

# The Washing – *John 13:1-17*

**Introduction** – Having concluded the “*Book of Signs*,” chapters 1-11, and the end of Jesus’ public ministry (12), we now come to what is known as the “*Book of Glory*,” or the “*Book of the Passion*,” chapters 13-21. Chapters 13-17 cover teachings and prayers of Jesus found almost exclusively in John and exclude much of the events covered in the Synoptics. As we enter this particular day, for Jesus, He is about to experience the most horrific hours of His life and He knows it. And yet, John begins this section by saying that in the midst of this, “*He loved them to the end.*” Our flesh sees times of trials and hardship as excuses to take care of self. Jesus teaches and exemplifies that times of trials and hardship are the stage for loving others.

**What Jesus Knew** (vv1-3) – Jesus knew that His hour had come (the cross). Jesus knew that He was about to depart from this world. Jesus knew He was going to the Father. Jesus knew He had loved His disciples to the end. Jesus knew the devil had put in Judas to betray Him. Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. Jesus knew He had come from God and was going to God. It would seem that Jesus has every reason to stop thinking about His disciples. Yet Jesus doubles down on giving Himself to them. Walking in obedience with faith that God has given you all things brings confidence to humble oneself, stop grasping for oneself, and instead give oneself away for the sake of others.

**And What Jesus Did** (vv4-5) – Foot washing was a common act of hospitality and was usually performed by a slave or the lowest member of a household. Throughout the Old Testament we see it as a sign of humility and of honor upon the one being washed (Gen 18:4, 19:2, 24:32, 1 Sam 25:41). Jesus was doing what Paul would then instruct all of us to do as well (Phil 2:1-7).

**The Symbols of Washings** (vv6-11) – The back and forth with Peter helps us to see what Peter did not then understand (v7). This should remind us that in trials and blessings that the Lord gives, we are often unable to judge what exactly God is doing (Heb 11:8) or why (although we particularly deal with this in trials, we should realize it as well in blessings – 1 Cor 4:7). And in trials, obedience brings clarity and faith is followed with understanding (James 1:2-6).

We are given a strong clue when Jesus answers, “*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.*” He is first teaching of receiving His initial cleansing of justification by faith (v10 and see 15:3) and then of the ongoing cleansing work of sanctification (1 John 1:8-9). Remember Jesus telling Nicodemus that to be born again is to be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). We must be born again, and we must continue in having a part with Christ through our ongoing walk with Him – and both cleansings are by grace through faith and not of works. Jesus cleansed us and Jesus cleans us. We are not able to do either ourselves. And any ritual devoid of sincere faith is of no value, as we see in Judas (v2, 10-11).

**Teaching by Example** (vv12-16) – Jesus is Teacher and Lord (a claim to His deity and Lordship – Rom 10:9-13). He never relinquishes His authority. He teaches us what godly leadership looks like. This contradicts the impulses of the flesh to use power and authority to give ourselves special perks and privileges. Godly leadership (whether in the home, in the church, in the civil realm) wields an authority that seeks the good of others. With confidence in His Father’s plan, Christ’s focus is neither on His promised blessings nor His imminent sufferings, but in the Father’s love and His love for His people.

**“You also”** – Just as it was the characteristic of Christ, so it is to be of His church, His bride, His body. We are to demonstrate a love that loves to the end. Our love is not salvific, but it imitates His salvific love and it does so efficaciously in other ways. As Peter came later to understand, when trials are increasing, it is all the more time to have fervent love for one another, for “*love will cover a multitude of sins,*” and to be hospitable to one another without grumbling (1 Pet 4:7-11).

**“Wash One Another’s Feet”** – This corresponds to a fervent love for one another and showing hospitality, especially when inconvenient. Later, in 13:35, Jesus says, “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” So, what should the church look like? If you scan the New Testament for the one anothers, you find that we are to be: kindly affectionate, giving preference to, of the same mind toward, not judging (in secondary issues), receiving as Christ received us, admonishing, greeting, waiting (at the Lord’s Table), serving, bearing with, speaking with psalms and hymns, submitting, forgiving, comforting, edifying, exhorting, confessing trespasses, having compassion, being hospitable, and ministering your gifts...

And for this to happen, we will all need (1) a disposition of humility and lowliness, (2) a willingness to be served along with an acknowledgement that we need others, and (3) a heart towards the sanctification of others. We must bear our own burdens first, watching to take the plank out of our own eye, but then we must serve others, helping to remove their speck (Matt 7:5) with those “one anothers.”

**A Concluding Sermonette and State of the Church 2023** (v17) – “If “y’all” know these things, blessed are “y’all” if “y’all” do them.” We are entering a year where the church will be tested in harsher ways. Jesus knew what His disciples were about to face, and He knows what we are to face. “*The cross is both the way of salvation and the key to community*” (Phillips). This principle of washing one another’s feet must be more strongly applied in the community of the family and then in the church in order to build a strong defense for the kingdom and a powerful tool to evangelize in the darkness. And note, Christ’s eyes were fixed on heaven and the task before Him (again, vv1-3), and that heavenly vision drove Him to a fervent love for His disciples. And so it is to be for His disciples.

# Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come. Let earth receive her King;

Let earth receive her King; Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,

And heav'n and na - ture sing, And And heav'n and na - ture And

heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing. sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing. sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing.

2. Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns.  
Let men their songs employ  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love.