

Was Judas Iscariot Saved?

At one time or another nearly every Christian will be confronted with the question of whether Christ's disciple, Judas Iscariot, was saved or lost. This study will address the relevant scriptures in an attempt to answer that question. It will also attempt to answer the apparent discrepancy concerning Judas' death.

WHO WAS JUDAS?

- Judas Iscariot was chosen by Christ to be an apostle [Mt.10:4; Mk.3:19; Lu.6:16; Ac.1:17].
- He was the group's treasurer [Jn.12:6; 13:29].
- Scripture prophecies show that he was revealed as the betrayer [Ps.41:9; 69:25; 109: Ac.1:16; Mt.26:21-25].
- He betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver [Zec.11:11,12; Mt.26:14-16, etc.]

A number of interpretations have been advanced as explanations for Judas' behavior, saying that Judas was a:

1. non-believer who was rotten to the core and was soaking the group for all that he could.
2. true disciple in the beginning, but turned against Christ after receiving ego-damaging rebukes from Him.
3. believing zealot who turned on Christ after realizing that Christ had no intention of a traditional overthrow of the Roman occupation.
4. true disciple who, in a period of rebellion, acted selfishly without realizing the consequences. After realizing his error he committed suicide in his state of remorse.
5. true, but ignorant, disciple who turned Christ in believing that the move would hasten Christ into action.
6. true disciple that was forced into the action by Satan and later killed himself out of consuming remorse.

WHICH OF THESE BEST DESCRIBES JUDAS?

The scriptures that bear on this issue are covered below. Each reference will be explored in an attempt to narrow down the above options. Relative merit will be given to the positions based on each reference.

Ps.41:9

This Psalm is referenced by Peter [Ac.1:16] as a prophecy of Judas. In particular, Peter refers to 41:9. In this application of the verse, Judas is said to have been a close, trusted friend of an omniscient Christ. You don't knowingly trust, or make an apostle of your enemy. Since Christ is God in

the flesh, then for Christ to have trusted Judas would require that Judas, at one time, was a believer with good intent.

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=1, 3=1, 4=1, 5=1, 6=1]

All of the Psalm can't refer to Christ and Judas because 41:4 clearly states that the speaker (Christ in Peter's application) is a sinner. However, 41:11,12 would apply to Christ. In 41:11 Christ (by extension) says that His enemy has not triumphed over Him. Christ's "enemy" is Satan, not Judas. This would imply that Judas was possessed at the time of betrayal so that the issue is with Christ's "enemy" Satan and not with Judas.

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=1, 3=1, 4=1, 5=1, 6=2]

Mt.10:1-41

Judas is called by Christ to the position of an apostle. He is one of 'the twelve.' As an apostle, Judas is given the power to heal any illness, the ability to raise the dead and authority to cast out demons. He is sent out into Israel to perform these deeds as evidence of the credibility of the message that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Apostleship is a spiritual gift [1Co.12:28]. While the context in 1Co.12 is the role that these gifts would take in the church, it is also obvious that the gifts existed before the church. God had empowered these twelve disciples as apostles before the church age. People throughout history were used by God as prophets and teachers. Many were empowered to perform miracles (i.e. Moses, Samson, Elijah, etc.), etc.

The purpose of these gifts was to help believers grow in knowledge and faith so that ministries may flourish and, ultimately, the whole body of Christ would be edified [Eph.4:12 - where "saints" and "body of Christ" refer to believers of any age].

The overriding evidence in scripture is that these gifts were exhibited *only* by those who were believers (Balaam's mule being the exception).

This means that Judas, in order to receive and/or exhibit the gift of apostleship would have to be a believer at least at that point in time.

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=2, 3=2, 4=2, 5=2, 6=3]

These apostles (including Judas) were to go from town to town and reside with local believers [11]. They would extend their peace to that household [13]. This is a reference to the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." A peace that is available only to the believer [Php.4]. Since Judas is included by Christ in this command to go, then Judas was a believer (at least at that point in time).

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=3, 3=3, 4=3, 5=3, 6=4]

Any household (or city) that would not receive one of these 12 apostles (or hear the message) was to be punished [15]. This would include any believer's household who refused to accept Judas

based on the household's knowledge of Judas' true intent and condition (if that true intent was to rip off unsuspecting believers). If Judas were an unbeliever, then this would set up a contradiction of scriptural principle (Ps.119:128; Am.3:3; Ro. 16:17; 2Jn.9-11).

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=4, 3=4, 4=4, 5=4, 6=5]

Christ sends the apostles (including Judas) out into the countryside as 'sheep' [16]. This is a reference to the scriptural principle that Christ is the good shepherd and believers are his sheep [Ps.79:13; 100:3; Ma.25:32-34; Jn.10:9,11] thus indicating that Judas is saved.

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=5, 3=5, 4=5, 5=5, 6=6]

Judas, as an appointed apostle, had the Holy Spirit inside of him [20], thus strongly indicating that his condition is that of saved (where 10:22 refers to reward via comparison w/ 32,33).

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=6, 3=6, 4=6, 5=6, 6=7]

Mt.26:14-16

These verses fit all of the positions and, as such, don't strengthen any position over another. More on this later.

Mt.26:21-25

Judas is revealed to the others as the betrayer. It is said of the betrayer that it would be better if he had never been born.

For those that believe that Judas was a believer (and, therefore, saved) who took this action out of willful rebellion (positions 2, 3) would believe that this statement refers to the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSoC). Here Judas would lose reward, perhaps all reward, in heaven for his willful action of betraying Christ. The problem with this position is that even if Judas lost *all* reward he would still be better off in heaven for eternity than if he had never been born. Wouldn't you choose heaven for eternity than never being born?

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=5, 3=5, 4=6, 5=6, 6=7]

For those that believe that Judas wanted the best, but made a big error in judgment (position 4, 5), or, that he was possessed and had no choice (position 6) would believe that this statement refers to the anguish he felt when he realized the consequences of what he had done (no doubt ably assisted by Satan). Suicide attempts are frequently based on this same feeling of self-worthlessness. This is an acceptable interpretation of this isolated verse.

[POINTS: 1=0, 2=5, 3=5, 4=7, 5=7, 6=8]

Those that take the position that Judas was lost would say that this statement could only be said of a person who was damned to hell (hence, he must have been unsaved). However, it does not say that the statement is in reference to Judas' eternal destiny at all! At the time, Judas had already

promised to betray Christ [14-16]. That being the case, why did Judas ask whether he was the betrayer [25]? The *last* thing a thief wants is to have his identity revealed. It is unlikely that if Judas, knowing by experience Christ's ability to foreknow events and facts, would willingly risk being revealed. For this reason it is unlikely that positions 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 are true

[POINTS: 1=-1, 2=4, 3=4, 4=6, 5=6, 6=8]

Mt.26:47-50

This portion of scripture fits all the positions. More on this later.

Mk.3:13-19

Christ ordained Judas as an apostle [13,14]. Again, since apostleship is a spiritual gift given by God to believers (as seen earlier), then this is taken as an indication that Judas was a believer.

[POINTS: 1=-2, 2=5, 3=5, 4=7, 5=7, 6=9]

Mk.14:10,11

These two verses are taken into account by all the positions. More on this later.

Mk.14:18-21

Mark's version of the events in the upper room parallel Mathew's. Here we see "they" were sorrowful [19]. "They" refers to "the twelve" [17]. This requires that Judas be numbered among those that were sorrowful (positions 4, 5, 6). It also requires that Judas would have had to change his mind about betraying Christ after having already made his deal with the chief priests. The alternative positions (1, 2, 3) would require that the scripture was, to be blunt, in error (and, apparently, not God's Word since God doesn't make mistakes). That raises more questions than it answers; like, "Who decides what parts of scripture are true and which ones aren't"?

[POINTS: 1=-3, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=10]

Mk.14:43-45

All the positions take these verses into account. More on this later.

Lu.6:16

Again, we see that Christ has ordained Judas as an apostle (and, as we have seen easier, all that the office of apostle implies).

[POINTS: 1=-3, 2=5, 3=5, 4=9, 5=9, 6=11]

Lu.22:3-6

This is the “later” referred to in some of the previous references. This is a key reference in support of position 6. It is clear from these verses that Judas did *not* betray Christ on his own volition. If he had, then Satan would not have had to possess Judas to get the job done.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=12]

Lu.22:47-49

This selection supports all of the positions.

Jn.6:64

This verse is generally used to strengthen position 1. However, upon closer inspection it becomes evident that this may not be the case. Verse 6:64b may be simply a digression for explanation. After all, John is about to refer to Christ’s foreknowledge of his betrayal a few verses away [70]. Could he simply be explaining background information important for his narrative in this chapter?

After consulting 42 different translations I found that all of them read the same as the KJV or, in a couple of cases, supported a reading that would indicate that Judas was *not* included in the first group. In *none* of the versions was the Greek word (καί) translated as “including” or any other obvious ‘cumulative’ word which would show that Judas was included in the first phrase. That is what most people who subscribe to position 1 read into the verse. After all, there is no reason a translator couldn’t have substituted “including” for “and.” It would be a perfectly reasonable to do so if any of the 42 translators had thought that Judas was included in the first phrase.

In light of these facts I am less willing to give points to position 1. However, because arguing from a position of what the Bible *doesn’t* say is also dangerous, then I can’t honestly credit any of the positions.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=12]

Jn.6:68-71

This verse is also frequently used to support position 1. However, I would also like to explore this verse a little deeper. Peter is of the opinion that *all* of the twelve apostles were believers [69]. We know that Peter includes Judas in this statement because Christ uses the phrase “you twelve” [70]. Far be it from me to disagree with Peter. After all, he was there. I was not.

But what do we make of Christ’s statement?

He calls Judas “a devil” [KJV]. The word used here is “diabolos” which literally means “one that accuses.” The same word is variously rendered ‘false accuser’ twice [2.Ti.3:3; Tit.2:3], ‘devil’ 25 times [in every other case it refers to Satan], and ‘slanderer’ once [1Ti.3:11]. Armed with that information we can glean the following from this verse:

1. Judas is not *the* devil, but is called “a devil.” That makes it clear grammatically that Judas is not being referred to as Satan.

2. Judas is not a demon in disguise. He is a human. At this point he is not possessed. That means that the verse is not a reference to demon possession or that Judas is a literal demon in disguise (after all, he was ‘born’, remember?).
3. Christ’s statement must refer to an attitude or action of Judas.

This verse is simply a literal use of the word ‘diabolos’ (‘accuser’) and is a reference to Judas’ betrayal of Christ as indicated in the next verse [71].

Are ‘accusers’, even ‘false accusers’ necessarily lost? Not according to Tit.2:3 or 1Ti.3:11 where mature Christian women are encouraged to avoid false accusations. The mere fact that it is mentioned means that this behavior is possible (even expected) among believers who let their guard down (so-to-speak). Certainly, it isn’t an indication that the mature churchwoman who accuses is lost? Why do we force that indictment on Judas?

Unless you are willing to say that anyone who makes a false accusation is lost, then you should be unwilling to call Judas lost on the basis of this verse. I’m not willing to do so! Sorry, but I can’t give points to position 1 simply because it is fashionable to do so. This verse does not support any position at the expense of others.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=12]

Jn.12:4-6

It is clear from this reference that Judas coveted the money. Do believers sin? Is sin an indication that one is lost? Are we to believe that covetousness is an indication that one is not saved? Of course not! The day you show that to be true is the day that I will eat my Bible! This verse is of no help to any position.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=12]

Jn.13

It is clear from Jn.13:2 and the preceding verses that Satan is going to use Judas to accomplish Christ’s downfall. At least that what Satan thinks. In reality, he is playing right into God’s hands. Satan’s second step is to plant the seed of betrayal in Judas’ heart now that he is out of fellowship (O.O.F.) (see HEART). Notice that this is not a possession by Satan (see Satan, Demons, and Witchcraft), but only an inducement.

This is how Satan tempts both believers and unbelievers to sin today. He does not force believers to sin by possession (although unbelievers can be forced), but plants the seed in our mind/heart [James 1:14-15]. This seed is designed to play on the weakness of our Old Sin Nature (O.S.N.). This O.S.N. is something we still possess even after salvation.

Although Judas is aware that, while possessed, he offered to betray Christ for money, that was not accounted to him as sin since he was powerless to prevent it. His own revulsion toward what he had done and the fear he had about revealing it to the others probably caused him to hide what had occurred. Scripture does not record for us his confession—an event of extreme importance, if it had occurred. Perhaps he felt that if he tried to forget about it the problem would go away. This failure to confess a sin, knowing the impact of what had happened, was his downfall and he was now a sitting duck for further exploitation by Satan. Satan did not intend to let it stop there.

The thought of betrayal for money is reintroduced by Satan [Jn.13:2]. Rather than confessing the whole matter or excusing the idea as outside of God's will, Judas' O.S.N. begins to go to work on it until the seed begins to take shape as his own plan. This is what James refers to as sin [James 1:15]. This sin is 'finished,' according to James, when Judas commits to the plan as a course of action. The 'death' that James refers to is spiritual death—a breaking of fellowship with God (the fellowship that each believer enjoys after confession of sin) [1Jn.1:8-9]. The result is that Judas remains O.O.F., but has bought into Satan's plan.

Jesus is fully aware of what has happened earlier and what has now been conceived in Judas' heart and sets about to place Judas back into fellowship (I.F.) by cleansing Judas' heart of sin (and, consequently, of the idea of betrayal).

This is illustrated by Christ by washing the disciples' feet. Peter, who doesn't understand the illustration, balks at the washing of his feet [Jn.13:8]. Christ's statement in 13:8 makes it very clear that the cleansing of sin (illustrated by the feet washing) is needed to place the person I.F. Without the cleansing of sin, Peter could not enjoy fellowship with God (or Christ). This act of cleansing will place all of the disciples I.F. and best able to understand the forthcoming doctrine [13:10-20].

Peter speaks out again [13:9] to be wholly washed by Christ, but Christ explains [vs.10] that once you are washed¹ (saved) you do not need to be washed¹ again (saved again). Instead of bathing the whole body you need only to wash² your feet.

The illustration is of a person returning from a public bath to his house. The person's feet would be dirty, but not his body. The believer is washed "once for all" [Heb.10:1-12], but needs to have their continuing sin cleansed by confession [1Jn.1:8-9] to restore their *fellowship* with God (*not* their salvation). It may be said that one's salvation covers for all time their guilt before God, but not the daily defilement caused by sin. Daily restoration of fellowship with God through confession cleanses the person of sin's defilement.

“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed¹ [saved] needeth not [wash again/be saved again] save [but only] to wash² his feet [cleanse the defilement of sin], but is [currently, now and forever] clean every whit [saved wholly/thoroughly]: and ye are clean [positionally/saved], but not all [practically/but not your feet/not everyone is I.F.].

For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean [not everyone is wholly clean/practically clean/i.e., someone has dirty feet/someone is O.O.F.].

So after he had washed their feet [made them practically clean/I.F. also], and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them [incl. Judas] Know ye what I have done to you?’

Ye [incl. Judas] call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am [everyone is now I.F., incl. Judas—ready to learn doctrine].”

After the doctrinal lesson on servitude Christ again picks up on the betrayal theme, but now there is an important difference. The commitment by Judas was sufficient to place him O.O.F. in 13:10. In 13:21, however, Christ uses the word 'shall' to indicate that the sin is not present at that point. This is important because it means that Judas was placed back 'in fellowship' (I.F.) by Christ for the doctrinal lesson. The commitment to betray Jesus is now gone and Satan must try again

¹ “washed” = lou'-o (#3068) = “bath” (as in the whole body)

² “wash” = nip'-to (#3538) = ‘cleanse’(especially the hands or feet)

to influence Judas. This explains why *all* the disciples (incl. Judas) wondered who would betray Jesus.

Jesus whispers to a disciple in 13:26 the clue as to who will be the betrayer. He does not want Judas or Satan to overhear Him. I suspect that He whispered, “Satan. Why? Because if he had whispered one of their names there likely would have been a reaction. No reaction is forthcoming.

Satan now tries the second time, but this time he is going to make sure he is successful by possessing him. Although possession of the saved is not an option during this age (see DISPENSATIONS) due to the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit, it was an option at that particular time. God again allows Satan to possess Judas (much to Satan’s delight, no doubt) so that Satan could force Judas to betray Jesus. Christ is aware that the possession has taken place and tells Satan/Judas to leave, but none of the others is aware. One disciple, having been told of the betrayer was likely aware that Satan would betray Jesus, but he did not know when, where, how, or by whom. For this reason no one at the table was sure why Jesus gave Judas instructions to quickly do what he had to do.

It says in 13:29 that some thought Judas was to buy provisions, or to give to the poor. Perhaps the others thought that Jesus supernaturally knew that Judas had to go to the latrine. In any case, Satan wasted no time in getting to work using Judas.

This view of Jn.13 is given credibility by the treatment that was given to Judas up to this time. If Judas had not been saved would Jesus have appointed him as an Apostle and given him the power to cast out demons, raise the dead and heal the sick [Ma.10:2-8; Mk.3:14-19; Lu.6:13-16]?

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=13]

Jn.17:12

This is another popular verse for supporting position 1. Let us look closer to see what it says.

The first instance of “kept” is the Greek ‘tereo’ (Strong’s #5083: pronounced tay-reh’-o). This word means ‘to watch with the intent of preserving’ (i.e. ‘maintain’). It is the same word used in 17:6 and 11. In 17:6 it refers directly to the apostles (with application to believers) who have ‘maintained’ the unity and purpose of Christ’s instruction (salvation by Grace) [that includes Judas, by the way]. In 17:11 it refers to Christ’s petition to God the Father to ‘maintain’ the practical position of the apostles despite the influence of the world. Both times the word means ‘maintain.’ The first instance of the word ‘keep’ in 17:12 refers to Christ having ‘maintained’ the apostles positional security by the authority vested in Him by the Father.

The second instance of the word ‘keep’ is a different Greek word. This one is ‘phulasso’ (Strong’s #5442: pronounced foo-las’-so). It literally means “to guard from outside influence” (i.e., to ‘isolate’). In this case the context is that Christ ‘isolated’ the apostles from Satan’s direct influence [i.e. Mk.8:33; Jn.18:9]. All that is except Judas. Judas was not ‘isolated’ from Satan. Positionally speaking, there is no reason to believe that Judas was not still saved, but practically speaking it is obvious that he was left unprotected from Satan’s onslaught—the results of which we are already familiar with.

In light of this explanation it would not be fair to give credit to position 1 without sufficient reason to belief that the above explanation is incorrect.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=4, 3=4, 4=8, 5=8, 6=13]

Ac.1:16-25

We see that Peter says that Judas *was* appointed as one of the twelve apostles (“numbered with us”) and took an active role and responsibility within the ministry [17]. This would require him to be a believer (at that point in time). Claims that he was with the group of twelve, but that Christ didn’t actually ordain him as an apostle, or give him spiritual gifts will have to answer to Peter’s statement to the contrary.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=5, 3=5, 4=9, 5=9, 6=14]

Notice also that there were about 120 other disciples present when Peter said this and none of them challenged the statement. Apparently, 120 others (no doubt most of them being eyewitnesses of Judas’ ministry) were convinced of Judas’ role as an apostle concerned for lost souls.

[POINTS: 1=-4, 2=6, 3=6, 4=10, 5=10, 6=15]

Overall position 6 has the most scriptural support. Position 1 has the least. That is interesting since position 1 is the most popularly accepted. That should not surprise us since salvation by works is also the most popularly accepted, yet it has the least scriptural support.

WHAT’S AT ISSUE?

There is a very important concept to be resolved in our discussion of Judas’ fate. Which of us would say that it is right or proper to sit in judgment of another “Christian’s” positional standing with God? We do not do it with one another, yet many of us have no problem sitting in judgment of Judas’ fate. Of course, we *are* to judge a person’s doctrinal standing [1 Jn.4:1], but not his/her eternal fate. This is because of *our* inability to:

1. determine what a person has believed in the past, and
2. judge what evidence is sufficient to PROVE one’s salvation.

Once we say that Judas went to hell we open the floodgates for other doctrinal questions:

1. How does an unsaved person exercise the gifts of the Spirit?
2. What other unsaved people have exercised those gifts?
3. Have we now established the criteria for proving salvation, or, have we established the condition for proving one’s unsaved condition?
4. Why would Christ say that the Father gave Him Judas and then say that Judas had lost his salvation if the doctrine of assurance is such a well established doctrine?

For this reason it is important to carefully weigh the evidence on both sides of the issue rather than basing our opinion on popular notion. Unless scripture says that Judas was an unbeliever (and as far as I am aware, it doesn’t), then I would be *extremely* cautious in making any claims to that

effect. I would also add that in the event of a tie, or uncertainty (in your view) I would suggest that you give Judas the benefit of the doubt.

WHAT ABOUT THE APPARENT DISCREPANCY IN THE MEANS OF JUDAS' DEATH?'

It is also said that Judas fell into the field that was purchased in his name and “his bowels gushed out” [Acts 1:18]. This is not a discrepancy, but a misunderstanding. Judas hung himself before Christ’s crucifixion. It was before Christ’s crucifixion that the priests and elders received the returned blood money. It is unlikely that the body would have been found that day. Even if it had, it is unlikely that any action would have been taken immediately due to the nature of the events at the time (public trial, crucifixions, temple veil torn, earthquakes, graves opened, etc.). The burial of an apparent vagrant would not have been very high on anyone’s priority list. The next day the body could not be buried due to the limitations on labor on the Sabbath. By the time the authorities did bury the body it was well bloated. When it fell the few feet to the ground it burst open.

Recall that it was a potter’s field—one that was filled with holes dug in search of clay. It was a convenient purchase for the purpose of burying those who had no money (and could not pay for the labor of building a sepulcher or digging a hole) since the holes and dirt piles were already there [Ma.27:7].

WHY DID JUDAS COMMIT SUICIDE?

Based on position 6 (the most likely scenario) Satan departed from Judas’ body after the trials, but before Christ is Crucified [Ma.27:3 w/ Ac.1:8]. Judas was then left to deal with what had transpired. Not knowing the part he played in God’s will he likely believed that he was solely responsible for Christ’s death sentence. Due to an unavailing remorse, he hangs himself.

Why would a lying thief who coveted money commit suicide?

DID JUDAS LOOSE HIS SALVATION AS A RESULT OF HIS SUICIDE?

No. Everlasting life is ‘ever-lasting’ by definition. Although suicide *is* a sin—it was a sin that was paid for on the cross [Titus 2:14].