

The Inscrutable Question: Near & Remote Meanings of Old Testament Passages, Psm 41:9: David & Ahithophel vis-à-vis Jesus & Judas

Psalm 41:9 - Even My close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me.

1. This passage must be interpreted under the hermeneutical principle of “double reference.” It identifies certain Old Testament passages as having a “near *and* a remote” meaning. This concept is elaborated upon by:

Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics.* 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 247; 251; 253:

Much of the prophetic description of the future is in the language of past, historical events. Past persons and events are used as forms for future persons and events.

The interpreter must search the New Testament to see whether the passage is cited there as fulfilled. If the passage is cited in the New Testament then a careful study must be made of both the Old and New Testament passages.

Deeply buried in the events, persons, and words of the Old Testament are references to events, persons, and words of the New Testament. The presupposition that the Old is profoundly typical of the New is called “compenetration” (**Oxford: mutual penetration; to pervade; to permeate**). In an Old Testament Passage the near meaning and the remote meaning for the New Testament so *compenetrate* that the passage at the same time and in the same words refers to the near and the remote New Testament meaning.

2. David’s near reference is to the participation by his friend, Ahithophel, in the revolution fomented against David by his son, Absalom. We learn from 2 Samuel 15:12 that Ahithophel was David’s National Security Advisor.
3. However, in 2 Samuel 15:31 David is informed that his friend and chief advisor has joined the revolution begun by Absalom and has become his son’s chief advisor.
4. Both Absalom and Ahithophel conspire to kill David and seize the throne of Israel.
5. It is this treachery to which David refers in Psalm 41:9. However, this near application has a prophetic application in its remote meaning.
6. Confirmation of this “remote meaning” must be verified by a New Testament quotation that relates a New Testament person or event to an Old Testament person or event.
7. We can correlate David with Christ and Ahithophel with Judas Iscariot. Judas ate the last Passover with the Lord, betrayed him to the Sanhedrin, and, as the Lord’s friend, identified him to the Jewish and Roman officers.

Matthew 26:47 - And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, accompanied by a great multitude with swords and clubs from the chief priests and elders of the people.

v. 48 - Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him!”

v. 49 - And immediately he went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

v. 50 - And Jesus said to Him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

8. Judas was paid thirty pieces of silver for this dirty deed. Following the Lord’s arrest Judas was struck with remorse and guilt to such a great degree that he committed suicide.

Matthew 27:3 - Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that Jesus had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

v. 4 - saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"

v. 5 - And Judas threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed and he went away and hanged himself.

9. This was the similar fate of Judas's Old Testament counterpart, Ahithophel in:

2 Samuel 17:23 - Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed (by Absalom), he saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order and strangled himself.

10. It is interesting to observe the mental attitudes of the protagonists in these two accounts. Both David and Jesus had unconditional love for men who had at one time served them loyally. They did not bear a grudge but rather showed grace to their adversaries.