



“When we were kids, we often played where there were “good guys” and “bad guys.” In most of the movies we watch there are those who are inherently evil and those who are good. The reality of this world is that humanity is more complex than that. We are good, in that we are created in the image and likeness of a good God, but we also are sinful, evil by nature and choice. Judas is a complex character who is neither entirely evil, nor entirely good. Join us this week as we look at this complicated man and the role He plays in the overarching narrative of the Bible.”

DIGGING DEEPER: Judas’ Motivations

The portrait of Judas that emerges from the New Testament accounts can be probed in many ways. Brown and Klassen argue that παραδίδωμι (paradidōmi) should be read in the neutral sense of handing over rather than with a pejorative connotation of betrayal, despite contexts where a negative sense is explicit (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22). Judas’ motivation is also questioned, since the Gospels are ambiguous as to whether he was motivated by:

- Greed (Matt 26:15; John 12:5–6)
- Satanic influence (Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27)
- Obedience to Jesus (Matt 26:50; John 13:27)
- A mistaken understanding of the nature of Jesus’ Messiahship which anticipated His establishment of an earthly kingdom (Matt 20:21; Mark 10:37; Acts 1:6; compare Matt 27:3)
- A growing understanding of Jesus’ true Messianic mission with which Judas disagreed

Judas: before the betrayal

For any definite allusion to J. during the interval lying between his call and the events immediately preceding the betrayal, we are indebted to St. John alone. These allusions are made with the manifest purpose of showing forth the nefarious character of J. from the beginning; and in their sequence there is a gradual development and growing clearness in the manner in which Jesus makes prophecy regarding his future betrayer. Thus, after the discourse on the Bread of Life in the synagogue of Capernaum (Jn 6:26–59), when many of the disciples deserted Jesus (ver 66) and Peter protested the allegiance of the apostles (ver 69), Jesus answered, “Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil” (ver 70). Then follows St. John’s commentary, “Now he spake of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve” (ver 71), implying that Judas was already known to Jesus as being in spirit one of those who “went back, and walked no more with him” (ver 66). But the situation, however disquieting it must have been to the ambitious designs which probably actuated J. in his acceptance of the apostleship (cf below) was not sufficiently critical to call for immediate desertion on his part. Instead, he lulled his fears of exposure by the fact that he was not mentioned by name, and continued ostensibly one of the faithful. Personal motives of a sordid nature had also influence in causing him to remain. Appointed keeper of the purse, he disregarded the warnings of Jesus concerning greed and hypocrisy (cf Mt 6:20; Lk 12:1–3) and appropriated the funds to his own use. As a cloak to his avarice, he pretended to be zealous in their administration, and therefore, at the anointing of Jesus’ feet by Mary, he asked “Why was not this ointment sold for 300 shillings, and given to the poor? Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein” (Jn 12:5, 6; cf also Mt 26:7–13; Mk 14:3–8).