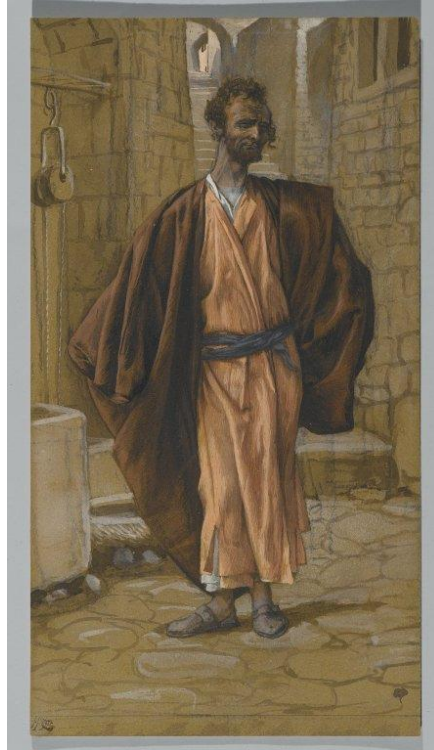


Twelve Men: Judas Iscariot



As we begin our journey investigating the Twelve Disciples, we begin at the bottom of the list with Judas Iscariot. What do you think of when you hear or read the name Judas Iscariot? The word betrayer comes to mind for me. Maybe the same is true for you. Judas Iscariot is more than just a betrayer though; he was one of the twelve disciples named in the gospels that Jesus Christ Himself singled out to be the twelve apostles. So, who was Judas Iscariot?

John MacArthur in his book *Twelve Ordinary Men* says, “*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.*”

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary records, “*Iscariot is an Aramaic word which means “man of Kerioth,” a town near Hebron. He was the only disciple from Judea. He acted as treasurer for the disciples but was known as a miser and a thief (John 12:4–6). He was present at the Last Supper, during which Jesus predicted his betrayal (Luke 22:21; Matt. 26:20–21). The price of the betrayal was 30 pieces of silver, which Judas returned to Jewish leaders, then he went out and hanged himself. He died in sorrow but without repentance. The money, which could not be returned to the treasury because it was blood money, was used to buy a potter’s field in Judas’ name (Matt. 27:3–10; cp. Acts 1:18–19).*”¹

¹ Gerald Cowen, “[Judas](#),” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 959.

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible records, “The Gospels clearly characterize Judas as the betrayer of Jesus. Each Evangelist introduces Judas in a list of the Twelve with some variation on the statement that Judas would betray Jesus (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; John 6:71).²”

What were the causes and or motivations for Judas’s betrayal? Many commentators and scholarly resources, including The Lexham Bible Dictionary suggest the following as possibilities based on scripture:

- Greed
 - o Matthew 26:15 records Judas speaking to the officials when he says, *“What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?” And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him.*
 - o John 12:5-6 records Judas’s response to Mary using expensive perfume to anoint Jesus’ feet: *“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.*
- Satanic influence
 - o As the Passover was approaching, Luke records in 22:3-6: *And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. They were glad and agreed to give him money. So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.*
 - o John 13:2 records: *During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.*
 - o John 13:27 records: *After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”*
- Obedience to Jesus (Matt 26:50)
 - o Matthew 26:50 records: *And Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.*
 - o Again John 13:27 records: *After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”*
- A mistaken understanding of the nature of Jesus’ Messiahship which anticipated His establishment of an earthly kingdom.³

² Steven M. Sheeley, [“Judas Iscariot,”](#) in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 748.

³ Karelynn Gerber Ayayo, [“Judas Iscariot,”](#) in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

- We'll probably discuss this in more detail when we come to the lives of James and John, sons of Zebedee. Most the disciples had a misunderstanding of Jesus' establishment of an earthly kingdom. It is possible Judas didn't take the words of Jesus too well when He pointed out their incorrect understanding of things to come.
- John MacArthur in his book *Twelve Ordinary Men* says, "*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.*"

We've discussed the possible causes and motivations of Judas' betrayal. Let's take a moment to look at the ramifications of that betrayal. Let's go to Matthew 27:3-10:

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me."

As we approach this subject, let it be known that the repentance of Judas can be up for debate. I wrestled with the thought myself. I've consulted several scholars way more intelligent than myself a thousand times over, and this was their conclusions about Judas's remorse, repentance and demise:

- Matthew Henry in his work *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* states, "*Judas went far toward repentance, yet it was not to salvation. He confessed, but not to God; he did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. Let none be satisfied with such partial convictions as a man may have, and yet remain full of pride, enmity, and rebellion.*"
- John MacArthur in his work *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* states, "*Judas felt the sting of his own guilt, but this was not genuine repentance. There is a godly sorrow that leads to repentance, but Judas' remorse was a different kind.*"
 - 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "*For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*"

- Craig Blomberg in the New American Commentary states, “*Judas does acknowledge his sin and Jesus’ innocence, but he does not demonstrate the mark of genuine repentance—appropriate corrective action. He confesses to the wrong group of people and then simply gives up on life.*”⁴”

As we begin to close this investigation into the life of Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve Disciples allow me to share some final thoughts that I have from all this studying and reading. I believe it is easy for us to pass judgement on Judas Iscariot, and rightly so. Because of many influences that we covered, Judas is the one who turned Jesus over to the officials for his death and practically did so for some pieces of silver. He turned His back on Jesus and betrayed Him.

Judas Iscariot, along with the other eleven disciples were all human just like me and you. They dealt with temptation just as we deal with temptation and fleshly desires. I believe in our own lives there have been times we may have betrayed Jesus ourselves, knowingly or unknowingly. It is easier than one may think. We often betray our commitment to pick up our cross and follow Him daily. We often betray the moving of the Holy Spirit speaking and leading us to do something in Jesus’ name. We often betray the commandments and lessons Jesus has given us through His inspired Word.

John MacArthur in his book *Twelve Ordinary Men* says, “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....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.”

Where do you stand today? Have you truly repented of your sins by confessing them to God and asking for forgiveness? Are you walking in the Spirit? Are you pursuing godliness and Christlikeness in your daily life?

Or are you as MacArthur stated, “*Judas felt the sting of his own guilt, but this was not genuine repentance.*”

Have you experienced the godly sorrow that leads to repentance that 2 Corinthians 7:10 mentions?

Think about these things as you look at your own heart and life. I know I have.

I hope you have enjoyed this first investigation into the life of the Twelve Disciples. I personally learned several new things myself. Our next investigation will be a look into the life of Judas the son of James (Thaddeaus), and I hope you make plans to join me as the adventure continues.

⁴ Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 407.