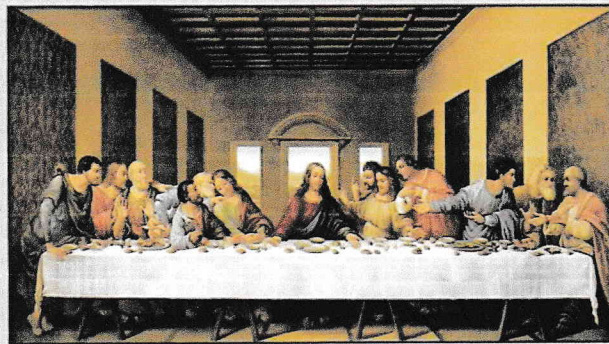


# Are You Focused?

It is a painting with a very interesting history behind it - Leonardo da Vinci's well-known painting of "The Last Supper," a painting that he completed more than five hundred years ago. It has been studied and re-studied, examined and re-examined by art aficionados almost from the time of its completion. There is no little speculation concerning what all the detailed "parts" of his work of art were or are intended to communicate to those who gaze upon it. The meaning of some are quite obvious; some others are not.

It is for certain that it is the twelve Apostles - six on either side of Jesus - who are seated at the table with Him in the center. They are divided into four groups of three, just as their names are grouped in each of the four the gospel records. Based on the artist's preliminary drawings which had the name of each Apostle super-inscribed over their sketch, each Apostle has been identified by name. The third Apostle to Jesus' right appears to have a knife in his hand. Could this be Peter holding the knife that would be used after the Passover meal to *"cut off"* the *"right ear"* of the *"high priest's servant"* in the Garden? Some believe it is.

On the night of the Passover Feast, when Jesus told them *"Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me,"*<sup>1</sup> each of them was *"exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?'"*<sup>2</sup> John 13:22 says, *"Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke."* The third Apostle to Jesus' left seems to be animating that very question. *"Lord, is it I?"* One Apostle is leaning backward resting on his elbow as if he is in a state of unbelief concerning what Jesus has said about one of them betraying Him. Is this Judas feigning ignorance? Some think so. One Apostle, near Jesus, has



his forefinger raised as if to emphasize, "No, Lord, this is not going to happen to you! It is unthinkable, not at all possible!" Another Apostle has both hands raised as if to agree with that

Apostle. "No, no, Lord! This can't be true!"

Some of the Apostles are conversing among themselves, perhaps asking questions among themselves rather than listening to anything else the Lord might be saying. At a time when their attention should have been hanging on

<sup>1</sup> John 13:21

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 26:22

every word the Lord spoke, they are focused only on themselves. And this is the point of this Lord's Supper Table Talk.

As we have assembled ourselves at this holy Table named after the Lord, are we listening to anything the Lord has said about what we should be doing? He said that we are to *"do this in remembrance of [Him]."*<sup>3</sup> But, are we? Are we focused on the incarnate Word that came as God's Lamb to cleanse us of sin or are we, like these Apostles, distracted by what someone may have said about us or did to us before coming to this sacred Table? Are we focused on ourselves or on our Lord at this Table?

Listen to the conversation that took place in *John 13* at the original Table of the Lord. In *verse 21* Jesus, being *"troubled in spirit"* said, *"Most assuredly I say to you, one of you will betray Me."* It was at this point that *"the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke."* It was then that Peter got John's attention and told him *"to ask who it was of whom He spoke."* "Peter, find out who it is that is going to betray Jesus." John did what the leader of the Apostles asked him to do. *"Lord, who is it?"* Jesus told him, and the others who it was: *"It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it."* And then, as far as what is written in *John 13*, Jesus then *"dipped the bread"* and *"gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."* *"Then Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'"* How more obvious could it have been who the betrayer was? Who, paying any attention, would not have known who it was? Answer: the eleven.

Incredibly it is written, *"But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him [to "do quickly" what he was about to do]. 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."* What!? Are you kidding me? What a disconnect! Was any of the eleven even listening? Judas certainly was, for *"having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night."* The one into whose heart the devil had planted the seed to betray Christ, have Him seized, and ultimately crucified was listening. He knew that Christ knew who *"it"* was.

Michelangelo's painting captures the moment at the last Passover meal that Jesus would attend. The Apostles are so stunned by Christ's pronouncement that one of them would betray Him that they became so focused upon themselves that they were deaf to what Christ said. For a moment they were the center of their own little universe and Christ is only on the periphery. The supper has turned into something that is all about them and very little to do with Christ.

Is this what happens at His Table among his disciples week after week? Have His disciples heard so many Lord's Supper Talks, heard so many Lord's Supper prayers, chewed on so many tiny pieces of a loaf, swallowed so many little cups of juice, and then moved on to the next thing that they are not focused on what is happening at the Table? Do they no longer focus on what they should focus on? Each person can only answer for him- or herself.

<sup>3</sup> *Luke 22:19*

We who are members of the church that Jesus built should be very careful. We severely critique religious groups who fail to follow the New Testament pattern for His church in this area of observing the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day, but, I wonder. When some of our denominational friends do get around to observing it, are they more focused on what they are doing than are we, God's true elect? Apostle Paul reminded the church of Christ in Corinth that *"whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself..."*<sup>4</sup> If we are not focused, this danger is ever present. There comes a time when we must shut out the world and this is one of those times. This will be easier to do when we focus and *"do this in remembrance of [Him]."*

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### Prayer

Our heavenly Father, we ask that You help us to focus on what we are about to do and truly do this in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ Who died for us. We kindly ask that You will receive our thanks for this loaf which is His body and that You will bless this cup which is His blood. These things we ask in His name. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> *I Corinthians 11:27*