

John 13:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

Analysis

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Jesus speaks these words during the Last Supper, distinguishing between the faithful eleven and Judas Iscariot. The Greek verb for "know" (oida, οἶδα) indicates comprehensive, intimate knowledge—not merely intellectual awareness but deep personal understanding. "Whom I have chosen" (exelexamen, ἐξελεξάμην) uses the aorist tense, pointing to a specific past decision, Jesus's sovereign selection of the twelve disciples.

Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9, where David laments betrayal by a close friend: "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." The phrase "lifted up his heel" depicts treacherous attack, like a horse kicking backward to injure. Sharing bread established covenant relationship in ancient culture, making betrayal by a table companion especially heinous. Jesus applies David's experience typologically to Judas's coming betrayal, demonstrating Scripture's prophetic fulfillment in Messiah's sufferings.

Theologically, this verse addresses the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Jesus sovereignly chose Judas knowing he would betray Him (John 6:70), yet Judas remained morally responsible for his actions. God's foreknowledge and prophetic Scripture don't negate human agency. The verse also reveals Jesus's omniscience—He knows hearts thoroughly (John 2:25). Despite this

knowledge, Jesus shared intimate fellowship with Judas, demonstrating divine patience and giving opportunity for repentance. The fulfillment of Scripture in specific details of Jesus's life validates His messianic identity and God's sovereign orchestration of redemption through human choices, even evil ones.

Historical Context

This scene occurs during the Last Supper in the upper room in Jerusalem, Thursday evening before Jesus's Friday crucifixion (approximately 30 AD). The meal was likely a Passover celebration or closely associated with Passover, filled with symbolic foods and rituals commemorating Israel's exodus from Egypt. Jesus transforms this meal into the institution of the Lord's Supper, giving new meaning to bread and wine as symbols of His body and blood.

Jewish meal fellowship carried profound significance in ancient culture, establishing covenant bonds and mutual obligations. Sharing bread with someone created relationship requiring loyalty and protection. Judas's betrayal after eating with Jesus constituted ultimate treachery, violating sacred hospitality bonds. Ancient readers would be shocked by such covenant-breaking. The disciples' response—asking "Is it I?" (Matthew 26:22)—reveals their uncertainty and self-examination despite their commitment to Jesus.

Early church history records Judas's infamy as the archetypal betrayer. Church fathers debated whether Judas could have repented and the extent of his moral culpability given Jesus's foreknowledge. Medieval art depicted Judas at the Last Supper, often without a halo or seated apart from others. The historical reality of Judas's betrayal, predicted in Scripture and fulfilled in detail, became powerful evidence for Jesus's messianic identity and Scripture's reliability. The account warns against superficial discipleship and demonstrates that proximity to Christ without heart transformation leads to destruction rather than salvation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do we reconcile God's sovereign choice with human moral responsibility in salvation and judgment?
2. What does Jesus's patient treatment of Judas despite knowing his betrayal teach about how we should treat those who may harm us?
3. How should the fulfillment of Scripture in detailed specifics strengthen our confidence in biblical prophecy?
4. In what ways does Judas's betrayal demonstrate the danger of proximity to Christ without genuine heart transformation?
5. How can we guard against the self-deception that allowed Judas to betray Jesus while appearing to be a faithful disciple?

Interlinear Text

οὐ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν λέγω· ἐγὼ οἶδα οὓς
not of all you I speak I know whom
G3756 G4012 G3956 G5216 G3004 G1473 G1492 G3739

ἐξελεξάμην· ἀλλ' ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ Ὅ
I have chosen but that the scripture may be fulfilled
G1586 G235 G2443 G3588 G1124 G4137 G3588

τρώγων μετ' ἐμοῦ τὸν ἄρτον ἐπῆρεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ
He that eateth with me bread hath lifted up against me
G5176 G3326 G1700 G3588 G740 G1869 G1909 G1691

τὴν πτέρναν αὐτοῦ
heel
G3588 G4418 G846

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 41:9 (Parallel theme): Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Matthew 26:23 (Parallel theme): And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

John 17:12 (Word): While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Mark 14:20 (Parallel theme): And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

John 13:26 (Parallel theme): 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.

John 6:70 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?