

The Upper Room Ministry: The Character of Christianity

John 13 - 17

The Upper Room Ministry. John 12 closes our Lord's public ministry. In John 13 - 17 we have the private discourse of our Lord with His disciples. This discourse took place after the Passover supper on the day before the cross. It was within the last 24-hours of the Lord's life. In John 14:31, Jesus said "Arise, let us go hence", indicating that ch.13-14 were given in the furnished upper room, and ch.15-17 were on the way to the garden of Gethsemane, which Jesus entered in John 18:1. The upper room ministry deals with the Lord's desires for His disciples in the time when He would be absent from earth, and at the Father's right hand. The discourse covers many subjects including: the return of Christ for His own, what should characterize the disciples in Jesus absence, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Doctrinally speaking, the upper room ministry gives us the proper Christian position before the Father, although not giving us Church truth.¹ It was of utmost importance that the disciples know that they would not be worse off without Jesus. In fact, in John 16:7 He says "It is expedient for you that I go away", on account of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus would send. This section is book-ended by the two aspects of Christ's intercessory work for us while He is on high. First, we have His *advocacy*, pictured in footwashing (ch.13), and then we have His *high-priesthood*, seen in the prayer at the end (ch.17). In this way "we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). All we need and more is provided by Christ! Even the Holy Spirit (Another Comforter) was sent by Christ for our blessing.

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Maintenance of Communion & Love in the Time of Jesus' Absence

John 13

John 13. In ch.12, Mary prepared Jesus for what was to come. In ch.13, the Lord prepares the disciples for what was to come. The two great subjects in this chapter are: maintaining

communion with Christ, and maintaining love between brethren. The very first issue Jesus addresses in the upper room is footwashing. He confirms His love for them, but explains that continual cleansing is needed to enjoy His love. Footwashing puts us in a state where we can hear what Jesus has to say to us. Then Judas leaves the table, and goes out into moral darkness. Christ does not unfold the love of the family and the Father's house until Judas goes out. He was not part of God's family. Once the betrayer is gone, the Lord speaks of the importance of love between disciples, giving them "*a new commandment*". He speaks of His death on the cross, and the glory it would bring to God.

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Footwashing (13:1-17)

Footwashing. The very first subject brought out in the upper room ministry (John 13 - 17) is footwashing, which represents the work of removing daily defilement for the maintenance of communion. It comes first before the rest of the upper room ministry, because we cannot enjoy Christ with defiled feet, so to speak. The subject is not entirely unique to John 13, but that is the most extensive treatment of it. It is important to see that footwashing is a symbolical action, not a physical ritual. Some groups of Christians down through the centuries have taken the Lord's command in John 13:14 literally; "*If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet*", and in so doing they miss the whole point of the passage. How do we know footwashing is symbolic? In v.7 Jesus said to Peter "*What I do thou dost not know now, but thou shalt know hereafter*". What did Peter not understand? He did not understand the symbolic meaning of what Jesus was doing. It was something that Peter (and the others) would later understand when the Holy Spirit gave them intelligence. Now surely Peter understood what literal footwashing meant, and therefore Jesus was indicating by His actions a spiritual reality that

goes far deeper than the middle-eastern tradition.

The Lord Washes the Disciples Feet (vv.1-5)

CHAPTER 13

1 Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end. **v.1 Setting: Return to the Father, Love to His Own.** This Passover is the third of three Passovers that the Lord went up to Jerusalem for in His public ministry (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). It was on this occasion that He would suffer and die as the true Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). The first thing we read of is the perfect omniscience of Jesus; He knew that His hour had come. His death, His resurrection, and His ascension were all known to Him. In keeping with the character of John's Gospel, this is stated as if it was already accomplished. Jesus knew that this was the end of His time with the disciples. Notice that the return to the Father was particularly before the Lord. To be sure, His rejection by man was before Him too, as we see in the next verse, but, in keeping with the character of John, His returning to the Father is viewed as His own action as a Divine Person. In the upper room ministry, the Lord tells the disciples over and over again that He was going away. They wanted Him here on earth, according to their Jewish hopes. But Christ was going to enter into a new order of things, as the Head of a new creation. In that new creation, the disciples would be associated with Him, above this world completely! His errand to the earth was almost finished, but His love would never cease; *"having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end"*, or 'through everything', or 'to the uttermost'. It is a sacrificial, unending, unstoppable love that provides for its own. While including the cross, it goes beyond to include *"everything"* that the disciples might need. It is a practical love, meeting the needs of His own each day. This is the setting given to us: Jesus was leaving the disciples to go to the Father, but His unchanging love would remain with them to meet every need!

2 And during supper [*'supper being come'*]², the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon, Iscariote, that he should deliver him up, **v.2 Setting: Opposition of Man and Devil.** But if the love of Christ is unchanging, so is the hatred of the Devil, and the opposition of man. The display of the two things rose in proportion: the love of God and the hatred of the Devil. As to the timing of the washing of feet, it was before supper, as was customary. See W. Kelly Translation.³ This might teach us that defiled feet can hinder communion (the table) with Christ. We must be washed first, in order for communion to be full. It was with the enmity of the Devil and the treachery of man in view that Jesus gave the

instructions that follow. The Devil “*put it into the heart of Judas, etc.*”. The hatred of the enemy was felt more keenly by the Lord through the betrayal of one of His closest earthly companions; one of whom He could say, “*mine own familiar friend*” (Psa. 41:9), “*a friend, a brother to me*” (Psa. 35:14).

3 *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God, v.3 Setting: Conscious Relationship with the Father.* The third and final part of the setting is that Jesus was full conscious of two things: (1) all that was rightfully His as Son and Heir was given into His hands as a man, and (2) that His manhood would not degrade or shadow in any way His Personal glory as the Son of God. Let’s break that down a little more. Jesus knew that “*the Father had given him all things into his hands*”. As the Eternal Son of God, He was the “appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). But now on earth, as a man, the Son was conscious the the Father had given Him all glory as a man! And at the same time, His becoming man did not alter or interrupt what had been true from a past eternity; namely, His eternal relationships in the Godhead, “*he came out from God and was going to God*”.⁴ What grace, that such a Person would, in all the dignity of His Person, lay aside His garments, and stoop to wash the disciples’ feet!

4 *rises from supper and lays aside his garments, and having taken a linen towel he girded himself: 5 then he pours water into the washhand basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel with which he was girded. vv.4-5 Taking the Servant’s Place.*

We first read of footwashing in Genesis 18, when Abraham offered to wash the feet of the three visitors to his tent in the plains of Mamre. We read in Exodus 30 of the laver of brass for the priests to wash not only their hands but also their feet. In those days when travel was done by foot, dust and grime from the roads would cling to the skin, and by the end of the day, the average person's feet would be hot and completely filthy. Upon retiring for the evening, it was customary to wash one's own feet. When receiving traveling guests, it was common courtesy for the host to provide water for the travellers' feet (Luke 7:44). However, the actual work of washing another's feet was quite unpleasant, and normally would be reserved for the servants. In the upper room Jesus did something completely contrary to what the disciples had known; He laid aside his garments, took water and a towel, and washed the disciples' feet. Incredible humility! He, the glorious Son of God, took the place of a lowly servant.

What Footwashing Represents. Literal footwashing was done to remove the filth of dusty

roads from the feet, and to give refreshment after a long day. Literal footwashing, as seen in John 13, represents a spiritual activity that Jesus does for believers even today, and which we can do for one another as well. The Lord explained to Peter the meaning of footwashing; *"Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me."* Footwashing in a spiritual sense is the way we are continually cleansed from the defilements of the pathway, and refreshed, in order to maintain communion with Christ. If we do not avail ourselves of this ongoing work of Christ, we cannot remain long in communion with Him. Footwashing is accomplished through *"the washing of water by the word"* (Eph. 5:26). Christ, through the Spirit of God, applies the Word of God to our heart and conscience, and when self-judgment takes place, the defilement is removed, and our spirit is refreshed.⁵ It is part of the ongoing work of Christ as our Advocate; *"if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1). The difference between John 13 and 1 John 2 is that footwashing has to do with defilement in a broad sense, rather than positive sin. For example, if I hear a dirty joke at work, I become defiled by it. But if I tell a dirty joke, it is outright sin, and I would need to confess it to the Lord, who is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9). But it is possible to be defiled without hardly knowing it. Feet represent our *walk* in this world. The Word of God washes over us, and transforms us by renewing our minds (Rom. 12:2), cleansing away the defilement. Footwashing is a moral cleansing (by water, not by blood), which is one of several types of cleansing in Christianity.⁶ [Read more...](#)

A Pattern for Footwashing. We see in the Lord's actions in John 13 certain symbols that give us a pattern for footwashing.

Symbol	The Lord	Our Pattern
<p>Resurrection <i>"He rises from supper"</i>.</p>	<p>Jesus rose up from the table, perhaps picturing His rising from the dead and returning to the Father in heaven, after the work of the cross (Passover) was complete. It is from this place, as a risen, glorified man, that He undertakes the work of footwashing. This is similar to John 6:15 where Jesus goes into a mountain, a type of His place on high while He intercedes for His disciples below.</p>	<p>Only those who are associated with the risen Man and share His resurrection life are able to be involved in footwashing. We must ourselves be in association with Christ before we can help others.</p>

Symbol	The Lord	Our Pattern
<p>Humility "He lays aside his garments".</p>	<p>Jesus laying aside His garments represents His laying aside His official rights as Messiah.⁷ As the Messiah, He ought to have the most honored place in the nation. He did not cease to be Messiah, but He did not insist on His rights. Instead He laid aside that character altogether, to take up a different position. While Christ is in glory and His disciples on earth, He leaves the royal garments set aside, instead occupied with an intercessory work.⁸</p>	<p>We are to have the same mind in us as was in Christ Jesus. If we are to be used to wash our brethren's feet, we must be willing to abandon all thoughts of self-importance, and get low.</p>
<p>Servanthood "Having taken a linen towel he girded himself".</p>	<p>Most hosts would provide water for their guests to wash, and the rich would have a servant undertake the lowly task. Jesus, great as He was, takes the place of a servant. He "took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7). A servant lives for the wishes and comfort of others. Christ became a servant in incarnation, but He has not ceased to be a servant. Even today in heaven, Christ is serving His own. He remains a servant forever (Exodus 21:1-6; Luke 12:37).</p>	<p>We must be willing to take the place of a servant. Footwashing is not something I do for myself, but for my brethren. It is not about getting something off your chest, but about ministering to others with tender love and care.</p>
<p>The Word of God "He pours water into the washhand basin".</p>	<p>Water in scripture, especially contained water, represents the Word of God; "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). We read of pools of water in 2 Kings 3, water pots in John 2, etc. These are types of the Word. There are different types of cleansing in scripture, but moral cleansing is by water, while judicial cleansing is by blood. The basin is a container. In a general sense, the water in a basin represents Christ Himself, the Eternal Word (water) become flesh (basin).</p>	<p>When we go about to wash one another's feet, we also must use water, and first pour it into a basin. Containing water in a basin might represent mediation. We cannot share something from the Word we have not enjoyed ourselves.</p>
<p>Cleansing "He began to wash the feet of the disciples".</p>	<p>The Word of God is applied to us by the Spirit of God, and moral cleansing takes place. It is really the Lord washing our feet. From His place in heaven, Christ continues this work of cleansing and restoring His saints, that they might enjoy communion with Him. There is a once-for-all water cleansing that occurs at new birth (v.10), but this is a continual, daily cleansing, which we will need as long as we are on earth.</p>	<p>We too can and should wash one another's feet (v.14). This is done by continually bringing the Word of God before our fellow-believers. Not a pointed rebuke, but by presenting Christ to the heart and conscience.</p>

Symbol	The Lord	Our Pattern
<p>Comforting <i>"To wipe them with the linen towel with which he was girded".</i></p>	<p>Jesus took the towel, which He had girded Himself with, and used it to dry the feet of the disciples. I believe that speaks of the comforting grace that Jesus has in His work of cleansing and restoring us. He doesn't leave our feet wet and uncomfortable. His words have a comforting and settling effect. <i>"And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth"</i> (Luke 4:22). It was the same towel he was girded with; and I believe it is the servant-character of Christ that comforts and warms our hearts.</p>	<p>Footwashing is not an assault on our brethren, like using a fire hose or pressure-washer. It is to be done gently, though firmly, but we need to use the towel. We should try to leave our brethren feeling secure and comforted.⁹</p>

Peter's Protest and the Lord's Response (vv.6-11)

6 He comes therefore to Simon Peter; and "he" says to him, Lord, dost thou wash "my" feet? **7** Jesus answered and said to him, What I do thou dost not know now, but thou shalt know hereafter. **vv.6-7 The Full Import of Footwashing then Unknown.** Peter was taken aback by the humility of the Lord. To him, it just seemed wrong that such a great Person would stoop so low as to wash a fisherman's feet. He thought footwashing was about the lowest a Person could go, and that the Lord had no business going low. Peter did not know how far lower the Lord would yet go, for His humility would take Him not only to the form of a servant, but much lower to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7-8). His feeble human comprehension did not rise up to the spiritual meaning of what the Lord was doing, nor could he until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down to teach them all things (John 14:26).

8 Peter says to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet [*In no wise shalt Thou wash my feet for ever*']. Jesus answered him, Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me. **v.8 The Meaning of Footwashing.** In v.6 Peter phrased his consternation as a question, but now in v.8 he essentially rebukes the Lord. Peter could only see the Lord's actions as humiliation, and his human thinking led him into error. He became bold when he should have been quiet and submitted to the Lord (John 2:5). The literal rendering of what Peter said was 'In no wise shalt Thou wash my feet for ever'. See W. Kelly translation. He rejected the idea of Jesus washing his feet, not only in this life, but for eternity. Peter thought he was honoring the Lord by refusing to let Him wash his feet, but really his actions were irreverent. The desire to honor the Lord was good, but the instructions for how to do it must come from God, not from the mind of man. In grace, the Lord responds to Peter, explaining why footwashing is necessary. *"Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me."* Daily cleansing

with the washing of the water of the Word is necessary to maintain communion with Christ. It doesn't say "no part in me" but "no part with me". It is not a matter of getting life, but rather the enjoyment of life. Footwashing doesn't make someone a child of God, but it does allow them to enjoy that relationship while on earth.

9 Simon Peter says to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. **10** Jesus says to him, He that is washed all over [**'bathed'**] needs not to wash save his feet, but is wholly clean; and ye are clean, but not all. **11** For he knew him that delivered him up: on account of this he said, Ye are not all clean. **vv.9-11 The Distinction between New Birth and Footwashing.** Peter barges off in another direction, still not rightly understanding what Jesus meant. Although footwashing is necessary to maintain communion, it is not necessary to maintain our soul's salvation. Jesus explained to Peter that the disciples (with the exception of one, Judas) were clean by reason of being bathed, or "*washed all over*". It was not necessary to repeat this once-for-all, total washing. It was only necessary to continually wash the feet, because they would pick up defilement from the pathway. But the whole person would not be defiled by the feet. It really speaks of the *moral cleansing of our soul* that occurs when a person is born again, "*born of water and of the Spirit*" (John 3:5). This once-for-all cleansing is never repeated (see John 13:10a; John 15:3; 1 Cor. 6:11). [Read more...](#) A believer may become defiled by sin, and may need the washing of the Word to restore them, but nothing can change the security they have in the Son! Yet there was one that was not clean in an absolute sense; that was Judas, who had delivered the Lord up to the enemy. Judas did not *lose* his Divine life; he never had it to begin with, because he was never born again.

"Clean every whit;" Thou saidst it, Lord!
Shall one suspicion lurk?
Thine, surely, is a faithful word,
And Thine a finished work.¹⁰

What Footwashing is Not. As we have already shown from v.7, to limit footwashing to a dead ordinance would be to miss the intended purpose. Those who do so make it into a law for themselves. There are many other mis-interpretations of footwashing. We do have in footwashing a powerful lesson in humility; however, it would be a mistake to limit the teaching of John 13:1-17 to humility. Footwashing requires humility, but it is much more than that. Humility on the part of one does not cleanse the defilement of another. Others twist Christ's teaching on footwashing to make it apply to baptism, as if baptism could save

the soul. In fact, Peter made both of these errors! He first saw it only as humiliation for the Lord ("*thou shalt never wash my feet*"), and then he swung to the other side and applied it to salvation ("*not my feet only, but also my hands and my head*"). Whether men restrict footwashing to a physical ritual, or confuse it with baptism, or limit it to a lesson in humility, all fall short of the true teaching of the passage.

Two Schools of Thought. In a sense, we can be thankful that Peter spoke up, because it became the means of further teaching from the Lord on the subject of cleansing. The two errors of Peter represent two schools of thought, equally wrong. First, the error that makes light of *sin*, as if cleansing was unnecessary. Second, the error that makes light of *the cross*, as if the believer can lose his security through defilement. Both are wrong, and both are corrected here by the Lord Jesus.

Instructions to Wash One Another's Feet (vv.12-17)

12 When therefore he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, having sat down again, he said to them, Do ye know what I have done to you? **13** Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am so. **14** If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; **15** for I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also. **16** Verily, verily, I say to you, The bondman is not greater than his lord, nor the sent greater than he who has sent him. **vv.12-16 Us to Follow Christ's Example.** The Lord had already told the disciples that it was not possible for them to understand the meaning of footwashing now, but that they would understand later (v.7). Now He says "*Do ye know what I have done to you?*" He now speaks of the importance of humility. They at least knew that He, whom they called "*the Teacher and the Lord*", had taken the place of their servant to wash their feet. The same humility ought to characterize those who are Christ's disciples, that they might wash one another's feet. Although they didn't understand exactly what to do, they had seen the humility, and He had given them a pattern to follow. The principle is given, "*a servant is not greater than his lord, etc.*". Since our Lord stooped so low, we should be willing to do the same. To refuse to humble ourselves is to think ourselves greater than the Lord!

17 If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them. **v.17 The secret to collective happiness.** Knowing the humility shown by the Lord, and that it is a pattern for His disciples, obedience is the path of happiness. To put others before ourselves is the only way to go on happily with our brethren. If there is strife between brethren, very often it is because pride is at work; although we "*know these things*", we have not done them.

The Prediction of Judas' Betrayal (13:18-30)

18 I speak not of you all. I know those whom I have chosen; but that the scripture might be fulfilled, *"He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me."* [Psa. 41:9] **v.18 Judas' Betrayal Foreknown.** There was one among them to whom the Lord's words were not addressed. Judas was incapable of washing others' feet, because he had not been bathed himself. The thought would likely occur to the disciples that perhaps the Lord had made some mistake in selecting the twelve, seeing that one of that privileged group was a betrayer. The Lord said, *"I know those whom I have chosen"*, showing that there was no mistake. Then why had He chosen one that would betray Him? The Lord chose Judas *"that the scripture might be fulfilled"*. It was necessary that the Messiah would have a betrayer. However, it didn't have to be Judas, as if he were predestinated for that role. Judas fit himself, by his own actions, for that role. The Lord quotes from Psa. 41, a psalm of David, in which David laments at the betrayal of his close friend and counsellor Ahithophel. Although the immediate events had to do with David, the Spirit of God was really writing prophetically of Christ! This is one of five psalms that speak prophetically of Judas; Psalm 35:14; Psa. 41:9; Psalm 55:12-14; Psalm 69:4; and Psalm 109:1-20. It troubled the Lord deeply (v.21) that one of His closest companions, who shared daily fellowship with Him (*"He that eats bread with me"*), would betray Him.

19 I tell you *it now before it happens, that when it happens, ye may believe that I am he.* **v.19 The Prediction to be a Comfort Later.** When the betrayal was manifested a few hours later, the disciples would be deeply discouraged. The Lord wanted them to think back on what He had said in the upper room, and realize that He knew it all beforehand. It would cause them to realize that Jesus was the "I AM", the all-knowing, self-existing, Jehovah. This would comfort their hearts at a critical time.

20 Verily, verily, I say to you, *He who receives whomsoever I shall send receives me; and he that receives me receives him who has sent me.* **v.20 The Apostles to Receive One Another.** A betrayer was in their midst. Could they go on in fellowship together, receiving one another, knowing that one of them was an enemy? The Lord assured them that they could and should receive one another as sent by the Lord, for that is what term 'apostle' means. To receive one whom Christ has sent is the same as receiving Christ, regardless of imperfection in the messenger. It is really the same principle by which, receiving the Son, we receive the Father who has sent the Son! But the principle applies to us today as well as

to the twelve apostles. Once a false teacher or prophet has been exposed, they are certainly to be rejected, not even to bid them God speed, lest we be a *“partaker of his evil deeds”* (2 John 1:11). We are always to separate from known evil.¹¹ But if there is no evidence of falsehood, we should receive all those who are the servants of Christ, just as we would welcome the Lord Himself.

21 Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, that one of you shall deliver me up. **v.21 Jesus Troubled by the Betrayal.** It was *“having said these things”* in the pervious verses that brought Judas to mind, and the thought troubled the Lord deeply. This is the third time on John that we read of Jesus being troubled. In John 11:33-34 He was troubled at the grave of Lazarus, considering the effects of sin in God’s creation. In John 12:27 He was troubled again in anticipation of the cross. Here in John 13:21 the Lord was troubled because of the treachery of Judas. How deeply it hurt the Lord that the betrayal would come from one of His own! It has been well said; *“the worst thing about betrayal is that it comes from your friend”*. In a general sense, the greatest enemies of Christ have arisen, not from without, but from within the Church (Acts 20:30).

22 The disciples therefore looked one on another, doubting of whom he spoke. **v.22 The Disciples’ Doubt.** In v.10 and v.18 the Lord had not specified how many betrayers there would be. He had only said that *“not all”* were clean. In v.21 He revealed that it was only one of them that would betray Him. This caused them to look on one another, *“doubting of whom he spoke”*, and as we read in another gospel, saying to Him, *“Lord, is it I?”* (Matt. 26:22). It was right for them to distrust themselves. Judas was now under pressure. To keep up appearances, he had to follow along. So we read in Matthew that Judas also said, *“Master, is it I?”* (Matt. 26:25). He did not give himself away. He would have to be exposed.

23 Now there was at table one of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus, whom Jesus loved. **24** Simon Peter makes a sign therefore to him to ask who it might be of whom he spoke. **25** But he, leaning on the breast of Jesus, says to him, Lord, who is it? **vv.23-25 John and Peter.** Peter wanted to know the identity of the betrayer, which was something that could only be learned from the Son, who sovereignly knows all things. But we can only learn this things in the bosom of Jesus. The troubling questions of life cannot to be answered by the universities and intellectuals of the world. It is in the place of affection that the knowledge of these things come. Why was John there and not Peter? He styled himself as *“the disciple whom Jesus loved”* (though he masks his name, we learn through other references that it is John; John 19:26; John 20:2; John 21:7, 20, 24). John was occupied with the Lord’s love for him, and he found the place of that love. Peter was occupied with his own love and devotion to

Christ (see v.37)! What a lesson. It is better to be occupied with Jesus' love for us than with our love for Him. Peter had to defer to John about the question of his heart. We never read that John gave the answer to Peter, although he may have. We can't depend on others to get answers for us. There is no substitute for personal nearness to Christ. John wasn't reclining on Jesus because he wanted information, but because he enjoyed the place of nearness. But being in that place, he is able to communicate. John simply says, "*Who is it, Lord?*". He had a direct line of communication open.

26 Jesus answers, *He it is to whom I, after I have dipped the morsel, give it. And having dipped the morsel, he gives it to Judas son of Simon, Iscariote.* **27** And, after the morsel, then entered Satan into him. Jesus therefore says to him, *What thou doest, do [more]¹² quickly.* **vv.26-27 Grace rejected.** As a contrast to John, who relished the love of Christ, the betrayer despised it. Jesus revealed to John that the betrayer was the same person who whom He would give the morsel. The "morsel" was a piece of bread, dipped in sauce, and given to a favored guest by the host of a banquet. Who did Jesus give this sign of grace and favor to? To "*Judas son of Simon, Iscariote*". It ought to have melted Judas' heart, and at the same time convicted him. But Judas' heart was hardened, and no display of love could soften it. Instead, he made himself available to the whims of the Devil. Satan had already put it into Judas' heart to betray Jesus, but now he fully entered into Judas, indwelling that wicked man until his dark purpose was accomplished. W. Kelly remarked, "Never does God thus abandon to Satan poor man, however wretched and sinful, till He rejects his love and holiness and truth, above all shown in the Lord Jesus." Satan seems to have entered Judas to overcome any hesitations at the last moment. He wouldn't trust this task to anyone but himself. The fated train had left the station, so to speak. How solemn that one with such a favored place, who came so near to the Son of God, could be indwelt by Satan! Our hearts are so deceitful. Yet I do not think it is possible for a true child of God to be possessed by a demon. The believer's body is the "temple" of the Holy Spirit. But Judas was not real. Jesus then turned to Judas, urging him to do what he had planned to do more quickly than he otherwise would have. Jesus was saying, as it were, "Don't let your desire to keep up pretenses hinder what you are doing; go now." If the Lord had shown John directly who the betrayer was by giving Judas the morsel (though possibly it was a sign to all the disciples: "*he that eats bread with me*", etc.), He now exposes Judas before them all, although it was vague enough for the distracted disciples to pick up on.¹³ Judas understood what the Lord meant.

28 But none of those at table knew why he said this to him; **29** for some supposed, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus was saying to him, *Buy the things of which we have need for the feast; or that he should give something to the poor.* **30** Having therefore received the

morsel, he went out immediately; and it was night. **vv.28-30 Jesus alone in His sorrow.** We find that the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant by “*What thou doest, do more quickly.*” He was alone in His sorrow, and this deepened it. Why didn’t they grasp the simple connection between the statement “*One of you shall deliver me up*” and the instruction to Judas? Their thoughts were on trivial things, which on other occasions would have been appropriate, but not now. Judas was not going to make a *purchase*, but to make a *sale*. Nor did he go to give to the poor, but to gain thirty pieces of silver for himself. How different the blessed Lord (2 Cor. 8:9). Judas “*went out immediately*”. He may have been irritated that Jesus had exposed him, although none of the others seemed to have realized. He may have wanted to get away before the others realized. He may have gone out at the command of his master Satan, to complete the betrayal in actual fact. But more than this, his hardened heart could not bear to remain in the presence of such holy love. It did not only become night in a physical sense when Judas went out, but also in a moral sense. His soul entered a moral darkness from which he never emerged; not when the sun rose on Passover morning, not when he returned the blood money, and not when he ended his miserable life.

The Cross and Its Implications (13:31-35)

31 When therefore he was gone out Jesus says, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. **v.31 God Glorified (Propitiation Accomplished).** In this verse we have another flash-forward, not to the millennium, but to the cross. The sorrow that Jesus experienced in the betrayal of Judas brought to His holy mind the work of the cross. He had told Judas to “*do more quickly*” the awful deed, and in a certain sense, His submission to the cross was complete.¹⁴ The two things were accomplished simultaneously: the Son of man was glorified at the cross, and He perfectly glorified God in Himself. In John 17:4 we have a different thought. There His entire path up to and including the cross had glorified the *Father*. In John 13, it is specifically the cross; *God* was glorified “in him”, that is in Christ as a sin bearer. This is the aspect of propitiation; i.e. the aspect of the cross in which God’s moral character was vindicated and glorified as to the question of sin. All that man ought to be, and should have been, was shown out in the suffering of the [Son of man](#) (as the title implies). As a man, the Son took responsibility for the whole human race, and rendered a perfect satisfaction to God. All that God is, as light and love, was shown there as well. Man was created for God’s glory, to do God’s will. Instead man did his own will, and brought dishonor to God. Christ as the Son of man submitted *perfectly* to the will of His God; submitted to the cross. And every attribute of God was brought into full display; for that is

what glory is.¹⁵ Never was God's holiness clearer seen than at the cross, where He made His Son to be sin, who knew no sin. Never was God's love manifested more than at the cross, where He sent His only begotten Son as a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9-10). God has been more than satisfied - He has been glorified - in the Son, in the world of the cross. It goes beyond the work of *substitution*, which it certainly includes, to take in the work of *propitiation*.¹⁶ When propitiation is in view, it is always the whole Person of Christ, offered up to God. [Read more...](#)

32 If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately. **v.32 The Son Glorified.** Since God has been perfectly glorified "*in Him*" (in the Son's whole Person, offered up to God), He has glorified Christ "*in Himself*" (in all that God is). God has given Christ as a man the highest place in heaven! God has seated Christ upon His own throne! He did this immediately, not willing to wait until the kingdom is brought in. God was anxious, if we can so speak, to glorify His Son, who had glorified Him. Thus, Stephen, "*having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*" (Acts 7:55). What about the kingdom? The full weight of the Son's glory will rest upon Christ in the Millennial day. For we do not yet see all things (earth as well as heaven) put under Him, but we see the pledge that it will be; Jesus now crowned with glory and honor in the heavens (see Hebrews 2). The work of the cross has, in a certain sense, made God a debtor to the Son.

vv.31-32 The last phrase of v.31 and the first phrase of v.32 refer to exactly the same thing; God's being glorified in the Son who offered Himself upon the cross. Often in the synoptic gospels the cross is looked at as a tragedy, but in John it is viewed as a victory. Hence, it is only in John that we have the victor's cry "Finished!" At the cross, God was glorified in the Son. But the first phrase of v.31 and the last phrase of v.32 refer to two different glories of the Son. First, the *moral* glory obtained by the Son through glorifying God. Second, the *heavenly* glory given to the Son by God on account of that perfect work. Both are acquired glories. But the second is a glory given by God in response to the cross. An example of this might be an Olympic runner who finishes first. He has obtained a glory that is independent of the judges and spectators. He finished first and he knows it. But then on the stage, he is awarded a medal and a new title by the judges. This is a different glory than the glory of crossing the finish line. The example falls for short in many respects, but I think it distinguishes the glory that Christ obtained by being the accomplisher and propitiator of God, and the glory given to Him by God in response to the satisfaction rendered.

33 Children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said to the Jews, Where I go ye cannot come, I say to you also now. **v.33 Jesus to go away, and take up a**

new position. If the Son was to be glorified at God's right hand, it necessitated that He would go away, and no longer be with the disciples. He uses a term of affection, "*Little children*". These two subjects occupied the Lord's thoughts, and characterize the upper room ministry: Jesus was going away, and the disciples would be united to a glorified Christ in heaven. When He departed, they would "*seek*" Him. He connects their seeking Him with what He had said to the Jews in John 8:21; "*I go away, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sin; where I go ye cannot come.*" When Christ ascended, He would be hid from the eyes of man, not only physically, but morally. Christianity would begin when Christ "*went away*"; when He took His seat in heaven. The Jews would seek for a Messiah to gratify their ambition and worldly lusts; and God had no such Messiah to offer. They would not be able to find their Messiah in a moral sense. The Lord applies the same principle in part to the disciples; "*I say to you also now*". The disciples would not die in their sins like the apostate nation of Israel, because they were "*children*". But they would seek for Christ after their Jewish hopes for a time, until the light of Christian truth revealed to them "a new and living way" into the holiest. Their thoughts of Him would have to be reoriented, from seeking a Jewish Messiah on earth, to seeking a glorified Christ in heaven. It was this very thing that Peter did not understand (vv.36-38); i.e. the moral distance between heaven and earth. It cannot be traversed by the energy of the flesh, whether in an unbeliever, or in a believer.

34 A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. **35** By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves. **vv.34-35 Love to characterize the disciples.** The practical love showered upon the disciples by Jesus while on earth would be replaced, through the Spirit's enabling power, with mutual love between brethren. The Lord gives the disciples a new commandment. This was "*new*" in contrast to the commandments of the law. The ten commandments said nothing about love, although Jesus taught that love is the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10). Even Lev. 19:18, which Jesus quoted, only puts self-love as the standard; "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*". The new commandment makes Christ the standard; "*love one another; as I have loved you*". It goes beyond our neighbor to encompass the whole family of faith. Such love was foreign to both Jew and Gentile. The Lord had demonstrated a practical, unchanging love to His disciples. This divine love is characteristic of the eternal life that was "*true in Him and in you*" (1 John 2:8). By showing the same love to one another, the disciples would not only fulfill His command, but also show the world that they were Jesus' disciples. This is why the collective testimony is so important; because love can only be shown between people. It isn't so much love to the poor, or love to the lost, but love to fellow believers. It is easy to love someone you don't know, but difficult to love someone whose failures and faults are known to you. Jesus knew everything about His disciples, and He loved them just the same. We do well to realize that

the greatest public testimony Christians have before the world is love amongst ourselves!

The Prediction of Peter's Denials (13:36-38)

36 Simon Peter says to him, Lord, where goest thou? Jesus answered him, Where I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after. **v.36 The Path to God Through Death Not Yet Made.** Peter was full of natural affection for the Lord. He wanted desperately to be with Jesus wherever He went. Peter's human love caused him to disbelieve what the Lord had said in v.33. This is always the danger with human love. It does not rise up to the thoughts of God. Divine love acts according to the mind of God. Peter insisted on knowing where Jesus was going. In the Lord's response, He shows that the destination was not the only issue, but also the way to that destination. Jesus must go home by way of the cross. He must first meet and annul the power of sin and death at the cross, then the way would be open for others, like Peter, to follow. Peter simply could not follow Him now. Satan had not yet been rendered powerless. Peter did not understand the 2000 cubits that were to remain between the ark and the people in Joshua 3:1-6.¹⁷ Yet the Lord comforts Peter that he could follow later, referring no doubt to Peter's own martyrdom, which Jesus spoke of again in John 21. Peter could only follow once death was annulled, and once he had the power of the Holy Spirit to give him true spiritual energy, in place of his former human energy. Peter should have rested in the Lord's simple assurance, but instead he pushed forward in self-confidence.

37 Peter says to him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee. **38** Jesus answers, Thou wilt lay down thy life for me! Verily, verily, I say to thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. **vv.37-38 Self-confidence and its results.** Read also Matt. 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:31-34. Peter's self-confidence was unshaken by the Lord's warning that he could not follow now. As a pledge of his devotion, Peter says, "*I will lay down my life for thee*". Peter did not understand that Jesus was going to lay down His life for him! He had not judged himself in the presence of God. We all tend to think highly of ourselves until we see what we are in the light of God's presence. Peter did not know his own heart. He would have to learn by bitter experience the lesson of self-confidence. When Jesus responds this time, it is with shock, if we can say so, at Peter's boldness; "*Thou wilt lay down thy life for me!*" It was a rebuke. Far from Peter laying down his life for the Lord, he would *deny* Him. Jesus predicted not only a slight

failure, but a grievous failure. Not once, not twice, but three times before morning (abundant witness, Deut. 17:6), when the rooster crowed, Peter would adamantly deny his Lord. The energy of the flesh can carry us a long way. For Peter, it carried him into the hall of Caiaphas. But eventually the flesh will break down, as Peter's did at the question of a girl.

Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
O'er us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conqu'rors we are!

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.¹⁸

Footnotes

1. *The entire drift is in all points and ways to lead His own into a true spiritual understanding of their new place before God the Father, in consequent contrast with that of Israel in the world.* - Kelly, W. *An Exposition of the Gospel of John.*
2. W. Kelly Translation
3. *I agree with those who take it to mean the arrival of the time for supper, which is confirmed by the wondrous action we are about to hear of. It cannot be doubted that it was usual to have the feet washed before, not after, supper.* - Kelly, W. *Exposition of the Gospel of John.*
4. *... whence He came and whither He was going: that is, His personal and heavenly character in relationship with God, and the glory that was given Him.* - Darby, J.N. *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.*
5. *It is the washing of water by the word which the Spirit applies in answer to the Son's advocacy with the Father. Of this Christ was here giving the sign.* - Kelly, W. *Exposition of the Gospel of John.*
6. *Be it carefully observed that it is a question here of water, not of blood. The reader of John's Gospel will not have overlooked that He makes much of "water" as well as "blood." So did the Lord in presenting the truth to His own, and no one shows this more than John. His first epistle also characterises the Lord as "He that came by water and blood; not in water only, but in water and blood." (1 John 5:6.) He purifies as well as atones. He employs the word to cleanse those who are washed from their sins in His blood. The Apostles Paul, Peter, and James, insist on this effect of the word, as John does. It is disastrous and dangerous in the highest degree to overlook purification by the washing of water by the word. If "the blood" is Godward, though for us "the water" is saintward to remove impurity in practice, as well as to give a new nature which judges evil according to God and His Word, of which it is the sign, adding to it the death of Christ, which gives its measure and force. Out of His pierced side came blood and water (chapter 19).* - Kelly, W. *Exposition of the Gospel of John.*
7. *Garments in scripture often represent a person's status or character. For example, often in the Old Testament when a person was upset or sorry, they would rend their clothes or put on sackcloth (Gen. 37:34). When the prodigal son returned, the father brought forth the "best robe", symbolizing a place of dignity.*
8. *There is an analog expression in Phil. 2:6-7; "who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself". He veiled His personal, intrinsic glory such that it could not be seen by the human eye. In Philippians 2 it is the veiling of His personal glory, in John 13 it is the veiling of His official glory.*
9. *There are two things we need to be careful of: using the water without the towel, and using the towel without the water. In the first case, the defilement is removed, but the soul is left unsettled, and on edge. In the second case, the defilement is*

not removed, and even the towel does not have its desired effect.

10. Bowley, Mary. *Praise ye the Lord, again, again*. Little Flock Hymnbook #156. 1881.
11. *Thus we find in their fellowship there was no known evil, or there would have been implication of guilt, even in the betrayal of the Lord Himself.* - Darby, J.N. *The Gospel of John*
12. W. Kelly Translation
13. *They thought it was to buy something, or give to the poor; but there was something more than ignorance in this wrong estimate, from the heart being occupied with other things than that which the Lord's heart necessarily was. The Lord had just said, "One of you," etc., and told John that it was he to whom He gave the sop; and He gave it to Judas. Now, if their hearts had been engaged with this they would have immediately associated the word, "What thou doest, do quickly," with it.* - Darby, J.N. *The Gospel of John*
14. *And this sorrow bowed to, He had taken the cup into His hand. Mentally, as it were, the thing was passed. It was to be carried into execution, but Jesus had taken the step. He had submitted to the sorrow, redeeming sorrow, trusting His Father, to go through all.* - Darby, J.N. *The Gospel of John*
15. *God was glorified in Him. His justice, His majesty, His truth, His love — all was verified on the cross as they are in Himself, and revealed only there; and that with regard to sin.* - Darby, J.N. *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible. John 13.*
16. *It was not merely (moreover) that He bore the sins of the Church (as indeed He did), but there was a great abstract fact of the vindication of divine glory, independent of all consequences, and more important than all, and which presents itself first to the Saviour's mind, centring in His Person; yea, as it were circumscribed by it; but withal in the person of Man; so that, in the infinite riches and unspeakable manifestation of grace, as in man God had been permanently dishonoured, in Man (even in Jesus) He was to be glorified. And so was it needful for the perfect rescue of His glory without stint.* - Darby, J.N. *The Gospel of John.*
17. *Poor dear Peter! How little he knew of himself, or of that which he was — sincerely, no doubt, though ignorantly — undertaking to do! How little did he imagine that the very sound of death's dark river, heard even in the distance, would be sufficient so to terrify him, as to make him curse and swear that he did not know his Master! "Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." "Yet there shall be a space between you and it." How needful! How absolutely essential! Truly there was a space between Peter and his Lord. Jesus had to go before. He had to meet death in its most terrific form. He had to tread that rough path in profound solitude — for who could accompany Him? "There shall be a space between you and it: come not near to it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore."* - Mackintosh, C.H. *Gilgal.*
18. Lemmel, Helen H. *O soul, are you weary and troubled?* 1922.