

LifeChange Bible Study Series

JOHN 13:18-30

Judas' betrayal predicted (13:18–30)

Reclining (13:23). This was the customary position for the Passover meal. “The usual arrangement ... was to have a series of couches each for three persons arranged in a U round the table. The host, or the most important person reclined in the centre of the chief couch placed at the junction of the two arms of the U. The guests reclined with their heads towards the table and their feet stretched out obliquely away from it. They leaned on the left elbow, which meant that the right hand was free to secure food. The place of honor was to the left of, and thus slightly behind the principal person. The second place was to his right, and the guest there would have his head on the breast of the host. Plainly this was the position occupied by the beloved disciple.”⁶

We might have thought that Peter would have the place of honor. But he seems to have been too far from Jesus to whisper a question himself (13:24), and he could scarcely have motioned to John if he was behind Jesus, who was behind John. Judas was near enough to Jesus to receive a piece of food from him (13:26), so he may have had the place of honor. He was the group's treasurer (12:6; 13:29), an important role, and Jesus may have been making a subtle last appeal to him.

7. Why did Jesus predict the betrayal to His disciples, but in a veiled manner (10:18; 13:3, 19)?

Optional Application: Have you ever been betrayed or let down by a friend? If so, compare the way you felt and acted to what Jesus felt and did about Judas (13:18–30; Luke 22:47–48) and Peter (John 13:37–38; 21:15–19; Luke 22:31–32). What might Jesus have done if He had been bitter about either man?

For Thought and Discussion: How is it ironic that Jesus gave His new commandment (13:34–35; 15:12–13) in the midst of knowing what Judas and Peter were about to do?

Peter's denial predicted (13:31–38)

Now that Judas has gone to fetch the temple guard, Jesus has only a few hours to say His parting words to His dearest friends. He begins with a teaching that has been implicit in the whole training of His disciples, but that He only now makes explicit (13:34–35). We will look at this command again along with 15:12–13 in lesson sixteen. In chapter 13 Peter completely ignores the new commandment because he is so aghast that Jesus intends to go somewhere without His disciples (13:33–36).

8. What is ironic about Peter's conviction that he will lay down his life for his Master (13:37–38; compare 10:11, 15; 18:8–18, 25–27)?

9. Knowing what Judas and Peter are about to do, Jesus gives His “new command.” Compare John 13:34 to Leviticus 19:18. What is new about 13:34?

10. How does the footwashing help to explain this commandment?

11. Why is this command so crucial for Christians to keep (13:35)?

Optional Application: Are you at all like Peter in 13:36–38? How accurate is your own assessment of your devotion to Jesus? Pray about this.

Optional Application: How has Jesus loved you? How can you love someone this week with this same love?

For Thought and Discussion: Why do you think actively loving other Christians is such an effective way to evangelize non-Christians (13:35)?

Your response

12. What one truth from 13:1–38 would you like to concentrate on for application this week?

13. How do you fall short in this area? How would you like this truth to affect your life?

14. What practical steps can you take toward cooperating with God in achieving this end?

15. List any questions you have about chapter 13.

For the group

Warm-up. Ask everyone to remember the most menial or unpleasant act of service that someone has done for him or her recently. Or, have everyone think of the most menial thing he or she has done for someone else recently.

Questions. Focus on the footwashing. Be sure the group understands both aspects of it: how it is something Jesus uniquely does for us, and how it is something we must do for each other. When you think you understand what Jesus was saying through the footwashing, list together as many ways of washing one another's feet as you can. In particular, look for ways of washing other group members' feet. Discuss "the new command" and its connection with the footwashing.

Worship. Praise Jesus for washing you wholly so that you need only to have Him wash your feet periodically. Thank Him for the ultimate act of humility He performed to wash you. Ask Him to show you how to wash others' feet. Praise Him for embracing betrayal by His friends without bitterness.

The Date of Passover

According to the official calendar of the temple authorities, the beginning of Passover was apparently Friday evening in that year. The Jewish leaders had not yet eaten the Passover on Friday morning when they were having Jesus condemned (18:28). They wanted Jesus executed before the Sabbath and the festival week began, because trying and executing a criminal during the feast was irreligious. Thus it came about that Jesus died on Friday afternoon shortly before the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple, graphically fulfilling John the Baptist's prophecy in 1:29.

However, the Synoptics make it clear that the meal Jesus ate with His disciples on Thursday evening was the Passover (Luke 22:7–13). Jesus was determined to eat this

Passover with His friends before His death (Luke 22:15–16). Perhaps because He knew He must be arrested before the official Passover, He seems to have celebrated it a day ahead. Several sects, including the community at Qumran, disagreed with the official calendar and routinely ate their Passover a day or so before the official date. They had to do without a lamb (the Gospels mention no lamb at this meal) because a lamb could be eaten only if it was slaughtered by the priests in the temple on the day they recognized. But Jews who were anywhere but Jerusalem also had to do without lambs so this was no great hardship.¹

¹ The Navigators, [LifeChange: John](#), ed. Karen Lee-Thorp, The LifeChange Bible Study Series (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 142–146.