

The Gospel of John

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Chapter Thirteen

John 13:1 NASB

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

John references the nearness of the Passover to probably remind readers that John the Baptist had already introduced Jesus as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). The original Passover was a new beginning for God’s chosen people and this Passover would be a new beginning for believers. John relates the meaning of this time to the love that Jesus had for His own and that He loved them to the end of His life on earth. It seems that “to the fullest extent” is a better translation of “*eis telos*” than is “to the end” at the end of verse one for John means to state that the love of Jesus for His own people is not something that only lasts until the end of His life on earth but that His love has no end. John had earlier quoted Jesus regarding the origin of His people: “*My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.*” (John 10:29)

In my opinion, this supper was not the Passover meal for there is no mention of a lamb being served and because Jesus is the Lamb (1 Cor 5:7) as stated in my comments of chapter 12. Also Jesus was considered apostate by the priesthood and would not have been allowed to obtain a lamb for sacrifice. My understanding would have Jesus eating the “Lord’s supper” on Wednesday, He was arrested and the trials began also on Wednesday. His trials would have continued into Thursday followed by His crucifixion and death at 3:00 PM on Thursday, Nisan 14. Friday, Nisan 15 would be the Passover Sabbath so Jesus was hastily buried on Thursday. The next day would have been the regular Sabbath, Nisan 16, when the Feast of Unleavened Bread would occur (Lev 23). His resurrection would have then occurred before dawn on Sunday, Nisan 17, when the soldiers were sleeping (Matt 28:13). This calendar of events is contra to the traditional views of most churches but it allows for Jesus to have been in the grave for three days and three nights as He predicted (Matt 12:39-40; Luke 11:29-30).

John 13:2-5 NASB

*During supper, [the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,] (3) Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, (4) *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. (5) Then He *poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

John adds the material that I bracketed above so the sentence should read “*During supper, Jesus,...*” John will continue the statement about the devil’s control of Judas in verse 27. John

wants his readers to understand the tension between Jesus and Judas. Jesus was totally dedicated to carrying out the will of the Father who had given the situation totally into His hands. Jesus knew that He had come from God and was soon going back to be with Him. Jesus also understood that the conflict was between God and the devil. John reveals more about the conscience of Jesus than the synoptic gospels perhaps because Jesus confided more in him. Everyone had come into the room from the street and ordinarily the host would have a servant remove their sandals and wash their feet. However Jesus did this task Himself to demonstrate His servant status before the Father and that He came to bring salvation to those given Him by the Father. Jesus got up from the meal, took off His cloak, and girded Himself with a towel so that He could wash their feet. He did the entire task of pouring the water, washing their feet, and drying their feet with His towel. One reason He may have done this menial task is that the disciples were arguing among themselves who was the greatest (Luke 22:24) and Jesus was rebuking their pride.

John 13:6-8 NASB

*So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" (7) Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." (8) Peter *said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."*

When He arrived at the feet of Simon Peter, he reacted in an impetuous manner as he replied to Jesus emphatically with the question regarding the order of the process for Peter had great respect for Jesus even though he did not completely understand the situation. Peter stated again his desire for Jesus to never wash his feet. But Jesus was doing this as a picture of the spiritual cleansing from sin, which was essential for entrance into the KOG.

John 13:9-11 NASB

*Simon Peter *said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." (10) Jesus *said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." (11) For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."*

Peter then showed his total dedication to Jesus as he asked for an entire bathing of his body. Jesus replied in a spiritual sense as only that part of the body that is in contact with dirt needs cleansing if the person is completely clean. But Jesus knew that Judas was not clean and would betray Him so He told Peter that everyone present was clean in a spiritual sense.

John 13:12-14NASB

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? (13) "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. (14) "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Jesus completed His task, put His garments back on, and reclined at the table in a standard eating position. He then probed them to try to make them better understand His position on earth and their interaction with Him. He acknowledged His superior position to them as Teacher and Lord

but then told them that they should all have a servant attitude toward each other. Some people have taken this statement of Jesus regarding the washing of each other's feet as a statement of their having to have foot-washing ceremonies during a worship service. However this statement of Jesus goes deeper than such an action for He is saying that all Christians should have a servant attitude toward other believers so that they would be willing to help them in any need. Few people today wear sandals and walk through dirt to the worship place so it is demeaning to take this statement literally. The only other statement about foot-washing is in 1 Tim 5:10 and there it does not refer to a regular tradition but as an example of charity toward the poor. This servant attitude is similar to that stated by Jesus in Matt 25:34-46.

John 13:15-20 NASB

"For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. (16) "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17) "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (18) "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' (19) "From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. (20) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

Jesus clearly states to them that His actions were done as an example for them to follow in their dealings with other believers. This example may have been the source for the statement by Paul:

Phil 2:5-8 NASB "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Jesus then stated an order of importance that showed His constant awareness of His loyalty to the Father who sent Him. He then stated an important concept regarding doing what you know needs to be done. First we have to know what we are obliged to do and then we will be blessed when we act upon that knowledge. This concept is similar to that recorded by Matthew: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."* (Matt 7:21) Jesus knew one of them would not be blessed even when he did what he knew he had to do. Jesus was well aware of the characters and future actions of all that He chose to be His followers. His quotation could be referring to several events in OT time:

- Psa 41:9 NASB Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.
- Psa 55:12-14 NASB For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him. (13) But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend; (14) We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng.

- 2Sam 15:12 NASB And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom.
- 2Sam 16:15-23 NASB Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. (16) Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" (17) Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" (18) Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. (19) "Besides, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence." (20) Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What shall we do?" (21) Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened." (22) So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. (23) The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel regarded by both David and Absalom.
- 2Sam 17:23 NASB Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself; thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father.

Jesus is probably referring to the incident regarding Ahithophel for Judas also hanged himself. Jesus then told them the reason that He had been telling them some of His insights into events for He wanted them to remember them after His resurrection so that they could look back on all the events with a clarity they could not have at this point in history. Hindsight is often the best! He was also clearly stating the relationship between Him and the Father. The general principle was recorded by Matthew: *"The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'"* (Matt 25:40) In applying this principle we must remember that Jesus related it to *brothers of Mine*, or other believers.

John 13:21-25 NASB

*When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." (22) The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. (23) There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. (24) So Simon Peter *gestured to him, and *said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." (25) He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, *said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"*

This meal was before the official Passover (verse 1). The normal way of sitting at a table was sitting but reclining was reserved for special occasions. The people would have been reclined on their left side with their right hands free for the meal. Jesus was not troubled just by the remembrance that Judas would betray him. He had revealed that to the disciples at least a year earlier (John 6:70). The Greek word translated troubled is the same word used by Jesus as

recorded earlier by John at the grave of Lazarus (11:33) and at the request of the Greeks (12:27). The remembrance of the betrayal of Judas brought the total circumstances of what faced Jesus clearer and He was troubled although He never wavered from His desire to fulfill the Father's plan. His statement of the coming betrayal certainly startled the disciples even though they should have remembered His previous announcement. Perhaps it was the seeming eminence of the event that startled the disciples.

We can only speculate at the looks on the disciples' faces as they looked at each other wondering who the trader would be. This beloved disciple would have been sitting next to Jesus on His right side so leaning on His chest he could whisper to Him. We presume that the disciple sitting next to the Lord was John, the author of this gospel. Peter was not next to Jesus so he asked John to ask Jesus the identity of the trader. Peter may have had in mind interfering with the traitor so that such an event would not occur for such would fit the impetuous nature of Peter. John then asked Jesus to give him the name of the trader.

John 13:26-30 NASB

*Jesus then *answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He *took and *gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. (27) After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus *said to him, "What you do, do quickly." (28) Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. (29) For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. (30) So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.*

Jesus told John that He would reveal the trader by an action rather than just stating his name. If nobody else heard this remark of Jesus they might have taken the action to just reveal that He had a special relationship with Judas. John would have been the only one knowing the true meaning but to tell everyone else would disturb the peace of the supper so he kept the knowledge to himself at this point. But Judas knew exactly what this gesture meant and at that time he yielded himself totally to Satan. Jesus told Judas to not hesitate but to do what he was ordained to do quickly so that the final events would quickly begin to unfold. The supposition that some thought Jesus was telling Judas to buy what was needed for the feast further illustrates the likelihood that they were not now eating a Passover meal with lamb. Judas then did quickly depart from the group. John stating that it was night may have had some spiritual significance to this event in his writing for in the opening chapter he had stated the difference between light and darkness in a spiritual sense.

John 13:31-32 NASB

*Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus *said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; (32) if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.*

The upper room discourses seem to be in two main divisions (12:31-14:31 and 15:1-16:33). John uses the title of Jesus as the Son of Man twelve times and this is the last time. It specifies the title of Jesus as the incarnate Christ as the representative of humanity before God and the

representative of God in humanity. Because Jesus represented humanity perfectly before God, He expresses that fullness of deity that all believers work to achieve in their sanctification although such will not be attained until death.

Phil 2:4-11 NASB do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Trinity will be glorified by this redemptive act of Jesus. This glorification is immediate and forever.

John 13:33-35 NASB

"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' (34) 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (35) 'By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'"

Jesus expresses His love for His disciples in a family way with Him as the Elder. John had previously recorded the interaction with the Jews: *"The Jews then said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? (36) 'What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"* (John 7:35-36) We will see in a couple of verses that Jesus told His eleven that they could come later. The new commandment has led to the anniversary of the Last Supper as Maundy Thursday although our preferred chronology would call this Maundy Wednesday. The new commandment was not entirely new as it is summed in the twin commandments of Deut 6:5: Lev 19:18; and Mark 12:28-33. John repeats this commandment in 1 John 2:7, 8 where it is not called a new commandment but it is to mark the love that His disciples have for each other so that they are willing to die for each other. This mark of love is also repeated by John: *"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; (21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."* (John 17:20-21) History records many instances where the love of Christ's disciples for each other is greatly marveled.

John 13:36-38 NASB

*Simon Peter *said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." (37) Peter *said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." (38) Jesus*

**answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.*

Peter acts as expected and he was devoted to Jesus and wanted to follow Him but it was much easier to speak this way in this company rather than the situation he would later encounter in the palace of the high priest. Peter would devote himself completely to His Lord after the resurrection and Pentecost until he followed Him in death (John 21:15-19). Peter would then understand the deep meaning of the words of Jesus. That night Peter would deny his allegiance to Jesus during Cockcrow (the third of four Roman night-watches that is halfway between midnight and dawn, Mark 13:35).