

John 13:18-38

What did Jesus mean in His opening comment, “I am not referring to all of you?” What the Lord had just been teaching about service did not apply to Judas. He was not one of those whom the Lord would send into all the world with the gospel.¹

As Jesus continued His final conversation with His disciples before the crucifixion (the following day), what was He prophesying about (v. 18)? Jesus was prophesying about the betrayal of Judas found in Psalm 41:9 “*Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me*” which means he “has taken cruel advantage of me” and was a sign of great betrayal and treachery.

NOTE: Jesus chose a betrayer among His twelve disciples (cf. 6:70–71) in order to fulfill the Scripture, namely, Psalm 41:9.² Even so, Judas was still responsible for making the choice to betray Christ. Here we see the tension visible throughout the scriptures between the sovereignty of God and the free will of man.

What was the value of prophecy in this case (v. 19)? The prophecy was given so that the fulfillment, when it came to pass, might be received as evidence that Jesus really was who He claimed to be—the unique Son of God. He said, “...so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.” The eyes of the disciples would be opened and their faith was further strengthened.

Prophecy is not given to us for our benefit so that we can know exactly what will happen in the future. What we are meant to know is that God has a plan, and that He has a goal toward which all of human history is headed. Prophecy reminds us that God is in control even in very volatile and uncertain times, such as today.

What point is Jesus making (v. 20)? Jesus is linking the mission of the disciples with His mission. The work of Jesus would continue and they would be sent as His representatives. God the Father is the One who started the whole “sending process.” They should remember that they were being sent on a divine mission. They were to be so closely identified with Jesus that to receive *them* was the same as receiving *Him*.³

Why was Jesus “troubled in spirit” (v. 21)? He was anticipating the betrayal of His friendship. He had loved Judas for three years. It’s as if He’s thinking, “*I know you have to do it, but it still saddens me greatly.*”

How did the disciples react to Jesus statement of betrayal (v. 22)? They had not understood that one of them would betray Him (cf. Matthew 26:21-22; Mark 14:18-19). That anyone in this close fellowship could do this to Jesus is almost beyond comprehension. Judas had been a successful hypocrite. He had covered his tracks so well that none of the others suspected him. Jesus’ solemn announcement now forced Judas to act quickly or to repent.

Who was the “disciple that Jesus loved” (v. 23)? John, the writer of this Gospel. He used this phrase five times in this Gospel. He omitted mentioning his own name, but did not hesitate to mention the fact that he held a place of special affection in the Savior’s heart. The Lord loved all the disciples, but John enjoyed a special sense of closeness to Him.⁴ Jesus would later discharge the care of his mother to John (19:26-27).

When asked by John, how did Jesus identify His betrayer (v. 26)? By dipping the bread and giving it to Judas. This was the Lord’s final extension of grace to Judas. As soon as Judas ate the bread, Satan entered into him (v. 27). The opportunity for repentance had passed, due to Judas’ persistence in unbelief. Therefore Jesus did not appeal to Judas to change his mind at that point, but to get on with his evil work “quickly.” Jesus’ hour had come and it was time for Judas get on with his betrayal.

For every man and woman who hears the gospel, there is a point of no return before their death, a point in time after which it is forever too late to repent and be saved. There is a time when one will turn away from Christ for the last time. No man knows that time, but it is a deadline we do not want to ignore.

Why didn’t the disciples understand that Judas was the betrayer? Judas had been the consummate hypocrite. He fooled all the disciples. He had covered his tracks well. Judas had no lack of opportunity for repentance nor did he lack a good role model, and he didn’t have an unfavorable environment. Judas simply demonstrated man’s sinful nature and what he is capable of.

What was Jesus talking about that would glorify both the Father and the Son (vv. 31-32)? He was looking forward to His victory at the cross where both God and the Son would be glorified. The cross would reveal God’s

love, His condescension and His righteousness. The Father would glorify the Son “*at once*” (v. 32) by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His own right hand in heaven.

How would Jesus glorify the Father? He explained later: by finishing the work that the Father had given Him to do (17:4). That is also how we glorify the Father: by finishing the work that He has given us to do.

How can the crucifixion be glorification? The answer is in what the crucifixion means. It is the most significant point of world history! **What does the cross reveal/mean?**

- The defeat of Satan for all time.
- Victory over sin. Sin no longer has dominion over believers.
- The sins of all of mankind were paid for – once and for all.
- God’s justice is both revealed and satisfied.
- The faithfulness of God is revealed at the cross. In Genesis 3:15 the redeemer was promised.
- God’s grace is revealed at the cross where He says in essence, “I’m going to provide a solution to your sin problem because you can’t.” There was no other way for men to be saved except through the perfect sacrifice which only God could provide.
- God’s love is revealed at Calvary. Nothing in all history reveals God’s love as does the cross of Jesus Christ. In fact, so great is this revelation of His love that God appeals to it as proof of His love. “*But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*”(Romans 5:8).

What do you think was going through the disciples’ minds when Jesus said, “I will be with you only a little longer....Where I am going, you cannot come” (v. 33)? This would have been like an earthquake to the disciples. They had literally left everything to follow Jesus, and expected to be high-ranking officials in His government when He took political control of Israel as Messiah. They have followed Him for three years, enduring a lot, and now He says, “*I am leaving you.*”

Why did Jesus give them a new command (v. 34)? Jesus established this new type of love for one another as an identifying mark of the individual Christian and the Christian community as a whole. The sacrificial love of Jesus was the basis for this new command. It called for a higher degree of love. “*As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*” It was designed to build up the church. When we behave this way, we glorify God and impress the world. To love as Christ directed requires divine power, and this power is only given to those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.⁵

What mistakes did Peter make (vv. 36-37) as he questioned Jesus’ statement (v. 33)? He had walked with Jesus for three years and he had seen that Jesus had never misled him or let him down. There is no reason to start thinking He will at this point. Peter was resting in his own strength and understanding; he was overconfident.

Peter grossly underestimated his own weakness, and what Jesus’ death entailed. Peter spoke of laying down his life for Jesus, but ironically Jesus would first lay down His life for Peter. Peter also underestimated the power of the satanic forces arrayed against him (Ephesians 6:12).

How did Jesus answer Peter’s offer to lay down his life for Jesus (v. 38)? Jesus curbs his “zeal without knowledge” by telling Peter something he himself did not know—that before the night was ended, he would deny the Lord three times. Thus Peter would be reminded of his weakness, cowardice, and inability to follow the Lord for even a few hours by his own power.⁶

With all of Peter’s flaws and failings, why didn’t Jesus kick him off the team? He knew Peter’s heart. Peter loved Jesus. Peter wanted to please Jesus at all costs. Not only did Jesus not kick Peter off the team, He later would put him in a position of privilege—the inner circle of three. He had a plan to use Peter. He was going to transform Peter into His special instrument. It’s the same reason Jesus doesn’t kick us off the team—our position on the team is not based on our performance but on our heart.

¹ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1543.

² Edwin A. Blum, “John,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 320.

³ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1543.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 1545.

⁶ Ibid.