

"Lord, Is It I?"

by Wayne Goff

Recently this passage in Matthew 26 has begun to trouble me. It has often been the focus of my mind over recent years. I'm sure I didn't understand it because I always wondered about it. The disciples who would become the Lord's apostles spent three and one-half years living with Jesus, observing His teaching and miracles, learning many lessons from Him. But other things were more difficult for them to grasp, sometimes because of their own preconceptions.

What troubles me is that at the end of all this deep association with Jesus, as the group was eating the final Passover before His betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus said to them "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray me" (v. 21). Matthew goes on to tell us that the entire group was exceedingly sorrowful (v. 22). This much I understand well, for who would want to be the traitor who turned against Jesus Christ?!

But then the text goes on to say that "each of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?'" Here are twelve disciples, close and beloved friends of the Lord, and when Jesus tells them that one will betray Him, each one wonders if it might be him! Amazing! Did they not know that their hearts would not betray their Lord? Did they not love Jesus enough to be faithful to Him? Over the years I have pondered this situation, often wondering how I would have reacted in that predicament.

Naturally, Judas knew that he was the betrayer, having already plotted with the chief priests (vv. 15-16) but he played it straight until Jesus exposed him. But the others were mortified, and understandably so. And this brings me to the point of this article: each disciple was humble enough to think that it might just be him.

Spiritual trouble begins when we become so arrogant that we think it couldn't possibly be us! The apostle Paul warned "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Just as soon as we think we are above any sin, we are setting ourselves up for a fall. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). So let each one of us always be so humble as to think that he/she might be the problem. Again the Lord taught us through Paul, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor. 13:5). Satan is extremely deceptive and has many wiles. Therefore, examine yourselves because you might have missed something. Examine yourselves because you might be caught off guard!

Did not righteous David pray to the Lord for help? "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). Are we better than David? Of course not. So always be willing to be tried by the Lord, and correct that which is found lacking. The Lord's twelve disciples had that humble, honest spirit and we must have it, too.

Looking In The Wrong Direction

A second lesson we may learn from this incident is that none of the twelve said, "Lord, is it him?" But we often rather delight in finding fault in others. Jesus warned against this when He said in Matthew 7:3, "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" Who can miss that point? It reminds me of my granddaughter, Emma, when she first learned to talk. She would see her sister, Anna, doing something she shouldn't be doing, and she would run to her mother and say, "Look at her!" We always laughed at that because she was so young. But Jesus reminds us to always consider ourselves too, Gal. 6:1.

254403