

**But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table**

**KEY TO  
THE LAYOUT  
OF THIS STUDY**

**The verses being studied are in bold type**

*Supporting and illustrative Scripture texts are in italics*

The explanation and commentary on the verses being studied and of the supporting texts are in normal typeface

PENN FREE METHODIST CHURCH  
BIBLE STUDY

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Luke 22:21-30

**THE CHRISTIAN'S  
CALLING : SEPARATION  
SERVICE,  
PERSEVERANCE,  
THEN REWARD**

**v21. “But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me *is* with me on the table”.** This is the night of the Lord’s final Passover meal before His arrest and crucifixion. One who had sat under the Lord’s ministry and who had been His consistent close companion is about to betray him to the authorities who hate Him. One who has been totally exposed to the Son of God’s miracles and teaching nevertheless is about to do Satan’s bidding. What a demonstration of the hardness of the human heart to the truth of God. This betrayal of Judas was prophetically foreshadowed in the Old Testament by the treacherous actions of David’s trusted counselor, Ahithophel, of whom we read in Psalm 41 :

*“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them” (Psalm 41:9-10).*

**v22. “And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed”.** The death of our Lord was part of God’s predetermined purpose, but that does not remove from

Judas the enormous personal responsibility for his hatred of the Lord and for the opening up of himself to Satan's mastery over him. As we read earlier on in this chapter :

*"The chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them" (Luke 22:2-4).* What a severe judgement awaits Judas. As Matthew's account tells us, the Lord declared,

*"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" (Matthew 26:24).* Judas has tragically rejected the grace of God drawing him to faith. He has persisted in his rebellion against His Maker, and so will soon come under His everlasting wrath.

**v23. "And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing".** The disciples are shocked and trembling at being informed of the Lord's betrayal. They begin to examine their own hearts. Judas's actions show that much exposure to God's truth and even an outward profession of faith are not guarantees of a person's true standing before God. Therefore, it is good for us today to continually examine ourselves that we are indeed walking faithfully. Paul says to the Corinthians,

*"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5).*

**v24. "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest".** The disciples, very sadly, still have a warped notion of what the Lord is about to accomplish and the true purpose of His mission. They imagine that they are going to be the King's ministers in a new earthly government, and are accordingly thinking about their own worldly status in that kingdom. They do not yet appreciate that Christ's kingdom is spiritual and not of this world. As the Lord would subsequently tell Pontius Pilate,

*"My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" (John 18:36).* There were no positions as earthly ministers of state awaiting the apostles.

**v25. "And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. v26. But ye shall not be so".** The rulers of this world exercise authority and receive men's honour. They call themselves 'benefactors', or doers of good, and others call them such in flattery, but it is not your calling as followers of Me, says our Lord, to have earthly authority and the praise of men. Indeed, by following Me the rulers of this world and the generality of the people will in fact despise you.

*"Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake ... And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:17-18,21,22).*

*"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:26-27).* God's true people are not usually the great men of this world. We cannot expect to be admired by society. True greatness is to be found in humble service, and we serve men best by taking the gospel to them, for which many will despise us.

*“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ... Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (1 Corinthians 4:11,13).* Thus spoke Paul of the status of the apostles as far as the world was concerned. The disciples of Christ will often receive the world’s disdain. In the early church they would even be made into a theatrical spectacle, being forced to fight with wild animals in front of crowds for their entertainment. So the disciples here should not be thinking about taking up great positions of State. To follow Christ is to follow in the steps of Him who was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3).

*“Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).* The Christian’s calling is separation from the world, and all its praise.

**v26. “But ye shall not be so but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve”.** You will not be exercising any authority in this world. Your calling is rather that of the menial servant. This very same night the Lord would give them an example of this :

*“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:4-5,13-15).* The Lord Himself came down to this earth as a servant, and so the disciples are not going to become earthly potentates, but humble pastors of despised flocks. Their great honour and privilege will be to assume the role of servants, of God and their fellow men.

*“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-4).*

**v27. “For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth”.** The Lord Himself is our pattern of costly service. Although he is the Creator and Lord of all the earth, He came amongst men as a suffering servant, and the disciples must walk in His steps as servants without earthly honour. In Matthew’s account of this incident we read,

*“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant : Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27-28).* In the Father’s eternal purpose His Son will not be the Ruler of an earthly kingdom, but will be a sacrificial lamb, dying a criminal’s death upon a cross. The disciples should have realised from their scriptures known that the Messiah would be a suffering servant. Likewise today, the disciples of Christ are called to suffer the world’s hostility and to engage in humble, sacrificial service. Paul emphasises the need for humility in the Christian life when writing to the Philippians.

*“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves ... Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:3,5-8).* The Cross is the ultimate act of service - our Lord gave up His very life that men might be saved from their sins, and whilst we can never emulate Him in His unique work of redemption, we must emulate Him in terms of self-denying sacrificial service, being willing to set aside the love of this world and to endure the hostility of men for the sake of doing the Father’s perfect will.

*“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).*

**v28. “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations”.** The Lord commends the disciples for having stayed by Him thus far, as He is being tested by the opposition and hostility of unbelieving men. This is in contrast to others who shrunk back, when they realised that His teachings were quite different to the mainstream political correctness of the day. An example of this is to be seen in John chapter 6 :

*“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:54,66).* Many struggled with the concept of sacrificial death and substitutionary atonement. They struggled to accept that unless another died for them, they could have no eternal life and were already devoid of any spiritual life. They wanted an earthly redeemer, but their carnal minds could not cope with the idea of eating the flesh of a Saviour. Thankfully, however, the 12 had remained faithful to the Lord and His ministry, though it was not the message that the mass of the people really wanted. We today are called to continue with the Lord and to endure with Him the world’s opposition.

*“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:1-3).* Our Lord persevered as a suffering servant amidst great opposition, and we must emulate Him.

**v29. “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me”.** God the Father has appointed the Lord Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews, but it is a spiritual kingship. He reigns over all the true sons of Abraham, all who have trusted in Him for salvation. To be a citizen of this kingdom is the privilege which the Lord grants to those who believe in Him. With regards to the Twelve, or Eleven excluding Judas (but he will be replaced), they are not going to receive any earthly honours, but they will nevertheless have a place of special pre-eminence assigned to them within the Lord’s spiritual kingdom. The word ‘appoint’ in the Greek means ‘appoint by means of a last will and testament’. Through His sacrificial death He brings them, and indeed all who believe in Him, into His kingdom to be blessed, safe and secure with Him for evermore. We need not just think of future heavenly glory here, because all believers in Christ become citizens of this kingdom, even whilst still alive upon this earth.

**v30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”.** Believers are spiritually fed by Christ (“eating and drinking at His table”), and they rest upon the foundation of the teachings of the apostles. In this sense the apostles will judge or rule God’s redeemed people in the new messianic kingdom. The 12 tribes of Israel is Old Testament terminology for the gathering of the saints, and in a New Testament context God’s Israel is the company of all the redeemed, both Jew and Gentile. Ten of the 12 tribes in our Lord’s day no longer retained any distinct identity due to the captivity in Assyria some 750 years earlier, but had become fused into the Gentile world. So “the 12 tribes of Israel” refers to the complete number of God’s true people out of every nation. The 12 apostles will have a pre-eminence in Christ’s kingdom, judging or ruling the people through their infallible doctrine.

## CONCLUSION

Let the disciples abandon all thoughts of worldly exaltation and honour, and concentrate on costly humble service. Then they will reap their reward. Our Lord Himself had to humble himself in conformity to His Father’s will, even to the point of laying down His life, before He was exalted. Likewise, the Christian’s calling is persevering sacrificial obedience, and *then* exaltation. Those who are perseveringly faithful, and not just in fits and starts, will be gloriously rewarded. *The Christian’s calling, therefore, is separation from this world and its praise, costly service, perseverance in that service, and then a glorious reward.*