

## What's in a Name?

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The top name given to baby boys in 2024 was "Noah". The top name given to baby girls in 2024 was "Olivia". The top name given to baby boys in 1960 was "Michael". The top name given to baby girls in 1960 was "Lisa". "Mary" was second and David / John were second and third for boys. All of these names sound like good names. Some of these names come from the Bible. Mary is a good name for a girl since Mother Mary comes quickly to mind. My name is David and my parents thought that was a good name because of King David in the Bible. However, there is one name in the Bible I've never heard someone called. That name is Judas. Have you ever known someone with the name of Judas? Johnny Cash sang the song "A Boy Named Sue" in 1969. In that song, his father names him sue and he grows up fighting people because people make fun of his name. Judas is one of those names that no one wants. I would rather be called Sue than Judas. We would put the name Judas in the same category as satan and Jezebel – hated names. However, Judas plays a key role in the Easter story. So, today we will spend some time looking into this person with the name "Judas".

Judas at one time was just a regular name. In Hebrew, it meant "praised". There is other men in the Bible named Judas or has another name added on. One of the disciples of Jesus was named Judas of James. The disciple we'll be looking at was named Judas Iscariot. It was thought "Iscariot" means "a man of Kerioth" in Hebrew which would mean Judas was from the south part of Judah. Judas was the only non-Galilean of the twelve disciples. That's about all we know about the background of Judas Iscariot before his time with Jesus. He was picked by Jesus. Let's turn in John 6: 60 where Jesus is telling His disciples about them having to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the savior and many disciples turn away from Jesus and this is where we'll come in, "Even his disciples said, 'This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?' Jesus knew within himself that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what will think if you see me, the Son of Man, return to heaven again? It is the Spirit

who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But some of you don't believe me.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) Then he said, 'That is what I meant when I said that people can't come to me unless the Father brings them to me.' At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, 'Are you going to leave, too?' Simon Peter replied, 'Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God.' Then Jesus said, 'I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil.' He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would betray him. (NLT)"

Jesus picked the Twelve and He already knew Judas was being directed by the devil. So, the question we need to ask is why did Jesus pick a disciple He knew would betray Him? We just got done interviewing several people for two PT Ranger positions. We had one application where the person had about ten jobs in the last two years. That was a red flag, so their application was put to the side and they were not called for an interview. We only wanted the best applicants. Jesus already knew the hearts of the Twelve and yet, Jesus picked Judas. Peter gives us the answer in 1 Peter 1: 18 – 20, "For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. (NLT)" Peter would state the same thing in Acts 2: 22 – 24 during his first sermon as a church leader, "God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But you followed God's prearranged plan. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to the cross and murdered him. However, God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life again, for death could not keep him in its grip. (NLT)" Jesus' whole life on this earth was put in motion before the world began. God knew what would happen with the people He created. God knew they would need Jesus to die on the cross

for their sin. Jesus had picked His disciples because they were part of the plan. Jesus picked Judas because Judas was part of the plan of God. This wasn't by accident. Jesus already knew Judas would betray Him and He knew Judas was in line with satan. Jesus was just following the Will of His Father. However, there is a bigger picture to this.

Let's turn to John 13: 1. Here, we have John describing the last meal Jesus would have with His disciples – the Last Supper. All four Gospels have the Last Supper event. John states this, "Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He now showed the disciples the full extent of his love. (NLT)" It's hard enough for us to grasp Jesus picking Judas even knowing that Judas would betray Him, but we have to realize Jesus loved His disciples, even Judas. It appears the other disciples didn't think Judas was a bad guy. In John 13: 21 – 22, we read, "Now Jesus was in great anguish of spirit, and he exclaimed, 'The truth is, one of you will betray me!' The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. (NLT)" None of the disciples figured it was Judas. To them, Judas was just like them. If they had known, they would all have looked at Judas as the guilty party. However, Jesus knew and He loved all the disciples.

We see the proof of His love by some of His actions during meal and communion. First, Jesus was eager for this meal and communion with His disciples. In Luke's version of the Last Supper, Jesus states this in chapter 22, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (ESV)" Jesus "earnestly desired" to have a meal and communion with them. I really believe Jesus enjoys taking part in communion with us through His Spirit just like He did with His disciples. Jesus included Judas in this last meal and communion. Now, there is some argument over when Judas left the meal to do the devil's work, but Jesus didn't exclude Judas from the meal. Most of us would have. If we know somebody that has stabbed us in the back, we wouldn't invite them to any of our functions. Jesus wanted to have this last meal with His disciples just like He wants to be part of our communion now. This communion is only a foretaste of something better yet to come.

Then, Jesus would take His love up a higher level by getting up in the middle of the meal and He starts to wash the disciples' feet to show them how to be a servant to the people. John tells us the story in John 12: 3 – 11, <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. <sup>4</sup> So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, <sup>5</sup> and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

<sup>6</sup> When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

<sup>8</sup> "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet,<sup>[c]</sup> to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." <sup>11</sup> For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." (Biblegateway.com)

Jesus makes the statement again about someone is going to betray Him and Jesus still washes the feet of all the disciples. He didn't treat Judas any different. Jesus also mentions to the group that someone is going to betray Him several times. Judas is among the group, so he hears Jesus' warnings. Mark tells us this in Mark 14: 17 – 21, <sup>17</sup> In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> As they were at the table<sup>[a]</sup> eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me."

<sup>19</sup> Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one?"

<sup>20</sup> He replied, "It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> For the Son of Man<sup>[b]</sup> must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it

will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!" (NLT, Biblegateway.com). So, Jesus makes sure that everyone knows what is going to happen including Judas. It would have been better if the person had not been born. Jesus is giving a warning here. In fact, Matthew tells us in Matthew 26: 23 – 25, "<sup>23</sup> He replied, "One of you who has just eaten from this bowl with me will betray me. <sup>24</sup> For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!"

<sup>25</sup> Judas, the one who would betray him, also asked, "Rabbi, am I the one?"

And Jesus told him, "You have said it." (NLT – Biblegateway.com)

Jesus tells Judas the truth about what is going to happen. Judas had already agreed with the religious leaders earlier to betray Jesus. I really believe Jesus is giving Judas time to repent even though Jesus already knows Judas' heart. This is hard for us to understand with our human minds. Jesus already knew Judas would fully betray Him, but Jesus still washes Judas' feet and gives warning several times about what would happen to Himself and Judas. Even though the plan was in motion, Judas still had a choice to make. He didn't have to complete the evil mission to betray Jesus. Jesus gave Judas every chance to repent from this evil deed. John adds this onto this story from Matthew, "<sup>21</sup> Now Jesus was deeply troubled,<sup>[a]</sup> and he exclaimed, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!"

<sup>22</sup> The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. <sup>23</sup> The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, "Who's he talking about?" <sup>25</sup> So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus responded, "It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl." And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup> When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, "Hurry and do what you're going to do." <sup>28</sup> None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant.

What we read here is that Judas had a choice to make when Jesus gave him the bread. Judas knew why Jesus gave him the bread and he made the choice to take and eat it. When he did, satan entered into Judas to help him finish the evil plan

of satan. Judas made the choice and Jesus had given him the opportunity to change even though Jesus already knew Judas would make the final choice to betray Him. This is love beyond measure on Jesus' part. Plus, Jesus gives Judas the ok to continue with the plan. This tells us Jesus was in charge of the whole Easter event. Jesus allowed Judas to continue with the betrayal. Again, this is love beyond measure.

I believe Jesus gave Judas every chance of repentance even though Jesus already knew the choice he would make. During this same meal, Jesus would reveal to Peter about the decision he would have to make in Luke 22: 31 – 32, <sup>31</sup> “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.” (NLT – Biblegateway.com). This would be about when Peter would deny knowing Jesus three times. Peter would have to make choices too and he would fail. However, Peter would weep bitter tears of repentance and he would be restored. Judas never repents and Matthew tells us in chapter 27 that Judas felt remorse, but wouldn't repent to Jesus. He would hang himself. Luke would add that his body would fall down and burst open in Acts 1.

So, the Last Supper is part of the love story of Easter. We sometimes treat communion just as a ritual, but it is actually a love feast where we eat and drink the bread and juice not just in remembrance of Jesus, but also to enjoy His love now through the elements. His Spirit works through the bread and juice. I believe Jesus enjoys seeing us taking part in communion in the right way. During this communion time, let's give thanks for the love Jesus demonstrated during the Last Supper, but also give thanks for the love He shows us daily. Plus, let's ask boldly that Jesus will help us to love Him back as faithfully as He loves us.