QUESTION:

Do you think that Paul, without naming him, is referring to Judas in 1 Corinthians 11:23-24? (The verse in the NRSV: “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”)

RESPONSE:

Ah, it’s a great question. Paul never explicitly mentions Judas Iscariot or indicates that Jesus was betrayed by one of his own disciples. But couldn’t this verse contain a reference to Judas? It refers to the night on which Jesus was betrayed!

One reason the question matters is that Paul says almost *NOTHING* about the events of Jesus’ lifetime. That seems weird to people, but just read all of his letters. Paul never mentions Jesus healing anyone, casting out a demon, doing any other miracle, arguing with Pharisees or other leaders, teaching the multitudes, even speaking a parable, being baptized, being transfigured, going to Jerusalem, being arrested, put on trial, found guilty of blasphemy, appearing before Pontius Pilate on charges of calling himself the King of the Jews, being flogged, etc. etc. etc. It’s a very, very long list of what he doesn’t tell us about. And it’s a very interesting question: WHY?

There are several explanations that I’ve explored on the blog before, but for now I don’t want to go into the question of why, but the question of what. Specifically, one of the things Paul doesn’t tell us is that Jesus was betrayed by Judas. But does he *allude* to it in this passage? I always thought so – for years and years. And then I looked into it and read what other scholars have said about it. They convinced me. I don’t think this is a reference to Judas’s betrayal.

But why not? The passage comes out and *says* that Jesus had his last supper “on the night that he was betrayed.” So Paul is referring to Judas’s betrayal, right? Well, probably wrong. “Betrayed” is almost certainly the wrong translation of the Greek for the passage.

The term Paul uses here is ...

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