

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## JUDAS, THE BETRAYER

Boyd Williams

Of all the characters who march across the stage of Bible history there is none so tragic nor so despicable as that of Judas Iscariot. A poet described him as “The base Judean who flung a pearl away, Richer than all his tribe.”

There is something horrible about the way he betrayed Christ with a kiss. One preacher described it as “the hiss of a kiss.” Not the least of all the dark aspects of his life is the way he died. There is a mystery of horror about this character which makes him typical of all the dastardly traitors of all ages. Even Jesus said of him, “It would have been good had he never been born.”

### THE CHARACTER OF JUDAS

We know nothing of Judas prior to his call by Jesus. To have been called as an apostle implies that he had previously declared himself a disciple. It is thought that he was drawn, as were the other eleven, by the preaching of John. Perhaps he had never been a disciple of John, but had heard the gracious words of the Teacher as Jesus traveled through Judea with His followers (see John 3:22). In any case, it is probable Judas was among those who received the call to Apostleship at the sea of Tiberias (Mat. 4:18-22).

There should be no doubt for the astute student of God’s word about the character of Judas at the time of his call. Jesus, being able to read the hearts of men (John 2:25), selected His apostles with care. Judas had talents and gifts comparable to the other eleven and due to that

supposed fact his call was not a matter of surprise to them, nor did they think it strange.

It is thought by most authorities that the germs of the evil unfolded themselves gradually. The rules of which the twelve were subject in the first journey (Mat. 10:9, 10) sheltered him from the temptations that later engulfed him. We find traces of evil in his life as early as Luke 8:13: **“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while, believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”** It would be hard to prove that this principle did not have a direct application to Judas.

From a strict biblical perspective we must refer to John for any reference to Judas between his call and the events immediately preceding the betrayal. John makes these allusions with the manifest purpose of making known the nefarious character of Judas. In the sequence of allusions there is a gradual development and growing clearness in the manner in which Jesus makes prophecy regarding His future betrayal. In John 6:70 Jesus said, **“Did I not choose you, the twelve? And one of you is a devil.”** John writing after the betrayal tells his readers that Jesus was speaking about Judas (v. 71). Why this warning, and others similar to it, did not cause a cessation of the betraying spirit, or initiate a break of their relationship by Judas is hard to fathom. Perhaps the fact that Jesus never mentioned His future betrayer by name caused Judas to stay with Him to the end.

We know that the gradual inception of evil into his character was brought about by personal motives for gain (see John 12:6). The gain must have been great enough to induce him to remain in spite of the warnings of Jesus.

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**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder  
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Mat. 6:19, 20).**

**“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed” (Luke 12:1, 2).**

## **WHY SELECT ONE WHO WOULD BE A BETRAYER?**

Some, on the ground of God’s absolute foreknowledge, content themselves with saying, with Calvin, that the judgments of God are as a great deep, and with others, that Judas was chosen in order that the divine purpose might be accomplished through him.

We may be sure that a dear friend of Jesus would betray Him (Psa. 41:9), but to remove the possibility of that one exercising his freedom of choice and having God make the choice of betrayal for him places God in the role of manipulator and man in the role of puppet. Surely none of us are ready for that. Some see room for this supposed attribute of God in John 6:64, but the meaning, clearly, is that Jesus knew from the inception of the sin of betrayal in Judas’ heart that he would betray Him.

We may be sure that the presence of such a false friend in the company of Jesus’ immediate friends was needed to complete the circle of Christ’s trials and tribulations. Jesus could not have been in **“all points tempted as we are”** without a Judas present, that is, a Judas who had himself chosen to be what he was.

I would suppose also that the appearance of such a person as Judas among the immediate attendants of Jesus was needed as an example of the strength of human depravity—how it can lurk under the most sacred professions.

Naturally we must also include the reason that the scriptures must be fulfilled. However, let us always remember that God’s word was given for man’s salvation and not man for fulfilling God’s word. That God’s foreknowledge would be brought to pass none would dare to deny. Also remember that with but few exceptions God’s foreknowledge covers only events and things. When it covered people it was normally those people who were His obedient servants (cf. Jer. 1:5). Let us make certain that we never assign to God the role of human manipulator in the process.

## **MOTIVES OF JUDAS IN THE BETRAYAL**

Some believe that Judas was a strong patriot who saw in Jesus the foe of His race and betrayed Him in the

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**2:30 PM:** *Into Our Hands The Gospel Is Given* – Jack Stephens

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interests of his country. This view is irreconcilable with his rejection by the chief priest (Mat. 27:3-10).

Others believe that Judas felt the throne should belong to Jesus, but realized that some act would have to be committed to compel Him to accept it. Having Him arrested would incite the people, who loved Him, to act. They would overthrow the authority of the priests and the Roman authorities and forcefully place Jesus on the throne. Jesus would then reward Judas with a high seat in government for his part in the chain of events. However, this falls short of reason. Nothing in the life of Judas indicates an intelligence of this nature.

There is no way to say with certainty what the motive of Judas was in betraying Christ, but we may be sure that the gradual change of his character brought out the worldliness in him and since all hope of a new reign of David seemed to be lost he attempted to take whatever spoils of the game he could. He undoubtedly hoped for more, but took what he could get.

#### **THE DEATH OF JUDAS**

Only Matthew of all the gospels mentions the death of Judas and this account differs in detail from the accounts in Acts. Acts says that instead of throwing the money into the temple he bought a field with it. Perhaps the explanation is that what was bought with his money is spoken of as bought by him.

Acts also says, that instead of hanging himself, **“falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, all his bowels gushed out.”** It is a reasonable supposition that,

the rope breaking, he fell with such violence that his abdomen burst with the fall.

#### **THE JUDGMENT OF JUDAS**

The idea that Origen suggest as the reason from his suicide is foolish. He suggests that Judas, despairing of pardon in his life, would rush on into the world of the dead, meet the Lord, confess his guilt, and ask for pardon. Foolish, true, but 700 million people today believe in the same principle—purgatory.

The apostles said, **“...he went to his own place”** (Acts 1:25). Most authorities agree that this meant some dark region of Hades reserved for the wicked.

In view of his self-murder I would have to agree with the idea of his going to torment, since murderers are included in that number (Rev. 21:18).

Today the name of Judas is a synonym of scorn and loathing. No mother ever names her child Judas. We think of Judas as being the arch traitor. Today a goat used to lure sheep to their destruction in the slaughter house is known as a Judas goat. A plant which grows in the East which looks attractive, but which is bitter to the taste, is called a Judas tree.

The name today stands for all that is false—so be it.

—Deceased  
(Article edited)