

Luke Chapter 22

In this chapter we have five principal divisions

1. The covenant between Judas and the chief priests
2. Events in the upper room
3. Events in Gethsemane
4. Peter's denial
5. The Lord before the Council

1. The covenant between Judas and the chief priests

Luke is often said to be the "moral gospel". By this, we mean that he often uses events taken out of their historical order so as to paint a moral background to what's happening. Or else as here, he mentions a seemingly unrelated event which is designed to establish the moral background to the day. That is why, I believe, we read about the feast of unleavened bread and the Passover in verse 1:

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

At this time of the year, the people were preparing themselves and their houses for these two feasts. The two feasts were regarded as being virtually one. On the 14th day of Abib, the Passover lamb was offered – from the 15th day till the 21st day, the feast of unleavened bread was kept. Not only was there no leavened bread to be eaten, but also before the feast began, there was a rigorous search of the house made to ensure that no leaven or leavened bread remained. It is typical of a soul-searching experience in the light of the holiness of God.

The chief priests and scribes in Jerusalem should therefore have been busy at this time making preparation for the feast, but instead of putting away that which was a symbol of evil, they were themselves engaged in their own form of evil – to plot the death of the Lord Jesus. Luke mentions the feast again in verse 7 – "Then came the day of unleavened bread".

Verse 2 describes the activities of the priests and scribes:

And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

It was no longer a question if they should kill Him – it was now just a question of when. The first attempt on the Lord's life was made at Nazareth as described in Luke chapter 4. Those who knew Him the best would have taken Him and cast Him over the brow of a hill. But soon the Jewish leaders were also trying to get rid of Him. Mark chapter 3 describes the scene in the synagogue where the Lord heals the man with the withered hand. He is grieved at the hardness of their heart. Verse 6 shows the response of the rulers:

And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians

against him, how they might destroy him.

It was but the first of many such occasions. But now in Jerusalem, the Lord is present and the scheming of the rulers is coming to a head. Only one thing is stopping them, and that is the approach of the Passover and their desire not to offend the people. There was therefore one day that they wished to avoid and that was the Passover day itself. Matthew 26 records:

5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

They therefore wished to take Him in the absence of the multitude. But how were they going to achieve this, given the attraction of the people to hear Him. The answer to their problem gave from a most unexpected source – from one of the disciples. Verse 3 describes what had happened to one of them, Judas Iscariot.

*Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.**

There are many examples of demon possession in the gospels, but Judas is unique in that he was possessed, not by demons, but by the prince of demons, by the devil himself. Satan was not going to leave this evil deed in the hands of a demon – he was personally going to control Judas. What prompted Judas to do this vile deed? I believe there are two reasons – one was greed and the other was his empty profession as a disciple. One thing depended on the other.

Judas had been in the house at Bethany when Mary had taken her pound of ointment and poured it out on the Lord's feet. In John 12, we read of the reaction of Judas. "Why was not this ointment sold and given to the poor?" Judas gives the ointment his estimate of what it might have fetched in the market place – 300 pence, which a year's salary for a working man. Judas however had no regard for the poor – he was a thief and had obviously hoped to have gained much if the ointment had been sold. Immediately after this incident at Bethany, we read of Judas making his approach to the chief priests.

9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

His greed had got the better of him. But greed alone would not have led him to betray the Lord Jesus. Though he had been called to be a disciple, he had never bowed to Jesus as his Lord. This comes out in Matthew chapter 26. When the Lord makes His announcement, "One of you shall betray Me", the disciples all began to look one on another doubting of whom He spake. They had such confidence in the others that one by one, they began to ask Him, "Lord, is it I?" Peter would look at James and John and Judas and think, "Not one of these men could so such a thing. Could it be me?". The question went round the table, until, at last, Judas was compelled to join in. Silence might have exposed him. But notice how he addresses the Saviour, "Master (or teacher), is it I?" Even when the spotlight was upon him, he could not bring himself to use the word "Lord". Jesus of Nazareth was never the Lord of Judas

Iscariot.

Judas was inspired by greed, but notice that he was not inspired by hatred towards the Lord. In Matthew 27, we read a significant statement, "When Judas saw that He was condemned, he repented himself. Judas had been in the ship when they thought they were all going to drown. But the Lord had stood up to rebuke the winds and the waves, and the great storm became a great calm. The Jews, on more than one occasion, had tried to stone Him, but He always managed to walk away unscathed. But this time it was different,. Judas must have been thinking that he would get his money for betraying the Lord Jesus, but then the Lord would simply walk away as previously. To his consternation, this didn't happen and the Lord was condemned. He comes to the priests, and says, "I have sinned. I have betrayed the innocent blood". He had respect for the sinless character of the Lord Jesus". Greed and empty profession led to the betrayal by Judas.

But why was it not one of the twelve disciples who betrayed Him? I think it is to show to all men during the two thousand years since, just how far profession can go. Judas kept company with the Lord and His disciples for three and a half years. During that time, he saw the Lord's miracles and heard His words, yet he remained untouched as far as salvation was concerned. Knowledge about Christ is not salvation – it is bowing to Him and owning Him as Lord that Judas lacked.

There is only one other man in the New Testament whose wickedness matches that of Judas, and that is the one called "the man of sin" in II Thessalonians chapter 2. This man of sin is the first beast of Revelation chapter 13. Both these men are called "the son of perdition". Judas is possessed of the devil – the devil gives the beast his throne and great authority.

Verses 4 to 6 of Luke 22 describe what happened next:

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude

Judas covenanted with the priests – he struck a deal with them. Perhaps they negotiated the price of thirty pieces of silver. But there was never going to be any other price than this. How do we know this? The prophet Zechariah had written some 500 years earlier in chapter 11:

12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

Not only did Zechariah write about the exact price, he also wrote about what would happen to the money. It would be cast unto the potter in the house of the Lord. This was fulfilled when Judas threw the money down on the temple floor. The priests gathered it up and gave it to the potter for his field.

Judas' part of the bargain was to deliver the Lord into their hands "in the

absence of the multitude”.

2. Events in the upper room

Luke’s account of these events is nowhere nearly as lengthy as John, but Luke still gives us some important details of what took place.

Verses 7 to 14 cover the finding of a suitable place to eat the Passover. The Lord tells Peter and John, “Go and prepare”. They ask the obvious question, “Where?” Jerusalem at this time would have been teeming with perhaps thousands of pilgrims. Where could they find a place at this late stage? Well, they didn’t have to go and knock on doors. The Lord has the answer for them, and they learn that He has already made the preparations. All they had to do was enter the city and a man would meet them. The Lord’s timing was perfect. As soon as they stepped inside the gate, this man would meet them. They wouldn’t have to even look for the man. But there would be hundreds coming and going at the gate. How would they know this particular man? He would stand out from all the rest because he was bearing a pitcher of water. This is a task that would normally have been done by a woman, so a man bearing a pitcher of water would indeed stand out. Nor would they have to speak to the man and ask the address. They simply had to follow him into the house. It is a picture of the simple direction of the Holy Spirit into a place prepared by the Lord for His own.

Once they arrived, they had to ask the master of the house a question:

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

The word for guest chamber is the same as that used for the inn of Bethlehem in Luke chapter 2. That was the world’s inn and there was no room there for Mary and Joseph and hence for the babe that was born. The second inn in Luke is found in chapter 10 as part of the story of the Samaritan. The Samaritan brought the wounded man to an inn and took care of him. It is a lovely picture of what the assembly is today.

1. A place for pilgrims and strangers
2. A place of care by the Lord
3. A place of care by the innkeeper – a picture of the elder
4. A place where gift was given and used
5. A place of reward
6. A place of anticipation of the Samaritan’s return

Now in Luke 22, we are taken into the guest chamber, which was that part of the inn used by the guests. It was a large upper room – it was above the level of the street., above the level of the world. It is again a picture of what the assembly should be today. We are not of the world but we should also be above the world.

On this holy occasion and in the presence of the Lord, one might imagine that nothing could go wrong. But Luke does not hold back from revealing all that

took place within this room.

1. The Passover kept
2. The Lord's supper instituted
3. The revelation of a betrayer in the midst
4. Strife about who should be the greatest
5. The denial of Peter prophesied

These last three events are entirely negative things. We sometimes have an idyllic picture of the times of the disciples, but they were men of like passions as ourselves, and we see their weaknesses exposed by Luke in this section.

First of all, the Passover is celebrated. This was to be a Passover like no other, for the Lord Himself would be the Passover Lamb. Yet rather than shrinking back from it, the Lord says about this particular occasion:

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

The idea of desire is twice repeated in this sentence, underlining for us His keen anticipation of the event. He did not look forward to the sufferings that were involved and the forsaking by His God, but He looked forward to the completion of the work that would be accomplished by His sacrifice. This would be the last Passover He would participate in, until His kingdom would be established on earth. Up until Calvary, the Passover looked forward to His death, but the Passover will still be celebrated in the millennium as a memorial of His death. This is confirmed in Ezekiel chapter 45:

21 In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

In verse 17, He took a cup and after giving thanks for it, He passed it to His disciples. The contents of the cup are described in verse 18 as "the fruit of the vine". Wine would speak of joy, and the Lord is looking forward to the day when He will share the joys of the kingdom with His earthly people Israel.

The Lord's supper instituted

The next event in the upper room is the institution of the Lord's supper.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

IT is interesting to observe that John is the only one of the four gospel writers not to write about the supper. It is all the more strange when one thinks of when John wrote – perhaps sixty years after the Lord's death. The Lord's supper is by then an established institution. Apart from this, John is by far the most progressive of the four gospel writers, dealing in the upper room with the coming of the Holy Spirit and of His own coming for His saints. It is a question that will probably remain unanswered this side of heaven.

The Lord first takes the bread. "This is my body which is given for you". The bread is a symbol of His body – it is nowhere suggested that it becomes His body as some would claim. It speaks of His life here on earth, a life that was soon to be given for His disciples.

Luke is the only synoptic writer to suggest that this supper would be

continued. It was to be done in remembrance of Himself. It is not lest we should forget Him. On every cenotaph in the UK, the words are written, "Lest we forget" ie lest we forget those who have given their lives for their country. There are some denominations of believers who do not celebrate the Lord's supper at all, or else very infrequently. We dare not suggest that they have forgotten the Lord who died for them. Remembering Him in the bread has sometimes been described as "calling Him to mind". It then becomes a positive concept and not a negative one. We set out to call to mind His words, His miracles, His sacrifice.

The Lord then proceeds to take the cup:

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you

It is not now called the fruit of the vine ie the wine, but simply the cup. It does not speak of the joys of the kingdom but of the suffering He passed through in death. By shedding His blood, He was about to establish a new covenant. By making a new covenant, He was making the first covenant a old covenant. This new covenant was made with Israel and Judah, as the writer to the Hebrews declares in chapter 8:

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Although the covenant is not with the Church, it is fair to say that we as Christians are enjoying the blessings of this covenant today.

When we look at what Paul has to say about the Lord's supper, it is fair to say that he follows more closely on Luke's account than he does with that given by Matthew and Mark. Yet Paul is quite positive that he did not get his instruction about the Supper from any of the gospel writers. He received a fresh revelation about it from the Lord Himself. Why was this? I suppose to firmly establish the Supper as an ordinance of the church and also to give Paul the confidence to uphold the principles of the Supper which were under attack because of the bad practices that prevailed at Corinth.

The first indication is given in verse 21 of a betrayer in their midst:

21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.
22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!
23 And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

IN the first three gospels, only one hint is given of a betrayer, but in John's gospel, there are three in total. John also mentions the sop which the Lord gave to Judas, then the Lord says to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly". Why

is this? The reason is given by John in verse 19:

Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

The Lord does not go so far as to say, "Judas will betray Me", but He gives so many hints in John 13 that the disciples would have no doubts that the Lord knew about Judas. Had there been any such doubts, it would have been a stumbling block to them.

Who should be the greatest?

Despite all that has been happening all around them, an argument breaks out amongst the disciples as to who should be the greatest. It is not the first time that such a discussion had taken place. In Matthew 20, the Lord is approached by the mother of James and John:

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

When the other ten hear of it, they are full of indignation against James and John. The desire to be greatest always leads to problems amongst the saints.

Mark chapter 9 describes another occasion when they disputed the point as they walked along the way.

33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

What was this a recurring issue with the disciples, apart from pride in their hearts? It was no doubt because they expected the Lord to establish His promised kingdom at any time, and that they His disciples would have a major part to play in the governing of this kingdom. That was their expectation when they accompanied Him on His triumphal ride into Jerusalem as described in John chapter 12. Their cries were ringing out, "Behold thy king cometh". It was still uppermost in their mind in Acts chapter 1:

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

The Lord continues the subject of the kingdom by telling them that the way to prominence in His kingdom was through humility and not ambition. He of all men could have commanded the servitude of all, but He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

There is however one lovely touch in verse 28:

Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

He appreciated their company with Him during the previous three and a half years. They might have been weak at times, lacking in understanding, and now striving to be the greatest, but they were still His chosen companions. In Mark chapter 3, we read that He ordained twelve that they should be with Him and

that He might send them forth to preach. So He does not dampen their enthusiasm for the kingdom but rather promises them that they would indeed one day sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

WE have not been promised such greatness in the kingdom but we too will be rewarded for having fellowship with Him and also for the service that we render to Him.

From verse 31 to 34, the Lord forecasts Peter's denials

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

In the Bible, we often come across this practice of naming someone twice over. The Lord did so with the child Samuel in I Samuel 3, and with Saul of Tarsus in Acts chapter 9. He does it too with Martha in Luke 10. It is a way of getting people's attention. Sometimes it is His way of giving a gentle reproach.

It has been pointed out that there is a difference between the "you" of verse 31 and the "thee" of verse 32. "You" is plural and suggests that Satan was interested in all 12 of men to sift them as wheat ie to destroy their testimony. But Peter is singled out especially by the Lord. "But I have prayed for thee". Peter was particularly prone to failure, hence the Lord has already prayed for him. The Lord prayed for Peter before he failed, so why did the Lord not prevent Peter's denials. It tells us that we each have a free will to make our own choices. Sometimes these choices can result in disaster but we today have an advocate in heaven, one who works to bring us back to the Father. So what was Peter's problem here? Peter was making a statement that he was ready to face prison and even death itself. In the other gospels, Peter goes even further and states that, though others might let the Lord down, he could be relied upon. Was that why the Lord asked Peter in John 21, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" ie more than these men do?

When Peter did fail, he did so in a dreadful way. Matthew records that he denied, he denied with an oath, that Peter began to curse and to swear. It took eight steps to fully recover Peter.

1. The Lord's prayer for Peter
2. The feet washing
3. A sign given
4. The sign fulfilled
5. The Lord's look
6. A message from the angel at the tomb
7. A private interview with Peter in Luke 24
8. Public restoration of Peter in John 21

Verses 35 to 38 Making preparations for trouble

In chapter 9, the Lord sent His disciples out to preach. They were to take neither purse nor scrip – they would be dependent on the Lord alone. But now in chapter 22, they were to take not only a purse but also a sword. They would be faced with being alone for three days, when they would have no protection from Him, between His death and His resurrection.

3. Events in Gethsemane

"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done".

This is a prayer which the Lord uttered three times, using exactly the same words on all three occasions. It is commonly assumed that the Lord was here contemplating the agonies of the cross and is asking His Father if the cup may be removed from Him. But if we make the "cup" to mean the "cross", can we really believe that the Lord prayed three times, "If it be possible, let this cross pass from Me". Was He therefore having second thoughts about the cross. We answer, "Of course not!!" Yet by implication, these are the words that we are putting into the mouth of the Lord Jesus. In John 12:27, the Lord is contemplating the cross when He says, "Now is My soul troubled and what shall I say, Save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour". The Lord raises the issue of not going through with the cross, and immediately dismisses the very thought of it. He has in fact been contemplating the cross throughout the whole of His public ministry. As early as John chapter 2, He says, "Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up again." He spoke these words about the temple of His body. In Matthew chapter 16, He tells His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things... and be killed". "He must go" – it was an absolute imperative. In Matthew 17, He is with Moses and Elijah on the holy mount. Luke 9 tells us the subject of their conversation – it was His exodus that He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

So what was the Lord praying about in Gethsemane if it was not the Cross? In Mark 14:35, He prayed that the hour might pass from Him. And what hour was this? In Luke 22:53, He says to His captors, "This is your hour and the power of darkness". The expression, "the power of darkness", is used by Paul in Colossians chapter 1. He reminds the saints that they have been "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son". "The power of darkness" is the power of the devil. The hour of Gethsemane was that of men and Satan, and He prayed that the hour might pass from Him. Such was His agony in the garden that He was weak, sweating as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. Is this scene not the subject matter of Hebrews 5:7. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard in that He feared".

(Note: in the expression "from death", the preposition "from" is not APO which means "away from" but EK which means rather "out of". If the Lord had asked the Father to save Him from the Cross, Hebrews 5:7 would have said, "Him that was able to save Him away from death. The Lord prayed rather to Him who was able to save Him out of death. Could it mean that the Lord was praying to be saved not from the death of Calvary but from the risk of death in Gethsemane. He felt Himself to be so weak that He prayed to Him who was able to save Him out of death. He was so weak physically that He was on the point of death. This raises the issue, could the Lord ever have died apart from being the Sin Bearer? What is certain is that the Lord's prayer was answered, for an angel came and strengthened Him. The angel gave Him the strength to rise up and move on to the Cross.)