

The Book of Glory: John 13-21

One Evening with His Own

John 13-17

The Significance of John 13-17

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

- ❖ Chapters 13-21 form the second half of John's Gospel: "The Book of Glory"—Jesus engaged in personal ministry to his disciples (13-17), followed by his death and resurrection (18-21). The first half of John's Gospel, "The Book of Signs," presented John's seven curated signs to the world that Jesus was "*the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing [they] may have life in his name*" (20.31). These signs revealed his deity as God (cf. P¹⁻³; 10.34-38), his re-presentation as the *God-Who-Is-Seen* (cf. P^{14, 18}; 12.45), and his purpose of coming into the world in love (3.16) and grace (P¹⁶) to provide salvation (1.29) that brings eternal life (cf. 3.14-15).

- ❖ Chapters 13-17 contain teaching and events that are unique to John's account of this evening. The Synoptics do not give us any of these details, nor does John's account relate the details of the "last supper" which is recounted by all of the Synoptic writers.
- ❖ In chapters 2-12, the words *life* and *light* are more prevalent than *love*; in chapters 13-17, it is *love* that is prevalent, in both the words and interaction of Jesus with his disciples.
- ❖ Chapter 13 contains the Great Example and the New Commandment—both of which are set forth by Jesus as definitive standards by which true Christ-followers will be identified and authenticated: "*as I have for you.*" Together these two dynamics form the heart, or the nature, which is the basis for the unity (chapter 17) that is indispensable for our witness to truly reveal Jesus. This unity is not something that we do, but something that we are—the same "are" that defines the nature and oneness of the Godhead.

- ❖ The interaction of Jesus with his disciples in chapters 13-17 takes place in the evening, within the *Weekend*, of the “hour” for which Jesus came and to which he has been referring (2.4; 7.30; 8.20; 12.23, 27; 13.1; 17.1). This is the most momentous weekend in human history; more than that, it is the “fullness of time” (Galatians 4.4) moment that has been the subject of Triune planning since before the creation of the world (cf. Ephesians 1.4; 2 Timothy 1.9; Titus 1.21 Peter 1.20; Revelation 13.8) —the weekend when Jesus through the “sanctifying enablement of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9.14), will bring his Father’s love to it’s “*finished*” conclusion on the cross when he is lifted up (12.32). The Weekend events culminate in the Triune work of the Father accepting the “propitiation payment” of the Son, raising him to life through the Spirit (Romans 1.4; 8.11; Ephesians 1.19-20), and securing for us the goal of His love for us: eternal life (cf. 2 Timothy 1.10; Titus 3.4-7).

- ❖ For one uninterrupted evening, chapters 13-17, Jesus is with “*his Own*”—these who are in the world and for the world but not of the world—“*his earliest Church of all, a group of people who exist for the sake of God’s deeply loved world*” (Bruner). For five chapters, Jesus pours himself, *The Word*, into his Church through teaching (13-16), followed by intercession (17). What does it mean to be *his Own*—his Church—in the world? How are we recognized and authenticated as truly *his Own*? How do *his Own* live in relationship to him, their Master and Life? How do they live in relationship to the world into which they are sent to make him known? How do they live in relationship with “*others of his Own*” so that they are proved to be genuinely *his Own* and he is revealed as the *One-Sent-By-the-Father*? How do they live in relationship to the enabling and sanctifying Spirit who is his source of power? Jesus began his ministry with his sermon on Kingdom Discipleship; he concluded his ministry with his teaching on “True Church” discipleship.

Nowhere in the entire Bible does the child of God feel that he is walking on more holy ground. For here, more than in many other portions of Scripture, he hears the voice of Jesus leading him into a greater understanding of his place before the Father and consequently also of his new position in the world. These chapters contain teaching about heaven, the new commandment, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the mutual union of Christ with the disciples and the disciples with Christ, and prayer.

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