

Matthew 26:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

Analysis

When the even was come (ὥψίας δὲ γενομένης, opsias de genomenēs)—Passover officially began at sundown, marking Nisan 15 by Jewish reckoning. **He sat down** (ἀνέκειτο, anekeito)—Actually 'reclined,' as free men reclined at Passover to symbolize freedom from Egyptian slavery, in contrast to slaves who stood while eating.

With the twelve—This intimate circle would soon fracture through betrayal, denial, and desertion. Yet Jesus intentionally includes Judas, demonstrating divine mercy even to the betrayer. The phrase echoes Israel's twelve tribes sharing the original Passover, now reconstituted around the true Lamb of God.

Historical Context

First-century Passover meals followed specific posture: participants reclined on their left side, leaving their right hand free for eating. They leaned on cushions around a low U-shaped table (triclinium). This reclining position explains how John could lean on Jesus's breast (John 13:23) and how Judas could dip in the same dish.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus's inclusion of Judas at the table teach about grace toward those who will betray us?
2. How does the posture of reclining (as free people) relate to your understanding of freedom in Christ?

Interlinear Text

Ὅψίας	δὲ	γενομένης	ἀνέκειτο	μετὰ	τῶν	δώδεκα
when the even	Now	was come	he sat down	with	G3588	the twelve
G3798	G1161	G1096	G345	G3326		G1427

Additional Cross-References

John 13:21 (Parallel theme): When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.