

# EXPLANATION OF 43<sup>RD</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## JOHN 13 (A.D. 70-95)

### INTRODUCTION

In John 13 Jesus begins his teaching during the eating of the Passover meal. He gives a new commandment to love one another and illustrates this by washing the feet of his disciples.

Luke does not give the impression that he writes his gospel in chronological order.

But John seems to write his gospel in chronological order (cf. 13:2,21,30,31).

The following events took place during the celebration of the Passover meal:

- The washing of the feet (13:1-17)<sup>1</sup>.
- The question about who of the disciples was the most important<sup>2</sup>.
- The prediction about the betrayer and the vehement reaction of the disciples on that (13:18-30)<sup>3</sup>.
- The new commandment (13:31-35).
- The prediction about the denial (13:36-38)<sup>4</sup>.
- The institution of the Lord's Supper<sup>5</sup>. John omits this because the other three Gospels relate that.
- The farewell address and high priestly prayer (chapter 14-17).

### OUTLINE

(I) 13:1. The last Passover.

(II) 13:2. Judas the betrayer.

- a. Judas was a pretender.
- b. Judas was greedy and a thief.
- c. Judas was a betrayer.
- d. Judas was chosen, but not blessed.
- e. Judas remains fully responsible for his act of betrayal.
- f. Judas became demon-possessed.
- g. Judas killed himself.

(III) 13:3-17. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.

- a. The bathing of the body symbolised Christ's entire work of salvation, called justification.
- b. The washing of the feet symbolised Christ's continuing work of salvation, called sanctification.
- c. The washing of the feet is a lesson in genuine Christian service (13:12-17).

(IV) 13:18-30. The prediction about the betrayer.

- a. Jesus predicted that one of his disciples was going to betray him (13:18-21).
- b. The reactions of the disciples on the prediction of Jesus (13:22-25).
- c. The clue to the betrayer (13:26-30).

(V) 13:31-32. Jesus glorified.

(VI) 13:33. The presence of Jesus.

(VII) 13:34-35. The new commandment.

(VIII) 13:36-38. The prediction about the denial.

### EXPLANATION

#### (I) 13:1. The last Passover.

**13:1.** Now Jesus, knowing (vpra) before the feast of the Passover that his hour to depart (vsaa) out of this world (and to go) to the Father had arrived (viaa), having loved (vpaa) his own in the world, loved (viaa) them to the end (the uttermost, the full extent).

Some interpret John 13:1 as "Now *twenty-four hours before* the Passover meal ..." and assume that the evening meal described in John 13:1-2 was NOT the same as the Passover meal mentioned in John 18:28. Their second assumption is that John 13:29 is an instruction to Judas to go and buy something needed for the Passover meal referred to in John 18:28.

However, both assumptions are wrong. The word 'feast' in the Old Testament<sup>6</sup> and in the New Testament (2:23; 4:45; 6:4; 11:55-56; 12:20; 13:1,29)<sup>7</sup> does not refer to the Passover meal, which was celebrated on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread, but to the entire seven-day celebration of the feast of Unleavened Bread, also called 'the Passover' in Luke 22:1.

Likewise the word 'feast' refers to the entire seven-day celebration of the feast of Tabernacles (Booths) (7:2,8,10,11,14,37). John 7:14 clearly speaks of "halfway through the (seven-day) feast" and John 7:37 clearly distinguished between "the last and greatest day" and "the (seven-day) feast"!

<sup>1</sup> cf. Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17-18a; Luke 22:14-16

<sup>2</sup> Luke 22:24-27

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 26:21-25; Mark 14:18b-21; Luke 22:21-23

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:34-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:33-34

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20

<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 23:5-6

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 26:5; Mark 14:2; Luke 2:41-42; 22:1

Moreover, by comparing the three most important events during the Passover meal in all four Gospels, we can clearly see that they all refer to *the same Passover meal*:

- the argument about who was the greatest (and the consequent washing of the feet)<sup>8</sup>
- the announcement about the betrayer<sup>9</sup>
- the announcement that Peter would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed the next morning<sup>10</sup>.

One cannot assume that three identical events occurred at different meals on two different evenings.

*We must conclude that the meal described in John chapter 13 refers to the Passover meal, which was celebrated on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread. There is absolutely no contradiction between the account of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and the Gospel of John!*

Jesus had foreknowledge about coming events, like his departure to heaven (2:4; 7:6; 12:23; 13:11,18; 18:4; 19:28).

His own people were those people God the Father had given to him (17:6,9,11,20). ‘The world’ is here the theatre of human history, the realm of people on earth (cf. 1:9). He would love them to the full extend or to the end. This he showed in washing their feet and praying for them (15:13)!

## **(II) 13:2. Judas the betrayer.**

**13:2.** And the evening meal happening (was being served)(vppn), the devil had already thrown (vpra) into the heart of Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, (the plan) to betray (vsaa) him (Jesus).

Thus, Judas was looking for an opportunity to carry out his evil plan. He did not want to be expelled from the Jewish synagogue (cf. 9:22) and had negotiated a plan with the Jewish religious leaders and teachers to arrest Jesus (cf. 11:57).

### **a. Judas was a pretender.**

In John 6:66-71, many of the disciples of Jesus turned back and no longer followed him. But Judas, by remaining with Jesus, *pretended* to be a true disciple of Jesus. Already at that time Jesus said, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” ‘Devil’ means slanderer or false accuser. *Jesus said that Judas was a servant or instrument of the devil.* His devilish character appears especially from the fact that he falsely pretended to be a true disciple of Jesus. While many others had deserted Jesus Christ, because they felt that they could not agree with Jesus and the spiritual nature of his teaching, Judas remained as if he fully agreed with Jesus. Jesus knew all the time what Judas would do in the future. *This is a warning for people who hate the distinctive Christian teachings, but prefer to remain in the Christian Church and drag it along with them to utter ruin.* When John wrote his Gospel many years later, he added a note explaining that this individual was Judas Iscariot.

### **b. Judas was greedy and a thief.**

John 12:4-6 describes Judas as a greedy person and a thief. While Mary spent much money to buy expensive ointment to anoint Jesus, Judas criticised her action as a waste of money. He said, “Why was this perfume not sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages!” John commented, “Judas did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was *a thief*; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.” The generosity of Mary and the selfishness of Judas were striking!

### **c. Judas was a betrayer.**

John 13:2 describes the manner in which Judas was going to deliver Jesus up. It says, “The devil had already cast the plan to betray Jesus in the heart of Judas Iscariot”. Among the twelve disciples of Jesus, there was one man who was so indescribably low in character, that he was fully determined to betray Jesus Christ. The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him (11:57). Judas was fully resolved to actually deliver Jesus up by treachery into the hands of Jesus’ enemies. He had agreed with them to do it for thirty pieces of silver. Not one of the other disciples knew about this or even suspected this. It was the devil that had injected this vile plan into the mind of Judas. After some time of following Jesus as his disciple, Judas discovered that being a disciple of Jesus would not be worthwhile. He was a greedy person and loved money more than Jesus. He was a calculating person, determined not to be put out of the synagogue (9:22), but instead to cultivate the favour of the Jewish authorities by showing them when and where they could arrest Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus knew all the time that Judas was going to betray him (13:11). His betrayal is described in John 18:2-5 and Matthew 26:47-56.

### **d. Judas was chosen, but not blessed.**

In John 13:17-18, Jesus said to his disciples that they would be blessed if they did the things he had taught them. Then he continued saying, “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me’.”

When Jesus had prayerfully chosen twelve disciples, he *chose them with the purpose* to be his apostles (to be with him and to send them out)<sup>11</sup>. But *he did not necessarily choose them for salvation*. He had made no mistake with Judas.

<sup>8</sup> compare Luke 22:14-15,24-27 with John 13:12-17

<sup>9</sup> compare Mark 14:17-21 and Matthew 26:20-25 with John 13:18,21-30

<sup>10</sup> compare Matthew 26:34, Mark 14:30 and Luke 22:34 with John 13:38

<sup>11</sup> Mark 3:14; Luke 6:12-13

Jesus literally said, “I know what kind of men I have chosen” (13:18). He also knew the heart and mind of Judas. He knew all the time that Judas was a pretender and could not be trusted. *Jesus had chosen Judas for a very special purpose, namely, to fulfil the Old Testament prophecy of betrayal.*

This prophecy is written in Psalm 41:9 and Psalm 55:9-14. In it David refers to his counsellor, Ahitophel, or a person similar to him, who had conspired a plot against him. In 2 Samuel 15-17 we read how Ahitophel plotted together with Absalom to kill David. David said that it was not an enemy who insulted him and rose against him, but it was his friend and counsellor who betrayed him. “My companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.” David was this man’s benefactor. This man had eaten his bread, and yet he suddenly kicked David violently, just like a horse that attacked its owner without warning. Therefore David prayed and asked God to confuse the counsel of wicked people like Ahitophel and to confound their speech<sup>12</sup>. In the light of the Bible, any action like that of Ahitophel merited strong disapproval and revulsion! This prophecy was certainly true of Judas Iscariot. He had kept up an appearance of friendship with Jesus until the very end when he kissed him! Not one of the disciples suspected Judas. Judas was a two-faced, double-crosser, who deserved to be despised.

#### **e. Judas remains fully responsible for his act of betrayal.**

In John 13:19 Jesus says, “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will *continue* to believe that I am he.” The betrayal of Judas was no surprise for God or Jesus. In no way did his betrayal disturb God’s eternal plan. On the contrary, his treachery fulfilled God’s prophecy and God’s plan!

Jesus predicted his betrayal for two reasons: he wanted to warn Judas and he wanted to fortify the faith of his other disciples. Jesus had warned Judas before (6:70-71) and now again, that he would not be blessed if he carried out his secret evil plan. Judas should have pondered the words of Jesus. Jesus warned Judas in order to fix the responsibility for his act entirely on himself.

But Jesus also said this to fortify the faith of his other disciples. He knew that the treachery of Judas would upset the disciples and undermine their faith. They might begin to doubt Jesus and doubt God’s plan through Jesus by thinking that Jesus became the victim of a complot unknown to them. When they would soon learn that Judas was a betrayer, they would also realise that Jesus had known it all along. They would know that what was happening was not a frustration, but a fulfilment of God’s plan. Jesus said this to his disciples before his betrayal, trial and crucifixion so that his disciples would *continue* to believe that he is whatever he claimed to be: he really is the ‘I AM’ of Exodus 3:14!

#### **f. Judas became demon-possessed.**

John 13:27 says, “Satan entered into Judas”. The devil had put an evil suggestion into Judas’ mind and heart to betray Jesus for money. Judas did not resist the devil, but acted upon his suggestion. Then the devil put himself into Judas’ heart. This is his usual method of procedure with people who do not resist him. The devil took full possession of the betrayer’s soul. Now Judas had become a completely hardened individual. He had hardened himself against the warnings of Jesus. Now warnings will no more be issued. Jesus was through with Judas. Towards the end of the Passover meal, Jesus said to Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly”. In spite of the fact that John and Peter had just been shocked by the news that Judas would be a betrayer, they did not understand what Judas was actually going to do. Judas was such a good pretender, that none of disciples ever suspected him. Judas however, knew that his plot had been discovered and he quickly left to carry it out<sup>13</sup>!

#### **g. Judas killed himself.**

The death of Judas is described in Matthew 27:3-10 and Acts 1:18-19.

### **(III) 13:3-17. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.**

**13:3.** (Jesus), knowing (fully aware of the facts)<sup>14</sup> (vp<sub>ra</sub>) that the Father had given (via<sub>a</sub>) to him all things into his hands<sup>15</sup> and he had come (via<sub>a</sub>) from God and was going (vip<sub>a</sub>) to God,

**13:4.** rose (vip<sub>p</sub>) from the meal, took off (vip<sub>a</sub>) his clothes (outer garment and under garment) and having taken (vp<sub>aa</sub>) a towel (loincloth), girded (via<sub>a</sub>) himself around (i.e. tied it around his waist).

**13:5.** Then<sup>16</sup> he poured (vip<sub>a</sub>) water into the washbasin and began (viam)<sup>17</sup> to wash (vn<sub>pa</sub>) the feet of the disciples, and to wipe (vn<sub>pa</sub>) (them) with the towel, with which he was (via<sub>a</sub>) girded (vpr<sub>m</sub>)(i.e. which was tied around his waist).

**13:6.** So he came (vip<sub>n</sub>) to Simon Peter, who said (vip<sub>a</sub>) to him, “Lord, are you (going to) washing (vip<sub>a</sub>) my feet?”

**13:7.** Jesus answered (via<sub>o</sub>) and said (via<sub>a</sub>) to him, “What I am doing (vip<sub>a</sub>) you do not know (realise, know by reflection)<sup>18</sup> (vira) now, but you will understand (know by observation and experience)<sup>19</sup> (vif<sub>d</sub>) hereafter.”

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<sup>12</sup> Psalm 55:9

<sup>13</sup> John 13:27-30

<sup>14</sup> G: oida

<sup>15</sup> cf. Matthew 28:18

<sup>16</sup> G: eita

<sup>17</sup> G: archomai. To begin

<sup>18</sup> G: oida

<sup>19</sup> G: ginóskó

**13:8.** Peter said (vipa) to him. “In no way (double negative) shall you wash (vsaa) my feet forever!” Jesus answered (viao) him, “If I do not wash<sup>20</sup> (vsaa) you, you have (vipa) no share with me.”

**13:9.** Simon Peter said (vipa) to him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”

**13:10.** Jesus said (vipa) to him, “He who has bathed<sup>21</sup> (vpre) has (vipa) no need except<sup>22</sup> to have feet washed<sup>23</sup> (vnam) but always is (vipa) clean altogether. And you (the disciples) are permanently (vipa) clean, but not all (of you).”

**13:11.** For he knew (by relationship and divine intuition)<sup>24</sup> (vila) who was betraying (vppa) him. Therefore he said (viaa), “Not all (of you) are (vipa) clean.”

Jesus was fully conscious that he was God’s only-begotten Son and therefore the rightful heir of all things<sup>25</sup>. He was fully aware of the fact that he had once for all in the history of this world come from God and stood on the point of returning to God. Therefore Jesus gave himself to teach his disciples some final very important things: He had not come to be crowned an earthly king (6:15), but to serve people in a very unique way<sup>26</sup>. His followers (Christians) should follow his example in being servants (13:14-15) and especially Christian leaders should follow his example and be the least of all the servants<sup>27</sup>! He would be betrayed, denied and abandoned by his own people. But he was not going to abandon them. He would send his Representative (the Holy Spirit) to be with them and in them forever. He was going to prepare the future place for them in heaven (and later on the new earth). He is the only Way to God and the only Source of a fruitful life on earth. The evil world would hate his followers, but he is praying for them.

Jesus and his disciples had walked from Bethany to Jerusalem and their feet were dirty from the dust. Under such circumstances, it was the general practice in Israel that the lowest servant in a household washed the feet of the guests before the meal started. Years ago, John the Baptist had regarded himself as unworthy to kneel before Jesus, untie his sandals and wash his feet (1:27). But in the Upper Room where they were eating the Passover meal there was no servant! When the disciples came into the room, they must have seen the washbasin and towel, but nobody was willing to be the lowest servant! All the disciples were too proud. In Luke 22, Luke tells how the disciples had argued on the way about who was the greatest among them. This probably continued when they had to decide the order in which they would recline around the table. Thus, all twelve disciples and Jesus reclined around the U-shaped table on couches with their dirty feet sticking out at the end.

Although Jesus was fully conscious that he was God the Son, he became the lowest servant<sup>28</sup>. Eastern slaves wore a towel. They tied one end around their waist and used the other end to dry the feet of those they washed. Washing was done by pouring water over the feet from one vessel into another<sup>29</sup>.

#### **a. The bathing of the body symbolised Christ’s entire work of salvation, called justification.**

The bathing of the body symbolises Christ’s entire work of salvation during his state of humiliation, called justification. Christ’s state of humiliation included his incarnation, becoming a human being like us, except for sin; his humble service; his rejection by men, his suffering and finally his death on the cross.

The Bible does not say in what order Jesus washed their feet. It only tells what happened when he came to Peter. All the disciples must have felt ashamed and embarrassed that Jesus was washing their feet, but Peter, as impetuous and impulsive as always, reacted in shock. But Jesus said that Peter and the other disciples would only know by observation and experience what he had done after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Only then would Christ’s work during his humiliation on earth be fully understood (16:13).

At first, Peter absolutely refused to be washed. Then Jesus answered, “Unless I *once for all* wash you, you *continue* to have no part with me” (13:8). This means the same as, “Unless you are born again (anew, from above) of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (3:5). Jesus meant, that unless he cleansed Peter from his sins by means of his entire work of salvation during his state of humiliation, of which the washing of the feet was only a part, Peter would never share with Jesus in the results of his salvation work!

He added: “He who has bathed has no need except to have feet washed, but is permanently and altogether clean” (13:10). The bathing of the body (from head to feet) symbolised Christ’s entire work of salvation, called regeneration or justification, and this happens once for all time. The blood of Christ washes away all the sins of the believer<sup>30</sup> and thus justifies him completely and forever<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> G: niptó

<sup>21</sup> G: louomai

<sup>22</sup> G: ei mé

<sup>23</sup> G: niptó

<sup>24</sup> G: oida

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 2:8

<sup>26</sup> Mark 10:45

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:1-4

<sup>28</sup> cf. Philippians 2:5-8

<sup>29</sup> cf. 2 Kings 3:11

<sup>30</sup> Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:7

<sup>31</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18a

The disciples remain *permanently* clean because of the word Jesus Christ had spoken to them (perfect tense) (15:3). This truth keeps ringing in their ears! Christians have once for all<sup>32</sup> been made holy *and remain in this holy state* (perfect tense), and have been made perfect *and remain in this perfect state* (perfect tense) for ever through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ<sup>33</sup>!

**b. The washing of the feet symbolised Christ's continuing work of salvation, called sanctification.**

The washing of the feet symbolises Christ's continuing work of salvation after a person has been born again or justified. This is called sanctification. After Peter heard the importance of having his feet washed by Jesus, the impulsive Peter jumped to the opposite extreme and wanted Jesus to wash his head and hands as well! Peter thought that the greater the area washed, the more numerous would be the blessings received. Peter was very impulsive and fell into extremes. He walked on water, but then sinks like a rock<sup>34</sup>. He confessed Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and then rebuked Jesus because he said that he was going to be crucified<sup>35</sup>. He promised to lay down his life for Jesus, but shortly afterwards he denied him three times<sup>36</sup>. He ate with Gentiles, but then in the presence of other Jews he withdrew from them<sup>37</sup>.

In Israel, a person going to a banquet would take a bath (cleansing his whole body) before leaving for the feast. Upon his arrival at the banqueting-hall he did not need to take another bath. Only his dusty feet were washed by the lowest slave in the household.

But Jesus was not speaking of physical washing, but of 'spiritual washing'! In John chapter 3, Jesus spoke about 'spiritual rebirth' to Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin; in chapter 4 about 'spiritual water' to the Samaritan woman; and in chapter 6 about 'spiritual bread' to the crowd of Jews. Now in chapter 13, he spoke about 'spiritual cleansing' to his disciples. At the beginning of his spiritual journey, a person only needs one spiritual bath, which represents regeneration or justification. But throughout his journey he would need the spiritual cleansing of his feet, which represents daily sanctification. While *regeneration or justification is a unique event, sanctification is a continual process in life*. All the disciples, except Judas, believed in Jesus and his Word and therefore they were already *permanently* spiritually clean (born again). They already shared in the salvation, which Christ merited for them. Now they only needed to be sanctified more and more<sup>38</sup>. Jesus knew *with divine intuition all the time* (perfect tense) that Judas was going to betray him (13:11). The fact that Christians need their feet to be washed again and again ought to keep them humble and willing to also wash other people's feet. The fact that Christians need to be forgiven and cleansed again and again<sup>39</sup>, ought to make them willing to wholeheartedly forgive other people their sins (13:13-15)<sup>40</sup>.

**c. The washing of the feet is a lesson in genuine Christian service (13:12-17).**

**13:12.** So when he had washed (finished washing)(viaa) their feet, had put on (viaa) his garments and had reclined (had taken his place) (viaa) again, he said (viaa) to them, "Do you understand (know by observation and experience)<sup>41</sup> (vipa) what I have done with permanent effect (vira) to you?"

**13:13.** "You call (vipa) me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and you are saying (vipa) this correctly, for (that is what) I am<sup>42</sup> (vipa).

**13:14.** If I, therefore, your Lord and Teacher, have washed (viaa) your feet, you also ought (vipa) to wash (vnpa) one another's feet.

**13:15.** I have given (viaa) you an example (pattern)<sup>43</sup> in order as I did (viaa) to you, you also should do (vspa).

**13:16.** I tell (vipa) you the truth, the servant is (vipa) not greater than his lord (master), neither (is) he who is sent<sup>44</sup> greater than he who sent<sup>45</sup> (vpaa) him.

**13:17.** If you know<sup>46</sup> (vira) these things, blessed are (vipa) you if you do (vspa) these things."

**Jesus demonstrated that he is the Servant.** Jesus washing the feet of his disciples is an example that all Christians should follow. The disciples began to understand the third meaning at this time: namely, that Christians should always be servants (13:12). But they only understood the first two meanings later after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: namely, that Christians need to be born-again once in their life (i.e. justification) and thereafter throughout their life Christians need to receive forgiveness of their sins again and again (i.e. sanctification)(16:13).

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<sup>32</sup> G: ephapax

<sup>33</sup> Hebrews 10:10,14

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 14:28-30

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 16:16,22

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 26:33, 69-75

<sup>37</sup> Galatians 2:11-12

<sup>38</sup> 1 John 1:9

<sup>39</sup> 1 John 1:9

<sup>40</sup> cf. Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35

<sup>41</sup> G: ginóskó

<sup>42</sup> G: eimi

<sup>43</sup> G: hupodeikma

<sup>44</sup> G: apostolos

<sup>45</sup> G: pempó

<sup>46</sup> G: oida

When Jesus had finished washing the feet of his disciples, he put on his clothes, returned to his reclining place around the low table and began to teach them.

Washing feet was an essential part of Jesus' humiliation on earth<sup>47</sup>, because only through his humiliation he would be exalted<sup>48</sup>. *Washing feet was a symbol of his work of salvation, because it symbolised the absolute necessity of regeneration or justification for every believer.* Washing feet was an example and lesson in true humility: this is how believers should behave towards one another and this is especially how Christian leaders should behave towards the people they lead. The disciples had to learn that true Christian leadership never means 'lording it over' people, but always means 'serving' them<sup>49</sup>! Servants are the most important in the Kingdom of God!

**Jesus said that he is the Lord.** The Greek word for 'Lord' is 'kurios' and this is the Greek translation of God's Hebrew name in Exodus 3:14, 'JAHWeH', which means 'I AM WHO I AM'<sup>50</sup>. Jesus is in the essence of his nature and in his authority completely equal with God the Father<sup>51</sup>!

**Jesus said that he is the Teacher.** All the teachings of Jesus in the Bible are the measure of truth: the final rule for doctrine and behaviour. With divine authority Jesus Christ teaches his disciples that because he had *once for all* washed their feet, they must *again and again* wash one another's feet. Jesus did not institute a new sacrament, ritual or command to literally wash one another's feet. He clearly calls this an 'example' (13:15) of humble service that he had shown under their very eyes. Greatness in the Kingdom of God is measured by humble service, not by position, power, fame or money! Moreover, humble service is an illustration of the great commandment "to love one another, just as Christ loved us". Of course, Christians may follow the historical examples of washing dusty feet<sup>52</sup>, but in 1 Timothy 5:10 it has spiritual significance and refers to rendering humble service, especially to strangers. In the Gospel of John washing feet is *not simply a historical example, but an authoritative spiritual teaching*:

- first, people must be born again (3:3-8);
- second, again and again people need forgiveness of their sins<sup>53</sup>;
- third, people must be willing to serve others by doing what others are not willing or not able to do, f.e. people must again and again forgive one another

Especially Christian leaders must be the greatest servants<sup>54</sup>. A slave is never greater than his master. If Jesus as Master serves as a slave, then it is never below a Christian leader's dignity to serve as a slave (13:16). Serving as a slave is not a degrading issue, but something Jesus blesses! A 'blessing' consists of calling down God's favour and grace upon someone. And Jesus blesses his followers when they not only know what he teaches, but actually do what he teaches (13:17). Note especially that an apostle (a messenger) is never an authoritarian leader, but always a servant!

#### (IV) 13:18-30. The prediction about the betrayer.

##### a. Jesus predicted that one of his disciples was going to betray him (13:18-21).

**13:18.** "I am not referring (vipa) to all of you. I know (by divine intuition)<sup>55</sup> (vira) the ones I have chosen (viam)<sup>56</sup>. But in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled (vsap), "He who eats (vppa) my bread has lifted (viaa) his heel against me."

**13:19.** From now on I am telling (vipa) you before (it) takes place (vnad) in order that when it does take place (vsad) you may continue to believe (vsaa) that I AM (vipa)<sup>57</sup> (he) (i.e. the 'I AM' of Exodus 3:14).

**13:20.** I tell (vipa) you the truth, he who receives (vppa) anyone whom I send (vsaa) receives (vipa) me, and he who receives (vppa) me receives (vipa) him who sent (vpaa) me."

**13:21.** Having said (vpaa) these things, Jesus was troubled (viap) in spirit, and he testified (viaa) and said (viaa). "I tell (vipa) you the truth, one of you will betray (vifa) me."

See Judas in John 13:2-3 above. When the betrayal, the arrest, the trials and the crucifixion would take place, the disciples must not begin to think that all is lost! All these events are an essential part of God's eternal plan for the salvation of his people. The disciples must see all these events, because Jesus Christ called them to be his witnesses and his ambassadors. They will be the eye-witnesses of his betrayal, arrest, trials, death and resurrection (15:27)<sup>58</sup>.

He chose them to be 'apostles', that is, the men he would send out as his witnesses and ambassadors. They must proclaim to the world that Jesus Christ truly lived, died and was buried and was resurrected on the third day. That is why Jesus said that whoever receives an apostle of Christ, receives Christ. And whoever receives Christ, receives God

<sup>47</sup> Philippians 2:5-8

<sup>48</sup> cf. Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12; Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>49</sup> Luke 22:24-26

<sup>50</sup> cf. John 8:24

<sup>51</sup> cf. Colossians 1:15,19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:3

<sup>52</sup> Luke 7:44

<sup>53</sup> 1 John 1:9

<sup>54</sup> Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:1-4

<sup>55</sup> G: oida

<sup>56</sup> G: eklegó

<sup>57</sup> G: egó eimi

<sup>58</sup> Acts 1:21-22

(13:20)<sup>59</sup>! Jesus Christ and his Sender are one (10:30)<sup>60</sup>. It is absolutely impossible to receive the God of the Bible, but reject Jesus Christ! The two are inseparable!

Every religion and every person who rejects Jesus Christ rejects therewith the God who revealed himself in the Bible<sup>61</sup>! There is only one God who exists<sup>62</sup> and he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Therefore receiving Jesus Christ is equal to receiving God.

Rejecting Jesus causes Jesus to be sorrowful and distressed. Then Jesus openly testified that one of his disciples was going to betray him<sup>63</sup>.

#### **b. The reactions of the disciples on the prediction of Jesus (13:22-25).**

**13:22.** The disciples kept looking at (viia) each other being at a loss<sup>64</sup> (vppm) concerning whom he was speaking (vipa).

**13:23.** There was (viia) reclining (vppn) in the bosom of Jesus one of his disciples, one whom Jesus constantly loved (viia).

**13:24.** So Simon Peter nodded (vipa) to this one to inquire<sup>65</sup> (vnad) who it was<sup>66</sup> (vopa) about whom he was speaking (vipa)."

**13:25.** So leaning back (vpaa) in this way on the chest (breast) of Jesus he said (vipa) to him, "Lord, who is (vipa) it?"

Among the disciples there was uncertainty as to which disciple Jesus meant. John was there and he describes the utter bewilderment of the disciples. They were perplexed, confused, completely at a loss where to go (the word literally means: without a way).

There were different reactions. Some with enough self-confidence said, "Surely not I, Lord?"<sup>67</sup>. Judas responded with contemptible hypocrisy, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"<sup>68</sup>. John, who was reclining next to Jesus, asked with childlike trust, "Lord, who is it? (13:25). In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me"<sup>69</sup>. But even this answer of Jesus is too general to make up who the betrayer was, because all the disciples dipped their hands with Jesus into the bowl!

The answer of Jesus could have the following intention:

- The words of Jesus could only be understood by Judas. These words warned the betrayer that his betrayal was known. God (Jesus) gives a serious warning even to people who finally perish<sup>70</sup>.
- These words of Jesus show that Jesus is fully in control of the situation. The betrayer cannot take God (Jesus) by surprise. His betrayal was decided long before (in God's eternal plan). And yet the betrayer remains fully responsible for his despicable act. Jesus knew exactly what was going to take place. He said, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written (in the Old Testament) about him. But woe to the man who betrays the Son of Man!"<sup>71</sup>
- These words of Jesus gave the disciples a chance to search themselves. Just before they had quarrelled about who of them was the most important<sup>72</sup>. So the disciples were seized by doubt and self-mistrust<sup>73</sup>.

The writer of this Gospel, the apostle John, never mentioned himself by name. He calls himself only by the expression: 'the one whom Jesus loved', here for the first time (19:26; 20:1-10; 21:7,20-24). Jesus loved all his disciples (13:1; 14:21; 15:9; 17:9,12), but this title was possibly given to John by the other disciples due to the confidential relationship they saw between Jesus and John. It is possible that John received the gift of understanding Jesus, but he never seeks honour for himself, otherwise he would have mentioned his name as the author of this Gospel. On the contrary, he seeks the honour of Jesus who loves him. John glories in the love Jesus has for him<sup>74</sup>! Such glory is never sinful.

All the disciples reclined on their left elbow on coaches around a low table. They used their right hand to eat. John lay with his back to Jesus, thus 'in his bosom' with his head close to the heart of Jesus. Leonardo da Vinci thus represented his famous painting 'the Last Supper' in a contemporary manner (sitting instead of reclining). Peter motioned to John to ask Jesus whom he meant and John leaned back onto the chest of Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?"

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<sup>59</sup> cf. Matthew 10:40

<sup>60</sup> The Triune God sent his human incarnation within the three dimensional creation and human history to reveal God to man, to save believers and to judge unbelievers.

<sup>61</sup> Luke 10:16

<sup>62</sup> Isaiah 43:10-11; 45:21-22

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 26:21-25; Mark 14:18b-21; Luke 22:21-23

<sup>64</sup> G: aporeumenoi

<sup>65</sup> G: punthanomai

<sup>66</sup> G: eimi

<sup>67</sup> Matthew 26:22

<sup>68</sup> Matthew 26:25

<sup>69</sup> Matthew 26:23; cf. John 13:18

<sup>70</sup> cf. Genesis 4:6-7; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 3:18-21; 18:30-32; 33:11; Proverbs 1:20-32; 29:1; Luke 13:6-9; 13:34-35; Acts 20:31

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 26:24

<sup>72</sup> Luke 22:24

<sup>73</sup> cf. Psalm 139:23-24; 2 Corinthians 13:5

<sup>74</sup> cf. Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 8:31-39

### c. The clue to the betrayer (13:26-30).

**13:26.** So Jesus answered (vipn). “It is (vipa) the one to whom I will give (vifa) the morsel after I have dipped (vifa) it.” Having dipped (vpaa) the morsel, he gave (vifa) it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

**13:27.** Then<sup>75</sup>, after the morsel, Satan entered (viaa) into him. So Jesus said (vifa) to him, “What you are doing (vifa), you must do (vmaa)(imperative) more quickly.

**13:28.** Now no one of those reclining (vppn) knew<sup>76</sup> (viaa) why<sup>77</sup> he had said (viaa) this to him.

**13:29.** Because some were thinking (viia), since<sup>78</sup> Judas had (charge of)(viia) the money-box, that Jesus was telling (vifa) him, “Buy (vmaa)(imperative) what we have (vifa) need of for the feast.” or (that he had said it) in order that Judas might give (vsaa) something to the poor.

**13:30.** So having taken (vpaa) the morsel, he went out (viaa) immediately. And it was (viia) night.

Jesus answered that it is the one to whom he would give a piece of bread after he had dipped it into the dish. The dish contained a mixture of bitter herbs, vinegar and salt or a mixture of mashed fruit like dates, figs and raisins together with water and vinegar. He dipped the piece of bread into the dish and gave it to Judas Iscariot. Now John knew who the betrayer was. He may have indicated this to Peter.

As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. First Satan planted an evil thought into Judas' mind (13:2). Now he planted himself into Judas' heart (15:27) and Judas became demon-possessed. It is not told how John knew this, but John had often seen demon-possessed people before. Judas had continually hardened his heart against Jesus. Now Jesus allowed his heart to become hardened<sup>79</sup>.

Jesus said to Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly”. The Jewish Sanhedrin had not chosen this moment. Also Judas had not chosen this moment to betray Jesus. It was only Jesus himself who chose this moment! He was in complete control of all events and knew that he was going to die very soon (on 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan)(cf. 10:17-18). Judas acted immediately, because he realised that his evil plan had been discovered and that if he did not act quickly, it might fail.

No one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to Judas. Since Judas was the treasurer of the disciples, some thought that Jesus had sent him to buy something needed for the feast. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out into the dark night. Most of the disciples had not heard what Jesus had said to John and did not understand what Jesus said to Judas. No one had previously held an evil suspicion against Judas. Judas was a hypocrite that pretended to belong to Jesus (6:67-71). He masqueraded that he was a servant of righteousness who cared for the poor (12:4-6)<sup>80</sup>. He had rejected the faith and a good conscience<sup>81</sup>! All these were signs of hardening his heart.

### (V) 13:31-32. Jesus glorified.

**13:31.** So when he had gone out (viaa), Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified (viap) and God has been glorified (viap) in (not: by) him (Jesus).

**13:32.** If God has been glorified (viap) in him, God will also glorify (vifa) him (Jesus) in himself (in God the Father), yes, immediately will he glorify (vifa) him (i.e. the course of events had already been set in motion and would quickly be accomplished).

*The whole life of Jesus is represented as a glorifying of God the Father by Jesus (8:54; 12:28; 13:31; 17:1,4) and at the same time as a glorifying of Jesus by God the Father (13:31f; 14:13; 17:1). The word ‘glory’ is a summary of all God’s divine attributes, including his reality and presence. The word ‘to glorify’ means to reveal God’s divine attributes, especially his self-sacrificial love for people. Now the moment has arrived in which Jesus is going to take upon himself the holy and righteous wrath of God against all sin whereby he would save his people from eternal destruction. God the Son would give himself over to die for his people (10:17-18) and God the Father would give his only Son to die for such people (3:16).*

The glory of Jesus is selfless and self-sacrificial love, mercy and grace. It is revealed in that Jesus saw the storm coming (his betrayal, suffering and death) and instead of avoiding the storm, he walked right into it! He sent Judas to set the final scene in action! His glory is that while he allows the storm of God’s wrath to descend upon him, he shelters his own (the elect)! He is going to die in their place! And because he has accepted this, he can speak of his glorification in the past tense. But in this act of doing the Father’s will, God the Father is also glorified (17:4). While the Son voluntarily gave himself to die, the Father willingly gave his One and Only Son to such a death for such people! God is not merely glorified by the Son, but glorified in the Son, in his character and in his behaviour.

This mutual glorification is a pledge for the future. The glory of Jesus would shine bright in his suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement! “God glorifying Jesus in himself” (13:32) means the same as “Father, glorify

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<sup>75</sup> G: tote

<sup>76</sup> G: ginóskó

<sup>77</sup> G: ti

<sup>78</sup> G: epei

<sup>79</sup> cf. Romans 1:18-32

<sup>80</sup> cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

<sup>81</sup> 1 Timothy 1:19-20

me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (17:5). Thus, as God the Father is glorified in God the Son (13:31), so God the Son is glorified in God the Father (13:32).

God is not only glorified by the praise of Jesus, but is also glorified in Jesus. *God’s divine attributes are revealed in the essence of Jesus’ nature, his character and his behaviour (life), and especially in his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven! In these events the holiness, righteousness, love and mercy of God are revealed and proved to be a reality*<sup>82</sup>. God the Father and God the Son are one divine being (10:30) and their glory (divine attributes, reality and presence) are inseparable from each other (5:23)!

In his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven also the glory of Jesus is revealed. See the symbolic description of his enthronement<sup>83</sup>! This glorification of Jesus is about to take place, because his crucifixion and consequent resurrection and ascension is about to take place.

### **(VI) 13:33. The presence of Jesus.**

**13:33.** “Little children, yet a little while I am (vipa) with you. You will seek (vifa) me, and as I told (viaa) the Jews so I tell (vipa) you now<sup>84</sup>: “Where I am going (vipa), you cannot (vipn) come (vnaa).”

Very soon the daily fellowship with Jesus in his human nature on earth will come to an end, because Jesus as to his human nature is going to ascend to God the Father in heaven. The disciples will miss his presence after his death<sup>85</sup> and also after his ascension<sup>86</sup> and in this sense they would ‘seek’ him. They cannot bring him back from heaven and they cannot ascend to him in heaven. Only later, after their own death, would they follow Jesus into heaven (13:36: 14:1-4).

Nevertheless, although the disciples would no longer be able to enjoy the visible presence of Jesus in his human nature with them, they would be able to enjoy the visible, loving presence of other Christians (13:34-35) and the invisible, loving presence of the Spirit of Christ (14:17-18)<sup>87</sup>!

### **(VII) 13:34-35. The new commandment.**

**13:34.** A new command I give (vipa) you: that you keep on loving (vspa) one another; just as I loved (viaa) you, that you keep on loving (vspa) one another.

**13:35.** By this everybody will know (by observation and experience)<sup>88</sup> (vifd) that you are (vipa) my disciples, if you keep on having (vspa) love for one another.

The word ‘commandment’ has several different meanings:

- A purely human order of the Jewish Sanhedrin (11:57).
- A commission of God the Father to Jesus (10:18; 12:49-50; 14:31).
- An instruction of Jesus to his disciples (13:34; 14:15,21; 15:10,12). This was also the inner rule of Jesus’ own life and he made it the regulation for the attitude and behaviour of his followers.

The commandment, to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength and the neighbour as oneself, was not an unknown commandment, because it already existed in the Old Testament<sup>89</sup>.

However, it is a ‘new’ commandment, because it surpasses the Old Testament commandment in:

- the standard and quality of love. The self-sacrificial love of Jesus Christ for his disciples is now the standard.
- the duration of love. They must constantly love one another.

The word ‘to know’ means to come to know by observation and experience<sup>90</sup>. People do not only want to hear the truth, but also see that the truth really works! Visible unselfish love is very attractive! It can be irresistible!

### **(VIII) 13:36-38. The prediction about the denial.**

**13:36.** Simon Peter said (vipa) to him, Lord, where are you going (vipa)?” Jesus answered (viao), “Where I am going (vipa), you cannot (vipn) follow (vnaa) now, but you will certainly follow (vifa) me later.”

**13:37.** Peter said (vipa) to him, “Lord, why can (vipn) I not follow (vnaa) you now? My life for you I will lay down (vifa).”

**13:38.** Jesus answered (vipn), “Will you lay down (vifa) your life for me?” I tell (vipa) you the truth, In no way (double negative) will the rooster crow (vsaa) until you have denied (disowned)(vifd) me three times.”

Jesus explained that he was going to a place where Peter could not come now, but would later come too. Jesus was referring to heaven, but Peter did not understand him. According to God’s eternal plan, the exact moment of Peter’s

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<sup>82</sup> Romans 5:8

<sup>83</sup> Revelation 5:1-14

<sup>84</sup> G: arti

<sup>85</sup> Luke 24:21

<sup>86</sup> Acts 1:11

<sup>87</sup> Matthew 28:20

<sup>88</sup> G: ginóskó

<sup>89</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18

<sup>90</sup> cf. Acts 4:13

death had not yet arrived. When that moment arrives, he would also ascend into heaven (14:1-4)<sup>91</sup>. Peter would also be crucified (21:18-19), but his crucifixion would have no atonement significance.

Jesus told Peter that, in spite of his boasting, he would do the very things, which he had boasted he would never do! Before the rooster crows, he would disown Jesus three times (13:38; cf. 18:15-18,25-27). According to Mark a night was divided into four parts: evening (18-21 hours), midnight (21-24 hours), the first crowing of a rooster (0-3 hours) and morning (3-6 hours). But here it does not refer to a specific hour. When Peter would hear the rooster crow, he would remember the words of Jesus. Also this shows that Jesus is the Great Prophet: he knows the heart of Peter and every future event!

Then Peter said, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." *And all the other disciples said the same*<sup>92</sup>! Peter said that even if all the other disciples 'fall away' from following Jesus, he would not fall away<sup>93</sup>! He said, "I will never disown you"<sup>94</sup>. And "I will lay down my life for you" (13:37). Peter did not know himself! He was dedicated to Jesus, but without realism and without patience. He wanted to follow Jesus in his suffering now!

Because Peter was so sure of himself, he failed to hear what Jesus was saying to him. *Peter thought that he would lay down his life for Jesus, but the truth was that Jesus would lay down his life for Peter!*

### APPLICATIONS

13:4-17. Make a commitment to be willing to serve in tasks in which no one else is willing or able to serve.

13:4-17. Make a commitment to be the first to serve where service is required.

13:34-35. Make the new commandment to love God and other Christians as Christ loves you the goal of your life.

### QUESTIONS

13:1. When did the Jews celebrate the Passover meal?

13:2. How does Jesus look at Judas?

13:3-17. What is the meaning of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples?

13:18-30. How did the disciples respond to Jesus' prediction about the betrayer?

13:31-32. How is the Son of Man glorified?

13:34-35. Why is this commandment called a 'new' commandment?

13:36-38. How does Jesus look at Peter?

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<sup>91</sup> Philippians 1:21-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

<sup>92</sup> Matthew 26:35

<sup>93</sup> Mark 14:29

<sup>94</sup> Mark 14:31