

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 26:14 - 26:16



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this session, Steve Gregg provides a detailed analysis of Matthew 26:14-16, focusing on Judas' betrayal of Jesus. He examines the nature of Judas' possession and discusses whether Judas was a true believer in Jesus and ultimately saved or not. Gregg also delves into the possible reasons behind Judas' betrayal, including his disappointment at Jesus' failure to bring about Israel's liberation from the Romans. Overall, this in-depth examination of Judas' betrayal provides insight into the complexities of human nature and the challenges faced by believers in their journey of faith.

### Transcript

I'm reading now from Matthew 26, verses 14 and following. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you? And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Now, Judas Iscariot is an enigma to us. Here is a man who followed Jesus around for the better part of probably two and a half or three years. He saw the miracles Jesus did, and there's reason to believe that Judas may even have performed miracles himself.

Because we read of at least twice that Jesus sent his disciples out, gave them power to cast out demons, gave them power to heal the sick, and even to raise the dead. And these men would go out and they did these things and they reported back to him. And there's no reason to believe that Judas was alone unable to perform these miracles.

He was one of the twelve, and Jesus gave this authority to the twelve to do this. And yet this Judas, who once had cast out demons, himself becomes possessed by the devil himself. And the devil enters his heart to put it in his heart to betray Jesus.

Now, Judas is lost. There's no question about that. Jesus said at the table, Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.

He said it were better for that man if he were never born than that he would have betrayed the Son of Man. Now, to say that about a person, it's better for him that he was

never born, would suggest strongly that that man was not saved. Even though we read later in chapter 27 of Judas having regrets about his deed, we do not read that he had a repentance that led to righteousness.

Instead, it led to death. It was a worldly sorrow that leads to death because he committed suicide. But many Christians have speculated about Judas.

Was he ever a true believer in Jesus? Was he ever saved? If he was, then we would have to argue that he had been saved and then he was lost. And some people would have trouble with that because they believe that once you're saved, you're always saved and there's nothing you can do to be lost again. And therefore, because of the problem that the case of Judas presents, some have argued that Judas never really was saved.

Some have argued that he was just an imposter from the beginning and that he deceived everybody about the nature of his sincerity. Now, it is true that very early on, well, not very early on, about a year before Jesus was crucified, he identified Judas as a devil. In John chapter 6, he said, And yet one of you is a devil.

And so at that very point, Jesus knew and identified that one of them was a devil and clearly was referring to Judas Iscariot. But was he always a devil, as it were? Was Judas always an imposter? This is what is very hard to determine. For one thing, Jesus once said to the twelve, You twelve shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve houses of Israel.

And although Judas forfeited his position there and was replaced by Matthias in Acts chapter 1, yet while Judas was there, the promise applied to him. And then, of course, when he defected, he lost title to that promise. But Jesus spoke to those twelve.

Judas was among them. He said, You twelve, you have positions waiting for you on twelve thrones. Now, as I said, he vacated and forfeited his position, but Jesus indicated that that position belonged to him at that point in time.

Remember that when Jesus sent the twelve out, and they did cast out demons, and they did preach the gospel, and they did raise the dead and so forth, that there's no reason to believe that Judas stuck out like a sore thumb as the one among the other eleven who couldn't do these things. There's very strong reason to believe that Judas was sincere. You might even remember in the upper room when Jesus predicted that one would betray him, and shortly after that, Judas gets up to leave the room.

The Bible indicates that the other disciples did not even suspect that Judas was the one that Jesus had just spoken about. They thought he was going out to do some business for Jesus when he left the room because Judas apparently was so convincingly a disciple. They had seen enough to really believe that he was a true disciple.

And when you live with someone for as long as these people live together, it's hard to

imagine that an imposter could have fooled them so well that they didn't even have the slightest suspicion of him leaving the room when Jesus had just predicted that one of them would betray him on that occasion. It seems to me very unlikely that Judas was an imposter from the beginning. Jesus prayed and fasted, or at least prayed and no doubt fasted all night before he selected the twelve apostles.

And when he called them, he called them so that they could preach and they could be with him and they could be extensions of himself. Judas was picked at that time. And we don't know whether Jesus would deliberately have picked one to betray him.

He might have. But there's something else to consider here. And that is that when Jesus prayed in John chapter 17 to his father, in verse 12, he said, while I was with them, he means the disciples, while I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name.

Those whom you gave me, I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled. Now notice Jesus says to his father, the ones that you have given me, none of them are lost except for one of them. Okay, that's what he said.

Of those that you've given me, none are lost except the son of perdition. That means that the son of perdition was once one of the ones that the father gave him. Now, the ones that the father gave him were people who were sincere members of the Jewish remnant.

How do I know that? Because Jesus said so. It's also earlier in this same chapter, chapter 17 of John, where Jesus is there praying. So he says in verse 6, I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me out of the world.

They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now notice what Jesus says about those that the father has given him, and Judas was one of those. We know from verse 12, he says that Judas was one of those that the father had given him.

What do we know about those that the father gave him? Jesus said to the father, they were yours, and you gave them to me. What does that mean, they were yours? It means that those disciples that God gave to Jesus to be his disciples were already God's disciples before. They were part of the Jewish remnant.

In Israel, there was a remnant of people who believed and were sincere about God. They were saved by their faith. And when Jesus came, God, whose they were, he gave them to Jesus.

So they became Jesus' disciples. Now that would have to include Judas, because he was one of those that the father gave him. And that means that before Judas became a follower of Jesus, he was part of the true remnant of Israel.

He belonged to God. He was not one of the devil's people. Jesus does not say, they were the devil's, and you gave them to me.

He said, they were yours, father, and you gave them to me. The people who were already God's people in Israel became Jesus' people when he came along, because the father, as it were, gave his followers to Jesus to be Jesus' followers, sent them his way. Just like John the Baptist did.

John the Baptist had followers, and he pointed them to Jesus and gave them to him. Some of them didn't go, but some of them did. The point is that the father had his people in Israel who were true, faithful, genuine part of the remnant.

And when Jesus came, the father directed those who were his to go to Jesus and gave them to him. Now among those that the father gave to Jesus, Judas was one. And that would have to mean that Judas was once one of God's people.

Judas was once one of the believing remnant in Israel. And when he came to Jesus, he came with sincere motives. But he fell away.

Something happened to disillusion him. Now if this bothers some people's theology, I'm terribly sorry for them. But truth sometimes rattles our theological presuppositions.

The Bible does not anywhere say that if a person is saved at one point, they cannot be lost. It does say that no one can pluck them out of God's hand, and that there is no power outside of ourselves that can forcibly take us away from God. However, the Bible does not say that when we become Christians, we lose our free will, and we no longer have any choice in the matter.

We do have a choice. And Judas apparently became embittered toward Jesus, and eventually the devil entered his heart. And he went off to betray Jesus.

Now, to become embittered, why would Judas become embittered toward Jesus? Well, we don't really know. There are various theories about this. Probably the prevailing theory, and we don't have anything from Scripture to tell us this, but probably the most common theory is that Judas really hoped that Jesus would overthrow the Romans and show himself to be the political, military Messiah that all the Israelites hoped he would be.

But he didn't, and hope deferred makes the heart sick, it says in Proverbs. And it may be that because Jesus did not proceed in the way that most of the Jews, and probably Judas himself, hoped that he might, that is, in liberating Israel from the Romans, that he became embittered toward Jesus. You might remember that even such a true prophet as John the Baptist struggled with disillusionment, it would appear.

And from prison he sent messengers to Jesus, saying, Are you the one that we're looking

for, or do we look for another? And Jesus said to John, said to the messengers, Go tell John what you've seen. There's miracles taking place here. The blind are having their sight restored.

The lame are walking. The poor have the gospel preached to them. And he said this, And tell John this, Blessed is he who's not stumbled by me.

Blessed is he who's not offended by me. We believe that John the Baptist took that advice and did not allow his faith to be stumbled by what Jesus was doing. Just because Jesus wasn't doing what John thought the Messiah should do, he doesn't have to be stumbled by Jesus.

However, Judas apparently was stumbled. Like John the Baptist, Judas probably wanted Jesus to rout the Romans. Jesus didn't do it, didn't even try, didn't show any interest in doing so.

And that being so, he may have become offended or stumbled or disillusioned with Jesus, and decided, you know, I'm angry at this guy, I'm going to side with his enemies. He might have even decided that Jesus wasn't the Messiah, because Jesus wasn't doing the things that the Messiah was supposed to do, and as such would begin to look at Jesus as an imposter, and maybe even as a dangerous person, because there were false messiahs, and they always brought the Romans down on the country and caused a bloodbath. Whenever the Romans came in to put down these messiahs that had followers, it ended up being a bloodbath for the Jews.

And Judas may have decided, well, this Jesus, he must not be the Messiah. He's not doing what I think the Messiah is supposed to do. And therefore, if he's not the real Messiah, he's an imposter.

And he's got a lot of followers, and he's dangerous. That might have been how Judas was made to think when the devil entered his heart. It's hard to say.

There are some who would like to suggest that Judas actually was trying to force Jesus' hand. Some people think that Judas all the way through was a loyal disciple, and he simply thought Jesus was a little too slow, a little reluctant to do what he had to do. And that he thought that if he betrayed Jesus to the Romans, that Jesus would then manifest his great power as the Romans were coming in to kill him, and would save himself and Israel, would overthrow the Romans, because Judas would have forced his hand, as it were, by bringing the Romans in.

Now, that is another theory. We have no way of knowing what Judas may have thought, what was going on in his mind, why he would have said that he did this. The Bible says the reason he did it was to fulfill prophecy, and it happened because the devil entered his heart.

So whatever motives may be attributed to Judas for what he did, he cannot be vindicated. It was a devilish act. It was an evil thing.

He allowed the devil to come in. Now, the Bible says, be angry and do not sin. This is in Ephesians chapter 4. Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down on your wrath. Neither give place to the devil. If you get angry and you let the sun go down on your wrath, you may be giving place to the devil.

It would appear that through disillusionment, Judas may have become angry at Jesus, and he gave place to the devil. The devil came in and inspired him to do the thing he did. Now, there are some who really try to make Judas out to be a decent guy who acted on the best of motives.

In fact, there's even, I believe it's in the rock opera, Jesus Christ Superstar, it almost glamorizes and glorifies Judas more than Jesus. I mean, Judas is made out to be the hero. And as I recall, it's been many, many, many years since I heard that thing.

As I recall, the chief priests are offering money to Judas, and he's reluctant even to take it. He's just doing his civic duty in turning in this dangerous person, and he doesn't care about the money at all. But that's not how the Bible represents it.

Judas was motivated by money. It says that he came to the chief priest and said, How much will you give me if I deliver him to you? Now, we're told already in John chapter 12 that Judas was a thief and that he was the treasurer of the group of disciples. And as the treasurer, he used to carry the bag, and he also used to take from it for his own use.

He used to pilfer. And he used to rob the group of disciples. So we can see this was a man who was consumed by material idolatry, covetousness.

And he came to the chief priest and said, What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you? And they answered, or it doesn't give an answer, they answered by action. It says they counted out to him 30 pieces of silver. Now, 30 pieces of silver is really not an awful lot of money.

It would have been about a month's wages for the average worker. And so, I mean, what does the average worker make today in a month? If he makes minimum wage, let's say, let's give him a little better than minimum wage. Let's say he's a good worker, and he's, let's say he gets, what, \$10 an hour.

That'd be \$400 a week before taxes, about \$1,600 a month. So, I mean, about \$1,600 is a month's wages for someone who makes about \$10 an hour. 30 pieces of silver would have been a month's wages in those days.

So Judas betrayed Jesus for the equivalent of maybe, you know, \$1,000, \$2,000,

something like that. Now, some of you might say, Well, I could sure use that kind of money right now. I might be motivated too.

But when you think about it, that money goes awful fast. And to sell your soul for something that is so tawdry as some is really a stupid transaction to make. Now, it was predicted that this would happen, although some people overstate the clearness of the prediction because it does not anywhere in the Scripture say the Messiah will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.

Lots of people say it was predicted, and it was in a way, but not in the way that some people think. In Zechariah chapter 11, the man Zechariah plays a dramatic role, sort of an acted parable. In this parable, he is a shepherd, and he is in the role, really, of the Messiah, although he doesn't say so.

But he is acting the role of the Messiah as the shepherd of Israel. And he has two shepherd staffs. One of them means grace, and one of them means union or unity.

And he comes to Israel, and this apparently occurred in a vision that Zechariah had. He, the shepherd, comes to Israel with these staffs, and Israel hates him. And so he breaks the staff that's called grace, which means he's breaking his covenant with them.

Later, he breaks the staff that's called unity, which means that the Jews themselves become disunified and war among themselves. But the point is, at the point that he decides he will no longer be their shepherd because they have hated him, we read that they pay him 30 pieces of silver. In Zechariah 11, in verse 12, he says, Then I said to them, If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages, and if not, refrain.

So they weighed out to my wages 30 pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, Throw it to the potter, that princely price which they set on me. So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.

Now, this is where the 30 pieces of silver is predicted in the Old Testament. But as you can see, it's not like a prediction that says they will betray the Messiah for 30 pieces of silver. It's rather that Zechariah, playing a role where he represents the Messiah as the shepherd of Israel, he quits.

He quits the job. And he says, Okay, I'm quitting. Give me my severance pay, whatever you want, whatever you think I'm worth.

And they give him 30 pieces of silver, which, by the way, was a very small amount of money to give to somebody for severance pay. And he refers to it as a princely price, sarcastically. And he says it's not even worth keeping.

He throws it to the potter. It's such an insultingly low price that they paid him. Now, what does that have to do with Judas? Judas is not even in this prophecy in Zechariah.

There's no one betraying somebody for 30 pieces of silver there. How is it that Judas, betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, corresponds somehow to that acted parable in Zechariah 11? Well, as I understand it, this is how it fits. When Zechariah, acting in the role of the Messiah, says, Give me, Israel, what you think I'm worth, and they give him 30 pieces of silver, that shows that the people of Israel would value Jesus at that tawdry sum.

They would not highly value Jesus. In fact, if they gave him the wages that they valued him at, it would be only 30 pieces of silver. Now, as it turned out, of course, Jesus didn't come to them and ask them to give him wages, so they never gave him 30 pieces of silver.

But they showed that that's what they valued him at by paying that much to get him from Judas. Judas could deliver Jesus to them, and therefore they showed him how much they valued Jesus at. They paid Judas 30 pieces of silver in order to obtain Jesus.

And that is the correspondence. What's interesting is that in Zechariah, once this 30 pieces of silver was given, he threw it to the potter in the house of the Lord. And we'll see later on in chapter 27 of Matthew, that's exactly what happens to this money that Judas has received for Jesus.

And so Judas goes out from the presence of the chief priest, and there he starts looking for an opportunity, it says, to betray Jesus. It says from that time he sought an opportunity to betray him. Apparently, Judas didn't have a clear plan.

When he took the money, he didn't know how he was going to betray Jesus. He just said, okay, I've got some money now. I'm obligated.

I have to look for a way to fulfill my end of the bargain. But betraying Jesus to them was not easy because they were determined not to take him in public, lest the sympathetic multitudes would protect him. So they had to take him at night, and yet Jesus' whereabouts at night were not easily ascertained.

Jesus did not even let his disciples know in advance where he was going to spend the night. They found out when they got there. And that being so, Judas did not know in advance where Jesus might be.

So as to tell the chief priest, you know, go here at such and such a time, and he'll certainly be there. But one thing he did know, and that was that Jesus frequently, late at night, went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Judas probably didn't know whether Jesus would go any particular night for sure, but there was a good chance he'd be there any given night.

And it was so that later on, Judas led a band of soldiers from the chief priests out to that very garden and, in fact, did find Jesus praying there. Now, of course, they didn't catch



Jesus by surprise. He knew they were coming.

In fact, he went there in order to be captured, because he knew that that's where Judas was going to bring them. Anyway, Judas, you know, he got his money, but the interesting thing is he didn't get to keep it. He ended up hanging himself.

So he lost his soul in exchange for a cash price, but then he didn't even keep the cash price more than a day. As soon as he saw that Jesus was betrayed, we see in chapter 27, he couldn't live with his conscience. He surrendered the money, gave it back to the people that gave it to him, and then he went out and hanged himself.

Not a really very good end for the person who betrays Jesus, and yet everyone betrays Jesus if they don't surrender to him. He is Lord. If you deny him that place, you are his betrayer.

And many of you, I dare say, may have betrayed him for much less. A price than 30 pieces of silver, in which case you have nothing to look down on Judas for.