

## John 13:1-20 Jesus Washes The Disciples' Feet

**Introduction:** It was important for John to explain to his readers why it was that Judas, one of Jesus' chosen disciples, one of His inner circle, did not believe in Jesus. On the surface, Judas' betrayal of Jesus seemed to threaten the credibility of who Jesus claimed to be. Judas was an inside man; had he discovered some ugly truth about Jesus that was so bad, he turned Jesus in? *If one of His own disciples did not believe in Jesus, why should you?*

**Overview:** One way to outline John's Gospel is:

John 1—Introduction

John 2-12—Public Jesus

John 13-17—Private Jesus

John 18-21—Glorified Jesus

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**\*\*\*\*\*What did John repeatedly tell his readers about Judas (13:1-11)?** John wanted his readers to know that Jesus was well aware of Judas' evil intentions (13:2, 11).

**John 1-12 covers three years. John 13-17 covers one night! Everything is in slow motion. Based on 13:1, what are the next five chapters about?** It shows how Jesus loved His disciples to the very end (of His time on earth).

**Observation:** We learn from 13:1 that **1)** the foot washing happened “before” the Passover Feast<sup>1</sup> and that **2)** Jesus' hour to depart out of the world had come (the cross was imminent).

**Timing:** A person's last words are often his most important. John 18 records the beginning of Jesus' final instructions to His disciples.

**On the freeway you can find an overpass, where one road passes over another. In Judaism there is no overpass but there is a Passover. Why is the Jewish Passover called the Passover? What was that all about (13:1)?** It looked back the 10th plague sent by Jehovah God upon the Egyptians, wherein every first born child of every family was killed. To escape this, a person had to kill a lamb and paint its blood on the door posts of his home. If he did this, the angel of death would “pass over” that home, not killing the firstborn. The Passover Feast was in commemoration of that event.

**Typology:** Jesus is described by New Testament writers as our Passover Lamb. His blood, if applied to your life, will protect you from spiritual death. God's wrath against sin will pass over you.

**ESV 1 Corinthians 5:7b** Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

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<sup>1</sup> It is best to understand “before” to refer to the foot washing only, and not the meal, to avoid timing problems. Otherwise, the meal could not have been the Passover Feast (which it most certainly was). See Carson, *John*, 455-457, 460.

**Application:** Each family had to apply the lamb's blood to the door post of its house. Unless you personally apply the blood of Jesus to your own life through faith, it won't do you any good. You remain unless the wrath of God and are subject to spiritual death.

**John described the disciples as Jesus' "own who were in the world" (13:1). What did John mean by world?** It refers to the mass of lost humanity from which Jesus' disciples were drawn. Jesus was about to leave the world, but the disciples would still be left there in it. As such, they would get their spiritual feet dirty.

ESV **John 15:19** . . . you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world . . .

**Jesus loved them to the "end" (13:1)—of what?** Certainly to the end of His life, but also to the uttermost in that He died for them. Both are true.

**According to 13:2, what role did the devil play in Judas' life?** The devil influenced Judas to do evil. Judas and the devil were in collusion. Those who truly love Jesus are on a collision course with the devil, not in collusion with him.

**Observation:** The devil is real. He hates you and has a terrible plan for your life. He is a sinister minister of evil. Give him an inch and he'll become a ruler. He'll cripple you and then blame you for limping.<sup>2</sup>

**Gandalf (*The Hobbit*):** "It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him."<sup>3</sup>

**In 13:3, what did John want his readers to realize about Jesus?** John wanted his readers to know that Jesus **1)** had authority from God, **2)** came from God and **3)** went back to God. The devil and Judas were simply part of God's sovereign, overall plan.

**How does 13:3 logically lead into 13:4-5?** Verse 3 sets the stage for the foot washing. Here was Jesus, to whom God has given ultimate authority earth, stooping to wash His disciples' feet as one of His last acts. It was a tremendous object lesson designed to teach these men about love in action. Sometimes, actions speak louder than words.

**Joke: Since this was an object lesson, Peter objected! Why did Peter object to what Jesus was doing (13:6-7)?** In the days of sandals and dirt roads in an arid region, people's feet were typically covered in dust. It was a lowly servant's job to clean the feet of guests when they came for a visit. Friends did not wash other friend's feet. Peter was puzzled; he couldn't understand why Jesus was the one doing the lowly servant's job (13:7). To Peter, it seemed inappropriate for the Lord and Master to wash His disciples' feet. It would be like touring the Senate building in Washington and finding the President cleaning the public toilets.

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<sup>2</sup> Adrian Rogers, *Adrianisms* (Collierville, TN: Innovo Publishing, 2015), 229ff

<sup>3</sup> JR Tolkien, *The Hobbit*.

**What did Jesus mean when He said that Peter would have no share with Jesus if he did not allow Jesus to wash his feet (13:8)?** It was to impress upon Peter the importance of the object lesson. There are probably two lessons here. **1)** All true followers of Jesus, and especially those in leadership, need to learn the lesson behind what Jesus was doing. Those who failed to learn the lesson should question their relationship to Jesus. **2)** The washing of dirt off their feet by Jesus also symbolized the washing away of their sins by His coming death (though this is not specifically stated by John).

ESV **1 John 1:7b** . . . the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin.

**Why did Peter over-react in 13:9?** Jesus explicitly said that Peter did not yet understand why Jesus was washing their feet (13:7). Not getting the point, Peter over-reacted and wanted Jesus to go ahead and wash his hands and head too! (Peter was a gung-ho kind of guy).

**How did Jesus bring Judas into the object lesson (13:10-11)?** He pointed out that all of them were clean except one.

**Secondary Application:** Jesus also washed the feet of Judas, but Judas was not one of His own. The lesson to be derived from this is the uselessness of participating in outward religious rituals such as baptism or the Lord's Supper if one's heart is not right.

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**Structure:**

Paragraph one (13:1-11)—What Jesus Did.

Paragraph two (13:12-20)—Why Jesus Did It.

**\*\*\*\*Why did Jesus wash His disciples' feet (13:12-20)?** He acted out an example of servant leadership that they were to follow. Jesus was indeed their teacher and Lord, and yet He served them. The point is not that we are to literally wash each other's feet, but that we are to seek ways to serve each other.

ESV **Philippians 2:5b-7a** . . . Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God . . . made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

**General Application:** *Really, come on now, do you think you are exempt from this? Do you think you are better than Jesus?*

**Do you want to be blessed? Based on 13:17, how can you be blessed?** You will be blessed if you do what Jesus did with regard to serving others.

ESV **John 8:31b** If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples . . .

**Applications:** 1) No task is beneath us to do for Christ's sake. 2) We are to think of others more highly than we regard ourselves (**Php 2:3-4**). 3) Take the focus off your own right and needs and put in onto the needs of others.<sup>4</sup>

**General Application:** *How are you serving other people outside your immediate family?*

**Leadership Application:** Beware of church leaders who are too big for their britches. Church leaders are not supposed to lord it over others. They are to lead by consensus more so than command. Ultimately, is not a church leader that you obey so much as it is the truth he represents.

ESV **Luke 22:25-27** The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

ESV **1 Peter 5:1-3** I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ . . . shepherd the flock of God that is among you . . . not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

**According to 13:18-20, why did Jesus tell them about His betrayal?** He told them about it beforehand to strengthen their faith when it came true, 13:19. Jesus wanted them to know that His betrayal was a fulfillment of Scripture (**Ps 41:9**).

**What did Jesus mean when He said, "I know whom I have chosen" (13:18)?** He meant that He knew full well from the beginning that Judas would betray Him.

ESV **John 6:70b** Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.

**Sovereign Purpose:** Jesus purposely chose Judas, knowing he would betray Jesus, to fulfill Scripture.

**Jesus told them about His soon betrayal so that when it happened they would believe that "I am he" (13:19). What did Jesus mean by "I am he"? I am who?** At the very least, it means "I am the one I claim to be" (i.e., the Messiah).

**How does 13:20 fit into the flow of the dialog?** Judas' betrayal and Jesus subsequent death would really shake the disciples' faith. Jesus made the point that the stakes were really high, because to receive Him is to receive the Father. Conversely, to reject Jesus is to reject the Father.

**Side Insight: What in 13:20 explains why the early church was so respectful of the apostles?** To reject an apostle's teaching was tantamount to rejecting Jesus' teaching. For example:

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<sup>4</sup> Steven Cole, "Lesson 71: Love, Humility, and Cleansing (John 13:1-11)", Bible.org. Accessed 04/12/2020.

ESV **Acts 2:42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

One might expect Luke to have recorded that they were devoted to Jesus' teaching. To be devoted to the apostles' teaching is to be devoted to Jesus' teaching.

**Foot Washing as an Ordinance?** Historically, the Church universal has recognized only two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Foot washing didn't make the list for two reasons:  
1) It appears only here in Scripture, and nowhere else in the New Testament or in early Christian writings was foot washing seen as a Christian rite to be ceremoniously copied.  
2) The lesson to be learned from what Jesus did was the importance of humility and service to other believers, especially by church leaders. To make an ordinance out of it could easily hide an unbroken spirit and haughty heart.<sup>5</sup>

**Foot Washing Applications:** Jesus' washing to the disciples' feet was a display of love, symbolic of spiritual washing unto salvation, and a model for every Christian's behavior.<sup>6</sup>

### So What?

**Literary Purpose: Did John primarily record the foot washing to show his readers that Jesus knew all along about Judas, or to show his readers what kind of lifestyle was required of a true believer in Jesus?**

**What essential lessons did Jesus want the disciples to learn before He left?** He wanted them to be servant leaders and to love each other.

**How was what John wrote in chapter 13 designed to cause an unbelieving Jew to believe in Jesus?** John showed how Jesus knew all about Judas' betrayal long before it happened, and how the devil was behind what Judas did. This was to bolster the disciples in their faith (13:19), and of course John recorded it to cause his readers to believe in Jesus, too.

\*\*\*\* = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

•You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.com/NTRF).

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NTRF.org  
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<sup>5</sup> Carson, *John*, 468.

<sup>6</sup> Carson, *John*, 462-463.