

The Twelve Apostles

Lesson 5

Study Notes

“Judas Iscariot: The Apostle Who Committed Suicide”

Instructor: Dr. Douglas Woody

Text: John 13:21-30.

Introduction: Judas is the most notorious and universally scorned of all the disciples, he was the betrayer. His name appears last in every biblical list of apostles, except for the list in Acts 1, where it doesn't appear at all. Every time Judas is mentioned in Scripture, we also find a notation about his being a traitor. It can be said of Judas, that he committed the most horrible, heinous act of any individual, ever. He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money.

Always placed last in the lists of the twelve, he became the best known of them because of his infamy. It would have been better for this traitor had he never been brought out of obscurity. Jesus said of him the most terrible thing that could be said of any man, it had been good for that man if he had not been born. The rest of the twelve Jesus selected were, in spite of their failings, covered with a glory not their own, but for Judas Iscariot who sold his Friend, Lover, Teacher, and Master for a paltry handful of silver, by such a diabolical deed he expelled himself from the shining ranks of "the glorious company of the apostles," and plunged himself into an abyss of scoffing and loathing; and the place of honor he might have won was exchanged for a suicide's grave and a universal and dreadful condemnation and notoriety.

I. He Was of Kerioth.

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 of God.

The given name of the betrayer of Jesus was Judas, the second name Iscariot being a form of a Greek word meaning, "a man of Kerioth," the town where he was born.

Kerioth is the same word as "Kirjath," and means a "city" as in KirjathJearim; but the name is found standing alone for two towns. One of these is in Moab (Amos 2:2), and the other is in Judah, on the south-east border, close to Edom (Joshua 15:25). The consensus is that Judas was a native of the Kerioth that lay in Judah. All the other apostles came from Galilee, in the far north of Palestine.

We know that many of the other disciples were brothers, friends, and working companions even before meeting Christ. Judas was a solitary figure who entered their midst from afar. Although there is no evidence that he was ever excluded or looked down upon by the rest of the group, he may have thought of himself as an outsider, which would have helped him justify his own treachery.

II. He Was a Disciple.

The call of Judas to be a disciple is not recorded for us in Scripture. He lived in a time of heightened messianic hope, and like most in Israel, he was eager for the Messiah to come. I come to the conclusion

that Judas was following more for political reasons than for his own spiritual need. He had given his life to following Jesus, but he never gave Jesus his heart.

We would like to think that at the time of his choice to follow Jesus, Judas was no conscious or deliberate hypocrite, and that the fervor and enthusiasm he displayed were no sham; that he was sincere in his initial discipleship, having an honest desire to follow Him. But the fact remains that while he may have been sincere, he was not whole-hearted in his decision.

III. He Was an Apostle.

The first mention of his name comes when, after Christ's night of prayer, He chose the twelve and included Judas among them, and in each list, he is always named last.

Luke 6:12-16

The betrayal of Judas was foretold by the Old Testament.

Psalm 55:12-15 For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Zechariah 11:12.13 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

How do we reconcile the fact that Judas's treachery was prophesied and predetermined with the fact that he acted of his own volition? They are not in contradiction, God's plan and Judas's evil deed concurred perfectly. Judas acted the way he did because his heart was evil, God works all things to the counsel of his own will. Jesus would affirm that he would die for the sins of the world and He would do so at the hands of a betrayer.

Luke 22:21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

Spurgeon said this about the tension between divine sovereignty and human choice:

"I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is foreordained, that is true; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring."

Any plea to justify Judas is cancelled out by the fact that when he covenanted to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, Jesus spoke of him as "a son of perdition," and allowed him to die by his own hand, and pass out into the blackness of darkness forever. Jesus referenced that all that the Father gave unto him none of them were lost except the "son of perdition."

Judas had every opportunity to turn from sin; as much an opportunity as was ever afforded anyone. Many of the lessons Jesus taught may have been directed at him. There was the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-13); the message of the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11-14) Jesus preaching against the love of money (Matthew 6:19-34). In John 6:70 Jesus candidly told the Twelve, "One of you is a devil." Jesus cautioned them about the woe that would come to the person who betrayed him (Matthew 26:24)

Matthew 26:24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Judas listened to all of the teachings unmoved, he just kept up his deceit.

IV. He Was the Treasurer.

Judas held a position of trust and confidence as the purse-bearer of the apostolic band. But the tragedy was that he took advantage of his position, and as John tells us plainly, Judas "was a thief, and had the bag, and bare [kept] what was put therein" (John 12: 6). He was grieved at the waste of the ointment that he felt could have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor.

V. The Bargain He Planned.

After Mary anoints Jesus with overwhelming love in John 12, Judas allows overwhelming hate to fill his heart at the rebuke of the Lord; the poor you have with you always but me you will not always have.

Judas would now go and seek opportunity to betray the Lord.

Mat 26:14-16.

John 13 Jesus will wash the disciple's feet and began to reveal Judas true colors.

John 13:1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

John 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

John 13:21-29

It would seem at the rejection of Jesus by Judas the text states that Satan himself entered into Judas. The day of salvation closed for Judas. Divine mercy gave way to divine judgment. Judas was in essence handed over to Satan. Sin had triumphed in his heart. Satan move in.

A. A convenient arrangement.

Both Matthew and Mark record how cunningly Judas watched for a fitting opening to sell Christ: "He sought opportunity to betray him" (Matt. 26: 16). "He sought how he might conveniently betray him" (Mark 14:11). Judas did not act in a moment of passion or insanity. His dark deed was quietly and deliberately planned.

B. A cowardly arrangement.

Judas knew of the popularity of Jesus and was afraid of the crowds. He knew of the place that Jesus went to often, the Garden of Gethsemane. He goes with a multitude of soldiers could have been as many as 600 soldiers. Jesus did not wait to be sought by them He went to meet them asking who they were looking for. He would announce He was the one they were looking for. When He spoke, they fell to their knees and backward.

C. A callous arrangement.

A kiss has always been a token of love and friendship, a symbol of fidelity, but the kiss of Judas was a profane one, marking out Jesus for arrest.

As Judas approached Jesus, and made to kiss Him, He lovingly called the traitor, "Friend" (Matt. 26:50), and doubtless reciprocated the kiss, for divine love never retaliates. But heaven and hell met in that embrace - there the Son of man spoke His last word to the son of perdition; the eternities united in that strange moment of a kiss on which history looks back with horror and pity.

VI. The Bargain Repented.

Judas would attempt to return the thirty pieces of silver; only to have it refused by the chief priest. He threw the money down and went out and hanged himself. His remorse was not the same as repentance. He was sorry, not because he had sinned against Christ, but because his sin did not satisfy him in the way he had hoped. His conscience would not be silenced, and that is the very essence of hell.

By proxy his money bought the "field of blood" in the potter's field to bury strangers in.

The death of Judas is recorded that he hanged himself but the Book of Acts gives us these details.

Acts 1:18,19 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

The Moral of Judas's life.

- 1. His life is a tragic example of lost opportunity.*
- 2. Judas is the epitome of wasted privilege.*
- 3. Judas is the classic illustration of how the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*
- 4. Judas exemplifies the ugliness and danger of spiritual betrayal.*
- 5. Judas is proof of the patient, forbearing goodness and loving-kindness of Christ.*
- 6. Judas demonstrates how the sovereign will of God cannot be thwarted by any means.*
- 7. Judas is a vivid demonstration of the deceitfulness and fruitlessness of hypocrisy.*