

AN EXAMINATION OF LUKE 22:1-6 AND ITS MORAL IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS

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ABSTRACT

The study also finds that the actions of the religious leaders and Judas reflect patterns of corruption, conspiracy, selfishness, and abuse of trust that remain prevalent in contemporary Nigerian society. The objectives of the study are to examine the historical and literary context of Luke 22:1–6, analyse the motives behind Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus, investigate the moral teachings contained in the passage, and evaluate their implications for Nigerian Christians. Christianity, as one of the major religions, has often addressed the issue of bribery as well as given several moral lessons in guiding the lives of its adherents. According to Luke 22:1-6, Judas agreed to betray Jesus. Despite the religiosity, discipleship, and the closeness of learning at the feet of Christ, he still managed to be deceived by the Devil, and finally, he betrayed Christ. The findings reveal that Judas' betrayal was influenced by greed, spiritual compromise, and personal ambition, demonstrating the destructive consequences of moral failure and disloyalty. This paper will employ the narrative and the historical methods of research. Although the issue of bribery and corruption has been a problem since time immemorial, all solutions and measures that have been placed on ground to curb this menace have proven abortive; it keeps growing daily. This growth has no regard for religiosity or spirituality; therefore, it becomes evident that bribery and corruption can also be found in Christianity. The Bible has addressed this issue, and moral considerations have been made towards the future recurrence of this phenomenon. In this paper, we shall be espousing the biblical narration of Luke 22:1-6, a conceptualization of bribery and its moral lessons to Nigerian Christians. Based on these findings, the study recommends that Christian leaders, churches, theological institutions, and families should intensify moral and biblical education aimed at promoting integrity, accountability, honesty, and servant leadership. It also recommends regular discipleship programs, ethical training, and spiritual formation initiatives to help believers resist greed, corruption, and other forms of moral compromise. The study concludes that Luke 22:1–6 remains a significant biblical text for understanding the dangers of greed, betrayal, and spiritual negligence. Its moral teachings provide valuable guidance for Nigerian Christians in cultivating godly character and contributing positively to national development. By embracing the ethical principles embedded in the passage, Christians can serve as agents of moral transformation, justice, and social renewal in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Nigeria, Bribery, God, Christianity, Betrayal, Conspiracy, and Entrance of Satan.

INTRODUCTION

According to Transparency International (2024), over the years, the issue of bribery has become a peculiar problem for all societies across the globe. Bribery in Nigeria is a phenomenon that began from the tentacles that have expanded its roots to all parts of human endeavour. According to the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), *Corruption and Ethics Report in Nigeria* (2022), bribery can be found in virtually all facets of life, which is not limited to the religious endeavour of man. The concept of bribery in Nigeria is not new; the country has continued to experience various kinds of bribery and corruption as the years passed by the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)* (2011) stipulates that Nigeria is a sovereign nation under God. This indicates that the constitution recognizes Nigeria as a religious nation as well as a moral nation. In addition, the constitution also recognizes Nigeria as a pluralistic nation, with heterogeneous ethnic groups and cultures. Despite this reality, in theory, Nigeria is a secular state. This has been indicated in the constitution since independence. A secular state is a state where religious communities have no recognized role in politics and no formal relation to the state. Individual citizens have freedom of conscience and religion, and freedom from discrimination based on religion. This is different from a theocratic or a religious state.

According to New Testament Theology (1993), the Bible has often served as a guide to how moral standards are laid for Christians. It has served as a guide to modelling their lives on how to always act. The betrayal of Christ, which can be seen in the book of Luke 22, explained how the devil can take charge of a life that isn't firm in Christ. The manner in which Judas went behind all the other disciples to betray Jesus has often been a matter of great concern for all Christians at large. Ministers and preachers of the word have often employed several methods in addressing this issue, and by constantly reminding their congregation about how important it is to avoid any issue that pertains to betrayal and bribery.

This paper will analyse the biblical narration of the betrayal and bribery of Christ as written in the book of Luke 22:1-6, conceptualize the term bribery, and point out the moral lessons in the Bible passage and how it would influence the lives of Nigerian Christians, especially as they navigate their Christian Life.

REASONS FOR JUDAS' BETRAYAL OF JESUS ACCORDING TO LUKE 22:1-6 AND OTHER RELATED PASSAGES

The narratives of the four gospels in the scriptures concerning the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot are germane events of disloyalty in Christian theology. It is difficult to conclude exactly what Judas Iscariot thought of Jesus when he (Judas) became a disciple of Jesus and what transpired between them that made Judas decide to betray Him. Explanations are given as reasons for Judas's behaviour towards someone he addresses as "Master" or "Rabbi". These reasons include bribery and demonic possession as narrated by the gospels (Matt. 26:15, Luke 22:3, John 13:27).

According to the gospels, Jesus Himself permitted it to happen. The gospels suggest that Jesus knew earlier that Judas would betray Him, and He permitted the incident to allow God's plan to be fulfilled (His betrayal is seen as setting in motion the events that led to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, which, according to Christian theology, brought salvation to humanity. Another explanation is that, regardless of the betrayal, Jesus was ultimately destined for crucifixion. Jesus had predicted earlier that "one of you will betray me" when they were having the last supper (Matt. 26:17-29, Mark 14:12-25, Luke 22:7-38, and 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Immediately, Judas left the table to meet with the Roman authorities who were seeking to arrest Jesus. Judas requested a monetary reward (30 pieces of silver) from them for him to hand over his master to them with a kiss. Betrayal is violating a person's trust or confidence, of a moral standard; to give over to an enemy by treachery; to be unfaithful to a very close person. Judas, whom Jesus had chosen was a close friend of Jesus, confidential servant, a partaker in apostolic ministry, and was given the honour of miraculous gifts. In essence, he was a trusted friend of Jesus. This implies that a person cannot be betrayed by an enemy but rather a very close person who is trusted the most. To be betrayed is something that really hurts, and Judas Iscariot betrayed his master (Jesus) with a kiss for monetary gratification.

However, the actions of Judas Iscariot could be viewed as a mysterious blend of natural and spiritual factors. The natural aspect of it can be related to everyday choices made by Judas Iscariot. According to John 12:6, Judas Iscariot was the treasurer of Jesus' ministry, and he began stealing money from the account. That little bag, which the generation of women who had been cursed by evil spirits and diseases by Jesus cast their contributions (Luke 8:1-3), had been put in his care, but Judas abused the position by turning it into a thing of greed and selfishness. This is very similar to stones we hear in Christianity in modern days. John says that he (Judas Iscariot) eventually became a thief because of greed and not being content; he thought he could make more money by selling his master to the Jewish authorities.

Apart from the natural aspect of the story, lies are a mysterious operation of Satan. According to Luke 22:3 and John 13:27, Satan entered Judas's heart to cause him to betray Jesus; Satan had been preparing Judas by tempting him to steal money that was in his care, making him ready to accept the offer to betray Jesus for more money. Scripture is silent on whether God created Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. However, it tells us Judas betrayed Jesus by the choice he made. Judas became the betrayer by allowing himself to be used by Satanic influence. Satan influenced Judas Iscariot using his desires, lust, and greed for money. This same Satan has not changed his strategy; what happened to Judas Iscariot is happening every day in Christendom. The desire for pleasure, luxury, wealth, power, or fame among people who call themselves "Servants of God" cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, Judas betrayal of Jesus is seen as setting in motion the events that led to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, which, according to Christian theology, brought salvation to humanity. According to Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, another explanation is that, regardless of the betrayal, Jesus was ultimately destined for crucifixion.

THE BIBLICAL NARRATION OF LUKE 22:1-6

According to Luke 22:1-6 in the New International Version,

Now the festival of unleavened bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas called Iscariot, one of the twelve. And Judas went to the Chief Priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

Luke 22:1 “Now the festival of unleavened bread called ‘Passover’ was approaching”

The feast of the unleavened bread (Passover) was first celebrated on the last night the Israelites spent under Egyptian slavery. God gave them instructions through Moses on how the Passover would be celebrated. A one-year-old lamb was to be killed and the blood applied to the lintel of their houses, the meat to be roasted and eaten with bitter herbs. They must dress up, having their staff in their hands, standing by the meal with an unleavened bread as they ate the meal in a hurry.

So, God commanded them to observe it when they got to the Promised Land. It was a natural celebration in which people travelled far and near to participate. It was a day of atonement for their natural sin. “So, this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance (Exo. 12:14).

Luke 22:2 “And the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people”

Every Jewish household had to kill and eat the meat of a one-year-old male lamb, apply the blood on their lintel according to the instructions and commandments of God. Instead, they were busy planning the death of an innocent soul while the feast was going on.

Luke 22:3 “Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the twelve”

The leaders of Israel were in a state of dilemma. They hated Jesus, and they also feared the people. For Judas, walking up to deliver Jesus to them was an opportunity. The Bible records that Satan entered Judas. Judas is someone who had walked with Jesus, he had preached the gospel, healed the sick, and even cast out demons from people. It is written in James 4:3 that “therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”. Assuming he had submitted himself to the leadership of Christ and was filled with the Holy Spirit, there was no way the devil could have used him. “You are of God, little children, I have overcome them, because He who is in you, is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Judas’s love for money and greed opened the door for Satan to use him. “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the money

box; and he used to take what was put in it. (John 12:6). Judas found himself under the influence of Satan, who compelled and controlled him.

Luke 22:4 “And Judas went to the Chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus”

Judas, therefore, went to the chief priests to discuss with them how he would betray Jesus. These steps were pointers to the fact that sin is premeditated and, as such, man should recognize the voice of the devil and desist from committing sin.

Luke 22:5-6 “And they were delighted and agreed to give him money”

The leaders of Israel were glad; if they captured Christ and people raised questions, they could easily say it was Judas who brought the idea. It was a welcome idea on their part, and on the part of Judas, he wanted to get rich quickly. In the book of Matthew 26:15, Judas said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you? And he was given thirty pieces of silver. Lack of contentment led Judas to betray Jesus despite the fact that he was the treasurer.

Judas sought the opportunity to betray Christ. When Judas betrayed Christ, it was in accordance with the plan of God. It was the will of Christ to die on the day of Passover; Jesus was handed over with God’s foreknowledge. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said: “Him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” (Acts 2:23).

It wasn’t the leaders of Israel or Judas that killed Jesus; it was God Himself who sent Him to die for mankind. Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me” (John 6:38). He also said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

From the foregoing, it is evident that Judas had the ability to rebuke the devil; someone would have still betrayed Jesus, it might not necessarily be him, but he still allowed himself to be used by the devil by collecting the bribe paid to him to show them Jesus through a kiss.

BRIBERY IN NIGERIA

The issue of bribery is a fundamental problem that has continued to permeate all facets of human society. Today, bribery and corruption make headlines as people are becoming aware of their prevalence. Indeed, bribery and corruption constitute one of the problems of contemporary society, which isn’t limited to any country. Bribery distorts governmental policies, which may lead to the misallocation of resources that can harm society as well as affect the poor.

There are various aspects of bribery and corruption, which include fraudulent acquisition of property and receipts, using one’s office for gratification, fraudulent transactions, gratifications, and so on. Many factors contribute to the level of poverty in the country, including bribery.

There are various vocabularies which can be used to describe bribery, including corruption and extortion. The term corruption will be used interchangeably

with the concept of bribery in the course of this work. Corruption is a socio-political, economic, and moral malaise that usually permeates all aspects of any society.

Corruption is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed; it is a betrayal of trust, taking undue advantage, and financial malpractice. It is variously known as *egunje*, “dash,” gratification, brown envelopes, tips, emoluments, hand greasing, softening the ground, inducements, sub-payments, side-payments, irregular payments, payment under the table, undocumented extra payments, facilitation payments, mobilization fees, routine governmental action, revised estimates, padded contracts, over (under) invoicing, cash commissions, kickbacks, payoffs, covert exchanges, shady deals, cover-ups, collusion, 10% rule (bribe surcharge), 50% rule (sharing bribe within the hierarchy), let’s keep our secret, highly classified transactions, customary gift-sharing, tribute culture, nepotism (a special form of favouritism in which an office holder prefers his/her kinfolk and family members. Corruption is seen as a daunting obstacle to sustainable development, a constraint on education, health care, and poverty alleviation, and a great impediment to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (C.B.N.) divided corruption into seven distinct types, which are autogenic, defensive, extortive, investive, nepotistic, supportive, and transactive;

Autogenic corruption involves one person, and it is usually self-generating. For instance, a person can influence a company’s transaction and add to the usual/normal budget for his/her personal preference.

Defensive corruption involves a situation in which a person is in need of a service and therefore bribes his way through for his personal interest in order to avoid an unpleasant consequence. For instance, a person can bribe their way through for a university admission.

Extortive corruption involves a person demanding compensation in exchange for services rendered. Investive corruption involves a situation whereby services are rendered in anticipation of future gains. For instance, a person giving out help in order to increase their chances of getting a gain later. Nepostic corruption refers to the preferential treatment of employing friends and family, which in turn violates the recruitment guideline.

Supportive corruption involves actions to protect or strengthen the existing corrupt practices; it doesn’t necessarily involve monetary gains.

Transactive corruption refers to situations where the two parties are willing and ready to participate in the corrupt practices. Despite the efforts made by the Nigerian government, Nigeria remains entangled in corruption, crime, and poverty.

The legal instruments used to fight corruption in Nigeria include the criminal code, the Code of Conduct Bureau, the Recovery of Public Property Act of 1984, and the newly formed commissions (EFCC and ICPC). Before 1966, the criminal code was the primary source of law dealing with corruption in Nigeria.

THE EFFECTS OF BRIBERY IN NIGERIA

The effects of bribery in Nigeria are numerous, as this phenomenon has deepened its roots in the Nigerian society. Some of the effects of bribery in Nigeria are;

1. Bribery diverts public expenditures, which are expected to care for the poor. According to Audu (2008), corruption is averred to bring about skewing of the composition of public expenditure from social services that are important to the poor.
2. Bribery and corruption cause an extreme reduction in the quality of goods and services made available to the public. Most companies reduce the level of resources that should be used and water down these budgets, leaving behind fake or inferior outcomes. Most contractors also bribe their way through getting a contract. Once the contract is awarded, the funds undergo the process of mismanagement, leaving the job with inferior or insufficient materials, which will be to the detriment of the public interest. For instance, a contractor who is awarded a contract of constructing a bridge, after bribing and paying for irrelevant bills which might have aided the contract, is caught up with the dilemma of either making profit or losing his capital, as a result the bridge might not be built according to the specified standard which will in turn put the public at the risk of losing their lives and properties in case anything happens to the bridge.
3. Corruption perpetuates social, economic, and political inequality. According to Osoba (2006), it is an anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' ability to improve the living conditions of the people.
4. Bribery and corruption influence the place of the constitution. For instance, a country with bad and corrupt governance will pay little or no regard to the people's fundamental human rights, as well as the place of the constitution in the affairs of its citizens. The enforcers of the law become the perpetrators of the crimes. Citizens become scared of reporting criminal cases as various cases have been overturned by the prosecutors.
5. Bribery and corruption influence the mobilization of effective and efficient management of human and material resources. Most Nigerians leave the country for greener pastures, where their labour and experiences would be appreciated, leaving the country to gradually get worse.
6. Corruption has a negative impact on economic growth as it, among other things, reduces public spending on education, results in a reduced level of investment, and adds to investment risk. Corruption may also lead to the rise of the underground economy.
7. Paying bribes to reduce fees, dues, taxes, and public utility services like water and electricity without having to make their full payment all result in a serious loss of government revenues. Corruption also affects the expenditure through large benefits which come in from corrupt or illegal deals whose costs are not

readily apparent and which are considered to serve as national priority concerns so that they can be undertaken in a discreet manner.

THE MORAL LESSONS FOR NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS

Judas Iscariot was not born again all along. He followed Jesus only because of what he stood to gain. So many people are in churches today because of the financial gains and connections, leaving behind their primary assignment, which is communion with God. Most Christians have allowed the norms, culture, and traditions of the world to blind their eyes to the right thing to do, despite all the admonitions from their pastors and ministers.

Another moral lesson is not to allow the material things of the world to consume the hearts of people. Most Christians find themselves in various governmental sectors, and they have the opportunity to right the wrongs of others, but they still choose to continue in the path of Judas Iscariot as they persistently follow the path of bribery and corruption.

Also, it is always good to crucify the works of the flesh on a daily basis. As Christians, the Bible has been given to constantly serve as a reminder that heaven is the destination. Greed is a result of a lack of commitment; it flows from the heart (Rom 8:12-14). According to the Christian faith, Lack of contentment could be eradicated by daily communion with God.

One of the fundamental lessons from Luke 22:1-6 is an admonition for the Christian leaders. The pastors and ministers should be on the lookout for the type of followers they have. Many profess to be Christians, but they are devil incarnates who only come into the church to steal and to destroy. They are an avenue for Satan to strike against believers and the church at large.

The Christians of today should take into consideration the story of Judas and how it correlates with the daily affairs in contemporary society. Although many pastors and ministers are constantly trying their best to ensure that Christians adhere to the commandments set out for them in the Bible, some will still end up like Judas, who followed Christ all through his ministry on earth and at the end of the day still served as an instrument of betrayal. The issue of bribery, corruption, and betray are not alien to the Christians Faith, and as such, various measures and guidelines have been laid down for Christians to follow. Non-adherence to these guidelines might lead to greater consequences, which might include the loss of eternal life and bliss. Judas chose personal interests over his commitment to Christ. His decision serves as a warning against placing worldly desires above spiritual responsibilities; therefore, Christians should remain loyal to Christ regardless of financial, social, political, or personal pressures. Faithfulness to God should be the guiding principle of every aspect of life.

Luke 22:3 states that "Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve." This demonstrates that even a person who is outwardly religious can become vulnerable to spiritual attacks if he or she neglects spiritual discipline and commitment to God. Nigerian Christians should maintain a vibrant prayer life, study the Scriptures

regularly, and remain committed to God's principles. Spiritual carelessness can expose believers to temptation, moral failure, and sinful influences.

Before Judas physically betrayed Jesus, the betrayal had already developed within his heart. Evil actions often begin with evil thoughts, desires, and intentions. Christians must constantly examine their hearts and motives. Feelings of greed, envy, bitterness, hatred, and selfish ambition should be rejected before they lead to sinful actions.

Finally, Christians are admonished to always remain committed to the Christian race, as the devil is eagerly ready to use anyone willing to be used.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the examination of Luke 22:1–3 and its moral implications for Nigerian Christians, the following recommendations are proffered:

Churches should intensify the teaching of biblical ethics and Christian morality through sermons, Bible study programs, discipleship classes, and leadership training. Special attention should be given to themes such as integrity, faithfulness, stewardship, honesty, and resistance to temptation. A deeper understanding of Scripture will help believers develop moral character and withstand the pressures of a corrupt society.

Christian denominations and local congregations should prioritize character formation rather than merely numerical church growth. Structured discipleship programs that emphasize spiritual maturity, accountability, humility, and ethical living should be established to nurture believers who reflect the character of Christ in both private and public life.

The account of Judas' spiritual downfall demonstrates the danger of spiritual complacency. Nigerian Christians should be encouraged to cultivate regular prayer, fasting, Bible study, and fellowship as essential spiritual disciplines. These practices strengthen believers against temptation and enable them to discern and resist negative spiritual influences.

Church leaders should establish transparent accountability mechanisms within church administration and leadership structures. Regular ethical evaluations, financial transparency, and leadership accountability will help prevent abuses of power, corruption, and moral compromise among Christian leaders and members.

Christian ethics should be integrated into the curriculum of theological institutions, seminaries, universities, and secondary schools. The study of biblical moral principles should be linked to contemporary societal challenges such as corruption, bribery, examination malpractice, cybercrime, political dishonesty, and abuse of public trust.

Nigerian Christians occupying positions in government, education, business, healthcare, law enforcement, and other sectors should be encouraged to demonstrate ethical leadership and integrity. Christian organisations should regularly organise workshops and seminars that equip believers to apply biblical principles in professional and public service contexts.

Families should be recognised as primary institutions for moral development. Parents and guardians should intentionally teach biblical values such as honesty, contentment, respect, responsibility, and obedience to God. Early moral formation can significantly reduce the tendency toward unethical behaviour in adulthood.

Many acts of betrayal, bribery, and corruption are rooted in greed and materialism. Churches should emphasise biblical teachings on contentment, stewardship, and responsible use of resources. Christians should be taught to pursue legitimate means of livelihood and to avoid unethical practices motivated by excessive desire for wealth.

Christian bodies in Nigeria should develop practical and context-sensitive strategies for addressing corruption and moral decadence. This may include public advocacy, anti-corruption campaigns, ethical leadership initiatives, and partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations committed to promoting transparency and accountability. Researchers in biblical studies, theology, ethics, and religious studies should undertake further investigations into the relationship between biblical teachings and contemporary social challenges in Nigeria. More interdisciplinary studies on Christian ethics, corruption, leadership, and national development will contribute to both academic scholarship and societal transformation.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the concept of bribery is not new to human society; it even has its basis in the Biblical texts. Christians have been admonished to learn from the story of Judas to have a hitch-free Christian journey. The illustrations of the story of Judas Iscariot, which depict an act of bribery and betrayal, are often preached to model the lives of Christians. It is no longer news that bribery has eaten deep into the Nigerian economy as well as affected every aspect of life, including the religious sectors. Undoubtedly, pastors and ministers have often admonished their congregants to live a life free from sin, but some still fall into temptation just like Judas Iscariot.

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