

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

TOSCA LEE

1. Before reading this book, what did you know about Judas Iscariot? Where did you get your information about him?
2. Had you ever thought about what Judas might have been like as a boy and a young man? Does picturing Judas as a child have any effect on your feelings toward him?
3. Name some personality traits that Judas exhibited as a child in the novel. How did these traits play into his story as he grew to adulthood and affect his actions as an adult?
4. What drove Judas to become a perfectionist about the Law. . . or to believe he could never perfectly keep it?
5. What observations did you make about his passion to overthrow the Roman government? How did his motives differ from the motives of his contemporaries?
6. Why did Judas find Jesus so compelling? Why did he choose to follow him?
7. What did Judas sacrifice in order to follow Jesus?
8. Do you think Judas felt disappointed or let down by Jesus? If so, when and why?
9. According to the story, the events surrounding Judas's handing over of Jesus did not go as planned. What do you think Judas expected to happen?
10. The author poses the question: Would you have done the same? In the context of this story, do you believe you might have?
11. The story opens and closes with a regret-filled Judas reflecting on his life. If he were given a cosmic do-over, do you think he would make the same choices? If so, what do you believe he might do differently?



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12. Do you think Judas was truly repentant for his deeds at the end of his life? Why or why not?
13. At the end of the book Judas says, “I, who denied [Jesus] and delivered him to his enemies. I, who die with him. My name will be synonymous with ‘traitor.’ But he has loved his enemies. He has loved me.” Do you think that this love of Jesus saved Judas from what has traditionally been considered his ultimate fate? Discuss.
14. Has reading this book changed how you think about the character of Judas? If so, how?
15. What new questions or insights do you feel you may have about the person of Jesus after reading the novel?
16. Do you think some readers might feel threatened or unsettled by this fictional account of the life of Judas? Why or why not?

A Conversation with Tosca Lee

Q: In previous novels, you’ve written about a fallen angel (Demon) and Eve (Havah), and now Judas. Do you find yourself particularly drawn to write about biblical characters who are historically maligned? If so, why?

A: I do, because we so often think of historical or biblical characters in particular in two-dimensional, cliché terms. We vilify without investigating why someone might have done what they did. But what’s the rest of the story? Would we have done the same? How much of ourselves can we discover in those characters? I find the answer to that question is always more than I’d like to admit.



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Q: How long did it take you to research and write *Iscariot*?

A: Three years.

Q: Were there any surprises for you in the writing of this novel? Did you uncover any startling facts or experience sudden flashes of insight?

A: The violence of the historical setting. The notion of national salvation (from Persia, from Rome), which is so different from the Christian context two millennia later. The culture of informing in the first century. The symbolism of many events in Jesus' life (forty days in the wilderness and crossing the Jordan) to earlier events in Israelite history (forty years in the wilderness, crossing the Jordan to enter the Promised Land), etc. The absolute unconventional, non-conservative, controversial, and sometimes dangerous person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Q: Have your years of studying and writing about biblical characters had an impact on your personal faith? If so, describe.

A: I have left every project with more questions than I had going in. And I had a lot of questions going in!

Q: If readers take away one primary message from *Iscariot*, what do you hope it will be?

A: That there is always more to the story. Of anyone. That we are all, essentially, the same.

To learn more about Tosca or her books, please visit: www.toscalee.com.



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