

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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The Judas Factor

Art Nelson

Introduction

The story of Judas Iscariot has always intrigued me and filled me with a fear of the Lord. It should do the same for all of us when you consider that, except for the grace of God, Judas is not much different than we are. Before you protest too much, let's look further at Judas and his actions and see if we can reach any conclusions about his motivation. I think that we will find that his story is very timely for us when we consider what is happening in some of the "movements" in the Church today.

The Choosing of Judas

We need to remember that Judas was not one of the twelve chosen apostles of Jesus by accident or by manipulation. Jesus earnestly prayed to God before selecting the twelve.

Luke 6:12-13 NASB

(12) It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

(13) And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

The twelve, including Judas Iscariot, were chosen for particular reasons which were important to the Lord.

Mark 3:14-15 NASB

(14) And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,

(15) and to have authority to cast out the demons.

The primary reason for His choice was "so that they could be with Him", which, we assume, means that He could train them, mold their character, and reveal the Father to them. Once this

was accomplished He would send them out to preach and cast out demons. This would include Judas.

We know that some of the reason that Jesus chose Judas as one of the twelve is because of the will and purpose of the Father. Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing; therefore, we know that this choice was in the will of God.

Another part of the reason has to do with the unfolding purpose of God. It had already been prophesied that Messiah would be betrayed; so, these prophecies had to be fulfilled. Does that mean then that Judas had no choice, that his betrayal was predestined? Of course not, this is not predestination but rather the foreknowledge of God. God already knew the choices that Judas would make; but, it was within Judas' power to make the choices.

The Sending Out

When the twelve were ready, Jesus sent them out to heal diseases and to cast out demons and proclaim the Kingdom of God. This included Judas.

Luke 9:1-2 NASB

(1) And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.

(2) And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

Luke 9:6 NASB

(6) Departing, they *began* going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

We can assume that Judas performed healing, cast out demons, and proclaimed the Kingdom of God just like the other eleven. Certainly, one of the other eleven would have noticed if everyone was performing miracles except Judas and would have raised the issue.

When the multitudes were fed, the bread and fish were multiplied in Judas' hands just like it was with the other eleven. If it had not been multiplied then Judas' basket would have been empty rather quickly.

In every way it appears that Judas participated in the work of the Lord just like the other eleven apostles. The only activities of Judas that appeared to be different was that Jesus made him the keeper of the money box; that is, He made Judas treasurer of the group (John 13:29).

The other eleven had no idea that Judas was a betrayer (John 13:28). It was only in retrospect that they even realized that he was a thief.

John 12:6 NASB

(6) Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

The question arises, “why did Jesus allow Judas to have the care of the money box?” The answer to this is important to us, today. The Lord puts us into circumstances to expose the hidden things of our heart so that they can be brought to the light and dealt with. Petty thievery in the heart will come out when exposed to the temptation of handling the money box. Apparently, no one but Jesus and Judas paid much attention to the money that was in the money box.

The Motivation of the Heart

As we just saw, Judas had thievery in his heart, which means that he did not have a proper view about money. This is one of the areas of our heart that the Lord has to deal with before He can trust us with true riches from Him—we have to be released from a bondage to the desire for money.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 NASB

(9) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

(10) For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

In Judas' heart was a love of money, which certainly resulted in him being pierced with many griefs. This was an issue in the heart of Judas that was never resolved. The question is, “why wasn't it corrected?” Judas had the ultimate opportunity and resources—daily interaction with Jesus, intimate teaching, a life of fellowship and miraculous ministry—yet, his heart wasn't changed.

The answer should cause us to come into a healthy fear of the Lord. Judas' heart wasn't changed because he never allowed Jesus to rule his life as his Lord. We can see this clearly in the Scriptures. As you read the Gospels notice that the disciples called Jesus Rabbi, or teacher, in their early relationship with Him; but, as that relationship developed and revelation came they each began to call Him Lord, that is, all except Judas who continued to call Jesus Rabbi or teacher. This is shown clearly at the last supper.

Matthew 26:21-22 NASB

(21) As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me."

(22) Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Matthew 26:25 NASB

(25) And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus *said to him, "You have said *it* yourself."

If Jesus is not ruling your heart as Lord, then you are still ruling your own heart—operating in the kingdom of self rather than the Kingdom of God. In this way we live our lives by the desires of our own heart rather than the desires of our Lord.

It is because of this that Judas could betray Jesus. In the heart and mind of Judas Jesus was a teacher, even a great teacher. It is much easier to betray a teacher than it is to betray the Lord.

Judas had his own agenda. It is most likely that he was a member of the Zealots, a patriotic sect that desired the restoration of the glory of Israel and the overthrow of the Roman government. It is even possible based on the etymology of his name, “Iscariot” that Judas was a *Sicarius*, a violent sub-sect of the Zealots that expected Messiah to be a military leader who would powerfully defeat and cast out the Romans. It is very possible that Judas saw Jesus in this manner. Jesus' popularity with the people, the power that He demonstrated, and His talk of the Kingdom certainly lent credibility for this to Judas.

We can't really know what went on in the mind of Judas, but it is certainly possible (and, in my

mind, probable) that, as Judas saw the popularity of Jesus begin to decline, he felt that he needed to help things along a little bit.

Judas, operating from his own agenda, needed to manipulate the situation in order to spark the rebellion against Rome. Judas tried to force Jesus into a position where He would have to reveal Himself as the divinely appointed warrior-king who would destroy His enemies. Judas' motivation for handing Jesus over was to force the hand of God into action. The thirty pieces of silver weren't the primary reason; they were just a side benefit.

I don't think that Judas ever thought that Jesus would allow Himself to be taken. He had seen Jesus pass through the crowds and escape capture and stonings on several occasions. He had every reason to believe that Jesus would do the same thing again. However, when that didn't happen and Jesus refused to even allow his followers to resist, Judas realized that his plan was not going to work. He regretted betraying Jesus and tried to back out of the deal but it was too late.

Applied to Us

Let's apply this to our own heart and to those who function in the ministry today. From the example of Judas, we know that a *false* person can do *true* things, but the true things are not to further the purposes of God but rather his own agenda. A person operating out of his own kingdom of self can do miracles in the Name of the Lord, performing healing and deliverance. The Devil did not do the miraculous works demonstrated by Judas, the Lord did them through Judas just as He did through the other disciples.

Is this part of what Jesus meant when He spoke of not knowing some who did miracles in His name?

Matthew 7:22-23 NASB

(22) "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

(23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Those who operate from the kingdom of self with their own agenda, deciding for themselves what is right and wrong are those who practice lawlessness. We are lawless until we come under the Lordship of Jesus and learn to practice obedience to His will.

Those who operate in ministry with a constant focus on money have a heart problem. Those who constantly speak of spiritual experiences and perform “manifestations of the spirit” in order to increase numbers, offerings, visibility, power and position are practicing lawlessness.

When Jesus said, “I never knew you;” He was referring to having an intimate relationship. The alternate meanings of “knew” in the original include “approved” or “authorized”. Jesus never approved or authorized those miraculous works—they were done in lawlessness, performed with illegitimate power by those who never yielded their heart to the lordship of Jesus.

With a healthy dose of the fear of the Lord, we need to ask Him to search our hearts for any of the motivations of Judas. We need to lay our lives open before Him and ask Him to rule over us—be Lord of our life. When we begin to practice the real Lordship of Jesus, it become much easier to discern in others ministry that is arising from self rather than the Lord—we are able to see beyond

the miraculous into the heart of the minister.

We have too many among the people of God who are operating from the principle of Judas rather than the life of Jesus. May the Lord help us cut through the hype, the manifestation frenzies, the personalities, the showmanship, the flamboyant styles, the self promoting, the arrogant, self-exalting ministries to see Jesus. What comes from Jesus remains; everything else is but dust in the wind.

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For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com

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