

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Ch. 13

As we've discovered in the Bible's sixty-six books, Jesus knits the Scriptures together into one consistent whole in which we find wisdom to help us understand the world and find our way in (and out of) it.

In about 90 A.D., twenty years after 30-year-old Nero was slain by his secretary, our author John is the sole survivor of Jesus' twelve disciples. He passionately wants his readers to put their full faith in his best friend, the Son of God.

Claiming to *be* God, Jesus infuriates power blocs who deride Him as a blasphemer. This segregates Jews into those who believe Christ to be their prophesied Messiah and those who see Him as a phony.

As we rejoin John, it's Thursday, the night before Passover, in about 30 A.D. Tomorrow Jesus goes to the cross. He gathers His bewildered disciples for "The Last Supper," aware that Jewish scribes and Pharisees are plotting to kill their Leader from Nazareth. **Let's read John 13:1-38.**

He Stoops to Conquer

Aware that sinister forces have persuaded one of His protégés to betray Him, Jesus hustles because the devil is breathing down His neck. Knowing His time on earth is short, and that He'd soon return to His Father in heaven, Jesus begins checking off his To Do list. With the original Passover in Egypt thirteen centuries earlier as His template, Jesus knows *He's* the Lamb at *this* Passover Feast who will be sacrificed for the sins of all mankind.

Within twelve hours He'll hang by nails driven through His hands and feet. Within twenty-four hours His spear-pierced corpse will lie sealed in a tomb. Yet His thoughts are on the men He'd poured His life into. Washing their feet dramatically shows His love for them, right to the very end of His earthly life.

DISCUSS:

His Father had placed Jesus in charge of His own death and resurrection. Jesus could've easily "Mayday'd," summoning millions of angels to rescue Him. Yet He stays focused, knowing who He is and what He must do.

Another account tells us that immediately before this meal, His disciples had been bickering over which of them is "the greatest" (Romans 18:2-6). So the God of the

universe stoops to bathe their dirty, stinky, infected feet, extravagantly modeling how they should serve others and swallow their pride. *Ultimate* power, he illustrates, comes from being a servant. It's been said, "You'll know if you have a servant's heart by how you respond when you're *treated* like one."

Imagine having your feet flossed by the same hands that open blind eyes, who'd taken five tiny loaves of bread and fed 5,000, who'd healed scabby lepers, who'd even raised the dead!

Peter is shocked by Jesus' move to wash his feet. Yet Christ deals with him in love, instructing him that those who truly know Christ have already been completely cleansed of their sins. That happens only once; there's no necessity to rebathe ... they need only to have their feet washed from time to time, a metaphor for the cleansing we experience from being forgiven.

A Tale of Two Trees

Judas had been with Jesus daily for three years and *still* didn't "get it." He was seeking a political overthrow of Palestine's invaders from Rome, and wanted to be the junta, not "the *junted*."

The others never suspect Judas. I guess we can outwardly appear to be best buds with Jesus, but only you and He know the truth.

Jesus knew up front that Judas would burn Him. He'd told His guys a year earlier (John 6:70), "I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil." He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would betray him." Yet He loved Judas just as much as the others, even entrusting the team's finances to him!

In that culture when the host dipped a morsel into the entree and served it to a guest, it showed courtesy and honor. Seeing this, the room would conclude that the Master held Judas in high regard.

Since none of his mates knew of his dastardly intentions, Judas could've changed his mind. But nope, he would not be denied his thirty pieces of silver. For three years he'd hung out with God's Son, as a first-hand witness to the awesome acts and teachings of this perfect God-Man. But he'd never given the reins of his life to Jesus. Instead, *his* lord had become satan. He was a counterfeit disciple.

Incidentally, several prophetic references in the Old Testament, some written 1,000 years earlier, describe in detail how Jesus would be betrayed, how much money would be involved, even where the money would wind up!

When Judas exits out into the blackness of night, unimpeded by Jesus, he'd never again see morning. After his fateful kiss of betrayal on Christ's cheek, the Bible says (Matthew 27:5, Acts 1:18-20) he stopped off at the temple, threw his blood money inside, and in despair hanged himself.

With Judas off-stage, the Master-Mentor begins his lengthy farewell comments to His mentees.

DISCUSS: If you knew this would be your final, private moment before you die with those you love the most, what would you say?

Nothing to Crow About

With little time left to prep His disciples to take the good news of God's forgiveness to the world, Jesus gives them marching orders. He knows they'll run like deer at His crucifixion, that after His return to heaven they'll face persecution and violent deaths.

How does listening to the daily news affect you? It's a litany of ugliness, wars, atrocities, terrorism, racism, killing, rioting, rape, drug abuse, perversion, infidelity, greed and power run amok. How can we end this madness? We've tried politics, education, mass genocide, education, more government spending, cutting taxes, etc.

We've tried 'em all, but none has moved our planet closer to Nirvana. In this chapter Jesus prescribes THE SOLUTION, one which the media and masses would ridicule for its simplicity. His powerful key to changing the world is simply:

“Love each other, just as I have loved you.”

Not that I frequently succeed at it, but back in the 80's Gary Smalley taught a group of us that love is a *decision*. Feelings may come and go, but they can often be revived by just *doing* loving things, even if I don't feel like it.

DISCUSS: Let's think about how this might look in our workplace, our home and our world.

When Jesus tells His men it's time for Him to go, can you believe that His inner circle doesn't know what He's talking about! After three years of investing in them to take history's most compelling message to every person on the planet, they're clueless.

Impetuous Peter assures Jesus he's ready to go ANYWHERE with Him, even to die for Him. History notes that thirty years later, in Rome, Peter was also crucified. But feeling unworthy to die as His Savior had, Peter asked to be hung upside down.

On their final night together, despite Peter's professed bravado and devotion, Jesus says with tough love, "Nice try, Pete, but tonight, before 3 a.m., you'll deny even *knowing* Me. Not once, but thrice!"

Peter needed to plumb the poverty of his self-righteousness, to discover he could only survive with Christ's strength. Our failures, if we learn from them, can be part of our growth.

Despite his foibles, Peter goes on to become a leader in the early church, boldly inviting people to follow Christ. Once 3,000 of his hearers chose to turn their lives over to Jesus in a single day. Even when we screw up big-time, God can still use us in His great plan to tell people He no longer holds their sins against them. All that remains for us sinners to do is to simply *believe* in Him and make Him the centerpiece of our lives.

If you haven't yet put your life in God's hands through trusting Christ as your Savior, you're building your life's house on sand. But if you *have*, you can be totally confident, based on God's iron-clad promises in the Bible, that you're completely safe in God's hands, now, and in the life to come.

Please take this moment to add your name to God's line-up card. Just tell Him, in your own words, "God, I believe You *are* speaking to me in the pages of this Bible. I know I'm a sinner. I need Your forgiveness, paid for on the cross by the death of Your Son. By faith I now accept that forgiveness, and I place my life in Your hands. Thank You, Father. And thank You, Jesus. Amen."

His Deal

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