

FOR BETRAYING JESUS CHRIST - WAS JUDAS ISCARIOT JUSTIFIED

Whatever benefit mankind derives from the death of Christ was never Judas Iscariot's credit but an act of God, Who turns the evil of the wicked to the good of His children. People who defend the action of Judas for betraying our Lord do so out of an ungodly disposition or scorn for righteousness or because of their ignorance of the Scriptures.

The death of Jesus Christ and the circumstances surrounding it have been a subject of discussion among Christians and non-Christians. A Christian who has a spiritual understanding of all that happened is ever struck with a good impression of the purpose of God Who knows the end from the beginning. But the ordinary man who evaluates spiritual things by worldly standards cannot know the significance of that historic incident or appreciate the justice of God or the harmony of His will.

In a world in which there are all sorts of people with different character and mentality, a world in which the majority are inclined to evil and give support to error, it is not strange that certain people still take sides with Judas Iscariot for committing treachery.

And so those who do not see the bad streak in the character of Judas Iscariot often ask: Did not some one have to betray Jesus, to fulfil the Scriptures; so why blame Judas? If Christ had to be crucified for the good of mankind, in what way was his crucifixion through Judas's scheming wrong?

The case against Judas Iscariot is so bad that no amount of defence could be good or strong enough to absolve him from guilt or condemnation. We can see the truth of this matter in its right perspective if only we accept the authority of the Scripture.

Prophecies

It is true that long before the first advent of Jesus Christ prophecies were uttered concerning his mission and the cruel persecutions he would suffer at the hands of sinners or wicked men. It was foretold that he would be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". The prophecies further showed that he would be oppressed and afflicted, and like a lamb to the slaughter he would be led and eventually slain. – Isaiah 53:3-9

Added to all this were prophecies to the effect that Jesus Christ would be betrayed by a familiar friend and that the price of betrayal would be thirty pieces of silver.- Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12, 13

God's word is always true. And so when Jesus Christ came to this world of sin all that the Holy Spirit moved that prophets of old to foretell concerning him were fulfilled.

Judas Iscariot who betrayed him was indeed a familiar friend of him. He was one of the apostles. Despite that fact that he had the grace and golden opportunity to be an associate of the Holy One, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and to taste of the word of God and the powers of the world to come, traits of avarice and wickedness remained in his character.

It is noteworthy that ever before Judas carried out his evil plan in conspiracy with the Pharisees

and others, Jesus Christ had given the hint to his apostles that one of them would be the traitor. On one occasion he said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70) On this St. John commented: "He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." – Verse 71.

Moreover, two days before the feast of Passover, Jesus again spoke of his betrayal and crucifixion to his disciples. Said he: "Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the passover*, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." – Matthew 26:2

The whole story shows clearly that Judas was a man with an evil heart, and so he was an easy tool of the devil. This is evidenced by his conspiracy with the Pharisees and others. In spite of the fact that he heard what Jesus said about the betrayal he still sneaked away to join the wicked Jews in their plot to kill him. Judas told the plotters: "...What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him." – Matthew 26:14-16

Jesus Christ as a perfect man was already aware of the sinister role being played by Judas Iscariot. And so when he and all the twelve apostles sat to eat in the evening of the first day of the Passover feast, a few hours before his enemies hatched their plot, he said again. "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." – Matthew 26:20, 21

The apostles, being so much touched with statement of their master, wanted to know who among them was the traitor. As it is written: "And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said." – Matthew 26:22-25

If Judas Iscariot was not a man really given to wickedness, the woe pronounced by Jesus Christ upon whoever the traitor would be would have been enough warning for him to desist from carrying out his treachery to a finish no matter how offended the enemies would be. But being an instrument of the devil he was bent on accomplishing his plot.

As the zero hour when the enemies of truth and righteousness would strike was getting nearer, Jesus Christ was overwhelmed with grief though his determination to do His Father's will till the end remained firm.

It was during that crucial moment when Jesus Christ and the other apostles were heavy in sorrow and while he was still addressing them that Judas Iscariot with his co-plotters arrived to get him (Jesus) arrested. As it is written: "And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him." – Matthew 26:47-50

Evil-doer

There is nothing in the whole episode that reveals a jot of innocence on the part of Judas Iscariot

for which he can be justified. It was David who, quoting an ancient proverb, said: "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." (1 Samuel 24:13) And Jesus Christ himself said: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." – Matthew 12:35

The fact that it was foretold earlier that Jesus Christ would be betrayed and killed was not a licence or mandate given anyone by God to do so. The Almighty God knowing the end from the beginning only revealed through His prophets what His Son would suffer in the world during his mission of redemption.

Furthermore, it was shown in the prophecies that those who would betray and kill Jesus Christ were evil doers. Therefore whoever was not wicked could not have been an object upon whom such prophecies could fulfil.

The point, which must not be overlooked, is that Judas and others who took part in the betrayal and crucifixion were not acting out of good will. It was not because they believed that through the death of Jesus Christ blessing would come to mankind they slew him. Judas was avaricious and so he wanted silver at all costs. It was on this consideration he betrayed our Lord and Saviour. The chief priests, the scribes and Caiaphas, the high priest, as well as their followers whose hatred for Jesus Christ all along was not concealed were envious because of his fame which was growing more and more. Their intention, therefore, was to kill him and put an end to his activities which they feared was making "all men believe on him." It is stated that when the Passover feast was near "...the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people." (Luke 22:1, 2) Well, if their intention was good, and they believed that by killing Jesus Christ they were doing a good work for the benefit of the human race, why should they fear the people?

What is more, it is clearly stated in the Bible that Judas Iscariot was inspired by the devil and so he could not have acted with a godly motive. Here is the record: "Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude." – Luke 22: 3-6

If what Judas was up to was good it was not Satan that should have entered him but the Holy Spirit. That his offence was grave there can be no doubt. Jesus who is the Redeemer and Saviour saw no good in Judas Iscariot's motive, and he declared: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born." – Matthew 26:24

His Guilt

In the long run Judas himself realized that he had sinned and he acknowledged his guilt as it is written: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said. What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, it is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." – Matthew 27:3-6

Since Judas had pleaded guilty and confessed that he had sinned by betraying the innocent blood, it is therefore ridiculous for anybody to stand as his advocate to justify his nefarious deed. It is a sin to justify the wicked. King Solomon, in his Proverbs, stated: He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.” – Proverbs 17:15

The priest themselves said that it was not lawful to put the pieces of silver returned by Judas into the treasury “because it is the price of blood.”

If Judas Iscariot had done well by betraying our Lord, he would not have committed suicide thus adding sin to sin. Consequent upon his heinous crime he was deposed from his high office or post of the heavenly calling and was replaced by another.

Addressing the disciples after the ascension of Jesus Christ and before the day of Pentecost, St. Peter said concerning Judas Iscariot that: “Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.” – Acts 1:16-19

Continuing St. Peter declared: “For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate and let not man dwell therein: and his bishoprick (office of overseer) let another take.” - Verse 20

Before lots were cast to choose Judas’s successor, the disciples prayed so that the person chosen by God “may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” (Acts 1:24, 25) From this it can also be seen that the apostles and other disciples knew that Judas was a transgressor who deserved not the grace of salvation but whose portion is damnation. And Jesus Christ referred to him as “the son of perdition”. – John 17:12

Judas Iscariot sinned against the light or the Holy Spirit and for that reason there is no forgiveness for him. – Matthew 12:31, 32

On the whole, for betraying the Prince of life, the Redeemer of mankind, Judas Iscariot was not justified.