

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

JESUS SAVES

JESUS THE SAVIOR

The Last Supper

Jesus, the Son of God, who knew all things realized that His death by crucifixion would occur the following day. The words of John the Baptist spoken at the beginning of His ministry were about to be fulfilled. **John 1:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* It was the time of Passover and the group of 12 had gathered together with Jesus to celebrate their Passover meal. Called "pesach" in Hebrew, the name Passover is taken from the story of God's angel of death "passing over" the homes of the Hebrews at the sight of the blood of the lamb placed on the doorposts of their homes when God sent the tenth plague upon the Egyptians, the killing of their first-born.

The Jewish Passover was about to be literally fulfilled – Jesus would shed His own blood for the purpose of covering our sins so that God will pass over us and not charge our sins to our account. When we accept Christ as Savior we are covered with the blood of our Passover Lamb.

John 13-17 is Jesus' farewell message to His disciples and it begins with what we could call an 'object lesson' – the washing of His disciples' feet. The disciples like Christians today were aided by visual learning techniques; therefore, Jesus used a visual example of the custom of the times known as foot washing.

Foot washing in that era was a necessity for comfort and cleanliness since travelers wore sandals as they walked on dusty Palestinian roads. It was customary for the host to provide guests with water for washing their feet and a servant or slave to perform the lowly task. And suddenly Jesus – the leader of the 12 was preparing to wash **their** feet! Jesus Christ who had come from heaven's glory down to this earth was now taking the place of a slave and washing feet! What could this humble service mean?

Read John 13:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* ² *During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,* ³ *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,* ⁴ *rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.* ⁵ *Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Notice that the foot washing took place at the Feast of the Passover *during the supper*. This is not the Lord's Supper. This reference is to the Passover supper. John does not mention the actual breaking of the bread for the Lord's Supper like we observe at the direction of Jesus today. In our study we will take that event from Matthew's account although both Mark and Luke record it as well.

John does record something very significant when he said of Jesus: *he loved them to the end*. This act of Jesus' love was not performed after Judas Iscariot left to betray Him. He was still in the room and Jesus washed Judas' feet just like all the rest. Jesus did not leave anyone out of His love – He loved them all – even the one who would betray Him. Sometimes people worry over having done something so unlovely that they feel as though that cannot be loved by God. But, that is the Devil's lie. We see the picture of Christ's love when He washed the feet of all – not just those the world might have considered to be His 'favorite' few. He died and shed His blood for all of us. It is our choice to place His blood upon the doorpost of our hearts.

Jesus washing the disciples' feet the night before His crucifixion pictures what He was about to do all of us at Calvary. (1) He rose from His place of comfort and rest at the table just as He rose from His throne in heaven, a place of comfort and rest, to come to this earth to be our Savior. (2) He laid aside His garments in preparation to wash His disciples' feet just as He laid aside His glory to become our sin offering. (3) He took a towel and girded Himself becoming the form of a servant during the Passover meal picturing how He took on the likeness of man and became one of us. (4) He poured water into a basin for the purpose of cleansing just as He poured out His blood to cleanse us from guilt and the penalty of sin. (5) In verse 12 we will read how He sat down again after washing their feet reminding us that He now sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father, after cleansing us from sin and having risen again from the grave.

Read John 13:6-15 (ESV) ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Every group has a Peter – the one who is bold enough to say what everyone else is thinking! And Peter objected loudly to Jesus’ act of humble service. Consider this: Which is harder – washing someone’s feet or allowing someone else to wash your feet? Many of us have a problem letting anyone do anything for us. A pastor shared a story that occurred during his first pastorate in a small country church. An elderly widow in the church invited him and his wife to have lunch in her home one Sunday. They knew she was very poor and thanked her for the invitation and responded with their own invitation to take her to lunch at a restaurant. “No,” she replied, “I want my pastor to eat at my home.” Quickly and more humbly the young pastor and his wife accepted the woman’s generous invitation.

Jesus was teaching by example – the example of being a servant Himself. We see not only a picture of the need for humble service in our own lives but also the need for continued holiness because of Jesus’ words. Jesus explained to Peter that without washing there is no fellowship with Christ. Sin breaks our communion, our relationship, with the Lord. Even though we remain His child, sin takes us outside of His fellowship. We humble ourselves but it is Christ who cleanses us. One of the best ways to allow the Lord to cleanse us is through the Water of His Word.

As believers we want to be humble, but when we think we are that is the very moment we are NOT! **Romans 12:3 (ESV)** ³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

Having a ‘servant’s heart, does not mean that we are to be a “religious doormat” for everyone to use! Some people try to ‘buy friends’ and maintain their status in church by giving in to everybody else’s whims and wishes. That is not what Jesus was doing when He washed His disciples’ feet. He clearly said, *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* It should be our heart’s desire to ‘be like Jesus.’

A supper of New Covenant sacrifice.

Read Matthew 26:26-28 (ESV) ²⁶ *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”* ²⁷ *And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,* ²⁸ *for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

In comparing all of the accounts of the ‘last supper’, there are differences of opinion as to whether Judas had already left the Upper Room by that time. I believe that he had. Jesus was initiating something new that would not include unbelievers.

He took two elements from the Passover feast, the unleavened bread and the cup, and He used those to picture His impending death. The broken bread pictured His body broken for the sins of the world. The cup of wine pictured His blood, shed for the remission of sins. The text does not indicate that anything special or mysterious happened to these two elements. Jesus often spoke figuratively. Consider, for example, how He called Himself the Vine and the Door. No one in Jesus' day or today believes that Jesus was claiming to be a door made of wood or a vine. He was speaking figuratively. The elements remained bread and wine but possess a deeper meaning. Certainly, the picture is much clearer to us today than to those who partook of that first Lord's Supper. Those elements then and now represent the body and the blood of Jesus Christ.

A supper of kingdom anticipation.

Read Matthew 26:29-30 (ESV) ²⁹ *I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.* ³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

When I take the Lord's Supper, I look back to the cross and what Jesus did for me and all of us there. It is also a time for confession of sin. However, we all need to remember that the Lord's Supper is a reminder for us to look forward for Christ's return. We will observe this supper until He comes. Paul explained in **1 Corinthians 11:26 (ESV)** ²⁶ *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* The Passover pointed ahead to the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (**John 1:29**). The Lord's Supper announces that this great work of the Lamb of God has been accomplished.

When Christ returns, there will be another supper for us to celebrate. **Revelation 19:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."*