

JOHN 13

Loving Dirty Feet

We now come to the final weekend of Jesus's life. Unlike the other Gospels, John does not dwell on the events of the final week extensively. His focus is exclusively on the cross. Chapter 13 falls on the eve of Jesus's crucifixion. At this point "Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world" (vs. 1). The cross is quickly approaching.

John does not include numerous events that are prevalent in the Synoptics. There is, for example, no kiss from Judas. Likewise, in the Upper Room, there is no final supper. Rather than instituting communion (John 6 comes close to that), John emphasizes the humble act of washing the Disciples feet.

According to customs at this time, it would have been the responsibility of the house servant to wash the feet of all who enter. If no servant was available, the Disciples would be expected to wash their Rabbi's feet. Luke tells us that the Disciple arrogantly argue about who was the greatest in the Kingdom of God. Distracted by their ego's, they fail to fulfill the simple, yet humble task of washing Jesus's feet (contrast this with Mary in chapter 12:1ff).

Jesus responds to their arrogance by taking the form of a servant (cf. Philippians 2:7). The lesson is made clear immediately afterward.

¹³You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (vs. 13-16)

The Logos – the Creator and Redeemer of the world – assumes the role of a house servant. How much more so should we humbly serve one another?

Before leaving the scene, Jesus emphasizes a fifth "L" word: Love. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (vs. 34-35).