

JOHN 13 | *Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet*

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour¹ had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved (ἀγαπάω) his own who were in the world,² he loved (ἀγαπάω) them to the end.³ 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,⁴ 3 Jesus, knowing⁵ that the Father had given all things into his hands,⁶ and that he had come from God and was going back to God,⁷ 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash (νίπτω, pres.)⁸ the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.⁹ 6 He came to Simon Peter,¹⁰ who said to him, Lord (Κύριε), do you wash (νίπτω, pres.) my feet? 7 Jesus answered him,

What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand (γινώσκω).

8 Peter said to him, You shall never wash (νίπτω) my feet. Jesus answered him,

If I do not wash (νίπτω) you, you have no share/part/place (μέρος)¹¹ with me.

9 Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head! 10 Jesus said to him,

¹ In *John*, Jesus' hour refers to his arrest, death, resurrection, appearances, ascension, and session at the Father's right hand.

² Jesus had departed out of this world and left us in the world.

³ **Mt 28:20** 20 ...Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

⁴ Satan put the idea to betray Jesus into Judas' heart. Later, he entered Judas (v. 27).

⁵ Jesus' knowledge and the disciples' lack of knowledge stands out in this chapter.

⁶ **Mt 28:18** 18 ...Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

⁷ Jesus understood his identity, situation, and mission. So must we.

⁸ "[T]o cleanse with use of water, *wash*...to provide generous service, *wash feet*, as the mng. of the unit term" (*BDAG*, 674).

⁹ See *Jesus' Humility*.

¹⁰ So far in *John*, Peter has not been very prominent. Now he will be very prominent.

¹¹ **Re 20:6** 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! **Re 21:8** 8 ...As for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death. **Re 22:19** 19 ...If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

The one who has been bathed (λούω, perf. pass.) does not need to wash (νίπτω, aor.), except for his feet, but is completely clean/pure/free from guilt (καθαρός). And you are clean, but not every one of you.

11 For he knew who was to betray (παραδίδωμι) him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean.

Jesus' Explains the Foot Washing

12 When he had washed (νίπτω) their feet, put on his outer garments, and resumed his place, he said to them,

Do you understand (γινώσκω) what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher (Ὁ διδάσκαλος) and Lord (Ὁ κύριος), and you are right, for so I am.¹² 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed (νίπτω) your feet, you also ought to wash (νίπτω) one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example/model/pattern (ὁπόδειγμα),¹³ that you also should do just as I have done to you.¹⁴ 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know (οἶδα) these things, blessed (μακάριος) are you if you do them.¹⁵ 18 I am not speaking of all of you.¹⁶ I know whom I have chosen/preferred/selected (ἐκλέγομαι, aor.).¹⁷ But the Scripture will be fulfilled,

He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.¹⁸

19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place,¹⁹ that when it does take place you may believe (πιστεύω, aor.) that I Am (ἐγώ εἰμι).²⁰ 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send (πέμπω) receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent (πέμπω) me.²¹

¹² See *Jesus as Teacher* and *Jesus as Lord*.

¹³ “[A]n example of behavior used for purposes of moral instruction, *example, model, pattern*...in a good sense as someth. that does or should spur one on to imitate it...an indication of someth. that appears at a subsequent time, *outline, sketch, symbol*” (BDAG, 1037).

¹⁴ See *Disciple Making* and *Imitation*.

¹⁵ See *Interpretation of Scripture* and *Application of Scripture*.

¹⁶ Did Jesus wash Judas's feet?

¹⁷ See *Apostles*.

¹⁸ **Ps 41:9** 9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

¹⁹ See *Jesus' Omniscience*.

²⁰ See *Jesus' Deity*.

²¹ The Father sent Jesus on a mission, and Jesus sent the apostles on a mission. Now we are sent on the same mission. He who receives us, receives Jesus, and thereby receives the Father. Jesus foot washing must have much to do with the role of the apostles. Maybe it's a sign of discipleship, just as water baptism is a sign of belief.

Judas Goes out into the Night

21 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me. 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. 23 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, 24 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25 So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, Lord, who is it? 26 Jesus answered, It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it. So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.²² 27 Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into (εἰσέρχομαι, aor.) him. Jesus said to him, What you are going to do, do quickly. 28 Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 29 Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, Buy what we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. 30 So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

A New Commandment

31 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 glorify him at once.²³ 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, Where I am going you cannot come.²⁴ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another (ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους). Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another (ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους). 35 By this all (πάντες) will know that you are my disciples (μαθηταί), if you have love for one another (ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους).²⁵

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

36 Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him,

Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.²⁶

37 Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you 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, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

²² Bother Peter and Judas are from the tribe of Simeon?

²³ See *God's Glory*.

²⁴ See *Jesus' Ascension*.

²⁵ See *Love for Believers*.

²⁶ Jesus refers to his ascension to the Father's right hand and the Messianic kingdom to follow.

Biblical Worldview

1. Chapters 13-17.

- a. In these chapters, Jesus prepares the eleven disciples for their Church age work. The disciples are to be primary witnesses of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. They are to multiply disciple makers with the objective of spreading the good news about Jesus to the ends of the earth. In the meantime, Jesus will be interceding for them at the Father's right hand as Priest.
- b. The disciples, soon apostles, had a very unique and specific calling. They were to take Jesus' message and spread it, by the power of the Spirit, to the end of the earth.
(1) Jn 17:14, 17-19
- c. The Upper Room discourse focuses on the time of Jesus' absence, between his first and second comings.
(1) Jn 13.1, 3, 33
- d. In many ways, it is the time of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, not the Father nor the Son takes centre stage.
(1) Jn 14:25-26; 16.12-13

2. Chapter 13.

- a. Jn 13:1 begins Jesus' focus on the disciples. No longer does Jesus directly minister to Israel as a whole.

3. Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (Jn 13:1-11).

- a. Jesus knows:
 - (1) His hour to depart to the Father has come (v. 1).
 - (a) "His hour" includes his arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and session.
 - (2) The Father is giving all things into his hands (v. 3).
 - (a) **Mt 28:20** 20 ...Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
 - (3) He came from God (v. 3).
 - (4) He is going back to God (v. 3).
 - (5) Jesus knowledge of his own identity is what readies him to be a servant leader who washes the disciples feet. It is the same for us. With a solid knowledge of who we are in Messiah, we are ready to go against the grain of the world and be servant leaders in the church. Identity precedes service.
- b. Jesus loves his own, the disciples, who are in the world (v. 1). He loves them all the way to the end of his life (v. 1), including through his arrest, trial, and death. He loves them with agape love (v. 1). The disciples are his own (v. 1).
- c. At the last supper (v. 2), just before Passover (v. 1), Jesus rises from supper, lays aside his outer garments, and ties a towel around his waist (v. 4). Then he pours water into a basin and begins to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel.
 - (1) The Greek word *ῥίπτω* is used for everyday washing. The Greek word *ἵνα* is used for full-body bathing.
 - (2) What Jesus does mirrors what Mary has done, except Mary used expensive ointment.

- (a) **Jn 12:3** 3 Mary...took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.
- d. Peter, now becoming prominent in *John*, questions Jesus why he is doing this (v. 6). Jesus says Peter will understand later (v. 7). When Peter rebuffs Jesus, Jesus says he must wash if Peter is to have a “share” with him (v. 8).
- (1) Sometimes “share” refers to what all believers get:
- (a) **Re 20:6** 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!
- (b) **Re 21:8** 8 ...As for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.
- (c) **Re 22:19** 19 ...If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
- (2) But here, Jesus refers to the “share” (μέρος) his twelve apostles will get as apostles. If Jesus does not wash Peter’s feet, Peter will not be an apostle, with all of its challenges and rewards. It is necessary for Jesus to wash the disciples’ feet, for they are to be the disciple makers when Jesus leaves. If they refuse this disciple making foot washing, they cannot be apostolic disciple makers.
- (a) According to A. T. Robinson, Jn 13 mirrors Mk 10:32-45 and Lk 22:24-27. In order for the disciples to share in the glory of Jesus they must be prepared to be baptised with his baptism. Jesus is challenging the disciples to be loyal to him in his death.²⁷
- (b) According to H. Weiss, foot washing was practiced in the Johannine community as preparation for the martyrdom its members were willing to face. It was a preparation for burial, just as Mary’s washing of Jesus’ feet was a preparation for his burial.²⁸
- (3) Peter wants Jesus to wash his entire body (v. 9), but Jesus says he’s already been bathed (λούω, perf. pass.)(v. 10). Only the feet of Peter and the other disciples needs to be washed(νίπτω, aor.) at this time.
- (a) Bathing refers to water baptism, signifying justification by grace through faith in Jesus. As believers, the disciples are already clean in a justification sense (v. 10). Foot washing, by contrast, is the graduation ceremony of a disciple to become a disciple maker. The disciples have walked with Jesus for three years. They are now ready to become disciple makers. As they graduate to that very important role, Jesus was to signify the essential nature of disciple making. He does so through this ceremony of foot washing. He shows that disciple making is all about leadership through humble servanthood. The disciples, now as disciple makers, are to lead their disciples as he has led his, a process that is to be repeated through the church age until Jesus returns. So in essence, foot washing is for disciple makers and their graduating disciples.
- (4) Judas is the one exception (v. 10). Because he has never believed in Jesus (Jn 6:64), he is neither justified nor clean (v. 10). Jesus has known about Judas’s unbelief this from the beginning (v. 11).

²⁷ H. Weiss, “Foot Washing in the Johannine Community,” *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1979, 298-325.

²⁸ H. Weiss, “Foot Washing in the Johannine Community,” *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1979, 298-325.

- (a) **Jn 6:64** 64 But there are some of you who do not believe. (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him [Judas].)

4. Jesus Explains the Foot Washing (Jn 13:12-20).

- a. Jesus puts back on his outer garments and resumes his place to show he is returning to his place of leadership and authority (v. 12). He is now Teacher and Lord again (v. 13).
- b. Jesus then instructs the disciples about disciple making. Just as he understands who he is and what he is doing (vv. 1, 3), he wants the disciples to understand who they are and what they are doing (vv. 7, 12).
- c. Jesus is the disciples' example (v. 15). As Lord and Teacher, he has washed their feet (v. 14). So they are to wash one another's feet (v. 14). They are to do just as Jesus has done to them (v. 15).
- d. As truisms, masters are greater than servants, and senders are greater than lessers (v. 16). In the same way, disciple makers are greater than disciples and believers. So in following Jesus' example, it is the disciple makers who must wash the feet of disciples and believers. This is how leadership works in God's kingdom!
(1) **Mt 20:25-28** 25 ...Jesus called [the disciples] to him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
- e. But it's not enough to understand. We have to do. The reward for doing is blessing (v. 17). See *Obedience*.
- f. Jesus is not speaking of Judas (v. 18). Although he chose Judas as a disciple, he did not choose him as an apostle (v. 18). Judas will be the one who fulfills Ps 41:9 by being the one who eats Jesus' bread and then lifts his heel against him (v. 18). Jesus tells the disciples about Judas' betrayal before it takes place, that they will have more reason to believe he is the I Am (ἐγώ εἰμι) (v. 19). Jesus' omnipresence, omniscience, and foreknowledge prove he is God. See *Jesus' Deity*.
(1) **Jn 21:17** 17 ...[Peter] said to [Jesus], Lord, you know everything.
- g. Just as the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus is sending the disciples. The disciple making pattern of model, assist, watch, leave (MAWL) is happening, and it is now time for the disciples to be disciple makers. As they go out, Jesus wants these new disciple makers to know that peoples' response to them is equal to their response to Jesus, which is equal to their response to the Father (v. 20). The Father, the Son, and the disciples are totally unified in their mission and stand together. This is what it means to have a share with Jesus (v. 8). This is why the foot washing was necessary. As disciple makers the disciples are to look for "receivers," those who desire to receive them, Jesus, and the Father. Likewise today, as disciple makers, we are to look for receivers.
(1) **Mt 10:40-42** 40 Whoever receives you [disciples] receives me [Jesus], and whoever receives me receives him [the Father] who sent me. 41 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the

one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

5. Judas Goes Out into the Night (Jn 13:21-30).

- a. Jesus is troubled in his spirit because he knows Judas is shortly to betray him (v. 21). He seems to genuinely care about Judas. He is deeply disappointed in the direction Judas has taken, but he knows it is the fulfilment of prophecy and must happen.
- b. The disciples are uncertain about whom Jesus is speaking (v. 22). So Peter motions to John, who is reclining at Jesus' side, to ask Jesus of whom he is speaking (vv. 23-24). John asks Jesus who it is (v. 25). It is unclear whether the other disciples could hear this exchange between Jesus and John.
- c. Jesus answers that it is he to whom he will give a morsel of bread when he has dipped it (v. 26). He dips it and gives it to Judas (v. 26). At that very moment, Satan enters into Judas (v. 27). Satan had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus (v. 2), but now he enters into Jesus. Then Jesus tells Judas/Satan to do quickly what he is going to do (v. 27). Judas immediately goes out into the night (v. 30). The disciples are confused about the whole exchange (vv. 28-29). Only later did they understand what had happened.
 - (1) Jesus wants Judas (and Satan) to hear his lesson on foot washing and servant leadership before he dismisses them to do what they want to do. This is probably because Judas is rebelling against Jesus for the same reason Satan rebelled against God long before. See *Satan*.
 - (2) This exchange between Jesus and Judas/Satan shows Jesus is in charge of the whole situation, including Satan.

6. A New Commandment (Jn 13:31-35).

- a. With Judas going out in the night to complete his betrayal of Jesus, the hour of Jesus' glorification is come (v. 31). Jesus is glorified not only by his resurrection, ascension, and session, but also by his arrest, trial, and death. These six great events constitute one package that glorifies the Son and the Father. Jesus, the Son of Man, is now glorified (v. 31). The Father, too, is glorified in the Son (v. 31-32). God will not glorify the Son in himself, and he will do it at once (v. 32). The climax of history, the great hour, has come. The seed of the woman is now going to bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent is going to bruise his heel (Ge 3:15).
- b. Jesus calls the disciples "little children" and informs them again that he is leaving to go to another place (v. 33). In this context, he gives them a new commandment: Agape love one another, just as I have agape loved you (v. 34).
 - (1) Like a coach giving his players one thing to remember before they enter the field, so Jesus give the disciples one thing to remember as they enter their field of ministry. It's the great commandment: Agape love.
- c. It through the disciples' agape love for one another that all will know these eleven men are Jesus' disciples (μαθηται)(v. 35).
 - (1) Going forward, the two keys for the disciples as new disciple makers will be servant leadership and agape love for one another.

7. Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial (Jn 13:36-38).