



**John 13**  
**By Chuck Smith**

John chapter thirteen.

*Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end (13:1).*

Or as in the revised standard, “He loved them unto the uttermost.” It’s interesting that John doesn’t give us any of the details of the feast of the passover with His disciples. He just tells us that the feast had come and Jesus knew that His hour had come. According to God’s determined counsel and purposes, Jesus was to be crucified on passover. And thus fulfill the shadow that was cast into the Old Testament that brought about the holiday of Passover.

Going clear back to Egypt when Moses had been directed by God to demand the release of the children of Israel from the bondage in Egypt and the subsequent plagues that the Lord brought upon the Egyptians, that final plague in which God was to take the firstborn of every household in a judgment against the Egyptians, He commanded the children of Israel that they take a lamb out of their flock first year and they were to slay the lamb and put the blood in a basin and sprinkle it upon the lintels and the doorposts of their house. And the Lord declared when He went through the land that night, when He saw the blood upon the lintels and doorposts of the house, He would pass over that house. Hence the term, passover; and hence, the feast. The sacrificial lamb. By it dying, it saved the firstborn in the house from death.

It was a beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus, the Lamb of God, dying for us that we could escape death. That is, that spiritual death. And so Paul tells us that the Old Testament holidays, “new moons, and sabbath days: were all a shadow of things to come: the substance is Jesus” (Colossians 2:16,17). And so it was foreshadowing Jesus, the Lamb of God who delivered us from death. And thus, Jesus celebrated with His disciples this Jewish feast of passover but when He celebrated with His disciples He brought to them the full meaning.

He said, “This cup is a new covenant in My blood which is shed [for the remission of sins] (Luke 22:20). “This bread is My body, that is broken for you” (1 Corinthians 11:24). Substance is Jesus. So knowing now that He is going to give Himself on Passover, to fulfill that type and shadow from the Old Testament, He loved His own unto the uttermost. He loved them. He was close to them.

As I said, John doesn’t give us any details of the Passover supper. That is given to us by the other gospels. And in the other gospels, we have quite a few details, even of the preparation. How Jesus sent the disciples into the city. There will be a man carrying a jug of water. Follow him into the house and there prepare the upper room that we might have the Passover supper in it. Tells us the interchange between Jesus and the disciples. John leaves all of that out and probably because it was covered in the other gospels. And John wrote his gospel probably forty years after the other gospels were written. So he was familiar with the other gospels and felt that that had been covered and was not necessary for him to cover it in his gospel.

So we go from before the feast of the Passover to after supper. Between verses one and two, we jumped a few days probably, a couple of days, jumped here and after the supper.

*The supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and was going to God; He rose from the supper, and laid aside his garments; and He took a towel, and girded Himself (13:2-4).*

Jesus had said to His disciples recorded in Matthew’s gospel, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.” What does He do? Here is the power of the universe vested in Him. What does He do with that power? He goes over and He takes a towel and girds Himself.

The scripture commands us to gird up our loins. What does that mean? And we read so often that they girded themselves. In those days, people wore long robes, clothing. And it was for warmth but it could be cumbersome if you tried to run or to work with a long robe down to your ankles. And so when they were going to work or when they were going to battle, they would gird themselves. That is, they

would pull up the robe and they would tie a sash so that then they would have a short type of a tunic. Plenty of freedom of movement. And so when a slave would go to work, they would always take and pull the robe up, gird themselves so that they would have the freedom of movement. And you'd always see a slave with girded robe.

So Jesus went over, took a towel and girded Himself with a towel. And then He came back,

*After that he had poured the water into the basin, and He began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel that He had used to gird Himself. Then when he came to Simon Peter: Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you do not know now; but you will know (13:5-7).*

So Peter objected and rightfully so, I think. I can't imagine the Lord washing my feet and yet, that's just the kind of Lord I serve. It's sort of when He came to John the Baptist to be baptized. John said, Lord, You ought to be baptizing Me. And I'm sure Peter felt, Lord, I should be washing Your feet. And so Jesus just said, Peter, you don't understand now. You will understand.

*Peter said unto him, You will never wash my feet (13:8).*

I won't allow that.

*Jesus answered him, If I don't wash you, you really have no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head (13:8,9).*

Peter's all gung-ho, all the way. If it means being a part of You, Lord, I want it all. And I love Peter for this. Yes, he's impetuous but you got to love him.

*Jesus said to him, He that is washed need not save to wash but his feet, he is clean every whit: and now you are clean, but not all (13:10).*

In the Roman baths, which they had Roman baths in Israel at the time up in the area of the Yardenet, not the Yardenet, the area of Galilee. It's the southern part of the sea of Galilee and over on the Golan side. They have a Roman bath that is still being used to the present day. And when they would come from the baths, they'd be there, they would have bathed. But when they came from the baths, as they would come into the house, of course, they have picked up dust on the way and thus, they would wash just their feet. But they were completely clean and all they needed was their feet to be washed. And so Jesus is making an aversion to this. All you need is your feet. "He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, he is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all."

*For Jesus knew who should betray him; therefore He said, You are not all clean (13:11).*

John lets us know that Jesus knew Judas Iscariot. Earlier in the gospel, John tells us that Jesus said, Have I not chosen twelve of you, and yet one of you is a devil? Jesus calls Judas the son of perdition. And so He says, Are you not all clean, but not all. He knew who would betray Him. Therefore He said, You're not all clean.

*So after that He had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, went back over and put on His robe again, then he said unto them, Do you know what I have done to you (13:12)?*

Did you get what I'm trying to tell you?

*You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet (13:13,14).*

Jesus had said unto them concerning the ministry, "He that is chief among you, let him be the servant of all." Jesus said "the Gentiles, they love to exercise lordship over others. But it shall not be so among you. And he that is a minister among you, let him be as one who serves" (Mark 10:42-44). So Jesus now is demonstrating to His disciples what the ministry is really all about. It is serving others. It is the call of God to serve others. And so this is what He was saying to Peter, You don't understand right now but you're going to understand because Jesus is going to explain what He's doing in washing their feet.

You call Me Lord, you call Me Master. That's correct, I am that. But if I am your Lord and Master and I wash your feet, then it's an example, you ought to wash one another's feet.

*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (13:15).*

I'm just giving you an example of what the ministry is about. Peter tells us that Jesus set an example for us that we should follow in His steps.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him (13:16).*

I'm sending you. You are My servants. You're not greater than I am. If I, your Lord, am willing to

serve you, then you must be willing to serve others. I've set the example for you.

*If you know these things, happy are you if you do them (13:17).*

There are certain fellowships in the body of Christ who, to the present day, practice foot washing. They have foot-washing services. I have never been in one. I have had, on a couple of occasions, people who felt that the Lord had called them to wash my feet. If I had had an advance notice, I would have changed my socks. But there are churches that do practice foot-washing services even to the present time.

We do not accept it as general church practice. The reason being is that we really do not find any examples of it in the book of Acts, nor is there any real definitive teaching on it in the epistles. And generally, that which we accept for church practice is something which was practiced by Jesus. We have examples of it in the book of Acts and then we have teaching on it in the epistles. Thus, water baptism. Taught by Christ, commanded by Christ. We find it practiced in the book of Acts and we find teaching by Paul on the subject of water baptism in the epistles. And thus, we accept water baptism as one of the ordinances of the church today.

The partaking of the Lord's supper. It was taught by Jesus and He said, "As often as you do these," it was practiced in the book of Acts and again we have teaching on it in the epistles. And that is why we practice as one of the ordinances of the church the taking of the Lord's supper.

But though Jesus set the example of foot washing, as I said, it doesn't live up to the full criteria. We don't really find it as a general church ordinance or practice in Acts nor do we find it really taught, as I said, in a definitive way in the epistles. And thus, we don't practice foot washing today.

In those days, it was a very common practice because people generally wore open sandals. The streets were very dusty or many times there was no paving at all, just dirt paths. And thus, your feet would get dirty. And when you would come in to a home that was all cleaned and all, the servant would be at the door to greet you and to wash your feet. Your sandals would be left then at the door and you would go in barefooted. And even to the present day in many of the Oriental cultures, you don't wear shoes into the house. You take your shoes off before you enter the house. And it's still a custom in the Orient in many places.

And so you can see the necessity for it and of course, you can see how that it would be a real example of that of a slave because usually the lowest slave in the house was the one whose duty it was to wash the feet of the guest who would arrive.

Years ago here at Calvary Chapel when we had just built the little chapel on the next corner and we have put this long shag carpeting which was popular then, it was the "in"; and we got a green color because we wanted to give the idea of a lawn, and we had the glass windows and the grass right outside so it was sort of bringing the outside in and we had burnt orange pews so that you get the idea of sitting in a garden to worship God. It was very lovely, very beautiful.

And so the fellow who sold us the carpet, because some of the hippies had started coming to the church, and really they helped us in the construction of the chapel very much, and he said, I just want to warn you. He said, The worst thing in the world for a carpet is bare feet. He said, There is an oil in your foot when it mixes with the dirt, it's practically impossible to get out of the carpet. And so you really need to think about that with all these barefooted kids coming to church.

So an issue arose whether or not we should allow the kids to come into church barefooted because of this beautiful carpet. And so when some objected and voiced objections to them coming in barefooted and all, I said, Well, if this is going to become an issue, I said, personally I'm in favor of ripping the carpet out and having concrete floors so that we can just say, "Hey, come on in" to anybody, barefoot or not. And if that's still a problem, next Sunday I'll be at the front door with a basin of water and I'll wash these kids' feet before they come in to church. They were embarrassed about the pastor sitting out with a basin of water. And so they relented and let them come. What's a little dirt on the carpet. I don't know. The Lord must have put some kind of a stain guard on that because that carpet just wouldn't wear out, even when shag went out, it was still good. What can you say!

But there was a need for washing feet in those days. Thus, it was a beautiful gesture. But as I say, we don't really find the church practicing that as we come into Acts.

Jesus said,

*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it is come, that, when it is*

*come to pass, you might believe that I am he (13:18,19).*

The prophecy of scripture. That “he who eats bread with Me is going to lift up his heel against Me.” That is, He would be betrayed by a close, intimate associate. Because eating bread, as we have mentioned before, was a very significant experience for them symbolizing a oneness, a closeness. And so the prophecy was He would be betrayed by an associate. And so Jesus said, “I’ve told you before it comes to pass that, when it does come to pass, you will know that I am He.”

Actually, prophecy is intended to prove to us that God is eternal outside of time. It is also used to prove that the Bible is inspired by God. For He “declares the end,” He said, “from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10). He laid out history in advance. He told things that were going to be before they ever were so that “when they did come to pass, you might believe” that this was truly God which spoke and that God is eternal outside of time. So He said,

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receives whomsoever I send receives me; and he that receives me receives him that sent me (13:20).*

So you have been sent by the Lord to bear witness. If a person receives you, they receive Jesus. If they receive Jesus, they receive the Father. In the same token, if they reject you, they’re not rejecting you, they’re rejecting Jesus; and if they’re rejecting Jesus, they’re rejecting the Father. When the disciples were rejected, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer persecution for Jesus’ sake.

*When Jesus had thus said these things, He was troubled in His spirit (13:21),*

In the previous chapter, we find Him troubled in His soul. In the emotions. He was troubled at the tomb of Lazarus. And now He’s troubled in His spirit,

*and He testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me (13:21).*

One who has eaten bread with Me will lift up his heel.

*Then the disciples looked at one another, doubting of whom he spake (13:22).*

The interesting thing to me is that the disciples did not suspicion Judas Iscariot. He must have pulled off his role pretty cleverly in that there seems to be no indication that he was a suspect at all above the others. So when Jesus came out direct and said, One of you is going to betray Me, they looked at one another, wondering who it was.

*Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved (13:23).*

And as we pointed out before, John’s the only one who tells us that he was the disciple that Jesus loved. In none of the other gospels is John called John the beloved, nor do any of the other gospels say that Jesus especially loved John. He’s the only one that tells us that. I think it’s great when you know that Jesus loves you. I think it’s wonderful that John had that feeling. He loves me. And that’s the feeling that we should all have. He loves me. And so John is using this to describe himself, “leaning on the bosom,” the closeness of John. He was that kind of a person. Was close to Jesus, leaning there on Him.

*Simon Peter therefore beckoned unto him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. So then he that was lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon (13:24-26).*

The sop was a gesture of friendliness. It’s sort of like lifting the cup in a toast. A gesture of friendliness and Jesus gave the sop to Judas.

*And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, What you do, do quickly (13:27).*

Judas had already been to the high priest. He had already struck his deal. He had already covenanted with the high priest that he would lead them to Jesus in an isolated place away from the public crowds where they could arrest Jesus without stirring the public because the people were looking at Jesus as a prophet. And so Judas had already made his covenant with the high priest. John tells us when He gave him the sop, Satan entered him. Jesus said, “Have I not chosen you, but yet one of you is a devil” (John 6:70)? There are some Bible scholars who believe that Judas Iscariot was not really a man. That he was Satan incarnate. That’s hard and difficult to prove, it’s just a theory by some theologians but it’s something to consider. And so Jesus commanded him, “What you do, do quickly.” Jesus is still in control. John tells us and here again, the interesting thing,

*Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. Some of them thought, because Judas was the treasurer, he kept the money, that Jesus had sent him out to buy those things that*

*they would need for the feast of unleavened bread; or, that he should go out and at this time give a gesture by giving something to the poor (13:28,29).*

As is often the case at Christmas or Thanksgiving when we think of the poor and as a part of our celebration, we like to give something to the poor. So the disciples thought, Jesus has sent him out to maybe buy something for the preparation for the feast, or maybe He sent him out to give something for the poor. But you see, they didn't suspicion Judas, which is interesting to me.

*He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him (13:30,31).*

The time has come.

*If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him (13:32).*

In the previous chapter, Jesus said, "What shall I say? Father, deliver Me from this hour: yet for this hour have I come. Father, glorify Thy name. And the Father responded, I have glorified it, I will glorify it again" (John 12:27,28). So now the time is come.

*Little children [in terms of endearment, as little children], yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, you cannot come; so I say that now to you (13:33).*

Just a little while, you're going to be seeking Me: but you can't come.

*A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another (13:34).*

That is an amazing commandment. In the first epistle of John, and I would suggest for you, advanced students, that you go ahead and read the first epistle of John this week and notice how John refers to the commandments of Jesus. Jesus in a little bit, in the fourteenth chapter actually, in the next chapter, will also say, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me will be loved of the Father, and we will come and manifest ourselves to them" (John 14:21).

But in his first epistle, John will make reference to the commandments of Jesus. What is the commandment? That we love one another as He has loved us. One commandment but boy, does that cover everything! Our loving one another as He loved us.

He said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "Love one another; as I have loved you." That is, with that love that is so deep that we will lay down our lives for each other.

*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another (13:35).*

As I look at the church history, my heart aches because there has been so much hatred manifested between different denominations, or different sects. There have been what were termed "holy wars" if there be such a thing. I don't think any war is holy. But you read *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, you read of the atrocities during the period of the reformation and neither side was totally innocent. We read Calvin's institutes but you read some of the things that Calvin said and Calvin did and nobody is innocent.

And how we could come so far from the commandment of Jesus is difficult to understand. And I'm not referring just to those in our body here but for the whole body of Christ. That we develop a love for all, even those that don't agree with us on every issue. That we have this kind of love that will bear witness to the world that we are His disciples.

*Simon Peter (13:36)*

Not so interested in this commandment as he is the things that Jesus has been saying about I'm going away and you can't come, so he,

*said unto him, Lord, where are You going? Jesus answered him, Where I am going, you can't follow Me now; you will follow me afterwards (13:36).*

I think that Peter realized that Jesus was talking about death. When Jesus said this to the Jews, they thought that maybe He was talking about committing suicide. Is He going to kill Himself? And in another place where He told the Jews the same thing, they said, Where is He going? To the Gentiles to teach them? What does He mean? But I think that Peter caught the meaning because,

*He said, Lord, why can't I follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake (13:37).*

Lord, if You're going to lay down Your life, I'll lay down mine. I'll follow You into death. It's interesting that Jesus said, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now but you will follow Me afterwards." Interesting that all of them did follow Him in death, with the exception of John, the writer of this book.

Every one of the disciples suffered violent death at the hands of men for their witness and testimony of Jesus Christ. And when they came to crucify Peter, he said, Look, crucify me upside down, I'm not worthy to die as my Lord.

So "Peter said, Lord, why can't I follow You? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

*Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for my sake (13:38)?*

Peter had made quite a great claim. Jesus is challenging it. "Will you lay down your life for My sake?"

*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till you have denied me three times (13:38).*

Luke tells us that when Jesus told this to Peter, Luke gives us a little more addition here, He said, "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired you that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you. And when you're converted, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31,32). And then He predicted how that the sifting by wheat was going to be Peter's failure in that test where he denied his Lord. He said you're going to deny that you even know Me. Peter objected. He said, Lord, if they would kill me, I would never deny You. And yet we know that Peter did deny Him.

There are issues involved in the denial of Peter that I think led directly to the denial. First of all, I think that this boasting in himself. Lord, I will lay down my life for You. That's boasting in himself.

The second was his arguing with the Lord. Know this, if you ever find yourself in an argument with the Lord, you're wrong. He thought he knew himself better than the Lord knew him. He was indignant when Jesus said, You're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows. He was indignant, Lord, I would never deny You. I will lay down my life for You. And so that boasting in himself and arguing with the Lord. Those are a couple of issues that can get you into trouble.

Next we find Peter sleeping in the garden when the Lord told him to pray. "When Jesus had come back to the disciples, He said, Peter, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40,41). Sleeping when you should be praying.

The fourth thing that we see is when Jesus was arrested and led to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, we read, "And Peter followed afar off" (Matthew 26:58). Attempting to follow Jesus afar off is another thing that can lead to denial. If you're going to follow Jesus, stick just as close as you can. The closer the better. Don't try and follow afar off.

And then finally, where was he when he denied the Lord? He was warming himself at the enemy's fire. Be careful about trying to find warmth at the enemy's fire. Sometimes Christians seek to do that. They seek to go back into the worldly things to find a little warmth, little excitement. And they're in the wrong place. And being in the wrong place can often lead to denial.

So with Peter, you can sort of follow the course that began with self-confidence, boasting of himself. So when Peter said, "Lord, why can't I follow You? I will lay down my life for You. Jesus said, Will you lay down your life for Me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till you have denied Me three times."

I don't like to stop there though I know it's the end of the chapter. I believe that Jesus went right on and said, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). I believe that those words were spoken by Jesus to comfort Peter. Peter, you're going to deny Me. You're going to be shaken over this. And he was. When the soldiers said, Surely you are one of His disciples, your speech gives you away. You have a Galilean accent. He began to swear, to curse, and he said, I don't know the man. And the rooster began to crow and Peter remembered the words of Jesus, Before the rooster crows, you will have denied me three times. And when he thought on these things, he went out and he wept bitterly. His heart was troubled. I had failed the Lord.

Actually, we read in one of the gospels that when the rooster began to crow, Jesus who was standing there, looked over to Peter. Caught his eye. And I'm sure that the look that Jesus gave to Peter wasn't one of, I told you so. Nor was it one of, You rotten crumb. You did it, didn't you? But I believe it was a look of tender compassion that broke Peter's heart. I think it was a look that said, Peter, I knew it all the time but I still love you. I still love you.

It's interesting that Peter carried that. He carried that look. He carried that guilt. When Jesus was crucified and placed in the tomb, I'm sure it haunted Peter that the very last thing, the very last contact with Jesus was when he had failed. That look of Jesus. I failed Him. I denied Him. I love Him. I'm sure it just haunted Peter. And so when Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to the women, He said, Go tell

the disciples and Peter that I have risen. And Peter was one of the first ones that Jesus appeared. On the day of His resurrection, He appeared to Peter. When the disciples came back from Emmaus and met the other disciples, they said, The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to the women and to Peter! The Lord had that personal little talk with Peter afterwards. And then of course, John gives us great insight into the talk at the sea of Galilee with Peter when Jesus sort of recommissioned him and put him back in the business up there at the sea of Galilee.

So we'll get that as we move through John and get to the last chapter, twenty-first chapter, we'll get the ministry of Jesus to Peter. But even here as He is predicting, He is saying, Look, "let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me." Peter, your problem is that you believed in yourself. Believe in Me. Don't believe in yourself.

Believe in Him. Don't believe in your ability, believe in His ability. Trust in Him.

Father, we give thanks for Your love and we ask that You will put Your love in our hearts. That we might love one another, Lord, even as You loved us so that we might be a witness to the world of what You're all about. That we might be loving, Lord, and not just to those who are a part of our fellowship or agree with us, but to all of those, Lord, who are Your disciples and who love You. Unite our hearts, Lord, in Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.