

Biblical Apostle Judas Iscariot A Critical Evaluation of His Integrity

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Abstract:

Judas Iscariot is regarded as one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, who trusted him to the extent that he (Jesus) would hand over to him (Judas) money to keep it safe with him as trust. But in the Christian circles his (Judas') integrity is questioned. He, according to some Christian scholars, was a traitor who in exchange of mere thirty (30) silver coins betrayed his master (Jesus), and testified against him. It is claimed that it was this testimony by Judas that Jesus was sentenced to death at the cross. The two differing images of Judas as described in the Bible and further interpreted by Christian scholars need to be analyzed critically so as to find out who Judas the disciple actually was, a person of integrity or a greedy and traitor. This paper is dedicated to this issue.

Keywords: Judas Iscariot, Jesus Christ, Traitor, Cross, Gospels

Introduction:

In the today's Christian world the name Judas appears to be synonymous with traitor and greedy. It is due to the calim in the Bible that Judas testified against Jesus Christ so as to be crucified. There is another Biblical story related to Judas that Jesus Christ trusted Judas and appointed him as one of his twelve pious disciples. Christian intellegentsia have declared him (Judas) as the worst enemy of Jesus, an apostate, and a traitor. He is shown in the history as a politically ambitious man who always looked for ways to please the Roman power. The two opposite descriptions about Judas—he was a trusted disciple of Jesus, and he was a traitor who sent his master to the cross to die—lead to several genuine questions. First, was Judas really a traitor who betrayed his master merely for the sake of material gains? Second, was Judas a politically ambitious person? Third, why did then Jesus select Judas as one of his disciples? Fourth, did Jesus not know about bad character of Judas? Fifth, why did Jesus trust Judas in matters of money? Sixth, was

Judas made a scapegoat to hide the crime of someone else? This paper represents a humble attempt to analyze and evaluate various stories spun around the Biblical character, Judas Iscariot.

The Name Judas:

The name (Judas) has many different meanings in the old history as well as in the Bible. Judas is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Judah, which means "praised".¹ Indeed, Judaism itself is named after Judah. The nomenclature Jew originates from Judah. Also, Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, and it was the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the tribe of Judah was awarded the southern part. After the reign of Solomon, the Israelite kingdom that David founded was divided into two kingdoms: Judah, the southern kingdom and Israel, the northern kingdom. The latter was overrun by the Assyrians, causing it to disappear from the pages of history. And the former which was captured by Babylonian rulers remerged as a political entity after the Babylonian captivity period.²

Judas' name is considered in Christian circles synonymous with betrayal. To call someone as "Judas" is to actually express contempt for the dubious behavior of that person.³

During Jesus' days, the name "Judas" was so popular that parents preferred to name their baby boys as Judas. As a matter of fact, there are around six different characters in the New Testament with the name Judas. It was a fine name. It was a blessed name. It was a special name, but because of one man's betrayal, nobody uses the name Judas today except on pets like goat. It is now nothing more than a label reserved for the worst of traitors.⁴

Dr. Glenn Cummings says: "The name "Judas" means the Lord leads" that tells us a little about the hopes and dreams that his parents must have had for him when he was born. But the sad fact is that there has never been a person that was more clearly lead by Satan than Judas was".⁵ John Macarthur says: "The last name on the list of faithful disciples is "Judas, the son of James." The name Judas in and of itself is a fine name. It means "Jehovah leads." But because of the treachery of Judas Iscariot, the name Judas will forever bear negative connotation. When the apostle John mentions him, (John 14:22) he calls him "Judas" (not Iscariot)."⁶ The surname of Judas is "Iscariot" which means "man of kerioth". Kerioth-hezron was a small town in the south of Judea. It wasn't much more than a wide spot in the road.⁷ In fact, the name "Iscariot" is subjected to two different interpretations. The first is that it means "Man of Kerioth," a city in Judah (Joshua 15:25), which would be significant because it would present Judas as an outsider, a man who was different from the 11 Galileans. The second suggestion is that "Iscariot" is a derivative from the Greek "sicarri", a sect of Zealots who took up arms (daggers) against the Romans.⁸

Judas Iscariot in the Gospels:

Judas Iscariot – one of the twelve Apostles, the one who is always the last on the list, the one who is always identified as "betrayor" of Jesus.⁹ Gospel Matthew mentions: "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of

Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him”.¹⁰

One may ask as to why Jesus Christ chose Judas as apostle, despite his knowledge that Judas would betray him. Kim Paffenroth responds: “If Jesus chose Judas as disciple and did not know or anticipate what he was going to do, then Jesus looks like a pretty poor judge of character, even by human, let alone divine, standard. But if Jesus chose Judas knowing that this choice would lead to Judas's betraying him, which would lead to Judas's being damned forever, then not only Judas's free will threatened, but Jesus looks like a very cold, calculating, destructive man (or God) indeed”.¹¹ Glenn Cummings shares the general notion: “Now, the thing that makes that so important is that Judas was the only disciple that wasn't from Galilee. Most of the other disciples were either friends or family. Judas was an outsider. That made it even easier for him to deceive the other disciples, because they didn't know anything about his family or his background or his life”.¹² And then he argues: “I totally reject that. That goes against everything that I know and believe about Jesus. I believe that Jesus chose each and every disciple with the purest of hearts and the most perfect of intentions, because otherwise that makes Jesus responsible for his own betrayal and Judas free from all blame”.¹³

Ivan Rogers opines: “At this point, it is time to address that sticky question – the one that has perplexed Christians for over 2000 years. If Jesus actually knew in advance that Judas would betray him, why, then, did he choose and commission him to be his own apostle? According to biblical record, Jesus did, in fact, possess a clear foreknowledge that Judas would eventually betray him (John 6:64). And it is also written: "He (Jesus) did

not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man" (John 2:25). Where shall we ever hope to find the answer to this mystery? As starting point, heed closely the words of Jesus in his famous discourse on prayer: "Which of your fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?"¹⁴ Jesus chose the Twelve, including Judas, after an all-night prayer session to his heavenly Father: "In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles".¹⁵ Jesus taught that all of his personal decisions were first informed by the father: "So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."¹⁶

Ivan Rogers continues his argument: "We are led to conclude that Judas was an answer to the savior's personal prayer request, a designed gift from the heavenly father to his son. If indeed, Judas was an answer to prayer, then surely advancing the mission of Christ. I contend that Jesus knew exactly what he was doing when he chose Judas to be an apostle. As Peter would say later, he (Judas) (shared in this ministry)¹⁷. When Jesus commenced the proclamation of his kingdom message, Judas was included among the twelve who were sent to "freely" share the grace he and the other had first received (Mt 10:7-8))"¹⁸

In Corinthians, Paul refers to the disciples as 'the Twelve', referring to a time shortly after the crucifixion when there were only eleven due to the defection of Iscariot: "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that

he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Kephaz, then to the Twelve.”¹⁹

According to Gospel Luke: “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd”²⁰.

Gospel Mark reads: “And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me”²¹.

In Mark's Gospel, Judas Iscariot is mentioned as the one who will hand Jesus over, but only in 3:19. In the three predictions made by Jesus, Judas does not appear, nor does it seem that Jesus is indicating that any human plays a role in the event. In fact, one can read the predictions with the Pauline theology in mind and there is no loss of meaning: Jesus goes to die because his death is the central event in signaling the coming of God's Imperial Rule. In MK 14:12a: when Jesus states that he must depart "just as the scriptures predict", he is referring to God's will. It is only in the last third of the first century that the action of Jesus being handed over is taken away from God or Jesus himself and is placed into

the hands of a specific human agent, "Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve. Judas is invented by the Markan community to humiliate the twelve and undercut their claims to authority. A narrative pattern supports this claim. Notice that, after each suffering declaration, an incident highlights the denseness of the twelve follows.²²

Gospel John mentions: "After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly".²³

Something of the kind dose seems to happen in the Gospel of John, during the last supper, Jesus declares that Judas will betray him. Oddly enough, the other disciples do not seem perturbed, but perhaps they are in on the plan. Then Jesus said to Judas, "Do quickly what you are going to do," after which Judas "immediately went out" to tell the authorities where to find Jesus so they could arrest him.²⁴

Truly, there is many a strange matter mentioned in the Gospels about delivery of the Christ, one of them is about the sign. Matthew said: "While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given

them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.” And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him”.²⁵ Mark also mentioned about that kiss: “Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard”.²⁶ The strange thing is that Jesus Christ said to the people who came to arrest him: “At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me”.²⁷ Mark also assured: “And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me”.²⁸ So, why the writing of Gospels insist about that kiss? In fact, we didn’t have any definite evidence that Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ because the apostles ran away and left him alone. The only argument to prove that Iscariot was a traitor was that he was with the soldiers and police that arrested Jesus.

However, it is noteworthy that in many chapters of the Gospels one can hardly find any mention of Judas’ betrayal. Jesus, for instance, said to them: “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”.²⁹ It is obvious from here that Jesus wished to include Iscariot among these kings of heaven. Even if Jesus did not make the above statement it is clear that Matthew thought so. According to John, “he laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his

waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him".³⁰ The word "disciples' feet here does not seem to exclude Judas Iscariot.

John also mentions: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples".³¹ It is clear that Iscariot did know about Gethsemane. It was a spot just off the Bethany Road opposite the temple and would have been a convenient rendezvous. How did Iscariot know that Jesus would be there on that particular night, at that particular time?

Madeleine Scopello argues: "When not in public at night, Jesus was effectively in hiding (from the crowds, at least) with the disciples serving as watchmen and body guards. Therefore, if Jesus was to be handed over to the authorities, someone who knew Jesus' hiding places had to "deliver" that information to them, or else led them to the spot. In the Gospel of John, there is no mention of this aspect of the betrayal. No logical background is necessary, just as no money is necessary because Judas is simply possessed by Satan. In the Gospel of Judas the motivation for the betrayal is even less clear. While there is some suggestions that Judas is at least "demonic" and while he dose receive money for his deed, the theological implications are murky at least".³²

Although John has the most negative portrayal of Judas, in particular, and of "the Jews", in general, the theory that Judas in fact wrote the fourth Gospel Keeps recurring. It can be based on the common speculation that Judas was the only Judean among the otherwise Galilean disciples, and there was long tension between

them. The Gospel of John may have been written by the "beloved disciple" who is described in it and who seems to be somewhat separate from the other disciples, perhaps because he was a Judean.³³

Some writers in the Christian thought (Particularly from protestant Doctrine) find anti-Semitic attitude in the contents of John's Gospel hence that toward Judas. Kim Paffenroth for example says: "The simplest anti-Semitic use that Judas's story could serve is one of simple equation: Judas was bad; all Jews are bad. The equation can run both ways: Judas was evil because he was a Jew; Jews are evil, demonstrated by their similarity to Judas. This has certainly been the most frequent anti-Semitic use of Judas's story throughout Christian history. John Chrysostom (ca.349-407 C.E.) was virulent in his anti-Semitism and passionate in his denunciation of Judas. Sometimes Chrysostom uses Judas as a potent lesson against the evils of covetousness and greed".³⁴

Judas's image as presented differently in all four gospels and Acts reveals that the early church attempted to understand and explain his character. Gospel of Mark says: "Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him".³⁵ Gospel of Matthew says: "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver".³⁶ Gospel of Luke says: "Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve".³⁷ Gospel of Matthew says: "And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself".³⁸ Acts describes: "Now this

man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out”.³⁹ These different stories about the character of Judas as described by Gospels and Acts clearly demonstrate discrepancies therein.

Hypotheses about Judas’ Character in the Western Thought:

Christian scholars in the west generally look at the character of Judas Iscariot from two angles, as a part of God’s plan and as a condemnable person. Some of these descriptions in the western sources are given here below.

Redemption and Crucifixion:

Some western scholars believe that Judas part of the God plan to the salvation of mankind. Madeleine Scopello argues: “The betrayal is ambiguous in Christian tradition. It was a bad deed with tragic consequences (the crucifixion), but it had a happy ending (the resurrection)”.⁴⁰

After reading four canonized gospels in the New Testament, one could argue that in order for Jesus to be crucified and rise from the dead, he first needed to be handed over to his enemies. According to his line of reasoning, Judas was an essential part of God's plan. Assuming that Jesus was able to influence these events, the next step would be for him to make a deal with Judas.⁴¹

Roy G. Pittman says: “The word of God is clear in giving the order of events. Interestingly, note that Jesus had the knowledge of his death revealed to him by God before the religious leaders began their scheming. God always prepares His people and servants regarding the plans and actions of the enemy (Satan) if they are open to receiving it. The religious leaders wanted Jesus dead before the 15th of Abib, meaning the day of the

Passover, a holy convection, and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus Christ was not to have been killed during the feast because the leaders had feared the reaction of the people. Another reference to those events is found in the Gospel of Mark 14: 1-2”.⁴²

If Jesus foreknew all that, why was the betrayal necessary? In the synoptic gospels, there is a logical background to Judas' deed, in a way. For fear of multitude(s), the authorities dared not arrest Jesus in public (Matthew 21:46; Gospel of Judas 58, 16-19; and Gospel of Luke 22:6).⁴³

Paul Verhoeven expresses another view when he says: “I consider this interpretation, in both the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Judas, to be patently absurd. If Jesus was so intent on dying, he could have turned himself in; he did not need Judas to do it for him. Furthermore, I do not think that God had a plan for Jesus' death (or for his life, for that matter). The dismal truth is that Jesus was betrayed when he was least expecting it- a fate he shares with countless others, including the Guevara and the French Resistance hero Jean Moulin.”⁴⁴

Servant of Christianity:

The radical Christians believe that Judas had a deep Christian faith. James Orr, for example, argues: “Other theories are put forward in explanation, that Judas joined the apostolic band with the definite intention of betraying Jesus. The aim of this intention has again received two different interpretations, both of which seek to elevate the character of Judas, and to free him from the charge of sordid motives and cowardly treachery. According to one, Judas was a strong patriot, who saw in Jesus the foe of his race and its ancient creed, and therefore betrayed him in the interests of his country. According to others, Judas regarded himself as a true servant of Christianity,

who assumed the role of a traitor to precipitate the action of the Messiah and induce him to manifest his miraculous powers by calling down the angels of God from heaven to help him (Mt 26:53). His suicide was further due to his disappointment at the failure of Jesus to fulfill his expectations.⁴⁵

John MacArthur points out: “Meanwhile, Judas was becoming progressively more disillusioned with Christ. No doubt at the start, all the apostles thought of the Jewish Messiah as an oriental monarch who would defeat the enemies of Judea, rid Israel of pagan occupation, and reestablish the Davidic kingdom in unprecedented glory. They knew Jesus was miracle worker. He obviously had power over the kingdom of darkness. He also had authority to command the physical world. No one ever taught the way he taught, spoke the way he spoke, or lived the way he lived. As far as the disciples were concerned, he was the obvious fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic promises”.⁴⁶

Psychiatric Disorder:

Some western writers believe that Judas’ deed falls within Psychiatric illness. John MacArthur says: “From human perspective, Judas had the same potential as the others. The difference is that he was never really drawn to the person of Christ. He saw Him only as a means to an end. Judas' secret goal was personal prosperity, gain for himself. He never embraced Jesus' teaching by faith. He never had an ounce of true love for Christ. His heart had never been changed, and therefore the light of truth only hardened him”.⁴⁷

Dr. Glenn Cummings claims almost the same thing: “He was hypocrite. The word "hypocrite" means "actors" or "pretenders". In other words, they pretend to be something that they aren't. That's exactly what Judas was.

He was pretender. He was an actor. He was a hypocrite in the worst sense of the word. Now, when or why his hypocrisy began, we don't know. Some believe that the devil made him do it. They believe that Satan somehow forced him to betray Jesus, but Satan couldn't make him, he couldn't coerce him, he couldn't force him. Judas acted of his own free will. He was responsible for selling the son of God for the price of a slave. Others believe that Judas was born to do what he did. That he had no choice. That he was predestined to play the part of the traitor".⁴⁸

Judas was a Devil :

Another perspective about Judas personality appears with most western writers, but that perspective belongs to the Bible accurately. Witness Lee says: "Revelation says: (Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon)⁴⁹. This beast is the false prophet: (And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs)⁵⁰. Since the earth, the land signifies the nation of Israel, this beast, the false prophet, will come out of the Jewish nation. Some students of prophecy believe that the false prophet will be Judas Iscariot. I believe this view is correct. According to acts 1:25, (to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place) "rather than to "his people," as was the case with others recorded in scripture (Gen. 25:17; 35:29). Although there have been many false persons in history, no one was as filled with Satan as Judas was. Jesus said, "Did not I choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? Now he spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he being one of the twelve, would betray him' (John 6:70-71). Here we

see that the Lord Jesus even called Judas a devil. Because Judas was filled with the Devil, he was one with the Devil. No one other than Judas matches the description of the false prophet.⁵¹

Roy G. Pittman also says: “Jesus had just not lined up with what Judas thought the Messiah was supposed to be, and in an impulsive and emotional act driven by pride he went to the chief Priests and made arrangement to betray Jesus to them. Judas motive in the matter can only be inferred as insight into his ulterior motive is not clearly defined in scripture. It is inferred Judas was angry, frustrated, desperate, and uncertain. It appeared to be great burden of personal confusion, anger, and distress Judas must have felt as he left to betray Jesus, the one and only son of God. By scrutinizing the action of Judas, the internal turmoil he appeared to have felt can be inferred. That Judas allowed Satan to have manipulated his mind into having thoughts of betrayal led to Satan having a stronghold in his life, the springboard from which his action of betrayal came. All sin or inappropriate actions begin with thoughts which then lead to sinful actions. In II Corinthians Paul reveals that very understanding. (II Corinthians 10: 3-5)”.⁵²

Ivan Rogers has some questions about the term ‘Satan’ and try to answer it: “According to John 6:70, Judas is identified as "a devil" (not = the devil). This verse has excited some commentators to wrongly speculate that Judas was "Satan incarnate”. But such an interpretation raises some disturbing questions such as: Would Jesus ordain Satan to be one of his apostles? Would Jesus appoint Satan to be his treasurer? Would Jesus lovingly wash Satan's feet? Would Jesus serve the new covenant bread and wine to Satan? Would Jesus call Satan his "friend"? Would Satan repent, saying, I have

betrayed innocent blood? The answer to each of the above questions is a resounding, "NO!"⁵³

Roy G. Pittman has a different interpretation about the term 'Satan': "According to the Gospel of Luke (22:1), (feast of unleavened bread draw night,) meaning it was still yet to occur but drawing closer. The chief priests had been seeking a way and a time to have Jesus Christ killed but feared the people's reaction. With the willing participation of Judas, one of Jesus own, the religious leaders must have become more confident of the success of their plan. The phrase "then entered Satan into Judas" is indicated from Greek to mean that Satan used Judas meaning Judas was under the influence of Satan but not necessarily "possessed" by him. Judas was ripe for being influenced and used by Satan as he was a thief, a liar and now an embittered disciple after having been reprovved onto separate occasions within the past three days by Jesus. Judas Iscariot's pride became the primary factor of his betrayal and the primary tool which Satan used to "push" Judas towards his impulsive and emotional action".⁵⁴

Judas was a thief:

The only one who has mentioned Judas as a thief is "Gospel of John". Strangely enough, the other three gospels do not mention him as a thief. Roy G. Pittman says: "Judas committed the most colossal failure in all of human history. He committed the most horrible, heinous act that anybody has ever committed. He betrayed the Lord Jesus, the pure, perfect, sinless, holy son of God. He sold Him out for a handful of money".⁵⁵

The writer of John's Gospel believed that, Judas was a thief, he built that belief according to the incident of pouring perfume on the Christ: "Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and

anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because **he was a thief**, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it”.⁵⁶

Judas was Greedy:

According to the Gospel of Matthew, Judas was very greedy. This appears in his personality when he had an agreement with the chief priests to deliver the Christ to him: “Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him”.⁵⁷ But there is another dimension of the story: “Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders”⁵⁸. In fact, what Judas did tell us was that he wasn't greedy. Otherwise, why did he return the money? In fact, we don't have any answer to this curiosity. Roy G. Pittman observes: “When Judas returned to the Temple he brought back the thirty pieces of silver. For what reason? Did he actually believe he could return the money and what was then happening would cease and Jesus would be set free? Did he truly believe he could buy Jesus back from the religious leaders who would then have been honored and agreed to let bygones be bygones? Or, did Judas need to make the attempt to soothe his own conscience and troubled soul because of his personal choices? Those are questions the

Gospel record does not answer in any form or fashion, and no amount of conjecture or theorizing can provide the answers”.⁵⁹

Authenticity of the Text of the Present Bible:

Hundreds of errors and discrepancies in the four Gospels make one think whether the currently available bible is authentic. Bart D. Ehrman, well-known authority on the history of the Gospels, observes: “What does this have to do with Judas Iscariot? In his case as well we have few historical facts but numerous later retellings of his story. Some of these retellings come from sources long after his day – for example, in medieval legends that arose centuries after his death. Some of them are from merely decades later, for example, in the Gospels of the New Testament. To be sure, in some instance the tales told about Judas can provide us with historical information about whom he really was, what he did, and how he did it. But in many instances it is hard to separate the fact from the fiction – especially because our very earliest sources tell us so little when we want to know so much”.⁶⁰ Dean John says: “Corrupt readings have occasionally resulted from the ancient practice of writing scripture in the uncial character, without accent, without punctuation, and indeed without any division of the text or spacing between the words. These corruptions are specifically found in places where there is something unusual in the structure of the sentences”.⁶¹ Also there is another problem which appeared in the ancient Codex of the Bible, Dean John maintains: “I think it necessary even a second time to call attention to the impropriety which attends the use of that heading. Thus Codex B differs from the commonly received Text of scripture in the Gospel alone in 7578 places, of which no less than 2877 are instances of omission. In fact omissions

constitute by far the larger number of what are commonly called Various Readings”.⁶²

Conclusion:

Judas Iscariot is one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Yet, the present Gospels depict him variously. The most predominant image of Judas is that he was a traitor, liar, thief, and greedy. It is very difficult to rebuild the true image of the Jesus’ disciple, Judas on the basis of the available versions of the Gospels. It seems Judas was a true follower of Jesus Christ. That is why he was selected by Jesus as one of his most trusted disciples. He was the keeper of the money bag of Jesus. This proves that Judas was not as most of the Christian scholars depict him or as the gospels particularly that of John describe him. Christian scholars who insist that Judas was a traitor because of his horrible description in the Gospels forget that the Gospels available today are not reliable at all.

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