

## **The Gospel of John (82); Jesus reveals His Betrayer**

### **Introduction:**

Let us turn once again to John 13.

When we began to consider this chapter before us several weeks ago, we entered a section of John's Gospel that addresses our Lord's close relationship and intimate interaction with His disciples, more specifically, "the Twelve"--His apostles. We have already considered our Lord washing the feet of His disciples, which occurred toward the end of the supper that they had enjoyed together. We considered the principle lessons and application of this event to us, who are disciples of Jesus. The major lessons were two in number. First, Jesus sets forth an example of humility and service that His disciples were to practice in their interaction and mutual service to one another. But secondly, the lesson is also conveyed in this passage of the need for every disciple of Jesus Christ to have his "feet" washed, that is, to be cleansed from sin that continues to defile them through their daily lives. This cleansing is performed upon His disciples by Jesus Christ Himself. But again, His disciples were to perform this work of service toward one another; they were to attempt to cleanse one another of sin.

As we continue to study the passage before us, we read of our Lord Jesus declaring that one of His disciples was a traitor, who would betray Him to the Jewish authorities. After being asked by John as to the specific identity of His betrayer, Jesus indicated that it was Judas Iscariot, although the other disciples did not fully understand the action of Jesus in identifying Judas and then sending him forth to do his deed.

Now the English translation that we will be citing is the New King James Version (NKJV). We often also employ the English Standard Version (ESV) in our consideration of a passage. But in consideration of the passage before us today, I thought it would be good if we compared how these translations stylistically differ from one another.

With respect to this passage before us, John 13:18-30, I have the Reformation Study Bible in both the NKJV and the ESV. In the passage under study, the paragraph divisions differ between these two English translations. Paragraphs are established by the translators, and so it is not unusual to see different paragraph designations between translations.

Now in our New King James Version (NKJV), a new paragraph begins with verse 18. It is preceded by a heading, which separates it from the context ending with verse 17. But in the ESV, verse 18 is part of the previous paragraph, which concludes with verse 20. These verses are then followed by a descriptive heading, separating the next section from the one that precedes it. Here is how these two translations of the Reformation Study Bible distinguish their paragraph divisions and identify their headings.

### **A. The NKJV in the Reformation Study Bible – John 13:18-30**

#### **Jesus Identifies His Betrayer**

<sup>18</sup>"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.' <sup>19</sup>Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He. <sup>20</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

<sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

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

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

<sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." <sup>28</sup>But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. <sup>29</sup>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.

<sup>30</sup>Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

## **B. The ESV in the Reformation Study Bible – John 13:18-30**

<sup>18</sup>I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' <sup>19</sup>I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. <sup>20</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

### **One of You Will Betray Me**

<sup>21</sup>After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." <sup>22</sup>The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. <sup>23</sup>One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, <sup>24</sup>so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. <sup>25</sup>So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup>Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." <sup>28</sup>Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. <sup>29</sup>Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

You may notice that in this translation, verse 18 does not begin a new paragraph, but it continues the paragraph from the previous section. The point is this: The ESV has verses 18 through 20 connected with the pericope of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. The way that the NKJV translators have identified its paragraphs, particularly with its heading, suggests that the words of verses 18 through 20 refer to what Jesus was about to say, not with what He has already said. The paragraph division of the ESV is probably the better arrangement in this case.

But after having said that, I might point out a weakness (in my view) in the manner that the ESV commonly distinguishes paragraphs. Up until recently, English writing style would begin a new paragraph every time there was a change of voice, whenever a new character began to speak. You can see this somewhat in the NKJV text above. There are a total of six distinguishable paragraphs containing these verses in the NKJV. But the ESV gathers many sentences into one paragraph (all of verses 21 through 30), regardless of the change of speaker. In the same verses as the NKJV, the ESV has one, full, distinguishable paragraphs, not six. And in this one paragraph, I believe, that running together the dialogue of different speakers can result in more difficulty in understanding the passage. It does not flow as well to the reader.

Let us now begin to work through this section of John's Gospel.

## **I. Jesus concluded His instruction to His Twelve in the setting of His washing their feet (13:18-20)**

Jesus had just instructed His disciples to permit Him to wash their feet. But He also gave them an example that they were to be washing one another's feet as well. What He meant by this was that He would

be performing the work of grace of their ongoing need to be cleansed of sin. They, too, should give effort to serve one another in this work of sanctification. But then Jesus stated in **verse 18**, “*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.’*”

Jesus was, of course, referring to Judas Iscariot, who was sitting with the other disciples throughout this meal. Jesus had apparently washed the feet of Judas along with all the other disciples present at this meal. When Peter had first resisted Jesus from washing his feet, Jesus had indicated that one among them was not really of them. We read in verses 10 and 11, “Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, *but not all of you.*’ <sup>11</sup>*For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’*”

When Jesus said, “*I know whom I have chosen*” (v. 18), we who are Reformed may immediately think in terms of God’s eternal election. God has His elect, ones that he chose before creation that they would be the recipients of His grace in salvation (Cf. Eph. 1:4). But Jesus is probably not speaking here of God’s election of sinners unto salvation. One reason we can say this is that the election by God of sinners to salvation is commonly attributed to God the Father, not God the Son. Here Jesus speaks of choosing these men Himself, ones who would be His closest followers, ones that He had designated His apostles. His election (choice) of them here is not unto salvation, but unto the office of apostle. The account of His choice of these men is recorded in **Luke 6:12-16**:

<sup>12</sup>Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup>And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them *He chose twelve* whom He also named apostles: <sup>14</sup>Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; <sup>15</sup>Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; <sup>16</sup>Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

Jesus made this selection after having spent all night in prayer to His Father. But even when He chose them, Jesus knew that Judas would be the one who would prove to be a false disciple who would betray Him unto the Jewish and Roman authorities. That time had come for this man to betray Jesus, so Jesus announced it beforehand.

We know, of course, that Judas and his betrayal of Jesus was foreordained of God. This is what Jesus declared that it had been foretold in Scripture. Again, **verse 18** reads, “*but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’*”

On another occasion Jesus made this declaration when praying to His Father:

While I was with them (i.e. His apostles) in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and *none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* (John 17:12).

The Scripture that Jesus was referring to was **Psalm 41:9**, the same reference that we have in our passage, John 13:18. It reads of Jesus referring to Judas as His “friend”: “*Even My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me.*”

“The son of Perdition” is a Hebraism (an expression common among ancient Jewish people). In one sense it describes a man’s character, that he is a deceitful and despicable man. It also speaks of his destiny, which is “perdition”, a word meaning “hell.” Judas belonged in hell; that was his destiny, the outcome of his life. Interestingly,

The same expression, “the son of perdition,” is applied to the antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 in parallelism with “the man of lawlessness,” presumably to denote his evil nature, but it may also include the thought of his sure destruction, which is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:8. A similar duality of meaning could attach to the expression in our passage.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, **John**, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Thomas Nelson, 1999), p. 299.

Regarding the meaning of Psalm 41:9, it suggests great deceit, treachery, and total disrespect, even contempt of one who was trusted and regarded as a close friend. David had written, "***He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.***" Jesus and Judas had "ate bread together", which was an emblem of close fellowship of friends. And further, Jesus said of him, "he has lifted his heel against Me." What does this mean? There are one of two ideas commonly suggested as the meaning for this expression. Some regard it as though Judas were kicking Jesus, as a mule would kick the one caring or feeding him. Another understanding proposed is that Judas was as a man who showed such indifference and disrespect to Jesus, it is as though he showed the underside of his foot to Jesus, which would have been a very disrespectful act in the ancient world. As one wrote, "Some take 'has lifted his heel against me' to mean 'has shown the bottom of his foot as a gesture of contempt': others take it to mean simply 'has kicked me.'"<sup>2</sup>

The belief that showing the bottom of one's foot toward someone is to show great contempt to him is still retained in parts of the world. When I was pastoring an international church in Munich, Germany (1994-1998), we had people from many places of the world. We would always have in attendance about 10 or 12 African asylum seekers, who had been sent to Germany by their family or village in order to earn money to wire back home. What was very tragic about these men is that the German society kept these men in very low paying occupations that barely sustained their living, not permitting them to earn enough money to send home. They were then too ashamed to return home, even if they could afford to do so, because they had failed in their mission. I was having lunch with two of these men one day along with a deacon in our church who was himself an immigrant from Nigeria, having moved and established himself in Germany 20 years before. The three began speaking together of the German culture, and I recall Sam telling these two African men how disrespectful toward him were his three sons, who had been born to him and his German wife. In a rather incredulous tone, he said to them, "And do you know what they even dare to do? When they sit in my presence they cross their legs showing the bottom of their foot toward me." The other men were aghast at such a thing. Perhaps this idea of total disregard and disrespect of Jesus by Judas was conveyed by the words of Psalm 41:9, "***Even My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me.***"

Jesus told His disciples the reason that He mentioned His betrayer when He did. **Verse 19** reads, "***Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.***" To be able to predict an event that shortly came to pass was proof that one was a true prophet of God. We read of this in a number of places.

In the days of God's judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, Jeremiah had to contend with many false prophets who declared to the people that God's judgment was only for the short term, that Babylon would oppress them only for two years, but then God would set them free of Babylon's oppression. Jeremiah declared that it would be a 70 year exile. We read of this false prophet, Hananiah in **Jeremiah 28:1-9**:

And it happened in the same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, who was from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: 'I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. <sup>3</sup>Within two full years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. <sup>4</sup>And I will bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah who went to Babylon,' says the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'"

<sup>5</sup>Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who stood in the house of the LORD, <sup>6</sup>and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! The LORD do so; the LORD perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the LORD's house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place. <sup>7</sup>Nevertheless

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<sup>2</sup> Herman Ridderbos, **The Gospel of John; A Theological Commentary** (William B. Eerdmans, 1997), p. 467.

hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: <sup>8</sup>The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms—of war and disaster and pestilence. <sup>9</sup>*As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the LORD has truly sent.*”

The fulfillment of a short term prophecy legitimized a true prophet from false prophets.

But in the case of Hananiah, his short term prophecy failed to come to pass. We read further in Jeremiah 28:

<sup>15</sup>Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, “Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie. <sup>16</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the LORD.’”

<sup>17</sup>So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month. (Jer. 28:15-17)

However this is an important note. Just because a short term prophecy did come to pass, that in itself was not proof that the man or woman was of God. In addition to the realized prophecy, that prophet had to speak in accordance to the truth of written Scripture. If he failed to do so, even though the miracle came to pass, he was to be viewed as a false prophet. Why would God allow this to occur? He tests people to prove whether or not they love Him. Only those who keep His written Word/Law, truly love Him and are called of Him. We read of this in **Deuteronomy 13:1-5**.

“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, <sup>2</sup>*and the sign or the wonder comes to pass*, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ <sup>3</sup>you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, *for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.* <sup>4</sup>*You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice*; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. <sup>5</sup>But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

Ultimately, it is not that someone can perform “signs and wonders” that matters, but teaching and obeying the written Word of God is the “sign”, or indicator, of a true man of God. As Isaiah warned God’s people, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

Jesus had declared to His disciples in advance that one of them was His betrayer. He declared in **verse 19** why He had told them of this. He said, *“Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.”* Had our Lord not told them in advance of the betrayal of one of them, they might have become greatly disillusioned and discouraged when they learned of Judas’ deception and defection. But for Jesus to have declared in advance that this would occur, would guard their hearts knowing that their Master had not been caught unawares or that His intentions and purposes had not been thwarted.

But Jesus intended that this advance declaration of His betrayal not just prevent their disillusionment and discouragement, but *that it might confirm them in their faith that He was God incarnate*. Actually, the pronoun, “He”, at the end of the sentence in verse 19 is supplied by the translators, for it is not in the original Greek text. This is another instance in John’s Gospel of the claim of Jesus that He is “I AM”, the eternal God who is incarnate as Jesus Christ. Literally, Jesus said to them *““Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I AM.”*

The content of that faith could have been put in many ways. Here the object of Jesus' proleptic<sup>3</sup> reassurance is that they might believe that *ἐγὼ εἰμι* (*Ego Eimi*) – an everyday expression that can be devoid of theological overtones, or can call to mind the ineffable name of God, the I AM, the I AM WHAT I AM, the I AM HE of Isaiah 41:4; 43:10.<sup>4</sup>

But after our Lord had declared to His disciples that one of them would betray Him, He immediately followed up His charge with this word of affirmation to those who were faithful to Him. We read in **verse 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.”*

Here is one more occasion in which Jesus prefaced His statement with the words, “Amen, Amen” (in Greek, *ἀμήν ἀμήν*). The NKJV translates it as “Most assuredly.” It is translated in the KJV as “Verily, verily”, in the English Standard Version (ESV) as “truly, truly”, and in the NIV translation, “Very truly.” This double worded exclamation is only in John's Gospel, and it occurs a total of 25 times. It indicates a very important and relevant statement was about to be voiced by Jesus.

Although this may be logically applied to all throughout history, that those who receive the ones He sent to them (with the truth of the gospel), do receive Him, and in doing so receive the Father, nevertheless, the words of our Lord have a narrower intent. We should understand that when Jesus said, *“I say to you”*, He was speaking directly to His twelve apostles, minus one. Later, of course, the apostles would select a disciple to replace Judas so that the number of “the Twelve” would be complete (Cf. Acts 1:15-26). This saying of Jesus would later affirm the apostles in their unique office to represent Jesus Christ to the world. And those who would later read these words of Jesus would also see the great authority that the Lord Jesus conferred upon the Twelve to be rulers within His kingdom, even to rule over the promised eschatological Israel of God. In another place the Lord Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). The Lord Jesus gave to His apostles the authority to speak on His behalf and has sent them forth after Him to declare His Word to the world. And in their speaking on behalf of Jesus who sent them, they spoke on behalf of God the Father, who had sent Jesus. Those who received their words as true, do receive Jesus, and those who hear (receive) Jesus through them, do hear (receive) the Father. When we hear and receive the written words of the New Testament, we are receiving the witness of these apostles whom Jesus had called and sent, and in doing so we are receiving the Words of Jesus, even unto receiving the Father who sent Jesus.

**Donald Carson** wrote regarding this verse 20:

Its relevance in this context probably turns on three features: (1) The stunning Christological claim, ‘I am He’, in the previous verse, is filled out by the words *and whoever accepts Me accepts the One who sent Me*. This inevitably calls to mind 5:19ff., where the intimacy of the relationship between the Father and the Son has been spelled out in such detail. (2) This verse powerfully ties the disciples to Jesus, and therefore serves as a foil for the failure of Judas Iscariot. The mission of Jesus is here assigned the highest theological significance, the most absolutely binding authority—the authority of God Himself. Failure to close with Christ is failure to know God. And because His disciples re-present Him to the world, their mission, their ministry, takes on precisely the same absolute significance. (3) Thus Jesus anticipates the commission of 20:21, where the parallels between His own mission and the mission of His disciples are explicitly drawn. To the disciples before the cross, this saying could be no more than a tantalizing hint at the work that would be theirs; to the same disciples after the resurrection, this became not only assurance that Jesus knew the direction He was taking (and therefore an incentive to their faith, as in verse 16), but also a foretaste of the commission that would consume them to the end of their days.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Proleptic reassurance”: Jesus was answering in advance possible issues or problems that might arise at a later time in the thinking of His disciples.

<sup>4</sup> Donald Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), p. 471.

<sup>5</sup> Carson, pp. 471f.

## II. Jesus reveals His betrayer (13:21-27)

Our Lord first told His disciples that one of them was a traitor. **Verses 21 and 22** read,

<sup>21</sup>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.” <sup>22</sup>Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

Our Lord Jesus “was troubled in spirit.” He was distressed, disturbed, and distraught, at the prospect that one of His own would betray Him. This reaction to what was happening to Him and what was about to happen to Him was an experience encountered in His human nature. His divine nature was at rest, for God is impassive with all that transpires. In His divine nature He was unaffected, but in His human nature He was almost overwhelmed. He was troubled in His (human) spirit.

Are you, as one of His disciples, ever “troubled in spirit”? You have a High Priest in Jesus Christ who knows very personally and experientially your distress. Take to heart the glorious reality of Jesus Christ who is able to give you grace to help you in your time of need, for He, too, had once been “troubled in spirit.” Take to heart the words of **Hebrews 4**:

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup>***For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*** <sup>16</sup>Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:14-16)

We might pose this question: Why did Jesus speak in a manner that any of the twelve could have been the one? He had not yet forthrightly declared Judas to be the culprit. Jesus simply said that one of them with whom He was eating bread, would betray Him. It is clear from the account that each of them, at first, thought himself capable of such a thing. This is later suggested by Peter’s prompting John to ask Jesus to identify the one of whom He was speaking. **Verse 23** records,

***Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. <sup>24</sup>Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.***

Of course later Peter declared that he would never betray the Lord. Jesus declared that he would not last the night before he, Peter, would deny Him. But that Jesus first revealed to His disciples that one of them would betray Him served to cause all of them to question themselves, as well as one another.

We should take a lesson from this. Anyone of us is capable of the most terrible kind of sin, if it were not for the promise and grace of God to keep us in Christ. But we should each recognize our own weakness and vulnerability to experience great personal failure. Paul wrote to Christians,

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup>Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. <sup>7</sup>And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” <sup>8</sup>Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; <sup>9</sup>nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; <sup>10</sup>nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the

destroyer. <sup>11</sup>Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

<sup>12</sup>*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* (1 Cor. 10:1-12)

We then read that Peter prompted John to ask Jesus to tell them who specifically was to betray Him. Here are **verses 23** through **25**.

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

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

The writer of our Gospel, the Apostle John, never identified himself by name in His Gospel (or His epistles). Instead, he referred to himself as "*one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*" This was the first time that John referred to himself in this way. He did so in four other places in this Gospel (John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). John was closest to Jesus while they reclined for their meal. Peter knew that if anyone could obtain what he asked from Jesus, John was the man, for Jesus loved him. It would seem that our Lord has a special love for some, though He loves all of His own. I do not know how to draw any other conclusion. **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) wrote of this:

Let it be noted that the general special love with which our Lord loved all His disciples, did not prevent His having a particular love for one individual. Why He especially loved John we are not told. Gifts certainly do not appear so much in John as grace. But it is worth noticing that love seems more the characteristic of John than of any disciple, that in this he showed more of the mind of Christ. It is quite clear that special friendship for one individual is consistent with love for all.

It is noteworthy that of all the writers of the New Testament, none goes so deep, and reveals so much of the hidden things of God, as he who lay in the bosom of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

When John asked Jesus to reveal the identity of the traitor, he must have done so in a rather discreet way, perhaps he somewhat whispered his question to Jesus, having been so close to Him. And we can probably assume that Jesus' answer to John was also a rather quiet word, rather than one being pronounced to all gathered there.

We read of Jesus responding to John's request in **verse 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.*"

The action by which our Lord told John He would indicate the traitor to him, was probably so common at an Eastern banquet, that no one at the table would remark anything about it... That our Lord whispered was evident. No one seems to have noticed it, except John.<sup>7</sup>

This act of Jesus giving to Judas a piece of bread, that He Himself had dipped, should probably be understood as one last overture of kindness and friendship that Jesus gave to Judas, even at the time of his action. Here are the words of **Donald Carson**:

Although Haenchen dismissively refers to the piece of food as "the magical morsel with which satan entered", and although some have seen the gesture as a sign of judgment, even as a 'satanic sacrament'(So Wrede, cited Bultmann, p. 482, n. 6), yet the gentleness and the courtesy implicit in giving such a morsel must not be lost to view. It is more consistent with the picture of Jesus in this

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<sup>6</sup> J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 3 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 39.



Gospel, and with the course of events in the life of Judas Iscariot, to think of this ‘sop’ as a final gesture of supreme love (cf. v. 1).

And that final act of love becomes, with terrible immediacy, the decisive movement of judgment. At this moment we are witnessing the climax of that action of sifting, or separation, of judgment which has been the central theme in John’s account of the public ministry of Jesus... (3:16-19). So the final gesture of affection precipitates the final surrender of Judas to the power of darkness. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has neither understood it nor mastered it. (Nebigin, p. 173)<sup>8</sup>

We next arrive to **verse 27a**, “*Now after the piece of bread, satan entered him.*” “

Judas received the sop, but not the love. Instead of breaking him and urging him to contrition, it hardened his resolve. At that point *satan entered into him*: the expression probably signifies thorough possession.<sup>9</sup>

One would think that the act of Judas betraying his Master was such an egregious act of betrayal and treachery, it had to have been satanic. Indeed, Judas was responsible for his action, even as satan probably gave him the idea, the opportunity, the boldness to carry it through. The devil probably gave Judas the temptation to covetousness that moved him to seek compensation for his deed. In the act of treachery toward Jesus perpetrated by Judas, he became the posterchild of treachery of all history.

Here are the words of **Leon Morris** (1914-2006) on verse 27:

Satan (mentioned by name only here in this Gospel) now entered Judas. John is under no delusion as to the magnitude of the issues involved or the real source of Judas’ inspiration. It was satan who entered him and inspired his actions. John sees this as the critical moment. If the giving of the sop was a mark of favor, it would be in the nature of a final appeal to Judas from Jesus. But Judas did not respond. He gave himself the more fully to satan’s leading. “Therefore” indicates that Jesus realized how it was. He accordingly urged Judas to do what he has to do quickly. But His words are general and the real import of them remains hidden from the eleven.<sup>10</sup>

We next read of Jesus giving leave to Judas to carry out his evil plan. In **verse 27b** we read, “*Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’*” Jesus said this loud enough for all to hear, however, no one knew what He was intending by His words to Judas. **Verse 28** records, “*But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. <sup>29</sup>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.*”

Some have argued that Jesus’ instruction to Judas to purchase things needed for the feast proves that this supper was on Thursday, the day before the Passover, that the things he would purchase was for the Passover Feast. But Donald Carson shows that this is a weak argument, that “the feast” that some of those present were thinking of was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which began the day after the Passover meal.<sup>11</sup>

The end of the pericope is **verse 30**, which reads, “*Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.*”

“Night” is more than a time note. In view of the teaching of this Gospel as a whole it must be held to point us to the strife between light and darkness and to the night, black night, that was in the soul of

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<sup>8</sup> Carson, **John**, p. 475.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Leon Morris, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 627.

<sup>11</sup> See Donald Carson, **John**, p. 475.

Judas (cf. 11:10). He had cut himself off from the light of the world and accordingly shut himself up to night.<sup>12</sup>

When we consider Judas Iscariot, it may seem rather difficult for us to draw a direct application to ourselves. After all, here was a man that was so blessed, so privileged, and yet fell so far and hard, even to death and damnation. We read of his fate. After he had performed his deed and received his blood money for betraying Jesus, he had great remorse. He attempted to return the money, but the Jewish leaders refused his offer. Judas went and hung himself. What an end to a one-time apostle of Jesus Christ!

But before we so dismiss him as a foul creature so far removed from us, let us consider the example of his life and his defection as a warning to us. **Edward Klink** made this point:

Judas must not be viewed as an isolated example but as a common experience in the church. While the gospel is good news, it is not easily swallowed. Scripture warns that the message of Christ is a stumbling block and foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23) and that even satan, “the god of this age,” is actively blinding the minds of the world (2 Cor. 4:4). But as scary as this is, there is something else frightening in the example of Judas. Judas does not represent disbelief among those on the outside of faith and opposed to Christ but disbelief among the faithful and those on the inside. Judas is a far more threatening figure than Pilate or the Jewish leaders, for he reminds us that on any day some faithful follower sitting among us might turn off the light and stumble out into the darkness.

May this not be you, O reader of this Gospel. May the Spirit of God protect you from such a flight into the “night,” into darkness and keep you in Christ, “shielded by God’s power” (1 Pet. 1:5), in intimate communion with Christ. Hold firm, Christian; hold fast, church.<sup>13</sup>

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“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
<sup>25</sup>to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power,  
both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)

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<sup>12</sup> Morris, **John**, p. 628.

<sup>13</sup> Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 599.