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The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel

A Narrative Analysis of their Faith and Understanding

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concerned about him abandoning or betraying Jesus like Judas. Indeed, Jesus promised him: "you will follow me later" (13:36).

Once more, the faith of Peter (however weak it is potentially), and his lack of understanding of Jesus' identity and work continue to run parallel to each other. Peter's authentic discipleship struggles to comprehend his Master, especially the necessity of his death, and what is expected of him as a disciple, but the narrator shows that Jesus is in total control over his discipleship.

6. "Put your sword into its sheath" (18:10–11)

Several chapters later, when the disciples are present with Jesus in the garden (18:1), Peter illustrates that he still has not understood Jesus' mission, even after the long Farewell Discourses (13:31–16:33). Peter is mentioned at the end of the scene, as Jesus is about to be arrested and taken away. Jesus was ready to be apprehended by the soldiers, and he asked that his disciples be let go for "of those you gave me I have lost no one" (18:9). But Peter refused to let it happen and so began to fight, cutting the high priest's servant's ear (18:10). The fight does not get very far, however, because Jesus swiftly stopped it, ordering Peter to put his sword back in his sheath and rebuking him: "shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (18:11).⁵⁵

These two verses are significant for the unfolding of Peter's characterisation in the narrative.⁵⁶ First, it shows that Peter's prior willingness to die for Jesus (13:37) was real and honest, since he actually put it into action. More importantly, it shows that Peter still does not understand that Jesus *must* die. He is not ready to let go of his own understanding of what a Messiah ought to be and do, and so chooses to disobey Jesus and the Father: "Il choisit l'épée du sang versé plutôt que le calice du sang donné en obéissance à son Père."⁵⁷ Because of this, the contrast between Peter and Judas, another disciple present on the scene (18:2, 3, 5), is more ambiguous here than earlier in the narrative. Judas betrays his master by divulging where Jesus is to Jewish authorities, and so seeks his death. Peter, on the other hand, fights against Jesus' apprehension that would lead to his death. But these two opposed actions from the disciples are not as different as one might think. Indeed, they both desire to divert Jesus from the way leading to his Passion: "Peter is thwarting God's design as Judas is thwarting God's design."⁵⁸ Though their motivations are diametrically opposed, they

⁵⁵ Köstenberger, *John*, 509: "'Cup' serves here as a metaphor for death. In the OT, the expression refers primarily to 'God's cup of wrath,' which evildoers will have to drink. [...] This imagery may have been transferred to the righteous, guiltless one taking upon himself God's judgment by way of substitutionary suffering."

⁵⁶ Pace Becker, *Johannes*, 2:544, who claims that Peter's actions serve no other purpose than to introduce Jesus' acceptance of the Father's will.

⁵⁷ Marchadour, "Simon-Pierre," 190. See also Wiarda, *Peter*, 139.

⁵⁸ Moloney, *John*, 484.

refuse the path prepared for Jesus by the Father. Peter's loyalty and desire to protect Jesus is thus reprehensible because it is misguided and it stands between Jesus and his mission in the world.⁵⁹ As a whole, Peter's misunderstanding has grave consequences since it leads him to disobedience.

7. "And at once the rooster crowed" (18:15–18, 25–27)

The next passage in which Peter appears continues to draw on the consequences of Peter's inability to understand Jesus and brings to a dramatic conclusion Jesus' prediction about Peter's denials in 13:38. As Jesus is taken away to Annas' court to be interrogated (18:13), Peter follows Jesus from a distance with "another disciple."⁶⁰ It is because of this other disciple that Peter gains access to the court, for he "was known to the high priest" (18:15).⁶¹ But as Peter was about to enter the court, the woman who guarded the door asked him: "You also are not [μὴ] one of this man's disciples, are you?" Peter answered by a lie, saying: "I am not" (18:17). Interestingly, this lie, "οὐκ εἰμὶ," which Peter will repeat in 18:25, is the exact reversal of Jesus' words, who revealed his identity in the garden declaring "ἐγὼ εἰμὶ" (18:5, 8). As proposed by Lincoln, "Depicting Peter's denial in this fashion shows up the failure of his witness not only in contrast to that of Jesus in the surrounding narrative but also in contrast to John [...] at the beginning."⁶² The narration of this event then briefly shifts focus from Peter to the officers (ὑπηρέται) and servants who had prepared a charcoal fire to

⁵⁹ Droge, "Peter," 311, goes too far in his indictment of Peter: "Moreover, when Peter's desperate act is interpreted in light of Jesus' statement 'If my kingdom was of this world, my subject would fight' (18:36), it becomes clear that the author of the Fourth Gospel has leveled a devastating indictment at Peter. That Peter *does* fight suggests, at a minimum, that he has a fundamental misunderstanding of Jesus and of the nature of his kingship. Worse still, Peter's action reveals that he is not a 'subject' of Jesus' heavenly kingdom [...]." Indeed, Jesus here only says that if his kingdom was of this world, he would order his disciples to fight, but it does not necessarily follow that if one disciple started to fight, his membership in the kingdom would be jeopardised! It is simply that this disciple has failed to grasp the nature of the Kingdom of which he is a member.

⁶⁰ Most probably, this disciple is none other than the "Beloved Disciple" (see e.g. Lincoln, *John*, 452–53). The section on the faith and understanding of the Beloved Disciple will come back to the issue of his identification.

⁶¹ For Kim, *Apostasy*, 36, "John's mention of the other disciple's help in this passage may be intended to shed light on Peter's determination to follow Jesus even to the point of death as he alleges in 13:37." This proposition is, unfortunately, difficult to assess textually.

⁶² Lincoln, *Truth*, 64. John twice said "I am not" when he was questioned three times about being the Messiah or Elijah (1:20, 21), just as Peter says "I am not" twice also responding to three questions. Obviously, John's answers were part of his "confessing" of Jesus, while Peter's are part of his "denying." Pace Quast, *Figures*, 87, for whom "Peter's reticence in entering the courtyard is not so much a refusal to be identified with Jesus as it is a fear of retribution for cutting off the ear of the guard," no textual element favours such a reading, while the insistence of the text in using the word μαθητής four times may indicate that discipleship is the issue at stake.

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All in all, however, chapter 21 cannot be considered a complete reversal of Peter's character compared with the first 20 chapters of the story. Throughout the narrative, Peter's faith is never explicitly denied, but often shows itself to be lacking its proper fruits because it is accompanied by misunderstanding. Implied readers, between Peter's denials and his reinstatement by Jesus, are nonetheless left with real ambiguity in regard to understanding Peter's faith, for it is practically impossible to consider him either as a believer or as an unbeliever. The portrayal of his faith during these chapters does not allow neat categories to be applied to him, but it is exactly this ambiguity that is lifted in chapter 21, which "redeems" this character and clarifies his standing as a disciple. There, he will in effect receive Jesus' forgiveness, and in reaffirming his love for and faith in Jesus, he is commissioned to a leadership role in the early church. Finally, Peter is able to truly follow Jesus (21:19).¹⁰² Even more, a death that is glorifying to God is predicted for him (21:18), thus highlighting his continued faithful discipleship to the end. In chapter 21, Peter's faith is not doubted, as it may have been earlier in the narrative. Implied readers receive the assurance of his fidelity to Jesus to the end

B. Judas

The Fourth Gospel gives relatively little information about Judas, and yet his characterisation is rich and dramatic. Judas appears in several sections of the narrative, and always in a negative light. Though he is clearly identified as one of "the Twelve," he is nonetheless called "a devil" (6:70) and "a thief" (12:6). Most famously, of course, Judas is the disciple who betrays Jesus (6:71; 12:4; 13:11, 21–30; 18:2–5), a betrayal that leads to Jesus' trial and crucifixion. As a whole, one might say that Judas is portrayed as a "figure of the night" (13:30).¹⁰³ This section will therefore attempt to understand the Fourth Gospel's perspective on Judas' faith and understanding (or, rather, unbelief and lack of understanding), drawing on the implied author's artful depiction of this character's several dimensions and of his role in the plot of Fourth Gospel. Since Judas is clearly portrayed as a disciple, albeit an errant one, it will be of interest for this study to notice how the implied author chose to contrast his characterisation with that of other disciples.

1. "One of you is a devil" (6:64, 70–71)

The final section of chapter 6 (6:60–71) builds on the preceding bread of life discourse.¹⁰⁴ But whereas in the discourse Jesus' conversation partners were

¹⁰² For Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 395–96, Peter represents throughout the Fourth Gospel a kind of discipleship that can be called "active service."

¹⁰³ Collins, *These Things*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ "This saying," in 6:60 is a clear reference back to Jesus' discourse.

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"the crowd" and "the Jews," this section focuses on the disciples: first a general group of Jesus-followers who ultimately abandon him (6:60–66), and second "the Twelve" who, through the representative confession of Peter, acknowledge that Jesus is "the Holy one of God" (6:67–71). Judas, in this section, is mentioned both in relation to the first group, though only implicitly, and as a member of "the Twelve," with Jesus singling him out in very strong terms.

In 6:64, Jesus mentions that some of his disciples do not believe. In other words, among his followers were some who were unable to receive and believe the words spoken by Jesus because his words were "spirit and life" (6:63).¹⁰⁵ In a narratorial aside, implied readers learn that "Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him." As Carson mentions, "Jesus was going toward his God appointed task with his eyes wide open,"¹⁰⁶ knowing perfectly well that one of his disciples was a traitor. Arguably, the first mention of the character of Judas is implicitly given at this point by the narrator, and it comes in the context of both Jesus and the narrator mentioning the paradox that some disciples are in fact unbelievers. The betrayer is therefore most naturally to be understood also as a non-believer,¹⁰⁷ and one whose understanding of Jesus and his words is "fleshy."¹⁰⁸

The second mention of Judas comes also in this section of the narrative, but this time explicitly and in relation to "the Twelve." After Peter's confession of faith, Jesus addresses his band of close disciples as follows: "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet, one of you is a devil" (6:70). This is an identification of Satan himself,¹⁰⁹ which indicates that the devil has been able to infiltrate even Jesus' closest followers.¹¹⁰ As was already mentioned in our study of the faith and understanding of the group of Jesus' disciples, this mention of a devil among "the Twelve" does not necessarily reflect poorly on the group as a whole and does not need to induce suspicion of the entire group, for indeed, the devil is immediately identified personally by the narrator in 6:71.¹¹¹ There,

¹⁰⁵ Lincoln, *John*, 237–38: "Among would-be disciples of Jesus, there are those who are unable to come to proper belief because their merely natural categories of judgment have not been transformed."

¹⁰⁶ Carson, *John*, 302. This impression is reinforced in 6:70, where Jesus claims to have chosen "the Twelve," including the "devil" among them.

¹⁰⁷ Kim, *Apostasy*, 154: "What is interesting in 6:64 is John's juxtaposition of the theme of unbelief and the theme of betrayal. In this way John deliberately links the theme of unbelief with Judas' betrayal."

¹⁰⁸ Moloney, *John*, 228.

¹⁰⁹ The substantive διάβολός in the New Testament always refers to Satan, even though in common Greek it could also mean "slanderer" or "false accuser." Thus, one might say that Satan "so operates behind failing human beings that his malice becomes theirs. Jesus can discern the source, and labels it appropriately" (Carson, *John*, 304).

¹¹⁰ Lincoln, *John*, 239.

¹¹¹ Contra, e.g., Conway, *Men and Women*, 169; and D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*, NFTL (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1981;

he explains that the "devil" of whom Jesus spoke was "Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him." The betrayer or unbeliever mentioned in 6:64 is thus now clearly identified, and starkly contrasts with Peter who professed faith in Jesus on behalf of "the Twelve."¹¹²

The motif of the betrayal strongly dominates Judas' characterisation in this section of the narrative. Yet, the implied author does not treat Judas solely as a "betrayer." If the author in 6:64, 71 already anticipates the betrayal that would in fact be effective only in 18:2, Judas' characterisation is not entirely stereotyped.¹¹³ Paffenroth argues that "all attempt to understand him as a human character has dropped out, and he becomes merely an illustration of John's ideas about evil."¹¹⁴ But this probably goes too far. Though Paffenroth is correct to state that Judas' betrayal dominates his characterisation, the narrator does take time to present Judas as a real human, a son,¹¹⁵ and a member of "the Twelve," although, as will be argued below, his human features are not fully exploited by the implied author. Certainly, this character raises acute issues, for he is a man of flesh and blood chosen by Jesus himself to be part of his little troupe of followers, yet a devil who would later betray him. Interestingly, the text gives no indication that Judas himself was aware, at this point, of being a devil, a betrayer, or an unbeliever.¹¹⁶ Only through Jesus' words, explained by the narrator's asides, do implied readers learn about Judas' unbelieving state and future treason.¹¹⁷ In the next section, in potential accordance with Judas' characterisation as a "devil," implied readers learn that he was far from upright even prior to his betrayal, for he was a thief.

2. "He said this ... because he was a thief" (12:4-8)

If Judas remained silent in his first appearance in the narrative, he appears in this new section as a critic of Mary's anointing of the feet of Jesus with expensive ointment. In fact, it is the only time in the Fourth Gospel that Judas manifests a

reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 130.

¹¹² As noted by Kim, *Apostasy*, 154-55, the link between Judas' betrayal and his unbelief is reinforced by his appellation as "a devil," for, in line with the Fourth Gospel and the New Testament as a whole, the themes of unbelief and of the devil are often connected (e.g., Matt. 16:23; Lk. 22:31-32; Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 3:10).

¹¹³ Pace Marchadour, *Personnages*, 187.

¹¹⁴ K. Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 36.

¹¹⁵ Koester, *Symbolism*, 73: "Since the Fourth Gospel accents the demonic elements in Judas' character, these references are important for perspective: Judas is a person with a human father whose name was Simon." Judas will be identified as "the son of Simon Iscariot" again in 13:2, 26.

¹¹⁶ In 13:2, the narrator mentions that "the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Jesus," but he does not specify when this actually happened.

¹¹⁷ Interestingly, the disciples are not said to have questioned Jesus on the identity of this "devil" at this point. Such questioning will only come in 13:22.

personal reaction to an event by speaking. Or, to use Booth's terminology, it is the only instance of "showing," allowing implied readers to draw conclusions from Judas' action.¹¹⁸ But before he even opens his mouth, he is introduced by the narrator as "Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him)" (12:4). Once more, the paradox of a disciple about to betray his master is brought to the fore. Such an aside certainly colours the apparently unobjectionable reaction of Judas: "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (12:5). From the implied author's perspective, however, such an introduction is perfectly legitimate since Judas' concern for the poor was hypocritical. From his question only, implied readers may have drawn the wrong conclusions about Judas' character. Thus, the narrator also adds that Judas was a "thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it" (12:6).

Here, it can be noted that this latter aside is consistent with the depiction of Judas in the Synoptic tradition, where it is made clear that his betraying of Jesus was motivated by money (Mk. 14:10–11; Matt. 26:14–16).¹¹⁹ However, on a purely literary level, the narrative of the Fourth Gospel is unconcerned with any psychological or political motivations for Judas' betraying Jesus.¹²⁰ If he was guilty of stealing from the purse, money does not appear to have been a motivation for his betrayal in the narrative.¹²¹ Rather, Judas is consistently portrayed as under the influence of the devil (13:2, 27), or, as we have seen, as "a devil" himself (6:70). As such, he is related to his father the devil, and his will is to do what his father desires, that is, to murder and to lie (cf. 8:44; 13:2).¹²² Likewise, the label "thief" is employed elsewhere in the narrative to denote an opposition to Jesus and his fold (10:1, 8, 10), and here the term may well serve a similar function.¹²³ The implied author thus uses Judas to show how evil has cosmic dimensions (betraying Jesus, the Son of God), but also petty and trivial ones (lying about one's concern for the poor, stealing money from the purse).¹²⁴

Most notably, as far as the present study is concerned, Judas' faith and understanding contrast strongly with that of Mary in this section.¹²⁵ Indeed, while Mary's exuberant devotion to Jesus displayed her acceptance of the necessity of

¹¹⁸ Booth, *Fiction*, 3–9.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., Lincoln, *John*, 338.

¹²⁰ Likewise, Judas will show no remorse after his betrayal, but will simply disappear from the story.

¹²¹ L. Eslinger, "Judas Game: The Biology of Combat in the Gospel of John," *JSNT* 77 (2000): 51; R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vols (New York, NY/London/Toronto/Sydney/Auckland: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1402.

¹²² Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 124.

¹²³ Lincoln, *John*, 339.

¹²⁴ Paffenroth, *Judas*, 34.

¹²⁵ Lee, *Symbolic*, 190.

Jesus' death,¹²⁶ Judas' response is to be seen as "a complete lack of insight into what he has witnessed."¹²⁷ Even more, Judas, in complaining about Mary's action, reveals a form of apathy towards Jesus: he is simply not concerned about Jesus' upcoming death.¹²⁸ Jesus thus swiftly reprimands Judas (12:7–8). Mary had understood the urgency and brevity of the time left before Jesus' death and had responded appropriately by anointing Jesus' feet as a preparation for his burial.¹²⁹ Concerns for the poor are constantly valid (Deut. 15:11), but they pale in comparison to Jesus' approaching departure. Judas was thus wrong on both counts: he sought to mislead people about concerns for the poor that were, in any case, inappropriate at that point. It should be noted, finally, that it is only through the narratorial aside or inside view that implied readers learn about Judas' hypocrisy. Jesus only addresses Judas' misunderstanding.

3. "You are clean, but not every one of you" (13:1–20)

Before the feast of the Passover (13:1), Jesus had supper with his disciples, during which Judas will often be mentioned (13:2, 11, 18, 21–30, 31). First, Jesus interrupts the meal to wash his disciples' feet (13:5). But before proceeding with the story, the narrator mentions the presence of Judas, once more in very negative terms. He explains that the scene took place "during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (13:2).¹³⁰ As Carson mentions, "John ensures that his readers grasp just how strongly this episode attests the loving character of Jesus. The disciples whose feet he was about to wash include Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, whose

¹²⁶ Bauckham and Hart, *At the Cross*, 17.

¹²⁷ Lincoln, *John*, 339. Lincoln further shows the irony of Judas' misunderstanding of the necessity of Jesus' death and his own upcoming role in bringing it about. As we have seen in an earlier part, Judas is certainly not alone in his lack of insight, as the other disciples themselves will lack such an understanding even after Jesus teaches them about it in the farewell discourse.

¹²⁸ Kim, *Apostasy*, 172–73. T. Thatcher, "Jesus, Judas, and Peter: Character by Contrast in the Fourth Gospel," *BSac* 153 (1996): 442, goes a step farther: "Judas sought to control both Jesus and Mary by forcing the Savior to rebuke her."

¹²⁹ For Lee, *Symbolic*, 219, Mary's prophetic action "functions as a faith confession."

¹³⁰ The Greek text is ambiguous as it simply says that the devil put betrayal "in his heart" (εἰς τὴν καρδίαν). Moreover, there are variants in regard to Judas between the genitive Ἰούδα (A D K Δ Θ Π f¹ 28 33 700 892 Byz) and the nominative Ἰούδας (p⁶⁶ B L W X Ψ 0124 2141 al). Since the latter could be translated as follows: "The devil had already put into the heart that Judas should betray Jesus," one wonders whose heart this is referring to. Several commentators have taken it to mean that the devil put the idea of betrayal into his own heart (so, e.g. Barrett, *John*, 439; Moloney, *John*, 378; E. Delebecque, *Évangile de Jean. Texte traduit et annoté*, CahRB 23 (Paris: Gabalda, 1987), 183), but this interpretation is unlikely for the genitive Ἰούδα is "the easier reading, which, if original, would not have been altered to a more difficult construction" (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 239). For detailed discussions, see Brown, *John*, 2:550.

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treacherous plot had already been conceived.¹³¹ Jesus already knew that Judas was a devil (6:70), and as will become clear, his plans to betray Jesus were also known by Jesus (vv. 11, 18). Yet, Jesus offers the gift of μένος to him by washing his feet (implied in the narrative).¹³²

In 13:2, Judas is portrayed as a human ("Judas Iscariot, Simon's son"), yet one strongly affected by the devil, so that his characterisation remains ambiguous. Judas' decision to betray Jesus finds its roots in the devil himself, and even though the betrayal was to be mediated by a human, his decision and action can properly be understood as satanic. Such understanding of the betrayal, however, cannot be seen as an excuse for Judas' behaviour.¹³³ On the contrary, in insisting on the link between Judas' decision and the devil's purposes, the implied author seeks to portray Judas as a human agent of the devil, and thus guilty of a terrible sin.¹³⁴ Jesus was nevertheless able to put Judas' decision into proper perspective (13:3), as Newbigin suggests:

But Jesus, in the assuredness of his unbroken communion with the Father, knows that even the treachery of Judas can only further the Father's purpose of salvation for the world, knows that this purpose has been wholly committed into his hands, and knows that it is both the source of his coming into the world and the goal of his going from the world.¹³⁵

After having washed his disciples' feet, and in conclusion to his conversation with Peter (13:6–9), Jesus says: "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you" (13:10). Jesus says this, as the narrator explains: "for he knew who was about to betray him; that was why he said: 'not all of you are clean'" (13:11). As was argued in the study of the faith and understanding of the group of the disciples in the Fourth Gospel, what has made the disciples "clean" in this section seems to be that they have already believed in Jesus, as he later makes clear in 15:3.¹³⁶ Logically, it follows that the betrayer Judas is an unbeliever. He has not believed in Jesus, in his words and in his deeds, and thus the values to which the footwashing pointed (namely, abiding with Jesus through the pattern of glory through humiliation that Jesus would exemplify at the cross) were irrelevant and of no effect on him.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Carson, *John*, 461.

¹³² Chennattu, *Discipleship*, 98.

¹³³ So Carson, *John*, 462: "The idea, then, is not that Judas was not responsible, for a heart incited by Satan actually wills what the devil wills (Schlatter, p. 279); rather, the plot against Jesus, however mediated by wicked human beings, was nothing less than [*sic*] Satanic."

¹³⁴ *Contra* Paffenroth, *Judas*, 35 and Bultmann, *John*, 482 who tends to eliminate any human element in Judas' characterisation.

¹³⁵ L. Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI/Edinburgh: Eerdmans/Handsel Press, 1982), 167.

¹³⁶ Lincoln, *John*, 370.

¹³⁷ H.-J. Klauck, *Judas, un disciple de Jésus. Exégèse et répercussions historiques*, trans. by J. Hoffmann, LD 212 (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 89. For Klauck, the fact that Judas did not resist Jesus'

Indeed, as Jesus continues to expound the meaning of the footwashing as an "example" for his disciples to follow, he once more refers (implicitly, but very clearly to implied readers) to Judas: "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'" (13:18). The Scripture in question is Ps. 41:9, which may be referring back to Gen. 3:15,¹³⁸ so that Judas could once more be identified with the devil in 13:18. Jesus thus warns his disciples beforehand of what is about to happen in 13:26–27 and in the ensuing actions of Judas against him, seeking to ground these events in salvation history, more precisely in the cosmic conflict between God and evil. Such a prediction is also meant to assist the faith of the disciples (13:19):

The disciples are warned beforehand, so that the terrible manifestation of the work of Satan in the very heart of the Church will not destroy their faith, but – on the contrary – enable them to believe that Jesus is indeed the Lord, the one who alone can say "I AM."¹³⁹

Thus, once again in 13:10, 18, Jesus makes a clear distinction between his true disciples, those who have believed in him, and the betrayer Judas (*cf.* 6:70). Jesus is very much aware of Judas' intention to betray him, he knows that he cannot count him as one of his true disciples. As a whole, Judas' actions are to be understood in the whole scheme of salvation history, but if Judas is acting as an enemy of God, God remains in control of the events at hand, as will be made clear in 13:21–30; 17:12; 18:1–11.

4. "What you are going to do, do it quickly" (13:21–30)

This section of the narrative marks an important development in the treatment of Judas as this character begins to put his plan into action. The figure of the betrayer is the centre of attention in this section; in fact, it opens with Jesus being "troubled in his spirit" and testifying: "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me" (13:21). Jesus had already mentioned to the disciples that one of them was "a devil" (6:70), that not everyone was "clean" (13:11), and that one of them had "lifted his heel against him" (13:18), but so far, none of the disciples had questioned Jesus about these remarks. In 13:22, however, "the disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke." Peter thus decided to ask Jesus, via the Beloved Disciple, to be more explicit. Jesus answered the Beloved Disciple: "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it" (13:26a). Jesus then gave it to Judas Iscariot (13:26b), and "after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him" (13:27a).

This remark is at first surprising given the fact that Judas had already been called "a devil" (6:70) and that "the devil had already put into [his] heart to

footwashing only aggravates what is already said about him in the narrative.

¹³⁸ Kim, *Apostasy*, 187–88.

¹³⁹ Newbigin, *Fourth Gospel*, 172.

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betray [Jesus]" (13:2). It is probable that the implied author sought to show that, as the devil had already been active in planting the intention to betray Jesus in Judas' heart, such intention had now settled in Judas' heart, so that "Judas can be depicted as having been taken over by Satan."¹⁴⁰ But such a "possession" happens at the most inappropriate of times, immediately after Jesus gives him a piece of bread, so that "the final gesture of affection precipitates the final surrender of Judas to the power of darkness."¹⁴¹ As Jesus very certainly knew that Satan had now taken a complete hold of his disciple, he tells Judas: "What you are going to do, do quickly" (13:27b). The idea of betrayal is thus set in motion, and just as Judas' identification with evil is complete, he immediately goes out (13:30). Judas understands exactly what Jesus is telling him.¹⁴² He has fully accepted his role of betrayer, and made the conscious decision to deliver Jesus to the authorities. Ironically, even in this most ignominious act of betrayal, Jesus remains in control of the situation, and Judas does what Jesus tells him to do.¹⁴³

The other disciples, however, have yet to understand who the betrayer is (13:28–29), so that their being at a loss about his identity is an implicit indication that they thought Judas to be on a similar level of discipleship with them up to that point. Judas had probably not given them any external indications about his lack of faith or evil intentions, but such a situation could not last long. Indeed, the concluding words of this section are fitting, and symbolically very meaningful: "and it was night" (13:30). For Lincoln, "His walking out into the night is a graphic portrayal of the state of affairs in which 'the light has come into the world, and the people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds

¹⁴⁰ Lincoln, *John*, 379.

¹⁴¹ Newbigin, *Fourth Gospel*, 173. For D. F. Tolmie, "Jesus, Judas and a Morsel. Interpreting a Gesture in John 13:21–30," in *Miracles and Imagery in Luke and John*. *Festschrift Ulrich Busse*, ed. by J. Verheyden, G. Van Belle, and J. G. Van der Watt, BETL 218 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 123, the gesture should be interpreted as one of feeding, so as to underline Judas' treacherousness. For Brown, *John*, 2:578, Judas' acceptance of the morsel of bread without changing his plans is an indication that "he has chosen for Satan rather than for Jesus." For Kim, *Apostasy*, 190–91, "Satan enters Judas' mind only after Jesus gives bread to Judas, as if Satan moves at Jesus' signal" and "Jesus gives Judas a chance to reconsider his plan by dipping the bread and giving it to him."

¹⁴² D. L. Bartlett, "John 13:21–30," *Int* 43 (1989): 394, remarks: "In one sense Judas comprehends the light all too well. In fact, Judas alone understands exactly what Jesus means when Jesus tells Judas to do what he must do quickly (13:27). Judas understands the light. Yet, he does not really comprehend the light, grasp the light with his heart and will, embrace the light. If he comprehended the light, how could he stumble out into the night, to betray the light and to work judgment on himself?"

¹⁴³ Lincoln, *John*, 380. Bartlett, "John 13:21–30," 393, recalls Jesus' earlier saying in 11:10: "But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him", and concludes: "Now we see (in the light of the Gospel) more clearly what happens to Judas. When Jesus sends him out into the night, Jesus sends him out to stumble, to lose his footing, to lose his way." For Resseguie, *Strange*, 166, Judas' passive stance is evident throughout the supper.

were evil' (3:19).¹⁴⁴ Finally, Judas is acting out his evil intent, and his true self is about to be revealed for all to see (cf. 18:3).¹⁴⁵

The separation of light from darkness within the group of disciples means that Jesus can now turn to his faithful disciples, who, far from being perfect (cf. 13:36–28), will nevertheless receive Jesus' farewell instructions as a preparation for their upcoming role of witnesses (chap. 14–17).¹⁴⁶

5. "Not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction" (17:12)

The following reference to Judas is set in the context of Jesus' farewell prayer (chap. 17), at the end of the farewell material (chap. 14–17). Jesus is praying for his disciples, whom the Father has given him (17:6) and who have come to believe in him (17:8), asking his Father to "keep them in your name [...] that they may be one, even as we are one" (17:11). But, parallel to several other references studied in chapter 2 of this study, Judas is once more singled out from among the band of Jesus' close followers: "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture may be fulfilled" (17:12).

Jesus' statement about his disciples is reminiscent of his earlier saying about the good shepherd (10:28). During his ministry, Jesus took good care of the disciples that were given him; he was faithful to the task assigned him by the Father (cf. 6:37–39). That none of them "perished" or "were lost" (17:12) means that they were kept in the realm of salvation by Jesus during his ministry.¹⁴⁷ But in excluding Judas (the obvious referent to the "son of destruction") from those whom he has successfully kept in the Father's name, Jesus shows that Judas, though he was a member of "the Twelve," was not, in fact *could not be*, a recipient of the same care. However, Jesus immediately exonerates himself of any guilt or failure in regard to Judas, since Judas was the "son of perdition" and since Scripture had to be fulfilled (cf. 13:18 and its citation of Ps. 41:9).¹⁴⁸ Thus, the "loss" of Judas was not due to any deficiency on the part of Jesus.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Lincoln, *John*, 380. See also Chennattu, *Discipleship*, 99: "The role of Judas in the story thus epitomizes the acceptance of darkness (σκοτία) and the total rejection of light (φῶς) and the covenant relationship of the fellowship (μέρος) offered to a disciple."

¹⁴⁵ The seriousness of this departure into the darkness is perceived by Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 124: "John has no story of Judas' death; it is enough that he has gone out into the darkness."

¹⁴⁶ Newbigin, *Fourth Gospel*, 174.

¹⁴⁷ As mentioned by Lincoln, *John*, 437, "There is a rich scriptural background of 'keeping' language for Yahweh's relation to Israel (cf. e.g., Gen 28.15; Ps. 121.7–8; Isa. 42.6; 49.8). Yahweh 'will keep Israel, as a shepherd a flock' (Jer. 31.10)."

¹⁴⁸ Another, though less likely possible reference is Ps. 109:1–20 (cf. Acts 1:20).

¹⁴⁹ Lincoln, *John*, 437. See also Carson, *John*, 563, for whom: "The only exception is Judas Iscariot, and this exception is merely apparent, since Jesus repeatedly indicates not only his awareness of the traitor's schemes, but that his choice of him was antedated by his awareness of what would take place (6:64, 70; 13:10–11, 18, 21–22)." Several scholars, however, insists

Jesus had already showed his sovereignty over Judas' upcoming actions when he predicted that Judas would betray him so that his disciples might believe in him (13:19). It follows that Judas' status as the "son of perdition" reflects both on his status and on his destiny.¹⁵⁰ As Paffenroth argues:

Judas was a devil all along, outside of Jesus' realm (though completely under his control). Jesus could not have lost any of his own, because those who are his own are impossible to lose and those who are not his own are impossible to gain because they are completely and utterly different, just as darkness cannot become light.¹⁵¹

6. "Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them" (18:1-5)

Judas appears one last time in the Fourth Gospel, in the most dramatic of scenes, as he takes part in the arrest of Jesus. After the Farewell material (chap. 14-17), Jesus and his disciples went across the Kidron valley and entered into a garden (18:1). Judas knew this place,¹⁵² since Jesus and the disciples often met there (18:2), and he therefore brought with him both "soldiers" and "some officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" in order to arrest Jesus.¹⁵³ One might say that Judas thus brought with him the representative of "the world" in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁵⁴ Even more, he brought with him co-representatives of "darkness," which is made clear by the narrator's mention that they had to hold "lanterns and torches and weapons" (18:3).¹⁵⁵ Judas has already left Jesus' inner circle, he has been identified with the devil, but in 18:3 he now visibly places himself on the side of Jesus' foes. The narrator later reiterates this very point: "Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them" (18:5).¹⁵⁶ The prophecy of the upper room has thus been fulfilled (13:18-19). As it happened, the disciples were

that Judas represents a failure on the part of Jesus. For instance, Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 125, concludes his short study on Judas as follows: "His loss, therefore, is Jesus' failure (17:12); however true a son of perdition Judas may have been, Jesus was not able to make him clean (13:11) or alter his course by the gesture of love (13:26)." Likewise, see J. A. T. Robinson, *The Roots of a Radical* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981), 139-43, who concludes that Judas is Jesus' failure.

¹⁵⁰ Thus, the Fourth Gospel's characterisation of Judas is in line with this Gospel's emphases on divine sovereignty, Jesus' predictive knowledge, and the significance of human agency and actions.

¹⁵¹ Paffenroth, *Judas*, 35.

¹⁵² As mentioned by Kim, *Apostasy*, 202: "This remark echoes the chief's priests' orders that 'if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him' (11:57)."

¹⁵³ Here, it is striking that the implied author emphasises that the betrayer Judas had intimate knowledge of Jesus and the disciples' whereabouts because he used to be a member of Jesus' inner circle of followers. This remark in 18:2 no doubt serves to underline Judas' treason.

¹⁵⁴ Koester, *Symbolism*, 74.

¹⁵⁵ Newbiggin, *Fourth Gospel*, 239: "Judas had gone out into the darkness (13:30). Now, he returns with the agents of the power of darkness, who must carry lanterns because they belong to the world of darkness (cf. Luke 22:53)."

¹⁵⁶ Koester, *Symbolism*, 74.

to believe that "I am he" (13:19), and three times during his arrest, Jesus will remind them that "I am he" (18:5, 6, 8).¹⁵⁷

As Jesus was about to be arrested, however, his sovereignty over these events is once more underlined (18:4: "knowing all that would happen to him"). More, he gives the overall impression of being in total control of his own arrest: he is the one asking questions (18:4, 7) and giving orders (17:8) to the forces of darkness. Finally, he shows his faithful care for his true disciples in ordering the soldiers to let them go, thus once more showing that Judas was not to be counted amongst them (17:8). Interestingly, Judas' presence in the narrative stops here. No mention is made of potential guilt or further actions on his part. Judas seems to have fulfilled his role in the narrative. The Fourth Gospel, just as it has not been interested in the psychology of this character's actions up to this point, is not intent on narrating what happens to him next.

In the Fourth Gospel, implied readers learn about Judas mostly through comments made by Jesus and especially the narrator who often explains Jesus' words about Judas. Judas only speaks in 12:5, and there too an inside view from the narrator is needed to explain Judas' hypocritical question. Thus, on the only occasion when Judas speaks, he cannot be trusted. These inside views on a character are unusual in this narrative. Indeed, implied readers generally learn what individual characters such as Peter, Andrew, or Thomas think through their speaking, with one exception in 20:8 where the narrator tells that the Beloved Disciple "saw and believed." Thus, this particular focalisation on Judas contrasts with the characterisation of other individual disciples in the story, and has the effect of turning implied readers' sympathy against him. In fact, Judas is never given any positive assessment from the narrator.¹⁵⁸

Through the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, Judas is presented both as a member of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, "the Twelve," whom Jesus himself chose (6:70), and at the same time as a member of the broader circle of disciples who yield to unbelief in 6:66.¹⁵⁹ As the story unfolds, though implied readers know early on that Judas was the one who would betray Jesus (6:64; 71), Judas begins to be influenced by the devil (13:2, 27), and he proceeds to identify himself visibly with Jesus' adversaries, leaving the circle of Jesus' close disciples during supper (13:30), and standing in the garden with the soldiers who were to arrest Jesus (18:5). Clearly, therefore, as far as Judas' role in the plot of the Fourth Gospel is concerned, he is squarely taking part in the "complication," an obstacle that the protagonist Jesus must overcome for his commission to be carried out.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:223.

¹⁵⁸ As noted by Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 23, disciples as a group often receive such inside and retrospective views from the narrator (2:11, 17, 22; 4:27; 12:16; 13:28, 29; 20:9; 21:4).

¹⁵⁹ Koester, *Symbolism*, 74.

¹⁶⁰ Lincoln, *Truth*, 17: "The opposition is in fact involved in a counterplot within the plot, one that parodies the main plot [...]. The irony of the opposition's counterplot is that, in its

The implied author does not allow much ambiguity as far as the believing status of Judas is concerned. The narrator portrays him both as a disciple and a traitor, consistently placing these two features in contrast.¹⁶¹ He is thus a particular kind of disciple, one that is a follower of Jesus only outwardly, and only for a time (until 13:30). Moreover, the constant contrasts between him and the other disciples in the narrative drive home this point quite clearly. In 6:70, Jesus speaks of his choice of "the Twelve," but immediately singles Judas as "a devil." In 13:10, Jesus addresses his disciples as "clean", yet qualifies that "not every one of you" is clean, referring to Judas. Likewise, in 17:12, Jesus explains that none of his disciples have been lost, except "the son of destruction". Finally, in contrast to the disciples standing behind Jesus in the garden (18:4), Judas is standing among those who came to arrest Jesus (18:5). Judas can thus never be considered a true or faithful disciple of Jesus. Even though, for the sake of the argument, Judas was already a member of Jesus' band of disciples in 2:11 when the disciples are said to have "believed" in Jesus, he cannot be understood to have lost his faith at some point in the story (a loss which in any case is never mentioned). What is more, though in the Fourth Gospel Judas is one of "the Twelve" and thus a member of the believing community, the narrator is at times able to mention such fellowship, yet to clearly (though implicitly) exclude Judas from it (e.g. 2:22; 12:16).¹⁶²

As a whole, the narrator portrays Judas as a real human, yet also identifies him completely with the devil. He is the son of Simon Iscariot (e.g. 6:71), but one who carries out the devil's purposes and who can properly be called "a devil" (6:70). Such ambiguity in his humanness, coupled with Judas' role in the complication of the plot and his overall portrayal as a traitor, inclines implied readers to also consider him as holding a representative or symbolic role in the narrative, potentially standing for a particular response to Jesus. Judas would then be "the betrayer." Even more, as Culpepper argues, he could represent "the disciple who betrays Jesus, for John emphasises that Judas was 'one of the Twelve' (6:71), one of his disciples (12:4; cf. 6:64, 70)."¹⁶³

success in putting Jesus to death, it brings about the resolution to main plot." On the plot of the Fourth Gospel's narrative, see chapter 4 below.

¹⁶¹ Thatcher, "Character," 439, speaks of the "paradox" of a disciple who was a traitor from the beginning.

¹⁶² It should be noted, however, that these issues are left to the readers to reflect upon rather than being cleared up in the narrative.

¹⁶³ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 125 (emphasis original). Koester, *Symbolism*, 32–39, argued that the *dramatis personae* in Greek tragedies were understood by audiences as "real people," but that they nevertheless functioned as "types" as well. Koester's assumption that the same is true in the Fourth Gospel could thus potentially be illustrated in the Fourth Gospel's characterisation of Judas. The issue of Johannine characters as mimetic and/or functional will be dealt with in chapter 4.