



Matthew 27:3-10

## The Suicide of Judas

Judas was a false disciple.

Judas in the words of J. C. Ryle gives a perfect example "to what lengths a man may go in a false profession of religion."

"It is impossible to conceive a more striking proof of this painful truth, than the history of Judas Iscariot. If ever there was a man who at one time looked like a true disciple of Christ, and bade fair to reach heaven, that man was Judas. He was chosen by the Lord Jesus Himself to be an apostle. He was privileged to be a companion of the Messiah, and an eye-witness of His mighty works, throughout His earthly ministry. He was an associate of Peter, James and John. He was sent forth to preach the kingdom of God, and to work miracles in Christ's name. He was regarded by all the eleven apostles as one of themselves. He was so like his fellow disciples, that they did not suspect him of being a traitor. And yet this very man turns out at last a false-hearted child of the devil—departs entirely from the faith—assists our Lord's deadliest enemies, and leaves the world with a worse reputation than any one since the days of Cain. Never was there such a fall, such an apostasy, such a miserable end to a fair beginning—such a total eclipse of a soul!" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, St. Mark*, p. 302).

How do you account for someone like Judas?

Alexander Maclaren observed, "No one could live near Him for three years without coming to hate Him if he did not love Him."

Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16).

"Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus" (Matthew 26:14-16 14; cf. Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6). Luke tells us "Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot" (Luke 22:3-6). At the Passover Supper, John tells us when Jesus dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas, "Satan then entered into him" (John 13:27).

"What are you willing to give me?" For how much are you willing to sell your soul? Evidently many people are willing to sell very cheaply. Judas emphatically responds "I will deliver Him." If they are willing to pay enough he will "deliver" Jesus to them. Only Matthew tells us the price was "thirty pieces of silver." Coins had been in use since time of Simon the Maccabee (B.C. 140); but it may have been still not uncommon to weight the coins. John Broadus reminds us, "A traitor is seldom trusted with his entire reward in advance." Thus the thirty pieces of silver may have been the down payment with more to come later. Exodus 21:32 tells us the thirty shekels was the amount of damages for the killing of a slave by an ox.

Zechariah 11:12-13 is fulfilled in the betrayal of Jesus. "I said to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Judas sought the opportunity to betray Jesus, and when the opportunity came, he sold Him.

### Judas at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:20-25)

"Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, He said, 'Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.' Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, 'Surely not I, Lord?' And He answered, 'He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.' And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself'" (Matthew 26:20-25; cf. Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-30).

### The kiss of betrayal (Matt. 26:47-50)

"While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.' Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, 'Hail, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. And Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you have come for.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him" (Matthew 26:47-50).

"Judas did what he wanted (he sold Jesus). Yet he was an unwitting tool of Satan (13:2, 27). Even people's volitionally free acts fit into God's sovereign plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28)" (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).  
John 13:11

### The suicide of Judas (Matt. 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'" (Matthew 27:3-10). (All Scriptures are from New American Standard Bible unless otherwise stated).

Judas concentrates on the one great act of sin, "I betrayed innocent blood." In his remorse, Judas turned to the wrong people. Instead of turning to God he looked to the Jewish leader who had only one goal, the death of Jesus. Judas' guilty conscience is a problem for him alone, not them. They had accomplished their evil goal. Jesus was now "condemned" by the Sanhedrin, and His destiny lay in the hands of the Roman governor.

In his own words Judas declared, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." G. Campbell Morgan observes, "Not, I have blundered, or have been mistaken, or foolish, or wrong; not, I have attempted to hurry this Messiah to declare Himself, but 'I have sinned.' As we look at Judas in that terrible picture, we see a man filled with terror, the terror of a lost soul; the sense of sin, and the dread of its issue. Not regret, nor the sense of sin with desire to escape it, but the sense of sin with desire to escape the issue of it. This is not the repentance that brings man to God. If is a man simply repents of sin, by attempting to escape its issue, he knows nothing of repentance in the true sense of the word. Repentance which would be glad to bear the fire of hell if it would purge from sin, is the repentance that works salvation" (*The Gospel According to Matthew*, p 310).

"The traitor in the inner circle of Christ's Kingdom, became his own executioner," says Morgan.

Judas threw the money down into the temple" (NRSV). Leon Morris writes: "The language seems to point an irrational act of throwing the coins with some force into some holy place nearby . . . There is nothing to indicate an exercise of piety, only wreckless desire to repudiate his evil act. Then he went off and committed suicide by hanging. . . Judas was remorseful rather than repentant. We might contrast him with Peter. That apostle had likewise sinned grievously, but he was moved to a genuine repentance that led to amendment of life rather than to further sin of suicide" (*Matthew*, p. 695).

There is no real discrepancy between Acts and Matthew's account of the suicide. Matthew says Judas hanged himself and Acts says he fell headlong and burst asunder. If Judas hanged himself from a tree on a high cliff in the potter's field and the rope broke or a limb broke and he fell on rocky ground it could have resulted in the description in Acts 1:18. Judas went out and hanged himself and either his corpse rotted and fell, or the rope broke and he fell and hit sharp rocks and he burst open.

All that Judas acquired from his treacherous money was a burial plot. The priests purchased the field in Judas' name with the money that was still his. The priests refused to put the blood money back into the temple treasury. The money in the treasury was holy and this certainly was not. It was money to purchase the death of a holy man.

John Calvin wrote, "If blood money may not be deposited in the sacred treasury, how could they draw it in the first place, for their only wealth came from the temple offerings and what they are now hesitant to put back in polluted could have been taken from no other source? Is not the pollution from their own hands?" How strange that they had no problem taking the money from the treasury to bring about the death of Jesus, but how sensitive is their conscience about putting it back in the treasury.

Jesus was derisively valued by the religious leaders of Israel at thirty shekels, and the money was used to purchase the potter's field.

H. C. Lenski says, "In Zechariah the payment of thirty pieces of silver was made in order to get rid of Israel's Shepherd. That same price was paid to get rid of Jesus who is Israel's Shepherd. At such a miserable price the Jews valued Jesus and gladly paid t to get rid of him" (*Matthew*, p. 1083).

In verse nine Matthew uses the Old Testament to demonstrate that this treachery of Judas was a fulfillment of Scripture. He gives credit to Jeremiah, however in reality he combines two prophecies, one each from Zechariah and from Jeremiah. He gives his source of credit to the major prophet, not the minor one. This is not

uncommon in Matthew and Mark. "The background of the passage is actually both Jeremiah and Zechariah, and that the first part of the quotation resembles a passage from Zechariah even more strongly than any from Jeremiah. . . . The main point to bear in mind, however, is that also in the suicide of the traitor and the purchase of a field with his blood money prophecy is again being fulfilled, and God's plan is being carried out" (William Hendriksen, *N. T. Commentary Matthew*, p. 948).

Is Zechariah 11:12-13 that he to quoting and probably includes ideas from Jeremiah 18:2; 19:2, 11; 32:6-9. Hengstenberg says the later prophets often reproduce earlier predictions, so Zechariah is reproducing Jeremiah 18:2 and 19:2 and Matthew intentionally refers to the original source though adapting the later form (*Christology of the Old Testament*).

### *Was Judas ever saved or did he fall from grace?*

John 17:12 provides the key to our understanding of this question. Jesus said, "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled."

In the context of his passage and many others including John 10:26-30 why did Jesus not keep Judas safe? Jesus always keeps those whom the Father has given to Him.

Newman and Nida write in their translation helps, "*Was lost* is the same verb rendered *die* in 3.16 and 10.28; in 12.25 it is used with the same meaning it has here. Because of the continuing relationship of Judas Iscariot to the developments described in Chapter 18, it may be necessary in some languages to use the perfect tense here, for example, 'not one of them has been lost.'"

"*The man who was bound to be lost* (NAB 'him who was destined to be lost'; NEB 'the man who must be lost'; JB 'the one who chose to be lost'; Gdsp 'the one who was destined to be lost') has been traditionally rendered 'the son of perdition.' The word rendered 'perdition' in many translations is a noun made from the same stem as the verb translated *was lost* in TEV and most other translations. This word is frequently used in the New Testament of the final fate of those who are without God (see Matt 7.13; Acts 8.20; Rom 9.22; Phil 1.28; 3.19; 1 Tim 6.9; Heb 10.39; 2 Peter 2.1; 3.7; Rev 17.8, 11). The phrase 'son of (literally 'man of') perdition' means 'one who is going to be lost (eternally).' The same expression appears in 2 Thessalonians 2.3 and is rendered the... One... who is destined to hell in TEV" (Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. *A Handbook on the Gospel of John*).

"Son of perdition" is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The name is a strong Hebraism meaning "a person worthy of perdition, or only fit to be lost and cast away, by reason of his wickedness. J. C. Ryle said, "It is a tremendously strong expression to come from the lips of our merciful and loving Savior. It shows the desperate helplessness of anyone who, living in great light and privileges like Judas, misuses his opportunities, and deliberately follows the bent of his own sinful inclinations. He becomes the 'child of hell' (Matt. 23:15)" (Ryle, *John*, p. 190). A. T. Robertson said, "It means the son marked by final loss, not annihilation, but meeting one's destiny (Acts 2:25). A sad and terrible exception (Mark 14:21)" (*Word Pictures of N.T., John*).

Was Judas one of those whom the Father "gave to Him"? Was Judas a true believer? Was he one who was genuinely saved and fell from saving grace? There are teachers who say that at one time Judas was a true believer like Peter, James and John. They would say that grace may be lost. They would say a person can be

converted, have the baptism of the Holy Spirit and finally fall away and perish in Hell. How does this view reconcile with other Scriptures?

James Boice writes, "Judas' repentance was utterly unlike Peter's. Peter's was true repentance. Peter was crushed and wept shameful bitter tears. Judas did not weep. He knew that he had done wrong and regretted his mistake, but his remorse did not drive him to repentance. Repentance would have turned him to Jesus. . . . Judas confessed he was a sinner, 'I have sinned' . . . . But many have confessed themselves sinners without their confession making the slightest difference in their lives. True repentance involves a full 180-degree turn, half of it away from sin and half of it to Jesus. That is the only sure path to salvation" (*An Expository Commentary on Matthew*, p. 598).

The only conclusion I can come to as I examine all the Scriptures in their context is that Judas was never one of Christ's own. Jesus faithfully kept all that the Father gave to Him. Judas was never given to the Father. He was never among the chosen (John 6:64-65; 13:18; 18:8-9).

Judas is not an example of a believer who has fallen from grace, or lost his salvation. He was nothing more than a pretender who was finally exposed for what he really was. Judas was never a sheep and his true character was revealed. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

Ryle gives a good expanded paraphrase of Jesus' thoughts this way: "Those whom Thou gave me I have kept, and out of them not one is lost. But here is one man who is lost, even Judas, the son of perdition; not one who was ever give to Me, but one whom I declared long ago to be a 'devil, a man whose hardened heart fitted him for destruction" (*John*, p. 190).

"Our Lord does not mean, 'No one of those given to Me is lost EXCEPT the son of perdition.' What He does mean is, 'Not one of those given to Me is lost. On the other hand, and in contrast, Judas, a man not given to me, a graceless man, is lost" (Ryle, p. 191).

At the moment of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "'I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,' to fulfill the word which He spoke, 'Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one'" (John 18:8-9). Jesus gives no hint of any exceptions.

Harry Ironside said, "You may be sure that whenever the Father gives anyone to Jesus, He gives him for time and eternity. Such a one will never be lost. 'Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' People call this the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but I rather like to think of it as the perseverance of the Savior. He says, 'Those that Thou gavest me I have kept.' If I had to keep myself, I would be hopeless of getting through. I would be sure that something would happen someday which would cause me to lose my hold on Christ and be lost. But it is His hold upon me on which I rely. None can pluck the believer out of His hand. I receive great comfort from these words. When He gives His account to the Father, when the last believer of this dispensation is safely arrived in heaven, He will be able to say of the entire elect Church, 'Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.' You may think you know the exception to this; but it will be made manifest in that day that these apparent exceptions were like Judas himself, never really born of God" (*Addresses on Gospel of John*, pp. 754-55).

If you are eternally secure you want to love Him with all your heart and you grieve deeply when you sin. When we know the Father is for us we want to guard our heart from all evil. We want to please Him with all our heart because He loves us so.

One of the accusations of those who say you can lose your salvation is that eternal security of your salvation gives you an excuse for sinning. Do you want to go out and sin because you are secure in your salvation? Do you want to go out and sin because you have been saved by grace? Do you want to go out and sin because you are the elect of God? The apostle Paul asked, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue [as a habitual practice, to remain] in sin that grace might increase?" God forbid! was his response (Rom. 6:1-2). My eternal security is my greatest incentive to please my Lord and Savior. The believer's security is in God's hands. We are kept by the Father's loving hand (John 10:28-29).

The case of Judas does not teach a born again person can be lost. It does teach us what will happen if person is not spiritually regenerated by the Holy Spirit and kept by God's sustaining grace until the day when he stands in His presence in heaven. Apart from God's perseverance with the saints we would all be eternally lost. Jesus said in John 10:26-29 "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

## SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

### *1. Jesus never cast out or lost any individual that truly comes to Him.*

Judas is not exception; Judas was never saved. Judas professed, but never possessed Christ.

### *2. Judas is an example of what a miserable end comes when we have great opportunities and privileges and we do not use them correctly.*

Judas should cause each one of us to ask if we have been truly saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. In whom or what am I trusting for my eternal salvation?

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5). "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

### *3. No sin is so great as sinning against light and knowledge of the LORD God.*

Let us take a long hard look at Judas and beware. Are we trifling with sin? Let us take a look at Judas and not become shipwreck in our Christian life.

### *4. There is no unpardonable sin except that of refusing the pardon that covers all our sins by means of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

You blaspheme the Holy Spirit when you reject His work of regeneration in the heart of a lost sinner. He pleads for the unbeliever to put his or her trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ. He pleads with the guilty sinner to come and trust in Christ for salvation. The only remedy for a guilty conscience is the blood of Jesus Christ.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You.](#)

Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries from 1972 until 2005. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist missionary and teaches seminary extension courses and evangelism conferences in Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador.