



## The True Servant (John 13)

*Notes: Week Thirteen*

### John 13 (HCSB)

#### Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

**13** Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Now by the time of supper, the Devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Him. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into His hands, that He had come from God, and that He was going back to God. <sup>4</sup> So He got up from supper, laid aside His robe, took a towel, and tied it around Himself. <sup>5</sup> Next, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around Him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who asked Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't understand now, but afterward you will know."

<sup>8</sup> "You will never wash my feet—ever!" Peter said.

Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with Me."

<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

<sup>10</sup> "One who has bathed," Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you." <sup>11</sup> For He knew who would betray Him. This is why He said, "You are not all clean."

#### The Meaning of Footwashing

<sup>12</sup> When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His robe, He reclined<sup>[b]</sup> again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? <sup>13</sup> You call Me Teacher and Lord. This is well said, for I am. <sup>14</sup> So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you.

<sup>16</sup> "I assure you: A slave is not greater than his master,<sup>[c]</sup> and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. <sup>18</sup> I'm not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: The one who eats My bread<sup>[d]</sup> has raised his heel against Me.<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. <sup>20</sup> I assure you: Whoever receives anyone I send receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

#### Judas's Betrayal Predicted

<sup>21</sup> When Jesus had said this, He was troubled in His spirit and testified, "I assure you: One of you will betray Me!"

<sup>22</sup> The disciples started looking at one another—uncertain which one He was speaking about. <sup>23</sup> One of His disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus.<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>24</sup> Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was He was talking about. <sup>25</sup> So he leaned back against Jesus and asked Him, "Lord, who is it?"

<sup>26</sup> Jesus replied, “He’s the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it.” When He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son.<sup>[g]</sup> <sup>27</sup> After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Therefore Jesus told him, “What you’re doing, do quickly.”

<sup>28</sup> None of those reclining at the table knew why He told him this.<sup>29</sup> Since Judas kept the money-bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival,” or that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup> After receiving the piece of bread, he went out immediately. And it was night.

### **The New Command**

<sup>31</sup> When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in Him,<sup>[h]</sup> God will also glorify Him in Himself and will glorify Him at once.

<sup>33</sup> “Children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, ‘Where I am going you cannot come,’ so now I tell you.

<sup>34</sup> “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

### **Peter’s Denials Predicted**

<sup>36</sup> “Lord,” Simon Peter said to Him, “where are You going?”

Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later.”

<sup>37</sup> “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You!”

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for Me? I assure you: A rooster will not crow until you have denied Me three times.

### **Footnotes:**

- a. [John 13:1](#) = completely or always
- b. [John 13:12](#) At important meals the custom was to recline on a mat at a low table and lean on the left elbow.
- c. [John 13:16](#) Or *lord*
- d. [John 13:18](#) Other mss read *eats bread with Me*
- e. [John 13:18](#) [Ps 41:9](#)
- f. [John 13:23](#) Lit *reclining at Jesus’ breast*; that is, on His right; [Jn 1:18](#)
- g. [John 13:26](#) Other mss read *Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son*
- h. [John 13:32](#) Other mss omit *If God is glorified in Him*

# Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

## John 13

[13:1-17:26](#) In the second major unit of John's Gospel, Jesus prepared His messianic community (represented by the Twelve, minus Judas) for the time following His exaltation to the Father. The community was first cleansed literally (foot-washing, [13:1-17](#)), then figuratively through the removal of the betrayer ([13:18-30](#)). Jesus' farewell discourse ([13:31-16:33](#)) conveys instructions to His followers, particularly about the coming "Helping Presence" (Gk *parakletos*), the Holy Spirit, and the disciples' need to remain in Jesus spiritually after His physical departure from earth. The discourse (unique to John's Gospel) concludes with Jesus' final prayer (chap. 17).

[13:1-17](#) With His crucifixion imminent, Jesus washed His disciples' feet as a final proof of His love and to give them an example of humility and service. In a striking demonstration of love for His enemies, Jesus washed *all* of His disciples' feet, including Judas's. Jesus' act is all the more remarkable because washing people's feet was considered a task so low it could only be performed by non-Jewish slaves. In a culture where people walked long distances on dusty roads in sandals, it was customary for the host to provide water for foot-washing. This was usually done upon arrival, not during the meal. The disciples probably felt guilty that none of them had thought to do this.

[13:1](#) References to Jewish religious festivals and the coming of Jesus' **hour** (see note at [2:4](#)) now converge. Jesus' **own** refers to the Twelve, the representatives of His new messianic community ([1:11](#)).

[13:4-5](#) The practice of foot-washing had a long OT tradition ([Gen 18:4](#); [19:2](#); [24:32](#); [43:24](#); [Jdg 19:21](#); [1Sam 25:41](#)). Jesus' performance of this menial task exemplified His humility ([Php 2:6-8](#)).

[13:16](#) On Jesus as the one **sent** as well as the sender, see note at [3:16-18](#).

[13:18-30](#) Judas's betrayal of Jesus comes as no surprise to the alert reader. John repeatedly anticipated this treacherous act ([vv. 10-11](#); [6:70-71](#); [12:4](#)). It is shocking that one whom Jesus had chosen as an apostle would betray Him. But far from indicating that Jesus made a mistake, the betrayal actually fulfilled Scripture ([13:18](#), citing [Ps 41:9](#); see note at [Jn 17:12](#)). God's plan was right on track. This section also contains the first mention of "the one Jesus loved" ([13:23](#)). He is frequently featured side by side with Peter in the second half of John's Gospel.

[13:18](#) Judas's treachery fulfilled OT typology. Jesus cited [Ps 41:9](#), which dealt with Absalom's rebellion against King David. Judas's betrayal came as no surprise to Jesus ([Jn 13:19](#)). Eating someone's **bread** indicated close fellowship, and yet Judas **raised his heel** against Jesus, an idiom that describes betrayal. Not only did Jesus' public foes plot against Him; even His own disciples could not be trusted.

[13:19](#) Jesus' statement is one of several references to His omniscience in this section ([14:29](#); [16:1,4,32,33](#)). **I am He**, as in [8:24,28](#) (see note there), very likely had overtones of deity.

[13:21](#) Jesus' being **troubled in His spirit** (cp. [11:33](#); [12:27](#)) parallels the emotions of David, who expressed anguish over the betrayal of a close friend ([Ps 55:2-14](#); cp. [Ps 31:9-10](#); [38:10](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "John 13".

**13:23** The reference to one of His disciples, **the one Jesus loved... reclining close beside Jesus** (Gk *kolpos*) echoes the description of Jesus as "the One who is at the Father's side" (Gk *kolpos*) in [1:18](#). This disciple is mentioned again in [21:20](#). Clearly he was an integral member of Jesus' group. Tradition identifies him as John, author of this Gospel.

**13:29** The supposition that Jesus may have sent Judas to **give something to the poor** harks back to [12:5](#), where Judas presented himself as a champion of charity. Almsgiving was an important part of Jewish piety ([Mt 6:2-4](#)).

**13:30** The phrase **it was night** strikes an ominous note. Compare [Lk 22:53](#): "This is your hour—and the dominion of darkness"; see [Mt 26:20](#); [Mk 14:17](#); [1Co 11:23](#).

**13:31** This verse echoes Isaiah ([Isa 49:3](#); see note at [Jn 2:4](#)).

**13:31-16:33** Jesus' farewell discourse in John's Gospel is patterned after Moses' farewell discourse in [Deuteronomy 31-33](#). Such discourses typically include predictions of a person's death and departure; predictions of future challenges for his followers after his death; arrangements for succession; exhortations to moral behavior; a final commission; an affirmation and renewal of God's covenant promises; and a closing doxology. While Jesus' farewell discourse is generally true to this pattern, there are differences as well. Jesus' farewell was only temporary (His followers will see Him again after **a little while**, [Jn 14:19](#)), so His final words focused on the future rather than the past. Also, the vine allegory in [John 15](#) is distinct from OT or second temple farewell discourses. Overall, Jesus made provision for the Holy Spirit to continue His mission through the disciples. Jesus Himself would continue to direct their mission from His exalted position with the Father.

**13:34-35** Love must be the distinguishing mark of Jesus' disciples. Jesus' **new command** closely resembled the Mosaic commands to love the Lord ([Dt 6:5](#)) and one's neighbor as oneself ([Lv 19:18](#); cp. [Mk 12:28-33](#)). Elsewhere Jesus said we must love even our enemies ([Mt 5:43-48](#)). While the command to love God and one's neighbor was thus not new, Jesus' example (**as I have loved you**) was unparalleled, as was His insistence that we should love our enemies.

## The Apologetics Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### John 13

**13:1** If it was just before the Passover feast in [verse 1](#), did John intend for the meal of [verse 2](#) to be a different one from the Passover? Probably not. [Verse 1](#) is a small paragraph that functions as a headline over all of chapters 13-17. [Verse 2](#) then describes the very Passover meal that had just been mentioned. Not only did various details match the accounts from the other Gospels that are more clearly based on Passover, but only on that night would anyone have imagined that Judas was leaving to give something for the poor ([v. 29](#)). The feast lasted for a week, so he could also have needed to buy more provisions ([v. 29](#)).

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<sup>2</sup> Ted Cabal, ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1599-1600.

[13:2-17](#) Only John describes the foot washing; only the other Gospels present Jesus' words over the bread and the cup. But both fit neatly together as part of the same meal, a Jewish Passover feast, which Jesus reinterpreted as symbolizing His upcoming, self-giving death for the sins of humanity.

[13:16](#) In other contexts, servants can become greater than their masters. But this is not true with Jesus and His followers, especially when the issues are those of menial service or persecution, which naturally we wish we could avoid ([15:20](#)).

[13:18-30](#) Jesus would have shared His bread with all of the Twelve, so [verse 18](#) means merely that one of His most intimate followers would betray Him. [Verses 23-26](#) describe what probably were whispered remarks among those seated closest to Jesus. Jesus' words in [verse 27](#) may then have been spoken loudly enough for all to hear—but not to understand.

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### *John 13*

[13:1](#) Jesus knew he would be betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, and deserted by all of them for a time. Still he "loved them to the very end." God knows us completely, as Jesus knew his disciples ([2:24, 25](#); [6:64](#)). He knows the sins we have committed and the ones we will yet commit. Still, he loves us. How do you respond to that kind of love?

[13:1ff](#) [Chapters 13-17](#) tell us what Jesus said to his disciples on the night before his death. These words were all spoken in one evening when, with only the disciples as his audience, he gave final instructions to prepare them for his death and resurrection, events that would change their lives forever.

[13:1-3](#) For more information on Judas Iscariot, see his Profile in [Mark 14, p. 1655](#).

[13:1-17](#) Jesus was the model servant, and he showed his servant attitude to his disciples. Washing guests' feet was a job for a household servant to carry out when guests arrived. But Jesus wrapped a towel around his waist, as the lowliest slave would do, and washed and dried his disciples' feet. If even he, God in the flesh, is willing to serve, we his followers must also be servants, willing to serve in any way that glorifies God. Are you willing to follow Christ's example of serving? Whom can you serve today? There is a special blessing for those who not only agree that humble service is Christ's way, but who also follow through and do it ([13:17](#)).

[13:6, 7](#) Imagine being Peter and watching Jesus wash the others' feet, all the while moving closer to you. Seeing his Master behave like a slave must have confused Peter. He still did not understand Jesus' teaching that to be a leader, a person must be a servant. This is not a comfortable passage for leaders who find it hard to serve those beneath them. How do you treat those who work under you (whether children, employees, or volunteers)?

[13:8, 9](#) When Jesus responded: "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me," he may have meant (1) that unless he washed away Peter's sins by his death on the cross, then Peter could have no relationship with him, or (2) that unless Peter submitted to him and allowed Jesus to minister in this way, Peter would never learn the lesson of humility. Either way, Peter seemed to grasp the significance of Jesus'

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<sup>3</sup>, *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 1783-1785.

words, for he then wanted to be bathed completely: "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

[13:12ff](#) Jesus did not wash his disciples' feet just to get them to be nice to each other. His far greater goal was to extend his mission on earth after he was gone. These men were to move into the world serving God, serving each other, and serving all people to whom they took the message of salvation.

[13:22](#) Judas was not the obvious betrayer. After all, he was the one the disciples trusted to keep the money ([12:6](#); [13:29](#)).

[13:26](#) The honored guest at a meal was often singled out like this.

[13:27](#) Satan's part in the betrayal of Jesus does not remove any of the responsibility from Judas. Disillusioned because Jesus was talking about dying rather than setting up his Kingdom, Judas may have been trying to force Jesus' hand and make him use his power to prove he was the Messiah. Or perhaps Judas, not understanding Jesus' mission, no longer believed Jesus was God's chosen one. Whatever Judas thought, Satan assumed that Jesus' death would end his mission and thwart God's plan. Like Judas, Satan did not know that Jesus' death was the most important part of God's plan all along.

[13:27-38](#) John describes these few moments in clear detail. We can see that Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen. He knew about Judas and about Peter, but he did not change the situation, nor did he stop loving them. In the same way, Jesus knows exactly what you will do to hurt him. Yet he still loves you unconditionally and will forgive you whenever you ask him. Judas couldn't understand this, and his life ended tragically. Peter understood, and despite his shortcomings, his life ended triumphantly because he never let go of his faith in the one who loved him.

[13:34](#) To love others was not a new commandment (see [Leviticus 19:18](#)), but to love others as much as Christ loved others was revolutionary. Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us. Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God. Jesus was a living example of God's love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus' love.

[13:34, 35](#) Jesus says that our Christlike love will show we are his disciples. Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division in your church? Or do they know you are Jesus' followers by your love for one another?

Love is more than simply warm feelings; it is an attitude that reveals itself in action. How can we love others as Jesus loves us? By helping when it's not convenient, by giving when it hurts, by devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own, by absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back. This kind of loving is hard to do. That is why people notice when you do it and know you are empowered by a supernatural source. The Bible has another beautiful description of love in [1 Corinthians 13](#).

[13:37, 38](#) Peter proudly told Jesus that he was ready to die for him. But Jesus corrected him. He knew Peter would deny that he knew Jesus that very night to protect himself ([18:15-18](#), [25-27](#)). In our enthusiasm, it is easy to make promises, but God knows the extent of our commitment. Paul tells us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought ([Romans 12:3](#)). Instead of bragging, demonstrate your commitment step by step as you grow in your knowledge of God's Word and in your faith.