

Did Judas Iscariot partake of the Lord's Supper?

When the Lord Jesus gathered with His disciples in the upper room to observe the Jewish Passover we are told that Judas Iscariot was among them. The question arises concerning the time of his exposure as a traitor and his departure from the group. Was he exposed as a traitor and then departed before the Lord instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper or did he depart after having partaken of the Lord's Supper?

A comparison of the gospel accounts shows that Matthew and Mark placed Judas' exposure and departure before the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 25:21-25; Mark 14:18-21). The gospel of Luke however seems to indicate that Judas was exposed and then departed after having partaken of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:21).

Because of the differences in the gospel accounts Bible commentators are obviously divided on this question and the order of events. Note this from several sources:

Luke 22:21 Robertson's word pictures

That betrayeth (tou paradidontos). Present active participle, actually engaged in doing it. The hand of Judas was resting on the table at the moment. It should be noted that Luke narrates the institution of the Lord's Supper before the exposure of Judas as the traitor while Mark and Matthew reverse this order.

Luke 22:21 Family Bible Notes

21-23. What is mentioned in these verses took place while they were eating the Passover, and before the institution of the Lord's Supper. The facts are not all mentioned in the order in which they took place. Joh 13:30; Mt 26:21-25; Mr 14:18-21.

Luke 22:21 John Wesley

V. 21. The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table-It is evident Christ spake these words before he instituted the Lord's Supper: for all the other evangelists mention the sop, immediately after receiving which he went out: John 13:30. Nor did he return any more, till he came into the garden to betray his Master. Now this could not be dipped or given, but while the meat was on the table. But this was all removed before that bread and cup were brought.

Luke 22:21 Matthew Henry

He signifies to them that the traitor was now among them, and one of them, Lu 22:21. By placing this after the institution of the Lord's supper, though in Matthew and Mark it is placed before it, it seems plain that Judas did receive the Lord's supper, did eat of that bread and drink of that cup; for, after the solemnity was over, Christ said, Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. There have been those that have eaten bread with Christ and yet have betrayed him.

Luke 22:21 People's New Testament

The incident concerning the betrayal mentioned in these verses occurred before the Lord's Supper was eaten (Mt 26:21). It seems probable, from John 13:21-35, that Judas left before the supper. On this passage, see notes on Mt 26:21-25.

Based upon these differences is there any way to determine the order of events and the answer to the question of just when Judas was exposed? Can we ascertain whether he departed before the Lord's Supper was instituted or after it was instituted?

I believe there are several factors to be considered and when these are considered we can arrive at a probable conclusion. First of all, Matthew's gospel account is ordered theology and Mark's gospel account is the chronological gospel. These two gospel accounts present the various events in more of a chronological order than the other gospel accounts. It must be seen that each of the gospel writers wrote with a different purpose to portray Christ in a particular way. This being the case many of the accounts are not in chronological order. Matthew and Mark place Judas' exposure and departure before the institution of the Lord's Supper. Luke's accounts therefore should be viewed as out of chronological order.

A second factor to be considered is that of fellowship. Since there is no fellowship between Christ and Belial or light with darkness (II Cor. 6:14,15) would Judas have been included in this observance of the Lord's Supper which calls for personal fellowship? Since the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's redemption for believers Judas, being an unbeliever, would have no right and no part in partaking of it.

Finally, Judas was given the sop which was no doubt a part and practice associated with the Passover meal. It was dipped in the juices of the meat and passed to one another. There is no sop associated with the observance of the Lord's supper, then or now, consequently Judas must have been given the sop, which exposed him as a traitor and he departed before the Lord Jesus instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.