

Denial Versus Betrayal: A Case Study Analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel

Dan Lioy

The Institute of Lutheran Theology; SATS; Portland Seminary

Abstract

This journal article undertakes a case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel. A review of the extant academic literature indicates this is a relevant lacuna, one meriting further consideration. Methodologically, the article situates the endeavor within the context of the Synoptic Gospels. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the Fourth Gospel's portrait of Peter and Judas, respectively. The wrap-up to the essay undertakes a theological and pastoral assessment of Peter's denial versus Judas's betrayal of Jesus. The major claim is that Peter experienced a restoration and reinstatement as the Savior's disciple, whereas Judas endured despair, remorse, and suicide. While the underlying premise might appear to be self-evident, the *reason* for these two radically different outcomes is far from obvious. Seminal to this study is a consideration of 2 Corinthians 7:10–11, which

provides theological insight concerning the divergent ends experienced by two of Jesus's most iconic disciples.

1. Introduction: Situating the Study Within the Context of the Synoptic Gospels

When compared with the three Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel provides its own unique portrait of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, respectively. One option is to regard these differences as evidence of clashing oral and contradictory literary Jesus traditions (a view often arising from a hermeneutic of suspicion). In contrast, a more constructive approach (the one adopted in this essay) is to consider the distinctions as being complementary and nuanced variations about two pivotal disciples among the original cohort of twelve whom Jesus chose.

Keywords

Simon Peter, Judas Iscariot, Synoptic Gospels, Fourth Gospel, denial, betrayal, suicide, repentance, restoration

About the Author

Prof. Dan Lioy is a professor of biblical theology at the Institute of Lutheran Theology, a senior research academic at the South African Theological Seminary, and a project faculty advisor at Portland Seminary.

dan@sats.edu.za

Even within the Fourth Gospel, the portraits the Evangelist sketches of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, respectively, contain areas of overlap and differentiation. For instance, on the upside, both disciples, along with the rest of the Twelve, remained with Jesus throughout the entirety of his three-year public ministry. Likewise, both shouldered responsibilities that suited each of their aptitudes and personalities. For example, Peter's more spontaneous temperament resulted in him often functioning as the spokesperson for the group. In the case of Judas, his more calculating disposition led him to assume responsibility for the oversight of the moneybag belonging to Jesus and his cadre of followers.

In contrast to the preceding upsides, the Fourth Gospel's depictions of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot indicate that both had contrastive downsides. Indeed, Valente (2008, 969) refers to Judas as the "negative twin of Peter."¹ For instance, Peter's impetuous disposition led him, during the final hours leading up to Jesus's arrest, to deny having any association with the Savior. With respect to Judas Iscariot, his more deliberative temperament eventually resulted in him sizing up the best way to betray the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth.

Likewise, the Fourth Gospel records vastly different reactions and outcomes for Peter and Judas. Specifically, on the one hand, Peter was filled with shame and sorrow, which led to his repentance and eventual restoration as a disciple of Jesus. On the other hand, Judas was overcome with despair and remorse. In turn, his intense feelings of regret led him to the self-destructive end of terminating his life.

The preceding overview is intended to motivate a focused case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel. Vyhmeister and Robertson (2020, 22) state that this approach includes the presentation

¹ The French original says, "comme un jumeau en négatif de Pierre."

of a "case" involving human subjects, an analysis of the "factors affecting" those individuals, and an exegetical and theological interpretation of what "happened." There is also the option of proposing a "pastoral" response to the situation being explored.²

With the above synopsis in mind, the methodological approach used in this essay first entails offering a concise introduction about Peter and Judas, respectively. The preceding is drawn mainly from the Synoptic Gospels. The aim is to provide sufficient contextual background information germane to the study, along with enhancing the acumen of the essay's upcoming disquisition.

Next, the article undertakes a descriptive analysis of the Fourth Gospel's portrait of Peter, followed by the Evangelist's depiction of Judas. The objective is to engage key biblical passages and offer an informed, sound interpretation of them. Finally, the article provides an assessment of Peter's denial versus Judas's betrayal of Jesus. The goal is to explore the underlying theological reason and pastoral implications for these two divergent outcomes.

The methodological approach also includes engaging pertinent scholarly sources in a sufficient and appropriate manner. As the bibliography indicates, there are other more extensive treatments of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, respectively, from various perspectives. The essay makes no pretense of either replacing or eclipsing these academic works.³

Two noteworthy treatises merit comment. First, Kim (2004, 19) uses the "rhetorical strategy of comparison" to explore the literary ways in which

² For more detailed information about the case study approach to biblical research, see Vyhmeister and Robertson (2020, 72-80).

³ While it might have made sense to include insights from some of the historical and contemporary interpretive luminaries of the Fourth Gospel, the limited space of this essay necessitated giving pride of place to more specialized works dealing specifically with Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot.

Peter and Judas function as divergent “symbolic representatives” of those experiencing “persecution” (18). Kim views Peter as a “representative of faithful believers who accept Jesus’s testimony” (24). In contrast, Judas is seen as a “representative of disciples who apostatize from the Jesus movement.”

Second, Greene (2016, 1) explores the “roles” of “Peter and Judas” in all “four canonical gospels.” Greene gives particular attention to the way in which the two are depicted in the “Passion narratives.” Greene’s objective is to obtain “insight” (7) into the “thought processes and literary techniques” used by the four Evangelists (particularly through the interpretive lens of Greco-Roman biography).

The preceding two treatises differ from the stated aim of the present essay.⁴ As described above, it is to present a fresh treatment of the topic by utilizing a case study analysis. Admittedly, on one level, this involves engaging the Synoptic Gospels, along with a representative set of published works. Yet, on another level, the article seeks to present its own distinctive treatment of the topic at hand. The essay makes its mark by addressing a relevant lacuna in the academic literature, namely, a paucity of studies providing a focused, *case study analysis* of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel.⁵

In keeping with what was briefly noted earlier, the major claim of the article is as follows: Whereas Peter’s denial of Jesus was followed by Peter’s eventual restoration as the Savior’s disciple, Judas’s betrayal of Jesus resulted in Judas’s demise. It is only the Fourth Gospel that explains Peter’s reinstatement in the aftermath of his disavowal. Concerning the fallout

⁴ See fns. 55 and 56 for additional ways in which this essay differs from the concluding assessments proffered by Kim (2003) and Greene (2016), respectively.

⁵ See similar observations made by the following: Counet (2011, 3); Worthing (2018, 158).

of Judas’s betrayal, one must turn to Matthew 27:3–5 and Acts 1:16–19, respectively, for elucidation.

Admittedly, while the underlying premise might appear to be self-evident, the *reason* for these two radically different outcomes is far from obvious. This is where the closing section of the essay comes into view and seeks to make a worthwhile contribution to the scholarly discourse. Specifically, the article deliberates a possible underlying theological rationale for why two of Jesus’s most iconic disciples, Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, experienced such divergent ends, despite acting in seemingly comparable ways.

2. A Concise Introduction to Simon Peter’s Life and Legacy

What follows is a concise introduction of Simon Peter’s life and legacy.⁶ To begin, Simon Peter (Πέτρος; which literally means “stone,” “rock,” or “boulder”; Matt 16:18; John 1:42) was the son of a man named either Jonah (Matt 16:17) or John (John 1:42; 21:15–17). While Bethsaida was the hometown of Peter’s family (John 1:44), he and his brother, Andrew, later relocated to Capernaum, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:21, 29; Luke 4:31, 38). There the two established a business catching fish

⁶ For a detailed examination of the information in the NT pertaining to Simon Peter, see Blaine (2007, 23–26); Bockmuehl (2012, 20–28, 67–85, 115–124, 131–141); Brown, Donfried, and Reumann (2002, 58–64, 76–79, 110–114); Cassidy (2007, 33–35, 55, 83, 126–127); Cullman (2011, 17–27); Foakes-Jackson (2003, 123–125); Greene (2016, 58–68); Helyer (2012, 19–30, 32–46, 48–60); Markley (2013, 151–157, 209–215, 238–239); Perkins (1994, 18–41). The abbreviated synthesis in this section has been informed by these respective works. Even so, the discourse operates under the premise that Peter was an actual person (rather than a fictional literary character) who lived in space-time history and that the NT provides reliable and accurate (rather than incoherent and contradictory) information about him, albeit motivated by theological concerns.

(John 21:1–6), possibly in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:1–11), that is, before Jesus summoned these trawlers to become his disciples.

Peter was one of the most prominent of Jesus's twelve disciples (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–61), and perhaps the first among them.⁷ For instance, Peter was one of the first disciples whom Jesus summoned (Matt 4:18–19; Mark 1:16–18; John 1:40–42), and Peter's name heads every list of the Twelve in the NT (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13). Also, an inner circle of three apostles existed among the twelve, and Peter was the leader of this smaller group (Matt 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28).

Moreover, additional firsts belong to Peter. For example, he was the first apostle to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah (Greek, *χριστός*; Hebrew, *מָשִׁיחַ*; Anointed One; Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:67–71).⁸ Later, Peter was the first apostle to see the resurrected Lord (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). Then, after the day of Pentecost, Peter was the first to proclaim salvation to non-Jews (Acts 10–11).

With Peter's triumphant firsts, however, come an extensive list of personal flaws. For instance, the only apostle to walk on water also nearly drowned in the process (Matt 14:28–31). Also, when Jesus needed his friends the most, Peter hid in the shadows and asserted three times that

⁷ Cullman (2011, 26) surmised from examining “all three Synoptic Gospels” that Peter “indubitably played the role of the spokesman among the twelve disciples.”

⁸ Maynard (1984, 533) describes the Johannine pericope as being the literary, functional “equivalent of the Synoptic confession at Caesarea Philippi.” Similarly, Lapham (2003, 8) regards the Fourth Gospel's rendition of Peter's confession to be the “equivalent” of the account that appears in the three Synoptic Gospels of “Peter's celebrated acclamation” of the Messiah. Bruce (1983, 165–166) goes even further by highlighting the “remarkable point of contact between the Synoptic and Johannine” accounts, especially that the “turning-point in both” was linked to Peter's “momentous confession.”

he did not even know the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth (Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–62; John 18:25–27). Though Peter tried to deny he was one of Jesus's disciples, the accent of Peter's speech signaled to attentive listeners that he was from Galilee, not Judea (Matt 26:73; Mark 14:70; Luke 22:59).⁹

As with other devout Jews of the day, Peter held fast to God's promise of a descendant of David who would sit on his throne (2 Sam 7:11–13; 1 Chr 17:10–12). Despite the false assertions made by some religious elitists (John 8:33), for much of their history, the Jews had languished under the dominion of one Gentile empire after another (including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Syria, and Rome). Yet, the promise of a future anointed ruler never faded from Jewish hope. Their messianic vision anticipated a political and military leader who would free them from foreign control and restore their nation as a world-class power.¹⁰

To someone such as Peter, Jesus of Nazareth, a miracle worker who exercised divine authority, looked like the Messiah. Both during Jesus's earthly ministry and for a short while after his resurrection, Peter was among Jesus's followers who resolutely interpreted the itinerant rabbi in light of what they expected Israel's anointed one to be (Luke 24:21; John 6:15; 18:36; Acts 1:6). Though Jesus told his disciples that his redemptive mission involved rejection, humiliation, and death (Pss 16:10; 22:1–2, 6–8, 12–18; Isa 53:10–12), it was not until after his resurrection that they—including Peter—understood what Jesus explicitly meant (Luke 24:25–27, 32, 44–46; John 2:19–22; 20:9; Acts 2:24, 31–32; 3:15).

⁹ Bockmuehl (2012, 170) explains that in “Judea and elsewhere, Galileans were notorious and mocked for their careless pronunciation, especially of gutturals.”

¹⁰ For an overview and explanation of Jewish messianic expectations in the first century AD, see the following: Aune, Geddert, and Evans (2000); Bird (2013); Collins (2000); Evans (2000); Heard and Yamazaki-Ransom (2013); Pitre (2013).

Prior to that triumphant event, Jesus repeatedly warned the Twelve about his upcoming suffering and execution on the cross. One noteworthy episode involved the Savior and his disciples traveling to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. There he questioned them about his identity and (as observed above) commended Peter's assertion that Jesus is the Messiah (Matt 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–21; John 6:67–71).¹¹

Next, Jesus told the Twelve that the religious leaders would plot his death in Jerusalem, as well as that on the third day the Father would raise the Son from the dead (Matt 16:21–23; Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:22). Peter, in response, took Jesus aside and began to chastise him (Matt 16:22; Mark 8:32; ἐπιτιμάω, to rebuke, censure, or reprove). Evidently, Peter could not accept that it was the Father's will for the Son to be executed, likely because Peter imagined a glorious, earthly reign for the Messiah.

Jesus countered by rebuking Peter for trying to persuade his Lord to abandon his true redemptive mission. Indeed, Peter's words echoed the same kind of temptation Satan previously used in the wilderness to get Jesus to stumble (Matt 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). In the present episode, Peter behaved as Jesus's principal adversary, which is why the Redeemer harshly referred to Peter as "Satan" (σατανᾶς; the archenemy of God; Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33).¹²

According to Clement, an early bishop of Rome (AD 88–99), Peter, along with Paul, was martyred in the capital of the empire during Nero's persecution (around AD 64; *1 Clem* 5; John 21:18–19). Centuries later, the patristic church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 265–339), reiterated

¹¹ See fn. 8 about the possible correlation between Peter's confession recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Fourth Gospel.

¹² Kruse (2003) stresses that "opposition to Jesus" is "satanic as well as human."

that Peter and Paul died as martyrs for the Christian faith (*Eccl His* 2:25; 3:1).¹³

3. A Concise Introduction to Judas Iscariot's Life and Legacy

As with the preceding section, what follows is a concise introduction to Judas Iscariot's life and legacy.¹⁴ To begin, as alluded to earlier, the four Gospels contain far less information about Judas Iscariot than Simon Peter.¹⁵ "Judas" (Ἰούδας, which literally means "praise" or "God is thanked") is identified as the son of Simon (John 6:71; 13:2, 36). The Synoptics list Judas among the twelve apostles whom Jesus chose early in his public

¹³ For a critical and analytical disquisition of apocryphal early Petrine writings, see Lapham (2003), especially the concluding observations (237–253). For a more abbreviated survey, see Bockmuehl (2012, 11–17, 41–57); Cullman (2011, 89–123); Foakes-Jackson (2003, 165–191); Helyer (2012, 271–281, 285–301); Hengel (2010, 123–133); Perkins (1994, 131–147).

¹⁴ For a detailed examination of the information in the NT pertaining to Judas Iscariot, see Cane (2017, 13–58); Greene (2016, 47–57); Gubar (2009, 57–82); Klassen (1996, 77–136); Maccoby (1992, 34–60); Oropeza (2011, 36–47, 75–77, 143–151); Ryan (2019, 225–232); Uruguchi (1918, 345–360); Worthing (2018, 152–164). The abbreviated synthesis in this section has been informed by these respective works. Even so, the discourse operates under the premise that Judas was an actual person (rather than a fictional literary character) who lived in space-time history and that the NT provides reliable and accurate (rather than incoherent and contradictory) information about him, albeit motivated by theological concerns.

¹⁵ It is beyond the scope of this essay to substantively engage the apocryphal Gospel of Judas. This is a late-second-century AD, Gnostic papyrus manuscript (written in Coptic script from an original Greek text) that provides a sympathetic portrait of Judas Iscariot as Jesus's closest friend and favorite disciple. The codex purports to record the "true mysteries of the kingdom," including the following: Jesus originated from the "immortal realm of Barbelo" as the "angelic Self-Generated"; only Judas, among the Twelve, learned and understood the true gospel that Jesus taught; Jesus never intended to inaugurate an earthly kingdom; Judas obeyed Jesus's directive to betray him; Jesus felt no pain while dying on the cross; and, Jesus's death liberated him from the prison of his temporal, physical soul so that he could ascend to heaven and attain immortality. For a public domain translation of the tractate, Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst (2007); Mattison (2019). For an overview and analysis of the text from differing perspectives, see Evans (2010); Frankfurter (2007); Gathercole (2007); Heath and Porter (2007); Krosney (2006); Mattison (2014); Min (2017); Wright (2006).

ministry. Judas is also identified as the disciple who “betrayed” (παραδίδωμι; to hand over or deliver up)¹⁶ the Savior (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19).¹⁷

Regarding the etymology of “Iscariot” (Ισκαριώθ), only the following three (of various) options are noted.¹⁸ One hypothesis is that “Iscariot” represents an Aramaic slur, אשקריא, which means “liar” or “false one.” A second theory is that “Iscariot” signifies a corruption of the Latin word, *sicarii* (Aramaic, סיקריים). This is the plural form of *sicarius* (Greek, σικάριος), meaning “dagger-man” or “assassin.” Allegedly, then, Judas was once part of a group who took it upon themselves to kill Jews accused of collaborating with the Romans. The most widely held view is that “Iscariot” signifies a Hellenized form of the Hebrew phrase, איש־קריות, which means, “man from Kerioth.” In this case, the reference would be to the village of Kerioth, which was located near Hebron in southern Judah (Josh 15:25).

Perhaps because of Judas’s ability as a businessperson, he shouldered the responsibility of being the treasurer for Jesus and his followers. Judas not only routinely carried the moneybox, but also pilfered the donations placed in the container (John 12:6; 13:29).¹⁹ Evidently, then, his fiduciary inclination helped lead to his downfall. Expressed differently, greed played a part in the fateful decision Judas made to collude with the leading priests in breaking faith with Jesus. The cabal enthusiastically agreed to pay Judas

16 The notional sense articulated here, which is the consensus scholarly view (cf. Arndt et al. 2000; Büchsel, 1964; Silva, 2014), is contra Cane (2017, 19–24) and Klassen (1996, 47–58), who each maintain that the standard lexica have an overly theologized understanding of παραδίδωμι, as influenced by the canonical gospels.

17 An indirect reference to this traitorous act might also be preserved in 1 Cor 11:23 (i.e., “the night [Jesus] was betrayed”).

18 Cf. Gathercole (2007, 25); Greene (2016, 155–156); Ryan (2019, 229–230); Taylor (2010, 368–370); Worthing (2018, 153).

19 Contra Sloyan (2009), who conjectures that the Evangelist merely invented “greed” as “Judas’s motive,” the details of which are allegedly “lost to history.”

thirty silver coins for his efforts to find a favorable “opportunity” (εὐκαιρία; or the “right moment”; Matt 26:16) to betray the Nazarene (Matt 26:14–16; Mark 14:10–11).

The payment Judas received for his traitorous action²⁰ was approximately the amount a rural worker would earn over a two- or three-month period. It was also the price someone was required by the Mosaic Law to pay for a slave who had been accidentally killed (Exod 21:32). During the postexilic period, Zechariah 11:12–13 recorded the prophecy that the Good Shepherd would be rejected for this sum.

Perhaps at the beginning of Jesus’s public ministry, Judas imagined Jesus to be a politicized, messianic figure, who would liberate the Jewish nation from Roman domination. If so, that hope was dashed in the week prior to Jesus’s crucifixion, during a meal hosted at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany. Jesus chastised Judas for censuring Mary after she anointed Jesus’s feet with expensive perfume (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8).²¹ The terse exchange could have left Judas feeling so disaffected and frustrated that he decided to double-cross the Nazarene.

Another factor involved the diabolical intentions of the devil. Following the episode in which Jesus fed over 5 000 men (not counting the thousands of women and children who were likely present) and walked on water (Matt 14:13–33; Mark 32–52; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–21), the Savior declared that one among the Twelve was a “devil” (John 6:70; διάβολος; a menacing adversary). The Evangelist explained that Jesus was referring to Judas Iscariot (v. 71), whose treachery contradicted whatever pretense he maintained about being Jesus’s trusted colleague and confidant (Pss 41:9; 55:12–14).

20 Noteworthy is the use of προδότης (“traitor”) in Luke 6:16 to refer to Judas Iscariot.

21 In this essay, the episode recorded in the first two Synoptic Gospels is regarded as being a parallel account to what appears in the Fourth Gospel.

Luke 22:3 clarifies that “Satan entered Judas” prior to his collaboration with the religious leaders, among whom were the “officers of the temple guard” (v. 4). Though the evil one prompted and prodded Judas, he remained responsible for his perfidy. John 13:2 and 27 add that later, during the Last Supper, Jesus’s chief adversary²² planted the idea in Judas’s “heart” (καρδία; the locus of a person’s thoughts) to become a rogue operative. Then, during his negotiations with the Jewish authorities, the entire group concurred that Judas should wait until Jesus was out of sight from the “crowd” (Luke 22:6; ὄχλος; an unruly throng) before handing him over to be arrested. Indeed, that would prove to be the ideal moment, when there would be no interference from the tumultuous masses.

In the events that followed, Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Matt 26:47–49; Mark 14:43–45; Luke 22:47–48). This gesture expressing affection, which was reminiscent of Proverbs 27:6,²³ led to the authorities arresting Jesus and his disciples abandoning him (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:50). Sometime later, Judas tried in vain to return his thirty silver coins. Then, Judas, after impulsively throwing down the money somewhere in the Jerusalem temple, exited the precincts and hanged himself (Zech 11:12–13; Matt 27:3–5; Acts 1:16–19).²⁴

²² Of particular note is the parallel use of διάβολος (“devil”) and σατανᾶς (“Satan”) in John 13:2 and 27, respectively, to refer to Jesus’s archenemy.

²³ Particularly, the Hebrew phrase, וְנִעְתְּרוּת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא, rendered, “excessive/deceitful are the kisses of an enemy” (author’s translation).

²⁴ In this essay, the episode recorded in the first Synoptic Gospel is regarded as being a parallel and complementary (rather than contradictory) account to what appears in Acts.

4. A Descriptive Analysis of the Fourth Gospel’s Portrait of Simon Peter

What follows in this section is a descriptive analysis of the Fourth Gospel’s portrait of Simon Peter.²⁵ Blaine (2007, 2) avers that this depiction is largely “positive,” and that Peter comes across as an “exemplary disciple,” albeit one who at times succumbed to “misdirected zeal.” Even then, readers encounter a disciple who was characterized by such virtues as “courage, zeal, loyalty, love, resourcefulness, and determination.”

According to the Evangelist’s treatise, Peter was one of Jesus’s earliest followers (1:40–42). Also, Peter, as the spokesperson for the Twelve, affirmed Jesus’s messiahship by referring him as the “Holy One of God” (6:69).²⁶ Domeris (1993, 165, 167), based on his assessment of the relevant biblical and extrabiblical data, concludes that the phrase emphasizes Jesus’s role as the Father’s supreme “agent” (or emissary) and revelatory “representative.” Jesus also is affirmed to be the “divine judge” and source of “eternal life.”

Even so, as Wiarda (2011, 508) observes, despite Peter’s insinuation of being personally loyal to Jesus (v. 68), an inexorable series of events would result in Peter denying his allegiance to the Savior. The Last Supper, as narrated in chapter 13, formed the backdrop of Peter’s moral failure. Most

²⁵ What appears in this section has been informed by the following secondary sources: Blaine (2007, 183–195); Bockmuehl (2012, 57–67); Brown, Donfried, and Reumann (2002, 129–141); Cassidy (2007, 85–107); Cullman (2011, 27–30); Farelly (2010, 89–106); Greene (2016, 249–287); Helyer (2012, 56–61, 64–67); Kim (2004, 29–150); Maynard (1984, 532–545); Perkins (1994, 95–101); Sturdevant (2015, 109–129); Thatcher (1996, 439–448); Wiarda (2011, 508–514).

²⁶ Other variant readings include the following: “you are the Christ”; “you are the Son of God”; “you are the Christ, the Holy One of God”; “you are the Christ, the Son of God”; and, “you are the Christ, the Son of the living God”; cf. Loken and Brannan (2014); Omanson (2006). For a detailed exegetical and theological analysis of the title found in John 6:69, see Domeris (1993). He states that “the holy one of God” (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ) is “well attested by the manuscript evidence” and represents the consensus view of the “accepted reading” among text critical scholars.

of Jesus's final moments with his disciples took place in a large, furnished upper room somewhere in Jerusalem (Mark 14:13–15; Luke 17:10–12).

After Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and foretold what his betrayer was about to do (John 13:1–32), Jesus warned Peter that he, too, would prove unfaithful to the Savior (vv. 33–38). Yet, Peter was self-assured that he, perhaps in contrast to the rest of the Twelve (including Judas Iscariot), was ready to die for Jesus. The Savior countered with the solemn assertion (*ἀμὴν ἀμὴν*; “Amen, Amen”) that by the following morning, after Peter had denied Jesus three times, a rooster would crow.

The fateful event is recounted in chapter 18. Perhaps a portion of Jesus's closing remarks were delivered after the group left the upper room, crossed the Kidron Valley, and made their way to an orchard called “Gethsemane” (*Γεθσημανί*; from the Hebrew, *גת שמני*, meaning “oil press”; Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32).²⁷ The valley itself was situated on the eastern slope of Jerusalem. The privately-owned olive grove mentioned in John 18:1 was located slightly east of Jerusalem on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Jesus and his followers would customarily travel through and on occasion meet in the orchard (Luke 22:39).

The Fourth Gospel provides a distinctive rendition of Jesus's arrest,²⁸ including Judas standing openly with the throng and Peter's botched attempt to prevent the Savior from being tied up and led away to a pretrial hearing in the presence of Annas (18:1–14).²⁹ He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest at that time. That said, Annas, though

²⁷ By “oil press” is meant a locale where laborers squeezed the oil out of harvested olives.

²⁸ Contra Sloyan (2009), this essay regards the Fourth Gospel's rendition of Jesus's arrest to be historically credible.

²⁹ Sturdevant (2015, 116) remarks that while Peter attempted to “defend Jesus through violence,” the Redeemer sought to “defend Peter,” as well as the “rest of the Twelve,” by yielding to “violence” at Calvary (cf. John 10:11, 15).

previously deposed as high priest by the Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus, in AD 15 (Josephus, *Ant* 18.2.2 [18.34]), maintained control over the high priestly office behind the scenes.³⁰

Meanwhile, as the authorities escorted Jesus to Annas, Simon Peter and another unnamed “disciple” (John 18:15) of Jesus followed at a safe distance in the darkness. This essay affirms the traditional view of the early church that it was John, the son of Zebedee,³¹ who accompanied Peter and obtained entrance into the “courtyard” (*αὐλή*; or private atrium)³² of the “high priest.”³³ John was able to do so because he was personally acquainted with the family and household servants of Annas.³⁴

At first, Peter had to remain outside the gate. It was only after John vouched for Peter to a servant girl watching the entrance (v. 16; *θυρωρός*; a gate- or doorkeeper) that she allowed Peter to enter the enclosed, accessible area with John. Then, as Peter walked through the gate, the “female slave” (v. 17; *παιδίσκη*) questioned Peter about his affiliation with Jesus. When the servant girl openly wondered whether Peter might be one of the Nazarene's “disciples,” Peter replied curtly that he was not a follower (*οὐκ εἰμί*; literally, “I am not”; rhetorically, “No, indeed!”). According to Mark 14:68, a “rooster crowed” for the first (of two) times.

³⁰ Cf. Beasley-Murray (1999); Borchert (1996); Bruce (1983, 250–251); Carson (1991, 421); Lindars (1986, 405–406); Morris (1995, 502–503); Ridderbos (1997, 408–409).

³¹ For a detailed analysis of differing views concerning the identity of the author/narrator of the Fourth Gospel, see McGrew (2021, 132–147), who concludes, contra Newman and Nida (1980), that, after examining the biblical and extrabiblical evidence, the “Beloved Disciple” was most likely “John the son of Zebedee.”

³² Ridderbos (1997, 581) describes the courtyard as an “uncovered enclosed space adjoining a building.”

³³ Contra Counet (2011, 2), who argues unconvincingly that Judas Iscariot was the anonymous “disciple” known to the “high priest.”

³⁴ John 18:15 uses the Greek adjective, *γνωστός*, which literally means, “known” (Arndt et al. 2000). In this verse, the term carries the notional sense of a “friend” or “acquaintance” (Louw and Nida 1989).

With that awkward exchange resolved, Peter joined Annas's household "slaves" (John 18:18; δούλος) and the chief priest's "guards" (ὑπηρέτης; or "officials"). Because the temperature that evening was "cold,"³⁵ the cadre stood around and warmed themselves at a "charcoal fire" (άνθρακιά) they had previously made.³⁶ Meanwhile, Annas cross-examined Jesus about the number and ardor of his followers. Bruce (1983, 348) finds "considerable literary skill" in the Evangelist's account, especially as he interlaced the "stages of Peter's denial" with the "narrative of Jesus's interrogation." Along the same lines, Blaine (2007, 99) highlights the stark difference between "Jesus's honesty and physical discomfort with Peter's dishonesty and physical comfort."

Next, a contingent of officials escorted Jesus from one end of the high priestly compound to the other, where Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin had assembled to question Jesus further (Matt 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:54, 66–71; John 18:19–24). Because Peter was curious to learn what would happen to Jesus, Peter remained in the courtyard and furtively warmed himself in the dim light of the charcoal fire, all the while trying to remain incognito.

Perhaps Peter was caught off-guard when some bystanders once more asked him whether he is one of Jesus's "disciples" (John 18:25). In response, Peter disavowed any affiliation with the Nazarene. Then, as with the previous exchange, Peter again stated curtly that he was not one of Jesus's followers (οὐκ εἰμί; "I am not"). Blaine (2007, 97) points out that

³⁵ Bernard (2000) points out that, due to Jerusalem being about "2,400 feet above sea level," the nighttime air, even during spring, would have been "chilly."

³⁶ Cf. the usage of the same Greek noun in 21:9, along with the implied literary connection between the two passages.

the "language" Peter used in his repeated denials is the "antithesis" of the words Jesus used previously to affirm his identity (ἐγώ εἰμι; "I am he"; vv. 5–8).

As noted above, earlier in the evening, Peter made an impulsive attempt to prevent Jesus's arrest by cutting off the right ear of Malchus, one of the high priest's slaves (Matt 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; John 18:10). About an hour after Peter's second denial (Luke 22:59), another of the high priest's slaves, who was related by blood or marriage to Malchus, wondered aloud whether he had seen Peter with Jesus in Gethsemane (John 18:26). For a third time, in response, Peter repudiated having any knowledge of the Nazarene (v. 27; ἀρνέομαι; to disown).³⁷

Kruse (2003) relates that Peter not only invoked a curse on himself, but also swore an oath to affirm his assertion (Matt 26:71; Mark 14:71). In essence, Peter was asserting, "May God eternally judge me in hell if I know Jesus." Right at that moment, just as Jesus had foretold (Matt 26:34; Mark 14:30), a "rooster crowed" (John 18:27). Mark 14:72 further clarifies that this was the "second time" the "rooster crowed." Hendriksen (1953) suggests that the other gospels focus only on the second incident, while Mark's treatise accounts for both of them.

Luke 22:61 adds that Jesus turned and focused his gaze directly at Peter. As adjudicated by Whitacre (1999), one option is that Jesus looked through an open window or door into the courtyard while still in the presence of Caiaphas (v. 54). A second possibility is that Jesus was being escorted through the courtyard from the high priest to an undisclosed place of detention (vv. 63–65). In either case, Peter suddenly remembered what

³⁷ Contra Kim (2004, 41–42), who is unconvincing in arguing that the Evangelist "seems to minimize the gravity of Peter's denial as much as possible," even to the point of "reducing it to no more than a fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy" (John 13:38).

Jesus prophesied. Peter became so overwhelmed with shame and grief that he quickly left the courtyard and “wept bitterly” (v. 62).

It is not until Resurrection Sunday that Simon Peter is mentioned once more in the Fourth Gospel. While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb where Jesus’s body had been placed (20:1). She went to Jesus’s sepulcher after the Sabbath to pour spices over his body, which was a cultural expression of love for the dead person (Mark 16:1). Such devotion on Mary’s part was not unusual. After all, Jesus had exorcised seven demons from her (Luke 8:2).

Mary noticed that the large circular stone that previously covered the entrance to the “tomb” (John 20:1) had been rolled away from the entrance. Matthew 28:2 states that previously an “angel of the Lord” removed the “stone.” When Mary and some other women with her (according to Mark 16:1, “Mary the mother of James, and Salome”) looked inside the sepulcher, they discovered that Jesus’s body was no longer lying there (Luke 24:3).³⁸

At this point, Mary Magdalene hurried to Peter and the “other disciple” (John 20:2), who most likely was John, the son of Zebedee. Mary frantically told them that people had transferred Jesus’s body to a place she and the other women did not know. Mary probably thought that Jesus’s enemies had stolen his body and had not considered the possibility that the Father had raised the Son from the dead. Understandably, Peter and John were alarmed by Mary’s news. This prompted the two disciples to run to Jesus’s “tomb” (John 20:3) to see for themselves whether the body was missing.

Westcott (1981, 289) advances a common supposition that because John was “younger” than Peter, John outran his peer and so arrived first

³⁸ John 20:1, in isolation, might convey the incorrect impression that Mary Magdalene went alone to the empty tomb. Yet, in v. 2, Mary’s use of the first person plural form of the Greek verb, οἶδα (i.e., οἶδαμεν; “we know”), clearly indicates that, in agreement with the parallel accounts in the Synoptic Gospels, other women were with her at that time.

at the empty sepulcher (John 20:4). More to the point, Hendriksen (1953) explains that it was customary for the entrance to private burial chambers to be less than three feet high. So, an adult would have to stoop down to look inside. John did this and saw the strips of linen that had been used to cover Jesus’s body. Yet, perhaps as Barton (2000) suggests, either due to fear or being “overcome with emotion,” John did not immediately go into the tomb, but waited for Peter to arrive (John 20:5).

Peter, without hesitation, entered the sepulcher, but struggled to decipher what had taken place (Luke 24:12). The apostle saw both the strips of linen and the face cloth that had been placed around Jesus’s head (John 20:6). The cloth was rolled up in a separate spot by itself (v. 7). These precise details indicate that thieves could not have stolen Jesus’s body, for it is unlikely that anyone who had come to remove the corpse would have bothered to unwrap it before removing it.

Shortly thereafter, when John went inside the tomb, he saw the evidence and “believed” (John 20:8). Borchert (1996) comments that the full extent of John’s faith is not explicitly stated. Beasley-Murray (1999) adds that, at this time, neither Peter nor John had a full understanding of Scripture’s teaching about Jesus’s resurrection (v. 9).³⁹ Newman and Nida (1980) delineate that, once Peter and John were done checking out the scene, they returned to their place of lodging in Jerusalem (v. 10).

The Fourth Gospel relates Jesus’s appearance to Mary Magdalene, Jesus’s appearance to ten of his disciples on Easter Sunday evening (with Thomas not being present at that time), and Jesus’s appearance to all

³⁹ In the disputed ending to Mark’s Gospel, it is reported that Jesus’s disciples, including Peter, initially did not believe Mary Magdalene’s eyewitness testimony that she had seen the risen Lord (16:10–11). Likewise, it is recounted that Peter and the rest of the Eleven did not believe the statements offered by the Emmaus disciples about having encountered the resurrected Messiah (vv. 12–13).

eleven disciples a week later (20:11–29). Though Peter was present, he is not directly mentioned by name in the Evangelist’s narration. Instead, it is in the final chapter (or epilogue) of John’s treatise that the spotlight again focuses on Peter.

In 21:1, the Greek phrase, *μετὰ ταῦτα* (“after this”), is an indefinite time reference for when Jesus’s third post-resurrection appearance took place.⁴⁰ As Blaine (2007, 132) clarifies, it is difficult to “know where, exactly, to place” the event on the “post-Easter timeline.” The physical location was the “Sea of Tiberius” (or Galilee), while some of Jesus’s “disciples” were fishing, including “Simon Peter” (John 20:2).⁴¹ It is easy to imagine that during the episode recounted in vv. 3–13, Peter thought deeply about how he had acted when the authorities arrested Jesus. The memory of disavowing the Lord must have haunted Peter.

Jesus’s reinstatement of Peter to a position of leadership in the church (which took place around a “charcoal fire”; *ἀνθρακιά*; v. 9) is the focal point of vv. 15–17.⁴² Previously, Peter had openly denied Jesus three times.⁴³ Now, as

40 Sloyan (2009) regards John 21 as a later, heavily redacted addition to an earlier version of the Fourth Gospel. Yet, as Greene (2016, 250) notes, the “chapter is consistent with rather than divergent from the general thrust of Peter’s portrayal throughout the Gospel.” Furthermore, Burge (2000) interjects that “today most scholars” think the “present chapter” was “fully integrated” with the Fourth Gospel at its “earliest stage” of development.

41 Borchert (1996), while acknowledging various literary parallels between Luke 5:1–11 and John 21:1–14, regards these two passages as recounting separate, distinct incidents (the first at the start and the second at the end of Jesus’s earthly ministry) involving Jesus, Peter, and various other disciples. Likewise, Bockmuehl (2012, 116) indicates that, even though there are some “verbal agreements,” there are also “major differences in the narrative setting and details of the two stories.” For this reason, Bockmuehl cautions against overstating the “similarities at the expense of the differences” (e.g., concluding that John 21 is either a “transposed resurrection experience” or a “recycled fishing story”).

42 The discussion that follows is informed by the following sources: Barton (2000); Blaine (2007, 163–164); Bruce (1983, 404–405); Carson (1991, 675–679); Keener (2003, 1235–1237); Lindars (1986, 632–635); Morris (1995, 767–772); Newman and Nida (1980); Ridderbos (1997, 665–667); Westcott (1981, 302–304).

Farely (2010, 103) sets forth, Jesus reinstated Peter in the “presence of the other disciples.” There is some debate about the significance of the use of two different Greek words for “love” — *ἀγαπάω* and *φιλέω*—in these verses. One option is that a distinction in meaning is intended, while a second option is that the variations in wording are only for stylistic reasons. Regardless of which view is preferred, it is clear that Jesus had a place of service in the church for Peter (as well as for all believers). There are also two Greek words rendered “know” in these verses. In Peter’s first two responses, he only used the term, *οἶδα*, which denotes an intellectual understanding of a fact. Then, in the apostle’s third response, he also used the term, *γινώσκω*, which signifies awareness obtained from experience. In this way, Peter seemed to strengthen his affirmation of his devotion to Jesus.

Peter’s reinstatement took place after the group had finished eating breakfast. Verse 15 says that Jesus asked Peter about the true nature of his love for the Lord, a question that can be understood in at least three ways: (1) “Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?” (2) “Do you love me more than you love these other disciples?” (3) “Do you love me more than these physical objects (namely, the boats, nets, and fishing gear nearby connected with Peter’s fishing business)?” Regardless of which option is preferred, it is clear that Peter had denied the Lord three times and that Jesus asked him three times whether he truly loved the Savior. On each occasion, Peter affirmed his love for and commitment to Jesus. Yet, by the third round of questioning, Peter became distressed and grieved. Nonetheless, Peter affirmed the Messiah’s knowledge of everything, including his love for Jesus (v. 17).

43 Contra Kim (2004, 60), who claims that the Evangelist, “by omitting the account of Peter’s repentance, signals that Peter has not committed a sin that is serious enough to require such deep repentance.”

The risen Lord, in turn, took Peter at his word. Because the disciple was wholeheartedly committed to the Savior, Peter was now ready to follow Jesus. In this way, the risen Lord renewed the apostle's commission to serve as Jesus's witness to the lost. Jesus also directed Peter to minister to the needs of his fellow believers. In particular, the apostle was to ensure that they were spiritually fed, guided, and protected from harm.

The Savior's commands to Peter contain additional subtle distinctions worth mentioning. For instance, in John 20:15 and 17, Jesus directed Peter to feed or pasture (βόσκω) the flock, while in v. 16, Jesus told Peter to take care of or shepherd (ποιμαίνω) the herd. Moreover, in v. 15, Jesus used the Greek noun for "lambs" (ἀρνίον), whereas in vv. 16 and 17, he made reference to "sheep" (πρόβατον). Alongside the possibility of stylistic variation, these linguistic differences likely emphasize that Peter was to do more than spiritually feed God's people. The apostle was also to watch over them, just as a shepherd would stand guard over the vulnerable domesticated animals.

5. A Descriptive Analysis of the Fourth Gospel's Portrait of Judas Iscariot

In keeping with what was noted earlier, the Fourth Gospel, like the Synoptic Gospels, contains far less information about Judas Iscariot than Simon Peter.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, there is enough biblical data in the Evangelist's treatise to arrive at a salient portrait of Jesus's betrayer. Intriguingly, in several places within John's Gospel, the depiction the Evangelist conveys for Judas Iscariot is interspersed among correlative information involving Simon

⁴⁴ What appears in this section has been informed by the following secondary sources: Cane (2017, 24–30, 33–39); Farely (2010, 106–117); Greene (2016, 249–287); Gubar (2009, 82–91); Kim (2004, 151–214); Klassen (1996, 137–159); Maccoby (1992, 61–78); Oropeza (2011, 182–185); Thatcher (1996, 439–448); Xavier (1995, 250–258).

Peter. This observation further incentivizes the value of undertaking a case study analysis of these two individuals as they are depicted in the Fourth Gospel.

The Evangelist first mentions Judas Iscariot in John 6:71. The broader literary context is Jesus's feeding of over 5 000 people and his walking on water. These episodes recorded in chapter 6 are followed by Jesus's presentation of himself as the living bread who came down from heaven to offer eternal life to all who believed in him. Jesus defined that heavenly bread as his body and foretold that he would sacrifice it on the cross. Indeed, anyone who, by faith, partook of him and his words would live forever (vv. 50–51). What the Savior declared deeply offended his ethnic Jewish peers (v. 52). Jesus did not make it any easier for his aggrieved detractors, for he explicitly stated that it was necessary for them to consume his "flesh" (v. 53; σὰρξ) and ingest his "blood" (αἷμα). What Jesus taught at the "synagogue in Capernaum" (v. 59) was loathsome to his interlocutors (vv. 54–60), because the Law of Moses forbade them from ingesting any "blood" (Deut 12:23) when they ate. The penalty for breaking this ordinance was to be treated as an outcast from the covenant community (Lev 17:10–14).

The strong, negative reaction Jesus experienced did not catch him by surprise. After all, he was cognizant from the start of his public ministry who would genuinely trust in him, along with who would eventually hand him over to the authorities (John 6:61–64). The Evangelist's indirect, parenthetical reference to Judas Iscariot is made more explicit in vv. 70 and 71. Keener (2003, 697) opines that the mention of Judas, when juxtaposed with Peter's affirmation (recorded in vv. 68–69), "presents apostasy and confession of faith as alternatives."

The Fourth Gospel preserves Jesus's statement of sovereignly choosing the Twelve, even though he knew in advance that one of them would prove to be disloyal (v. 70). Jesus equated the fiendish action of Judas Iscariot

with that of the “devil” (διάβολος), which Hendriksen (1953) clarifies can mean either “slanderer” or “false accuser.” As the BBE translation conveys (using a Hebraic idiomatic expression), Jesus’s statement has the exegetical force of Judas essentially being a “son of the Evil One” (namely, Satan).⁴⁵

The Evangelist next mentions Judas Iscariot in chapter 12. Six days before the Passover began,⁴⁶ Jesus and his disciples went to Bethany (v. 1), where the Savior visited Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. While the group ate dinner together, Mary anointed Jesus’s feet with expensive perfume. Verses 4–7 highlight a terse exchange between Jesus and Judas Iscariot. In keeping with what was noted earlier, Judas protested that the money spent on the “perfume” could have been given to the indigent. In agreement with Borchert (1996), the Fourth Gospel reveals that Judas was not a “tragic hero.” Moreover, far from caring about the destitute, Judas sought numerous opportunities to poach from a small, box-shaped container filled with donated silver coins, over which he was in charge. Carson (1991, 429) posits that Judas used the pretense of “altruism” to conceal his “personal greed.” Jesus, in response, rebuked Judas and declared that Mary’s act was special, because it honored the Son’s upcoming sacrificial death at Calvary. Perhaps the above incident convinced Judas that Jesus was not the politically motivated, sword-wielding Messiah so many of his ethnic peers longed to appear. If so, it provides one reason (of several mentioned earlier in the essay) for Judas’s premeditated decision to break faith with Jesus (Matt 24:14–16; Mark 14:10–11). John 13 deals pointedly with this act of betrayal, which occurred during a farewell meal Jesus ate with his disciples

⁴⁵ Borchert (1996) argues against any attempt to blame the Father for the “evil of Judas,” whose “rebellious heart” led him to betray the Savior.

⁴⁶ Passover (or Pesach) was annually observed in the spring between March and April.

before the annual “Passover Festival” (v. 1). The Crucifixion would fulfill the Passover’s symbolism (John 1:35; Acts 8:32; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19).

Prior to the start of the Last Supper, the “devil” (John 13:2; διάβολος) placed into the mind (καρδία) of Judas Iscariot to “betray” his loyalty to the Savior.⁴⁷ Newman and Nida (1980) paraphrase the exegetical force of βάλλω (to put or place) as the “Devil caused Judas to think.” It is unlikely that Jesus felt any personal sense of defeat about this, for he was aware that the Father had given him authority over everything. Jesus also knew that nothing could happen to him apart from the will of God, from whom Jesus had come and to whom He was returning (v. 3).

As Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, he adjudicated Peter’s objections and emphasized the importance of humble, sacrificial service (vv. 4–17). Amid this exchange, it remains unclear how Judas felt about what he heard. Perhaps Judas reacted with callous indifference, especially as Satan took control of him (v. 27). In any case, Jesus explained that his statements were not directed to all of those present at the Last Supper (v. 18). He also clarified that the decision Judas made to betray his Lord was foretold in Scripture. Specifically, Jesus quoted from the Hebrew version of Psalm 41:9. In this prayer for mercy, David noted that a trusted associate, who served in the king’s royal court and ate at his table, had lifted up his heel against the monarch. There are differing views concerning the meaning of this idiom.⁴⁸ Most likely, the idea is that one of David’s closest friends had acted treacherously by taking cruel advantage of him. What Israel’s ruler lamented found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of David, when

⁴⁷ Contra Barrett (1955, 365), who maintains that καρδίαν (“heart”) in John 13:2 refers to τοῦ διαβόλου (“the devil”), not Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτης (“Judas [son of] Simon Iscariot”); cf. v. 27, and the discussion in the following paragraph.

⁴⁸ Cf. Bernard (2000); Bruce (1983, 287–288); Carson (1991, 470–471); Lindars (1986, 454); Morris (1995, 552–553); Ridderbos (1997, 467); Westcott (1981, 193).

Judas Iscariot became the Nazarene's enemy by turning against him. The Savior was predicting this traitorous act before it ever happened so that when it occurred, his disciples would believe that he is the Messiah (John 13:19). The Greek is literally rendered "that I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι). One interpretive option, as put forward by Morris (1995, 553), is that Jesus made explicit reference to Exodus 3:14 and in so doing, declared himself to be the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-living God.⁴⁹

In John 13:21, Jesus once more emphatically stated (ἀμήν ἀμήν; "Amen, Amen") that one of the Twelve would "betray" him. Aside from Judas Iscariot, the rest of the "disciples" failed to comprehend whom Jesus meant (v. 22). Because John was "reclining" (v. 23) at the table close beside Jesus, Peter made a nonverbal gesture to John to learn whom Jesus had in mind (v. 24).⁵⁰ Accordingly, John leaned over to the Savior and asked him to identify the culprit (v. 25). Jesus did so by "dipping" (v. 26) a "piece" of unleavened "bread" in a "dish" filled with sauce and handing it to Judas Iscariot.⁵¹ After Judas took and ate the morsel, he fell under Satan's control and heeded Jesus's prompting to hurry in executing the villainous deed (v. 27). Even then, the rest of the Twelve remained oblivious concerning the turn of events that was about to unfold (v. 28). Bernard (2000) elucidates that Jesus's gesture was a common "courtesy" of the day, which clarifies why it easily "escaped the notice" of Judas's peers. They theorized that Jesus either urged Judas to purchase additional supplies to ensure a proper

49 Cf. Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13; in which the Hebrew, אֲנִי־הוּא, "I (am) he," is rendered ἐγώ εἰμι in the Septuagint.

50 Kruse (2003) refers to the "low U-shaped table" as a "triclinium," around which the attendees leaned on their "elbows," with their "heads" positioned toward and their "feet away from the table."

51 Carson (1991, 474) indicates that the "bowl" was filled with a "fruit purée" consisting of "dates, raisins, and sour wine." Bruce (1983, 290) adds that Jesus, as the "host" of the meal, showed "special favor" to Judas by offering him the "appetizing morsel."

observance of Passover or that he make a charitable donation to the "poor" (v. 29).

However, none of the above mattered to Judas. He promptly left the cohort under the cover of darkness to carry out his nefarious plan (v. 30). Cane (2017, 39) stresses that, for the Evangelist, "night" was filled with "symbolic import."⁵² Indeed, Judas's cold and calculating deed fitted Jesus's description of the renegade disciple as the "son of destruction" (17:12).⁵³ Xavier (1995, 256) refers to Judas as departing from Jesus, the "light of the world." Yet, for Jesus, a divinely-foreordained chain of events was now set in motion that would result in the glorification of the Father and the Son (13:31–32).

At some point during the evening, Jesus and the disciples moved to Gethsemane (Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32; John 18:1). Suddenly, the rattle of weapons disturbed the quiet of the garden, for Judas escorted a gaggle of priests, temple guards, and elders to the olive grove (John 18:2–3). Next, Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss on the cheek. Despite this customary gesture signaling amity between friends and family, treachery filled Judas's heart. Moreover, though his behavior seemed appropriate, Jesus saw the evil Judas's actions were meant to conceal (Luke 22:47–48). The dire turn of events did not fluster Jesus, including Judas's crass decision to stand with the arresting squad (John 18:5). The reason is that Jesus fully knew everything that was about to happen to him (v. 4).

52 Cf. John 3:2; 9:4; 11:10.

53 Jesus used a Semitic idiom (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας), which referred to someone who was destined for loss and perdition; cf. 2 Thess 2:3; Beasley-Murray (1999); Bernard (2000); Lindars (1986, 525–526); Morris (1995, 644–645); Ridderbos (1997, 553); Uruguchi (1918, 358). That said, as Ryan (2019, 223) observes, an analysis of the biblical data does not warrant vilifying Judas as the "embodiment of evil and the prototypical betrayer," along with using that caricature as a pretext for antisemitism. For an exploration of how Judas-legends were used to foster antisemitism, see Gubar (2009, 6–13, 114–117, 259–285, 389–393); Maccoby (1992, 101–40).

6. Conclusion: A Theological Assessment of Peter's Denial Versus Judas's Betrayal of Jesus

The preceding sections of the essay have undertaken a case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. In terms of their similarities, Jesus chose both as members of the original Twelve. Also, both Peter and Judas remained followers of Jesus throughout his three-year public ministry. Furthermore, both Peter and Judas took lead roles among the Twelve, such as Peter acting as the group's spokesperson and Judas overseeing the cohort's moneybag. Additionally, they both tried to undermine Jesus's redemptive mission, albeit in completely dissimilar ways and for entirely different reasons.⁵⁴

In terms of dissimilarities, Peter tended to be more spontaneous and impetuous in his disposition, whereas Judas operated in a more calculating and deliberative manner. On one level, both Peter and Judas failed Jesus in his moment of greatest challenge and need. Yet, on another level, the nature of their respective offenses resulted in vastly different ends. For Peter, though he denied Jesus three times, he repented of his transgression and was restored as a disciple of the Savior. For Judas, his betrayal of Jesus led to the renegade's despair, remorse, and suicide.

Moreover, though Judas Iscariot was associated with the Messiah, heard his teaching, and witnessed his works, he did not have an abiding spiritual union with the Son. Rather than bearing fruit, the life of Judas ended in ruin. Jesus taught Simon Peter the same truths and gave him the same sorts of opportunities to witness that Jesus had given Judas. Peter did not begin his life as a disciple with enormous success, but after some pruning (such as his denial of the Son and later reinstatement), Peter bore

⁵⁴ In a comparable manner, Farelly (2010, 97) submits that Peter and Judas "both desire to divert Jesus from the way leading to his Passion."

much fruit. He found the key to a productive life in a living relationship with the Savior.

Having synthesized the broad contours of the information presented in the preceding sections of the essay, the final task in this concluding section is to explore the underlying theological reason for these two divergent outcomes.⁵⁵ To be specific, why did Peter's denial of Jesus result in life for Peter, whereas Judas's betrayal of the Savior bring about Judas's demise?⁵⁶ Insight arises by placing the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of these two iconic disciples in conversation with 2 Corinthians 7:10–11.⁵⁷

The above passage states that "godly sorrow brings about repentance" (κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν ... ἐργάζεται).⁵⁸ The emphasis here is on a grief-stricken conscience (λύπη) that accords with God's will (or, as the REB

⁵⁵ Kim (2004, 25) charts a different course than this essay by considering Peter and Judas, respectively, through the interpretive lens of an "anti-apostasy polemic." Kim reasons that the Evangelist's "narrative presentation" of "Peter and Judas" functions as a "warning against apostasy." Moreover, Kim surmises that this approach serves to "protect the confessional kerygma" of the early Johannine "believing community."

⁵⁶ Greene (2016, 291–294) also deliberates the disparate outcomes experienced by Peter and Judas. Yet, in contrast to this essay, Greene mainly treats these two disciples as fictional literary characters, whose respective predispositions explain the reason for their differing fates. Specifically, on the one hand, Greene describes Judas as being "completely cynical, self-serving, and hypocritical." On the other hand, while Greene regards Peter as "sincere in his love for Jesus," Peter is said to be "initially too enthralled by ideas of worldly authority and personal status." Just as significant, Greene considers these dissimilar portraits found in the four Gospels as indicators of each Evangelist's "values and ideals," as well as a window into the "entire worldview" each of them held.

⁵⁷ Admittedly, the idea of 2 Cor 7:10–11 being illustrated by the experiences of Peter and Judas is not original to this essay; yet, the detailed usage of the passage as an interpretive lens in the discourse that follows is quite distinctive; cf. the brief observations made by the following: Barker (1999); Barton (1999); Belleville (1996); Garland (1999); Kim (2004, 212–213); Kistemaker (1997, 255); Kruse (2015); Martin (2014, 399); Plummer (1999); Seifrid (2014).

⁵⁸ The exegetical analysis of 2 Cor 7:10–11 has been informed by the following secondary sources: Barnett (1997); Best (1987); Garland (1999); Harris (2005); Hughes (1962); Kistemaker (1997); Kruse (2015); Omanson and Ellington (1993); Martin (2014); Plummer (1999); Pratt (2000); Seifrid (2014); Thrall (1994).

translates *κατὰ θεόν*, “borne in God’s way”). Not only do the penitent renounce their sinful behavior (*μετάνοια*, or a turnabout in one’s thinking and behavior), but they also experience the fulness of the temporal and eternal “salvation” (*σωτηρία*) that Jesus freely offers. Amid the entire process there is no “regret” (*ἀμεταμέλητος*) or lingering feelings of remorse for the emotional affliction they experienced. In contrast (signaled by the adversative use of *δέ*), “worldly” forms of “grief” (*τοῦ κόσμου λύπη*; that is, permeated by heathen ideations) lack genuine repentance. It is a self-centered and self-destructive type of guilt and paralyzing kind of shame. Those affected in this way are left feeling resentful, despondent, and tormented. The presence of indignation and animosity, whether directed at oneself or others (or both), inevitably “produces” (compare the previous use of *ἐργάζεται* with *κατεργάζεται* here)⁵⁹ physical and spiritual “death” (*θάνατος*).

Verse 10 provides a salient theological explanation for the divergent outcomes experienced by Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. Succinctly put, Peter’s grief was heartfelt and Spirit-induced, so much so that it turned him away from his iniquity and back to the Redeemer for pardon and cleansing. In contrast, Judas’s remorse was from below, not from above, so much so that it drove him further away from the Savior, inundated Judas with bitterness, and brought about his demise. Verse 11 takes the analysis further. When applied to Simon Peter, it is reasonable to surmise that his “godly sorrow,” though at first emotionally painful, created within him an earnest desire to draw closer to God and become once again a useful, productive bondservant in his kingdom. The closing two chapters of the Fourth Gospel, along with

the opening chapters of Acts, bear witness to this remarkable turnaround in Peter’s life.

Oppositely, nothing of the sort could be said of Judas Iscariot. Evidently, his ruefulness was not so much over his transgression, as it was over the unwelcomed consequences that his iniquity spawned (especially Jesus’s death). Also, Judas’s anguish diminished his relationship with the Savior, along with the rest of his followers. The consistent witness of the gospels and Acts is that Judas’s ill-fated choices led to his undoing.

From a pastoral perspective, the way in which believers respond to challenging life circumstances can become more important than the circumstances themselves. For instance, as with Simon Peter, when the Spirit convicts Jesus’s followers of sin in their lives, the proper response is for them to repent and receive God’s forgiveness. Dissimilarly, as with Judas Iscariot, the inappropriate response is to wallow in self-pity and plunge down a path leading to temporal and eternal destruction.

Bibliography

- Aune, David E., Timothy J. Geddert, and Craig A. Evans. 2000. “Apocalypticism.” In *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Barker, William R. 1999. *2 Corinthians*. Joplin: College Press.
- Barrett, C. Kingsley. 1955. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Barnett, Paul. 1997. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Barton, Bruce B. 1999. *1 and 2 Corinthians*. Wheaton: Tyndale.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. 1999. *John*. Dallas: Word Books.
- Belleville, Linda L. 1996. *2 Corinthians*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

⁵⁹ Huges (1962, 272) surmises that *κατεργάζεται* signifies an “intensive compound” of *ἐργάζεται*, which Paul used to “emphasize the inevitability” of *θάνατος*.

- Bernard, J.H. 2000. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Best, Ernest. 1987. *Second Corinthians*. Louisville: John Knox Press.
- Bird, Michael F. 2013. "Christ." In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicolas Perrin. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Blaine, Bradford. 2007. *Peter in the Gospel of John: The Making of an Authentic Disciple*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Bockmuehl, Markus. 2012. *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Borchert, Gerald L. 1996. *John 1–11*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman.
- Brown, Raymond E., Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds. 2002. *Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock.
- Bruce, F.F. 1983. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Büchsel, F. 1964. *παραδίδωμι*. In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by G.W. Kittel, G.W. Bromiley, and G. Friedrich. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Burge, Gary M. 2000. *John*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Cane, Anthony. 2017. *The Place of Judas Iscariot in Christology*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i1.923>
- Carson, Donald A. 1991. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Cassidy, Richard J. 2007. *Four Times Peter: Portrayals of Peter in the Four Gospels and at Philippi*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- Collins, John J. 2000. "Eschatologies of Late Antiquity." In *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Counet, Patrick C. 2011. "Judas, the Disciple Who Was Known to the High Priest: A Deconstruction of the Betrayal Based on John 18:15." *HTS Teologiese Studies* 67(1):1–7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i1.923>
- Cullman, Oscar. 2011. *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*. Translated by Floyd V. Filson. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- Danker, Frederick W. 2000. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226028958.001.0001>
- Domeris, William R. 1993. "The Confession of Peter According to John 6:69." *Tyndale Bulletin* 44(1):155–167.
- Evans, Craig A. 2000. "Messianism." In *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- . 2010. "Understanding the Gospel of Judas." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20(4):561–574.
- Farely, Nicolas. 2010. *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Foakes-Jackson, F.J. 2003. *Peter: Prince of Apostles*. Whitefish: Kissinger Publishing.
- Frankfurter, David. 2007. "An Historian's View of the 'Gospel of Judas.'" *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70(3):174–177. <https://doi.org/10.1086/nea20361323>
- Garland, David E. 1999. *2 Corinthians*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman.
- Gathercole, Simon. 2007. *The Gospel of Judas: Rewriting Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Greene, Clement. 2016. *Cowardice, Betrayal, and Discipleship: Peter and Judas in the Gospels*. PhD thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Gubar, Susan. 2009. *Judas: A Biography*. New York: W.W. Norton.

- Harris, Murray J. 2005. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Heard, W.J. and K. Yamazaki-Ransom. 2013. "Revolutionary Movements." In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicolas Perrin. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Heath, Gordon and Stanley E. Porter. 2007. *The Lost Gospel of Judas: Separating Fact from Fiction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Helyer, Larry R. 2012. *The Life and Witness of Peter*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Hendriksen, William. 1953. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Hengel, Martin. 2010. *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*. Translated by Thomas Trapp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Hughes, Philip E. 1962. *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Kasser, Rodolphe, Marvin Meyer, and George Wurst. 2007. *The Gospel of Judas*. Translated. New York: The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/judastxt.pdf>.
- Keener, Craig S. 2003. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Kim, Dongsu. 2004. *An Exegesis of Apostasy Embedded in John's Narrative of Peter and Judas Against the Synoptic Parallels*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- Kistemaker, Simon J. 1997. *2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Klassen, William. 1996. *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.
- Krosney, Herbert. 2006. *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot*. Washington, DC: The National Geographic Society.
- Kruse, Colin G. 2003. *John: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- . 2015. *2 Corinthians*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Lapham, F. 2003. *Peter: The Myth, the Man, and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Lindars, Barnabas. 1986. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Loken, Israel and Rick Brannan. 2014. *The Lexham Textual Notes on the Bible*. Bellingham: Lexham Press..
- Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene A. Nida. 1989. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.
- Maccoby, Hyam. 1992. *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*. New York: Free Press.
- Markley, John R. 2013. *Peter: Apocalyptic Seer*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. <https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-152464-6>
- Martin, Ralph P. 2014. *2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Mattison, Mark M. 2014. *The Gospel of Judas: The Sarcastic Gospel*. Scotts Valley: Create Space.
- . 2019. *The Gospel of Judas: A public domain translation*. <https://www.gospels.net/judas>.
- Maynard, Arthur H. 1984. "The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel." *New Testament Studies* 30(4):531–548.
- McGrew, Lydia. 2021. *The Eye of the Beholder: The Gospel of John as Historical Reportage*. Tampa: DeWard Publishing.
- Min, Kyung-Shik. 2017. "Jesus in the Gospel of Judas and the Self-understanding of the Community Behind the Gospel." *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 103(1):91–115.
- Morris, Leon. 1995. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Newman, Barclay M. and Eugene A. Nida. 1980. *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John*. New York: United Bible Societies.

- Omanson, Roger L. 2006. *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*. Stuttgart: German Bible Society.
- Omanson, Roger L. and John Ellington. 1993. *2 Corinthians: A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians*. New York: United Bible Societies.
- Oropeza, B. J. 2011. *In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors: The Gospels, Acts, and Johannine Letters*. Eugene: Cascade.
- Pratt, Richard R. 2000. *1 and 2 Corinthians*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman. Logos Research Systems edition.
- Perkins, Pheme. 1994. *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Pitre, B. J. 2013. "Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Teaching." In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicolas Perrin. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Plummer, Alfred. 1999. *The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Ridderbos, Herman. 1997. *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Ryan, Maurice. 2019. "Creating Judas Iscariot: Critical Questions for Presenting the Betrayer of Jesus." *Journal of Religious Education* 67(5):223–237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-019-00089-z>
- Seifrid, Mark A. 2014. *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Silva, Moisés, ed. 2014. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Sloyan, Gerald S. 2009. *John*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- Sturdevant, Jason S. 2015. "The Centrality of Discipleship in the Johannine Portrayal of Peter." In *Peter in Early Christianity*, edited by Helen K. Bond and Larry W. Hurtado, 109–129. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Taylor, Joan E. 2010. "The Name 'Iskarioth' (Iscariot)." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129(2):367–383. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27821024>
- Thatcher, Tom. 1996. "Judas, Jesus, and Peter: Character by Contrast in the Fourth Gospel." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153(612):435–448.
- Thrall, Margaret E. 1994. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Uraguchi, B. 1918. "The Psychology of Judas Iscariot." *The Biblical World* 51(6):345–360.
- Valente, Pedro. 2008. « Le Traître Nécessaire ? Judas l'Isariote. » *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 72(4):955–972. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfp.724.0955>
- Vyhmeister, Nancy J. and Terry D. Robertson. 2020. *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Westcott, B. F. 1981. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Whitacre, Rodney A. 1999. *John*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Wiarda, Timothy. 2000. *Peter in the Gospels: Pattern, Personality, and Relationship*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . 2011. "The Portrayal of Peter and Atonement Theology in the Gospel of John." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 21(4):507–523.
- Worthing, Mark. 2018. "Judas Iscariot: A Biblical and Theological Reappraisal of the Forgotten Apostle." *Lutheran Theological Journal* 52(3):152–164.
- Wright, N.T. 2006. *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus*. London: SPCK.
- Xavier, Aloysius. 1995. "Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel: A Paradigm of Lost Discipleship." *Indian Theological Studies* 32(3):250–258.