

## Notes on John 13

© Copyright David E. Pratte, June 3, 2008, [www.gospelway.com](http://www.gospelway.com)

The first twelve chapters of John's record have discussed the major portion of Jesus' public ministry. The last nine discuss His final days on earth, from shortly before the crucifixion till after the resurrection.

### Jesus' Final Days - Chap 13-21

#### **The Passover Meal & the Washing of Feet – John 13:1-30**

##### Verse 1

1. What feast is described in these verses? Explain what this feast involved.
2. Study carefully the parallel passages about Jesus' Passover with His disciples, then tell:
  - \* What act of New Testament worship did Jesus ordain at this time?
  - \* What conflict did the disciples have among themselves?

#### *Jesus meets with the disciples for the Passover.*

The events recorded here occurred while Jesus was with His disciples to eat the Passover feast. Other writers record this Passover meal (Matthew 26:20-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-30). However, John skips several events that are recorded by the other authors, and the others skip many events that John recorded.

In particular, other accounts tell us that Jesus kept this Passover with the twelve in a place that He had especially directed His disciples to prepare. Further, it was at this feast that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. This means that John's account has progressed to the very night before Jesus' death. The remainder of John's account will concern the events immediately preceding, during, and following Jesus' death. It is helpful, while studying John's account, to keep in mind what the others wrote.

The Passover was a Jewish feast commemorating Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage. On that occasion, God went through Egypt slaying the firstborn sons of all the Egyptians, but sparing the firstborn of Israel. To be spared, the Israelites had to mark their houses with the blood of a lamb.

The lamb was slain on the 14th day of the first month. This was followed by a feast of seven days of unleavened bread, which lasted from the 14th day "at even" till the 20th day, inclusive. See Exodus 11:4-12:28; 12:43-51; 13:3-10; Leviticus 23:4-8; Numbers 9:1-14; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Exodus 34:25; Numbers 28:16-25; 33:1-4; Joshua 5:10,11; 2 Kings 23:21-23; etc.

Jesus had said He would be crucified at the Passover. This shows the symbolic connection between Jesus and the lamb that died so the people could be spared. See 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Here John tells us that Jesus knew what was about to happen. He knew He would die, yet He went ahead with the events that He knew would lead to that conclusion. This proves that He loved His own until the end. He was willing to die because He knew it was the only way people could be saved. "His own" were His disciples, His sheep who would hear His voice. It was because He knew there were such people who would be receptive to His message and receive His salvation that He was willing to die.

Note: There exists considerable confusion as to exactly what night it was that Jesus ate the Passover. Specifically, it is difficult to know, comparing John's accounts to the other accounts, whether or not the night on which Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover was the same night that others ate it. And if He ate on a different night from others, by what authority did He do so. Suffice it to say that Jesus never committed any sin, therefore He did not disobey the Passover law, and there are explanations that harmonize His act here with the law. However, rather than

spending time on the subject, I suggest interested readers consult King's commentary on John, which contains a careful analysis of possible explanations.

Verses 2,3

3. What had Judas already determined to do, and from where did the idea come?

***Jesus acted with full knowledge of what was about to happen.***

At this point, the devil had already led Judas Iscariot to decide to betray Jesus. Other passages tell us, of course, that he did this to receive 30 pieces of silver. As discussed in 12:4-6 (see notes there) Judas was already a thief, so covetousness and love of money motivated him to commit other evils as well. His betrayal of Jesus was not his first act of covetousness or greed. He had already established that pattern in his life, and simply continued that pattern here. In fact, this event happened soon after Jesus had corrected Judas for his criticism of Mary's use of valuable perfume to anoint Jesus. It may be that he was still reacting to that event when he determined to betray Jesus. Cf. vv 21-30; see notes on Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10,11; Luke 22:3-6.

Jesus knew what was happening (v1). He knew what Judas had determined to do, and He knew that He had come from God and was going back to God. All things were given into His hands. Perhaps this is stated because it shows that Jesus was Divine and knew His power. Yet, with all this exaltation, He was willing to humble Himself to perform the menial task John is about to describe. It would be especially difficult for Him to wash the feet of Judas, fully knowing what Judas had already determined to do. Yet, Jesus' love and humility was so deep that He washed even the feet of His own betrayer.

Note: Again there is a textual issue as to whether the original language says the events recorded here occurred after supper was over, or whether they occurred as supper was in progress. This difference is reflected in the various translations, and apparently depends on a variation of just one letter in the original. The context appears to indicate that the meal was still in progress as these events occurred.

Verses 4,5

4. What service did Jesus perform for the disciples?

5. Study other Bible passages about this practice. List at least two others and explain the nature and purpose of the act (i.e., who did it, when, why, etc.). (Think: Can you find any passage that describes this as a church activity done in public assemblies like the Lord's supper?)

***Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.***

Jesus arose from the table, laid aside His garments (the outer ones) took a towel, girded Himself, poured water in a basin, and began to wash and dry the disciples' feet.

Washing feet was an act of hospitality in that land where people generally traveled by foot, wearing sandals, walking in hot, dusty sand. Washing the feet of visitors was done to comfort guests, meet their needs, and welcome them. It was often done by servants and was considered a menial task. See Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Exodus 30:19-21; Judges 19:21; 1 Sam. 25:41; 2 Sam. 11:8; Song Of Solomon 5:3; Luke 7:38,44; 1 Tim. 5:10.

Other accounts show that this occasion was one of several on which the apostles had been arguing among themselves about which of them was greatest and would have the highest positions in the kingdom. This was an issue they had fussed about among themselves more than once. They had a serious problem with pride and self-exaltation. Note the parallel account in Luke 22:14-27; see also Mark 9:33-36; 10:35-45; Luke 9:46-48; Matthew 20:20-28.

Most likely, their pride had been stimulated by the great honor the people showed when they entered the city with the Lord. Like other people, they expected the time was at hand for Jesus to announce His kingdom and attempt to begin His earthly reign. This lifted the apostles up with pride, since they were part of the inner circle. No doubt this encouraged the strife among

them, recorded by Luke, as to who would be the greatest in that kingdom. Apparently no one wanted, at such a time, to do any such menial task as might lead anyone to think they should have any but the highest of positions. One wonders whether or not it was even already on their minds – maybe even part of their dispute – as to who would do the task of washing their feet after their journey.

On such occasions in the past, Jesus had tried to teach the apostles humility, even explaining that He Himself had come to serve and give His life for others. He was not here to Lord it over others (Matthew 20:28). Finally, on this occasion He determined to do an act of service that would demonstrate to His apostles the need for humility. Cf. Philippians 2:1-8.

By washing the disciples' feet, Jesus took upon Himself the humblest of duties, generally left to a servant. It would appear that, up till this time, the feet had not been washed (else why would He wash them again?). This would indicate that none of the other disciples would lower himself to do it for the others. Jesus had perhaps waited to see if any would condescend to do the work. When none did so, He did it Himself. Hence, the One, Whom they all knew to be the greatest among them, voluntarily chose to do the humblest task among them. This is exactly what He had taught them in words on other occasions (see the passages above).

Verses 6-8

6. Describe how Peter objected to Jesus' act, and tell how Jesus responded.  
(Thought question: Why would Peter object?)

### *Peter questions Jesus for washing his feet.*

While doing this task, Jesus came to Peter to wash his feet. Peter, outspoken as ever, expressed what the others were no doubt wondering. He questioned why the Lord would wash his feet. Jesus stated that Peter did not understand at that time, but would understand later.

This shows there was more to Jesus' act than simply washing feet. If washing feet had been the main point of what Jesus' did, then Peter already understood that much. Obviously there was something deeper intended by Jesus' act. Peter's objection proved that he did not understand this deeper meaning.

### *Peter then objects to allowing Jesus to wash his feet.*

Having first questioned the Lord's act, Peter then openly objected to Jesus' washing his feet. This indicates the attitude Peter had, which was no doubt shared by the others. The task was too humble for Jesus to do for the disciples. They had not humbled themselves to do it for one another, but Peter's concept of rank among them was such that surely Jesus was not the one to do it! To him, this was a task for the lowliest to do. No one else would do it, so it was better to leave it undone than to have Jesus do it. Jesus was the highest in rank and surely should not do it.

Doubtless, this very attitude is what kept all the disciples from doing the act to begin with. And this is the attitude Jesus was trying to correct. He wanted them to learn that possessing authority and being worthy of glory did not mean one need not do works of humble service for others. On the contrary, the one who serves others is the one most deserving of glory.

Jesus responded that, if Peter did not let Jesus wash his feet, then Peter would have no part of Jesus — i.e., no relationship with Him. If Peter wanted to continue to be a disciple of Jesus and serve Him, then He had to submit to this act.

This appears to mean that Jesus had a lesson to teach the apostles. If they refused to let Him teach it, they were refusing to follow Him as the teacher. Jesus was determined to teach humility to these proud men. If they refused to submit - especially if their refusal was based on the kind of motive Peter had - they were just continuing the wrong attitude Jesus was trying to correct. Hence, He insisted they let Him proceed so He could teach the lesson.

Verses 9-11

7. What did Peter want done then, and how did Jesus respond?  
(Thought question: What does this tell us about the purpose of this action?)
8. What did Jesus mean by saying they were not all clean (vv 10,11)?

***Peter then asks for even greater cleansing.***

Impetuous Peter then went to the other extreme. If Jesus needed to do this in order for Peter to be His disciple, then let Jesus wash even more of Him: his hands and head as well as his feet! Peter was determined (in his mind) to be a total disciple, so let Jesus wash everything!

But Peter's approach would have missed the point and defeated Jesus' purpose. Perhaps Peter was even intentionally extending the act so it would not be so entirely a menial matter: Don't just do the unpleasant things, Lord, but go further and do what is less objectionable. But such an approach would defeat Jesus' intent to prove Himself humble and compel them to submit to His humility in order that they be made ashamed of their own lack of humility.

Jesus responded that Peter did not need his hands and head washed. He was already clean (bathed), so all that needed washing were his feet and then he would be clean entirely. It was a matter of what "needs" washing. This shows that their feet did need washing. Jesus was not doing this just as an outward show but to meet a real need. What did not need washing, He would not wash. He washed their feet because they needed it.

Jesus used the opportunity, however, to say they were not entirely clean, meaning that among them was Judas who was evil and would betray Jesus. This was meant spiritually, not physically as the rest of the discussion meant.

Verses 12-17

9. ***Special Assignment:*** What lessons are we supposed to learn by Jesus' act? Specifically, was He instituting an ordinance for church assemblies? Consider the purpose of the act, other passages, and Jesus' comments about their lack of understanding — vv 7,12.)
10. What lesson should we learn about examples as a means of teaching?
11. Who has the greater position according to v16, and what lesson should this teach us? (Thought question: What connection does this have to the washing of feet?)
12. Who is truly happy or blessed according to v17? (Thought question: Does this fit the world's idea of happiness? Explain.)

***Jesus then urges the disciples to follow His example.***

Having completed His task, Jesus asked whether or not they understood what He had done. This shows that there was more to this than just washing of feet. Of course, they knew He had done that. But He sought to emphasize a deeper lesson they should learn.

He reminded them that He was the teacher and the Master. The servant is not greater than the Master. So, if the Master washed their feet, they should wash one another's feet. He had given them an example, so now He expected them to follow it. They would be blessed only if they practiced what He had exemplified.

There can be no doubt that Jesus is here giving His apostles an example He wanted them to imitate. This is clearly and repeatedly stated. The question is what is the meaning of the example, and what is the proper application of it today?

There are two possible views to be considered: (1) Jesus is here instituting a ritual of washing feet to be practiced regularly in the public worship assembly of the church, as He did on this same occasion with regard to the Lord's Supper. (2) Jesus is teaching the value of humility, kindness, and service — that we should be willing to render for others any service that they truly need, no matter how humble. The washing of feet was just a particular occasion to illustrate that principle.

***Jesus did NOT intend to institute a ritual as practiced in church assemblies, like the Lord's Supper.***

This is clear for the following reasons:

(1) John 13 nowhere states this is to be a ritual of worship done in the assemblies of the church.

(2) No other passage gives any example or any indication that Christians did this in church worship assemblies.

(3) The only passage after this that ever even mentions feet washing is 1 Timothy 5:10. The context there shows that the act is a personal, individual act done as one has the opportunity, like other qualities listed in that context. There is surely no indication of church assemblies. The widow indeed is hospitable to **strangers** and washes feet of the **saints**.

(4) No passage anywhere states when or how often this ritual should be practiced or what purpose it would serve.

It is true that Jesus at this time instituted the Lord's Supper. But we have other Scriptures that clarify that the Lord's Supper was practiced by Christians in their worship assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:17ff). The time and frequency when it should be done are also taught (Acts 20:7). The **meaning** and purpose of the Lord's Supper is also clearly stated several times. We have absolutely no such instruction or information regarding feet washing as a ritual.

So as a religious rite, we have instructions to take the Lord's Supper in the church worship assembly, we are told its purpose and when to do it. Regarding feet washing as a religious rite, however, we have no instruction to do it in the church assembly, we are never told what purpose any such act might serve, nor are we told when or how often to do it. When the Lord instituted a religious rite, He always gave us the necessary information to carry it out.

(5) Many other passages in the Old and New Testaments mention washing of feet, and in none of them is there any evidence the practice was to be a religious worship ritual done in the assemblies of God's people. In every case, the practice was simply an act of kindness and hospitality done by individuals in a private way to meet the needs of people (see references listed above).

(6) When modern denominations attempt to practice "foot-washing," that which they do is surely not what these passages describe. Generally in such denominations, each person has only **one** foot washed, where Jesus clearly washed the **feet** (plural) of each disciple (vv 6-10).

Further, in denominations people know ahead of time their feet will be washed, so they make sure they are clean (who wants everybody in a church assembly seeing and smelling your dirty feet?). But this defeats the whole purpose of the washing — to meet a need as an act of hospitality. Jesus clearly said that what was already clean did not "need" to be washed. The feet washed in ritual ceremonies today are clean; therefore, by Jesus' own statement they need not be washed. His act was intended to meet a "need." Modern denominational ritual foot washing involves just the opposite: Feet are washed that do not need to be washed.

Jesus washed feet (plural) because if a man had one foot dirty, the other would be too. Denominations wash only one foot, because it is only a ritual: people don't need both feet washed. But the same reasoning that leads them to not wash the foot they leave unwashed would likewise tell them to not wash either foot. Neither foot really needs to be washed, so as Jesus explained, there is no purpose in washing either one!

Further, the main lesson Jesus was trying to teach His apostles was humility. But the modern denominational ritual eliminates the whole element of humility: one makes great show and pomp of his humility! One who is truly humble does not seek or deliberately set up rituals by which he can demonstrate his humility!

So the modern denominational ritual violates both aspects of what the Lord intended: It is not really an act of humility, and it does not really meet a need. It is nothing like what the Lord really did.

(7) The fact Jesus said more than once that the disciples did not understand what He was doing, indicates that simply washing feet was not the real point of the lesson — they could clearly see He was doing that (note John 13:7,12).

### ***What then was the lesson Jesus intended to teach?***

Perhaps there is even more to it than this, but at least this much seems to be involved: The 12 had disputed among themselves about which of them would have the greatest place of honor in Jesus' kingdom (see notes above). Jesus' act showed that what is important is **service**, not **authority** or greatness in man's ways of looking at greatness. (Cf. Matthew 20:20-28.)

The disciples needed a lesson on having the **humility** to **serve** one another with **kindness**, rather than competing with one another to see who can excel others in honor and power. The 12 refused to humble themselves to serve the others in this way. So, Jesus took the opportunity to serve them and thereby teach them the lesson of **humble service** to meet the needs of others, rather than striving to excel in honor and power. If the **Lord** performed this kind of humble service, surely the **disciples** should do the same. To make this a ritual in the church assembly misses the point.

Compare this to Luke 10:37 in which Jesus had plainly described a specific act of kindness done by a man (the Samaritan), and He then commands others to "go and do likewise" — just like in John 13. Yet we know He wasn't saying to do just or even primarily the specific thing the man did (help someone beaten by robbers), but rather to show care and kindness to help people in whatever their need.

The application to today would be that anytime others really need our help, we should be kind enough to be willing to serve in whatever capacity they need, no matter how humble, not thinking we are too good to do certain tasks. In certain cases, people today may need their feet washed (such as elderly people, sick people, or children who cannot bathe themselves, etc.), though this would be much less common in our society than in theirs. But there are plenty of other opportunities to serve, and we should be humble enough to do so.

Verses 18-20

13. What passage did Jesus quote in v18, what did it mean, and to whom did Jesus apply it?

14. Why did Jesus make predictions about future events? How would it help the apostles to know what was about to happen?

15. **Application:** What does this tell us about the purpose of prophecy?

16. Explain the principle of v20 and give another passage where a similar idea is stated.

### ***Jesus predicts Judas' betrayal.***

Jesus then returned, it seems, to His reference to Judas as His betrayer. He had said that the disciples would be happy in doing as Jesus taught them (v17), but He knew they would not all be happy in it. One of them whom He had chosen was Judas, who would betray Jesus and then end his own life. This would fulfill the passage of one who would turn against the very one he ate bread with (Psalm 41:9).

Jesus had chosen Judas, not to salvation, but to be an apostle. But He knew what kind of man Judas was. Judas was wicked already (see notes on v2). Jesus nevertheless had chosen Him, knowing the result would fulfill Scripture. Judas did not sin in order to fulfill Scripture, nor did God compel him to so act. But knowing that Judas would be a betrayer, God had predicted it ahead of time.

He warned them of this ahead of time so they could understand and believe when it was fulfilled. It seems that this was true of a number of things Jesus said. He knew they would not understand what He said at the time He spoke it. And when He died there would be great temptation to them to think that He had been a failure or not the Messiah whom they thought. But if

He told them ahead of time what to expect, even though they did not understand at the time He said it, yet when the event later occurred they would realize what He meant and that He had anticipated these events all along. This would strengthen their faith in Him and their conviction that what had happened was not a failure but had been God's will.

Then He assured them that whoever received those whom He sent would receive Him, and whoever received Him would receive the One who sent Him (see Luke 10:16; Matthew 10:40). After the fulfillment of those things Jesus had been describing, He had a work for them to do. In that work, they would be received by some people and not by others. He wanted them to know that the treatment they received for doing His work was the same treatment being given to Jesus and His Father (as far as they were concerned).

Verses 21,22

17. What future event did Jesus directly predict in v21, and how did He feel about it?

18. What question did this raise in the minds of the apostles?

### *Jesus then more specifically predicts the betrayal.*

This was the night before Jesus' death and shortly before He was betrayed and arrested. He was obviously quite distressed over the suffering He would endure (as He later expressed more fully in the garden). He had already referred to the fact they were not all clean and one of them would turn against Him (vv 2,18). As He continued His deep sorrow over this, He determined to tell them more specifically what would happen. This prediction is also recorded in other accounts in Matthew 26:21ff; Mark 14:18ff; Luke 22:21ff.

He said very definitely that one of them would betray Him. It is bad enough to sin against your Master, to be unfaithful in fulfilling your duties to Him. But to betray Him is to take sides with His enemies and, worse yet, to make use of your special position as a disciple to enable you to aid the enemy in defeating your master. There are few things more hated and despised than the act of betraying one's own cause, but how much greater when one betrays the very Son of God. Yet Jesus was saying one of them would betray Him.

The disciples in fact would all fail Him before the night was over, but none of them (except Judas) expected to do such a thing. They all considered themselves to be true to Him. They no doubt loved Him, though they deeply misunderstood much of His intent. But to think that one of them would betray Him was no doubt a severe blow to them.

Other accounts show that Judas had already made the necessary arrangements to deliver Jesus to His enemies for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus knew He had to die, but He said that the one who betrayed Him would have been better off had he not been born.

Other accounts say the disciples began each one to ask if he was the one to do this terrible thing. Jesus said it was one of them who ate from the very dish He was eating from. When Judas asked if he was the one, Jesus gave an affirmative that showed He knew who it was. Apparently, however, Judas asked this question and received the answer privately, since John later records that the other disciples did not understand Judas was the one.

Again, the fact God knew who would do this does not mean that He compelled that person or predestined him to do it. God knew from the beginning how the Jews would treat Jesus and how Judas would act. These men were already evil men long before the betrayal and crucifixion. This was their choice, resulting from the influence of Satan (Luke 22:3). But knowing the kind of people they were, God dealt with them in such a way that their evil character led them to do what God foreknew would happen. Evil men, when treated with love and goodness, will often react with evil and malice. Such was the case here. Jesus had done nothing but good to Judas, yet Judas turned against him.

Verses 23-26

19. Who was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and where was he reclining?
20. What question did this disciple ask of Jesus, and who urged him to ask it?
21. How did Jesus answer the question?

### *John asks Jesus who the betrayer might be.*

John no doubt here refers to himself as the one whom Jesus' loved (see our introduction to the book). He was leaning on Jesus' bosom. Presumably they reclined at the table (rather than sitting in chairs as we do), each lying on his side with his head at the table and his feet away from it. In this way, John was very close to Jesus and leaning back could even lean against Him. Peter made a motion to him to ask Jesus who it was that would betray Him.

When John asked, Jesus said it was the one to whom He was about to give a sop - piece of bread of meat that had been dipped in a broth or sauce. Then He gave it to Judas. Apparently, this too was done quietly (John was so close this would be easy to do), for John proceeds to say that no one else knew what Judas was going to do.

John, as the author of this account, however, is able to here give his personal testimony that Jesus knew beforehand who it was that would betray Him.

Verses 27-30

22. Whose power influenced Judas? What did Jesus tell Judas after answering John's question? (Thought question: Why would Jesus tell Judas this?)
23. What did the other disciples think Jesus meant for Judas to do?

### *Judas then leaves the meeting.*

Satan then entered into Judas and Jesus told him to do quickly the thing he intended to do. Satan had already influenced Judas to bargain with the rulers to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14). John's statement here appears to mean that, at this time, Judas became fully set in his heart to go through with it. Perhaps the fact that he realized Jesus knew his intent also provoked Judas to proceed to give in to Satan and accomplish the betrayal before Jesus could do something to prevent it.

Note that, when men do evil (including when Judas did evil) it is because they give in to the influence of Satan, not because God compels men to do evil or predestines them to do so. Judas acted as he did because he gave in to the influence of Satan, not of God. But Judas had the power to allow Satan into his life or not. If he gave it to Satan, it was by his own evil choice.

Jesus told him to do it quickly. Perhaps this is similar to our expression of "get it over with." Sometimes people are determined to do something we object to; but if they are determined to do it, it is better to be done with it. Jesus is not justifying or condoning the act, let alone encouraging it. It was a shame it had to be done; but if Judas was going to do it, it was better to have it over with than to continue the waiting. Jesus also knew the act was necessary for the salvation of the world, and He knew it had to be done at the Passover, so He told Judas to get on with it.

John said no one knew why Jesus had said this. Presumably, this means no one except John. Though perhaps John means that, though he now understood that Jesus was betraying Jesus, yet he did not understand that Jesus here was telling Judas to proceed immediately with the betrayal. He may have thought the betrayal would happen at some future time.

The others thought perhaps Judas was being told to take some of the money from the bag and buy something for the feast or give something to the poor. In any case, Judas left.

It was already night, so the next several chapters in John's account, up till the day of His death, all occurred on the night before He was slain. John gives us far more information than do the other writers about the things Jesus said on that final night.

## Jesus' Final Discourse to the Apostles — 13:31-16:33

Verses 31-33

24. Explain how the events Jesus was predicting would lead to glory for Himself and His Father.

25. What did Jesus say would happen to Him (v33)?

### *Jesus predicts that He is about to leave the disciples.*

Knowing He was about to die, Jesus gave final instructions to the eleven. He discussed topics relating to His death, its effects, and teachings to prepare the apostles for things to come. These instructions were given after Judas had left (v30).

He began by plainly telling them that He was going to be with them only a little while longer. He would leave and they would seek for Him. But as He had told the Jews, they could not go where He was going (see notes on 7:33,34; see also below on 13:36ff).

He spoke of this as a time of His glory. He would be glorified and would glorify God. God would in turn glorify Him, because He had glorified God.

This would be a very difficult concept to understand, no doubt, if Jesus faced simply a normal death. However, this was no ordinary death. Jesus would be the sinless Son of God, dying as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. And following His death, He would be raised from the dead and eventually ascend to the right hand of the Father.

The glory was not in the manner of the death, but in the effects it would produce. Jesus' glory in heaven and His glory in the eyes of men came after the death was accomplished. The death itself was a horrible torment, that Jesus dreaded and was ashamed to have to face (see also Hebrews 12:2,3; Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 1:18-21).

Note that Jesus here called the disciples "little children," a term expressing His love and care for them. This may help us understand the reference to Jesus as the "eternal Father" in Isaiah 9:6.

Verses 34,35

26. What new command did Jesus give them? What was "new" about this command?

27. What does our love show to other people? (Thought question: How would our love demonstrate discipleship?)

28. **Special Assignment:** List other *passages* regarding love. How did Jesus' love differ from what people in the world consider love to be?

### *Jesus left a new commandment for His disciples.*

Preparing to leave the disciples, Jesus wanted them to understand the proper attitude they should have for one another. He gave them a new commandment: They should love one another as Jesus loved them. God has always commanded His people to love one another. The command was new in that it is based on Jesus' example of love.

Jesus had just washed their feet to show them His humble willingness to serve their good. He had done this because they lacked love for one another but were instead filled with pride, arguing about who would be the greatest.

However, Jesus had shown them love throughout His lifetime. And yet the love He referred to here is more than just the love during His lifetime. Also included was the love He was about to show in dying for them. He would soon say that this is the greatest kind of love (15:13).

Love is a sincere concern for the wellbeing of others. Love for others is commanded in many passages (Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 6:27,28,31-33; 10:25-37; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13). Love for our fellow-disciples or other Christians is especially commanded (John 15:12-17; Ephesians 4:2,31-5:2; Philippians 2:2,3; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9,10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 3:8,9; 4:8; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:10-18,23; 4:8-5:3).

The world plays lip service to love, yet perverts the concept and often even uses it to justify evil and gross perversions. The kind of love Jesus is talking about is expressed by obedience to His commands (John 14:15,21-24,31; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:6; Hebrews 10:24; 1 John 2:3-6,15-17; 5:2,3; 2 John 5,6; Revelation 3:19). Strangely, many people think they are showing love even as they disobey His commands. Such is the very opposite of the love Jesus is here commanding.

Jesus further said that practicing this love would indicate to the world that we are His disciples. This follows because a disciple is one who imitates his Lord and strives to be like Him. Jesus is here saying we especially should imitate His love. Again, love requires obedience to His commands, so this does not mean we are His disciples if we just have some close or deep feeling for one another. Love must show itself in treating one another as Jesus' word commands.

Yet strangely many people claim to be part of Jesus' church and think they are His disciples simply because they have strict concepts of how to worship God and how the church should be organized and function. This is definitely part of loving Jesus and our brethren. But some make demands in these areas that Jesus Himself never made and others show little regard for the needs of their brethren, treating them like they are dirt when they hold other viewpoints. Such does not prove they are Jesus' disciples but just the opposite.

True love requires both doctrinal soundness and a sincere concern for how we treat one another. Anything less is not the love Jesus showed for us, is not the love He commanded here, and surely does not prove we are His disciples.

Verses 36-38

29. What question did Peter ask (v36), and how did Jesus answer? (Thought question: Where was Jesus going, why could the disciples not follow, and how would they follow later?)

20. What claim did Peter make in v37?

31. What did Jesus predict in response? (Thought question: What lessons should we learn from Peter's over-confidence?)

***Jesus predicts Peter's denial.***

Jesus had said the disciples could not follow Him where He was going. Peter asked where Jesus was going. Jesus said, though they could not follow Him at that time, they would follow Him later. Clearly, He is describing death and going to be with the Father in eternity (see 7:33-36; 14:2,12,28; 16:5,7,10,16,17,28; 13:1,3; 17:11,13; 20:17). The disciples would go there, not immediately, but eventually. The point is that Jesus was leaving and the result would be a very difficult time for the disciples. Perhaps He is also referring to the manner of His death: He would die as an act of supreme sacrifice for the truth and for the salvation of others. None of the disciples could die in that sense, but they could and would eventually die as martyrs for the cause of truth.

Peter asked why He could not follow. He said He was willing even to die for Jesus. Apparently, he thought Jesus was saying that the disciples lacked courage or commitment to follow Him. Obviously, he did not understand the nature of Jesus' mission and where Jesus was going.

As recorded in other accounts, Peter boldly declared that, no matter how many other people stumbled over Jesus, nothing would ever make him stumble. He said he would even die for Jesus (Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:33,34).

These are bold words, but much easier said than done. 1 Corinthians 10:12 — Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Many make bold professions of what they would do in God's service. We are convinced we will do what is right and not fall into error. Yet, when the time of temptation comes, it is not nearly as easy as it was to talk about it.

Jesus plainly predicted that Peter would betray Him three times that very night. He did not just say Peter would stumble, but that in fact He would deny Him, and not just once, but three times, and not just sometime, but that very night before the cock crowed. It was a very explicit

and powerful prophecy, and was precisely fulfilled (see Matthew 26:69ff; Mark 14:66ff; Luke 22:55ff). Such ability to predict the future is another proof that Jesus was a true prophet of God.

But let us learn some lessons from Peter. His error is now obvious to us, but it would not have been at the time. There was truth in his statements. He would have fought to the death for Jesus, and he attempted to do so — John 18:10. The problem came when he did not understand what Jesus was doing. When he saw Jesus surrender without a fight, Peter apparently lost faith.

This shows us the importance of understanding truth. Courage and boldness are needed. But if we don't understand what God expects, we will lose heart and sin in time of hardship.

In contrasting Matthew 26:34; John 13:38; Luke 22:31-34 to Mark 14:20, we see that Matthew's account predicts three denials "before the cock crows," but Mark has "before the cock crows twice." This difference in prophecy is paralleled in the accounts of the fulfillment (cf. Matthew 26:74,75 to Mark 14:68,72; Luke 22:60,61; John 18:27).

There is no contradiction. The cocks crow twice in the night, around midnight and then again around morning. The midnight one had no particular significance so people ignored it. The morning crowing signaled the beginning of day, it had significance to people, so it is "the cock crowing" — i.e., the important one (cf. Mark 13:35). John and Matthew spoke only of the morning one, while Mark recorded both.

© Copyright David E. Pratte, June 3, 2008

These study notes are copyrighted but are made available free to individuals for personal study. They must not be reproduced for distribution (other individuals may download their own copy from our web site). In no case may these commentaries be reproduced in any form for sale or a financial fee. All rights reserved. To see our copyright guidelines for more details go to

[www.gospelway.com/copyrite.htm](http://www.gospelway.com/copyrite.htm)

**For other free Bible commentary study notes, please visit**

[www.gospelway.com/commentary/](http://www.gospelway.com/commentary/).

**To find topical study notes or online Bible courses about Bible topics, Christianity, and Christian doctrine, see the following links:**

**Free online Bible Study Courses & Lessons** – [www.biblestudylessons.com](http://www.biblestudylessons.com)

**Study our Online Bible Study Guides (the Gospel Way)** – [www.gospelway.com](http://www.gospelway.com)

**Free e-mail Bible study newsletter** - [www.gospelway.com/update\\_subscribe.htm](http://www.gospelway.com/update_subscribe.htm)

Information about copyright permission or restrictions - [www.gospelway.com/copyrite.htm](http://www.gospelway.com/copyrite.htm)