

Exegesis

Vs. 2-4 – John gives us another chronological marker (cf. vs. 1) by saying, "and supper being ended...." But while this translation is perfectly reasonable given the Greek structure, it is problematic. After all, verses 4 and 26-27 imply that the supper was still going on and had yet to end. Thankfully, there is another way of translating that exact Greek phrase which would make it "supper was being served" rather than "supper being ended."¹ This is what linguists call an 'ingressive aorist,' and it makes better sense when one considers the rest of the context, especially verses 4 and 26-27.² So, the picture we're supposed to imagine is that Jesus' actions occur sometime between when the Passover meal was set (or being set?) but unfinished.³

John reminds his audience that there was one among their group who had already left Jesus in spirit, though, by all outward appearances, he was still one of them. He tells us that "the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him...." The mastermind behind Jesus' death was not born of flesh and blood but came from the darkest depths of hell. Judas' betrayal was, first and foremost, of the Devil's composition. In a book that has totally avoided any mention of demonic activity,⁴ it should shock us that the Devil himself, though mentioned in conjunction with others (cf. 8:44), now enters the narrative as an active agent with his own intentions. And John does not hesitate to attribute everything that follows to the Devil himself. Just as the people have arrayed themselves against the Son of God, so does the demon horde.⁵

This is *not* to say that Judas was innocent as if he was some mindless simpleton unaware of his actions. The Devil has never once made anyone do anything. John has already established that he was a bad egg from the start (cf. 12:6), and Jesus even called Judas himself "a devil" (cf. 6:70). Instead, this makes Judas something like a co-conspirator alongside his true leader, Satan. Thus, the grandest conspiracy ever wrought in history resulted from a partnership where the Devil used a devil of a man.

¹ The Greek phrase in question is either **καὶ δεῖπνου γενομένου** "supper being ended" (AV) or **καὶ δεῖπνου γινόμενου** "during supper" (NU). Hence this is why most modern translations, following the NU, have a translation that indicates that the supper wasn't ended but was, at some stage, still in progress (i.e., ESV: "during supper;" CSB: "Now when it was time for supper;" NIV: "The evening meal was in progress;" etc.). Even the NKJV places a helpful footnote ("during supper") indicating that there are perfectly valid yet divergent translations of this phrase.

² Carson (1991), p. 469.

³ Klink (2016), p. 576.

⁴ Köstenberger (2008), p. 403.

⁵ Klink (2016), p. 576.

The prince of this world saw that Judas was the weakest link of the twelve. Doubtless, from his perspective, he must've felt fortunate to find such a willing henchman in one of Jesus' own disciples. He could not have asked for a better vessel to execute his gruesome vision. But may we never forget that the vice that Satan used to capture Judas' heart was nothing more complex than *greed* (cf. Matt. 26:15). It was because he was *already* corrupt and because he had *already* chosen a love for money over a love for anyone else (cf. Matt. 6:24) that made Judas fit for the Devil's service. Men of every age have done great evil for great gain. Judas is no exception to this rule. In fact, he is what *all men* become when avarice grows unchecked in a man's heart.

But, while devilish designs had taken root in the heart of Judas, John tells us that in the heart of Jesus, he knew "that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God...." As we know, this indicates that Jesus was in complete control of his situation. The phrase "all things" is especially significant in light of Judas' betrayal. John has gone to great pains to show that while betrayals always surprise the one being betrayed, this particular betrayal stands as the exception. The only reason an all-knowing being like Jesus would even allow betrayal is if it worked in his (or, in this case, *our*) favor.

Vs. 4-5 – One would've thought that since God had given Jesus "all things into his hands," he would've exercised that power to its fullest. Indeed, any other person who had pre-knowledge of their demise would've likely done everything possible to avoid it. But rather than avoiding it, the Lord uses this moment to illustrate a fundamental principle: *servitude*.⁶ Rather than recline at the table and enjoy the spread before him, John tells us Jesus rose "from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The detail here is *vividly* portrayed.⁷ It makes us wonder how closely John, and the other disciples, were watching Jesus. This moment would be forever embedded in their memory.

Now, though alien by today's standards, foot-washing was a daily and necessary occurrence during this time. Streets were not only unpaved but also overcrowded and in near-constant use by both people and animals.⁸ As such, roads would've been caked by debris, dust, and even

⁶ Luke 22:24-27 states that the disciples had been fighting amongst themselves at some point during the dinner about who would be regarded as the greatest. Jesus soundly rebukes this train of thought, illustrating that he is among them "as the one who serves." Jesus' washing their feet would go a long way to ensuring this point sunk in.

⁷ Morris (1995), p. 547.

⁸ Keener (2012), 2:903.

excrement.⁹ This alone would be reason enough to ensure one's extremities (not just one's feet but one's hands and face) were clean by dinner time. However, the need for a person's feet to be washed was even more critical because, during the first century, a person would often be reclined on one elbow during supper rather than seated in an upright position, as is common today.¹⁰ And yes, though a person's feet would be pointed away from the table, given that they would still be on the same level and near each other and the food, cleanliness was of supreme importance.

So, foot-washing was not unusual in and of itself. What made this particular foot-washing abnormal was *the person* doing it.¹¹ The Lord leaves his place of honor at the table, removes his jacket, and, like a servant, wraps a towel around himself and begins washing the *disciples'* feet.¹² In the ancient world, there is no single example where a superior was known to have washed the feet of an inferior.¹³ This is partly because foot-washing was synonymous with slavery.¹⁴ Thus, this would make what the Lord does here not only historically unique but, given Peter's response later (vs. 6, 8), it also means that Jesus' actions were so *humiliating* that there is "no fitting comparison."¹⁵ In fact, Kruse, in an attempt to explain how bizarre Jesus' actions were, states, "A wife might wash her husband's feet, children might wash their father's feet, and disciples might wash their master's feet, but in every case it would be an act of extreme devotion."¹⁶ Not even Jewish slaves were required to wash someone's feet; that unenviable task would be delegated to the lowest gentile servant, probably a child.¹⁷ Thus, the least likely person to wash the disciples' feet was Jesus, yet, there he was, doing just that.¹⁸ One cannot help but hear Paul's words from Phil 2:5-8:

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Köstenberger (2008), p. 404.

¹¹ Elowsky (2007), p. 87, quotes Theophilus of Alexandria, "What is more contrary to expectation than this, what more awe-inspiring? He who is clothed with light as with a garment is girded with a towel. He who held the waters in the clouds and sealed the abyss with his fearsome name is bound about by a belt. He who gathers the waters of the sea like a wineskin pours water in a bowl. He who covers his upper chambers with water, with water washed the feet of the disciples. He who measured heaven with his hand's span and holds the earth in his grasp, with his undefiled palms wiped off the feet of servants. He for whom "every knee bends, of those in heaven, and on earth and under the earth" bowed his neck to attendant servants. The angels saw and recoiled; heaven beheld and shuddered; creation observed and trembled."

¹² Klink (2016), p. 576, "...just as God became a man, so the King became the Servant."

¹³ Carson (1991), p. 462; Köstenberger (2008), p. 405; Keener (2012), 2:904, quoting from Thomas, "unrivaled in antiquity."

¹⁴ Klink (2016), p. 578.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kruse (2017), p. 325.

¹⁷ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 233; Köstenberger (2008), p. 405,

¹⁸ Elowsky (2007), p. 86, quotes Severian of Gabala as saying, "He who is "clothed in light as in a robe" was clad in a cloak. He who wraps the heavens in clouds wrapped round himself a towel. He who pours the water into the

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

And again, we must be mindful of Judas in this passage. Even the feet of the betrayer were washed this night. Which is astounding when we consider what they do after this. Soon, Judas' feet will carry him to the Sanhedrin, where they will bear the load of 30 pieces of silver (a load which eventually proves too heavy to bear, cf. Matt. 27:3-10). After that, those same feet will lead an armed guard to his friends and beloved teacher in Gethsemane. But, before they do all that, Jesus ensures those feet are clean for the journey.

What manner of love is this that the Betrayed washed the feet of his own betrayer? While Jesus' actions undoubtedly portrayed his humility and willingness to serve, they also demonstrated how highly he regarded the disciples, even Judas. He loved them so much that he was willing to wash their feet. And soon, he will show he is also ready to die for them.

rivers and pools tipped some water into a basin. And he before whom every knee bends in heaven and on earth and under the earth knelt to wash the feet of his disciples.”

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 40

Text: John 13:2-5

Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet has no modern-day comparison. How could it? Jesus is God. He decorates the sky with clouds. He tells the seas how far to come. He breaks up the night sky with uncountable stars. He shaped mountains. He cut valleys. He formed each and every living thing. And yet, the one who wraps himself in light also dressed himself as a servant; the one who holds the universe in the palm of his hand also held the feet of his disciples; the one who washes the earth with a sky of rain washed the feet of men with a basin of water.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: