

## 13:1-30

Since the masses have now rejected Jesus, we cannot help but wonder what the disciples thought. Were the twelve unified in their devotion to the Messiah? Were they, indeed, a band of brothers who would follow their captain even to the death (cf. 11:16)? Or were they divided? Were there cracks even within the Lord's own inner circle? And so, to answer these questions, John now turns away from Jesus' public life and to his final moments with the Twelve. But before we're given the so-called 'Farwell Address' (cf. 13:31-16:33), a message given with both present and future believers in mind, Jesus has a few more things left to do.

First, by washing the disciples' feet, Jesus demonstrates that a "servant is not greater than his lord" (vs. 16). Today, this story is so widely known that we're at risk of missing how extraordinary this act was. And that is honestly saying something because we've already been given one of the most remarkable foot washings ever with Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet (cf. 12:1-7). But even a woman using her hair to wash a man's feet cannot compete with what Jesus did here. The Lord was the disciples' *leader*, the *Son* of God, and God *himself*! That he would don the garb of the lowliest servant and begin washing a bunch of men's feet (even those of his own betrayer) was an act more unprecedented and more shocking than even what Mary did.

Secondly, just as Jesus purged his Father's House in John 2:13-22, he must purge his new fledgling community before he is taken away. In fact, the Lord himself is the very one who gives Judas leave to betray him (cf. vs. 27). Jesus always said that he alone would give his life; no one would take it from him (cf. 10:11, 17-18). And now we see that not even one of his disciples would've been able to betray the Lord if they did not have permission first. Ultimately, that he would orchestrate his own betrayal would later become evidence that Jesus was God (cf. vs. 19).

But, at its core, this section proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus *loved* his disciples. He will endure betrayal, arrest, humiliation, and death, all for the sake of his own. Though most of the disciples will eventually turn their backs on Jesus (even Peter), the Lord's love for them was to the very end and beyond, just as it is for all true believers today (vs. 1).

### Exegesis

**Vs. 1** – Curiously absent in the following pages is any mention of the Lord's Supper. This has led some theologians to propose that the Last Supper did not occur during the Passover but the

day before, i.e., Wednesday. This (they claim) means that, at the same time as the paschal lambs were slain in the Temple, so was Jesus crucified on Calvary.<sup>1</sup>

As appealing as this view may be, this understanding has significant problems. Namely, this not only directly contradicts Mark 14:12 but would also place Jesus' crucifixion on a Thursday, which obviously conflicts with John's own words in 19:31. Admittedly, those who hold to the Thursday crucifixion view have counterarguments to these objections. However, a large portion of their reasoning rests on calendrical theories that are based on limited evidence. It seems best to assume there is no discrepancy between John and the Synoptics. Hence, the foot-washing described here must've occurred during the same time as the Last Supper.<sup>2</sup> Even in this, we should not ignore that John has purposefully refrained from mentioning Communion. As such, we should not rely on the Synoptics to tease underlying meaning from John's words. This scene stands on its own and for its own purpose.

With that said, let us now turn to John's own words. Just as 12:37-50 acted as a mid-book epilogue, verse 1 of chapter 13 functions as a mid-book prologue, reintroducing us to the main narrative left off in 12:36.<sup>3</sup> Our faithful narrator says, "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Chronologically, we now jump from Sunday (cf. 12:2) to Thursday evening. Interestingly, the Greek term **κόσμος** (*kosmos*), here translated as "world," plays a prominent role throughout the following few chapters as it shows up a staggering *forty* times.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, we're meant to contrast Jesus' community—i.e., believers—with those outside that community—i.e., unbelievers. That, even though believers may be *in* the world, they are not *of* the world; they are, in fact, of *another* world entirely (cf. 17:6; 18:36).

And so, at the very onset of this scene, John would like us to know *three* things: first, he reminds us that Jesus' death was not a surprise; he "knew that his hour was come;" second, just as the Son of God came from God, he would, likewise, be returning to "the Father;" and, lastly, through it all, the Lord loved "his own...unto the end." In this last phrase, there is some ambiguity. It could have an adverbial bent which indicates that Jesus showed the fullest extent of his love; or, in other words, it was "love in its highest intensity."<sup>5</sup> Or the phrase could be

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<sup>1</sup> Keener (2012), 2:899; Wright (1950), p. 282-287.

<sup>2</sup> Kruse (2017), p. 324; Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 221; Köstenberger (2008), p. 358; Klink (2016), p. 576; Morris (1995), p. 543; Thompson (2015), p. 281; especially see Carson (1991), p. 455-458 for a thorough explanation of this issue and a defense of the traditional view.

<sup>3</sup> Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 232; Klink (2016), p. 575.

<sup>4</sup> Carson (1991), p. 461, "If God loves the world (3:16), it is in order to draw men and women out of it."

<sup>5</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 402, quoting Ridderbos (1997: 452 n. 4).

understood temporally, meaning the Lord did not cease loving his disciples until his last breath.<sup>6</sup> Both understandings are equally acceptable, and this is likely a classic example of a Johannine double meaning.<sup>7</sup> Regardless, the things going through Jesus' mind as he's washing the disciple's feet are his imminent demise/departure and his love for the disciples. True. He loved the world (cf. 3:16), but not to the exclusivity of his own. For the disciples, there was a love without limit, forged by the bonds of familiarity and intimacy the likes of which the world did not experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Kruse (2017), p. 325.

<sup>7</sup> Morris (1995), p. 545; Keener (2012), 2:899.

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 39

Text: John 13:1

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: