

“Lord, Is It I?”

“When the evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. (v. 21) Now as they were eating, He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’ (v.22) And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’ (Matt. 26:20-22). Cf. Mark 14:18-19; John 13:21-22.

On the occasion depicted in these verses Jesus and His disciples were eating “*the Passover*,” Matt. 26:17, which had been instituted around 1,500 years prior to this incident and just before the departure of Moses and the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, Ex. 12:14-20. Jesus came “*to fulfill*” the law and the prophets, and through His death upon that cruel cross, the Mosaic law was blotted out, and taken “*out of the way*,” having been “*nailed..to the cross*,” Col. 2:14. Having thus made the one sacrifice which would be sufficient to atone for our sins, I John 2:2, Jesus thereby became “*the Mediator of the new covenant*,” Heb. 9:15, which is now in effect and will be until Jesus returns to Judge the world by His word, John 12:48, at which time He will sentence the wicked to “*everlasting punishment*,” Matt. 25:46, and “*deliver the kingdom to God the Father*,” I Cor.15:24, and the “*faithful*” citizens therein will receive that coveted “*crown of life*,” Rev. 2:10, and dwell eternally in that celestial city wherein God “*will dwell with them*,” and “*they shall be His people*,” Rev. 21:3.

In view of the facts just stated, the Passover Jesus observed with His disciples as cited in our beginning text (Matt. 26:20-22) has appropriately been called “*the last Supper*.” It was the last Passover Jesus observed before His death, and it was the last time the Old Testament Passover could be observed before the conclusion of the Mosaic Law of which it was a part. It was also more than fitting that Jesus would use this occasion as the time for instituting another memorial feast, namely the Lord’s Supper, which, in keeping with approved apostolic example, is observed by members of His church today “*on the first day of the week*,” Acts 20:7, at which time in the observance thereof they “*proclaim the Lord’s death till He come*,” I Cor. 11:26.

Returning to our opening text, Matt. 26:21-22, the scene before us is very somber. Jesus had almost completed his earthly ministry. He was virtually in the very shadows of the cross. He had been in close contact with His apostles for over three years. He had set before them a perfect example, I Peter 2:21-22; He had delivered unto them the words His heavenly Father had given Him, and they had “*received*” them, John 17:8. They had seen Jesus walk on water, heal the sick, raise the dead, and heard Him (“*the master teacher*,” John 7:46) speak like none other had ever spoken. They knew of a certainty that He was “*the Son of the living God*,” Matt. 16:16; John 20:30-31), and now at this, “*the last supper*,” Jesus gave them the sad news, “*one of you will betray Me*,” Matt. 26:21! In view of these facts, it is easy to see why the disciples “*were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, ‘Lord is it I?’*” (Matt. 26:21!

However, Judas had already made an agreement with “*the chief priests*” to “*deliver*” Jesus to them, and that for the paltry sum of “*thirty pieces of silver*,” Matt. 26:15-16! And it was but a matter of time until Judas would lead “*a great multitude with swords and clubs*,” approach Jesus, and kiss Him, having instructed them, saying, “*Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him*,” Matt. 26:47. Of course, Judas knew of the agreement already made, but he, upon hearing Jesus say “*One of you will betray me*,” Matt. 26:21, also chimed in with the rest, saying “*Rabbi, is it I?*” Interestingly, however, the other disciples said “*Lord, is it I*,” where Judas said “*Rabbi*,

is it I. “Rabbi” basically means “teacher,” whereas “Lord” refers to one who has power and authority. Of course, Jesus is both “*teacher and Lord*,” John 13:13, but it seems that the word (“*Rabbi*”) used by Judas did not reflect the reverence and respect evidenced by the other disciples when they used the term “*Lord*.” However, the indications are that the other disciples did not suspect Judas (John 13:29), and each of the others was very sincere when he asked, “*Lord, is it I?*” They were not pointing fingers of suspicion at each other; to the contrary each was undergoing a sober examination of himself!

The question, “*Lord, is it I,*” when asked sincerely, should often be asked by all who claim to follow Jesus. It is most imperative that we all “*examine*” or “*test*” ourselves, 2 Cor. 13:5. Inasmuch as the Bible is likened to a “*mirror*,” Jas. 1:23-25, it is imperative that we examine ourselves, our actions, thoughts, and conduct in the light of true Bible teaching. That being the case, in the paragraphs which follow we shall ponder the question:

“**Lord, is it I?**”

“*Lord, is it I*” who is at fault when the local church seems “cold and unfriendly?” Do I expect others to warmly embrace visitors, show concern for the sick, and reach out to those who are discouraged and struggling, while I am focused primarily on self, **my** family, **my** problems, and **my** needs?

“*Lord, is I*” who is at fault when the local church is not growing? Do I blame “the preacher,” or “the elders,” or others for not doing their work while I neglect to invite others to the assemblies, neglect to share the gospel with others, or do what I can to further the work of the Lord?

“*Lord, is it I*” who is at fault when others are discouraged? Have I been a hindrance to the local work by “*forsaking*” the assemblies (Heb. 10:25), by constantly arriving late for worship, and expecting others to do their part, while neglecting to honor my own obligations?

“*Lord, is it I*” who is at fault when others point to “hypocrites in the church” and justify that as an excuse not to obey the gospel, or be restored to active duty as a Christian? Do I judge others by a stricter standard than that by which I judge myself? Cf. Matt. 7:1-5. Do I profess to be a Christian while I dress immodestly, engage in questionable conduct, and use language ill-befitting a Christian?

“*Lord, is it I*” who is at fault when there is strife in the family? Do I throw temper tantrums when I don’t get my way? Do I expect my mate to make greater sacrifices in behalf of the family than I am willing to make? Do I tell my children, “don’t do what I do, but do what **I** say?”

“*Lord, is it I*” who has fallen away from the Lord after having learned and obeyed the gospel of Christ? Have I been critical of others for their shortcomings, or their negligence, while trying to hide my own shortcomings, and seeking to justify my own negligence because of what “others” may have said or done?

“*Lord, is it I*” who is at fault when the sermon seems “boring” or the Bible class “dull and uninteresting?” Have I become so caught up in “*the cares, riches and pleasures of life*,” Luke 18:14, that I have lost my spiritual appetite for both the “*milk*” and “*solid food*,” Heb. 5:12-14, of the word of God?

“*Lord, is it I*” who is at fault when apostasy is threatening the local church? Have I

become so desirous of being “liked” by others (both within and without the church), that I am squeamish when a preacher, while speaking “*the truth in love*,” Eph. 4:15, identifies false doctrine and false teachers by name (cf. I Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18) in a concerted effort to keep the church pure?

Conclusion:

There are many “*Lord, is it I?*” questions that we could all ask. The message is this: before I point the finger of suspicion at others, or blame them when things are not going well, I should first look into the “*mirror*” of God’s word, Jas. 1:23-25, “*examine*” myself, 2 Cor. 13:5, and sincerely ask “*Lord, is it I.*” There are times when we severely criticize others while our biggest enemy (other than Satan himself, I Peter 5:8!) is the person we see when we look into a mirror! Yes, “***Lord, is it I?***” —Bobby Witherington
