

# Did Judas Partake of Holy Communion?

By His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy

*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.*

Concerning this important topic, we shall examine the events that occurred in the holy gospels to demonstrate that Christ the Lord did not permit Judas, the disloyal disciple, to partake of His sacred body and blood. The Lord did not permit Judas, since He had foreknowledge of what Judas had resolved in his heart to do, what he had insisted upon performing, and of his betrayal.

## **First – The Gospel According to Saint Matthew:**

Our teacher Saint Matthew the Evangelist states, *"So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?' He answered and said, 'He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 'The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.' Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, 'Rabbi, is it I?' He said to him, "You have said it."* (Mat 26: 19-25).

It is apparent in these verses of the gospel, that Christ the Lord declared His betrayal by of one of His disciples (namely Judas) as they were eating the Passover meal of the Old Testament. This is evident in the words of Jesus when He said, *"He who dipped his hand with me in the dish..."* It is also written in the gospel, *"...as they were eating..."* meaning, as they were eating the Passover which they had prepared.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not wish to expose Judas before his peers, the disciples, so He told Judas secretly that he was the one who would betray Him. Jesus also informed both of His disciples John and Peter of the betrayal in a concealed manner when John the disciple questioned Him. We shall later discuss this point in our exegesis on the gospel according to Saint John.

Saint Matthew, after the previous passage, continued his narration saying, *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. 'For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 'But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that*

*day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Mt 26: 26-30).*

It is clear from this passage in the gospel that the Lord's Supper took place after Christ spoke of the betrayal of Judas, and after He spoke about Judas himself. Christ the Lord did not mention this subject after offering His body and blood to the disciples; but rather, they praised and went out to the Mount of Olives immediately afterwards.

These praises were part of the worship; it occurred directly after the sacred interval which the Lord spent with His disciples around the table of the Lord's Supper. Meanwhile, the conversation regarding the love between the disciples and on the subject of the Holy Spirit, took place (see Jn 14-16).

On the way to the Mount of Olives, until they reached Gethsemane, Jesus Christ spoke of His disciples' being made to stumble because of Him and of Peter's denial (Mt 26:31-36).

## **Second – The Gospel According to Saint Mark**

Our teacher Saint Mark the Evangelist narrated how Judas sought to betray Christ the Lord. He wrote, "*Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.*" (Mk 14:10-11). This narration closely coincides with that of Saint Matthew the Evangelist on the same subject.

The events of the Passover according to Saint Mark, are identical to those in the gospel of Saint Matthew in all details. These include, the prediction of the Lord's betrayal by one of His disciples during the Passover of the Old Testament, the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, going out to the Mount of Olives, the Lord speaking about the disciples being made to stumble because of Him, and Peter's denial. Thus, the same incidents that are found in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, are re-emphasized.

## **Third – The Gospel According to Saint John:**

We shall discuss the gospel according to Saint John prior to our exegesis on the gospel according to Saint Luke, as Saint Luke's Gospel requires special attention.

Saint John wrote his gospel approximately thirty years after the three Synoptic Gospels were written. The Lord's Supper and the rite of the Divine Liturgy had already spread among the churches; and what Christ had said on the Lord's supper table on the eve of His suffering, was also well known.

Therefore, Saint John mentions the words of Jesus Christ regarding communion at the beginning of his gospel. They can be found in Chapter Six during the Lord's debate with the Jews, and after the miracle of the feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fish.

Christ the Lord told the Jews, "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*" (Jn 6: 51).

Here, the Lord identified the link between the body that He would give on the cross, with the body that He offers in the Holy Sacrament – it is the same body. When the Jews were astonished at His words, He said, "*Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*" (Jn 6: 54-56).

As we have observed in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, during the Last Supper the Lord told His disciples what He had formerly mentioned to the Jews concerning the offering of His broken body and His shed blood. He said, "*Take, eat; this is My body'...'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins...*" (Mt 26: 26-28). This is the connection between the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the act of the redemption upon the cross; it is the same body given and the same blood shed. It is, "...*food indeed and drink indeed for the remission of sin, the firmness in Christ and eternal life. Given for us unto salvation and remission of sins and everlasting life for whom so ever partake of it.*"<sup>1</sup>

Saint John in his gospel, outlines what was not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels regarding the body and blood of Christ. This includes details of the last supper, the service of the washing of feet, and some passages of the Lord's conversation with Judas Iscariot. The Lord's words, "...*Take, eat...Drink from it...*" which are mentioned in the other gospels and are used in the Divine Liturgy, are not mentioned in Saint John's gospel. In his gospel, Saint John clarified without any doubt that Judas went out of the upper room during the Jewish Passover and before the Lord's Supper. However, Judas was present when Christ washed His disciples' feet.

This is apparent because the Lord told Peter and the disciples, "*He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.' For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean.'*" (Jn13: 10-11).

After Saint John's recount of the washing of the disciples' feet during the Jewish Passover, we read the following, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me. Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about*

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<sup>1</sup>Excerpt from the Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great

whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, **'It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.'** And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, **'What you do, do quickly.'** But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, Buy those things we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night. So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, **'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.'** (Jn 13: 21-32).

***“He to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it”:***

It is clear from the recount by Saint John (which corresponds to the narratives in the gospels according to Saints Matthew and Mark) that Christ the Lord spoke about the betrayal of Judas as they were eating the Jewish Passover. The evidence for this is that He dipped a piece of bread and gave it to Judas. This is different from taking the body and blood which He gave to each disciple individually. He did not dip the body in the blood. However, He said, *"Take, eat; this is My body...Drink from it for this is My blood"*. He gave them the blood in the cup saying ***“Drink from it, all of you...”*** (Mt 26:27). Christ never dipped the body in the blood.

Saint John writes that Judas, after taking the Jewish Passover piece of bread, dipped it in the soup and then ***“...went out immediately...”*** (Jn 13:30). He did not wait until the institution of the Lord's Supper. When Judas went out, Jesus said, ***“Now the Son of Man is glorified”*** (Jn 13:31). In other words, at this moment, Christ the Lord accepted death by His own will, since He acknowledged that Judas would go to those who were plotting to kill Him.

***“What You do, Do Quickly”:***

The Lord, pitied Judas, and tried to prevent him from carrying out the betrayal. He also awaited his repentance. Christ warned Judas several times, and even went to the extent of declaring His knowledge of His betrayal by Judas to him. However, when Judas took the piece of bread and did not deviate from his evil intentions, Satan entered him and he refused the Lord's advice and warning. Subsequently, the Lord told him, ***“What you do, do quickly.”*** (Jn 13:27). In other words, Christ implied, ***‘If you are insisting on betrayal, do not remain on the table from which only the pure who are washed by repentance will partake.*** If you intend to repent, this should be carried out quickly and before

the institution of the Lord's Supper which is now ready to commence.' Instead, Judas went out quickly guided by the the devil who had possessed his heart.

### ***The Relationship between Judas and Satan:***

This was not the first time that the devil had worked inside the heart of Judas. Saint John the Evangelist at the beginning of his account of the Last Supper and of the washing of the disciples' feet said, "*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.*" (Jn 13:1-4).

In this passage, it is apparent that Satan worked with great power in the heart of Judas; even to such a point that he was not affected when the Lord washed his feet in inexpressible humility.

Moreover, Saint Luke mentions in his gospel that Satan entered Judas Iscariot prior to this. He stated, "***Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.***" (Lk 22:3-6).

Therefore, Satan commenced his work in the heart of Judas in different stages. Firstly, we read, "***...the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him...***" Secondly, it is written, "***Then Satan entered Judas, so he went his way and conferred with the chief priests...***" And then we read, "***Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him...***" Each time the degree of Satan's influence on Judas became stronger. It started with a thought, then with a plan of betrayal, followed by the start of carrying out the conspiracy, then executing the plan, and finally reaching full betrayal. Satan led Judas to the stage of complete loss in the hope of God's mercy, and so he killed himself and will perish eternally with no opportunity for salvation. This is why the gospel of Matthew states, "*It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*" (Mt 26: 24).

### **Fourth – The Gospel According to Saint Luke:**

In Saint Luke's gospel, several incidents are recounted according to subject matter rather than being presented in the sequential order in which they occurred. This is clear in the narrative of the baptism of Christ. Saint Luke mentions the story of John the Baptist, his sermons, his preaching for

repentance by baptism, and his baptizing of the multitude in the Jordan River. He then mentions that King Herod arrested John the Baptist and shut him up in prison, because John had rebuked by him for his marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Saint Luke wrote, "*But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.*" (Lk 3:19-20).

It is well known, as mentioned in the gospels, that Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan before he was shut up in prison, and before John's martyrdom which followed his imprisonment. However, Saint Luke after mentioning the imprisonment of John, continued saying, "*When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him.*" (Lk 3:21-22).

It is evident that Saint Luke wanted it to be understood that Jesus was baptized in the presence of the multitude, who were baptized by John before John's imprisonment. However, he mentions this incident when he started speaking about the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ministry of Christ followed His baptism and His going out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Before this, Saint Luke retold the story of John the Baptist, including what Herod had done to him. So, he adhered to the subject matter rather than the sequential order of the events. In other words, Saint Luke narrates a whole subject before shifting to another. According to sequential order, the incidents of two subjects combine. This is not unusual, and does not contradict the accounts of biblical events presented by the other evangelists.

### ***The Lord's Supper:***

The same notion applies to Saint Luke's narrative of the Last Supper. He mentioned the betrayal of Judas after he had written of the events relating to both the Jewish Passover and the Lord's Supper. As a consequence, some believe that Judas was present during the institution of the Eucharist; but the gospel of Saint Luke does not mention that Judas participated in the Lord's Supper, or that he was present.

Saint Luke started his account of the Supper and the Passover by stating what the Lord said when he sat with His twelve disciples, "***With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.***" (Lk 22: 15). He began by talking about the Passover of the Old Testament. Thus it was not convenient for Saint Luke to abandon the narration of the Passover event in order to discuss the betrayal of one of the twelve, only to return to the topic of the Passover of the new covenant once more. This may have led the reader to believe that Christ, by His words, was referring only to the Old Testament

Passover. So Saint Luke, after completing his recount of all aspects of the Lord's Supper, transferred the focus to Judas Iscariot's plan of betrayal.

As mentioned, Saint Luke, for various events in the gospel, narrates according to subject matter rather than order of occurrence. In all gospels, if we study the sequential order of events concerning the going out of Judas from the upper room where the Passover supper took place, **it is obvious that the Holy Bible denies that Judas Iscariot partook of the divine sacrament of the Eucharist because of his unworthiness. The Lord attempted to lead him to repentance, but he refused. Therefore, Christ the Lord prevented him from sharing in the communion of the Holy Sacrament. This wisdom of the Lord is marvelous, and we hope to learn from it.**

*Glory be to God forever, Amen.*