

Judas Iscariot

Lessons From Judas

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If I were to ask you who the greatest traitor in American history is, I think you can only think of one name, and I am sure it would be Benedict Arnold. But did you know before he became the most infamous traitor, Benedict Arnold was a brilliant, courageous Continental Army general? He was a trusted subordinate of George Washington and he was key in the victories for the patriot armies.

He led the capture of Fort Ticonderoga and leading the troops there in Saratoga. And he sustained serious injuries in the battles of both Quebec and the Battle of Saratoga, earning the reputation as an aggressive, heroic commander. But over a short time, he became very bitter because he did not feel like he was appreciated. And he felt like the Congress did not give him the appreciation and the promotions that he deserved and as a result of that faced financial issues.

So here was a man that was in the inner circle, friends with George Washington, that became bitter. And that bitterness destroyed him because he could not appreciate what he had; he felt underappreciated. And so he joined the enemy.

Benedict Arnold shifted to the British side. He was paid about a million dollars in today's money to lead a plot against the surrender of West Point, which failed, by the way. And so these historic actions that he had done overshadows the things he did, the good things. And so Benedict Arnold is not remembered as a loyal patriot but as a man who betrayed his country.

Today, I want to look at a man also who had been a faithful and loyal leader that turned bitter and a traitor. As we enter this Passover season, I want to talk about the greatest traitor in the history of the world, and that is Judas

Iscariot. There are lessons that we can learn from Judas as we prepare for Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, as we examine ourselves. And I am going to look into him just for a few minutes here.

Of the 12 disciples, you may say Judas was the outsider of the group. Rather than being from the region of Galilee like the other disciples, he was from down in Judah. And there was a little town called Kerioth, which the name Iscariot comes from. It is interesting, the name Judas also was a very common name, meaning praise God. This is a variation of the name Judah. It was very popular and very common at that time. And also he is from the same tribe as Jesus was from. But we have no details about his life. There is no knowledge about his family background. Was he married? Did he have children? Or what he did before following Christ.

Unlike the working men from Galilee, which were fishermen, tax collectors, common men, it is believed that he was the son, possibly, of a Pharisee. In fact, he was the only one of the 12 that held an office, and that was that position as treasurer. I always thought this was interesting because Matthew was a tax collector. You would have thought he would be the one to handle the money. But it was Judas.

Please turn to Luke chapter 6. I am going to start in verse 12.

Luke 6:12-16 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [Now we are talking about Christ.] And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them, He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, who was also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who also would become a traitor.

I found it interesting that it says he would *become* a traitor. He did not start as a traitor. When Jesus called him and chose him, he was a loyal follower. And I do not think Judas had any inclination to become a traitor either.

And so at the beginning, Judas was like Benedict Arnold, a loyal servant. But over time, a separation from Christ began. Just like Benedict Arnold, he started out as a general, a leader, but bitterness snuck into his heart. In verse 13, Jesus actually refers to them as apostles. Do you ever think of Judas as an apostle?

If you would, turn to Matthew 10, please. I am going to read verse 1. Now this is Christ again.

Matthew 10:1 And when He had called the twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

Every single one of the apostles was given power over demons, spirits, sickness, to heal, all sorts of things. Do you ever think of Judas as a man that had power to serve? And he is also a man that preached the Word. He was preaching out there at the same time.

Now there is no indication at all that his commitment was insincere. He left everything he had, like the others did, to serve Christ for three years. He seemed pretty much like all the other guys. He was just one of the group. There was nothing unusual outwardly of his character, his sincerity, or his devotion. There was nothing remarkable about him that set him apart from the other men. He did not have beady eyes. He was not always standing in the shadows. You know, that is the way he is usually portrayed in the movies, a little bit different. Everybody is wearing white, he is wearing black. That is not the case.

He was just like every one of them. So much so that there was no surprise when he was chosen to be the treasurer of the group. And in fact, I was thinking, if the 12 disciples were chosen by resume, I would probably say that Judas would likely have been the most qualified to become a disciple of Christ. But you know, that is the catch. We look at the outside but God looks at what is on the inside.

Please turn to John chapter 6, please. Now it begins with Jesus feeding the 5,000. And then we see Jesus walking on water. And the people are

following Christ, and they keep wanting more and more from Him: more food, more attention, whatever they could get from Him. Now I want to start in verse 53.

John 6:53-56 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. For he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."

You know, this is a very hard saying, as it says in the next few verses. They could not understand what Christ was saying. On the surface, was He talking about cannibalism? They really did not know. They did not understand the depth of what Christ was saying. And as a result, you will see in verse 66, starting there. It says,

John 6:66-71 From that time many of the disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

I was wondering how Jesus felt as He spoke these words, and this is early on. And I do wonder if this was the moment that Judas turned. Instead of walking away with all the other disciples that left Him, he might calculate and say, "Well, you know what? I have a pretty good position here. You know, I do not necessarily believe what He's saying. But I think, you know, I should stay here because I handle the money. I have responsibilities. I have respect."

You know, here was a man was not humble in spirit, as Bill was talking about, but full of himself and self-centered. And in fact, Judas may even thought that Christ was not even talking about him. He may have thought He was talking about somebody else who was a demon.

And so he continued with Christ: miracle after miracle for three and a half years. He heard Him give sermons. He watched this Man walk the face of the earth who was perfect. And yet became evil in his heart.

Again, we do not know for sure exactly when Judas fell away. But it is clear, I believe, that he had a serious problem with Jesus. And I believe Judas was motivated by what he could get, what profit he could get from Christ. Because here, as we will learn, he was a man full of greed.

Also, there are many who believe that Judas was motivated by political reasons. Some interpreters suggest that Judas may have been disillusioned because of Christ's mission. They expected Christ to take over right then, that His Kingdom would start right then. They did not understand.

He did not understand because he wanted Christ to come into His power right then. Why? Because he wanted that power, not for the right reasons. Again, he wanted the power.

Please turn to Psalm 41. It is interesting here in verse 9, Jesus quotes this verse in John 13:18.

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

Again, I believe this is a prophecy about Judas. And many scholars also agree. I do believe though that the previous verses also are prophecies about Christ and about Judas. Back in verse 5,

Psalm 41:5 My enemies speak evil of me: When will he die, and his name perish?

His name still has not perished to this very day.

Psalm 41:6 And if he comes to see me, he speaks lies; his heart gathers iniquity to itself.

We do not know, it does not say in the Scriptures, but is it possible that Judas was judging Christ because He was not following the traditions of the priests and the Pharisees? Again, it is believed that he was the son of a Pharisee. And is it possible that he became so arrogant and not believing who Christ was, that he started looking for faults and mistakes in Christ? And he was blinded by the traditions of that time and he really never saw Christ.

In verse 7, it says,

Psalm 41:7-9 All who hate me whisper together against me; against me they devise my hurt. "An evil disease," they say, "clings to him." . . . Even my familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

So, I think there is no doubt that probably Judas maybe spread rumors about Christ and behind the backs of everyone. It does not say but I think here we are seeing more of the true character of Judas coming out.

Please turn to John chapter 12, and I think we will see even more about his character on display. Here we will see how Judas' character is governed by earthly possessions and power. Now, there is nothing wrong with having a great deal of earthly possessions. But it is the lust of those possessions that becomes the problem. I am going to start in verse 3. This is at the house of Lazarus.

John 12:3-8 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. But 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?" [300 denarii may be up toward a year's wage.] This he said, not that He cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and he had the money box; and he used to

take what was put in it. But Jesus said, "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."

Here we see the true character of Judas come through. This is a man that was full of greed. He was a thief, self-centered.

How bold was he that he was rebuking Mary and Jesus! And you know, in Mark it says that the other disciples murmured. That gives you an idea of the influence of Judas on the other disciples. I was thinking, you know, with this, I would say that Judas may have been up for an Academy Award because what he was saying was not what was in his heart.

He had the other disciples deceived. They had no idea that he was a thief. They had no idea that he was so self-centered. Mary gave everything to honor Jesus.

Judas was silently calculating what he could take from Him. It is just an interesting thought. And the rebuke Jesus gave to Judas appears to have been the last straw. No doubt, Judas became incensed because the very next verse, Judas is going to the religious leaders, the authorities, to sell out Christ.

Please turn to John chapter 13. We will keep going through here now. You will see in the first verses this is about the foot washing, the first 17 verses, and I am not going to read those, but I will make a comment that Jesus washed *all* their feet. He humbled Himself as a servant. And He washed Judas' feet. And I always wonder what the eye contact was between the two as they did that. You just do not know. I just do not know.

In verse 21, this is after the foot washing.

John 13:21 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."

You know, Jesus was human. He was a man just like you and I are. And I always wondered what was the emotion in His voice at that time. How hard was it for Him to speak those words to the other disciples?

Quickly turn back to Psalm 55. In verse 12, there is a prophecy here about this. I think it really fits perfect.

Psalm 55:12-13 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.

You see, Jesus loved every one of those men, probably in a very special way, including Judas. Jesus had spent three and a half years walking with him. And you know, He was doing miracles, but with those men He was preaching to them, comforting them, talking to them, helping them, guiding them, directing them, doing all He could do for them because He loved them, including Judas.

And that night also, Jesus knew what He was going to experience. He knew the pain that He was going to go through. And no doubt He was considering this, but He also probably considered what these other disciples were going to go through as well that night.

John 13:22 Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

Now I want to jump over quickly to Matthew 26, verse 22 because I think it is a little bit more expressive.

Matthew 26:22-23 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me."

Matthew 26:25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?"

Now, I want to go back to John 13 and now verse 23.

John 13:23-25 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?"

I would like to interject here for just one moment regarding this room. You see, the setting was not just a table; it goes across the room. The table was a U-shaped, it probably only stood a few inches or a foot or so off the ground because when they ate, they were lounging, oftentimes on the left elbow and sitting. So there is a central area you could walk through; people could serve them.

So the table was U-shaped. And usually the host would sit at the center, at the top of the table. So Jesus is at the center. He is the host. And there were places of honor to the left and right of the host. And to the right of Him was John because he was able to recline back on His chest. But to His left, it was Judas who occupied the seat of highest honor in that room to Jesus. And it also allowed for more direct private interaction with Judas and with the dipping.

Remember, these men are all spread out. It is only possible to dip with a few men. You see, Jesus was not bypassing somebody to reach over and give this up to Judas. He was sitting right next to him. He was very close.

It is amazing, all of the things that Jesus Christ did for him: choosing him to be a disciple, choosing him to be the treasurer, choosing him to be a leader. And then He washes his feet, even though He knows he is going to betray Him. You know, Jesus gave Judas every opportunity to change his mind.

What more could Christ have done? I do not think anything because it was not enough for Judas.

John 13:27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

John 13:30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

I have always thought this last phrase was interesting. You see, I think it is a very profound statement because when he was in the room, he is with the Light of the world. But when he left, he was with Satan the Devil, the darkness of the world. And his heart was not changed. His mind was not changed because he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Back in Matthew 26:22, when he is talking about when the disciples responded, they said they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each one of them began to say, "Lord, is it I?" Then down in verse 25 when Judas responded, he said, "Rabbi, is it I?" I find it interesting.

In verse 22, the term Lord, is *Strong's* #2962, and it means supreme in authority, God, the Messiah. But for Judas, when he said Rabbi, that is *Strong's* #4461, which just means honorable teacher. Judas did not believe He was the Messiah. Judas could not see that Jesus was God.

And after the Passover, Judas knew where the disciples would be. He spent three and a half years with them. He knew where they would go, so he would know that they would go to the garden afterwards. And so he carried out his plan to sell out Jesus.

Matthew 26:46-50 "Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand." And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." Then immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

You see, he is still saying rabbi. He still just sees Him as a teacher. He does not see Him as God.

Matthew 26:50 But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they laid hands on Jesus and took Him.

I always wondered about the statement here. He asked him the question, "Why have you come?" I do not know; I just feel maybe He was giving him one more opportunity to back out. I do not know.

Why a kiss? Jesus was betrayed with a sign of affection, with a sign of love, with a sign of compassion. You see, at that time a kiss on the cheek was a common greeting, but it was a sign of respect, honor, and brotherly love.

Judas' actions were hypocritical in the extreme. His actions said, I respect you and honor you, at the same time he was betraying Him. You know, no matter who you are on the face of this earth, to be betrayed by someone close to you, someone that you love, had to be very difficult.

Jesus, we have already read that He loved Judas. And He hated what he was doing. And I am sure that He was hurt very, very deeply. He had spent three and a half years with this man. He had witnessed; he saw all the miracles He performed. Judas heard the sermons about the Kingdom and the words of wisdom that Christ gave. And I am sure it hurt Jesus to think of this, the man He loved, was a betrayer.

And again, betrayed with a kiss, which is a sign of affection. And once Judas gave the kiss, the deed was done. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the government to be crucified. Again, to be betrayed by a complete stranger is one thing, but a close friend. . . You know, it made me think, Jesus, we know that He went through everything that we will go through, and not just physically but mentally.

I want to tell you, Judas did not escape unscathed. That betrayal weighed heavily on him. After Satan left him, he felt regret. You will read in Matthew 27:3-10; it explains how Judas went out. He was remorseful and he tried to give the money back, which they rejected. Then he went out and hanged himself.

One more thing. All of the disciples that night left Jesus. One betrayed Him, the others just ran. And even with Peter, Peter denied Him three times. With the other disciples and with Peter's denial, that was just a moment of weakness.

Judas' actions were planned and cold-blooded. It was planned to humiliate Jesus.

But you know what? Both men were sorrowful for their actions, but only one of them repented. And I think the reason why Judas did not repent is because he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

There are lessons that we can learn from him. Judas did not appreciate the great privilege he had been given. He was given the opportunity with power to do miracles, heal the sick, even raise the dead, and preach. For three and a half years, he was with Him. And it was not enough. He never realized how perfect Jesus really was. He never sinned. He never made a mistake. His story is interesting because even being in the proximity to Christ, it is not the same thing as intimacy with Christ. He was with Him, but he was not *with* Him.

Judas serves as an example to us. We have been given such a great gift. He became self-centered and bitter. Brethren, we need to be careful to cherish what God has given us and appreciate the great calling that we have been given, this vocation that God has called us to, and not to squander what we have been given.

In Ephesians 4:1, which Bill read, I am going to read again.

Ephesians 4:1-2 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord [Paul speaking], beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.

The downfall of Judas was self-centeredness. He allowed his personal ambitions to take over his mind and his heart and he missed out on a great opportunity.

Another lesson we can take from here is how do we handle or deal with tares. Jesus knew that Judas was a tare. He knew what kind of man he was, but you know something. He always showed him courtesy, respect, and humility, even servitude when He washed his feet. That is an example for us.

You know, when we have issues with other folks, can we take it patiently?
Can we forgive and do as Christ did with Judas?

Judas is a warning to each of us to guard the gifts that we have been given. And the reason why is that Satan is looking for a crack in your armor. He is looking for anything to cause you to question your conversion. Now, it does not always happen just all at once. It can be a progression. Just as we grow in faith, I think also we can lose faith because once bitterness creeps into us, that is the tool that Satan will use.

Back in Luke 6:16 it said, Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. Now that word is *paradidomi*, Strong's #G3860, and it is only a couple of times in the Scriptures. And one of those times is in II Timothy chapter 3, verse 4.

II Timothy 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, . . .

II Timothy 3:4 . . . traitors.

It is a very sobering thought that Paul is warning us today to be careful not to become a traitor to God.

Brethren, we have been given a great privilege and honor to be a part of the firstfruits. And Judas gives us an example of what *not* to be and what happens when you squander what you have been given.

As the Passover nears, let us examine ourselves and ask God to remove any bitterness that is within us, any pride, and to remove those sins to help us to see ourselves as we truly are so we can be with Him.