

## The disciples of Jesus: Judas, the betrayer

To betray someone means that you give them over to an enemy by winning their confidence first. You can betray someone by telling others about private things that they shared with you in confidence. Betraying a friend will destroy your relationship and the trust that they had in you. Besides that, it can destroy a person's life making them miserable and even leading to suicide. Jesus understands what you're going through if you've been betrayed by someone you thought you could trust, as he was betrayed by one of his own disciples.

Matthew 26:17-25 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You have said so."

### 1) A chosen vessel

- Jesus chose Judas, not only to be one of his disciples, but to be one of his twelve apostles.
  - Luke 6:12-16 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and **Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**
- It almost seems unbelievable that Jesus would choose Judas to be an apostle knowing that Judas was going to betray him.
  - Was Jesus unaware of who Judas was and his intentions?
  - Or did he know exactly who Judas was and chose him as a vessel to accomplish the plans and purposes of God?
- This was not the first time that God chose a wicked person to fulfil his purposes.
- Pharaoh was chosen to enslave the Israelites in Egypt for four hundred years, but he was merely a vessel in God's hands to do so, and to eventually set them free after opposing their freedom.
  - Genesis 15:13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.
  - Exodus 9:16 But I have raised you (Pharaoh) up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.
- Both Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and Cyrus, the king of Persia, were chosen vessels in the hands of God.
  - Jeremiah 27:6 Now I will give all your countries into the hands of my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him.
  - Isaiah 45:1 This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut.
  - Both of these kings were wicked kings that committed atrocities against their enemies, but God not only referred to Cyrus as his servant but as mashiach (anointed) or the messiah.
  - When Saul was pursuing David, David said referred to him as the Lord's anointed – mashiach.
- Nothing and no one take God by surprise.
  - Judas didn't take Jesus by surprise. On the contrary Judas was God's chosen vessel carrying out the plans and purposes of God.
  - That difficult person in your life hasn't taken God by surprise either.

## 2) A corrupt character

- There is no doubt that Judas had a corrupt character, which was revealed in various ways even prior to him having betrayed Jesus.
- Jesus knew exactly what Judas' character was like all along.
  - John 6:70-71 Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)
  - The Greek word for devil means false accuser or slander. Judas falsely accused Jesus when he betrayed him to the Jews.
- John 12:1-8 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."
  - Judas hid behind pious platitudes of wanting to help the poor.
  - He had a problem with greed.
  - He was a thief who helped himself to what was in the money bag.
  - It's interesting that Jesus entrusted the money bag to Judas knowing that he was a thief with a problem with greed.
- It was ultimately his character weakness of greed that led Judas to betray Jesus as he betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver.
  - Matthew 26:14-16 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot —went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.
- This was in fulfilment of a prophecy by Zechariah in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.
  - Zechariah 11:12-13 I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the LORD.

## 3) A purpose fulfilled

- Judas knew that Jesus would be found in the Garden of Gethsemane after dinner and led the Jews there to arrest him.
  - Matthew 26:47-56 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.
  - Once again Jesus wasn't taken by surprise but knew that Judas was going to betray him.
  - Jesus wasn't bitter against Judas, but recognised him as being instrumental in fulfilling the scriptures and the prophets.
- Do we trust God that he is busy doing something in our lives even when we have someone in our lives who we wish wasn't part of it, or circumstances that are less than favourable?