

Question:

Why did Jesus say that Judas Iscariot was a “devil” in John 6:70? If Jesus knew this, why did He choose Judas as one of His twelve disciples?

Answer:

Let’s begin by examining the Scripture in question:

John 6:70-71 (ESV)

“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.’ He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray Him.”

At first glance, this might seem puzzling. Why would Jesus knowingly choose someone He called “a devil”? Does this mean Judas was Satan incarnate? Theologically and biblically, the answer is no. Let’s explore why.

1. Understanding “Devil”

When Jesus called Judas “a devil,” He was not saying Judas was literally Satan. The Greek word used here is *diabolos*, which can mean *accuser*, *slanderer*, or someone under satanic influence. Jesus was speaking figuratively, describing the spiritual nature and moral character of Judas at that time.

This use of metaphor is consistent with how Jesus spoke of others. For example, He once referred to Herod Antipas as a “fox.”

Luke 13:31-32 (ESV)

“At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, ‘Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.’ And He said to them, ‘Go and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.’”

Here, Jesus didn’t mean Herod was literally an animal, but rather that he was cunning and deceitful attributes associated with a fox.

2. The Nature of Judas's Heart and Influence of Satan

Judas was not Satan, but he allowed Satanic influence to take root in his life. This is seen clearly in the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 22:3-4 (ESV)

“Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the Twelve. He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them.”

This passage affirms that Judas's betrayal was not merely a human decision but was influenced if not possessed by a demonic force. Judas gave room in his heart to Satan, which culminated in his infamous betrayal.

3. Peter Also Rebuked as “Satan”

This principle is further demonstrated when Jesus rebuked Peter not because Peter was Satan, but because Peter was, at that moment, expressing thoughts aligned with Satan's agenda:

Matthew 16:22-23 (ESV)

“And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to You.’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’”

Jesus wasn't condemning Peter as Satan incarnate but was rebuking the satanic mindset one that opposes God's redemptive plan.

4. Why Did Jesus Choose Judas?

Why would Jesus choose someone He knew would betray Him?

The answer lies in divine sovereignty and the fulfillment of Scripture. Judas's betrayal was foreknown and foretold as part of God's redemptive plan.

John 13:18 (ESV)

“I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate My bread has lifted his heel against Me.’”

Psalms 41:9 (ESV)

“Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”

Jesus’ choice of Judas wasn’t an accident. It was in full accordance with prophetic Scripture. God used even the betrayal of Jesus for His ultimate purpose our salvation.

5. Watchfulness Against the Spirit of Betrayal

Judas’s story is a sobering reminder that proximity to Jesus (being among the twelve) is not the same as being spiritually aligned with Him. Satan can exploit weaknesses in anyone who opens the door, whether through greed, ambition, or doubt.

Paul also warns believers of this in the New Testament:

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 (ESV)

“And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.”

Therefore, believers are called to continually examine their hearts:

2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV)

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”

And we are reminded to walk daily in self denial and submission to Christ:

Matthew 16:24-25 (ESV)

“Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"

- Judas was not the devil incarnate, but a man who allowed the devil to influence him.
- Jesus used the term "devil" symbolically to describe Judas's spiritual condition.
- Judas's betrayal fulfilled prophecy and served a divine purpose in the plan of salvation.
- The same satanic influence can affect anyone not vigilant in faith.
- True discipleship means aligning our hearts and minds with God's will through daily surrender.

May the Lord give us grace to remain faithful and spiritually discerning, so that we walk not in the spirit of betrayal, but in the spirit of truth and devotion to Christ.

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