

John 13:21-38

Countdown to the Crucifixion

Dave Moldenhauer, Northwest Gospel Hall, March 29, 2020

The setting for our passage is the upper room where Jesus ate the last Passover meal with His disciples just prior to His crucifixion.

The sequence of events in the upper room is generally taken as follows although some harmonies of the gospel may vary the order slightly.

- When evening came Jesus sat down with the 12 to eat the Passover feast in the upper room.
- As they were eating the disciples began disputing among themselves as to who should be considered the greatest.
- Jesus rebuked them by saying, “He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”
- He then interrupted the meal by rising from supper, laying aside His garments, taking a towel pouring water into a basin and washing the disciple’s feet one by one.
- That being done, Jesus again reclined at the table to finish the meal. While they wrap up the meal we have the discussion recorded for us in this chapter.
- Now that the meal is over, Judas leaves the upper room to carry out the devious plan he and the Jewish leaders had agreed to.
- Then Jesus introduced the communion service, by taking bread, giving thanks and passing it around, and likewise also the cup.
- Following this first remembrance meeting Jesus continued to teach his disciples, and we have the content of that in John chapters 14 through 16.
- Then Jesus prayed what we call the high priestly prayer of John 17.
- And last of all, before leaving the upper room, they sang a hymn together.

If that truly was the sequence of events in the upper room, there are 2 facts about Judas that stand out.

- First, Jesus bowed down and washed the feet of Judas Iscariot.
- And secondly, Judas was absent when Jesus introduced the remembrance meeting.

Realizing that emphasizes the truth that partaking of the emblems at the Lord’s Supper is only for true believers.

Our portion divides into 3 sections

- In the first section verses 21 – 30, Jesus identifies Judas as the one who will betray Him.
- In the second section verses 31 – 35, Jesus instructs the disciples.
- And in the 3rd section verses 36 – 38, Jesus answers Peter’s questions.

Now let us look at the **first section** starting in verse 21

Vs. 21 This is the third time that we read that Jesus was troubled.

- The first was at the graveside of Lazarus. When Jesus saw Mary weeping and the Jews weeping, He groaned in spirit and was troubled.
- The second in chapter 12, while Jesus reflected on the thought that His hour had come He said, “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour?”
- And now for the third time we read that, “He was troubled in spirit” in view of the betrayal of Judas which would occur later on that evening.

Christ vividly displays His humanity by being troubled in both spirit and soul as the countdown to the crucifixion nears T zero. But yet in spite-of-this, a few verses later, Jesus spoke words of comfort to His disciples by saying, “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.” And again a little later Jesus comforts by saying, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.”

Vs.22 Jesus knew exactly who would betray Him to the Jewish authorities. For we read in chapter 18 regarding the crucifixion that Jesus, “Knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward.”

But the disciples were perplexed. Judas had so deceitfully concealed his motives that the other 11 did not realize his intent. Surely after all this time you would have thought that they would have had a clue as to whom Jesus meant.

The parable of the wheat and the tares also illustrates concealment of evil motives.

- A man sowed good seed in his field, but while he slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.
- The servants came to the owner and asked, "Should we gather up the tares?"
- But the owner replied; let both grow until the harvest, and then the reapers can gather the tares for burning and the wheat into my barn.

Unger says that the most common tare found in grain fields in the Holy Land is the bearded darnel, "A poisonous grass, almost indistinguishable from wheat while the two are growing into blade. But when they come into ear, they can be separated without difficulty." Judas was the tare among the wheat.

This just goes to show how that there can be some among us who from outward appearances talk the talk and mimic the walk, but yet inwardly their heart is not right with the Lord. They may fool you and me, but not the Lord. I can think of a number of individuals like that. Perhaps you know of some, who have been among us in the past, but now have cast aside the faith.

It's been said, "Proper training is the solution to man's behavior." Judas had the best example and the cream of the crop teachers for 3 years. But yet he turned out wrong. The real need, the real solution, for the human heart is the new birth

But on the other side of the coin, there are believers in the world that live like the world to such an extent that none of their peers realize that they identify with Christ. One is as wrong as the other, a goat does not belong in the sheep fold, nor does a sheep belong in a goat pen. When the Son of Man comes in His glory, all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Vs.23-25 It would be nice if we knew the layout of the table and the seating arrangement. Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the last supper shows a long table with Jesus in the center, 6 disciples to the left and 6 to the right all seated on one side – with a name assigned to each person. Others depict a U shaped table. But that is all speculation. But we can tell that John was sitting next to Jesus because he leaned back on Jesus to ask the question, "Lord who is it?"

John the writer of this book, does not use his own name, he simply identifies himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Five times in the gospel of John, John identifies himself this way. There seems to have been a special endearment in the relationship between Christ and John.

- John was one of the 3 who accompanied the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- John was one of the 3 who stayed nearby in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- And here we find John reclining at the table adjacent to the Lord.

Judas may have sat on the other side of Christ. We know that Judas was seated near enough for Jesus to dip the bread and hand it to him. If so the seating there in the upper room at the table reflects the crucifixion, with the repentant robber on a cross on one side of Christ and the unbelieving thief on the other side.

Also we understand that Peter was further away because he motioned to John to have him ask the "Who?" question.

"Lord" was the common name the disciples used to address Him.

- John used the title Lord in verse 25.
- Peter used the title Lord in verses 36 and 37.

- Thomas used the title Lord in verse 5 of the next chapter.
- Philip in verse 8.
- And the other Judas in verse 22.

Throughout the gospels when the disciples spoke to Christ they called Him Lord

From Matthew's gospel we get the impression that each of the disciples in turn around the table asked the question, "Lord, is it I?" But when the turn came to Judas, he phrased the question differently from the others he said, "Rabbi, is it I?" And in the garden just before Judas kissed the Lord he said, "Greetings Rabbi." As far as I can tell, Judas Iscariot, never addressed Christ as Lord, rather he used the title Rabbi or Master or Teacher. And quite significantly so, for in reality Christ was never Lord to him. This demonstrates what 1st Corinthians 12:3 says, "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

Vs.26 The way Jesus answered John's question was so typical of the way He answered most questions people asked Him. Seldom did he give a direct answer; at times He answered a question with a question. Sometimes it's hard to see how the answer relates to the question asked. So in character, rather than simply mentioning Judas by name he answered with a motion. Peter motioned to John to ask who, and Jesus with a motion provided the answer to John.

John is very specific in telling us to whom Christ gave the bread, Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Thus He distinguished this Judas from the other Judas that also was one of the 12. The other disciple named Judas was the son of James.

By Jesus giving the piece of bread to Judas, and his acceptance of it, was fulfilled what Jesus said back in verse 18 quoting from Psalm 41. "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." As Ahithophel was to David so was Judas to Christ

The Lord showed Judas a token of friendship by giving the bread to him. Never did the Lord display animosity to Judas, even though He knew exactly what Judas would do. This is a demonstration of what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you." This serves as an example to us. In like kind we show friendship and courtesy to those who would spitefully use us.

In the garden Judas deceitfully returned the token of friendship by betraying the Lord with a kiss.

Vs.27 What in the world was Satan doing in the upper room with Christ and the disciples? He was there so that he could enter Judas and take control of him. Satan can be found in the most unlikely places, like in church meetings and he even mingles with the angels of heaven as he did in Job chapters 1 and 2. Ephesians 2 refers to Satan as the, "Prince of the power of the air." He does not obey "no trespassing" signs, for he walks to and fro throughout the earth as he pleases.

Reading though the gospels we learn of demon possessed men healed by Jesus. Reading through 1st Samuel we understand that Saul was influenced by an evil spirit. But this tops them all, instead of Satan sending a demon to possess Judas, he entered into him himself.

This is the antithesis of what happens to a believer the moment he accepts Christ. Christ does not send an angel to indwell us. No, He does something far better; He indwells us personally with the Holy Spirit.

Men, like Judas, don't just instantaneously transition from being an upright moral person to committing some heinous crime. James 1 describes the downward spiraling path of a soul that allows sin to flourish in his life. "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

Such was the pathway of Judas. He kept the money box for the group, and he would help himself to the contents. Evidently he got away with it without consequence. Satan put the thought of betrayal into the mind of Judas, and thereby came that tantalizing temptation to pocket the income of 30 pieces of silver.

He must have thought he could get away with this too. One downward step led to another until Satan entered him, perhaps similar to the way that Satan entered the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Leading him to betray the Lord, and then to finally commit suicide

Vs.28-29 Various explanations have been offered as to why the disciples did not catch the meaning of what Jesus had said to Judas. Perhaps the others did not hear Christ's remark to John back in verse 26. Or they did not realize how quickly things would progress, thinking that the betrayal would be some time off in the future. But I think Judas must have known exactly what Jesus meant.

Some assumed that Jesus sent Judas on an errand to buy supplies for the feast. For the Feast of Unleavened bread directly followed the Passover and lasted for 7 days and evidently they did not have enough food on hand to feed all 13 of them for 7 more days. Jesus fed the thousands when they needed food, but He never performed a miracle to feed Himself or His disciples. They must buy their own food.

Another possibility that came to the disciples mind - maybe Jesus wanted Judas to give something to the poor. After all just a few days prior when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, Judas had made the remark that the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. It must have been customary for Jesus and His disciples to give to the needy.

It's so easy to jump to a wrong conclusion. Sometimes we don't even realize that we have made a bad assumption until the damage has been done. There are countless people out there in the world that assume they get to heaven by their good works.

Vs.30 What a sad commentary! Three actions describe what Judas did

- First he went out. The epistle of 1st John speaks of the antichrists which also portrays the departure of Judas. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us." The prodigal son went out of his father's house, into the far country. Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, the place of blessing and fellowship with the Lord, to till the thorn-and thistles-infected ground. And also Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.
- Secondly he went down from the upper room. That too represents going in a wrong direction. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we read that a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves. In the case of Jonah we read that he fled from doing what he should have done and went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish.
- And thirdly Judas went into the darkness. Not only was it nighttime outside, there was also a deep dreadful darkness within his soul. How true that statement Jesus made, "This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Proverbs 2:13 speaks of those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness. It's as Jesus said in Luke 22, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." And ultimately Judas experienced the place of outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The life of Judas serves as a stout reminder to any man or woman to not yield to the temptations of the world, and to examine yourself to make sure your relationship to Christ is right.

This brings us to the **second section**, words of encouragement and instruction.

Verse 31 begins what we call the upper room discourse and it continues through to the end of chapter 16 and concludes with the high priestly prayer of our Lord in chapter 17. The thrust of this discourse provides comfort, encouragement, peace and joy to His disciples in-spite-of the treachery of events that will play out in the next few days. Christ provides sincere comfort even though His own spirit is deeply troubled.

I've heard testimonies of ones who have gone to the hospital to encourage a brother in the Lord who is lying on his death bed with an incurable condition. But yet the one who went to visit, received the greater blessing. They were encouraged by the bright spirit and hope that emanated from the feeble brother there in

the bed. Such was the situation here in the upper room. Jesus was directly facing the agony of Calvary, troubled in spirit and soul, but yet he ministered to His disciples with beloved soothing words of encouragement.

Vs.31-32 Five times in these 2 verses a form of the word glory is used. Christ glorified His father throughout his life. The signs Christ performed manifested His glory. After the first miracle of turning the water into wine John wrote, "This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory." According to the commentary we have in chapter 11 verse 4, the sickness, death and resurrection of Lazarus was for the glory of God and that Christ may be glorified through it.

But now as He approaches the cross, the glorification of God rises to a crescendo that far surpasses any glory that was manifested in the foregoing miracles. The cross was the ultimate demonstration of His obedience to His Father's will. His glory, His food, His mission in life, His joy, His all in all was to do the will of His Father. The thought has been expressed by others and I pass it on: Christ's desire to glorify His Father even exceeded his desire to provide redemption for lost mankind. Whether that was the case or not, I don't know. But I'm so glad He was able to accomplish both at Calvary, glorify His Father and provide salvation for you and me.

It's not that the Father received all the glory and the Son received none. But it's as these verses explain, both the Father and the Son were glorified. God is glorified in the Son, and the Son is glorified in the Father – it's mutual.

To us it seems such a contradiction, especially when we think of the shame, suffering, and the ignominy that Christ endured at the hands of sinful men. But then I think of what the Lord told Samuel when he was looking for a new king to anoint in place of Saul. "For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Vs.33 Now that Judas has left, Christ can speak more intimately with the remaining disciples. So Jesus used a term of endearment in addressing the 11 disciples – "Little children." This was the only time He called His disciples that. However when John later wrote his first epistle, he addresses believers by the phrase, "Little children" 9 times.

Twice previously while speaking to the unbelieving Jews Jesus told them, "Where I go ye cannot come" referring to His return to heaven. And now He tells his faithful followers the same thing, but qualifies it by adding at the end of verse 36, "You shall follow Me afterward." The difference being that the unbelieving Jews would never be able to follow Christ to heaven, whereas the disciples upon their death would eventually follow Christ into the glories of heaven.

Vs.34-35 Since the disciples could not follow Christ now, Jesus gave them a new commandment to occupy them in the meantime. Notice that Jesus did not simply say to love one another; he added the criteria to love as I have loved you - that really raises the bar. Jesus repeated this commandment again to His disciples in John 15:12. The old commandment's criteria was to love your neighbor as you love yourself (Leviticus 19:18). But the way that Christ loves us is far superior to the way we love ourselves. Thus the new higher standard far supersedes the old, and I think for that reason it is called the new commandment, or as some have called it the 11th commandment.

The superior standard is further exemplified by our relationship to those who hate us. Under the OT economy it was acceptable to hate your enemies. We see that in the imprecatory Psalms such as in 109 where David called down curses upon those that hated him. But Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

The hallmark of a true believer is not:

- Wearing a cross around your neck, or a "what would Jesus do" wristband
- Nor is it defined by extensive theological knowledge
- Nor by faithful church attendance

- Nor adhering to a lengthy list of rules
But it is demonstrated to the world by the love one believer has for another.

In Acts 4 we see how the disciples carried out this new commandment. There we read, “The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul... neither was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who possessed lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold... and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” What a phenomenal testimony they must have been! For after that we read in Acts 6, “The word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.”

Sadly we have done a poor job in living up to this high standard. It’s been said, “The measure in which Christian people fail in love to each other is the measure in which the world does not believe in them, or their Christianity.” Loving your fellow believer can be a mighty difficult thing to do, because your fellow believer may not see eye to eye with you on some passage of scripture. But Jesus did not provide an exception clause for that. May the Lord give us the grace we need to love one another in the same way as He loves us.

Then in verse 36 Peter interrupts with a question. This brings us to the **third section**.

Vs.36-38 This is the first of four times during the upper room discourse the disciples interrupt Jesus with questions; the second time by Thomas in 14:5, the third by Philip in 14:8, and the 4th by the other Judas in 14:22.

In response to what Christ said in verse 33, Peter like a small boy who wants to go somewhere with his dad asks the question, “Lord where are you going?” Peter may have thought that Christ was planning to go on an earthly journey somewhere. But of course Jesus was referring to His death at Calvary and ultimately His ascension into heaven, neither place of which Peter could follow now. He could not follow Christ to the cross, for Christ had to do His atoning work alone. Nor could he follow Christ into heaven just now, because Christ needed him to preach a mighty message on the day of Pentecost and serve in other ways that we read of in Acts. Nevertheless, about 30 years later according to historians, Peter followed Christ by way of death into heaven by being crucified upside down in Rome under the reign of Nero.

Peter’s personality is marked by zeal and blurting out the first thought that enters his mind. There’s that verse in James that says, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.” But Peter had it reversed; he was swift to speak and slow to hear. So he questions, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.” Really Peter, are you sure you mean that? Jesus had to remind Peter just a little while later, while in the garden “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” It’s easy to boast courageously when danger lies somewhere out there in the distance, but the real test of courage comes when death stares you directly in the face.

- There’s that verse in Proverbs that we know well that says, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Peter may not have staked out his claim in pride, but there certainly was a measure of a lofty spirit in his robust reply.
- There’s that verse in 1st Corinthians 10 which says, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Poor Peter, he was like many ambitious young men today who think they are invincible. However Peter’s self-confidence and ego was inflated to such a degree that he was about to topple right over.
- And there’s that verse in Romans 12 which says, “To everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think”

So Jesus had to gently rebuke Peter by saying, “The rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.” The higher the pride, the greater the fall –Peter was educated, like they say, in the school of hard knocks. He like we, make so many blunders in life, but yet Peter had a teachable spirit. If we yield ourselves to the Lord, Like Peter, He uses us to do His will on earth regardless of our shortcomings.

Peter's example has been indelibly inscribed in scripture to remind us of our dependency upon the Lord and not to boast about what great thing we will do tomorrow especially in light of the events that have transpired during the last several weeks with the Coronavirus. James 4 tells us, "You do not know what will happen tomorrow...you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

In this passage we have seen Jesus interacting with 3 of His disciples, Judas, Peter, and John.

- Judas the betrayer
- John the beloved and
- Peter the boaster

With which of those do you identify?