

The Upper Room

by: Ingimar DeRidder

1 Up

“Where wilt thou that we prepare? Lk. 22:9

Where is the upper room? No one can be positive where it is. There are several sites that tour guides like to visit while claiming each to be the "original" upper room. Given man's tendency to build shrines on such "so called" sacred sites, it is perhaps best that God keeps some things secret. Holy relics and real estate are of little importance to a kingdom that is spiritual. We do know that it was up. That meant that to enter one had to go higher. The church began in an upper room in Jerusalem. It was a special place. It must have involved steps. So too, our going higher always involves steps.

Whether we can find the actual room is not as important as whether we find the original lessons first taught there. The Upper Room was, among other things, a classroom. The actual chamber may or may not still exist, the lessons will live forever. It is in the upper room that we are catechized in a kind of holy "High School" for spiritual living. It is in the upper room that the church is given its primer of Christian protocol. It is in the upper room that we learn of peace, of power, and of purpose. It is through the ministry in the upper room that Christ prepares his disciples to face a hostile world and to overcome it.

The disciples were still looking for and hoping for some kind of physical kingdom. They were anxious for, and were anticipating some kind of religious and Messianic uprising. They were prepared to assume powerful positions of prestige and authority as cabinet members or prime ministers. They were not prepared, however, for the crucifixion of their leader, his death, and his burial-- and in their wildest dreams, they never imagined the resurrection, (although Christ spoke of it often). While Israel will again have its day, the Christian life is primarily a spiritual one.

The lessons of the upper room are spiritual lessons. They cannot be understood except in the spirit. Never were the words of the Apostle Paul more appropriate than here, *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1Cor. 2:14). The "breaking of bread," the peace that passes understanding, and the abundant life are as much a mystery to the unsaved as the cloud was to the Egyptians in the wilderness.

The hour had come. Christ was about to die for the sins of the world. The lessons of John thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen were not fully comprehended by those who were present. It was not until they returned to that upper room nearly fifty days later that it became clear. Then the classroom became the cradle. It was in the upper room that the church was born. And it was not until the Holy Spirit came that these believers knew what it was to be born-again.

The book of Isaiah has been called the gospel of the Old Testament because it is filled with Christ and his Spirit. God tells us through Isaiah that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. We look too low. Although they were so close to the cross, the disciples failed to lift up their eyes. The upper room is a good place to be challenged with God's higher thoughts, and to be changed by God's higher power. *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isa. 55:7-8).

In the upper room the disciples were challenged with higher visions, higher thoughts, and the promise of a higher power. Am I willing, as Peter and John, to make ready an "upper room," where I would learn more of Christ. Do we desire to "overcome" the world and the downward pull of evil? Do we want to learn more about the humility, tranquility, prosperity, and fidelity of the Christian life? Are we willing to take whatever steps (upper rooms have steps) necessary to have Communion with Him? Are we willing to prepare for the Passover, going from the Old to the New? Are we ready to remember the purpose of his death, and realize the power of his life? If yes, then let us find the upper room and go up. "Where wilt thou that we prepare?" Lk. 22:9. Today, that place is somewhere in your heart. Go, make it ready for the Master.

"I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" Lev. 11:45. Christ is our Passover. He wants to bring us "up" as well as "out."

2 Sit

“And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.” Luke 22:12

Take a seat. A table brings a family together. The church is a family. Supper time is a time of gathering of kin and kindred spirits. Although the affairs of commerce may carry its members in different directions throughout the day, at its conclusion, each family member makes their way back to the place where they belong. Everyone goes home.

The Passover was a family meal. As with the coming of any Sabbath day, every Jew turns from the things of the world to the things of God. As the day begins to draw to a close, business is suspended, shops are shut, commerce is ceased, and individuals make their way home to a place around a table to be with their own family. Never was this more true than at Passover. No one should be alone on that night. On such a night each must be where they belong.

The Jewish nation reenacted this rhythmic ritual of faith to commemorate the birth of their nation and their deliverance from Egypt. Nearly 1500 Passovers had been observed and they were all merely dress rehearsals for this final Passover. This Passover would be different. Notice that during this Passover and this Last Supper the disciples did not disband to seek out their biological family. In the upper room we must find our place among the family of God.

Peter and John had the responsibility to make things ready (Lk.22:8). If they followed the pattern of history, they would have had to stand in long lines at the temple in order to procure a lamb for the Paschal meal. They would have prepared the room so mysteriously provided. Peter and John fulfilled this final mission. Peter may have thought that surely such an honored service deserved his getting a place of honor at the table. Surely that place belonged to Peter, the spokesman and outspoken leader among the disciples. Instead, the place of honor, the highest seat, (the place just left of Jesus) probably went to Judas, the treasurer. To the right, John leaned on Jesus' bosom. If human nature was fully at work that evening, it is not hard to picture Peter sulking silently in the lowest seat. We can imagine him thinking "If the Master does not realize that I am more worthy than Judas, if I am to be so overlooked, I will take the lowest seat."

The custom of the day and of the hour suggests such a seating arrangement. The sop was customarily given to the one in the seat of honor, which was next to the host. Judas was in position to receive the sop. In order for John to lean on Jesus, he would have to be to the Master's right. If the table was in the usual horseshoe shape, with its upper and lower seats, Peter had to be near enough to discretely request John inquire of the Lord, who it was that was going to betray him.

Such a seating arrangement would also set the stage for a great and important lesson. No servant was attending to this party or their needs. Whoever was in the lowest seat should have assumed the required role and brought water for the others. If Peter was indeed in this position (as we speculate) service was the last thing on his mind. A similar oversight had occurred before, but the disciples were slow to learn. Jesus spoke of it in Lk. 7:44. *“Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.”*

The disciples seemed to be ever quarreling about their place or position. Chickens will not settle down to roost at night until the pecking order had been established, or re-established. One bird will take the highest place and havoc will reign should any try to unseat it. The bushes or trees of the barnyard are alive with posturing and positioning until every creature is “in its place.”

Knowing where to sit at a state dinner is an important part of protocol. Knowing where not to sit is a part of wisdom. The world fights for the best seats. Jesus taught that the first principle of the faith life was in understanding our place. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

The disciples were always arguing among themselves about who was the “greatest.” Christ once took a little child into his arms and set him in the midst in an attempt to teach a difficult law of heaven. But the truth seemed to be lost to these apostles in their apprenticeship. *“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest”* (Lk. 22:24). Again and again, the disciples of Christ fail appreciate or understand God’s grace and God’s place.

The disciples of Christ need to revisit the upper room. It was the place of the farewell but also of the fullness. It was the place where they celebrated the Passover, which comes from the word “Pesah” which means to “Pass over” or to “Spare.” Unfortunately the family has fallen to bickering. The church has been fractured and fragmented into a thousand pieces, sects, and denominations, each laying claim to the high seat of the “most faithful.” The church has argued about who is “closest” to Jesus. The church has even argued about the shape of the communion table, distribution of the elements, and the significance of the tokens. Heaven is patient with us.

Not long after these apostles died, the survivors all fought for their mantels, positions, and bishoprics. By the third century, the church was divided up into higher (clergy) and lower (laity) seats. Among the chief places there were popes, bishops, and archbishops. Priests took charge of the simple tokens and administered the elements as a sacrament and held that either grace or God was found in the bread and the wine.

Our Lord told a story in Luke fourteen after he *“marked how they chose out the chief rooms.”* He told of a presumptuous man who took a seat at the head of the table, only to be embarrassed when asked to give up his seat for a man more honored than himself. The moral of the story was simple. *“When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room;*

that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend go up higher” (Lk. 14:10a).

Each must find their place. Like heaven it is a place prepared for you. Rather than fight for the best or the “box seats,” we could not do better than look for the lowest seat or the servant’s place. In a way we will never understand, there we find ourselves closest to the Lord Jesus, and that’s the best place.

3 love

“By this ...” John 13:35

Jesus said, it was “by this.” He did not say it was “by that,” or by some “other thing.” Look for this. Look for love. Jesus shows his disciples love. It marks place of the upper room. It is communion. There is no church without “this.” In order for us to see what “this” looked like, Jesus dropped to the floor to demonstrate.

Real love forgets itself and sees the needs and worth of others. The room must have grown strangely quiet as Jesus moved from the place of the Master and assumed the posture of a servant. He *“laid aside his garments”* and washed the disciples feet. They were stunned; they were embarrassed. There was silence until he came to Peter. *“Lord, dost thou wash my feet?”* asked Simon. Peter was not about to allow his Master to stoop so low. *“Thou shalt never wash my feet,”* he said. Jesus continued, *“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”*

There is a fine line that divides the Last Supper from the Lord’s Supper. When the one had *“ended”* (vs. 2) the other had just begun. The Church is communion and there can be none without it. The saints are instructed to participate in this living memorial to remember him *“till he come”* (1Cor. 11:26). The Church has been given a blessed memorial service called the Lord’s Supper. We remember his death. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...”* There are tokens. There is a table. There is also a simple test. Jesus said, “by this,” (not by “that” or the “other thing”), “by this” shall all men know that you are my disciples. Love is the “hallmark” that makes it genuine. Look for the bread. Look for the wine. Look for the love.

Christianity and this communion is founded in and upon God’s love. Jesus loved his disciples unto the end. He loved them, not because they were lovely, but because he is love and love can do nothing less. If we were to take up the ministry of Christ (where he left off) it must be here— it must be in love. John would take up this theme again later when writing from Patmos. Perhaps what we fail to learn in a humble place in an upper room we may learn in the hard place, (like in some prison on Patmos) but let us learn to love one another.

With the Last Supper, Jesus would leave an important lesson of love before he left this life. He employed the lowly implements of a servant to teach the church the way to greatness. He would also teach an important truth about communion. Communion in some circles amounts to kneeling at a rail and receiving what is called the “host.” Those who speak of “taking communion” misspeak, for communion is not something we “take” it is something we “have.”

A Spirit-filled assembly is more than strangers kneeling at a communion rail. It is more than a few saints sitting in a circle around two tokens. It is communion, communion with Christ, and communion with one another. It is love.

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” (Jn.13:1) Jesus is the demonstration and proof of God’s love. He was about to fulfill the greatest law act love, and die on the cross for our sins.

It is the love of God that gathers us into a sweet communion. It is the love of God that is the tie that binds. It is the love of God as embodied in Christ that makes a church a church. The Lord Jesus Christ is the center and sun of our spiritual solar system. His love is the gravitational force that is experienced by faith and which holds each planet in its orbit. It is love that holds a local assembly together. Take love out of the assembly and it falls apart. There can be no assembly without love. Our love for Christ is seen in our love for one another. *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1Jn.4:20-21).* This love will be the hallmark of the church. *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” (Jn.13:35).* When Christ is in his rightful place an invisible power of love unites us in holy communion.

There will never be true communion in the church without each member understanding what was happening when Jesus *“laid aside his garments.”* In order to have full and complete communion each must learn at times to “lay aside” his or her individual rights for the good of the whole. If Jesus did it, we must learn to do it as well. If we are to experience a true communion we must lay aside our differences, prejudices, and our pride. We must be willing to give up the best seats in order that someone else might find a “better” one. As in any union of people or things we must surrender certain rights and prerogatives of the individual to accommodate the good of the whole. If there is to be happiness and harmony in a home, country, marriage, or ministry, each of the partners must at times defer and yield to the other.

Since none of them seemed to hear that the circumstances cried out for a servant, Jesus himself decided to leave them and Christianity a much needed lesson. The thought never occurred to the disciples that in the absence of such an attendant, one of them should assume the role.

Many a sweet communion is broken when the disciples begin demanding their rights. Many an assembly fails when no one wishes to lay aside what they consider important rights in order to minister to the needs of others. Many reach for the crown, few for the basin. In order for a broken communion with God to be restored, Jesus had to leave the glories of heaven, lay aside the garments of splendor, and take up a tabernacle of flesh. *“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.” (Phil. 2:7). Happy is the assembly and sweet is the communion where men come to serve, rather than to be served.

Washing a brother’s dirty feet is an act of love. Love accepts one another. Love notices and attends to one another’s needs. Communion is also based on cleanliness. Someone rightly said, “Cleanliness is not next to godliness; cleanliness is part of godliness.” Peter did not understand how important this was until Jesus said, “*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*” (v.8). He who approaches God must be clean. “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” (Ps. 66:18).

Even a saint’s feet get dirty. Angels may fly above the grime; we must walk through it. We cannot pass through the streets of social contact and not become somewhat soiled or pick up some of this world’s contagion. The answer is continual cleansing. “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1Jn. 1:9).

Darkness has no business in the light. When darkness seeks to sit in the light it casts its own shadow. Its presence is obvious. Sin spoils the communion and soils the church. Times come when the church must exercise discipline upon itself if it would remain clean. There is a time when it is obvious and individual in not in communion with Christ and therefore not in harmony with the rest of the body. Those are sad times, for what fellowship can darkness have with light? Such a sad scene it was when Judas went out into the night. But as the Master taught us “*Unless I wash you, you can have not part with me.*” How much better for each sincere believer to “*examine himself*” (1Cor. 11:31) so they need not be judged by another. The church must be clean if it is to enjoy the presence of the Lord. Everything is done in love.

4 Eat

"Take, eat; this is my body." Matthew 26:26b

Do This. What must I do to be saved? The question was first asked in the ruins of a Philippian jail nearly two thousand years ago. While holding a torch in his trembling hand the jailer listened to God's servant give the answer that still illuminates every soul sincerely seeking to know. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved."* It is faith and faith alone in Christ that saves. Some churches add seven sacraments to that first simple answer? Some add two. Let all who add (or take away) from God's Word beware (Rev. 22:18-19). The orthodox Jew counted 614 commandments in the Pentateuch and each knotted tassel of his prayer shawl was a reminder that he was a son of the law.

There is only one law that Christ has given the church, not 614, not ten, not a thousand (Mohammed left thousands of laws for his followers to meticulously obey). Jesus left one. Love! That's it. That's all, but that's enough. He who will be governed by this single word has all the Decalogue, the Law and the Prophets, written in his heart: Love. Some may laugh at the simplicity of it. Some may rage at its seemingly lack of restraints or regulations. Some may see how broad the ocean, but never begin to comprehend or even imagine its depth. Some may feel they need more but, love is the container that holds everything. It is the Christian "Ark of the Covenant." The old ark, contained the law, the loaf, and the leader's rod. Love contains all that and more. But that is another lesson. It is only mentioned here because the "Do this" of Christ's memorial feast is not the "Don't do this" of Mt. Sinai. It is the "Do this" of faith. It is not legalism. It is love.

When Peter's mother-in-law was cured she arose and began to serve Jesus. When the man of Gadera was delivered from the demons of darkness, he sought to follow Christ. When the Master speaks, the winds obey. How curious that men should lay claim to salvation with their words, but balk and resist, or neglect Christ's most simple requests. God may one day ask you to do some hard thing, or some fantastic thing, but first he asks all his children to do this simple thing. If we cannot keep this, the most simple of the Lord's wishes, how shall we expect to discover and delight in any other aspect of his will. Some even pray "Thy will be done," and yet fail in doing this most simple of things.

"Do this" Few things are more clear in the Scriptures than this. There are some teachings that are not easily understood. This is simple to understand. Believers find in these words, not a sacrament but an ordinance, not a requirement as much as a request. Salvation is by grace and not works, and since grace must be communicated "freely" and without cost, the Lord's Supper is not a means of grace or a means "to grace." In Christ we have moved from the realm of law to love. One of the last requests of the Savior before he went to the cross, was *"do this."* If there was ever a prescription of Spiritual worship entrusted to the Church, this is it. There are no candles, no robes, no bells ringing or incense rising in a curl of smoke from an altar. There is no kneeling or genuflecting, there is no ritualistic

washings or recitations. There is a simple meal, consisting of bread and wine. The “breaking of bread” is the worship of Christ in his own prescribed way.

“In Remembrance of me” In the ten commandments there is one commandment to “remember.” The Jews were told to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. The Sabbath day principle was started before Moses. On Sinai, God merely established its observation as a covenant and a memorial and a reminder of his awesome creative power. The law came by Moses but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. He is our Sabbath. He is our Rest. He calls us to a New Covenant and asks us, not to remember a day, but to remember him.

It demonstrates our love, loyalty, faith, devotion, and obedience to Christ. It is not without significance that it was inaugurated on the *“night in which he was betrayed”* (1Cor. 11:23). Paul speaks of this request as truth received in 1Cor. 11:23-34. *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.”*

“Ye do show” Christ held up the bread and said *“this is my body.”* What he meant was that it was a picture of his body. It was a visual aid, and a token left by the Savior before he went to the cross. When we partake of the elements (the bread and the cup) we remember his work of salvation and the price he had to pay for our sins. The elements remain what they seem to be. They are not changed into the actual flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus (transfiguration), nor do they take on some mystical, mysterious, spiritual aura of his presence (consubstantiation). They are simply pictures to remind us not to forget him and his sacrifice. What we show is the great cost of salvation and the awfulness of sin. What we show (in his death) is the depth of his love and the depravity of man. What we show is so vast and so deep so in-exhaustible that we shall never take in with one look its full size and significance. It is a testimony. All who are born-again through saving faith in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus are welcome at this memorial feast. In this regard, it is an open meeting. All who are walking in consistency with such a faith (according to their own conscience) and are not living in a state of open disobedience to God’s Word are welcome. At the same time, it is a closed meeting to all who are unbelievers and are living in open disobedience to Christ. Because it is something “we show,” unbelievers are not allowed to participate. They are however, permitted to observe and ponder (v.29).

The church is asked to observe this memorial *“till he come.”* Each time we remember his work, we also remember his words *“I will come again to receive you unto myself.”* With this we look at ourselves, to see if we are in the faith and in fellowship in the present. We look back at the ministry of the Lord upon the cross by which he paid sins penalty for us. And we look to the future realizing that he purchased, by virtue of his death, a place in heaven for us.

“As often” Few dare to reject the Lord’s Supper as much as they neglect it. The “often” would be better said “as seldom” in most circles.

The early church “broke bread” on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). *“And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto*

them...” It is also clear that the Lord’s Supper was an integral part of the church experience among the early believers. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,”* Acts 2:42.

The motive of gathering for the “breaking of bread” (as the Lord’s Supper was commonly called) was to “remember him.” This is spiritual worship in the truest sense of the word. (Rev. 5:9). Worship is an act of praise, adoration, appreciation, and submission. It is most beautifully expressed in “remembering him.” Anything that would hinder the act or atmosphere of worship should be carefully excluded from the memorial feast.

Jesus Said “Do this.” It is a simple request. To all who somehow failed to catch the beauty, importance and significance we can only wonder at the words of the Master who said in another place, *“Why do ye call me Lord, and do not the things which I say.”* (Lk. 6:46).

5 Be True

“One of youshall betray me.” Mark 14:18

We know very little about what took place around the table in the upper room. We must attempt to reconstruct the Passover and the Paschal supper with the fragments of insight contained in the gospels. The principles, spiritual lessons, and quickening power of the words bring us life. The seating arrangement in the upper room, or its location are things we cannot be certain of. We must speculate.

Christ sent his disciples Peter and John to prepare for the Passover. They were to find a servant with a jar of water and inquire as to the location of the “*kataluma*” guest chamber. This is the same word used in Luke 2:7 referring to the inn (in which there was no room for him). The story begins and ends with Christ looking for room in the inn. This time it is arranged that the disciples be given a *anavion* “a place upstairs.”

The feast of the unleavened bread came on the 14th day of Nisan and lasted for seven days. It was on this first day (Thursday) that the Passover lamb was slain. As Peter and John went up the stairs- Judas perhaps went to purchase the Paschal lamb. He held the purse.

As we come to this dark culmination of Christ’s earthly ministry, gone are the crowds, gone are those who ate the miraculous fish and loaves. A very small remnant remained. Now just the twelve gathered around the Master. To these would be entrusted a sacred mission. They too must “overcome the world.” Christ came now to fulfill all things and also to say farewell. As Elijah flew to heaven his mantle fell to Elisha who prayed for a “double portion” of his spirit. So now one far greater than that famous prophet was about to leave a little school of disciples but not before some important last lessons would be taught in the upper room. After three years of fellowship and intimacy, these last few hours would be precious. And although the world was locked out we are allowed by virtue of the Holy Book to look inside and sit with these to whom Christ would entrust the world.

As hindsight affords us a more perfect vision we can gaze on disciples who little knew what lie ahead. The disciples had no idea their leader was about to go to the gallows. They hardly grasped the pregnant meaning of Christ’s prophetic words, “*Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up again.*” The disciples were students about to take a test. Just how difficult an exam it was, they were about to learn. Twelve men, ordinary men, were chosen by providence. What was about to happen would change their lives. What was about to happen would change the world.

The disciple that so greatly confuses and troubles us is Judas. We know little about him. He was the only disciple from Judea. All the others were Galileans. Judas must have had a gift for government or administration. He handled the money and financial affairs of the little band. He must have been looked up to and admired by those within as well as without. He had a place of privilege. He participated in miracles. He held the purse. He kept the books. But, (we are told, by the sacred pen of divine inspiration that) he was a traitor. He

was also a hypocrite. He held an office of trust. Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. Why would Christ allow such a one to hold the bag? Why allow a thief to sit so close? The truth is there is a little bit of thief in all of us. Remember Adam and Eve took the fruit that did not belong to them. We have that same sin nature. Every saint is capable of the most heinous of sins. It is easier to see them in others, than in ourselves. Beware and tremble.

Paul speaks of the Lord's Supper taking place on the night Jesus was betrayed. Is it not curious that this sad element is included in the eternal description of that holy night? Most character studies ignore the one whose name lives in infamy. Sad as this human figure is, the church would do well to remember this son of perdition before we in obedience remember the Son of God.

Paul wrote to the *Corinthians* "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...*"(1Cor. 11:23) and then, after describing that first memorial feast of the new covenant, concludes with the admonition to the participants "*wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*" If anyone was ever guilty of the body and blood of the Lord it was Judas. One of the greatest lessons of the upper room was to learn of the tragedy of one who came so close to heaven and yet plunged head long into hell.

J.C. Ryle wrote of him "On all the coasts of England there is not such a beacon to warn sailors of danger, as Judas Iscariot to warn Christians." It is close to astounding to see the lengths a man may go in religious profession and yet "turn out in the end to be a rotten hypocrite."

As his impatience grew and his disappointment deepened, his darker nature rose up. He became more and more alienated. The gift of government implied a desire for it. It is a small step from desire to ambition. Careful! Judas was drawn to Jesus believing he was the Jewish Messiah. He earnestly and ardently expected victory and success. And in that success, he fully expected to personally share in the spoils of triumph and somehow be recompensed. He was not alone. Had not James and John sought place and position? Selfish feelings lurk in the saintliest heart.

The spring-time of the ministry was a happy time; now it was autumn. Leaves once green with hope had now turned brown. The crowds left, John the Baptist was beheaded and unavenged. Christ refused and seemingly missed an opportunity to take the crown. There was enmity from Israel's leaders. And there was ugly talk, yet Christ failed to act. More and more, Christ spoke of sacrifice, disaster and death. He spoke of his flesh and blood. Peter said, "*to whom shall we go?*" When asked if the disciples would follow the disappointed crowd. Although Judas was silent, he would wreck his ship upon these rocks.

Judas may have been caught up in the Jewish "cause." Then Christ began to speak of a spiritual kingdom. Jesus said "*blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" Judas' heart was not pure, and Judas did not see God. Talk of a spiritual kingdom did not

impress this man. He counted the money, yet had trouble laying up treasures in heaven where ledgers are unseen by men. Whether the cause was Israel's or his own, he mistook it for his salvation. Beware when we set some cause, no matter how high or noble above Christ. Causes compete with Christ. Not liking the way things were going, Judas would try to snatch the reins from the very hand of Christ.

Judas saw that the movement was about to foreclose upon his dreams of grandeur. He would not be bankrupt if he could help it. He would employ personal knowledge and strike a bargain. He would trade his kingdom stock and sell his shares on the exchange of self-interest. He would bargain with the Sanhedrin and agree to the price of 30 pieces of silver, (Zech. 12) the price of a slave— and with that, he would sell his soul.

Have you ever been disappointed with God? Has Christianity not profited you as you hoped? Has your will ever shifted and broken ranks with the will of God? Have you ever sulked when God refused to answer your prayer or take your advice, advance your cause, or erect your kingdom? Careful, you are walking in the footsteps of the man from Iscariot.

How could one be so close to the light and be so blind? How could one taste and fail to partake? How could one so privileged be so perverse? To these questions we can only speculate as to the depths one might sink should Satan enter one's heart. Did Judas lose his salvation? One cannot lose what one never had. And if he ever had it, he would not have given it for all the treasures of Egypt. Had Judas a place in his heart for Christ, the evil one would have never gained entrance. Paul would later write "*that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith.*" In another place Jesus told of the man delivered of the demon who failed to allow God to take up residency and was re-inhabited by spirits worse than the first.

There is no sin so heinous that the best of us is not capable of committing it in the flesh. There is no crime too crimson, no stain too black, but into which the careless may stumble should he fail to walk circumspectly. David never dreamed, in his worst nightmares that he should stoop so low as he did when he sent Uriah to his death. Christ stunned his followers with the pronouncement that one of his disciples would betray him. It turned out to be one the closest. One by one they asked, "*is it I?*" Let none presume a place in the inner circles of Christian power that privilege insulates them from the high voltage of spiritual irresponsibility. Be true or betray, they sound so much alike. One ends in heaven the other in hell.

Speaking to others, being able to preach, knowing facts, and being a close acquaintance of Jesus is no proof of salvation. Judas endured the difficult life of an itinerant minister, was held in the highest esteem by his peers (he kept the purse), and played a role (however minor) in miracles, yet he failed in grace.

History is acted out on a stage between eternity past and eternity future and we at times are but spectators. At other times must step on stage. Theologians, depending on their particular school of thought, argue about what "must" take place and what "may" have been when it comes to this pitiful human being named Judas. While we will leave for

others to prove or disprove the nature of his disposition, his destiny or pre-destiny, we will consider the warning of the Apostle for ourselves, *“But let a man examine himself...for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body”* (1Cor. 11:29).

On the one hand, let us not be staggered by the thought of a hypocrite fooling every other disciple, for on the other hand we find an opportunity for all to examine their own hearts for the first signs of hypocrisy lest we too become sickly and even sleep.

Judas coming from either Karjetan or Kuriut (therefore called Iscariot) appears to be the only disciple chosen from Judea. All the others seem to have been Galilean. Any messianic fervor that drove him must have evaporated when Jesus made it clear that his mission was a spiritual one and his death was a necessity. Judas’ ambitions were dashed when the crowds abandoned Christ after the difficult teachings of John chapter six. Turning to his disciples, Jesus asked the question *“will you go away also?”* *“To who shall we go?”* asked Peter *“thou hast the words of eternal life.”* (Jn. 6:69). Peter’s answer was so moving that we often fail to consider the response of Christ which should send a chill down our back and cause us to tremble. After this heartening display of loyalty and devotion, a shadow is spread across the face of this bright sun, *“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”*

Christ spoke of this man in his private and personal conversations with the Father noting the lostness of this saddest of souls of whom Jesus said it would have been better had he never been born. As in all the events of Jesus’ life, an unseen hand of providence was working out a Sovereign will, so this too was done that *“scripture might be fulfilled”* (Jn. 17:12). The lesson of Judas is not that Judas had no choice, but rather that we had better be careful in what we choose. Providence had written a part for one to play in the role of “son of perdition,” That Judas chose to play that part, though ironic, was his own choice.

Although it appeared that Judas was of noble and high ideals, the holy record reveals the truth, every choice that seemed to be for Jesus was, in fact, a choice for self. While some have suggested that Judas merely attempted to force Jesus to play his hand, the fact of the matter is this disciple was never interested in any cause but his own. And if that is indeed the case, the visible church has many sons of perdition peppering its pews.

John called Judas a *“thief”* (Jn. 12:6). His observation of the said disciple’s pretended care for the poor could well describe many a modern-time minister who has sought to enrich himself while pretending to serve the interests of heaven. Such cases have been well documented. The real heart of Judas is exposed in the recorded conversation between him and Jesus’ enemies. *“What will you give me?”* (Matt.26:15). Many men have emptied their pockets in pawn shops to feed some awful addiction and would have placed their eternal soul on the auction block if it could command a price. But never was there a more pitiful sight that Judas bargaining with the devil, never was there a worse business arrangement than this: Jesus Christ, exchanged for thirty pieces of silver. Judas was a tool of Satan (Lk. 22:3;Jn 13:2, 27). At what point he relinquished control we have no way of knowing. Just when his sinful human nature was fully swallowed up by the prince

of darkness is not clear, but to know that such a horrible thing is possible should cause us pause. Whenever that happened it was without observation, for his companions never suspected he was the one the Master was referring to when he spoke of treason. Even as he left the table before the Eucharist was instituted, the others assumed this most trusted disciple was off on some holy errand or act of mercy (Jn. 13:29).

The awful death of this one, once so close to Jesus, should cause the meek to melt. The tragic end of the world's most famous traitor is not the end at all. If hell is in fact a place of torment (and it is) and men reap what they sow (and they will), this poor man's plight is unimaginable.

It is not an accident that the holy record prefaces a holy rite, (the Lord's Supper) an act of loyalty and devotion with the most despicable account of betrayal and treachery. To hypocritically touch our lips to the very symbol of the body of our Lord is tantamount to planting a Judas kiss again on the cheek of Christ.

No wonder the apostle warns those around Christ's table to "examine" themselves for hypocrisy is a dangerous thing. None of us is so pure and so without sin that we should ever deserve Christ, but let us make sure that the blood of one greater than any Paschal lamb has been applied by faith. Let us make sure we have bowed before the King in spirit and in truth. Let us abandon all ambition and fully trust the one who calls us to "follow" him. And should we somehow in a fit of madness deny our Lord, as Peter did, (the strongest of the twelve), let us quickly run to him alone in whom there is forgiveness and repent at his feet. And should our dear Savior break our heart with his pointed interrogation, let us search the heart for the one important thing, as did Peter. *"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."*

6. Fire

The world is cold. The disciples returned to the upper room to await the fire. Returning to the upper room without Christ must have been bittersweet experience. Although they were finally convinced that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead (as he said he would) there was no precedent for appropriate behavior or protocol. It was too early for them to remember to set a table with two elements, besides it was too soon for that. Christ had not yet ascended. They were meeting with the Master on occasions and times of his own choosing during the forty days till Pentecost. He instructed them to return to Jerusalem and wait. They were to wait for the Promise.

Luke describes what it was like. They were in *one place and in one accord*. One describes a latitude, the other an attitude. Each person must find their place. Every saint, as part of the body of Christ, must discern the latitude where they must obediently go and wait for him. The second thing has to do with the spirit more than the spot. They were in *“one accord.”* The word translated “accord” comes from the Greek word from which we get our word “harmony.” The world around them was the picture of chaos. In that upper room there was harmony. Discord is never God’s way. Had not Christ prayed, *“May they be one as we are one?”* One accord is beautiful. The music of the church may be made up of different notes, but it is always from the same symphony, and in the same key.

Today we sing, “Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.” Pianos are greatly affected by conditions of humidity and sudden change of weather. Harps, violins, and stringed instruments must be tuned often. So too, a believer’s heart. Sudden, changing life conditions easily throw us “off key.” Finding the right “pitch” is important if we would sing well the song. They were in one place and in one accord.

The Book of Acts describes the first “room service” of the early church in that upper room. *“Suddenly there came a sound from heaven”* (Acts 2:2). Unless you hear a *“sound from heaven,”* you have been someplace else; you have not been to church. Our modern churches are filled with noise and sounds that come from every direction but heaven. Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a *“time to be silent and a time to speak.”* Discernment knows the difference. Nowhere is this more important than in the Assembly. When we have finished “sounding off” about ourselves, our plans, our needs; when we have finished making appeals for funds or faithfulness, when we have finished making joyful sounds about what we think of God; then we should hush, be still, and listen for *“a sound from heaven.”* Worship has to do with what we bring to God. Worship involves our praying and praising, and the pouring out of heart and gift. The early church would do a lot of that, but there was something else that made the church the church. It was God’s presence. Jesus said *“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* His presence was in the promise. They waited for the promise. The promise was the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The “rushing wind” may not have stirred a candle’s flicker, but it inflamed their hearts. This “sound from heaven” was all Spirit and no flesh. The eardrums that hear such sounds must be spiritual. Jesus said, “*my sheep hear my voice and they follow me.*” If I did not hear God’s voice last Sunday could it be that I am becoming “hard of hearing?” Would I recognize a “sound from heaven?” The secret of this sound is in His Word not ours. Peter said, “where can we go, you have the words of eternal life?.” Seekers are as important as the speakers. John’s disciples knew the difference between the man’s voice and God’s voice. John 1:37 a good speaker is described. “When they heard him [John] speak...they followed Jesus.” The voice in the wilderness caught their ear, but the sound from heaven, won their heart. They spilled out of that room with a faith on fire. They and the world would never be the same.

7. Keys to the Upper Room

A key is needed to open locked rooms. There is a key for this one as well. The lessons of the upper room are simple because they address common things, things as common as a loaf of bread and a cup of wine, but they are difficult lessons unless taught by the Spirit. If we could reproduce the order of every event around that table, if we could mimic the most humble of acts and possess the “original” basin Christ used to wash the disciples feet it would be only a “form of godliness, denying the power thereof.” There is much more taking place in that room than meets the eye.

Some are tempted to search for some secret element hidden in the sacred experience of the historic events that took place there. Our goal is not to capture or reproduce the experience of the upper room, either in the holy feast or in the holy fire. Christ is greater than the experience. Even the truths of the upper room must not be interpreted by our or another’s experience for such a foundation is too flimsy. Even if we were to witness with our own eyes, Christ stooping to wash his disciple’s feet, or were we later to watch as cloven tongues of fire fell on the early church, we would not be wise to interpret spiritual things with carnal organs. We have a more sure word of prophecy. We have the Bible. By it we are able to eavesdrop on an intimate conversation between God the Father and God the Son. It is in this sacred dialog that we find the tools of discernment and the key with which we may unlock the door to the upper room.

The ministry of the upper room makes up the final lessons of the “Teacher come from God.” They afford us a wealth of spiritual knowledge in that they summarize the plans and purposes of God for the church. The ministry of the upper room begins with disciples setting out in obedience to Christ’s request to find an appropriate place and ends with the after dinner conversation before the Lord entered Gethsemane. To fully appreciate the depth and dimension of what was said during those last personal moments, the Master shared with his little group of followers in John thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen we should turn to chapter seventeen. It is there that Jesus conversed with the Father about the truths imparted in the upper room and thus affords an invaluable commentary. It is in this prayer that we find the keys to unlock the treasures and truths of the upper chamber.

In the upper room a new form of government was instituted. In chapter thirteen we learn something of the position and protocol of Christ’s kingdom. Chapter fourteen speaks of a new kind of other-worldly peace. In chapter fifteen Christ talks of a power available to every citizen of this kingdom and the place and posture disciples must assume to experience it.

“I have give unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me; for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father,

keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

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. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled. And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe through their word.” (Jn. 17:8-20)

There is power in the word of God. *“In the beginning was the word...”* Christ was the Word incarnate. He came to fulfill the word of God. As Christ gave us the word of the Father and lived in complete obedience to it, so we are to give the word to the world and by faith, live in obedience to it as well. There are many wonderful lessons taught in the upper room. After we have taken note of each precious word that fell from the Master’s lips, we should underline a sentence most precious. *“If ye know these thing, happy are ye if ye do them.”* (Jn. 13:17).