

John, Part 36 – The Revelation of Jesus Christ –Washing People’s Feet

John 13 through John 17 gives the upper room discourse. The narrative in John 13 strongly indicates that this was the meal that Jesus had with the 12 in the upper room. The events that occurred during and after the meal happen during their Passover festival. This supper is the Passover meal that Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe.

Timeline of Jesus’ last week.

- Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany and was anointed by Mary, for His burial, (John 12:1-11; Matthew 26:6-12; Mark 14:3-9).
- **Sunday**, (Nisan 10), Jesus had a triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, (Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-22).
- **Monday**, (Nisan 11) Jesus cursed the fig tree on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple
- **Tuesday**, (Nisan 12) on the way to Jerusalem, the disciples saw the withered fig tree, (Matthew 21:21). Jesus’ authority was questioned by religious leaders in the Temple. Then He went to the Mount of Olives and taught His disciples about the end and the hope of His return, (Matthew 24:6). He told them in two days he would be crucified. Judas plotted with the religious leaders to betray Jesus.
- **Wednesday**, Nisan 13 was a day of rest in Bethany, (Mark 14:1; John 12:1)
- **Thursday**, (Nisan 14) Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples, then He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and was ultimately betrayed and arrested. (Matthew 27:27-56; Mark 15:16-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 13-14)
- **Friday**, (Nisan 15) Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod Antipas, and then Pilate again. He was tortured and beaten. He was led to the cross at 9:00 a.m., died at 3:00 p.m., and was buried later that day. Jesus died at the time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed. That night Jesus was placed in the tomb. (Matthew 27:27-56; Mark 15:16-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:17-30)
- **Saturday**, (Nisan 16) On Passover, Jesus’ body was in the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-66; Luke 23:56)
- **Sunday**, (Nisan 16) Jesus’ resurrection, (Matthew 21:1-13; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:1-31)

John 13:1-5 NKJV Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

This was a very intimate meeting with His disciples before the crucifixion.

The text reveals several things that Jesus knew.

- Jesus knew this was in the last hours of His time with His disciples.
- He knew that He was going back to the Father.
- Jesus was not going to stop loving them.
- Jesus knew that the devil had put it in Judas Iscariot’s heart to betray Him.

- He was confident in His position, authority and relation with the Father.
- He knew their hearts and thoughts.

At the end of their supper, Jesus arose and laid aside His outer garment and washed the disciples' feet.

On Sunday, Jesus had entered Jerusalem with multitudes of people crying out, *"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!"*

Jesus knew His time with His disciples was limited. He had very little time for final instructions and encouragements. It is interesting to watch what He does in these last moments of His earthly life. The pressure of the crucifixion must have been heavy on Him, but Jesus took time to express His love to them. Jesus knew that His time was near.

John 13:1 NKJV ¹Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Jesus wanted to demonstrate His love for His own, even though He knew what was in the heart of Judas Iscariot. John does not tell us what was happening in the background. All of the gospels tell us that Jesus was telling them that He knew that His betrayer was at the table with Him. After this, the disciples got in an argument over who was the greatest among them.

Luke 22:24-30 NKJV ²⁴ Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' ²⁶ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. ²⁸ "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. ²⁹ And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

It appears that the unity of the group was disintegrating. They were all disputing over who was the greatest. The devil had put betrayal into Judas Iscariot's heart. It appears that their union and fellowship was about to fraction and dissolve.

So, the Lord began to take action to correct their actions and attitudes.

While the disciples were still discussing who would be the greatest in the kingdom, Jesus got up from supper and laid aside His outer garments. Then He took a towel and prepared to wash their feet.

Foot washing was usually reserved for the servant. When a guest would come into the house, a servant would offer them water and would wash their feet.

The disciples were discussing who would be greatest in the kingdom. So, Jesus arose from supper, took a towel and poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. This appears to be one of the most unusual and unnatural acts of His life and ministry.

Why would Jesus do this?

First, He wanted to demonstrate His love.

John 13:1 NKJV ¹ Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that

His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, *having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

The theme of the 'Upper Room Discourse' is love. From John 1-12 love is mentioned 6 times. Now in John 13-17, love is found 31 times. Jesus genuinely loved His disciples. One of the greatest signs of love is demonstrated in what Jesus did here to Judas

Have you ever thought about this? Jesus knew what Judas was going to do and yet, He washed his feet. Jesus knew that Satan had deceived him and was about to control Judas' actions, yet, Jesus washed his feet.

We need to know that Jesus loves us. Here, we see the character and magnitude of the love of Christ. Knowing their thoughts and what they were about to do did not keep Jesus from showing them His love.

Second, Jesus washed their feet to model humility and love.

Since the transfiguration, the disciples had been in a power struggle among themselves. They were contending for position and power with Christ. They were looking at an earthly kingdom, position, and rewards.

Luke shows us the attitude of their discussions. They were in the Upper Room eating the Lord's last Passover meal. They are on the eve of the Lord's crucifixion and their conversation is full of jealousy, strife, and contention.

Why would Jesus wash their feet? Jesus was prompted by their actions and attitudes and His love for them.

The disciples were not in a good mood when Jesus stood up to wash their feet. According to Luke 22, the whole group was inflamed with jealousy and strife.

John says that Jesus removed His outer garments and took the position of a slave.

Philippians 2:7 NKJV But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

John 13:4 NET He got up from the meal, removed His outer clothes, took a towel and tied it around Himself.

His flowing outer garment and tunic (as well as the belt) had been laid aside. *Jesus was making a point.* He was clothing Himself with humility. He took a servant's towel and girded Himself. Envy, strife, and division has no place in Jesus' disciples. The world's competitive spirit and envy had filtered into the hearts of His disciples.

Romans 12:10-11 NET ¹⁰Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord.

Third, Jesus did this to represent His entire mission.

He knew that He was equal with God and that all things were His. He knew He had all authority and power and that all glory and honor was His. He could speak a word and the world would obey. At His call, all of the angels of heaven would come. Yet, He rose from His table in glory. He laid aside His robes of glory and girded Himself with our nature. He took the form of a servant and "came to minister." He poured out His life and His blood in death.

What Jesus Christ was doing was more significant than the disciples knew.

He was demonstrating His cleansing power. He was dealing with

inconsistencies in their lives. He was revealing how far down He had come to minister to them and us.

John 13:6-8 NKJV ⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, “Lord, are You washing my feet?” ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.” Peter said to Him, “You shall never wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

Jesus is talking about more than washing their feet.

Jesus was illustrating His entire mission and the cleansing His blood would give. ***Once He provided cleansing, He rose up, clothed Himself with glory, and resumed His seat in heaven.***

John 13:9 NIV84 ⁹“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

Peter wanted to be washed and made clean. He wanted to be totally given and accepted by Jesus. He wanted to be made completely clean in heart, mind, and soul.

In Scripture references to the foot or feet was an expression of subjection, humility, discipleship, respect, worship or a rejection.

Washing another’s feet was a sign of worship. The Gospels show two women who bowed down and worshiped Jesus and washed His feet. Washing another’s feet was a sign of humility and a willingness to serve. It was a sign of submission — your comfort and need is more important than my own. Foot washing was a sign of acceptance - you are part of my family.

When Jesus went to Simon the Pharisee’s home, he was not offered water to wash His own feet. A woman who was a sinner came in and stood behind Jesus and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, kissed His feet and anointed them with fragrant oil. (Luke 7:36-39)

After Jesus washed their feet, He asked them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”

Jesus did not directly answer His question. If you know the history provided in the Bible, you will find the answer. Jesus was showing them that He cared about them. He loved and accepted them as His family.

After Jesus washed the disciples feet, He gave a lesson that is good for all of us.

John 13:13-15 NET You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and do so correctly, for that is what I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you too ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example—you should do just as I have done for you.

Was Jesus wanting them to take turns washing each other’s feet? He was wanting more than that. Jesus wanted them to love and minister to each other. They needed to forgive one another and bear one another’s burdens.

Jesus was giving an example for US to do as He did. This is an important part of our relationship with Christ. We should love one another, be patient and kind to one another. We should be interested in each other’s comfort and need.

John 15:12 NKJV This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.