



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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## The Apostles, Judas of Iscariot

### Lesson #9

### Lesson #37

### Judas of Iscariot

#### **Role as an apostle**

Judas is mentioned in the synoptic gospels, the Gospel of John, and at the beginning of Acts of the Apostles. Judas was a common name in New Testament times. Judas Iscariot should not be confused with Judas Thomas (Saint Thomas the Apostle), or with Judas Thaddaeus (Saint Jude Thaddaeus), who were also among the Twelve Apostles.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke state that Jesus sent out "the twelve" (including Judas) with power over unclean spirits and with a ministry of preaching and healing: Judas clearly played an active part

in this apostolic ministry alongside the other eleven. Origen of Alexandria, in his Commentary on John's Gospel, reflected on Judas's interactions with the other apostles and Jesus' confidence in him prior to his betrayal. However, in John's Gospel, Judas's outlook was differentiated - many of Jesus' disciples abandoned him because of the difficulty of accepting his teachings, and Jesus asked the twelve if they would also leave him. Simon Peter spoke for the twelve: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life," but Jesus observed then that although Judas was one of the twelve whom he had chosen, he was "a devil."

Matthew directly states that Judas betrayed Jesus for a bribe of "thirty pieces of silver" by identifying him with a kiss – "the kiss of Judas" – to arresting soldiers of the High Priest Caiaphas, who then turned Jesus over to Pontius Pilate's soldiers.

Mark's Gospel states that the chief priests were looking for a way to arrest Jesus. They decided not to do so during the feast [of the Passover], since they were afraid that people would riot; instead, they chose the night before the feast to arrest him. According to Luke's account, Satan entered Judas at this time.

According to the account in the Gospel of John, Judas carried the disciples' money bag or box, but John's Gospel makes no mention of the thirty pieces of silver as a fee for betrayal. The evangelist comments in John 12:5-6 that Judas spoke fine words about giving money to the poor, but the reality was "not that he cared for the poor, but [that] he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it." However, in John 13:27-30, when Judas left the gathering of Jesus and His disciples with betrayal in mind, some [of the disciples] thought that Judas might have been leaving to buy supplies or on a charitable errand.

## **Death of Judas in biblical accounts**

There are several different accounts of the death of Judas, including two in the biblical canon:

Matthew 27:3–10 says that Judas returned the money to the priests and committed suicide by hanging himself. They used it to buy the potter's field. The Gospel account presents this as a fulfillment of prophecy.

The Acts 1:18-19 says that Judas himself used the money to buy a field (lit: acquire), but fell headfirst, and burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. This field is called Akeldama or Field of Blood. This way of death may not be incompatible with the act of being thrown down before being stoned.

### **Lessons of implication**

I must admit that when I first chose to address this subject I was not feeling very charitable towards Judas, son of Simon. I was all prepared to talk about the failings and sins of the man who betrayed Christ. But the more I read in the scriptures, the more I began to identify with him. As I read about he who betrayed the Christ, my own sins began to sing quietly in harmony their own chorus of deceit and betrayal, and my guilt got the better of me. I do not condone, nor excuse what Judas Iscariot did to Jesus, but neither can I be his judge.

Fortunately, the scriptures are vague enough about what was really going on with Judas Iscariot that we cannot point our finger to any one sin and declare it to be his downfall. The pattern of sin, however, is common enough. The ability for Satan to snare even the elect is real enough. Our own willingness to disobey and entertain

thoughts and emotions that are damning are all too close to home. These are lessons we can draw from the fall of this apostle of the Lord.

The odd thing about the story of Judas Iscariot is that we have talked about and heard about his betrayal to the point that we feel we really know the story and the man. But there are precious few verses that actually talk about him except when he disagrees with what the Lord is doing or allowing to happen, and when he performs his betrayal of Christ. What a mercy it is to us that we don't have to wallow in the details of his downfall. Following are five lessons we can learn from the tragic story of Judas Iscariot.

### **1 – Be not quick to judge**

In Matthew 26:7 – 9 we read about a woman who came to Jesus with an alabaster box of expensive ointment. She poured it on the Savior's head during His meal. His disciples were indignant at what they considered to be a waste of expensive ointment. That ointment could have been sold for a great deal of money and given to the poor.

There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.

Even though multiple apostles were indignant over the apparent wastefulness of this act of reverence, it appears to have been the last straw for Judas. It was after Jesus defended the woman's behavior that Judas left the room and went to perform his betrayal.

Being quick to judge, to lay blame, to want to execute immediate judgment is a trait that can get us all in trouble. The Lord tried to teach His apostles that their priorities were in the wrong place. They were thinking only of the value of the oil. They were ignoring the value of their Lord and Master. They would always have the poor around them, but their Master would soon be gone from among them.

Jesus told them this act of piety would be treated as a memorial to this woman forever after. He treated this anointing of the oil as a precursor to His own burial that was now only a day away.

We can all learn to be more patient, slow to anger, slow to judge, and quicker to forgive and more tolerant of other's actions.

## **2 – Be willing to take direction**

Even though it appears that all the apostles were indignant over this incident, it was only Judas who saw it as a point of separation from the group. His leaving signaled the end of his willingness to follow the Son of God and be led by Him.

The lesson here is in the end result. When we begin to question our priesthood leaders, second guess their decisions, make pronouncements about how it should have been done, and so forth, we start walking down that road of apostasy. In this case, Judas wasn't criticizing his bishop, he was condemning the decisions of God.

## **3 – Don't think you know better**

A big part of being unwilling to take direction is that we become unwilling to submit to someone else's guidance because we think we know better than they do. It becomes a matter of pride or arrogance.

When we convince ourselves that we are more intelligent than those God has called to direct us, we come out in open rebellion to God.

The interesting thing is that you may actually know more than your church leader. You may be more educated or wise in the ways of the world. But that is not the point. The lesson we need to learn in mortality is that we must all learn to become submissive, humble, teachable, and patient one with another. We must be forgiving of the shortcomings of others and pray that they will extend the same kindness to us.

#### **4 – Don't allowing bitterness to take root**

When Judas betrayed Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the kiss he used to identify the Savior was one of more than normal affection. The verb used in the Greek (kataphilein) translates to a firm or passionate (intense non-sexual), or warm kiss. This was the kind of kiss someone would give to a friend publicly, who is now viewed as the enemy. It was false through and through, like a sarcastic kiss.

You have probably heard someone make reference to a Judas kiss. This is a betrayal of the deepest kind. Judas allowed his own issues to be worked on by Satan until he was willing to put an end to whatever it was he thought Jesus was doing, at any cost. We don't know what his rationale might have been, but we know from the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) that Judas had been warned by Jesus that Judas needed to "beware of innocent blood." (JST for Mark 14:30 – 31) Whatever was going on with Judas, "he turned away from him, and was offended because of his words."

How often are we hurt over something our leaders tell us? What do we do about it? According to the Joseph Smith Translation for Mark

14: 36 – 38 the disciples who went with Jesus to Gethsemane were deeply affected by what happened that night. It says, “the disciples began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and to complain in their hearts, wondering if this be the Messiah.”

One of the big differences between the other disciples and Judas, is that Judas allowed his own doubts and fears to fester into full-fledged resentment and bitterness. The other apostles may have fled the garden, leaving Jesus alone in His hour of need, but they had not allowed their personal doubts to turn into anger and resentment.

It isn't difficult to be offended. It is more difficult to seek reconciliation. When we feel the Lord has “done us wrong” do we seek to make peace with Him, or do we allow ourselves to become bitter in our soul to the point that we want paybacks?

## **5 – Don't Be Stingy**

This is something new to me. I hadn't thought of this before. When the woman used the ointment on Jesus and everyone became indignant over the apparent waste of the expensive oil, they were, in essence telling Jesus that He was not as important as the faceless poor they could have helped with the sale of that ointment. They were telling Him that he was not worth that kind of expense, luxury, nor honor the woman was offering Him.

Judas is often painted as being a stingy man. I think this is partly because he was the keeper of the purse for the apostles, and we have all probably experienced those conversations that inevitably come up with the “keeper of the bag” at home or at work when the money gets low.

Though we might think of Judas as being stingy with the money, I think the more important lesson is about our own level of tight fistedness. When I was younger and had precious little money, I found that I was far more giving than when I began to earn more money. It seemed the more I earned the less I gave to others. That was a revelation when I realized that I was actually becoming stingier as I became more prosperous. When I was truly poor I understood the depths of poverty better and had a more open heart for the pain of others.

Are we willing to inconvenience ourselves and give to others? Are we anxious to participate in the many service projects that present themselves to the Latter-day Saints? Are we seeking service or hiding from service? Are we stingy in any way with what we have been given from the Lord, be it in money, time, service, or attitude?

In many ways it appears that human emotions and relationships have changed little since the days our Savior walked the earth. We are just as susceptible to the weaknesses of the mind and heart as Judas and even the other apostles were. Our task is to learn from the tragic lesson of Judas Iscariot and keep constant vigilance over our own souls to make sure we don't fall into the same traps he did.

## Application/Activity

How often do you pray for God's protection over your family? How often do you pray for God to keep evil spirits away from your family and house? This week's activity is to pray once at night over your house. Walk through your house, in each room, and ask God to remove any evil that may lurk within your house. We all know evil spirits, aka Satan's demons or minions, exist. We need to consistently acknowledge their existence and pray for God to forcibly remove them from our house. The second part is to begin each day with a prayer to God for His protection over your family. Mention each family member by name. Extend this list to as much of your extended family as you wish. Pray that God will watch over them and keep them from harm and bless them with good health. Pray for their walk with Christ and that it will increase every day.