doesn't* say God *caused* Judas to act this way. A close friend's betrayal isn't wicked or painful if the friend had no *choice* in his actions. This text merely says Judas *would* act this way and God *knew it in advance* and used this for bringing about the events of the cross of Christ.

It's a very similar situation to Pharaoh. Most of us know how the Bible says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But what many *don't* know is that's not all the Bible says: **Exodus 8:15,32,34** - **"But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.....Exodus 8:32....But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go."** Behold again the danger of not fully honoring the Lord. A dual process begins to unfold.

The Bible says this will happen again in the last days, just before Jesus returns - **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12** - “**The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, [10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. [11] Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, [12] in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**”

So, just as Jesus said, to him who has, more will be given. To him who has not, even what he has will be taken from him.

Regarding **John 13:27**, Satan certainly entered Judas' life and led him into this terrible sin. But was Judas' will ***uninvolved?*** Was Judas ***forced*** to do this ***against*** his own judgment and choice? True, Satan ***entered*** Judas' heart, but ***Judas*** opened up the door. Judas clearly opened up his life to a world of wickedness by not honestly hearing and continuing in Jesus. God in His all-wise ***foreknowledge*** knew what Judas was going to do. In His wisdom He worked all those things together for good in the eternal plan for the redemption of mankind.