

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY TWELVE

Betrayed and Arrested

Selected Scriptures

Judas wasn't always a traitor. He became a traitor when something happened in the erosion of his character.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EXPECTANT parents often peruse lists of baby names for ideas to name their newborn. Among girls' names, you'll find Olivia, Emma, and Ava. Boys' names might include Oliver, Noah, or Liam. One name, however, never makes the list—*Judas*. The name is forever tarnished by Judas Iscariot, the betrayer who delivered Jesus into the hands of His enemies to be arrested and crucified.

The name, however, wasn't always draped in dishonor. In the first century, Jewish parents *proudly* named their sons Judas after the warrior priest, Judas Maccabeus who led the Jewish uprising against the Seleucids. When he liberated Jerusalem, Judas Maccabeus destroyed the altar that the pagans erected in the temple and replaced it with God's altar. The Jewish holiday of Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the temple—an event that many Jews thought would usher in the messianic age.

Judas was the name of a hero, not a traitor. His deeds inspired messianic hope. *Judas* means, “praised,” in Hebrew. But now simply uttering the name grates the teeth with scorn.

Who was Judas Iscariot, and how did he become the world's most infamous betrayer? The gospel writers don't unravel all the mysteries inside this man's soul, but we can follow Judas' trail to see possible reasons he took such a treacherous turn . . . and to take heed to avoid his path.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Judas' betrayal of Jesus is a tragedy, and yet, none of the events took Jesus by surprise. In prayer, turn to the Lord who knows our hearts and reaches out in love even to His enemies.

Father, in the darkest hour of betrayal, Your Son showed mercy on His enemies. As I dig into the life of the disciple who turned against his Master, may I find comfort in Your grace and forgiveness freely given to anyone who repents. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Luke set the scene.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of the religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction.

Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren't around. (Luke 22:1–6)

Why did Judas turn against his Lord? What changed his heart from loyal friend to backstabber? Let's see what light the gospel writers can shed on Judas' fall.



Observation: Judas' Downward Path

In *observation*, we read the Scriptures as a detective might investigate a crime scene. In this case, the crime is betrayal, and as we read the following passages, we look for clues that might solve some of the mystery of Judas' treachery.



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Disillusioned Judas—John 6:1–15, 60–71

One of Jesus' handpicked disciples, Judas had a front-row seat for Jesus' sermons and miracles. Jesus even sent Judas as an apostle to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick in Jesus' name (*Mark 6:7–13*). Judas was *in the boat* when Jesus stilled the storm (*4:35–41*) and *ate the bread and fish* that Jesus multiplied (*John 6:1–13*).

Why would someone basking in the glorious light of Jesus try to snuff Him out? John gives us the first clue. How did the people respond in *John 6:14* after Jesus fed the 5,000 and what did Jesus do that may have surprised even the disciples in *6:15*?

Jesus wasn't performing miracles to feed bellies alone, but to inspire faith. Later in Capernaum, Jesus said,

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (6:35).

Some left because this teaching was hard to accept, so Jesus addressed His closest disciples in *6:60–71*. How do these verses preview the shift in Judas' character?



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Iscariot may be related to the word, *sicarius*, which means “dagger bearer” or “assassin”—a name for Zealots fighting against Roman occupation. If Judas was a Zealot, then how might he have been disillusioned and even provoked by Jesus’ words and actions?

Could it be that in the heart of Judas was the hope that Jesus would be the one to overthrow Rome? If Judas really wanted Jesus to become king, then maybe something snapped in him when he realized Jesus wasn’t a revolutionary. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Deceptive Judas—John 12:1–9

Disillusionment, left to simmer, can boil over as resentment, bitterness, anger—feelings people can leverage to justify sin. What sin did his reaction to Mary’s extravagant expression of love expose in [John 12:1–5](#)?

What true motive did John unmask in [12:6](#)? How did Jesus rebuke Judas in [12:7–8](#)?



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Judas was seeing Jesus for who He was, and He was not who Judas wanted. He wanted Jesus on his terms. Judas was in it for what he could get out of it. Jesus was in it for what He could give away. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Devilish Judas—Matthew 26:45–50; Luke 22:3; John 13:26–30

Lying had become a way of life for this sticky-fingered disciple . . . and an open door for the “father of lies” (John 8:44). What happened next, according to [Luke 22:3](#)? What last gesture of grace did Jesus offer in [John 13:26–30](#)?

Judas must have known Jesus would go to Gethsemane to pray, and so on that sacred ground Judas arranged to betray Jesus. Describe the events in [Matthew 26:45–50](#). What do you observe in Jesus’ spirit throughout the scene?

Satan infiltrated the person of Judas so that Judas was a walking model of the enemy himself. Judas was without shame and without fear of God. Don’t ever play with the enemy. He will win. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Despairing Judas—Matthew 27:1–5

When the terrible truth of his actions hit him, what did Judas do to try to relieve his guilt, according to *Matthew 27:1–5*?

Judas couldn't get rid of the blood money fast enough. But where could he go to ease his throbbing conscience? The priests to whom he confessed his sin rejected him, and he had rejected Jesus, the only One who could absolve him. Judas was utterly, hopelessly left in his guilt.



Interpretation: Lessons Learned from Judas' Tragedy

What meaning do we glean from the account of Judas' betrayal of Jesus? First, Satan is not a harmless red imp that cartoonists draw but a real and dangerous force of evil. What did Paul warn about the nature of our spiritual battle in *Ephesians 6:11–12*?



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Second, Judas' sin gave a foothold for "the schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Judas was a skilled cover-up artist. No one but Jesus truly knew him. When he left the upper room, the others thought Judas was going to "give money to the poor" (John 13:29). What was it about Judas' double life that made him vulnerable? What lesson do you learn?

The devil despises the things of God. He wants nothing more than your demise, the loss of your testimony, the ruining of your spiritual walk, the shaking of your marriage, and the destruction of your thinking. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Adoration for Jesus' Triumph

On the surface, it appeared that Judas gave Jesus into the hands of Jesus' enemies. In fact, however, what did Paul say actually happened in *Galatians 1:4* and *2:20*?



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What was the real reason Jesus was “handed over to die,” according to *Romans 4:25*?

Jesus controlled each event in His journey to Golgotha, even His betrayal. No one *took* His life. He *gave Himself* for our sins—a truth that forever gives hope to sinners. Despite Judas’ treachery, God was at work turning evil into the greatest good.



Application: Choosing to Learn and Live

Four insightful caution lights flash from Judas’ tragic life.

- 1) *Association with the godly is no guarantee of godliness.* Years of rubbing shoulders with Jesus didn’t make Judas godly. The work of godliness must be done in the heart.
- 2) *Wickedness in secret is as wrong as wickedness in public.* Sins we conceal behind a guise of respectability aren’t any less destructive to ourselves or others.
- 3) *Satan and his demons are willing to work with anyone who desire to work against God.* Enemies of God are allies with Satan, whether or not they realize it.
- 4) *No sorrow can compare to the remorse of those who discover too late that they’re on the wrong side.* Guilt hounded Judas to the grave. Christ’s loving call is urgent.



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Do you struggle with guilt? What hounds you?

Jesus never shamed Judas, *not once*. Jesus' love freely flowed toward Judas, and flows toward you, regardless of your sin. How would you like to respond to Jesus' gesture of grace in this moment? It could be confession and repentance, or it could be praise and thanksgiving.

The priests at the temple may have rejected Judas, but Jesus, our High Priest, welcomes and pardons all who come. With Jesus, you are never left in your guilt. The following verses invite you to "go right into the presence of God." Spend time in prayer receiving God's love through Christ. Give Him praise for His cleansing grace.

And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.
(Hebrews 4:21–22)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, help me heed the warnings from Judas' life and guard me from the evil one, who seeks my ruin. In Christ, I no longer bear the guilt of my sin, and in Christ, I dwell securely. Keep me close to Him, free from sin, far from evil, and always walking by His side. In Jesus' name, amen.

