

The Lord Predicts that One of His Disciples Will Betray Him

John 13:18-30

John 13:18-30 - *"I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'" 19 Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He. 20 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."*

21 When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." 22 Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.

25 Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

26 Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. 27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 28 But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. 29 For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.

30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night."

Background Notes

In order to reconstruct the scene in which Jesus identified Judas as the "betrayers," we need to remember that in the 1st century the people didn't sit at tables for meals, as we do. For special meals, like the Passover *seder*, they reclined around a low table on low backless couches or divans. So Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of "The Last Supper," in which the Lord is sitting on a chair at a table with six disciples on each side, is really not historically correct, is it?!

As they reclined on the low couches, diners would lie on their sides or stomachs and prop themselves up on their left forearms, leaving their right hands free to reach for food and eat. And they didn't use silverware - they used a soft flat bread (like a pita or taco) to dip into the dishes of meat or sauce on the table. By the way, at Passover the bread was unleavened.

Knowing this background is important for understanding how John was leaning back on Jesus' chest (v23), as well as how Judas received the morsel of bread (v26). Verse 23: *"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved."* We believe that this disciple was John. John's couch was placed so that the head area of his couch was near the Lord's couch, so if he leaned back his head would be close to the Lord's chest.

When the Lord said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me,”* Peter, whose couch was at another part of the table, gestured to John to ask Jesus who would betray Him. So John leaned his head back against the Lord’s chest and, in a quiet voice, asked the Lord, *“Lord, who is it?”* (v25). Again in a quiet voice that was not heard by the rest of the disciples, the Lord responded, *“It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it”* (v26). The Lord then dipped a piece of flatbread into a dish of meat or sauce, and gave it to Judas. As He passed it, the Lord said to Judas, *“What you do, do quickly.”* And Judas then left the group.

Even at this point, no one suspected Judas. Judas was the treasurer of the group (v29), and people don’t usually ask a questionable or untrustworthy person to be the treasurer for a group. So on the surface it appeared that Judas was the least likely of the disciples to be the betrayer.

The other disciples hadn’t heard what the Lord said to John, so they probably thought Judas was going out to buy some last minute items, or perhaps to give Passover alms to the poor.

Doctrinal / Teaching points

1. The betrayal by Judas was a fulfillment of Scripture.

“I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me’ (v18). The Lord had just finished washing the disciples’ feet, but He had indicated that all of them were not clean. *“‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean’”* (v10-11). By this statement the Lord specifically indicated that one of His disciples would betray Him.

“When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me” (v21). As the Lord contemplated betrayal by one of His own disciples, and the fate that awaited Judas, He was deeply disturbed in His human spirit. The Lord was not surprised because He knew all along that He would be betrayed. But the nearness of these events weighed heavily on His human soul. In John 6:70-71 we read, *“Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.”*

In verse 19 there are two further proofs of our Lord’s deity. *“Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.”* The phrase, *“I tell you before it comes”* demonstrates our Lord’s omniscience, which is proof of His deity. Also in verse 19, the Lord claimed the title of God from the Old Testament. *“You will know that I am He”* - and notice that the word *“He”* is in italics. This means that it was not in the original text. **“I am”** is the title of deity that comes straight from the Old Testament. Do you remember when God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush? **“I AM”** is the divine title that God used to identify Himself. Here, once again, the Lord claimed that divine title for Himself.

The prophecy quoted in verse 18, *‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me,’* comes from the Messianic portion of Psalm 41:9. In Psalm 41 David was referring to Ahithophel, one of his trusted counselors. When David’s son Absalom usurped the throne, Ahithophel betrayed David and defected to Absalom. But when Absalom rejected Ahithophel’s counsel, Ahithophel went out and hanged himself. (Read about those events in 2 Samuel 16 and 17.) Ahithophel, then, is a *type* in this Messianic Psalm. He is a picture of Judas, who betrayed his Lord and King, and then went out and hanged himself.

Judas fulfilled Scripture when he betrayed Jesus, but this fact doesn’t relieve him of his sin of betraying the Lord. Two verses in Acts 1 make this quite clear: *“Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus...”* (Acts 1:16). And Acts 1:25 says, *“...this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.”*

Judas was guilty of transgression – of sin. Judas was responsible for every single one of his actions, even though his betrayal of Jesus fulfilled Scripture.

2. There is a difference between satanic possession and satanic influence.

“Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly” (v27). Up to this point, Judas was **influenced** by Satan, but he was not **possessed** by Satan. There is a difference. Look back at verse 2: *“And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him...”* Satan put the idea to betray the Lord “into the heart of Judas” - that is satanic influence, but not satanic possession. For another example, when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matthew 16, He said, *“Get behind Me, Satan!”* Peter was not possessed by Satan, but his ideas and statements about the Lord not having to go to the cross were influenced by Satan. They were “put into his heart” by Satan.

In John 13:27, the case of Judas is very unique. Here is satanic possession: *“And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him.”* Think of it - *“Satan entered him.”* A man possessed by **Satan himself!**

Today there are occasional cases when unbelievers are **demonically** possessed, but they are probably not possessed by Satan himself. Satan is not omnipresent. He can be in only one place at one time. Satan is waiting until the end times, when he will possess the leader referred to as “the beast” in Revelation 13.

Today, there is much satanic influence and some demonic possession, but actual **satanic** possession is very unlikely. Remember - there is a difference between satanic influence and satanic possession.

Practical Applications

1. There is only night, if you turn from the Light!

“Having received the piece of bread, Judas went out immediately, and it was night” (v30). In this verse, “night” has a double meaning. It was after sundown, and dark outside – but it was **night** within the soul of Judas! I believe spiritualization of this Scripture is legitimate, because the contrast between light and darkness is one of the themes of the Gospel of John. Jesus is the Light of the world. This world is in spiritual and moral darkness. If you turn away from the Light of the world, there is only the night of the world!

A number of years ago a student who professed to be a Christian came to study at Emmaus, but he left after one year. The next time I saw him, he told me that he had given up the Christian faith, and he was now seeking for the truth and happiness elsewhere. To this day he is still searching, but he’ll never find truth and happiness apart from Jesus Christ. He is further away from the Light now than he ever was. Because he has turned away from the Light, he is blind, walking in darkness, and his heart is hardened. Why? Because there is **only night** if you turn from the **Light!**

2. Don’t refuse your last chance for salvation.

The Lord gave Judas a morsel of bread that He had dipped in meat or sauce. This was considered a gesture of kindness, and an honor extended to a friend - not just a gesture to indicate the one who would betray Him. The Lord was not playing games with Judas. The Lord loved Judas!

The Lord Jesus had given Judas a chance to change when He washed Judas’s feet. With the gesture of kindness when He the bread to Judas, the Lord was giving him one last chance to change his mind and reverse his course of action. But Judas refused his last chance for salvation. Sadly, the point of no return had been reached. Judas now was open to Satan. How tragic!

Maybe you’re like Judas. You’re a good, trustworthy type of person. You would be the logical person for a group or committee to choose as treasurer. You’ve been going along with the Christian faith. Maybe that’s the way you were raised. Maybe you had Christian parents, and you went to Sunday School and church. But is it possible that you are considering going the other way now? Is it possible that, like Judas, you never **really** became a **true** believer in Jesus as your personal Savior?

Don’t turn away from Jesus! If you do, a hardening process will begin to set in. This may be your last chance for salvation. Don’t refuse your last chance for salvation!