

Judas, the son of perdition

Neil Short, April 2015

Was Judas *predestined* to be lost? I am about to support the position that Judas was not *predestined* to be lost. The people involved with the events leading up to the Lord's crucifixion acted in their roles as they chose and those eventual actions became reality as those actors made choices. We begin by acknowledging that a passage within the Lord's priestly prayer seems to support Judas' destiny to hell.

When I was with them I kept them safe and watched over them in your name that you have given me. Not one of them was lost except the one destined for destruction, so that the scripture could be fulfilled (John 17:12, NET). King James Version calls Judas "the son of perdition."

Jesus seems to be claiming here that keeping his apostles or that losing one (Judas) was a fulfillment of scripture. We must take care to not place more burden upon a passage than it is intended to support. John 17:12 supports the truth that Judas' loss was a fulfillment of scripture. It does not require that Judas' loss was a fulfillment of a prophecy directly about Judas. I know of only a few passages that are quoted in other places with the claim that Judas "fulfilled" scripture. One is quoted in Acts 1:20.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and 'His office let another take' (RSV).

The verse quotes from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. Psalm 69:25 speaks of David's enemies in the plural, not singular as Peter quoted it. Peter modified it a bit to apply to Judas. Peter's use of the scripture was not to show that Judas was spoken about by David; but rather, something David said in Psalm 69:25 can be repeated in application to Judas. He is quoting it much like somebody today may quote a famous speech and apply the quote to a contemporary event. *Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.* He is applying David's words without applying David's specific meaning. David's situation regarding his enemies paralleled the apostles' situation regarding Judas. Peter applied Old Testament language and context to a new situation.

Peter also merged Psalm 69:25 with Psalm 109:8 to bolster his proposal, with classical language, that Judas' apostolic vacancy needed to be filled. Psalm 109:8 is about an unrighteous judge, probably a priest, who tolerated mistreatment of the poor.

Jesus similarly applied Psalm 41:9, about the psalmist's betrayal by a close friend, to his current situation with Judas in John 13:18.

I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me' (RSV).

A reading of the Psalm reveals the passage is about neither Jesus nor Judas. In the same Psalm, verse 4 clearly does not apply to Jesus.

As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against thee" (Psalm 41:4, RSV)!

Thus, there seems to be no Old Testament prophecy directly about Judas or about his relationship to Jesus. To put it another way, when some New Testament event "fulfills" a Scripture, it *does not require* that the fulfilled Scripture is a *direct prophecy* of the event. Rather, "fulfills" often means, "while it applied to a completely different situation, the language can be adapted and applied in this new situation."

We now return to our original question: Was Judas *predestined* to hell? Let us examine the evidence.

Judas left everything to follow Jesus (Mark 10:28=Matthew 19:27).

Judas was given authority to cast out demons, heal the sick and preach the gospel (Matthew 10:1-27). Judas' name was written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

He had a throne in heaven upon which he would judge Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30).

Although Jesus called Judas a devil (John 6:70) he also called Peter "Satan" (Matthew 16:23).

(Incidentally, "devil" is a Greek word, *diabolos*, that means "slanderer." The word is translated that way in 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3; and possibly ought to be translated "slander" in John 6:70.)

Even Peter lost his salvation at one point (Mark 8:38; Matthew 10:33; cf, Matthew 26:34). Peter's restoration to salvation required conversion, or repentance (Luke 22:31-32).

Judas began his apostolic vocation on the right foot; but somewhere along the line he took a wrong turn, embraced a selfish attitude and hatched a plot against Jesus. The Scriptures report in John 6:70-71 and 13:10-11, 26 that Jesus was aware of Judas' plans.

Judas was not *predestined* for hell; but he became so destined by his own choices. He destined himself by embracing sickness in his heart. Another example of this kind of destiny is seen in Acts 13:48. *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers* (NRSV).

The reason the Acts 13:48 Gentiles were disposed (destined) to eternal life is because they were receptive to the gospel. *As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath* (Acts 13:42, RSV). Earlier, the Jews disrupted Paul's sermon. He explained that the election, to be enjoyed by the Gentiles in just a few minutes, belonged to the Jews; but the Jews rejected it and thus were forfeiting their election. *And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46, RSV).

Thus, in those few days, the Jews in that town prepared their own hearts to be unreceptive to the gospel and they disposed (destined) themselves against eternal life. Clearly, on some later occasion, those same Jews might have chosen to be receptive and then oriented themselves towards a better destiny. The choice of those Jews made a particular Scripture apply to them.

We make choices too; and those choices can make Scriptures describing God's blessing be about us; but choices may also make Scriptures about God's wrath be about us. We too should examine ourselves to determine if our hearts are receptive to the gospel. We must heed Paul's warning that the Jews ignored.

Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:

'Look, you scoffers!

Be amazed and perish,

for in your days I am doing a work,

a work that you will never believe, even if

someone tells you!"

(Acts 13:40-41, NRSV).