



---

## Week 1. Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

### - Introduction:

- **A word of alignment for Evangel...** In October of 2009, the Lord gave this exhortation to the Body of Evangel, **“Prepare for the return of Jesus.”** That one simple word has led us into...
  - A six-month, verse-by-verse study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians
  - A renewed focus on discipleship as we worked through James Smith’s “Apprentice Series” together
  - A more than three-year study of the book of Revelation
  - A ten-week study of Heaven
  - And just this past year, a move from meeting Sunday evenings to mornings, and a teaching series on “Understanding the Times” and “Cultivating a Culture of Honor.” As you can see, we have been busy as a congregation learning and growing this past 6 years!
- **Knowing the voice of Jesus...** We are entering a season where the focus seems to be on discerning the voice of the Lord as it is revealed through the scriptures, through divine revelation, as well as through other believers.
- **We have to start somewhere...** The events that unfold in John 13 through 17 all happen over the course of one evening in Jerusalem, the night before Jesus was betrayed which began a three-day period of time called “the Passion of the Christ.” These four chapters in John’s gospel give us an inside look at the **“Final Thoughts”** Jesus shares with His followers before going to the Cross. Over the course of the next couple months, we want to study the text, listen to what He had to say to them, and begin to understand what He is saying to us.

### - The Text: John 13:1-17 *Passion Translation*

- <sup>1</sup> Jesus knew that the night before Passover would be His last night on earth before leaving this world to return to the Father’s side. All throughout His time with His disciples, Jesus had demonstrated a deep and tender love for them. And now He longed to show them the full measure of His love. <sup>2</sup> Before their evening meal had begun, the Accuser had already planted betrayal into the heart of Judas, the locksmith, the son of Simon.
  - **Preparing for Passover...** Night was falling and Jesus asked His disciples to prepare a place to celebrate the Passover together. He had been telling them the time was coming (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 12:23,

27; 17:1), now it had arrived. This may actually be same place where Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection, possibly the same room where the Holy Spirit fell on them when the church was birthed! Regardless, Jesus was about to demonstrate the scope and intensity of His love to His followers (3:16).

- **The full measure of love...** In showing them the intensity of His love, Jesus was not trying to prove His love, but reveal the magnitude of it (1 John 3:1). Something remarkable is about to be made known to them. The atmosphere in that room was thick with anticipation of what was about to be revealed.
- **The birth of betrayal...** The plan to take Jesus out had already been planted in the heart of Judas. The “soil of his heart had been prepared for this seed.” The proof of this preparation can be seen in Judas’ disposition towards covetousness, lit., his preoccupation with needing to have his “fingerprints” on everything. Yet, none of it was hidden from Jesus (6:70-71). He saw the full extent of Judas’ betrayal. Later that same evening Satan would actually enter Judas (v. 27).
- **<sup>3</sup> Now Jesus was fully aware that the Father had placed all things under His control, for He had come from God and was about to go back to be with Him. <sup>4</sup> So He got up from the meal and took off His outer robe and took a towel and wrapped it around His waist. <sup>5</sup> Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ dirty feet, and He dried them with His towel.**
  - **The fight for honor...** It’s hard to grasp just how much jockeying was going on for position, asking the age-old question, “Who is the greatest?” (Luke 22:24-30). They all had a place at the table, yet each wanted “the chief seat at the feast,” and there was still a strong desire in their hearts to be in the position of influence with Jesus. All that in their hearts was about to be challenged!
  - **From leader to servant...** What happened next astounded the disciples. What Jesus was about to do was totally out of the box. He moved from the place of leader, to that of a servant. This stunning move that would shake everyone in the room to the core. Jesus was not instituting a new church practice, but instead, without a word of explanation, would model for them a deep, practical, spiritual lesson for all ages.
    - Jesus and the disciples had just come in from a hot, dusty walk from nearby Bethany. They entered the house, removed their sandals, and sat at the table with dry and dusty feet, but no one brought the customary basin of water to pour over their feet and dry them off. Not one of them volunteered to serve, but were all waiting for someone to serve them.
    - When significant time had gone by and no one took the responsibility to serve by washing feet, the Son of God got up from the table, wrapped himself for the task and one by one, poured water over their feet and dried them with a towel.
- **<sup>6</sup> But when Jesus got to Simon Peter, he objected and said, “I can’t let You wash my dirty feet. You’re my Lord!”**
  - **A missed opportunity...** So much about all the disciples is revealed in Peter’s response to Jesus’ actions. He was astonished, confused, humbled, and deeply embarrassed that he hadn’t grabbed the basin and towel before Jesus did.
  - **Schooled in lordship...** Peter was barely got the gist of what it meant for Jesus to be Lord, and Jesus’ move to wash his feet would only magnify and intensify what he *didn’t* know.

- <sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, “You don’t understand yet the meaning of what I’m doing, but soon it will be clear to you.”
  - **An important lesson...** What is about to happen didn’t take just a few minutes to unfold. With every set of feet that Jesus washed and dried, the lesson was repeated. By the time Jesus got to the last disciple, what they were witnessing, *experiencing*, would change the way they walked with each other forever.
  - **Discipleship models...** The clarity of the lesson Jesus was teaching would be learned in years, not minutes. The most important lessons in spiritual growth aren’t produced in a *microwave*, but a **Crock Pot!**
- <sup>8</sup> Peter looked at Jesus and said, “You’ll never wash my dirty feet— never!” “But Peter, if you don’t allow Me to wash your feet,” Jesus responded, “then you will not be able to share life with Me.”
  - **Back to the truth...** For Peter, this is still about looking good. Having missed his opportunity to pick up the towel and wash feet, he now jumps to the podium and assumes the role of teacher. He is trying to prove his worth to Jesus by what he thinks he knows. The Rabbi uses this opportunity to gently draw Peter back to reality and the truth of what was really happening.
  - **Look closely...** Don’t make the same mistake Peter made in assuming you know what Jesus is talking about here. Listen to His words. Ask the Holy Spirit for understanding. Let these words draw you deeper. You may see something about your relationship with Him you have never seen before!
- <sup>9</sup> So Peter said, “Lord, in that case, don’t just wash my feet; wash my hands and my head too!”
  - **Peter reacts...** Peter can’t let go. Part of his reaction (as opposed to response) is due to embarrassment and self-loathing to have found himself in the position of receiving this ministry from Jesus. This was no doubt amplified by all of it unfolding in front and to the other disciples.
- <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “You are already clean. You’ve been washed completely and you just need your feet to be cleansed— but that can’t be said of all of you.” For Jesus knew which one was about to betray Him, <sup>11</sup> and that’s why He told them that not all of them were clean.
  - **First, the facts...** These men ALL wore sandals. ALL their feet were dirty. ALL needed their feet cleaned as they entered the house, but that didn’t happen. Jesus was preparing them ALL for what would happen next at the table as they shared a meal together.
  - **The spiritual meaning...** There were spiritual implications here as well. As they will soon learn, those who come to Jesus for forgiveness of sin are completely cleansed by His blood. They will, most likely, live to sin another day. The initial “cleansing” will still apply. This would be one of John’s most profound messages to the church in the days ahead...
    - <sup>8</sup> If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. <sup>9</sup> But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. (1 John 1:8–10 NLT-SE)
    - “Roman Catholics sometimes have interpreted verse 10 to mean that after infant baptism only penance is needed. A preferable interpretation is that after salvation all one needs is confession of sins, the

continual application of Jesus' death to cleanse one's daily sins (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:1-2)." ~ Bible Knowledge Commentary

- **Did Jesus wash Judas' feet?**... He did. Most likely, Judas was never converted. Here, Jesus would help the Disciples understand the spiritual dynamics of His betrayal that was just about to unfold.
- **<sup>12</sup> After washing their feet, He put His robe on and returned to His place at the table. "Do you understand what I just did?" Jesus said. <sup>13</sup> "You've called Me your Teacher and Lord, and you're right, for that's who I am. <sup>14-15</sup> So if I'm your Teacher and Lord and have just washed your dirty feet, then you should follow the example that I've set for you and wash one another's dirty feet. Now do for each other what I have just done for you. <sup>16</sup> I speak to you timeless truth: A servant is not superior to his Master and an apostle is never greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Put into practice what I have done for you, and you will experience a life enriched with untold blessings!"**
- **Pop quiz**... Here, we see the "teaching moment" begin to unfold. The disciples seem to have only a limited understanding of what they had just seen take place. They knew Jesus was teaching them something (Mark 4:13). They just didn't understand what it is they were being taught. They are about to get the "meat" of Jesus' teaching, although it would surely become an unfolding revelation as they went forward (v. 5). Jesus puts the onus back on His followers by saying, "You've called Me your Teacher (Master) and Lord (Ruler), and you're right, for that's who I am." They now have nowhere to run, nowhere to hide (11:28). So, what does He say to them?
- **"Follow My example"**... It is clear that Jesus was NOT saying, "Whenever you enter a building together, you should take off your shoes and socks, pull out a basin of water and a towel, and wash each other's feet!" This makes no sense and is not being presented to the church as an ordinance (e.g., Holy Communion/The Lord's Supper or Water Baptism, e.g., Acts 2:38) anywhere else in scripture. So, what was He saying to them?
- **Serving one another**... As they entered the room that night, His disciples were apparently more focused on themselves than each other, or even attending to their leader. By this example, He was calling them to a new paradigm of relationship with each other, one where they valued "serving one another in love" more than being served. Both Peter and Paul understood this, developing it more fully in their letters to the churches.
  - God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (1 Pet 4:10 NLT-SE)
  - For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. (Gal 5:13 NLT-SE)
  - <sup>24</sup> God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (1 Cor 12:24-25 NIV)
- **The fruit of a servant's heart**... The result of this type of preference for one another is clear in Jesus' exhortation; that they would "experience a life enriched with untold blessings!" Again, Jesus wasn't telling the disciples that they should show their love by washing each others feet. He was encouraging them to always be ready to serve each other with this kind of heart, with a spirit of humility and self-sacrifice. This attitude will also guard us against the insidiousness of spiritual pride (Pr 8:13, 16:18-19, James 4:6).