



Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN
LESSON 14

The Last Supper John 13:1-38

Mid-Year Review

A. Jesus' Public Ministry

The first 12 chapters of the Gospel of John developed five basic themes that were delineated in the Prologue (Chapter 1:1-18.) The themes were:

- (1) Jesus was the Son of God. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (1:1);
- (2) He came into the world as human flesh. *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."* (1:14);
- (3) The world did not know Him. *"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."* (1:10);
- (4) He was rejected by the great majority of His own people. *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."* (1:11);
- (5) He was accepted by a slim minority of people. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."* (1:12.)

B. The Unbelieving Majority

Jesus came as a special revelation to God's chosen people and the great majority of Israel starkly and absolutely rejected Him. Throughout His public ministry, He had performed sign miracles to authenticate His words that He was and is the Son of God. He called Himself the Bread of Life, the source of living water, the Light of the world, the Door of the sheepfold, the Great Shepherd and the resurrection and the life. His final supreme sign was raising Lazarus from death. But the eyes of the great majority were blinded and their hearts hardened. They were determined to kill Him. Jesus' words of Matthew 7:13 were being fulfilled, *"Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."*

C. The Believing, Slim Minority

The grim reality of John 1:11 was relieved by the next verse, 1:12. There was a slim minority of people in Israel who did receive Jesus gladly, and showed themselves to believe Him and truly be His people. The woman at the well, the Samaritans, the blind man, the royal official, Martha, Mary, Lazarus, the adulterous woman, some of the multitudes, some of the rulers and eleven of the twelve disciples yielded their allegiance to Jesus. Again, Matthew's words in 7:14 were fulfilled, *"Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

Application:

John's description of the majority's response to Jesus' public ministry (Chapters 1-12) is similar to that of many people in our own culture today. The difference now is, in addition to many people refusing outright to believe Jesus, there are significant numbers of people who profess to be Christians, but their lives do not consistently give evidence of genuine allegiance to Him (Matthew 7:23.) Have you thought deeply about this situation? Does your life give evidence that you truly believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God? Have you sincerely accepted Him as your first love? Do you strive to follow and obey His teachings and commandments?

Introduction

A. Setting

In the next section of the Gospel, Chapters 13-17, John describes the private ministry of Jesus with His intimate circle of believers, the twelve disciples. Israel's leadership had officially and finally rejected Him. The God-appointed "hour" had arrived when Jesus was to become the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world. His disciples had arranged a place in an upper room for Him to celebrate the Passover meal and to spend intimate time with them (Matthew 26:17-25; Mark 14:10-20; Luke 22:2-37.)

B. Differences Between Synoptics and John

All four Gospels record Jesus' last Passover meal and upper room teachings with His disciples. However, there seems to be conflict between John and the others in some areas. For example, John did not mention holy communion (Lord's Supper) nor certain discussions with the twelve. But he did describe selected episodes, discourses, the priestly prayer and the foot washing which Matthew, Mark and Luke excluded. It is suggested that John did so because he was moved by the Holy Spirit not to repeat what had already been written, but to record new material. He described the Last Supper and upper room discourses to fit his own distinctive purpose of integrating Christ's divine power and loving leadership with His willing obedience and supreme sacrifice.

C. Purpose

This upper room time with His disciples was an exceptional training period specifically conducted to prepare them for leadership in the church. Jesus expressed the inner depths of His love for them with an incomparable example of true servanthood and with beautiful words of tender compassion and love. His actions and instructions would ripen their faith, hope and love, and allow them to perceive the inestimable value they were to Him and to the Father. This training in the upper room has meaningful application for all of us who claim the name of Jesus Christ and believe deeply in the fundamentals of our Biblical faith.

Outline of John 13:1-38

- I. The Foot Washing (13:1-20)
- II. The Betrayer (13:21-30)
- III. God's Glory, Father and Son (13:31-32)
- IV. A New Commandment (13:33-35)
- V. Peter's Denial (13:36-38)

I. The Foot Washing (13:1-20)

A. Jesus' Love of His Own

The Last Supper occurred on Thursday night of the Passover season. The atmosphere in the upper room was emotionally charged with sorrow and sadness (Matthew 26:20-22.) Jesus was preparing the disciples for His death and departure to be with the Father. He wanted to encourage them and demonstrate His deep, heartfelt love before leaving them. He foresaw the conditions in which they would go forth with the Gospel and His heart overflowed with concern. That crafty schemer, the devil, had al-

ready imbedded the plan for betraying Jesus into the heart of Judas (Matthew 26:14-16, 21-23).

B. The Lowly Bondservant

It is important to recognize that Jesus knew that His "hour" of supreme humiliation, torture and suffering had come. He knew also that, after the crucifixion and resurrection, He would ascend to the very throne room of God where He would be highly exalted and given the name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9.) And yet, He was not filled with self-veneration about coming soon into the majesty and glory that were rightfully His. Instead, He emptied His Being of all pride and loftiness and took upon Himself the form of a lowly bondservant. The Son of God took off His outer garments, girded Himself with a towel and bowed down to perform the menial task commonly assigned to slaves. According to Luke 22:24-27, the disciples had just disputed among themselves as to which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom to come.

C. The Supreme Act of Humility

The disciples must have looked on with disapproving silence as Jesus moved slowly and deliberately from man to man, washing and wiping the dust off their feet. When He came to Peter, the big fisherman objected strongly. It was totally unacceptable socially for Jesus to perform a bondservant's job. Jesus replied to Peter that this was a spiritual and symbolic gesture and urged Peter to submit to having his feet washed. Jesus further stated that those who have bathed (meaning those who have given their lives to Christ) are completely clean. But, because they get their feet dirty with sin walking through life, they need to have their feet washed regularly (meaning they need to confess and be forgiven to restore fellowship with God (1 John 1:9))

D. Explanation of the Foot Washing

The significance of this love-motivated act by the Master was twofold. It represented a spiritual cleansing which could only be accomplished by Jesus (1 John 1:8.) Secondly, it was a supreme example of humbling oneself to serve another. He was teaching them that the attitude of humility was paramount, not simply the performing of a ritual. Other examples could have been used, but in a culture where people wore sandals and soiled their feet daily, the Lord chose the most meaningful one. Jesus then spoke of contrasting roles between teacher and students, and between masters and servants, and explained that no disciple of His should ever consider it beneath him or her to serve others.

II. The Betrayer (13:21-30)

A. Judas' Despicable Plan

Judas' verbal contract with the chief priests and captains is described in Matthew 26:14-16 and Luke 22:1-6. Judas would watch for the opportunity when Jesus was away from the multitude and would betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. That opportunity had now arrived following Christ's last supper with His disciples. Judas' hypocrisy and despicable plan came straight from Satan. Judas had been a familiar, trusted friend who ate bread with Jesus and now double-crossed Him. One commentator notes that betrayal by one who had received table hospitality was especially heinous in the ancient Near East.

B. Jesus Announced His Betrayer

After the foot washing, Jesus was visibly troubled by the thought of His imminent betrayal and death. It was time to get the spirit of Satan out of their midst so that He could talk to His disciples intimately about His departure and return. He knew from the beginning that Judas would be His betrayer (John 6:64, 71). Jesus had chosen Judas as the one of the Twelve to fulfill Psalm 41:9 and He testified at the table that one of them would betray Him.

C. Jesus' Beloved Disciple

The disciples were alarmed and perplexed at Jesus' statement. They wanted to know who the culprit was. John, His beloved disciple and friend, was reclining at the table close to Jesus. John leaned back on his elbow against Jesus' chest and asked Him who was going to betray Him. (Note: For special meals like the Passover, the Hellenistic custom of reclining at the table was a mark of unhurried celebration and freedom.) Jesus identified the betrayer by dipping a piece of bread in the stew and giving it to Judas. Satan entered Judas and Jesus told Judas to leave quickly and get on with his mission. Judas went out immediately into the night to find the chief priests and elders.

Application:

Spiritually, the contrast between the Light of the world and the reality of darkness is piercingly clear. True followers of Jesus enter into a vital relationship with God through their identification and union with Christ (Psalm 36:9.) Conversely, those who reject the Light, like Judas, cast their lot with the powers of darkness and are forever separated from God (Matthew 22:13.) What is the difference

between mentally knowing the words of Galatians 2:20 and applying them spiritually in your life?

III. God's Glory, Father and Son (13:31-32)

A. Glory to the Son of Man

After Judas departed, Jesus started His upper room discourse to prepare His disciples for what lay ahead for them. He told the disciples that soon He would be glorified as the Son of Man. Jesus existed with the Father in the timeless reaches of eternity as the Son of God. By referring to Himself as the Son of Man, He meant that He would be glorified as a man in a human body and have a glorified human body to ascend to heaven.

B. Glory to the Father

He explained that His glorification would mean glory for the Father who would glorify the Son. Jesus explained that not only would He be glorified by His sacrificial death as representative man, but God the Father would be glorified in Him. God's atoning mission for Jesus and His redeeming purpose for man would be divine evidence for all the world to see. The glory of the Father and the glory of the Son are inseparable; so, too, the glory of the cross and the glory of the resurrection are inseparable. Both the Father and the Son would be majestically glorified in Christ's resurrection and ascension which were to follow soon thereafter.

Application:

We glorify God by acknowledging His Being, His acts and His attributes, and by honoring, praising, magnifying and extolling His name. In addition to all of these, Jesus glorified the Father by finishing the work the Father gave Him to do. Have you considered the spiritual gifts and personal attributes God has given you and thought about how you are using these in terms of finishing the work He wants you to do? If you have not, there are pastors and leaders in your church who would be delighted to help you identify and understand your spiritual gifts and use them in the body of Christ.

IV. A New Commandment (13:33-35)

A. Separation

Jesus' announcement of His death and return to the Father would be the supreme glorification and honor to Him. His disciples, however, were saddened and bewildered at the prospect of His leaving. Sensing their bewilderment and sadness, He showed His deep affection for them by calling them "*little chil-*

dren.” He explained that this physical separation need not mean spiritual separation. They would not be able to follow Him now because they would not die at this time. But He would be dwelling in them, and they in Him, by this new commandment.

B. Love One Another

The new commandment was that they were to love one another as He had loved them. If they had the kind of love that they had seen and felt from Him during His entire earthly ministry, and most recently in His washing of their feet, they will be able to love all of those for whom He would be laying down His life. The world would see the mutual love of Christ’s disciples and many would be drawn to Him by the love shown in His disciples.

C. Meaning

The new commandment does not annul the old commandment that you shall love your neighbor as yourself. It does mean that you love others because they are fellow-sinners redeemed by Jesus, not because you like them, or have family, social or national ties with them. It means you love them because they are brothers and sisters in Christ. One man has said, “Whereas the Old Testament demanded that people should love their neighbors as themselves, the new commandment is that they should love their brothers and sisters better than themselves and die for their friends.” Bear in mind that we sometimes meet Christians who are disagreeable and unlikable, but we are to love and pray for them anyway.

V. Peter’s Denial (13:36-38)

Impulsive Peter told Jesus that he did not want to be separated from Him. He was willing to follow his Lord even if it meant dying with Him. Peter obviously underestimated his own human weakness and what kind of punishment and death Jesus was about to undergo (Matthew 26:41.) He was sincerely devoted to His Master and was ready to defend Him with his life. But Jesus foresaw that Peter’s self-reliance and confidence in his own flesh would be powerless in a darkened garden with a hostile mob anxious to crucify their Messiah. Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the cock crowed in the early morning. Since it was already dark it must have been difficult and disturbing for Peter to believe that he would deny his Lord before dawn.

Application:

Confidence in the flesh is a weakness that we all have. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”* (Romans 7:15-20.) Do you recognize your weakness of confidence in your flesh? Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that when we are weak, then we are strong. Why? Because God’s grace is sufficient and the power of Christ rests upon us in our acknowledged weakness. When Dwight Moody was asked, “Do you have grace enough to die for Jesus?” he answered, “No, He hasn’t asked me to do that. But if He asks me to, I know He will give me the grace to do it.”