

Representative and Head

In the sheep pens of the stockyards where animals are kept before their final march to the slaughter house there is a Judas Goat. The name of the Judas Goat is merely its title. It could be a goat, or it could be a sheep. In this case, the Judas Goat is an older animal and it wears a bell. It is the bell-wether, the one who takes the lead. In the sheep pens are scores, perhaps hundreds, of sheep. They all look the same, balls of fur, bleating when another bleats, moving when another moves, or following when another leads. A man standing above the sheep leans over and prompts the Judas Goat to go. It understands the command. It bleats and begins to walk through a chute to the slaughtering room. The bell tinkles and the other sheep follow the sound; they follow the bell-wether.

The flock follows the Judas Goat up to the door of the slaughter house. Then the man commands the leader again, and the Judas Goat leaps to one side. He pauses in safety and then he watches his fellow sheep pass by on the way to their doom.

The Judas goat is a sheep or goat trained to lead other animals to slaughter. Figuratively, it is any person or thing used as a decoy to lure people into being caught, arrested, or killed. The allusion is to Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus in exchange for thirty pieces of silver.¹

The idea of the Judas Goat is unpleasant, but it is a fact of life. There are Judas Goats for sheep, and there are Judas Goats for people.

Peter wrote in his second letter,

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

On one occasion the disciples of Jesus came to Him and said that the Pharisees had been offended by something Jesus said. He answered,

Matthew 15:13 ... “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

- The pit receives both the leader and the follower.

And consider what Peter told the rulers and elders of Jerusalem about Jesus,

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

- Peter said there is salvation only in Jesus.

¹ <https://wordhistories.net/2019/08/30/judas-sheep-judas-goat/>

- It doesn't matter what anybody else says.
- So, be careful whom you follow, you might be following a Judas Goat.

They say of the Judas Goat that eventually even he outlives his usefulness and his destiny is the same as that into which he led hundreds and perhaps thousands of other sheep. But in the interim, a lot of sheep who trusted him as a leader wind up in the slaughter house. The moral is, be careful about your choice of whom to trust; he just might be a Judas Goat.

The scriptures tell of Jesus' advice about listening,

Mark 4:24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to..."

And,

Luke 8:18 "Take care how you listen..."

People differ in their choices about the ones in whom they place their trust. Some people are careful; others are careless. In a lot of cases they will just "go with the flow" and allow themselves to be led in the assumption that the person in the leadership role has their best interest in mind. Regrettably, that is not always the case. This is sometimes true of maritime travel.

Many of the people who lived in April 1912 thought the engineering and manufacturing prowess of man had progressed to the point that they could build a ship that could not be sunk. The Titanic and an iceberg argued otherwise. Fifteen hundred seventeen people lost their lives because they trusted the shipping company, the designer, and the crew of the ill-fated ship. It is interesting to note that among the ones who perished in the sinking was the Titanic's designer, Thomas Andrews. Andrews was one of nine members of a guarantee group belonging to Harland and Wolff who were responsible for checking over the Titanic during her maiden voyage, fixing any small snags that might occur. Their focus was on small things. It should have been on larger.²

Jeremiah the prophet wrote,

Jeremiah 17:5 Thus says the LORD,

"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind

And makes flesh his strength,

And whose heart turns away from the LORD.

- You should trust in the Lord.

Pharaoh led his army into the Red Sea and into destruction. Those Egyptian soldiers had little choice but to follow their Pharaoh. They thought he was a god, but in reality Pharaoh had set himself against the only real God.

The Jewish rabbi named Gamaliel told the Jewish council about a leader named Theudas. In Acts the scripture says,

² <https://titanicfacts.net/who-designed-the-titanic>

Acts 5:36 “For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. NASB95.

Theudas and his fate illustrate the futility of following man. Regardless of how greatly his men view him, his cause or his leadership they frequently come to the same end—death.

It is said that Spartacus the Thracian was one of the most spirited and energetic men ever to live. He was also a slave. He worked almost all his life as a slave to his Roman masters. The Romans trained him as a gladiator and would have sacrificed him in the arena, but he led a revolt of the slaves and nearly escaped the Empire. It was a noble struggle. For a brief time Spartacus and his followers tasted the sweetness of freedom, but his allies betrayed him and he died—crucified with his fellow slaves by the Romans he could not defeat. The power of Rome crushed his army of rabble as swords always eradicate clubs.

As was the struggle of Spartacus with the power of Rome, so is the struggle of man with the power of Satan and of sin. Alone against Satan, no matter how spirited the fight, no matter how noble our intentions, we must be defeated.

We need another—someone stronger than Satan, someone wiser, someone who will not betray our interests and well-being.

Betrayal sometimes comes when we are constrained and have no room to maneuver to a safer place, like when we are a passenger on an airliner.

Germanwings Flight 9525 was a scheduled international passenger flight from Barcelona–El Prat Airport in Spain to Düsseldorf Airport in Germany. Germanwings, a low-cost carrier owned by the German airline Lufthansa, operated the flight. On 24 March 2015, the aircraft, an Airbus A320-211, crashed 100 km (62 mi; 54 nmi) north-west of Nice in the French Alps. The crash killed all 144 passengers and six crew members. It was Germanwings' first fatal crash in the 18-year history of the company.

An investigation determined that the crash was caused deliberately by the co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz, who had previously been treated for suicidal tendencies and declared "unfit to work" by his doctor. Lubitz kept this information from his employer and instead reported for duty. Shortly after reaching cruise altitude and while the captain was out of the cockpit, he locked the cockpit door and initiated a controlled descent that continued until the aircraft struck a mountainside.³

Obviously, Lubitz did not have the best interests of his passengers in mind. And those who had placed their trust in the crew to deliver them safely to their destinations were instead betrayed. Similar circumstances occur when a person is locked into a situation by family ties, employment or debt. In these cases the ties do not allow the person to escape a morally perilous fate when the person in charge either through evil intent or mental incompetence leads his flock into perdition.

Jesus said,

Matthew 7:15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 “You will know them by their

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanwings_Flight_9525

fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

Do you think these admonitions do not apply to religious leaders? If not, then consider Jim Jones.

Jim Jones, whose full name was James Warren Jones, was an American cult leader who promised his followers a utopia in the jungles of South America after proclaiming himself messiah of the Peoples Temple, a San Francisco-based evangelist group. He ultimately led his followers into a mass suicide, which left more than 900 dead and came to be known as the Jonestown Massacre. On November 18 he commanded his followers to drink cyanide-adulterated punch, an order that the vast majority of them passively and inexplicably obeyed. Jones himself died of a gunshot wound in the head, possibly self-inflicted.⁴

Misplaced trust led to "...inexplicably obeyed..."?

Religious leaders do not always have the best interest of their flock in mind.

Don't be a follower of a religious leader who is showing the signs of a "false prophet," a "wolf in sheep clothing."

Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church,

Acts 20:29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

And Jesus said to His disciples,

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; 18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Sometimes a leader intends to act in the best interests of his followers, but instead will lead them to disaster. Adam surely did not know the extent of the disaster his choice was about to cause when he ate the forbidden fruit. But his action was not only his sin, but it allowed sin and death to enter the world. And so, not only did Adam and Eve suffer the consequences of their sin but all their posterity as well.

Paul wrote to the Romans,

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jim-Jones>

We suffer death because Adam made a serious mistake.

Several years ago Yaroslav Kudrinski was a pilot of one of Aeroflot's newest aircraft, an Airbus built by the European consortium. In March 1994, on a flight from Moscow to Hong Kong, Kudrinski gave up his pilot's seat to his 12-year-old daughter, then to his 16-year-old son, Eldar. The flight recorder revealed what they said.

"Daddy, can I turn this," Yana asked as she sat at the controls.

Her father warned her not to push any buttons.

The captain's son then took the seat and put his hands to the controls.

"Turn it," the father said, and watch the ground as you turn. "Let's go left. Is the plane turning?"

"Great," Eldar said.

Four minutes later Eldar asked, "Why is it still turning?"

"It's turning by itself?"

"Yes."

There follows a low whistling sound and a roar. For the next two and a half minutes, the flight tapes record the crew's frantic efforts to regain control of the aircraft. They failed. The aircraft crashed in Siberia, killing all 75 aboard. Evidence indicates that Eldar's turning of the wheel apparently turned off the automatic pilot. That would not have happened in a Russian made plane, and the crew did not notice it in time. The final error came when the boy's foot accidentally pushed the right pedal, sending the aircraft into a spin.⁵

Sometimes even a father's best intentions can be fatal.

What, therefore, is the test to know when the leader is maliciously misleading, or merely mistaken? The answer is in the letter of Paul to Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Read the scriptures and follow the instructions in them.

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

In spite of the false leaders and traitors that emerge in important places in life, the same ones who lead many to death and destruction, it is nevertheless true that God has appointed certain

⁵ Source: The Tampa Tribune, September 28, 1994

persons in positions to lead and to represent the best interests of mankind. Such was the case of King David as he represented Israel in conflict with the Philistines.

The Bible tells the story of how the boy, David, answered the challenge of the enemy of Israel, Goliath of Gath, how he met the giant on the field of battle and engaged him in what the spectators thought was a struggle that David must lose. The prophet Samuel told how the battle unfolded. Goliath taunted Israel,

1 Sam. 17:8 And he stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, and said to them, “Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. 9 “If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us.”

It is the story of the representative man, a principle that is well-laid in the history of mankind—a heroic figure represents all. The stakes are high. If Goliath wins then Israel becomes slaves to the Philistines; if David wins then the Philistines become slaves to Israel. The principle is the same in the great spiritual battle for the souls of mankind. Satan is the “Goliath of evil.” Christ is the “David of righteousness.”

In the contest between David and Goliath David slew his antagonist with the stone from a sling.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 1;3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, 4 just as **He chose us in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons **through Jesus Christ** to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His **grace**, which He **freely bestowed on us in the Beloved**. 7 **In Him we have redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, 8 which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of **His will**, according to His kind intention which **He purposed in Him** 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, *that is, the summing up of all things in Christ*, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. **In Him** 11 also **we have obtained an inheritance**, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 **In Him**, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit** of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God’s own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

The emphasis is mine, and I have emboldened the type that you may note the number of times Paul points out the location of the blessings he cites. All blessings are “in Christ.”

The Expositor's Greek Testament says of God's election (i.e., in Him) that it is,

“Not merely through Christ. The phrase expresses the supreme idea that pervades the epistle (to the Ephesians). Here it qualifies the whole statement of the blessing, in its bestowal, its nature and its seat. The Divine blessing has its ground and reason in Christ, so that apart from Him it could have no relation to us. It is ours by reason of our being in Him as our Representative and Head.”⁶ And, “In Him lay the cause that God blessed us with every spiritual blessing, since His act of redemption is the *causa meritoria* (meritorious cause) of this Divine bestowal of blessing.

Christ is the Christian's Representative and Head.

A similar phrase is used of David in 2 Samuel in connection with the revolt of Sheba. Samuel wrote,

2 Samuel 20:1 **N**ow a worthless fellow happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; and he blew the trumpet and said,

“We have no portion in David,
Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse;
Every man to his tents, O Israel!”

2 So all the men of Israel withdrew from following David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah remained steadfast to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem.

Sheba announced that the rebel faction had no portion “in David.” He, thus, rejected David as king, and in doing so he disavowed the interest and well-being he would have possessed by remaining loyal to God's appointed king. People today have the choice to pledge their loyalty to God's appointed King and to have Him as their Representative and Head. It is wise to choose Christ, for God has said that He, “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

Another scripture that reveals a shade of meaning of “...in (name)” is in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

To the Corinthians Paul said, death in all cases is grounded in Adam, and life in all cases is grounded in Christ. It follows that there is no death without the one and no life without the other.⁷

Which, therefore, is the better representative and head?

It is told that on Sunday morning, September 27, 1959, President Eisenhower invited Nikita Khrushchev to accompany him to a worship service at a Gettysburg church. The Red leader declined and Eisenhower went without him.⁸

⁶ Nicoll, Robertson W., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 3, p. 247.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Nicoll, Robertson W., p. 926.

Here is the picture of two leaders and two roads. Eisenhower chose to follow God. Khrushchev chose to follow the other guy.

What would be your choice?

Which leader would you choose?

Which road would you follow?

Remember the Judas Goat.

⁸ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 242). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.