

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN13B_Judas' Last Chance and Jesus Predicts His Betrayal)

John 13:18-30

I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen, but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' (Jn 13:18)

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. (Psa 41:9)

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; we who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng. Let death come deceitfully upon them; let them go down alive to Sheol, for evil is in their dwelling, in their midst. (Psa 55:12-15)

It is interesting that none of the disciples had a clue as to Judas' true intentions and secret motives to betray Jesus (see 13:22). This indicates just how good of an actor and hypocrite Judas was since he had lived with the other eleven disciples for more than three years. However, it is impossible to deceive Jesus. The Holy Spirit ministered to Jesus' human soul and spirit using all of the scripture that Jesus had appropriated to produce wise discernment of Judas' character. Jesus had to fulfill all Scripture including Psalm 41:9. In that Psalm, David had been betrayed by his companion Ahithophel, who then hanged himself (2 Sam 16:20-17:3, 23). Ahithophel had been David's counselor and diplomatic advisor who deserted him in Absalom's rebellion. This is an example of a prophecy by parallelism.¹

In verse 19, Jesus makes a connection between the Psalm 41:9 and what was about to transpire in His life. This raises an interesting question. Did the fact that this betrayal was prophesied hundreds of years prior to Judas' betrayal of Jesus mean that Judas had been programmed by God to commit this despicable act? Does God program people so that His sovereign purpose in human history can be accomplished? Did God forecast His sovereign purpose in our Lord's life in Psalm 41 so that He could justify creating a man for the specific purpose of betraying Jesus? Of course, the answer to these questions should be very easy to anyone who has begun to grasp the manner in which the attributes of God's essence work in a unified way. Yet, they are examples of the types of questions that perplex many due to a distorted understanding of God's essence, particularly the attribute of sovereignty.

Judas was free to choose whether to yield to the influence of Satan or the Lord in his life. God foresaw Judas' decisions from eternity past, not to mention a period of a few hundred years prior to his betrayal of Jesus (when Psalm 41:9 was penned). God's omniscience and advance knowledge of the negative decisions of man does not mean that the individual is devoid of his/her volition. The fact that Jesus knew that Scripture had to be fulfilled that fateful night did not mean that Judas did not have a choice. Jesus knew Judas still had a choice as evidenced by His last appeal to Judas (vv. 21-26). During this "Last Supper," Jesus followed a custom practiced during the Passover meal that was to be celebrated soon. It was customary for the father as the head of the house to give honored guests pieces of bread or meat dipped in a juice prepared by boiling

¹ Frank E. Gabelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, electronic version (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1989-1998).

fruit in wine.² This symbolized the fruit of the Promised Land. If Judas had yielded to the Lord's gracious act toward him, he would have found his ever-hardening heart immediately softened by such a gracious act.

The disciples totally missed the signal and Jesus was purposefully subtle. Can you imagine the chaos that would have ensued had Jesus not been so subtle and Judas' betrayal became an obvious fact to the other eleven?

In verses 19-20, Jesus was asking for more than personal loyalty. The disciples could have been loyal without acknowledging or believing that He was the one sent from God. Jesus used the phrase "I am He" just as He had in front of His enemies at the Feast of Tabernacles (8:24, 28, 58). The reason that Jesus wanted their personal commitment through faith at this time is that Jesus knew that the events which were just on the horizon would bring to the surface the disciples' misperceptions of the timing of Jesus as the Messiah/King in deference to Him as the Servant/Messiah. He knew that His crucifixion would shake their faith in Him as the Messiah and He knew that the reason was their continued confusion between the servant and king aspects of His messiah-ship. However, Jesus also knew that the resurrection would re-establish their faith in Him as Messiah (Jn 2:22) that they were to now affirm. The fact that Jesus spoke the words which included quotes of parallel events in David's life and performed these acts of humble service to His disciples helped the disciples after Jesus' death to believe that God had sent Jesus (see Jn 13:19; 14:29).

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray Me." (Jn 13:21)

The word "troubled" is the Greek word (*tarasso*). It is the same word used of Jesus' agitation at the grave of Lazarus (11:33) and at the request of the Greeks to see Him (12:27). This same word is also used by Jesus in 14:1 & 27.

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was **troubled**. (11:33)

Now my soul is **troubled**, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. (12:27)

Let not your heart be **troubled**; you believe in God, believe also in Me. (14:1)

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Let not your heart be **troubled**, neither let it be afraid. (14:27)

Does the fact that the Bible indicates that Jesus was "troubled" mean that Jesus worried or was full of anxiety? If so, then Jesus would have sinned and could not be our Savior as the propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Note the following comments from one commentary about this verse (v. 21) in John 13.

Being human, Jesus was troubled over Judas' soon betrayal of His love and friendship. *Being divine*, Jesus knew in advance that it would happen. Jesus sensed the spiritual hardness and deadness which sin had produced in Judas.³

² Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 496.

³ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985).

Most believers (and even unbelievers) attribute any divine insight that Jesus manifested to the fact that He was divine. The comments from this commentary are a classic example of this point. As a result, Jesus remains shrouded in a certain degree of mystery and seems a bit beyond our reach or comprehension. Certainly, Jesus was both God and man in hypostatic union and this truth does boggle the mind as we struggle to understand the mechanics of how that could be. I do not deny the profound and almost paradoxical nature of this truth. However, I believe the humanity of our Lord on this earth while in His public ministry is an often minimized reality.

Therefore, I would suggest that when we see passages such as these that mention that Jesus was “troubled” in spirit, we should interpret them in view of the fact that Jesus was human. In His humanity, Jesus had to stabilize with a doctrinal rationale. The mental process that one pursues in deriving a doctrinal rationale in a set of circumstances that tests the soul is briefly disruptive to normal life. As a person develops the appropriate doctrinal rationale to address the situation at hand, one can appear to be “troubled.” The brief disruption in one’s normal thought patterns as one reflects upon God’s promises, principles and doctrines to find relevance to the situation at hand does not equate to a sinful action or state.⁴

The fact that in verse 22 John notes that the other disciples were perplexed about whom Jesus spoke indicates that Judas covered his tracks well. None of them knew that he was a thief and none of them had discerned his motives. This was in spite of Jesus’ previous indications that one of them was not a true believer.

But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (Jn 6:68-70)

Jesus said to him [Peter], “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.” (Jn 13:10-11)

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.” (Jn 13:18)

In verses 23-29, we see the betrayer’s identity disclosed to the apostle John, but evidently not to the other disciples. It is likely that Peter asked John to ask Jesus for the betrayer’s identity because Peter wanted to take matters into his own hands. After all the disciples had two swords among them (Lu 22:38, 49-50). See the following comments of interest regarding the customs and traditions associated with the bread.

“Bread” in this context does not mean the modern spongy loaf used in most Western nations. It was probably a piece of flat bread, somewhat leathery in consistency, which could be used to scoop bits of meat taken from the pot in which they were cooked. For the host to select such a tidbit from the main dish and give it to a guest would be a mark of courtesy and esteem. The disciples, seeing this, would conclude only that Jesus regarded Judas as a friend he had confidence in. Perhaps he so favored others in turn. Jesus’ reply would answer the question for the beloved disciple; but he could scarcely have communicated

⁴ The faith-rest drill is that process that the believer pursues when faced with a life situation that could be classified as a test. The faith-rest drill can be defined as consisting of three stages: 1) claim a promise – stabilizes the soul by shifting focus from the temporal circumstance to the eternal; 2) develop a divine viewpoint rationale based upon pertinent doctrine – the key word here is “pertinent;” 3) apply the pertinent doctrine to the life situation.

his knowledge to Peter at that moment without disturbing the peace of the group and violating the confidence of Jesus.⁵

Jesus displayed graciousness and presented Judas with the opportunity to repent of his intentions and the direction that he had set for himself before it was too late. The other disciples were ignorant of Judas' intentions and he could have changed direction without any explanation and no one would know except Jesus. However, he hardened his heart and rejected Jesus' gracious treatment and offer and that final act of negative volition opened the door to Satanic possession.

Once Judas had rejected this final opportunity to repent, Jesus wanted Judas to get on with his treachery so that God's will and purpose could be accomplished in His life. Jesus had lived His entire life in preparation for His sacrificial death; therefore, He was prepared for its immanency. He did not need to delay it while He prepared mentality and spiritually for it. He had not lived His life like the masses who attempt to deny and not face the reality of death until it is too late. The sooner Judas departed, the sooner Jesus could continue His ministry to His true disciples.

Evidently, as soon as Judas received the bread, he departed to carry out his plan (v. 30). "Perhaps as Judas opened the door to leave, John saw the city veiled in darkness. His four words correspond to Jesus' statement when Judas betrayed him: 'This is your hour--when darkness reigns' (Luke 22:53)."⁶ The contrast between darkness and light is a continuous theme throughout John's Gospel as is the heightening conflict between Jesus and His enemies empowered by Satan (see Jn 8:38, 42-44; 13:27; 14:30; 17:15).

⁵ Gabelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

⁶ Ibid.