

Chapter 9

Why Judas Betrayed Christ

I have always wondered why Judas betrayed his master Jesus Christ. It is difficult to see why Judas would betray Christ because we see Jesus as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Why would anyone want to fight against God? Why would anyone want to have innocent blood on his hands?

Many people just see Judas Iscariot as a detestable person. Most people refuse to name their children after Judas. But I believe many people were named Judas before the era of Christ.

I believe Judas was a trustworthy person when he started out. In fact, the Bible tells us that there is a point at which Satan entered into Judas. That means there was a point in time when there was no devil in Judas.¹

Judas: The Trusted Minister of Finance

If Judas wasn't trustworthy, Jesus wouldn't have entrusted him with the money. **Most people appoint the trustworthiest person to be their treasurer.** I have appointed trustworthy people to be treasurers in my church and I am sure you are doing the same. The Minister of Finance of any country must be very close to the Prime Minister.

In this chapter, I want us to analyze what might have led Judas to betray Christ. Was this something that could only happen to Judas?² Or is it something that can happen to us?

You Will Have a Judas

I remember once I sat with a senior church leader who said something that struck me! He said, "I don't care what leadership style you have." "I don't care what type of leadership principles you are using."

He continued, "You are not greater than Jesus. If Jesus had a Judas, you will too!"

He went on, "No matter what you do, you will have to experience betrayal because your master experienced it."³ This made me think deeply. I realized that what this senior minister said was true.

Every church will have a Judas. Every church will experience the scourge of treacherous leaders.

... it must needs be that offences come...

Matthew 18:7

There will by all means be a Judas from among your trusted leadership. The Bible describes him as a trusted friend who eats, drinks and fellowships with you. The Bible says that he is not an ordinary friend, but a familiar friend. That means, someone who is very close.

...mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9

Dear leader and pastor, you cannot escape this reality. It is difficult to believe that someone you have known for years will fight against you one day.⁴

Maybe up to now you have not encountered this, but I assure you that as you become more experienced you will find out how true and accurate the Word of God is. I hardly know of any seasoned minister who has not experienced betrayal in one form or other.

Which of Us Will Be the Judas?

The truth I have just shared with you has two implications. The implication for all heads is simple. **Anticipate disloyalty and create a system that will not collapse in the event of betrayal.** Notice how Jesus' ministry continued effectively after Judas had fallen away. The implication for assistants, associates and followers is frightening but also very real – *one of us will be a Judas. Just make sure it's not you!*

...woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Matthew 18:7

Apostle Paul knew that it was inevitable that treacherous people would arise from amongst the congregation, so he said,

...after my departing shall grievous wolves enter...

Acts 20:29

These grievous wolves are the anarchists and betrayers of the church. Other versions describe them as savage, monstrous, merciless, fierce and evil wolves. Paul said they would come!

I believe many people, though not called Judas, will behave like Judas when the opportunity presents itself. It's just a matter of time. Before we begin this study, I want us to remember that Jesus prayed all night before he chose his twelve apostles.

You must also note that the disciples were very close to Jesus. They traveled together. They talked together and they lived together.

How could someone so evil rise out of such a fraternity? These reasons I am going to share with you, although theoretical propositions, are very real. I think they apply especially to people who embark on full-time ministry or ministry as a career.

1. Judas was the odd one out.

All the disciples came from Galilee, **but Judas came from Kerioth. Judas was the exception to the Galilean team. He was the odd one out in a related Galilean family.** Whenever you are the exception or the odd person within a group, your oddness may make you see things in a different light. If you

are the only black person among many whites, you may always see their jokes and comments directed against your colour.

Who Is the Odd One Out?

If you are the only woman amongst men, you may always interpret their decisions as being targeted against women. If you are the only uneducated person amongst many educated people, the devil will come to you many times and tell you that the people think you are stupid.

Watch out for people who are circumstantially peculiar. Judas probably began to see himself as different from the others. He gradually grew apart as these thoughts raced through his mind. Many disloyal people are casualties of the “odd one out” experience.

2. Judas was disappointed at the type of training he was undergoing.

He initially felt that joining the ministry team would elevate his status and give him opportunities to minister. To his surprise, he became an errand boy, a waiter, an usher and a scavenger.

Judas the Usher

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down...

John 6:10

Judas the Waiter

...the disciples [distributed food] to them that were set down...

John 6:11

Judas the Errand boy

...then sent Jesus two disciples,

Matthew 21:1

Judas the Scavenger

...Gather up the fragments that remain...

John 6:12

Judas Was Humiliated

He was humiliated before thousands of people as he carried baskets of food from place to place. At a point, Judas thought to himself: this is not what I bargained for.

3. Judas was probably disappointed at the poor accommodation that the ministry office provided for him.

He thought that he would get better conditions of service. But in following Jesus he did not even have a good apartment or rented house to live in. In fact, he became a homeless street dweller.

...but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Luke 9:58

Judas thought to himself, “Jesus has not taken into consideration some important administrative details.” Perhaps Judas hated staying with friends and crowding into people’s homes. Imagine twelve grown men crowding into a small house.

And being In Bethany in the house of Simon the leper...

Mark 14:3

4. Judas was disappointed at the poor transportation provided by the ministry office.

Perhaps Judas thought that by going into full-time ministry he would have the luxury of owning his own donkey or mule (car). This was not to be so. The only person to ride on a donkey was Jesus himself, and even that was at the end of his ministry.

...thy King [Jesus] cometh... sitting upon an ass [donkey]...

Matthew 21:5

What a disappointment for the aspiring young man! A number of people defect from their ministry jobs when they discover that good cars are not as readily available as they imagined. What is even more difficult for them is when only the Chief Executive (the Lord Jesus, in the case of Judas) seems to enjoy certain benefits.

5. Perhaps Judas was not happy with the type of food he had to eat when he became a full-time minister.

Judas was probably looking forward to some good restaurants and expensive high quality food. Judas probably thought that he had had better times when he was not working for Christ.

No Chinese Restaurants?

He hoped for some good Chinese dinners with international guests. But the worst came when he was asked to eat other people's leftovers.

...and filled twelve baskets with the fragments [leftovers]... which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

John 6:13

6. Perhaps Judas began to see Jesus as a wicked miser who would never be generous to his employees.

This point was emphasized when Jesus asked his disciples to collect the leftover crumbs. As Judas carried his basket of crumbs, he must have thought to himself, "This is the limit! I cannot take this stingy treatment any longer."

...Gather up the fragments that remain...

John 6:12

7. Perhaps Judas did not like the way Jesus was being treated specially.

He thought that the expense being lavished on Christ was unnecessary. "Who is this Christ anyway?" he thought. Why spend so much money on one man? There are thirteen of us on the team now. Why single out one person and expend so much on him? After all, we started this ministry together a few years ago. He began to think that there was an imbalance in the distribution of church finances.

...To what purpose is this waste?

Matthew 26:8

8. Perhaps Judas felt that the emphasis and direction of the ministry had changed.

He felt that more money should be given to the poor.⁵ As the treasurer, Judas knew how money was being spent in the ministry. He now found Jesus' financial and administrative policies defective.

Why was not this... given to the poor?

John 12:5

9. Maybe Judas had accused Jesus of misusing the church's finances.

I want to tell you a secret, a revelation that you must always remember. Someone who accuses others tenaciously of horrible crimes, is often guilty of the same. A person who has never been involved in certain things doesn't usually accuse others in an adamant fashion. This is because those evil crimes do not even come to him as options that he could take.

He Accused His Wife Continually

I remember one man who continually accused his wife of adultery. He would say to her, "I know you. You are going out with another man." But she was not doing anything of the sort. Ironically, he was having multiple affairs with different women.

It was Judas who accused Jesus of wasting and misusing the church's money. And it was Judas himself who was the thief.⁶

...he [Judas] was a thief...

John 12:6

10. Perhaps Judas wanted to get rich quickly.

He thought his income was too low for the work he did. Even though Jesus promised that those who followed him would have car loans and housing benefits he could not envisage when such a promise would materialize.

...he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses...

Mark 10:30

So he began to think of other means to get money quickly. He began by stealing money from the offering.

...he [Judas] was a thief...

John 12:6

After a while this was not enough. He felt a big one-time deal would earn him a lot of money. Considering the hatred that the Jews had for Christ, he realized that if he could sell-off Christ he could make it in a big way.

And Judas... went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them...they were glad, and promised to give him money...

Mark 14:10,11

11. Perhaps Judas had become too familiar with Christ.

There is a saying, “familiarity breeds contempt”. This saying is not in the Bible but it is true. Judas had now been with Jesus for three years. He had seen Jesus happy.

...Jesus rejoiced...

Luke 10:21

He had seen Jesus crying.

Jesus wept.

John 11:35

Judas did not only know Christ in his moments of great power, miracles and anointing. He knew him when he was vulnerable, like any other man. Judas would not have attempted to murder Christ if he did not see him as an ordinary human being.

...mine own familiar friend... hath lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9

Familiarity had crept in as Judas engaged in so many day-to-day activities with his master. He had been with Jesus while he ate. He had been with Jesus when he went to the toilet. The close fellowship that Judas had with Jesus led him to think that he was someone easy to betray or even kill. Judas did not see Jesus as God but as man. Nobody in his or her right mind would attempt to betray God. But many people would attempt to betray another man.

As soon as you begin to see your man of God as a mere man, you will no longer receive from him. Evil thoughts of betrayal will now enter your mind. Ministers must therefore not allow themselves to become too familiar.

...mine own familiar friend...

Psalm 41:9

The congregation must also not want to be too familiar with their ministers. This is important so that the temptations familiarity brings may reduce.

12. Perhaps Judas may have realized that Jesus had discovered he was a thief.

It was a known fact (even before Christ was crucified) that Judas was a thief.

...but because he [Judas] was a thief...

John 12:6

Perhaps the Lord was giving Judas an opportunity to come clean. Some government officials, when they realize that their corruption has been uncovered, decide to burn down their entire office. This is an attempt to destroy all relevant documents and evidence. Judas probably realized that he had been discovered and feared that he would be exposed further. He decided that he would attack Jesus before anything happened to him.

Many rebels are guilty of other crimes in addition to rebellion. They often time their rebellion to cover up other offences. Judas timed his betrayal to exterminate Christ before he could publicly disgrace him. Some ministers, fearing public discipline for their wrongdoing, fight against authority. They pretend to have justifiable reasons for doing so. But beneath the façade are many shameful crimes.

He Attacked Me First

I remember the bitter attacks of one minister against my life and ministry. As I mused over all the lies and unbelievable stories that this gentleman spread about me, I realized it was just an attempt to cover his own shame. As is said in Ghana, "do them before they do you."

13. Perhaps Judas thought that if Jesus was to really die he would lose his job. He had to secure himself.

He felt the future was not so bright. With the impending departure of Christ, Judas conceived a plan that would give him enough money to set-up a private business.

And Judas... went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them... they were glad, and promised to give him money...

Mark 14:10,11

Perhaps Judas thought that if he were to betray Christ and earn some money it would stabilize his family financially for the next few years.

14. Perhaps Judas knew too much about too many things.

He knew about the offerings.

...he [Judas]... had the bag [account book], and bare what was put therein.

John 12:6

He knew how much money came into the ministry. He knew Jesus' timetable. He knew where Jesus lived and when he traveled. Sometimes people know things that do not help them. This is because they see things from the wrong perspective. Be careful about those who count the money of the church. Many of those who count the money do not pay the church bills. They just know the income of the church, but they do not know the expenditure.

...neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

Psalm 131:1

They often have a warped idea about the kind of wealth that the church must have. This can lead to disloyalty and treachery.

15. Perhaps he thought that the power and anointing on Jesus Christ was waning because Jesus kept talking about his death.

Usually only depressed people keep talking about death. Jesus Christ calmly predicted his death several times.

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer... and be killed...

Mark 8:31

Each time Jesus talked about the end of his ministry, Judas must have thought, “The fight has gone out of this man. He is not as powerful as he was three years ago.”

“When I first knew this man he would powerfully confront the Pharisees and Sadducees. He would preach with such zeal. No one could stand before the anointed preaching of Christ,” he remembered. “Things have changed. The anointing has lifted.”

Many observant but natural people see the man of God with a very critical eye. They notice variations in the mood and presentation of the Word. Over a long period, some critical people may conclude that the man of God is in a “low” season.

Don't Make a Mistake

There may be a genuine change in a minister's outlook because God may have moved the person on to another phase of his ministry. However, make no mistake about this! It does not mean that God is not with him.

When Jesus cried, "O God why hast thou forsaken me", many people thought that he was an ordinary man who had come to an unfortunate demise. Little did they know that this was just a stage in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Unfortunately, Judas misinterpreted the phase and change in Jesus' ministry.**