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## Dual Allegiance (DA) and Religious Syncretism (RS): Clamor for Material Wealth, Love for Power, Position, and Misplaced Priorities in Following Jesus; The Case of Judas Iscariot in Betraying His Master

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concepts of DA and RS through the account of Judas Iscariot's life, as exemplified in his three and a half years of following Jesus Christ as a purported disciple who turned betrayer to his master. The study illuminates how the pursuit of power, fame, position, material wealth, and misplaced priorities in following Jesus are a revelation of an unconverted heart. This investigation drew from various scholarly interpretations of Biblical texts and analysis of historical and cultural information, which assist in revealing the life of Judas Iscariot and the effects his actions had on his spirituality, those around him, and the Christian Church at large. The immediate context delves into the personal circumstances and decisions of Judas Iscariot in his schemed betrayal of his master, shedding light on his struggle with his faith, loyalty, and ambitions in positions, power, material wealth and misconceptions (of) misplaced priorities, his short sightedness and in contradiction to Jesus' mission on earth. The study of Judas Iscariot's contributions to the narrative and theological fabric of Christianity also offers insights into the enduring relevance of contemporary discussions on faith, identity, and morality. This also gives contextualized application to current issues, which simply reveal that all the clamour for worldly wealth, the pleasures of this body of flesh, and the pride of this life are futile, and soon they will come to an end with the world itself: hence giving everyone a challenge to reasonably weigh how their individual life would finally end based on choices made in their individual experiences.

**Keywords:** Clamour for political positions, dual allegiance, religious syncretism, materialism, wealth, power.



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## INTRODUCTION

Dual Allegiance (DA), according to Kraft (2005), is when Christians double up by going back to their pre-Christian ways of dependence in their daily challenges of unfamiliar origin. DA comes into play, and I quickly add that as they do this, they still profess to follow Christ.

DA refers to the phenomenon where an individual or group of individuals hold concurrent loyalty to two or more distinct entities, which can be nations, cultures, religions, or ideologies. This divided loyalty often results in conflicts of interest and challenges in prioritizing commitments, especially when the values or demands of these entities will definitely conflict. In a religious context, DA can manifest as a struggle between adherence to one's faith and the pressures or allures of external, often secular, influences such as political power, wealth, and societal or cultural acceptance. According to Kraft and Kraft (1993), when Christians hold to cultic powers.

Religious Syncretism (RS) describes the blending or amalgamation of different religious beliefs, practices, and traditions. Sanou (2018) expounds further that this fusion can occur when cultures come into contact and exchange ideas, leading to the creation of new religious expressions that incorporate elements from multiple faith systems. Syncretism can be observed in rituals, deities, ethical beliefs, and cosmologies, among other aspects. While syncretism can foster understanding and tolerance among diverse religious communities, it may also provoke controversy and resistance from purists within those different beliefs.

The quest for power, the allure of fame, the gravitation towards elevated social standing, and the accumulation of material wealth are threads intricately woven into the fabric of human history. These elements are more vividly brought to life in the scriptural accounts of Judas Iscariot, a figure who epitomizes the potential and peril of great fortune and prominence. This study juggles with the infamy of Judas Iscariot, examining the phenomena of DA and RS as demonstrated in his recorded life experience as we know it in the gospels' accounts.

Judas Iscariot, a purported disciple and an apostle who walked with the embodiment of divine wisdom, is remembered primarily for succumbing to the most

infamous act of betrayal, motivated, as some suggest, and it is indeed Biblically documented for his greed and clamour for material gain and power of position among the rest of his fellow disciples and to a more extreme extent he thought himself more informed than Jesus and that he could advise Jesus on what to do in manoeuvring Jesus's way to kingship (White, 2001).

This paper explores the complexities of this account, endeavouring to unearth insightful human tendencies in the face of wealth and influence and their impact not only on the concerned person's spirituality but also that of the whole Christian fraternity. Judas Iscariot's narrative offers profound insights into the human condition, especially in terms of the moral and spiritual dilemmas faced by individuals in need of positions, power, and influence, most of which land God's people into DA and RS and hence forgetting God, who should be given undivided loyalty. This causes a problem not only for the concerned individual but also for the entire group of Godly people who were called by His Name in their time, and the lessons are still relevant today. But what history tells us about Judas Iscariot is of essence, and it is documented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Documentation of Judas Iscariot

According to Bart (1999), it has been generally accepted that Judas Iscariot was one of The Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ and that he actually was among the said group, although the Bible is silent and does not explicitly mention or show how Jesus literally called Judas Iscariot as He called the rest. In view of the historic agreement of the presence of Judas Iscariot, this has not gone without being challenged by Stein (2009). However, the challenged historical existence of Judas Iscariot has been responded to as it has already been documented in all three synoptic Gospel accounts (Mark 6:6; Matt 10:5-1; Luke 9:1). In this regard, we will get into why the article of Judas Iscariot in relation to involvement in DA and RS which gives us a glimpse of how these relate to his unfortunate betraying of his Master: Despite the gospels narrative of how Judas had an active role among The Twelve (Mark 6:6; Matt 10:5-1; Luke 9:1).

### Judas Iscariot Through the Eyes of Theologians

In a more contemporary discourse, figures like Bishop N.T. Wright offers a nuanced understanding of Judas's

motivations, taking into account the socio-political turmoil of the time and the possible zealot's hopes Judas may have held (Stauffer, 2010). These interpretations often view Judas's betrayal as a complex act that cannot be boiled down to simple greed or evil but must be seen within the broader narrative of Jewish expectation and the revolutionary climate of 1st-century Palestine. While Wright has a right perspective of Judas's act, it is important to emphasize that Judas lost focus of the mission of Jesus and, therefore, syncretically thought to forcefully grab power through the guise of discipleship (Stauffer, 2010). Eventually, the whole plot backfired because his misunderstanding of the Messiah's mission and methods contradicted, hence costing his life and the loss of the money he thought to cunningly acquire. Matthew's documented message probably confirms this misguided perspective of Judas's worldview of the Messianic Kingdom, which was probably triggered by Jesus' statement to the disciples about the judgment. Gubar (2009) confirms this thinking process of Judas Iscariot and, of course, the rest of the Twelve. However, Judas was keen on being in a more proactive power leadership position in that particular situation of the expected Kingdom after Jesus conquered the Romans (emphasis supplied).

### **Biblical Texts on Power, Position, Riches, and Wealth: Moral and Spiritual Implications.**

#### **The Ambivalence of Wealth in Scripture**

The Bible offers a nuanced view of power and wealth, acknowledging their potential for both good and evil. In the Old Testament, Abraham and Job are examples of righteous men blessed not only with material prosperity but also with fame, which goes with the positions each of them held in their individual societies, suggesting that wealth, in itself, positions in society as well, are not condemned. However, numerous passages caution against the moral dangers associated with the pursuit and possession of wealth and riches, more specifically, on the love of money as the beginning of all evils, which can be used for selfish motives (1 Tim 6:10).

Ecclesiastes, traditionally attributed to an older Solomon reflecting on his life, wealth, position of power, opulence, and fame, are all portrayed as ultimately meaningless without a right relationship with God. "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity", and they will never have enough of it (Ecl

5:10). This reflection captures the emptiness that material wealth can bring when it becomes an end in itself. Equally, positions without guided leadership in the fear of the Lord will always eat the concerned up, including their families. Furthermore, money and wealth, positions and power, continue to be an allurements in DA and RS. Solomon continues to warn on wealth even as we endeavour to come to terms with money, wealth, power, and positions. The Book of Proverbs, also associated with Solomon, is replete with aphorisms on wealth and power. Proverbs warn against ill-gotten gains: "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it" (Prov 13:11). It advocates for a balanced view of wealth, recognizing it as a potential blessing but warning against its ability to ensnare one's heart away from God and idolizing it.

#### **The Teachings of Jesus on Material Wealth**

In the New Testament, Jesus offers direct teachings on the subject. The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) warns against storing earthly wealth without being "rich toward God." The Sermon on the Mount teaches the impossibility of serving two masters, God and money, for "you will hate the one and love the other" (Matthew 6:24). These teachings suggest that wealth can easily become a competing allegiance, one that can distract and divert from spiritual fidelity.

#### **The Apostle Paul on the Love of Money**

The Apostle Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, starkly warns that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils" (1 Timothy 6:10). This passage does not condemn money itself but identifies the love of it, the overwhelming desire for material wealth, as a source of moral and spiritual downfall. I see this as a way of making an idol out of the love of money, and wealth is the one thing which brings condemnation for the love of both money and wealth because it becomes an idol in an individual's heart and mind and, consequently, removes Jesus from the heart and one's life. This violates commandments one to four of the Decalogue, and consequently, the love of God has forever been compromised, mounting to DA and RS.

#### **James on Wealth and Humility**

The Epistle of James offers a critique of wealth that oppresses, stating; "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you" (James 5:1).

James calls for humility and compassion, highlighting the responsibilities that come with wealth and the importance of using it for righteous purposes in advancement to the Kingdom of God.

### **Revelation and the Dangers of Complacency**

The Book of Revelation contains a message to the church in Laodicea, which had become complacent in its wealth, feeling "rich" and "in need of nothing." The rebuke is severe: "You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Although this text deals with metaphorical images and statements which do not translate literally, however, the statements can literally be used to mean exactly the material wealth and riches in a defined explanation or application. From this perspective, we can use it to show the dangers of self-trust and overconfidence, which eventually become deceptive in anyone's thinking. This passage serves as a warning that material wealth can lead to a false sense of security and spiritual blindness.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Judas: A Complex Character**

Judas's character is scrutinized through his interactions and the few actions attributed to him in the Gospels. Notably, Piper (2021) points out Judas's criticism of Mary's use of expensive perfume to anoint Jesus' feet, which he argued could have been sold to benefit the poor, which reveals a complex figure. The Gospel of John accuses him of dishonesty, alleging that he was a thief who stole from the common purse. This accusation introduces a significant paradox: Judas, an appointed keeper of the disciples' funds, is implicated in petty theft, even as he walked with Jesus, who preached integrity and selflessness (White, 2001). He also conspired with the temple authorities on how much he was willing to take for the price of his Saviour—thirty pieces of silver (White, 2021). The third instance that revealed his earthly bound mentality is the offence he took with Jesus's mention of eating his flesh and drinking his blood—from this time on, Judas took offence because he did not like such kind of a kingdom (White, 2021). Judas floated the project idea of making Jesus king by force. This was during the miracle of feeding five thousand with loaves of bread (White, 2021). Piper (2021) observes that satisfaction with money corrupts our souls. He further says that Judas's hypocrisy was revealed during the anointing of Jesus's feet by Mary Magdalene in Simon's house during the feast. Note how

he remarks on the wastage and his suggestions that the perfume should have been sold and the proceeds used to help the poor while, in actual fact, he intends to help himself from the kitty.

### **A Mysterious Beginning**

The Gospels provide scant details about the life of Judas Iscariot before he became one of the twelve disciples. Reinhartz (2007) opines that this might have been an assumption by many that Judas is known as a traitor and betrayer, and as such, they probably failed to detail his account even when the Gospels were being compiled way after the death of Jesus Christ and that of Judas Iscariot. Additionally, it is important to note that there is no direct mention of Judas as having personally been called by Jesus to follow Him as a disciple. Jesus affirms this by saying, "Didn't I call you twelve and one of you is a devil" (John 6:70-71). The assumption is possible because Jesus never called Judas because it would beat all logic to call him a devil in His disciples' company and finally knowing quite well that the same would betray Him. Many arguments have cropped up on this particular issue, causing some scholars to sympathize and side with Judas and conclude that Jesus did what He already knew was going to happen, and thus, Judas should not be faulted. While this observation can be sincere to the thinkers, they should be reminded that each individual has a self-will, in which case God does not interfere with it or push anyone to do the will of God. Anybody has free will to choose, either good or bad, and get ready to bear the results and the consequences. The truth of this matter is embedded in free will and personal choice. (Rice, 1985), however, cautions that in such circumstances, it must be underscored that freedom requires more than the absence of coercion. It also requires the presence of genuine alternatives, as personal experience indicates, and this is the case with Judas. He had several options, but he chose what he liked against other better choices or, rather, other alternative choices, he chose to betray his master.

Matthew mentions Judas during the negotiation on how much the high priests would give him in exchange for delivering Jesus to them (Matt 26:14-16). Ryan (2019) asserts that Judas is used as a bit player in the drama, and it is the first place where Judas's motive of greed is introduced. Mark has talked about Judas in four instances only as one of The Twelve (Mark 3:13-19, Mark 14:20). Mark outrightly informs the readers at the

onset about the events to occur about the betrayal and consequential killing by the high priest when he reports what Jesus had told them about Him being killed; Fredriksen (1999) also confirms this early information when Mark started informing the readers on the sad events which were to befall Jesus Christ in the hands of the chief priests and the teachers of the law in Jerusalem. The New Testament does not explicitly detail how or when Jesus called Judas to follow him, a mystery shared with other disciples like Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas, son of James. This lack of detail has led to much speculation and theological debate over the nature of Judas's calling and his understanding of his role among the disciples. While the major question is how Judas found himself in the disciples' group, Jesus' statement on Judas and the rest in regards to their calling is very telling, "Did I not choose you twelve and one of you is the devil." said Jesus (John 6:70). White (2001) says that, "it was exactly one year before the betrayal when Jesus said these words. This meant that Jesus exonerated the rest of the ambiguous names of the disciples whose record of explicit and direct call is not clear to us and categorically pointed to Judas as the one whom He meant to be the devil.

Furthermore, John cleared all the air about the other unmentioned names in the direct calling when he categorically mentions Judas as the one mentioned to be the devil by Jesus, as earlier mentioned. When this is clear as it has been put, another glaring challenge pops up: if or precisely because Jesus knew all this about Judas, and He knew that Judas was to betray Him and that this was to fulfil the prophecy according to God's word, and that Judas was to cooperate with the accusers to the painful end of the cross why could He not do something about it? Or had He already done something? In response, (Rice, 1985) guides as follows: because freedom is the absence of outside compulsion, therefore something that flows naturally from the constitution of a being is free. Therefore, the concept of freedom harmonizes with the idea of absolute divine knowledge. For if freedom is merely the absence of external compulsion, a creature's future actions may be entirely predicted by anyone sufficiently acquainted with that creature. Possessing exhaustive knowledge of every person's inner workings, God would thus know everything everyone would ever do. This is how Jesus, having knowledge of all present prevailing

circumstances and having the behavioural knowledge and acquaintances with Judas's behaviour, could and indeed did know exactly who the devil was and how the devil was manoeuvring and manipulating circumstances and people towards a given end result. Further, (Rice, 1985) concludes by saying, "However, according to this way of thinking, the complete predictability of one's actions does not negate personal freedom as long as the actions flow from internal and not external causes. Absolute foreknowledge thus arises from God's exhaustive knowledge of the present. For if the course of future events follows entirely from factors that are already present, then anyone who exhaustively knows the present can predict the future with infallible accuracy.

Consequently, since God does know the present exhaustively, He knows infallibly all that will ever happen." This is why Jesus had all knowledge of every event that was about to take place, His Omniscient notwithstanding. But even with this, Jesus has full knowledge of every present situation, for He is, "the same yesterday, today and forever;" (Heb 13:8) and being The Great I AM, He is (Exod 3:14), it gives Him all the audacity to absolutely know the present and thus able to analyze things absolutely with infallibility. This would further cause some other question: With this in mind, why then does Jesus not dictate to the concerned or even tell them explicitly what to do or choose? The appropriate answer will be, then, this will not be freedom, which does not have free will but rather induced choice, hence ceasing to be freedom and, by extension, denies God or Jesus Who He Is because He doesn't coerce and in this case, if He influenced or induced some decision of given outcome they will have denied themselves. Milton emphasizes this more, and he says in part, "... God's foreknowledge of the future does not make Him responsible for what happens. As God says of the Angelic rebels in the book *Paradise Lost*, "If I foreknew, Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault, which had no less proved certain un foreknown" (Milton, 1949).

The scholarly debate about his (Judas's) surname, "Iscairiot," which likely indicates that he came from Kerioth, a town in Judea, suggesting he was the only Judean among the predominantly Galilean group of disciples is a possibility; and probably this geographical distinction may have isolated him from the others,

contributing to his eventual betrayal. This debate has been quelled by two authors whom I have found very objective in their observations; probably, the Gospel authors were aware of the meaning and, therefore, did not find the need to restate the obvious. Alternatively, it may be that 35 to 65 years after Judas's death, people no longer knew what it meant (Ehrman, 2006). (Taylor 2010) asserts that the lexicon does not have any word which gives meaning to the name Iscariot. It can be satisfying to go with the Gospel authors who were clear to distinguish among the numerous other figures named "Judas" who are mentioned throughout the New Testament, none of whom are portrayed negatively (Oropeza, 2010; Gubar, 2009; Stanford, 2015). These positive figures named Judas are mentioned in the New Testament and include the prophet Judas Barsabbas (Acts 15:22–33). Jesus's brother Jude (Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55; Jude 1), and the apostle Judas, the son of James (Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13; John 14:22). Oropeza (2010) confirms the Biblical record affirming their clean names as opposed to the one of Judas Iscariot the one who betrayed Jesus.

The Judas who betrayed Jesus is recorded clearly, including what followed his betrayal of Jesus Christ (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). Despite the lack of Biblical information about Judas Iscariot, he has lived an expansive life on the highways and byways of the Christian tradition. Judas became the stereotypical wicked man whom the devil made even more wicked: "The association of Judas with the grotesque became a staple of Christian preaching and teaching" (Boys, 2013). Judas Iscariot has been portrayed as "greedy or avaricious, qualities associated with Jews in anti-Semitic discourse from the medieval period onward and still evident today" (Reinhartz, 2005). In medieval literature, Judas became ingrained in European consciousness. Braswell (1995) further tells us that the fourteenth century seems to have become the high-water mark for interest in Judas when "references to Christ's betrayer permeated everyday life." This was a testament, as earlier mentioned in the introduction of this article, that Judas is almost known to every Christian and even in the secular world, thus popularly known for having betrayed his master.

### **Judas Iscariot and the Perils of Materialism: The Betrayal of Trust**

The life of Judas Iscariot is an introduction to the paradox of a person whose very close relationship with the source of power, life, wisdom, position, and all manner of blessings could yet lose the opportunity to become moulded to the image of God of heaven, and to become an heir of all the blessings accorded to the followers of Jesus Christ. Albeit that, Judas was not ready to surrender himself to Christ, renounce "self", and allow his spiritual eyes to be opened and to behold the great opportunity of Jesus' great purpose of being in the world of sin for the purpose of redemption of the fallen mankind.

Judas Iscariot, the figure synonymous with the betrayal of his master among the twelve disciples, is familiar to many in Christian circles. Judas can only be associated by coming from a modest and humble background, as can be witnessed by the Bible for having been among the disciples, although his direct calling by Jesus is not explicitly pronounced Biblically in all the four Gospels (Acts 4:13). Yet he played a crucial role in the events leading to the brutal killing by execution through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ following his decision to betray Jesus for thirty silver coins (Matt 26:14-16). This act immortalized him as a symbol of treachery, motivated by materialism, clamour for power and position, selfishness and greed, lack of prioritized mission goals and contradiction of political earthly ambitions versus the Heavenly Kingdom's vision. All these combined can be summarized as a simple DA life and an RS confusion in his life of following Jesus. Additionally, this can also be associated with having come from an unconverted and unconsecrated heart from which all these worldly aspirations emanate, blurring the mind and preventing him from seeing the heavenly imperishable rewarding things. Some scholars, such as Hebron (2006), observe that the character of Judas painted a picture of Christianity's way of looking at the Jews in their treacherous ways of attitude. This looks true if Hebron were alluding to Matthew's account (Matt 27:9-10). Probably, this is why some dramatists think that Judas was a pseudonym, which never was but was meant to just be an opposing influence to the Jews in Jesus's movement as a betrayer (Maccoby, 1992). Luke, on the other hand, mentions Judas four times (Luke 6:16, Luke 22:3-6, Luke 22:47-48). All through, Judas shows greed for money. This is in line with what we have mentioned as a cause of DS and RS. Notice how Judas is pictured in each of the four instances where he is

mentioned. Again, never mentioned to have called Jesus one of the Twelve, but rather, we just find him among them (Luke 6:12-16, Luke 22:3-6; 22:3). Finally, John's gospel begins by asserting that the devil had already entered Judas Iscariot's heart to betray Jesus. John paints the true negative picture of Judas Iscariot, including his thiefling behaviour in the purse of the disciples' expenses. John, however, does not tell us that Judas was called by Jesus, but rather, he continues to remain among the Twelve (John 6:70). The paper ventures into these discoveries from where we find him in the group of the disciples of Jesus to his unfortunate tragic, shameful death on a tree where he took his life by hanging himself. But the Bible gives a hint in the gospel of Luke (Luke 9:57-62). White (2021) mentions the person as Judas Iscariot, and she explains who Judas really looked like.

### **The Unanswered Question**

A perplexing aspect of Judas's story is why Jesus, who possessed insight into the hearts of his followers, chose to keep Judas close, even with knowledge of his eventual betrayal. This decision underscores a profound theme in Christian theology: the coexistence of divine omniscience with human free will. Judas's presence among the disciples and his role in the crucifixion narrative reflects the enigmatic balance between predestination and personal choice within the Christian faith.

Jesus's decision not to expel Judas may also highlight themes of forgiveness, redemption, and the inclusivity of Jesus's message. By allowing Judas to remain, Jesus demonstrated an unwavering commitment to his teachings on love, forgiveness, and the potential for redemption, even in the face of betrayal. White (2021) tells us that Jesus kept Judas in the group without exposing him or expelling him from the group for several reasons. He gave him an opportunity for repentance, which he squandered. Additionally, He did not want him to go out there and spoil the work of evangelism and cause unnecessary challenges before the appointed time. He was allowed to stay so that his character could remain an object lesson to all the followers of Christ in future generations. Notice the opportunities accorded to Judas for repentance and change of heart and attitude, but he squandered all of them, causing his heart to be hardened, his eyes to be blinded, and his mind beclouded until the door of mercy

closed on his face without repentance; hence dying miserably by taking his own life.

### **Materialism: A Corrosive Influence**

Materialism, the desire for wealth and possessions, has the power to corrode spiritual integrity and moral judgment. For Judas, the tangible security that money offered overshadowed the spiritual kingdom Jesus spoke of—one not of this world. The choice to betray Jesus can be seen as a tragic misalignment of priorities, where the immediate gratification of material desires took precedence over eternal considerations. Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) assert that greed for money, wealth, materialism, and clamour for positions of power lead to the downfall of leaders, and I quickly add that, not only so but in the end, this greed and clamour cause death itself to the concerned and also these vices negatively affect families of the concerned especially when these cravings are done against the backdrops of backstabbing, political manoeuvres, schemes and all craftiness. According to Schreier (2003), Christianity and, by extension, Jesus and the kingdom that he was advocating are too abstract, and Judas wanted a tangible kingdom which could offer what he was looking for: power, position, material wealth and full of affluence. However, the one Jesus Christ was advocating was vengeful and always looked insubordinate, powerless, and unsatisfying.

### **The Ambiguity of Motivation**

While traditional interpretations emphasize greed as the central motive, some scholars suggest that Judas's betrayal may have stemmed from more complex motives, including political disillusionment or a misguided attempt to force Jesus' hand in establishing a temporal kingdom. Nonetheless, the act of exchanging the Messiah for material wealth stands as a cautionary tale of valuing the finite over the infinite, the material over the spiritual. Note: No one can serve two masters. . . (Matt 6:24).

### **The Consequences of Materialism**

The fallout from Judas's decision was catastrophic not only for the trajectory of Jesus' earthly ministry but also for Judas himself. The Gospels recount that he was seized with remorse without repentance; he could not yield to anything because it followed his confession of having sold and betrayed innocent blood without turning back to God and returned the thirty pieces of silver coins

to the priests in the temple and went out crying, "release him he is innocent. . . " but it was already too late: His regrets could not undo the chain of events he had set in motion (Matt 27:3-5). The tragic end of Judas underscores the perilous path of allowing materialism to dictate one's actions, particularly when it comes to relationships and trust. He consequently went out crying, and because of the traumatic emotional torture he got himself into, he could not stand to see his master being hung on the cross. He went and hung himself. Consequently, he burst, and his carcass was devoured by dogs, a testament to the end result of political manoeuvres, greed for money, and clamour for position and power; these land the concerned into loss of the kingdom. It remains a testament that no one can serve two masters, mammon and God (Matt 6:24).

### **The Price of Betrayal**

The act of betraying Jesus with a kiss in exchange for a sum of money that was deemed the price of a slave has layers of symbolism that reverberate with themes of materialism and misplaced value. Judas, who held the money bag for Jesus and his followers, is described in the Gospels as one who dipped into these funds for his own use (John 12:6). His proximity to the teachings and miracles of Jesus did not immunize him against the lure of material wealth, suggesting a dissonance between his outward service and inner values. He had a double character, the inside living and the outside showing. Not even The Eleven understood Judas properly.

Judas was sincere in his original discipleship. Though Judas was sincere, he was not whole-hearted in his decision to follow Christ. Judas didn't leave everything to follow Jesus. Judas offered Jesus a divided allegiance. The love of money had been in his heart from earlier days, and thus, he was a double-minded man. No telling what kind of apostle he would have turned out to be had he not betrayed the Lord. White (2008) says that the mind must be transformed by receiving Jesus Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to indwell. This doesn't show in Judas's life.

Judas took his sin with him into the service of Christ. He was appointed as treasurer for the ministry of Jesus (John 12:6; 13:29). Judas's love and greed for money was apparent as he sold out Christ in an act of betrayal for 30 pieces of silver-the price of a slave gored or killed by an ox as recorded in Bible (Exod 21:32). He sold the

King of glory to ignominy and death (White, 2001). Judas was empowered with the other disciples to preach, heal the sick, and cast out devils (Mark 3:14-19). Yet his greed and desire for money caused him to commit the most horrendous betrayal of all time.

### **Reflections on the Role of Wealth**

Judas's story invites reflection on the role of wealth in our own lives. While money is a necessary part of the human experience, granting access to resources and opportunities, its pursuit can become detrimental when it disrupts our moral compass or becomes the central focus of our existence. In Judas's case, his association with the greatest spiritual leader of his time was not enough to quell the whisperings of material temptation, and this is a powerful reminder of the vigilance required of all of us to maintain ethical integrity in the face of material allure.

### **The Struggle with Dual Allegiance in Judas Iscariot**

Kraft (2005) and Kraft & Kraft (1993) opine that DA occurs when Christians go for other power sources to fill in what they don't get in Christianity. In this context, Judas had not been able to tap the power of contentment in his 'new life in Christ Jesus-if he ever had it at all' which Jesus Christ gives and had also given to the disciples then, forcing him to seek the same in money, position, and power for self-satisfaction. In the case of Judas, it becomes clear that he has not been converted. This means that he had not given his life to Jesus Christ for a new life and a new mission. In this new perspective, he should have changed his focus and perspective for this life, including all it offers, and instead focus on the heavenly and the eternal life in Jesus Christ, which would have saved him from DA. Bauer (2008) observes that preachers of the Gospel truth, together with the new believers, must learn to continually embrace the truth as it is both in the Bible and as it is exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ, Whom we have accepted as personal Savior, friend, and soon coming King. Further, (Bauer, 2008) says that we all need to live this truth in our daily lives as an influence on other non-believers.

Judas Iscariot's narrative, while it took place several years ago, converges on the theme of DA, a complex commitment to both spiritual duty and worldly gain. It reminds us that no one can serve two masters in this life (Kraft & Kraft, 1993). Judas, a disciple among the

Twelve, ultimately gives in to the temptation of financial gain at the expense of loyalty and faith. This story serves as a compelling study of the tension between the divine and the temporal, the sacred and the profane. Moreau (2001) also calls this mixture of Christian following and having an attitude like the one of Judas a syncretic life, which is not compatible with Christianity. This leaves any believing and converted Christian to make an informed decision on what to follow in regard to their intended ultimate focus in life. As Schreiter (2003) has it, it is true and unfortunate that because some of the old behaviours, activities, beliefs, and such are subject to stick even for centuries with Christianity, it is prudent to have more teachings for the new believers. Serious nurture and retention will be maintained until the new believers are able to influence others in their newfound faith with their daily living testimony. This is probably an additional way of dealing with DA and RS so that when believers have already received Salvation in Christ Jesus, the old behaviours and daily living become a new creation because Jesus offers a new heart and a new life in Him. On the contrary, Judas reached a critical juncture where the acquisition of wealth led to a rift between his spiritual obligations and his earthly desires, causing the sacrifice of his spiritual life and all the bountiful benefits it offers to the believers.

### **Apostleship, Spiritual Gifts Compromised**

Judas's Apostleship and divine gifts, which were intended to support and aid in the spreading of Jesus's teachings, were, however, compromised when they were paired with divided loyalties and mixing the sacred with the worldly. Saving faith is not the same as religious activity. Having been "purportedly chosen" from the beginning as an apostle, Judas became "destined" for apostasy and destruction, and by including him in his closest relations and by giving him power over unclean spirits and over diseases, Jesus shows us that religious associations and religious practices and miracle-working are no sure evidence of being born again. Matthew describes the choosing of the twelve (Matt 10:1–4). It names Judas and says Jesus "gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction" (Matt 10:1). Judas walked with Jesus, ministered with Jesus for three [and a half] years, and he worked those miracles, yet he was not positively affected to conversion. Judas becomes a vivid illustration of the people in the last days of judgment (2 Tim 3:1-5). His life proves nothing about saving faith

and being born again. That is the lesson of Judas (Matthew 7:22–23). Furthermore, the consequences of divided loyalties in Judas were immediate and personal—his remorse without repentance and subsequent suicide left a legacy of infamy that has persisted throughout history. The heart of the whole matter for Judas was faced with the tension between the spiritual kingdom proclaimed by Jesus and the tangible power of money, position in leadership in worldly government, and personal selfish benefits; he chose the latter, with dire consequences of suicide outside hope of resurrection into newness of life. Pope St. Leo the Great teaches that Judas never repented of his grave sin—that he committed suicide out of despair, adding guilt to guilt: many others add their comments on Judas and his own sin of not only betraying Jesus Christ but also killing himself (Kwasniewski, 2015).

### **Learning From Judas Iscariot's Journey**

Judas compels us to consider our own allegiances and religious nuances. It prompts the reader to self-reflect and introspect on how we balance the spiritual and material aspects of our lives and challenges us to consider how we might prioritize our values when faced with competing loyalties.

The analysis of Judas Iscariot's case offers a multifaceted look at the human struggle with DA and RS. His legacy underscores the perilous journey of navigating between spiritual devotion and worldly desires. The story serves as a timeless reminder of the need for clarity of purpose and integrity of heart in a world where the seduction of power, position, and wealth can allure believers and lead them astray into choosing divided royalty. Notice how he has been painted by Malegam (2017), which gives a summary of his lessons, in which all Christians and non-Christians can learn special lessons of devotion to God.

### **Additional Insights from Judas Iscariot for the Modern World**

#### **Recapitulating the Journey**

This exploration of Judas Iscariot has traversed the complexities of his story, which shifts from disciple to betrayer, highlighting the pivotal role that the lure of wealth and power played in his life, his figure entrenched in his historical and biblical contexts, offering profound insights into the human condition, particularly regarding the challenges of dual allegiance

and the temptations of material wealth., or religious syncretism in the same aspects, when taken alongside godliness or in place of God; all these add up into DA and RS in which case Jesus Christ is denied.

### **Dual Allegiance: A Timeless Struggle**

The narrative of Judas Iscariot illustrates the peril of allowing material interests to overshadow one's commitments to higher principles. This account reveals the internal conflict and moral dilemma that arise when worldly pursuits conflict with spiritual values, a theme as relevant today as it was in antiquity. This is the struggle in the present world and in my ministry context.

### **Contemporary Reflections on Riches, Wealth, Position, and Power**

In today's world, where the accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of power are often celebrated unequivocally, the story of Judas serves as a critical reminder of the need for vigilance and introspection. It challenges the modern reader to reflect on personal values and the potential for compromise in the face of material temptations. The biblical caution against the love of money and how to discern between true wealth and its illusory counterpart remains poignant.

The story of Judas Iscariot, therefore, not only illuminates the complexities of human nature but also serves as a guidepost for navigating the ethical landscapes of our own lives. It reminds us that the pursuit of wealth and power, devoid of ethical and spiritual grounding, can lead to personal and societal downfall. Conversely, it underscores the value of integrity and a steadfast commitment to higher principles in achieving meaningful and fulfilled life lessons for Contemporary Society, Hence calling us to embrace wisdom in the pursuit of riches, wealth, power, and position,

The biblical account of Judas Iscariot offers timeless insights into the challenges of balancing material success, power and positions with spiritual and ethical integrity. By reflecting on his story, contemporary individuals can gain wisdom in their pursuit of all these personal gains, ensuring that these pursuits are aligned with enduring values and contribute to the greater good. As we navigate the complexities of modern life, let the lessons of the ancient figure inspire us to seek harmony between our material aspirations and our spiritual

values, forging a path that honours both our ambitions and our ethical commitments., and honouring God in all we do in pursuit of the acquisition of wealth, riches, power and positions in our given societies from where we find ourselves. The counsel of the Apostle Paul will be safety guidance (1 Cor 10:31).

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Conclusion:** The narrative of Judas Iscariot provides a compelling exploration of the love for money, clamour for leadership positions, political status, acquisition of material wealth, and idolizing materialism, which are all allurements into DA and RS, which cause spiritual degeneracy and have far-reaching consequences. The story delves into the human psyche, revealing a deep-seated fear of mortality and the often futile attempt to shield oneself from this inevitability through wealth and material possession in a complete forgetful disregard of the fact that these earthly riches are fleeting with the world as a whole including the pride of this life as advised by the apostle John (White, 1977) (1 John 2:15-17; Gal 5:19-24; Rom 13:11-14; Job 31:1; Matt 6:22; Proverbs 17:24; Ps 73:7). Calvin (1959) emphasizes the lustfulness in the flesh and the desires of the lustfulness in it which entice believers into ungodly choices. Sibbes (1982), on the other hand, emphasizes that most people follow only the things of the world, which are for their convenience, but challenges believers of purity in all things, even in all they do. Barclay (1964) is emphatic on gluttony, cravings, the extravagance of material wealth, selfish use of the same, and all these means for self-glory and pride in this life, which in a short while will vanish.

Judas Iscariot's betrayal of his master and the world's Savior and redeemer of mankind for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave (Riggleman, 2023), represents a more direct engagement with materialism's perils. His decision to betray Jesus, a figure of ultimate spiritual authority and salvation, for material gain underscores a profound misevaluation of God's sacrificial gift to mankind's salvation. The act of exchanging the sacred for the profane, driven by the illusion of securing some form of control or safety in the face of life's uncertainties, highlights a tragic misunderstanding of value and an underestimation of the existential threat posed by spiritual bankruptcy. This echoes Jesus's words in the gospels of both Matthew and Mark; "For

what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36)”

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36). For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt 16:26). What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt 16:26). These Biblical texts present a profound meditation on power, wealth, riches, position, and their moral and spiritual implications. While acknowledging the potential for wealth to be a blessing when rightly acquired and rightly dispensed (Matt 6:33). The Scriptures consistently warn against its capacity to corrupt, distract, and distance individuals from their spiritual commitments (Matt 6:19-21, 24). These passages underscore the importance of maintaining a perspective where wealth serves a greater good and does not become an idol in itself, which is a virtue that needs to be keenly observed in the process of wealth seeking (Matt 6:25-32). Furthermore, whatever is honourably acquired and earned should be used for the advancement of God's Kingdom; this is true wealth (Matt 6:34).

Judas's unconverted heart caused many challenges both in his own seemingly Christian life, in the cause of God,

in the life of the Apostles, and ended up with his loss of this life and the life to come because of mixing his worldly aspirations with Christianity. He was a double agent which is unacceptable in Christianity.

It also reveals to us how misplaced priorities in Christianity are disastrous to our calling and our salvation. Additionally, the lack of clear analytical understanding of the heavenly kingdom and its way of positioning oneself so that he could fit in there, turned out to be a disaster in his life, and can be disastrous to us too. He thought of dealing with the Spiritual affairs in a worldly way which is a conflicting and stumbling thing of real DA and RS lifestyle.

**Recommendations:** The whole experience in the life of Judas is a serious reflection of how some Christians who might, and indeed some have the same outlook, should now change their allegiance to fully surrender to God. The lessons which have been authored are meant for our individual lessons so that we can ably adhere to our calling and stick to God's guidance who does not disappoint, fail, or get slack in fulfilling His promises, which are all meant for our own good getting us back to His original plan of living with Him in a world without sin and the author of sin.

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