

“Love to the Uttermost”  
The Gospel of John Chapter 13:1-17

The public ministry of Jesus has concluded. Chapters’ 13-17 record Christ’s private words to His apostles. It is the longest discourse by Jesus in the Gospels and concludes with His high priestly prayer. John does not record the institution of the Lord’s Supper, which is found in the synoptic Gospel accounts (Matt. 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-23). During the supper, Luke tells us that the apostles, as they often did, were arguing about who was the greatest in the Kingdom (Luke 22:24; Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 9:33-37). That context makes the washing of the apostles’ feet so poignant and exemplifies Jesus’ love that is without end and to the uttermost (Deut. 7:6; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 8:38-39; 1Cor. 13:4-8; Eph. 2:4).

Jesus’ hour had come and His final humiliation is beginning (Phil. 2:5-8). Judas Iscariot is still present as the supper ends. Yes, even his feet will be washed by the Master! John graphically describes Jesus’ actions as He removes His garments, girds Himself with a towel, and begins a slave’s job of washing His apostles’ feet.

The apostles, one of whom should have performed this menial task, are silent until Christ comes to Simon Peter. Peter’s grasp of the incongruity of this moment is captured in the literal Greek which reads, “Lord, are You, **my** feet, washing?” Jesus’ responses to Peter demonstrates that Peter only understood the Master’s words in a rote, wooden, physical literal sense. Jesus was speaking of a literal spiritual washing (1Cor. 6:11).

Jesus drives His lesson home by asking them a question (verse 12) that they would need His explanation to understand. He, as their Lord and teacher, was giving them an example of service to follow (Heb. 4:11, 8:5, 9:23; James 5:10). In the Kingdom of Heaven, the first shall be last and the greatest shall be servant to all (Matt. 20:25-28).

Jesus is not instituting an ordinance of “foot washing” to be followed through the ages by the church like baptism or the Lord’s Supper. He is demonstrating that the Christian life is to be one of service, however that service may appear (Matt. 25:31-46). It is offering one’s body as a **living sacrifice** (Rom. 12:1-2) by allowing the resurrected Christ to live His life through you by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20; 1Thess. 4:3).

