

SATAN ENTERED HIM

There are two passages in the Bible which say that “Satan entered” Judas. The first time is in Luke 22:1-4. “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then **Satan entered Judas**, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So, he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them.” The second time is in John 13, at the Last Supper, when Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him (v.21). A few verses later, the Bible says, “Now after the piece of bread, **Satan entered him**. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly’” (v.27). I was asked to discuss the meaning these passages.

There are those who claim that these verses are teaching “Satanic possession” – i.e. that Satan literally entered the body of Judas, and controlled him against his will. I believe such a view is untenable. While I DO believe that there was a time when demons could possess men (e.g. Mt.12:22), I do not believe this is an instance of such. My reasons are as follows:

When one was “possessed” by demons, s/he had no control over themselves (e.g. Mk.5:1-5, cf. v.11-15). **By contrast, Judas seems to have all his faculties.** He “conferred with the chief priest and captains, how he might betray” Jesus (Lk.22:4). **Further, Judas is held fully responsible for what he did (Jn.17:12; Ac.1:24-25).** If he was “possessed” by Satan, he would have no control over his actions, and could not be held responsible for them. In a Biblical context, “possession,” by definition, would place one is under the control of another. That’s not what happened to Judas! **He CHOSE to betray Christ!**

Instead, of being “possessed” by Satan, Judas simply yielded to the “influence” of Satan. To illustrate this point, consider the case of Ananias and Saphira. When Peter rebuked Ananias, he said, “Ananias, **why has Satan filled your heart** to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? **Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?** You have not lied to men but to God” (Ac.5:3-4). Note carefully that “Satan filled (his) heart” – that sounds a lot like “Satan entered him.” Yet, one verse later, Peter said that Ananias “conceived this thing in (his) heart.” **Sounds more like “Satanic collusion,” rather than “Satanic possession!”**

To further illustrate this, consider the “flip side” of this equation – **i.e. the “indwelling” of the Holy Spirit.** It is a fact that the Spirit dwells in the Christian (1Cor.6:19). However, this is NOT to be understand as a “possession” by the Spirit, for we still have control over our behavior. In this very context, we are told to “**flee sexual immorality**” (v.18) and “**glorify God**” (v.20). But if we were actually “possessed” by the Holy Spirit, those things would automatically happen! “Indwelling” is better understood as “influence,” rather than “possession.”

To wrap this up, I offer this quote from Albert Barnes in His commentary on Luke 22:3. I will say up front that just because Barnes said this does not make it so! But it does show that I am not alone in my conclusion here. Now, let’s look at the quote: “[Then entered Satan into Judas] **It is not necessary to suppose that Satan entered personally into the body of Judas, but only that he brought him under his influence; he filled his mind with an evil passion, and led him on to betray his Master. The particular passion of which Satan made use was ‘avarice’ - probably the besetting sin of Judas. To show its exceeding evil and baseness, it is only necessary to say that when it produced its ‘appropriate’ effect in this case, it led to the betraying and crucifixion of the Son of God. We may learn, also, that when Satan ‘tempts’ people, he commonly does it by exciting and raising to the highest pitch their native passions. He does not make them act contrary to their nature, but leads them on to ‘act out’ their proper disposition.**”

I hope this brief study helps answer the question about Satan “entering” Judas.

--Lanny Smith