



IS IT I? – A SERIOUS INQUISITION FOR US ALL

SUMMARY

There are many who begin the Christian life well, but along the way they drift further and further away from the Lord. The great news is that regardless of how far you have drifted, Jesus still loves you, and He offers forgiveness to you, but you have to back the decision to repent and turn back to Him. What will your decision be?

MESSAGE

When we come to Matthew chapter 26, we need to understand that there are three very important things taking place.

- (1) The Jews were making their way up to Jerusalem to purify themselves for and to eat the **PASSOVER MEAL**, and then to observe the seven-day **FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD** that followed.
- (2) The Sanhedrin (a council that was made up of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people – about 71 people, so I'm told.) was actively seeking for a way to take Jesus (arrest Him) and to kill Him without causing a riot in the city of Jerusalem (which was very complicated with so many people in Jerusalem).
- (3) Judas was seeking for an opportunity to betray Jesus to the Sanhedrin.

Now, with those three things in mind, let's work our way through the passage and attempt to set the scene:

Matthew 26:17-19 says, *“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.”*

Jesus and his disciples were in Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper spending time with Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, when the disciples came to Jesus, and they asked Him about observing the Passover meal. To which, Jesus told Peter and John...

To go into the city of Jerusalem,

To find a man carrying a pitcher of water,

To follow that man into the house that he enters into,

To ask the goodman, or the head, of that house where the guest chamber was that Jesus and His disciples could eat the Passover meal, and then

To prepare the Passover meal.

Matthew 26:20 says, *“Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.”*

Now, there is a lot that surrounds what appears to be a very simple statement. In that statement is included the fact...

That Jesus and the rest of the disciples had made the forty-minute walk from Bethany to Jerusalem.

That Jesus had no doubt had a personal conversation with the goodman of the house expressing His gratitude for the use of the guestchamber,

That the cup of blessing had been passed,

That the recollection of God’s deliverance of their ancestors from Egyptian bandage had taken place, and

That they were presently eating, the Passover meal.

It is then that we’re told that Jesus made a very specific announcement.

Matthew 26:21 says, *“And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”*

Can you imagine the **CONFUSION** and the **CONCERN** that filled every one of their hearts? Well, we don’t have to imagine because the Bible tells us the **REACTION** and the **RESPONSE** of **ALL** of the disciples.

Matthew 26: 22 says, *“And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?”*

That phrase *exceeding sorrowful* means “to have a high degree of grief, distress, and heaviness. And while we’re not told who was the first to ask the question, we are told that every one of them said to Jesus, *“Lord, is it I?”* None of them (except for Judas) thought it was them, but they were all concerned that it could be them.

Let me pause right here and say this: it could have been anyone of them, because everyone of them could have made the decision to betray Jesus just like all of them were going to make the decision to forsake Jesus and to flee from Him after Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:50).

Now, it appears that this initial statement was spoken to everyone in the room, not just to the disciples. The reason I say that is because it appears that Jesus begins to progressively narrow down His statement. Let me show it to you.

Matthew 26:21 says, *“And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”*

Luke 22:21-22 says, *“But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!”*

It seems here that we have the statement narrowed down from everyone in the room to the disciples that were sitting at the table with Jesus. This caused an even greater problem for the disciples and they began to enquire which one of them could do such thing. So much so that it stirred up a strife among them and they began to argue over who was the greatest.

It is here that John tells us that Jesus rose from the table, laid aside His garment, girded Himself with towel, poured water into a basin, and washed His disciples feet.

John 13:10-11 says, *“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.”*

Jesus then spoke up and again narrowed His statement even further.

Matthew 26:17-25 says, *“And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.”*

Now, let me remind you that the table that Jesus and His disciples was sitting at was nothing like the painting that we have all seen. It wasn’t a straight table with

the disciples sitting straight out on each side of Jesus. It was a U-shaped table that accomplished a couple of things:

- (1) It made it easy for the participants in the meal to be served.
- (2) It removed unnecessary distractions from the table.
- (3) It enabled everyone at the table to be involved in the discussion

When Jesus mentioned that the betrayer would be one that dipped their bread in the same dish that Jesus did, He was essentially narrowing down His statement from “one of you” to “one of these.” You see, because of the way the table was, there would have been more than one dish that the disciples used to dip their bread (*mat-zah*) into the *charoseth* (pronounced *haro-set*). I’m told that it was a sweet liquid, or a paste, that was made from pureed fruits and nuts that were mixed with honey.

So, when Jesus said that the betrayer was dipping their hand with His hand in the *charoseth*. It limited who it could be from the room, to the table, to the ones sitting right next to Jesus. Now, we know that that limits it to at least two of the disciples: John and Judas.

At this moment, a large portion of those at the table breathed a sigh of relief, but John tells us that Peter beckoned to him to ask Jesus which one of them would betray Him. And that is exactly what John did.

John 13:25-26 says, *“He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? 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.”*

I’m going to come back to the sop in just a moment, but finally the betrayer has been identified. It is Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

It is then that Matthew tells us Judas’s response.

Matthew 26:25 says, *“Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.”*

If you’re in the habit of marking things in the word of God, I want to draw your attention back to one statement that is made in two verses that we just read:

Verse 22 where the disciples say, *“...Lord, is it I? ...”*

Verse 25 where Judas says, *“...Master, is it I?...”*

For the time that we have remaining, I’d like to consider this thought: **IS IT I? – A SERIOUS INQUISITION FOR ALL OF US.**

The word *inquisition* means “an inquiry; an investigation; a severe questioning.” And I use that term intentionally because that is exactly what the Lord’s Supper is supposed to be – and examination.

The Apostle Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 11:27-28, *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”*

Now, what do we know about Judas Iscariot?

Judas was a man of **POTENTIAL**.

I want you to understand that Judas was created for God’s good purpose. Just like you and me, Judas was a man of great potential. God could have used Judas in a mighty way. He was called to be a follower of Jesus before he chose to become the one who betrayed Jesus.

Judas was a man of **PRIVILEGE**.

He had the privilege of **WALKING WITH** Jesus,

He had the privilege of **LISTENING TO** Jesus teach and preach,

He had the privilege of being a **PERSONAL EYE-WITNESS** of the miracles of Jesus, and

He had the privilege of **SERVING** Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Judas was a man of **POSITION**.

He had been chosen to serve as the treasurer of the disciples. He was put in charge of what little they had.

On the outside, everything about Judas looked good. He knew how to walk the walk and he knew how to talk the talk. Before his betrayal, he had the testimony of being faithful and trustworthy. As a matter of fact, when you consider what the Bible has to say about Judas, there really isn’t anything bad said about him until he chose to betray Christ. The only other thing said about Judas is that he was a thief, but even that wasn’t mentioned until he was actively searching for a way to betray Jesus to the Sanhedrin.

Here was a man that started out well, but he didn’t finish well because he continually drifted further and further away from the Lord.

(1) Judas allowed **PROFIT** to cause him to drift away from the Lord.

John 12:1-8 says, *“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.”*

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."

Mary, who had spent time at the feet of Jesus, was moved to worship Jesus. Judas, however, cared more about the money that could have been made than the worship that was given to Jesus. By the way, there are many in our day who have made the exact same decision. Profit and possessions have caused many of God's people to become more and more cold toward God and the things of God.

1 Timothy 6:10 says, *"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*

(2) Judas allowed **PRAISE** to cause him to drift away from the Lord

Mark 14:10-11 says, *"And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him."*

The name Judas means "praised," and oh how we love to be praised. We all do. We want the **ATTENTION** of others, and we want to be **APPLAUDED** by others. We want to be considered as being somebody special in the eyes of those around us. We care more about how we look in the eyes of men than how we are known in the heart of God. Some have suggested that Judas to feel like he was getting the attention and the opportunity that he felt he deserved as a follower of Christ so he sold his soul for a small fee seeking the applause of men. Once again, there are many today that have made exact same decision.

Galatians 1:10 says, *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."*

(3) Judas allowed his **PERSONAL DESIRES** to cause him to drift away from the Lord.

The title *Iscariot* identified Judas as being a man from a place called Kerioth. Kerioth was located a few miles south of Hebron which would have made Judas the only disciple from Judea (the south). The other disciples were from Galilee (the north). Now, the reason that is significant is due to the fact that there was a group of individuals in the south who were dedicated to freeing the Jews from Roman control **AT ANY COST**. While Judas did indeed profit by betraying Jesus, Judas may have had another plan in mind altogether. For three years, Judas had seen what Jesus was capable of, and he saw Jesus as a way to rid their

Roman oppression. However, Judas had watch Jesus remove Himself, in John chapter 6, from those who had come to take Jesus by force and instill Him as their king. To accomplish his personal goal of nation liberty, Judas may have assumed that if the Roman soldiers were coming after Jesus, then Jesus would have to fight and with what Judas had seen that Jesus could do deliverance from Rome would have to be the result.

Truth be told, the Bible doesn't tell us why Judas betrayed Christ only that he did. But how? How could Judas do it? He did it because he had allowed himself to drift so far away from the Lord that he cared more about **PROFIT**, about the **PRAISE OF MEN**, and about his own **PERSONAL DESIRES**, that he parted way from Jesus only to invite greater problems into his life.

Now, here's the thing: Judas may have been the one to do it, but all of the disciples could have made that decision, and anyone of us today could make that exact same decision.

Our flesh is strong and this world promises a lot that it simply can't deliver. Please hear me:

Don't drift away from the One Who **LOVES YOU**,

Don't drift away from the One Who **LAI D DOWN HIS LIFE FOR YOU**,

Don't drift away from the one Who **LIVES TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR YOU**.

It's easy for us to consider a section of Scripture like this and focus on the life of a certain individual, but that isn't what stuck out to me this time. It was the love of Christ for Judas even though He knew that Judas would betray Him.

I don't have the time to consider them this morning, but at least four times, Jesus tried to get Judas's attention (once at the feeding of the five thousand and three times at the Lord's Supper), but Judas refused to repent and return to Jesus. Instead, Judas just kept walking further and further away. I mentioned earlier that I would come back to talk about the giving of the sop to Judas.

Now there are a couple of things about this that are very interesting to me.

(1) The **POSITION** is interesting to me

Matthew 26:23 says, *"And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me."*

The two most honored seats at a meal were those to the right and to the left of the host, or the master. That means that John and Judas were both sitting in seats of honor, but Judas refused to see just how precious he was to Jesus.

(2) The **PROMISE** is interesting to me

Luke 22:28-30 says, *"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat*

and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Jesus offered Judas what this world could not promise or provide, but Judas rejected it.

(3) The **PRESENTATION** is interesting to me

John 13:25-26 says, "He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? 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."

I've often wondered what the significance of the giving of the sop to Judas was. Well, the importance is found in both the **GIFT** and the **GIVER**. It took three things to make up the sop: the unleavened bread (*mat-zah*), the bitter herbs that were meant to remind the Jews of how awful slavery is, and the *charoseth* (pronounced *haro-set*). that paste made from pureed fruits and nuts that were mixed with honey.

The host, in this case Jesus, would take two pieces of unleavened bread place the bitter herbs inside the pieces of bread. He would then dip the unleavened bread into the *charoseth* (pronounced *haro-set*) – which was a picture of God brought them out of the bitterness of slavery into the sweetness of liberty. And this is what I have grown to love about this passage, the host would then take the sop and give it, by placing it in the mouth, of the person that He wanted to show the greatest love to.

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."