Why did Jesus choose Judas?

Jesus chose Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve disciples. Judas was "a devil" (John 6:70-71), "a thief" (John 12:6), an unbeliever (John 6:64), and spiritually unclean (John 13:10), yet he held a respected position within the group (John 13:29). Since Jesus "knew what was in each person" (John 2:25), it may seem puzzling that He would select Judas, the one who would later betray Him.

Jesus chose Judas as a disciple because, ultimately, Judas fit into the plan of God. Jesus had come to earth to die for the redemption of sinners. That death, "the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18, NKJV), was not an accident but was God's intended purpose. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming for baptism, he spoke of Jesus as a sacrifice: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, ESV).

Jesus was not fooled by Judas. He knew exactly what Judas was like and what he was going to do: "Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him" (John 6:64). In Judas, we have a clear example of how a person can be religious, hear the Word of God taught, witness genuine miracles, and for all appearances seem to be saved, and yet not be born again.

One of the reasons Jesus chose Judas was that prophecy had to be fulfilled. Speaking of His imminent betrayal, Jesus says, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him" (Matthew 26:24; cf. John 13:18).

After Christ's resurrection, Peter also points to fulfilled prophecy in relation to Judas: "Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus" (Acts

1:16, ESV). He also links Judas's actions to Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 (Acts 1:20).

Another reason that Jesus chose Judas was that God's sovereign plan had to be accomplished. In Acts 2:23 Peter states in his sermon to the people of Jerusalem that "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23, ESV). Not only was the betrayal of Jesus foreknown by God, but it was part of His "definite plan."

So, Jesus chose Judas to fulfill prophecy and because the plan of God required someone to betray the innocent Son of Man. However, none of this means that Judas and others who condemned and crucified Jesus were without fault. Judas Iscariot bore the responsibility for what he chose to do. Jesus said, "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" (Mark 14:21).

Peter also speaks about the sovereign plan of God and the guilt of those who act in sinful ways. In Acts 3:17 Peter says, "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:17-19). Even though the people had "acted in ignorance" in the fulfilling of prophecy, and even though Christ had to suffer according to the plan of God, the people who brought about Jesus' death were guilty and had to "repent."

Throughout the Bible, we see that God can use even the most wicked of mankind's actions for good (see Genesis 50:20). Nothing could be more wicked than betraying and murdering

the Son of God, yet in spite of that evil—even through that evil—God provided salvation and "disarmed the powers and authorities [and] . . . made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them" (Colossians 2:15).

God does not create evil, but He does control it. God does not participate in sin, but, in His power and wisdom, God can and sometimes does use the sin already existing in our world to fulfill His purpose. Judas was chosen with the foreknowledge of God that he would betray Jesus, but his betrayal, rather than stop God's plan for salvation, actually advanced it.