

## Jesus Identifies His Betrayer

HN/SS 5/2/06 am

Reading: II Samuel 15, Matthew 26:1-30

Study Text: John 13:18-21

Sing Psalms: 100, 41:4-9, 55:21-24, 41:10-13

Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend? If so, you will know how painful it is. To have someone whom you love and whom you trust turn against you is devastating. David knew such betrayal. His own son Absalom led a revolt against him to take his throne. And his trusted advisor Ahithophel also turned against him to advise Absalom on how to humiliate and destroy his father David. The Son of David, Jesus Christ, also experienced betrayal by a close friend, indeed one of his chosen disciples. He was betrayed unto death.

As Jesus came to his last hour, as he shared what was to be his last meal with his twelve disciples, he became acutely aware that one of them would betray him. He had known all along one of them would betray him and he knew who it was. Why did he keep him? Was it grace? Was it because it was the will of his Father? And why did he tell the group that one of them would betray him and go on to identify this one?

### Jesus Knew

Even as he washed his disciples feet Jesus alluded to the fact that one of them was not faithful. ‘Not all of you are clean’ he said. Washing the feet of Judas in particular must have been tense for both parties. Although his feet were washed by Jesus his heart was being filled with evil plans. The devil had already put the idea of betrayal there (13:2). Soon he would be completely under the control of Satan (13:27).

*I know whom I have chosen* said Jesus. Why did Jesus say this? Obviously he knew who the twelve were for he chose each one of them. He chose them at the beginning of his ministry and called them to follow him. But more than this, Jesus knew what was in them – as he does all men (2:24, 25). He knew what was in the heart of each one of his disciples from the very beginning. He knew that one of them would betray him. *Did I not choose you the twelve and one of you is a devil* (6:70).

Why then did Jesus choose Judas? And why did he keep him, knowing he was a devil? What Judas was about to do, would come as no surprise to Jesus. He was not caught off guard; he did not make a mistake. How could Jesus keep on with this man, keep on ‘sleeping with the enemy’ as it were? Clearly he was not walking according to his human nature.

Jesus was sent by the Father into this world. He knew where he had come from and where he was going. He was single minded in his commitment to obey his Father and do the work of the Father (e.g. 5:19). If it was the will of his Father to choose one who would betray him, as it clearly was, then he would obey. This was not man’s plans gone wrong, but divine plans being fulfilled.

Was it just because of his divinity, his being the Son of God, that he knew the will of God? Yes – and no. Jesus knew the will of God from Scripture. He knew that Scripture, the word of

God, was true and unchangeable. Jesus found in Scripture a prophecy he knew had to be fulfilled and concluded that now was the time. The words were spoken by David but their ultimate fulfilment was in the greater Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth.

## Jesus Told

*Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass you may believe that I am* (13:19). The disciples confessed to believing that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (6:69). Yet they still had much to learn about Jesus. They understood very little really, but Jesus entrusted himself to them and indeed entrusted the gospel to them. He opened his heart to them, especially here at this last Passover meal together. How gentle Jesus is with those who are struggling to understand him! Are you such a person? I hope so!

All the disciples were reclining around the table when Jesus spoke these words. After washing their feet, Jesus rejoined them to eat the meal. It was at this meal that he instituted the Lord's Supper, although John does not record this. Rather, the focus is upon the disciples and especially the one who would betray him.

Jesus wants Judas to know that he knows what he is up to, and he wants the others to know that he knows he is going to be betrayed. So he tells them. He tells them so that even if they do not comprehend what is going on now they will after Jesus is betrayed, crucified and resurrected from the dead. They will believe with greater knowledge that Jesus is God the Son, the great I AM. See what Peter preached at Pentecost – *him (Jesus) being delivered by the determine purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death* (Acts 2:23).

This is the point of all prophecy – it points to the sovereignty of God and the majesty of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught his disciples how to understand prophecy and how to learn from it. We find them later preaching from Old Testament prophecy just like Jesus as they proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament also contains many words of prophecy which we are to use in the same way. In Scripture we are told what will come to pass. We read these words for blessing, even if we cannot fully understand now (Revelation 1:3). We read them as words that point to Jesus Christ, that we might believe more strongly that he is the great I AM, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.

So Jesus told the twelve that one of them would betray him. It was not a pleasant thing to talk about as they celebrated the Passover. They were perplexed. What was Jesus talking about? Already they had been shaken from their pride by Jesus' action. Now they were shaken further from their complacency by his words. For them betrayal was incredible, beyond belief – except for Judas.

People today don't want to hear about Judgment Day and they don't want to believe this truth – any more than the disciples wanted to believe one of them was a betrayer. Such talk 'upsets the party' as it were. 'Let's not talk about such horrible things' they say. But most prophecy is about this very thing – about the judgment to come. Jesus speaks about his second coming for the very reason that when it does come to pass you will be ready and you will believe in Jesus, God the Son, when you see him coming on the clouds of heaven.

*Most assuredly I say to you, he who receives whoever I send receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me (13:20).* What did Jesus mean by these words and why did he say them here? The other gospels record similar words. They contain profound truth, even apart from the solemn introduction.

Throughout this gospel Jesus has been declaring that he was sent by the Father and that he and his Father are one. Father and Son are inseparable. But now Jesus includes his apostles (sent ones), and indeed all whom he sends out, in this ‘oneness’ (*cf.* 17:21). What a tremendous promise. What comforting words for the twelve as they heard about betrayal.

Those whom Jesus sends out to preach the gospel are not to be taken lightly. They go with divine power and authority. Worldly men may despise, ridicule and betray the servants of God, but they do so at their peril. *It will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city* or for such people that do not receive Christ’s ambassadors (Luke 10:12). ‘Contempt for Christ’s ministers, when they are really faithful, is a bad symptom in a church or a nation’ (J.C. Ryle). Those who receive Christ’s servants receive Christ himself; just as those receive Christ receive the Father also.

## **Jesus Troubled**

Divine knowledge did not preclude Jesus from pain. The pain of betrayal affects the heart like nothing else. One who lived with him for three years, one who saw up close the amazing love of God, one who took bread from his own hands, in the end betrayed his teacher and Lord. He betrayed him unto death.

*Jesus was troubled in spirit (13:21).* What was troubling him, what was causing agitation to his soul? I may seem obvious but let us ask anyway. Jesus had previously been troubled in his spirit or soul. That he had come to this hour, the hour of his death, troubled him (12:27). It was not just abuse and physical pain that troubled him – he did not fear what man would do to him. It was the pain of bearing the sins of the world and of being forsaken by God, even for a moment, which troubled his soul.

Jesus was also troubled when he saw Mary and the Jews weeping at the tomb of Lazarus (11:33). He was troubled and groaned at their mourning like unbelievers. Here again Jesus was confronted with the horror of unbelief. How could one who was so close to him, one who outwardly walked with him, so harden his heart in unbelief.

Does unbelief send shivers up your spine? Do you groan inwardly as you pray against unbelief – whether it threatens you, those close to you, or those you know? May the Holy Spirit help us in our weakness and in our prayers, and make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26).

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