

What Did Jesus Mean?

Digging deep into Jesus' teachings.



What Did Jesus Mean? Judas, a Ruined and Wasted Life

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Jesus' call to discipleship was a voluntary response to his invitation to "follow me." Here are two of his invitations.

Matthew 4:18 - 22

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Mark 2:14

As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

In every case we are told they left their professions, their jobs, at once, immediately. No questions asked; no hesitation.

Judas Iscariot

Consider the three years Judas had been following Jesus before he betrayed him. He witnessed all the miracles, heard all the teachings, and was sent by Jesus on a mission trip.

Matthew 10:1, 7 - 8

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

"As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."

Twelve men in all of history were given the privilege and the opportunity to spend over three years with Jesus, 24/7, and Judas was one of them. The future for Judas was full of possibilities, and he blew it; he wasted it all.

Why? **Because he never had an eternal perspective.** He heard Jesus say:

Matthew 6:19 - 20, 24

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

Matthew 16:24 – 25

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

Judas began to show his true colors as the crucifixion and resurrection drew closer.

John 12:1 - 8

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ 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.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ “Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.” ⁶ 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.

⁷ “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

Jesus' reaction to Mary's extravagant gift was the opposite of Judas's reaction.

Matthew 26:10: *Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me.”*

This was a Woman of the Word—of Jesus' word—who believed what Jesus was teaching. She had an eternal perspective!

But once again, **Judas has no eternal perspective.**

Because Judas did not have an eternal perspective—because all of his hopes and dreams were limited to and controlled by what he could accumulate and achieve on this earth, he made the most horrific and disastrous decision in history—to betray the Son of God!

John 13:1 – 5, 18 - 30

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’” ¹⁹ “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." ²⁸ But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

Matthew 26:23 – 25

Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so."

It was all part of God's plan. Even the evil of Judas's betrayal was used by God as part of the plan that led to the arrest of Jesus and that led to the crucifixion—and that led to the resurrection! Though it was not God's will that Judas should betray the Lord, God takes evil and uses it to fulfill his purpose. God did not tempt Judas; he set his own course when he set his heart on things of this world instead of things of God.

James 1:13: *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone..."*

Judas suffered eternal loss, eternal separation from God. It would have been better for him if he had never been born, as Jesus said.

Ever had someone you trusted betray you? When and if you have or will suffer the heartache of rejection, please stop and remember what Jesus suffered for you.

Judas leaves and he was not there for the remainder of the Last Supper. He wasn't there to hear Jesus pray:

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled (John 17:12).

John 18:1 – 3

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

² Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.



Luke 22:47

While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

"Can you picture the twisted pain this act of treachery brought to the heart of Jesus, who had spent three years investing in Judas, walking with Judas, loving Judas? Before Judas could kiss him, Jesus had stepped forward, offering himself to those who came to arrest him. There was no need now to identify him with a kiss. Nothing would be gained by it. It would be a wasted act of wickedness." (*Saints and Scoundrels* by Nancy Guthrie, pg 125).

Judas's kiss was his final act of defection and betrayal.

Matthew 27:1 – 6

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ²So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

³When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

⁵So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.”

Judas was an apostle who became an apostate. Later John’s description of those who rejected Jesus seems a fit for Judas:

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

Betraying innocent blood was forbidden by their law:

Deuteronomy 27:25: *“Cursed is anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person.”*

The blood of Jesus—the only totally innocent person in all of history—was shed as a result of Judas’s betrayal and the chief priests’ jealousy.

1 Peter 1:18 – 19

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

This was all part of God’s sovereign plan—that the precious, innocent blood of his only son would redeem us from our empty way of life.

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace

And what is our response? What is your response to this astonishing, mind-boggling truth?

Revelation 5:9

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

Revelation 5:12

In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

You’ve been purchased by his blood and he is worthy of your praise and obedience for all eternity