6. - Judas Iscariot

Most authors, when writing about the events in Jesus’ life, will take the stand that Judas Iscariot was a traitor of the worst kind. The concept of his unmitigated evil pervades our society to such a degree that the name Judas has become automatically synonymous for ‘traitor’. A sheep who leads other sheep on to the slaughter is ritually termed a ‘Judas sheep’. Even so there is something not quite right about the betrayal stories in the gospels. The more general books comment on this occasionally. Now there is arising quite a school opinion which sets forth the idea that Judas was actually innocent and, in fact, was a friend and helper of Jesus. I give three major sources below, which probably cover the field, however there is quite a volume of work on the subject which I have not read. The implications of the concept that Iscariot may not have been a betrayer are far reaching and central to the subject of this book. (One should mention the recently translated Gospel of Judas. This also presents Judas as a friend and helper, however I do not discuss it here because of its uncertain provenance.)

1) William Klassen presents a scholarly work, Judas, Betrayer or Friend of Jesus. This book is a seminal work on the subject and I go along with most of it. It makes a strong case for the idea that the Greek word usually translated as ‘betrayal’ actually means ‘handed over’. Professor Klassen also elaborates on meanings for the surname, which I find interesting. He covers many points I have found elsewhere. In my opinion he falls short of definitive truth because he dies not supply a motivation for Iscariot. Klassen, a committed Christian, bases his thought on the concept that Jesus willingly went to the cross as part of God’s Holy Plan and posits that Iscariot was helping him achieve this. This is a very common explanation among scholars who wish to present Judas as a hero. Of course I cannot accept that Jesus dying on the cross was part of God’s Holy Plan.

2) An article The Narrative Necessity of Judas Iscariot in the New Testament? by Derek Nelson was found on the Wabash College website. The web page has now disappeared and I did not retain all of the material. This is a summary article, which represents a majority opinion of those scholars who admit to Iscariot’s innocence. It excludes comment on the Gospel of John. It points out that Judas is never mentioned in the earliest documents, the Epistles of Paul, and notes an increasing denigration of his character with time through the synoptics. Nelson points out that Judas’ actual given name was Judah and has become Judas in English via various translations. As we know Judah is another name for the Jewish race. Nelson posits that the betrayal stories were developed by the Pauline (or Gentile) branch of the early Church in a conflict of power with the Jewish (or Ebionite) branch, the purpose being to paint the Jews in a bad light. He does not mention the other motivation, the necessity to appease Roman public opinion. Nelson poses some interesting questions:

How could Jesus knowingly choose a traitor to be one of his disciples? How could Judas do what he did? What motive(s) did he have? If his deed of handing Jesus over was so evil, how could he have been so impervious to Jesus’ good influences? To what extent has Judas served as a scapegoat requisite for an oppressively anti-Semitic theology?

3) Bishop John Shelby Spong in Liberating the Gospels presents a good deal of material in chapter 16, Judas Iscariot: A Christian Invention? Spong, however, goes one step further and presents the idea that an historical Iscariot never existed. Spong, in his many books, has the bad habit of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. I discuss this point below.

These and other sources point out many of the flaws in the concept that Iscariot was a betrayer. Apart from the discussion of the dipping procedure at the Last Supper, very little of my work in this chapter is original.

My approach has been to inspect each and every reference to Iscariot in the gospels and to perform a careful analysis on each passage for logical consistency. This has brought to light some interesting points and does indicate that the betrayal stories are not to be relied upon. Removing these from the gospel reports I have left a slim list of facts which I consider to be either true or probable.

The only fact of ‘betrayal’ that I accept is that Iscariot accompanied the arresting detail at Gethsemane. The question must be asked: if he was not a traitor, what was he doing there? Nothing of what I have read has ever given an answer which satisfies me. (Of course Spong says he wasn’t really there, because he didn’t exist, and probably the events at Gethsemane didn’t happen anyway.) The point has been made that betrayal stories were invented for various political reasons. I would like to add the thought that the original Galilean disciples, who observed Iscariot with the arresting detail, might have jumped to the conclusion that he was a betrayer because they were kept in the dark as to exactly what was going on. But then there is always the niggling thought, from the lack of blame in the early reports, that his role in the proceedings was originally fully known and understood. (See article 6.6 below.) The question is: Was this an act of betrayal or was Iscariot acting under secret instructions from Jesus? The thing that has always perplexed me is that the meeting at Gethsemane appears to have been a pre-arranged rendezvous. Not only pre-arranged – Jesus appeared to know exactly what was going to happen to him. These matters are discussed in detail in chapter 8.
6.1 The Greek word paradidomi

I am indebted to Klassen (p 47 et seq) for his analysis of this point, which I summarise here. (Klassen believes he was the first to point this out however there was someone else who preceded him – the reference is in a book by Professor Charlesworth about the Beloved Disciple.) In most modern translations of the New Testament (including the NAB) Iscariot is invariably described as the person who ‘betrayed’ Jesus. The Greek word which is translated as betrayed is paradidomi. When this word is used in the New Testament in a context which does not include Iscariot the word is invariably translated as ‘handed over’. This is also apparently the case when the word is used in surviving ancient Greek literature. Klassen refers to his edition of Liddell and Scott, the standard Greek/English Lexicon, which defines paradidomi as ‘handed over’ but with a collateral meaning of betrayal. Klassen has the complete edition of this lexicon, which gives a reference to all usages of the word in extant pre New Testament Greek literature. (My personal edition of Liddell and Scott is an abridged one, which does not contain these references.)

Klassen has then inspected the source of all the classical references mentioned by Liddell and Scott and concluded that ‘handed over’ is the only possible meaning in these contexts. (He quotes them all.) He then accuses Liddell and Scott of being biased by current Christian beliefs by including ‘betrayal’ in their definition. What this means is that the concept of betrayal was largely absent in the gospel reports and has been generated by later thought.

The only case where Iscariot is described with a Greek word which has a negative connotation is in the listing of disciples in Luke 7:16 where he is called a traitor. (LUKE 6:17... and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.) We may note that Luke came last of the synoptics and exhibits the continuing tendency to blacken Iscariot’s name.

6.2 The Other Judas’s

Judas was a common name at the time and is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Judah which means ‘praised’. Judah is still popular given name among contemporary Jews. It was the name given to an ancient patriarch, the leader of one of the twelve tribes and hence becomes associated with Jewry. We can note also that Judah might be considered to be synonymous with the Jewish race. This similarity has given rise to the thought, in the minds of some scholars, that when the early gospel writers were blackening the name Judas they were also blackening the Jews. Personally I think this is an overstatement. Judah was a very common name at the time.

There was at least one other member in the group of disciples with the given name of Judas. This is the reason for the surname Iscariot. As I’ve explained before, people were given one name at birth. Subsequently if there were two people with the same given name in a group or context a surname or nickname was allocated in order to distinguish between them.

First to note is Judas, son of James, a somewhat shadowy figure who is mentioned only by Luke and then only in the list of the twelve disciples. (See Luke 6:16 quoted above.) Mark and Matthew list Thaddeus, another shadowy figure, in the place of this Judas.

Second to note is the eminent disciple, (Doubting) Thomas.

JOHN 11:16 So Thomas, called Didymus*, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go to die with him.”

* NAB NOTE Called Didymus: Didymus is the Greek word for twin. Thomas is derived from the Aramaic word for twin; in an ancient Syriac version and in the Gospel of Thomas (80:11-12) his given name, Judas, is supplied.

I’m not familiar with the Gospel of Thomas mentioned by the NAB however there is another Gospel of Thomas, a Gnostic text in Coptic found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, which is not accepted by the church but thought to be genuine by scholars (and myself). This has a short preamble which also indicates that Thomas’s given name was Judas.

These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas recorded.

So Doubting Thomas should really be called Judas the Twin. No doubt the given name has been lost sight of because of the ignominy associated with Iscariot. Another point to note is that Jesus had a brother called Judas (or Jude) and that Judas the Twin may be this brother. There has been speculation (and, I believe ‘tradition’) that he might have been Jesus’ twin. I think this unlikely. He may have been the twin of one of Jesus’ brothers or sisters. He was certainly somebody’s twin.

We can also refer to the canonical Epistle of Jude (Jude and Judas are synonymous) which was written by someone who claimed to be James’s brother. (1:1 Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ: 1:2 may mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance.) James (the Just) was Jesus’ brother and was leader of the Jerusalem branch of the congregation in the early days. It seems unlikely that this Judas was Judas the Twin (Thomas), however it seems that he was Jesus’ brother. Even so there is a bit of a mystery here, if Jesus, James and Judas were all brothers I find it strange that Judas did not claim to be Jesus’ brother in his gospel. Many commentators consider the Jude Epistle to be a falsely named work dating from the end of the first century or even later.

There is also another enigmatic Judas mentioned in John.
Chapter six

JOHN 14:22 Judas, not the Iscariot, * said to him, “Master, (then) what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

NAB NOTE Judas, not the Iscariot; probably not the brother of Jesus in Mark 6:3 // Matthew 13:55 or the apostle named Jude in Luke 6:16 but Thomas (see the note on John 11:16), although other readings have “Judas the Cananean.”

As the NAB notes this Judas could be any of the Judas’s mentioned above. It may be Thomas, however I am doubtful as Thomas is referred to by that name several times in John. Even so the thought struck me that the questioner may indeed have been Iscariot, for it is a question that might be asked by a devoted disciple, and John or subsequent editors may not have wished to ascribe such a question to a traitor. What if the original Iscariot was changed to Cananean which is another term for a revolutionary. (see article 6.3, point 4) then subsequently to ‘not Iscariot’ as no Judas the Cananean was known? Fanciful perhaps?

6.3 The Surname.

Judas Iscariot was given a surname in order to distinguish him from the other Judases in the group. No-one is exactly sure what Iscariot means and there is a good deal of scholarly discussion on the matter.

1. Certain arguments relate the surname to Aramaic words for betrayal. These are somewhat tenuous and must assume the name was allocated subsequent to the putative betrayal. This goes against the sure knowledge that the surname was allocated because of another Judas in the group of disciples. I don’t accept this as a source for the surname.

2. One theory is that the name is taken from the Hebrew Ish Kerioth, which means “a man from Kerioth”, the Hebrew being somewhat obscured by its Greek equivalent. Kerioth no longer exists and its exact location is unsure, except that it is mentioned in the Old Testament as being in Judea. If so, Iscariot would be the odd man out among the other disciples, who all came from Galilee. The Catholic Encyclopaedia is sure that this is the source of the name however other commentators point out that it is a Hebrew term where an Aramaic one would be preferable among Galilean disciples. Even so Hebrew would have been learnt by the Galileans for religious study. It could also indicate that Iscariot was a scholarly or priestly person.

3. Initially I noted that keriath is also a name for ‘town’ hence the surname could possibly be rendered as ‘Man about Town’ perhaps implying that he came from Jerusalem. I put a question mark beside this until I came across Klassen who notes a source (p 33) which indicates that the meaning ‘the man from the city’ could be derived from Aramaic. Klassen is quite happy that Jerusalem might be the city in question. Klassen quotes G. Swartz, Judas and Jesus, 6-12 (p 49) but does not include the book in his bibliography.

4. Another theory is that he was a sicarius, a political revolutionary of the serious kind. They were generally in cahoots with the Zealots. They would use daggers to assassinate their political enemies, or those who promoted a policy of appeasement with the Romans.

In John it states that Judas inherited the title from his father so Judas himself may have been none of these. (JOHN 6:71 He was referring to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot; it was he who would betray him, one of the Twelve.) As far as my thesis is concerned it doesn’t matter particularly. However there is some important fact hidden in the name which somehow eludes us and it is a pity that the meaning is so uncertain. I prefer the Man about Town version, for want of anything better. We can note that this might imply that he had contact with the Jerusalem Connection, something which fits in with my theories in chapter 9.

6.4 What was his crime and how serious was it?

I can note cynically that if Iscariot betrayed Jesus then he was, at least in part, responsible for Jesus’ death on the cross and so must have been included in God’s holy plan to save the world from sin, and hence should be praised. This argument is actually used in the defence of Iscariot.

The only eyewitness evidence that Iscariot was a traitor was that he was with the detail of soldiers and police that arrested Jesus. There are also accusations, allegedly made by Jesus during the last supper, but these are doubtful, as I shall explain later. Various other statements are made for which there could not be a witness or about which there is some doubt.

I believe that it was true that Iscariot was with the arresting detail, but in fact Jesus could have been arrested at any time. He made no attempt to hide his whereabouts. He was a well known itinerant preacher and healer who had made a triumphant entry into Jerusalem a few days previously. Perhaps the priests were afraid of arresting him when there were crowds around for fear of a riot but certainly not the Romans, who would have had enough soldiers present to quell any riot. But if they were afraid of arresting him in a public place they could have certainly arrested him in a quiet place. I don’t think Jesus made any secret of the fact that he was going back to Bethany most evenings. This is something commonly assumed in many of my sources. It may be true although it is possible he occasionally slept out on the Mount of Olives. Both places were quiet and relatively uncrowded. Certainly he could have been tailed when he left the temple and followed home, or even arrested on the road. And there were no qualms about making Jesus carry his cross through the town where there were crowds around. So why were there qualms about arresting him?
6.5 Did Iscariot actually exist?

Most readers probably wouldn’t bother to ask such a question however Spong (op. cit.) has drawn the conclusion that Iscariot never really existed, that he, and the betrayal stories, were invented by the gospel writers (or later editors) in order to blacken the Jews. I do not find the argument particularly appealing. My thesis is that it is the betrayal stories, not the historical character, that were the invention. There are so many details about Iscariot, including the name itself, which are very convincing. Also I do not believe that the gospel writers would be capable of such invention because they really were not that competent at creative writing. Moreover, why would they choose a person with a name which means ‘praised’ as a villain? This leads me to believe that he was an historical character. You must read Spong’s book for yourself.

- Consistent mention in all gospels. I note that the synoptics list twelve disciples and in each Iscariot is named as betrayer. (Or should we say hander-over?) John does not provide a list of disciples but does name Iscariot.
- Judas was a common name at that time. Moreover it was the given name of heroes and eminent people in Jewish history. Why would an invented evil personality be modelled on a hero?
- The fact that it was necessary to give Judas the Twin a surname and that surname has been subsequently lost sight of. The gospel writers would not have any reason to invent a surname for Iscariot and then hide the reason for doing so. If Iscariot was a pure invention he would have had no surname. Why would someone invent a name the same as an existing disciple (Judas the Twin) and then go to strange lengths to suppress the name of that disciple?

6.6 Lack of blame in the early reports.

The earliest Christian documents are the epistles of Paul. By doing a search on all New Testament books except the first five I have noted that the names ‘Judas’ and ‘Iscariot’ never occur. Moreover there are no references to a betrayal, although there is one to a handing over in the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, (during a description of the institution of the Eucharist.)

I COR 11:23  For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread...

Although the phrase ‘handed over’ is often rendered as ‘betrayed’ in other translations it is clear (from Nelson op. cit.) that the NAB has rendered the original Greek word correctly. So, even the concept of betrayal is not present at all in Paul, just that Jesus was handed over. I assume here that Paul is referring to the idea that the Jews handed Jesus over to the Romans. So even here Iscariot is not in the frame. All this is in spite of several references to the crucifixion and the subsequent resurrection. The question is: that if Iscariot was a traitor why did Saint Paul not make full use of this fact in his political squabble with the Jewish church? It appears possible that Paul either did not know of him or was unaware of any villainy associated with the name.

In another passage in Corinthians, Paul refers to the disciples as ‘the Twelve’, referring to a time shortly after the crucifixion when there were only eleven due to the defection of Iscariot.

I COR 15:3  For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; 15:4 that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; 15:5 that he appeared to Kephas, then to the Twelve.

Does this indicate that Iscariot never left the Twelve? Luke, in Acts, recounts the election of Matthias to make up the numbers. This was subsequent to the appearance of Jesus to Peter (Kephas) referred to above. Matthias is never mentioned again, either in Acts or elsewhere in the New Testament. Is it possible that the election in Acts was a later invention to make it appear that Judas did defect? Of course it is possible that when Paul used the term ‘the Twelve’ he was being careless or was not mindful of the historical facts or was using it as a generic for disciples.

We can note a statement made by Jesus during the last supper which appears to be accurate because of the presence of an oratorical catchphrase

Matt 19:28 Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

It is obvious from this that Jesus wished to include Iscariot among these kings of heaven. Even if Jesus did not make the above statement it is clear that Matthew thought so, even though he reviled Iscariot in other parts of his gospel.

The fact is the authorities didn’t have any need of Iscariot to finger Jesus. If the crime was pointing out where Jesus was on a certain quiet night then it is not much of a crime.
6.7 Gospel attempts to change the script to blacken Iscariot’s name.

MARK (The Anointing at Bethany.) 14:3 * When he was in Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head. 14:4 There were some who were indignant. “Why has there been this waste of perfumed oil? 14:5 It could have been sold for more than three hundred days’ wages and the money given to the poor.” They were infuriated with her. 14:6 Jesus said, “Let her alone. Why do you make trouble for her? She has done a good thing for me. 14:7 The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them, but you will not always have me.

Matthew (26:6-13) is much the same but the uncharitable comments are attributed to disciples. Luke (7:36-50) has a parallel but apparently unrelated incident.

JOHN 12:3 Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. 12:4 Then Judas the Iscariot, one (of) his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, 12:5 “Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?” 12:6 He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. 12:7 So Jesus said, “Let her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. 12:8 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

We should note that there is much detail that is common between the two passages, and in particular a repetition of certain phrases. This would indicate that John has based his passage on Mark, Matthew or a source common to both. The significant difference is that John has passed responsibility for the uncharitable comments from general bystanders or disciples to Iscariot. Here we have a case where a gospel writer deliberately changes a passage in order to express his prejudice. We shall see more examples of this as we continue.

I would note, in passing, that John generally presents an account which is pretty much independent from the synoptics. The above passage, the reports on Iscariot and the anti-Jew sentiments expressed in the interview with Pilate all follow similar passages in the synoptics, even to the point of reflecting the wording. This suggests to me the possibility of a later editor making changes to the original manuscript of John with reference to the synoptics in order to present some anti-Jew political agenda.

In addition John makes a comment that Iscariot holds the communal purse and steals money from it. He makes this statement about theft in order to denigrate Iscariot’s charitable comment about giving to the poor. The charge of stealing money is unsubstantiated. If it was known that he was stealing money from the purse he would not have been allowed to hold it. Yet he did so, right up until the last supper. If Iscariot had no contact with the disciples after the events at Gethsemane then he would not have returned the purse. This may be the source of the statement concerning theft.

Again we should consider the theories presented by Nelson and Klassen (op cit) that, with a progression of time, the synoptic gospels presented an ever darker picture of Iscariot. This could be ascribed to a changing theological climate. Nelson has many details in his argument, which he summarises as follows:

... the earliest Judas narratives did not paint Iscariot as an evil villain, but as a necessary and tragic figure. As time progressed, animosity between Jewish and Gentile Christians increased, leading to a literary tendency to depict Judas as the archetypal Jew, epitomizing evil and guilty of the greatest sin of all: slaying Jesus. Careful textual analysis shows that the earliest written sources are the most sympathetic toward Jesus, and with each additional text comes a inclination to ascribe more and more evil, guilt and scorn to Judas Iscariot.

(I copy exactly, but I think ‘Jesus’ is a typo for Judas.)

Of course we have noted previously that Matthew, at least, changes his Marcian sources apparently because of a differing theological viewpoint.

This matter will be elaborated in ensuing articles as I compare the veracity of parallel passages in Mark, Matthew and Luke.

6.8 In charge of the money

JOHN 12:6 He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. 13:29 Some thought that since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus had told him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or to give something to the poor.

Although this matter of holding the purse is only mentioned in John I can believe it because it is such an irrelevant and apparently trivial matter. It was Jesus’ policy to run the group as a sharing commune, hence the existence of a communal purse:

PROVERBS 1:14 Cast in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse!” —

This is in mentioned in the context of an outsider being invited to join a group of high moral stature. Hence the idea of having communal property in a group of the type that Jesus headed has a firm basis on tradition. We have also seen that this was how the Essenes operated. I do not see this as a midrashic invention based on the verse cited above. It is also possible to argue that it was where Jesus got the idea of having a communal purse from.
6.9 The conspiracy with the Jews.

In the synoptics it is stated that Iscariot had decided to betray Jesus a few days before the event. In Matthew and Mark the passage describing it has included within it the anointing incident quoted above. In this article and subsequent articles I will follow through the gospels in the order Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, the probable order of composition.

Mark

MARK 14:1 The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to take place in two days’ time. So the chief priests and the scribes were seeking a way to arrest him by treachery and put him to death. 14:2 They said, “Not during the festival, for fear that there may be a riot among the people.” <snip anointing incident> 14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went off to the chief priests to hand him over to them. 14:11 When they heard him they were pleased and promised to pay him money. Then he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

The term ‘chief priests and scribes’ is somewhat vague and may indicate the author’s ignorance of local custom. It appears to indicate an informal subset of conservative members of the Sanhedrin. The first question to ask is: how did this information come to the disciples, who must have been the source for the gospel reports.

It is quite an important point in my thesis that Jesus did know about what was going on in priestly circles so I shall discuss it here. Nicodemus and Arimathea, eminent members of the Jerusalem Connection and followers of Jesus, were both on the Council of the Sanhedrin and would have been close to the members of it. Nicodemus was quite open about his connection to Jesus and may not have been trusted with as many confidences as Arimathea, who had kept his faith secret.

(See the relevant articles in chapter 5.) They would be in a position to report deliberations back to Jesus, and there is plenty of evidence that they did do. My quotation from John: 11:47-53 later in this article indicates that minutes of the Sanhedrin meetings were somehow getting to Jesus who, in this case, took note of them and acted accordingly. The question here though is: was the above an accurate report?

I can believe that there might have been a witness to MARK 14: 1-2 (or something similar). Security during the festival was difficult due to the influx of people into the city. I cannot believe the bit about the council wishing to act out of treachery. It sounds like an attempt to blacken the high-priestly caste who were allegedly responsible for Jesus’ death. As I discuss below the Sanhedrin was bound to act in accordance with the law.

However I cannot believe that there would be witness to MARK 14:10-11. If this were heard by Nicodemus or Arimathea and reported back to Jesus then Iscariot would be in deep trouble and the whole plot would be revealed. This is the main reason I have for not believing that it ever happened. It is probable that Iscariot went off by himself from time to time, particularly since he had the purse. He may well have been undertaking other errands on Jesus’ behalf and I speculate on the nature of these in chapter 9. (There is also speculation that, as he held the purse, he went to the priests to pay the half shekel temple tax, which was levied on all Jews.) The disciples may have observed this and, after the event, speculated about what he was up to.

I have read the opinion that no reason for the chief priests’ desire to arrest Jesus is given in the above passage, and this is true. It is clear that there were doctrinal differences between Jesus and the hierarchy however these would not be justification for an arrest. One must understand the Sanhedrin’s position in this issue. The priestly caste were the upper class and expected to rule. They were also supported by the Roman occupiers. However they did not always have the full support of the people. If they transgressed the law and arrested a popular figure (as Jesus had become in certain circles) there was bound to be a reaction from the populace which would cause them embarrassment. The only way open to them was to convict him on a charge of blasphemy or to convince the Romans that he was a revolutionary. In neither case would there be any reaction from the people. I am sure that there would be no grounds for a charge of blasphemy (in spite of the synoptic ‘trial’). Jesus knew the rules in this regard and was intelligent enough not to transgress them. Also if there was evidence of any revolutionary activity the matter would be easily handled by the Romans, who were experienced in crowd control.

There is a problem with motivation for Iscariot also here. Mark states that he was promised money however not that he asked for it. This seems to imply that it was offered by the priests after the event. But then betraying one’s master for money does not seem to be a strong motivation. I have also encountered the idea that Iscariot, being a revolutionary (as one possible meaning for the surname Arimathea, who had kept his faith secret.

When they hear him they were pleased and promised to pay him money. Then he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

Matthew

MATTHEW 26:3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 26:4 and they consulted
together to arrest Jesus by treachery and put him to death. 26:5 But they said, “Not during the festival, that there may not be a riot among the people.” <snip anointing incident>

26:14 Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 26:15 * and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver, 26:16 and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

* NAB NOTE The motive of avarice is introduced by Judas’s question about the price for betrayal, which is absent in the Marcan source. Thirty pieces of silver: the price of the betrayal is found only in Matthew. It is derived from Zech 11:12 where it is the wages paid to the rejected shepherd, a cheap price (Zech 11:13). That amount is also the compensation paid to one whose slave has been gored by an ox (Exodus 21:32).

It is fairly clear that Matthew’s source is Mark and that the elaborations are pure invention. It has been commented by many authors that Matthew added many tags, based on passages in the Old Testament, in order to ‘prove’ that OT prophecies were fulfilled.

Firstly, the idea in 27.3 that there was a meeting of chief priests and elders in Caiaphas’s palace is probably incorrect. Caiaphas has a substantial house, no doubt, but certainly not a palace. Formal meetings of the Sanhedrin were usually in special rooms in the temple. This point reveals Matthew’s lack of knowledge of Jewish custom.

Matthew introduces the motivation of avarice which is certainly typical of his misdirected inventions and designed to further blacken Iscariot’s name. The NAB note correctly supplies the OT source for this. (Spong also has extensive comments.) The error is shown up by the fact that silver coins were not current in Judea at the time. The concept of thirty pieces of silver is engrained into our consciousness as the price of betrayal. I have seen several different estimates of its value in present day terms but it certainly was not a huge amount. Iscariot possibly had as much in the communal purse.

Luke

LUKE 22:1 Now the feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was drawing near. 22:2 and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking a way to put him to death, for they were afraid of the people. 22:3 Then Satan entered into Judas, the one surnamed Iscariot, who was counted among the Twelve. 22:4 and he went to the chief priests and temple guards to discuss a plan for handing him over to them. 22:5 They were pleased and agreed to pay him money. 22:6 He accepted their offer and sought a favorable opportunity to hand him over to them in the absence of a crowd.

Luke does not include the anointing scene within his narrative but places a modified version elsewhere in his gospel.

We can see that Luke has taken the Marcan source and changed it in a manner independent of Matthew, but also in the direction of putting more personal blame on Iscariot.

Luke notes that Mark has not provided a satisfactory motivation for the chief priests and so adds that they were afraid of the people. I believe this to be an invention as it is not at all convincing. He seems to be implying that the council was afraid that Jesus would stir up the people against them.

Luke follows Mark in that the priests offer money after Iscariot’s initiative. But Luke is not wholly convinced by the motivation of avarice and adds the comment that the devil entered Iscariot. This has to be an invention. No-one can actually see the devil. (Can they?) What he is saying is that Iscariot suddenly, for no apparent reason, became evil. As I see it this is a pretty crude attempt to blacken Iscariot’s name.

One should also comment on the doctrinal difficulties raised here. One is told that Jesus died on the cross as part of God’s Holy Plan to save mankind from Satan. Yet God is enlisting Satan here to assist Him in this work.

Naturally all that Matthew and Luke are achieving here is to add inventions on top of what was already an invention in Mark.

John

JOHN 11:47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, “What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. 11:48 If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation.” 11:49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing. 11:50 nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.”

11:53 So from that day on they planned to kill him. 11:54 So Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Jews, but he left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples.

I place this passage as parallel to the quotations from the synoptics above because it contains a plan to kill Jesus. To me it has the ring of truth. Perhaps the Marcan version is a vague echo of this confused by Peter’s failing memory.

John places this episode much earlier in time than the equivalent in the synoptics and does not describe any interview with Iscariot. This passage explains many things which are not explained in the synoptics. First we should note that this occurred during a meeting of the Sanhedrin. Jesus’ ‘disciples’ (Nicodemus, Arimathea) would have been present and would have informed him of the council’s decision, which would explain why he left the area.

Second, the Sanhedrin’s motivation is very clear and believable. They were afraid that Jesus would stir up a revolution against the Romans and that in the bloody conflict the Jewish nation would perish. It would be fairly obvious to
them that irregular groups of guerilla fighters would be no match for a well disciplined army. Even though the army in Judea was an auxiliary one, a battle ready one could be easily deployed. This is what actually happened about forty years later in a war which almost did destroy the Jewish race. I should add that Caiaphas’s suggestion that they sacrifice one man to save many is reasonable and responsible. Of course if this one man is the most important man in history....

The council may well have had other reasons for wanting Jesus out of the way. They were a conservative body and were used to the old ways. Jesus was very radical in his teaching and had a growing following. They may have thought that there were threats to their position. However you would expect that they were honourable men, bound to prosecute Jewish law and custom, according to the rules and regulations laid down in the Torah. If Jesus were found to transgress it would be their duty to punish him and the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning. However the crime of blasphemy was fairly closely defined and Jesus would have been aware of the definition. He was an intelligent man and would have been careful to keep to the law. I think that we can put the trials, as recorded in the synoptics, to one side and accept that the Sanhedrin would be hard pressed to find charges that would stick.

JOHN 13:2 The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper...

The only indication of Jesus’ motivation in John, which echoes Luke’s statement. John does not record any interview with chief priests. My feeling is that this piece is an addition by a later hand as it does not display John’s usual independence of the synoptics.

In summary, what we can believe is that the Sanhedrin, or at least a significant majority, did want Jesus out of the way because they were afraid that he might start a revolution. The idea, presented in the synoptics, that Iscariot approached the council in order to betray Jesus is seen to be a fabrication.

6.10. Jesus’ statements at the Last Supper.

I discuss the Last Supper in the appendix. I state there my reasons for believing that this was held one day before Passover (Pesach) but was actually a Passover meal. The modern Passover meal follows a standard format, called a Seder, of which there are 15 items. I believe that the Seder current in Jesus’ time was not significantly different from the modern Seder.

All of the gospels report that Jesus stated, during the Last Supper, that one of the disciples would hand him over. (‘Betray him’ is how it is usually expressed.) In each case this accusation is linked to a custom of dipping which is traditionally associated with the Passover meal. The story originates with Mark and is repeated with variations, even in John. There are various problems with this story which I point out in the ensuing. The subject is intriguing and seems to be a misrepresentation of something that actually occurred during the Supper, although what that was is only speculation.

Firstly we can note the Old Testament source of an occasion where a friend at table betrays the host. Although quoted in John it is the sort of ‘midrashic’ invention you would expect Matthew to add.

PSALM 41 41:8 My foes all whisper against me; they imagine the worst about me: 41:9 I have a deadly disease, they say: I will never rise from my sickbed. 41:10 * Even the friend who had my trust, who shared my table, has scorned me. 41:11 But you, LORD, have mercy and raise me up that I may repay them as they deserve.”

NAB NOTE Even the friend . . . has scorned me: John 13:18 cites this verse to characterize Judas as a false friend. Scorned me: an interpretation of the unclear Hebrew, “made great the heel against me.”

JOHN 13:18 I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the scripture might be fulfilled, ‘The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me.

(The phrase “made great the heal against me”, which appears to be idiomatic, has been rendered differently in each version, but was probably the same in the original, although one in Hebrew, the other in Greek.)

Mark.

MARK 14:17 When it was evening, he came with the Twelve. 14:18 And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” 14:19 They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, “Surely it is not I?” 14:20 He said to them, “One of the Twelve, the one who dips with me into the dish. 14:21 For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born.” 14:22 While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.”

Many commentators have made the point that as soon as the announcement that he was to be handed over was made the disciples forget about it and go on to the next topic of conversation (which was the first Eucharist) as though nothing had happened. Surely there should be a greater reaction to such a momentous pronouncement. Even the gospel report was probably a truncated version of what happened and we can expect that, if this accusation was actually made, there may have been more consternation than was actually reported. We can note quite clearly that Judas is not identified as being the traitor but just ‘that man’.
There is something very strange about the accusation which makes me think that it was based on a real event which was altered after the event. Firstly note that Jesus’ statement in 14:18 appears to be reliable as it contains an oratorical catchphrase. Although I would not expect that the disciples would be taking notes on such an occasion the phrase is so striking that it well may have been remembered verbatim. This statement does appear to relate to Psalms 41:10 quoted above. It is possible to say that the whole passage from Mark is a midrashic invention and therefore unreliable. It is also possible to say that Jesus had the Psalm in mind because he thought that the situation was appropriate.

The fact that the practice of dipping is mentioned next is significant and must be based on something that actually occurred.

There are two dipping procedures associated with the Seder: Item 3 is called Karpas. A salad green, symbolic of spring, is dipped in a bowl of salt water, symbolic of the tears shed by the Jews when in bondage in Egypt. Item 9 is Maror. Here bitter herbs (often a horseradish root) are dipped in a sweet mixture of nuts and fruit (charoset) and eaten. The herbs are a reminder of the pain suffered by the Jews while slaves in Egypt.

Both procedures are very similar symbolically so that it doesn’t really matter which one is being referred to. The point to note is that everyone present is involved in the dipping and they dip into a communal bowl. This simple fact casts a different light over the significance of the dipping. One must also note the parallel between the time when the Jews were in bondage in Egypt and the current time when the Jews were in bondage to the Romans. This is something which would be on the mind of every Jew when they celebrated Pesach and something which must have been discussed during the Last Supper. I suspect that we do not have an accurate record of what was actually said. I came across this matter of the Pesach Seder when the library ghost thrust a Jewish cookbook into my hands. It is strange but I have never read of this in any book about Jesus. The scholars, in their ivory towers, are clearly not Jewish, or have no interest in fine cuisine.

Normally I would have expected Jesus, as leader, to be the first to have dipped into the bowl which case the statement must have been made as he was dipping or had just dipped. According to ritual all of the disciples will then dip into the bowl. This means that any of those present might have been regarded as suspect, as their response indicates. There is no indication as to who dipped into the bowl. Certainly Iscariot is not specifically identified. The problem that Mark has is that if someone had been identified as traitor at the Last Supper then he would have immediately been torn limb from limb. Obviously, from the ensuing story, nobody ever was, hence any attempt to identify Iscariot as a betrayer must be considered to be a fiction.

Because everyone would dip then Jesus seems to be saying that one of those present would hand him over, but he does not indicate who. But was there a slight editorial change and did Jesus say that all those present were responsible for him being handed over. This is a possibility fraught with many implications, which will be discussed later.

There is another thought. At the time all Jews were weeping under or suffering the pain of, bondage. Hence when Jesus says ‘that man’ he could be referring to any member of the Jewish race. If we look at the practice of dipping we might see that Jesus might have seen the Karpas as a symbol for himself, about to be plunged into those tears. So what was the hand that was dipping Jesus into those salt tears? Was it the hand of one identified person present at the last supper, or was it the hand of his fellow Jews who were about to hand him over to the Romans? Did Jesus merely say at this point that he was about to be handed over, that he was the fresh greens about to be immersed in the grief of the Jews?

I believe that there was some discussion about dipping and betrayal at the Last Supper but that it has been altered subsequently in Mark in order to cast blame on an individual. This alteration has subsequently affected the reports in the ensuing gospels.

Matthew

MATTHEW 26:21 And while they were eating, he said, “Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” 26:22 Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another; “Surely it is not I, Lord?” 26:23 He said in reply, “He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. 26:24 The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born.” 26:25 Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” He answered, “You have said so.” 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

Matthew here has followed Mark and modified it as was his custom. It appears that he has noticed some of the problems that I have already outlined and tried to make them more believable. Noticing that the disciples are only (mildly) distressed, he makes them more deeply so. But they still drop it. He notices that the disciples will not dip if they know that that will identify them as a traitor so he puts it in the past, implying that he was not the first to dip. However this is not very smart. If just one of the disciples had already dipped he would be known and, if so, why was he not identified? This points up a clumsy piece of narrative writing, something which is common when the story goes wrong. Then, in verse 27.25, he enigmatically identifies Iscariot as the guilty one but still the disciples do nothing about it. Of course Matthew knows that Iscariot could not possibly have been identified, yet he invents a verse to cast blame.
Luke

LUKE 22:21 “And yet behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me on the table; 22:22 for the Son of Man indeed goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed.” 22:23 And they began to debate among themselves who among them would do such a deed. 22:24 Then an argument broke out among them about which of them should be regarded as the greatest.

It appears that Luke has noticed the problems with Mark and decides to bale out and omit the difficult areas. Iscariot is not identified. Note how quickly the subject is dropped in favour of the petty argument about priority in heaven.

John

1) JOHN 13:18 I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me.' 13:19 From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. 13:20 Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” 2) 13:21 When he had said this, Jesus was deeply troubled and testified, “Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” 13:22 The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant. 13:23 One of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus’ side. 13:24 So Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he meant. 13:25 He leaned back against Jesus’ chest and said to him, “Master, who is it?” 13:26 Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it.” So he dipped the morsel and (took it and) handed it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot. 13:27 After he took the morsel, Satan entered him.

3) So Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly. 13:28 (Now) none of those reclining at table realized why he said this to him. 13:29 Some thought that since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus had told him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or to give something to the poor. 13:30 So he took the morsel and left at once. And it was night.

This is one case where John appears to be following, and modifying, the synoptics. This is unusual for John who is usually independent. This is one of the things which leads me to believe that the passage above contains a tampering invention or may be something Jesus said, as I have discussed above.

2) 13:21-27 I only include the first sentence of verse 27 here. This does not affect my argument that this section may have been a later insertion as the original manuscripts did not have verse numbers. This follows the dipping scene in Mark however here John specifically identifies Iscariot as the traitor. As I pointed out above this presents a problem as the disciples do not take immediate and violent action against him. For this reason I believe this scene to be a fabrication designed to blacken Iscariot’s name. The reference to Satan is similar to that of Luke. I imagine that Satan might have been interested in attending the Last Supper as it was apparently part of a process designed to seriously curtail his operation. (Although we can note, cynically, that Satan was actually assisting God here.) We cannot expect Satan to have appeared in visible form hence the witness to his entry into Iscariot must have been particularly acute.

3) 13:27-30. (Including only the latter part of 13:27) This is quite incredible really. A traitor is identified. He is sent on an errand which appears to be clearly something to do with the betrayal and yet John says that no-one present knows why he is sent. Perhaps you can now see why I consider the two previous passages to be independent. It appears to me that passage 2) is a clumsy insertion made without reference to the following passage 3). I can believe 3) to have veracity. Iscariot would have had to have left the Supper some time in the evening in order to be in company with the arresting detail at Gethsemane. It is stated that the other disciples did not know what the errand was and most commentators assume that Jesus took Iscariot aside, or whispered instructions to him. The more fundamentalist opinion is that Jesus knew that Judas was about to betray him and was telling him to go about that business. However the point is that some of the conversation was overheard × to go about it quickly × so why not the rest? The idea occurs to me that the details of the mission may have been discussed between the two of them before the supper commenced and that Iscariot was merely acting in accordance with his master’s detailed instructions.

From all of the above we can see that the betrayal statements, reputedly made by Jesus at the last supper must be considered suspect. The main reason being, that if Iscariot had been identified he would have been prevented from doing his work.

Klassen makes a point concerning the giving of the morsel which I don’t know whether to believe or not. Apparently is was/is a custom that if a host gave a guest a morsel of food from his own hands it creates a special bond of trust between them. He sees this as Jesus making a covenant with Iscariot to help him in his work of self sacrifice. This covenant would last for three days, as long as the salt in the morsel remained in the mouth. (Klassen is apparently unaware that the morsel might have been dipped in salt water.)
7.10 The arrest in the garden.

MARK 14:43 Then, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. 14:44 His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, “The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely.” 14:45 He came and immediately went over to him and said, “Rabbi.” And he kissed him. 14:46 At this they laid hands on him and arrested him.

Firstly all gospels (and Acts) state that Judas accompanied the arresting detail. This simple fact must be accepted.

Naturally the disciples present at the time could not possibly know what arrangements had been made between Iscariot and the leader of the detail concerning the identifying kiss. I do speculate in chapter 8 that a member of the Jerusalem Connection may have accompanied this detail. If this were so the kiss could not be one of betrayal because it would have been done with the compliance of this person. The kiss could well have been a kiss of affection. Why was a kiss necessary anyway. If it was a clear moonlight night the Iscariot could have just pointed him out. It is interesting to note that Judas calls Jesus ‘Rabbi’ (teacher). Why would he use such a term of affection if the devil had entered into him or if he was betraying out of avarice? This slip is so striking that I believe it might be based on fact. Furthermore there was no reason for identification. The troop could have arrested everyone and sorted out who they were later. I note that Jesus made no attempt to evade capture.

(One should note that Spong considers the kiss to be a midrashic invention based on an incident in the old testament where Joab, King David’s captain kills a rival by treachery. 2SAM 20:9 And Joab asked Amasa, “How are you, my brother?” With his right hand Joab held Amasa’s beard as if to kiss him. 2SAM 20:10 And since Amasa was not on his guard against the sword in Joab’s other hand, Joab stabbed him in the abdomen with it, so that his entrails burst forth to the ground, and he died without receiving a second thrust... Personally I don’t think this tracks in very well with the kiss in the garden. I’ve been able to locate 35 kisses in the Old Testament but no other kisses of treachery. Joab does a similar trick in 2SAM 3:27 without the kiss. The image of entrails bursting out has a similarity to Luke’s invented version of Iscariot’s death, however that death story does not contain a kiss.)

One might well expect that the disciples would jump to the conclusion that Iscariot was a betrayer if he was present with this ‘crowd’ who had come to arrest Jesus.

MATTHEW 26:47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 26:48 His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying, “The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him.” 26:49 Immediately he went over to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and he kissed him. 26:50 Jesus answered him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then stepping forward they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

In addition to my comments on Mark we note that Jesus refers to Judas as ‘Friend’ and tells him to complete his mission. I have noted previously that Matthew added little midrashic tags to his accounts based on Mark. However this verse (26:50) is quite different from the normal run of these additions. Also everywhere else in Matthew Iscariot is treated as a traitor. Why would he allow Jesus to call Iscariot a friend here? We have to accept the principle that when additions to Mark by Matthew and Luke are different (as they are here) then they are inventions. Yet this is so untypical of Matthew I wonder if it not some passage from some manuscript that was allowed to slip into the cannon by mistake. Perhaps there were words in Mark which were subsequently deleted from it or that Matthew had a variant. I can’t imagine that Matthew would have invented such words if he wanted to blacken the character of Judas.

Also I can quote from Nelson: Judas was called “friend” (hetairos) by Jesus. A word for friend indicating partnership, comrade, companion as opposed to “philos” indicating endearment. In other words, there was a partnership of some sort involved in this “betrayal.”

LUKE 22:47 While he was still speaking, a crowd approached and in front was one of the Twelve, a man named Judas. He went up to Jesus to kiss him. 22:48 Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

Luke does not mention swords and clubs but apart from that comments above apply. We can note that Luke carries on the custom of deepening Iscariot’s guilt. The first alteration is to put him to the forefront of the group, something that is not mentioned in any other gospel. A major difference is verse 22:48, which is a famous and dramatic statement, but also without a parallel. This is another example of the theory that Matthew and Luke were independently written. (I would point out that the Greek word translated here as ‘betraying’ should perhaps be more properly rendered as ‘handing over.’) I believe it to be an attempt to change the record in order to blacken the character of Judas, such as we have seen before.

(I have wondered that if the disciples assumed that the kiss was one of betrayal and in their subsequent discussions they expressed such an idea which was subsequently put into the mouth of Jesus.)

JOHN: 18:1 When he had said this, Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered. 18:2 Judas his betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. 18:3 So, Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the
Chapter six

Judas Iscariot

3) He was in charge of the communal purse. (Probable)
4) He was sent by Jesus from the Last Supper on an unspecified errand. (Probable)
5) Knowing exactly where Jesus would be, he was with the detachment of guards and soldiers which arrested Jesus, to that place. (True)
6) He greeted Jesus then with affection. (Probable)

The possibility remains that Iscariot was Jesus’ trusted and beloved servant.

7.1 The death of Iscariot.

There are two unlikely and completely different stories concerning the death of Iscariot. The New American Bible comments extensively on the problems with these stories and on their relationship to OT precedent, as does Spong. The general theological opinion is that both these stories are midrashic inventions. I will not repeat this material here. Nothing can be said with confidence concerning the death of Judas Iscariot.

7.12 William of Occam’s Razor

It is possible to review what we have been told about Iscariot and pare away the obvious inventions, all of which were designed to blacken his character. What we are left with is a story quite different. I list below various propositions which I have marked as true or probable.

1) Iscariot was an historical figure and one of the disciples. (True)
2) He either a) came from Kerioth or was a man about town or b) was a sicarius (assassin) or both a) and b) or neither. (True)