

Exegesis

Vs. 18 – “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Everything that Jesus said and did (cf. vs. 1-17) was not for every apostle. The Lord did not “speak” for the sake of “all” twelve men. Judas was the outlier. He saw no value in what the Lord taught and would utterly reject everything he was hearing, and because of that, he would eventually betray Jesus. At this point, Judas’ betrayal has been referred to many times (cf. 6:70-71; 12:4; 13:2, 11). Though the disciples were still in the dark, John’s audience had been expecting it for some time. Our faithful narrator has shown that while all twelve men had been handpicked by Jesus (or as the Lord said, “I know whom I have chosen”), they’ve not all been chosen for the *same purpose*. Judas had been selected as the *betray*er from the beginning, unlike the rest. And the Lord explains that even this fulfills the “scripture” and then quotes Psalm 41:9.

In its O.T. context, Psalm 41 was written by King David when he was suffering some unknown sickness. His enemies, not wanting to miss an opportunity to kick a man when he’s down, begin to revile and disparage him. So much so that, should David die because of this sickness, his adversaries hoped his “name” would “perish” along with him (cf. Ps. 41:5). And, sadly, David goes on to lament that even his “close friend” had “lifted his heel against” him. This “close friend” likely referred to Ahithophel, David’s own counselor, who, under the direction of Absalom, conspired against David (cf. 2 Sam. 15:12).¹

Unlike the Psalmist, Jesus was not sick. But, like the Psalmist, he was being condemned and despised by his enemies. They planned to kill Jesus (cf. 11:53). That animosity had now spilled into the Lord’s inner circle. Judas, though a “close friend” who should’ve been loyal to Jesus, was the one who “lifted his heel against” him. This last phrase has been interpreted in various ways. Morris suggests it imagines how a mule might kick the person feeding it.² Carson explains that it could mean ‘has given me a great fall’ or ‘has taken cruel advantage of me’ or ‘has walked out on me.’³ Whatever the precise meaning of this phrase may be, the point is that both here and in Psalm 41, the betrayal of one who has shared a meal was a great offense. Hospitality in the East was of supreme importance. Even strangers were regarded with respect at a meal. That Judas, who was no stranger but a close companion of Jesus, betrayed the Lord

¹ Köstenberger (2008), p. 411.

² Morris (1995), p. 553, also contends it could refer to “the shaking off of the dust from the feet” (cf. Lu. 9:5; 10:11).

³ Carson (1991), p. 471; Keener (2012), 2:912, mentions Morris’ interpretation but says it is likely about someone turning their back on a close friend.

would've sickened audiences at the time. It would've been worse than anything an out-right enemy could've done. "The deeper the level of intimacy, the more that trust was a duty, and the more terrible its betrayal."⁴

Vs. 19 – What could've been the rationale for Jesus to handpick his betrayer? The Lord explains, "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*." The "he" is not in the original Greek. Thus, the phrase is actually "ye may believe that I am." As in 8:24, 28, and 58 (cf. Ex. 3:14; Isa. 41:4; 43:10), this is a declaration of Jesus' deity; he is the Great I Am (cf. 14:29).⁵ But once Judas' betrayal was revealed and he was captured, executed, and buried, the disciples might've been tempted to think that the Lord wasn't God. And if so (which is likely), that would only be because the apostles had forgotten what Jesus had said here.

Judas' betrayal was not a mark against Jesus' deity but a point in favor of it. To prove he was God, the Lord foretells his own demise without revealing who the betrayer was. After all, the betrayal had to happen to fulfill the scriptures (cf. vs. 18/Psa. 41:9). Probably, had the Lord unmasked Judas for who he was, one of the disciples would've tried to stop him (cf. Lu. 22:49-51). But this death could not be avoided. The Lord was born to die.

Nevertheless, Jesus tried to ensure that, even in the wake of Judas' treachery, the disciples ought not to doubt his deity. Of course, this would be made abundantly clear after the resurrection. Yet we should not overlook the fact that many clues indicated that Jesus was God, and counterintuitively, one of the best clues was his very betrayal.⁶ It wouldn't be until the Holy Spirit connected the dots for the disciples later that they would finally see the connection (cf. 14:26).

Vs. 20 – "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." Connected as this verse is to yet another "I am" declaration in vs. 19, it holds immense weight. Jesus, with all the import of his divine status behind him, declares that the one who receives the people he sends will receive himself. That is to say, those who later believe the apostles will have not just welcomed the disciples but will have accepted Jesus himself (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1-4). And not only that, when one receives Jesus (via the apostles), they also receive the one who sent Jesus—i.e., God. Or, as the Lord said in another place, "He that receiveth you [the apostles] receiveth me, and he that receiveth me

⁴ Keener (2012), 2:912-913.

⁵ Köstenberger (2008), p. 412; Morris (1995), p. 553; Keener (2012), 2:914; Carson (1991), p. 471.

⁶ Morris (1995), p. 553, "He was not the deceived and helpless victim of unsuspected treachery, but One sent by God to effect the divine purpose going forward calmly and unafraid, to do what God had planned that he should do."

receiveth him that sent me" (Mat. 10:40). Believing the disciples is embracing the Son, which is accepting the Father. And this model lives on today. The books of the Bible may have been written by human hands, but they are *divine*. They have been inspired by God's very breath (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). So, even today, should we believe what the Bible says, we don't only believe its authors (i.e., Matthew, John, Paul, etc.) but in the One who inspired those authors. And in doing so, we believe in Yahweh himself; for if the Bible is anything, it is God's very words. Sadly, Judas' forfeited this honored place as one of God's apostolic witnesses. As an unbelieving disciple, Judas did not embrace the Son, and, in doing so, he rejected the Father, consequently rejecting his divine calling.

Vs. 21-22 – Sadly, Jesus is not done talking about his betrayer: "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake." The Greek term "troubled" is the same word used elsewhere (cf. 5:4, 7; 11:33; 12:27), and it means that the Lord had an intense and visceral reaction to what he was saying (*see notes* for 11:33). Jesus was profoundly disturbed and bothered by what he was now telling the disciples. Just because he was not surprised by this betrayal *does not* mean he was spared emotional turmoil. On the contrary, he was *severely* grieved and *unsettled* by Judas' actions. In fact, his heartache can be heard by his repeated use of the term "you." This traitor would not come from without but from *within* his close-knit group.

And how do the disciples respond? Shocked by this display of emotion and revelation that the betrayer sat in their midst, all the disciples did was look around at one another. No one said a word, not even Peter! They just sat there eyeing each other, wondering who Jesus was talking about. Interestingly, this is the first of many "wordless" communications in this scene.⁷ Much is said without actually being said.

Jesus had already admitted that there was "a devil" amongst the Twelve (cf. 6:71). But he did not specify what he meant by that. It could be that the disciples thought that if one of them was going to betray the Lord, they wouldn't do so intentionally.⁸ Or, perhaps, they assumed that since Jesus knew who would betray him, he would do everything he could to avoid it. He was a miracle worker, after all. Regardless of their reasoning, what is clear from all the gospels, is that *no one* suspected Judas. As Morris says, "He had covered his duplicity very well."⁹ However, while the disciples were in the dark, Judas had to have felt like he had been made.

⁷ Klink (2016), p. 593.

⁸ Carson (1991), p. 472.

⁹ Morris (1995), p. 555.

And, in light of that, it is a shame that Judas did not take this opportunity to repent. Doubtless, had the betrayer come forward, he would've been forgiven. Instead, he remained silent, sending his Master this non-verbal message: "So what if you know. I don't care."

Vs. 23-25 – “Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Finally, John, our faith narrator, aka the 'Beloved Disciple' himself, is officially introduced. And where do we find him? Propped up next to Jesus, on his very "bosom." The Greek term used for "bosom" is **κόλπος** (kólpos), and it refers to the region of the body between the arms, such as the stomach or chest, though it is doubtful we should take the meaning so literally here. It's better to see that John is shoulder-to-shoulder with Jesus.¹⁰ This is why we were told that "Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake." Of all the disciples, John was closest to the Lord. And so, though close already, John says that he leaned even closer to the point that he was, literally, "lying on Jesus' breast...." Thus, being as close as would be physically possible, the Beloved Disciple asked, "Lord, who is it?"

Admittedly, western sensibilities may recoil at the close physical proximity of these men. But, to be clear, there are no homosexual implications in this display.¹¹ Outside of the West, male physical contact is quite ordinary.¹² In fact, men who operate a business together will often be seen holding each other's hands as a show of "mutual respect and trust."¹³ Famously, President George W. Bush walked hand-in-hand with King Abdullah in 2005 as they strolled the gardens of his Texas ranch. At the time, the gesture marked the peaceful relationship between Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

Moreover, it was fashionable in first-century Palestine, especially during feasts like the Passover, that dinner guests would be seated in the style of a Roman triclinium (see Figure 13.1).¹⁴ The term "triclinium" is a combination of two Greek words: **τρεῖς** (teîs), meaning "three," and **κλίνω** (klínō), meaning "to lean." And while the term "three" referred to how three tables would've been positioned in a u-shape, the term "to lean" referred to how, rather than being seated in an upright position, attendees would be reclined on couches with their heads pointed toward the meal and their feet away from the table.¹⁵ As such, people would've used their left elbow to support themselves while using their free right hand to eat.

¹⁰ For an example of how **κόλπος** is used in a far more technical sense, see Acts 27:39, where it describes what we might call a gulf, cove, or bay.

¹¹ Keener (2012), 2:917.

¹² Carson (1991), p. 474.

¹³ Klink (2016), p. 595.

¹⁴ Keener (2012), 2:915.

¹⁵ Köstenberger (2008), p. 415.

Additionally, the 'guest of honor' would've been seated at the top of the u-shaped table in-between two other honored guests. This means that if John the Beloved could lean back on Jesus' chest, he must've been seated to the Lord's right.¹⁶ But, if so, which disciple was seated to his left? Considering that we'll see Jesus give Judas a piece of bread in vs. 26, we can assume that he was within arm's length of the betrayer. Thus, it is likely that, of all people, Judas held the other position of honor at the Lord's lefthand side.¹⁷

Figure 13.1 – Roman Triclinium.¹⁸



Vs. 26 – “Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the Son of Simon.” For the host of the feast, in the case of Jesus, to give someone a piece of bread ("sop") was a token of respect and friendship (cf. Ru. 2:14).¹⁹ Carson theorizes that “The Evangelist may well be thinking of an early point in the paschal meal when bitter herbs were dipped into a bowl of fruit puree, the *harōset* sauce of dates, raisins and sour wine.”²⁰ Meaning Jesus has done nothing out of the ordinary. Even this gesture would've been expected. The only person who knew the true meaning behind this act was John. He alone is a witness to this moment. Which leads us to ask, "Why didn't John do something?" We don't know. It could be that while this scene is

¹⁶ Carson (1991), p. 474.

¹⁷ Keener (2012), 2:916; Köstenberger (2008), p. 416; Carson (1991), p. 474.

¹⁸ The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library, "Roman triclinium, or dining room, with table and couches," *New York Public Library Digital Collections*, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e4-37b5-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>, [Accessed May 10, 2023].

¹⁹ Köstenberger (2008), p. 416.

²⁰ Carson (1991), p. 474.

presented to us as a crisp and orderly narrative, in reality, things moved so fast that John could do nothing but watch and remember.²¹

Vs. 27 – Though offering Judas that piece of bread was an act of love that should've convicted the traitor's heart, it seems to have made it even more deviant. Because, as John reveals, "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." Herein is the only demon possession in John. Our faithful narrator has refrained from mentioning the others so that this moment will hit with as much impact as is due. Judas had resisted every olive branch extended to him by Jesus. Yet, little did he know the more he hardened his heart to the Savior, the more he became susceptible to Satan. Thus, the Devil did not force his way into Judas; the betrayer welcomed him. At this point, what is Jesus to do? What more could be said to one who would not be turned away from his present course? There was nothing to do but stop standing in his way. If Judas insisted on betrayal, Jesus would have him be quick about it. The Lord was in control; he even gave leave to his betrayer.²²

Vs. 28-29 – "Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor." John included himself when he said that "no man" understood what Jesus meant when he spoke to Judas, is possible. If this is the case, John only later connected the dots between his question, Jesus' action, and Judas' departure. This would go a long way in explaining John's non-reaction.²³ But this can hardly be the case. Had he misunderstood Jesus' gesture, he likely would've said so as he does in other places (cf. 12:16; 20:9). No. For the first time, John saw the traitor for what he was.²⁴ But Judas had played the part of a disciple so well that no one suspected him. Even in a conversation about Jesus' betrayal, where he blatantly indicated that one of the twelve would betray him, not a single disciple thought it unusual that Judas left. Instead, they assumed the best; they believed he had been sent on some errand for the Passover or to give money to the poor. All, except Jesus and now John, had been deceived by Judas.

Vs. 30 – The rest of the disciples were focused on other things, but John's eyes were fixed on Judas. He says, "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night." No sooner had Judas taken the bread than he was out the door. And with that, the betrayer exits the scene. In doing so, he leaves behind the warmth of a feast, a meal with friends in the

²¹ Notice how, in verse 30, Judas left "immediately" after getting the bread.

²² Köstenberger (2008), p. 417.

²³ Morris (1995), p. 558.

²⁴ Köstenberger (2008), p. 417; Carson (1991), p. 475.

presence of God's Son, and strikes out into the cold dark night possessed by the Prince of this World and committed to a devilish objective. Poet George Herbert penned these words:

Mine own Apostle, who the bag did beare,

Though he had all I had, did not forbear,

To sell me also, and to put me there:

Was ever a grief-like mind?

For thirty pence, he did my death device,

Who at three hundred did the ointment prize,

Not half so sweet as my sweet sacrifice:

Was ever grief like mined?²⁵

²⁵ Carson (1991), p. 476, quoting from George Herbert, in C.A. Patrides (ed.), *The English Poems of George Herbert* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), p. 48.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 42

Text: John 13:18-30

Tonight, we'll deal, in-depth, with Judas. And though he was offered a piece of bread, an act of love that should've convicted the traitor's heart, we'll see as it will make him even more deviant. So much so that Devil takes that opportunity to possess the heart of Judas Iscariot. Judas had resisted every olive branch extended to him by Jesus. Yet, little did he know the more he hardened his heart to the Savior, the more he became susceptible to Satan.

Thus, to be clear, the Devil did not force his way into Judas; the betrayer welcomed him in. At this point, what is Jesus to do? What more could be said to one who would not be turned away from his present course? There was nothing to do but stop standing in his way. If Judas insisted on betrayal, Jesus would have him be quick about it. The Lord was in control; he even gave leave to his betrayer.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: