

JUDAS . who gambled and lost his soul
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(LUKE 22:3-5)

The account of the treachery of Judas Iscariot is the most tragic story in history. It is beyond comprehension that a man who had occupied a position of trust and friendship in the disciple band, should ultimately betray his leader. Many questions have been asked concerning this pathetic episode; but one thing has become evident. It is that the complete story of Judas is summed up in the opening statement of Luke 22 :4, "And he went his way." It is indeed most doubtful whether he ever went Christ's way.

The Way of Glory

"And Jesus ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. Simon James . . - and Judas Iscariot" (Mark 3:14-19). The foreknowledge of God does not alter the responsibility of man. Even although Christ knew what would take place, Judas of his own volition deliberately betrayed the Master. To him the call of Christ had been irresistible. It opened vistas of unprecedented possibilities. If this new leader were to be the Messiah, then the kingdom was at hand, and every man in the nation would have welcomed a place at the side of his King. Eagerly anticipating the splendour of a glorious future, Judas left his friends and followed the Saviour. And there is reason to believe that he worked as hard as anyone else in the days of preaching which followed. This was indeed his own way, and it is easy to imagine how fervently he proclaimed his message to all and sundry.

The Way of Greed

Many years later, when the apostle John described the criticisms made by Judas concerning Mary's gift of ointment, he wrote, "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12 :4-6). There had been times when the disciples had been puzzled by the shortage of money. It was inconceivable that one of their number should steal from the common fund; and yet . . . ? Long afterward they remembered, and understood. "Judas went his way." It was the way of self-pleasing. Probably he argued with himself that his position as treasurer deserved remuneration. He therefore helped himself to money which was not his. Ultimately it was this love of gain which wrecked his soul. As the end of Christ's pilgrimage approached, Judas became increasingly suspicious that something had gone wrong. The promised kingdom seemed to be receding; the Master had grown sad and thoughtful; the enemies were becoming jubilant. Judas noted all these things, and realized that Christ's way and his own way were not parallel paths. When the Lord failed to take advantage of the delirious welcome afforded by the crowd as He rode into Jerusalem, Judas knew that tragedy loomed on the horizon.

The Way of Guilt

At an eastern feast, the offering of a sop by the host is

JUDAS . who gambled and lost his soul recognized as a mark of favour. Almost the last thing Jesus did for Judas was to offer friendship. Judas replied with the traitor-kiss. When the betrayer felt the coins in his hand, he smiled. They were better than nothing! Yes, he was getting out while he was able! He went his own way. Poor man! With remorse playing havoc with his conscience; with his coins rudely scattered over the floor; with his hopes and plans completely broken, a poor tormented man, he went out to commit suicide. And of his final destiny there can be no doubt. Jesus prayed and said, ". . . those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12. Certain eminent teachers have declared that Judas was Satan's imitation of the Son of God. They have drawn attention to the fact that the same title-" The son of perdition" is also used of the antichrist (2 Thess. 2: 3). Mention has also been made of the fact that of Judas alone it is said ". . . from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1:25). Here are great mysteries; but one thing is certainly clear. Judas had staked his all; he was a reckless gambler. He lost because he had not the ability to see God's way was better than his own.

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