

# Exegesis of John 12:36b-13:17

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Not too long ago we witnessed the end results (or have we?) of some public ministries. Oral Robert's television ministry has suffered ever since his proclamation that God told him he'd die if he didn't receive x amount of millions of dollars. Jim and Tammy Baker's television ministry more or less came to an end when they were both caught for fraud, and now Jimmy Swagart's television ministry has come to an end (or so we're told) because of (well, it's actually "None of your business!") his lust for loose women. All of the above got caught up in the folly of their sins and were exposed.

There are some people that might feel sorry for them, but I can't. They did damage to the Word. For the most, the thousands of people who watched their television ministries, have gotten "fed up" and "turned off" with religion. And that's sad. But, as we will study later, it will be their own fault if they were led astray and refuse to have anything to do with Jesus.

Being in the public ministry ourselves, we know and understand how easily one can fall prey to sin. After all, we are sinners and we deal with sin. And we, too, could fall away from the truth. We pray that our lives and ministries don't turn people off to that ever-important saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the portion of John's Gospel under consideration, we hear of another such ministry that came to a close. But this particular ministry and public servant were different. Even though false charges were later brought against him, this person wasn't exposed of his sins, nor did his ministry collapse. Instead, it grew! And we pray that it continues to do so.

Jesus was now in the last week of his earthly mission. The time had now come for his public ministry to come to a close. The Pharisees, the Saducees, and the religious leaders proudly sat back, thinking they had a hand in ruining this ministry. But our Lord himself knew that his time was short. The few hours Jesus had were going to be spent with his disciples, preparing them for their public ministries, teaching them important truths about service in his kingdom. We do well to heed these lessons. They apply to us as well.

The following outline divides this portion of John's Gospel:

1. John 12:36b-43      The Results of Christ's Public Ministry
  - The Unbelief of the Jews
  - Doctrine of Election
2. John 12:44-50      Christ's "Sermon Conclusion" or Final Appeal
  - Reasons Why Men Ought to Believe
3. John 13:1-5          Jesus Washing His Disciples' Feet
4. John 13:6-10        Jesus' Dialogue with Peter
5. John 13:11          Jesus' love and appeal to Judas to repent
6. John 13:12-15      The Meaning of the Foot Washing

## The Results of Christ's Public Ministry

Ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἐκρύβη ἀπ' αὐτῶν.

*"Jesus spoke these things, and after he left he hid himself from them."*

- Ταῦτα            - "these things"  
                    - refers to the previous verses; all his past teaching among the Jews
- ἐλάλησεν       - "spoke" Pf. tense of  
                    - note tense: John is focusing on the completion of the action; he emphasizes the certainty of the existing fact
- ἀπελθὼν        - "after he left"  
                    - Aor. Ptc. (Circumstantial/Time) of

- ἐκπύβη - “was hidden” Aor. Pass. of - conceal  
 - passive meaning - “hide one’s self” figuratively can mean “withdraw from sight”  
 ἀπ’ αὐτῶν. - “away/away from”

The time is Tuesday after Palm Sunday, the last week of Jesus’ life. This concludes for all time Jesus’ activity among the Jews, except in the moment of prayer for them on the cross. Does ταῦτα refer just to what Jesus had spoken in this preceding section in the Temple, or does ταῦτα refer to Jesus’ past teaching of his entire public ministry? Commentators were mixed while others made no mention of it. The Bartz commentary states that it could be both. No matter what reference you give to ταῦτα either the things just spoken or all of Jesus’ past teaching, it does conclude Jesus’ public ministry.

In 8:59, Jesus “hid himself” when his own life was in danger. Where and why did Jesus hide? We aren’t told his life was in danger, though it may have been because of the plot to take his life (11:53). Why does one hide from others? It may be for any number of reasons: personal safety; the game “Hide and Seek”; or just to get away from a person or people. I think the last reason mentioned was why Jesus “hid himself.” Jesus was now done with the people who would not accept him as God’s own Son, the promised one, the Messiah. In his commentary Lenski says perhaps Jesus went to Bethany and stayed with some friends until two days later. But we need not and ought not make a big point of this. We aren’t told and we ought not read into, or speculate, where and why Jesus went.

37 Τοσαῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ σημεῖα πεποιηκότος ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν, 38 ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῆ ὃν εἶπεν, Κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; καὶ ὁ βραχίων ξυρίου τίνι ἀπεκαλύφθη; {37} “Even though he had performed so many signs before them, they would still not believe in him, {38} in order that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled which he spoke,

Lord, who has believed our preaching?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

### verse 37

- Τοσαῦτα - “so many” placed in position for emphasis for effect  
 σημεῖα - “miracles/signs”—signs of authority that points to something  
 - Kittel, “when ‘sign’ occurs in the NT, humans are always involved (pg. 1018)  
 πεποιηκότος - “had done” Pf. Ptc. (Gen. Abs. Concessive) from ποιέω - do; perform  
 - Perfect tense emphasizes the certainty of existing facts  
 ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν - “before them” Gen. Abs.  
 ἐπίστευον - “they believed”  
 - Progressive or Durative Impf. - emphasizes repeated unbelief or the continuous stubbornness of the unbelief

### verse 38

- ἵνα - Final “in order that”  
 - Purpose clause  
 ὁ λόγος - “the word” - actually God’s Word which Isaiah spoke  
 πληρωθῆ - “might be fulfilled” Aor. P. Subjv. of πληρόω to fill  
 Κύριε - “Lord” no article—focuses on the Lord’s quality or character  
 τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν - report/message/preaching/hearing  
 - literally, “the preaching of us”  
 - with the article  
 |→ specific—the message  
 |→ The Word of God  
 - does not refer to the things the prophet preaches but to things he himself has heard (from God)  
 ὁ βραχίων - “the arm” (symbol of God’s power and strength)

- (shorter part of the arm from shoulder to elbow)
- power shown by the signs done by Jesus
- power which can and will bring about the Son's glory after his humiliation
- ἀπεκαλύφθη - "been revealed" Aor. Pass. of ἀποκαλύπτω to reveal

The Apostle recorded other instances of miracles performed by Jesus. Up to this point only six are recorded. But John also speaks of many unrecorded miracles. In 20:30, "*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.*" And in 21:25, "*Jesus did many other things as well. If everyone of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*" With all the recorded miracles and even with all those that were not recorded, why were the people such dunderheads?

Ylvisaker tells us, "John does not confine his information to the bare statement that Israel on the whole did not believe and that Jesus' labor of love was entirely wasted upon this obdurate people—he points also to the old Testament writings and explains that it could not be otherwise" (The Gospels, Ylvisaker, page 595). Later, in verse 42, John tells us that there were some who believed.

The prophet Isaiah complained that during his ministry very few accepted what he and all true believers believed in regard to the Servant of the Lord; that he was to suffer; become our substitute; be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

We have to be careful not to say that the Jew's unbelief was deliberately brought about by God in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled. Was it God's will that this event should happen, or that God will deliberately bring about the things predicted? No. He repeatedly invited them to come time and again. He showed them signs and wonders. But to no avail. They were just like their ancestors. In Psalm 78:12ff, Asaph speaks of God's miracles shown to the children of Israel in Egypt; during their Exodus; during their wilderness wanderings; and later in verse 42 we're told, "*they did not remember his power.*"

Israel's unbelief did not come as a surprise to Jesus. It was a matter of record and prophecy. (That quotation, from Isaiah 53:1, is cited from the Septuagint and follows the original faithfully.) And so because of their stubborn refusal to believe, God withdrew His hands from them so that they *could* no longer believe. Things had come to pass just as they were foretold, because God knew that they would come.

John explains this important point of doctrine further in the verses that follow.

39 διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεύειν, ὅτι πάλιν εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας, 40 Τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ στραφῶσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς. 41 ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας, ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλησεν περὶ αὐτοῦ.

{39} "For this reason they could not believe, because Isaiah said again, {40} He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they might not see with their eyes and understand with their heart and be converted, and I will heal them. {41} Isaiah said these things, because he saw His glory, and he spoke concerning him."

### verse 39

- διὰ τοῦτο - "therefore, for this reason" connected with ὅτι clause
- οὐκ ἠδύναντο - "they could not" Impf. Mid. from δύναμαι
- ὅτι - Causal

### verse 40

- Τετύφλωκεν - "he has blinded" Pf. tense of τυφλόω to blind
- Pf. tense emphasizes the continuing present state and emphasizes the certainty of the existing fact
- "hardened" Aor of πωρόω
- Aorist shows the completed act of this hardening
- verb describes the formation of a "callous"

τὴν καρδίαν - “the heart”  
- figuratively—the seat of emotions/thought/understanding; in the Old Testament it was the source of religious and ethical conduct.

NOTE: The hardening of the heart is a process that has been going on for some time and results in a state. God is the author, but it’s also a self-hardening, so that personal responsibility remains and a call can go out for repentance.

ἵνα - Final “that/in order that”  
μὴ ἴδωσιν - “they might not see” Aor. Subjv. of ὁράω see/experience/perceive/take note of  
νοήσωσιν - “understand” Aor. Subjv. of νοέω understand/comprehend/know  
- refers to our senses as “to grasp or to realize”  
- NOTE: The heart is the center of νοέω  
στραφῶσιν - “be converted” Aor. P. Subjv. of στρέφω  
- might turn/twist/bend in the Passive - be converted  
ιάσομαι - “I will heal” Progressive Fut. Ind. to restore/cure  
|→ “continue to...”

#### verse 41

αὐτοῦ - refers to Jesus  
- in the Old Testament, it was the Second person of the Trinity who spoke to men and acted as their intermediary

The reason the Jews could not believe is because they were subject to the judgment which Isaiah spoke about in 6:10. Here John retains the general idea of the original but renders it in a different way. In Isaiah it is translated like this:

Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and be healed. (NIV)

In Isaiah the imperatives are addressed to the prophet so that the effect may be a hardening. John translated the imperatives into the past tense because the order has been accomplished and the prophecy visibly fulfilled. This prophecy was also quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; and by Paul in Acts 28:25ff and Romans 7:11ff.

Yes, Israel made itself obdurate and so God hardened their hearts against his gracious call of the Gospel. Once hardened, no longer does man have a chance to repent; this is his punishment; this is his own fault and damning sin.

In his book, “Biblical Christology,” page 140, John Schaller points out:

While it is the divine will that all men should give attentive ears to the saving message of this Prophet, and though it is most assuredly true that his gospel is always the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16), it is not only certain that many hearers of the gospel resist its saving power, to their eternal loss, but we learn that in certain definite cases the preaching of Christ’s word hardens the hearts of the hearers. Of these cases the Scriptures testify that this resultant hardening, which per se cuts off the possibility of conversion, is effected by the saving gospel, according to God’s design. We are sure that such dire results of gospel preaching are due to the wickedness of sinful hearts, and not to the fact that God had predestinated such men to eternal death.

These verses (39-41) point out a couple of things doctrinally. The first is, as you have come to know it, *gratia resistibilis* and that *crux theologorum*.

As Pieper says, “Men do possess the power to thwart the operation of the divine grace whereby God intended to produce faith in them (*gratia resistibilis*). Luther’s axiom: When God works through means, he can be resisted; when God operates without means, in his uncovered majesty, he cannot be resisted. God does not harden a man according to an absolute decree, but his hardening results from his own guilt, from man’s resistance to God’s Word and will. Obduracy is God’s dreadful judgment upon those who despise the grace offered them and resist the operation of the Holy Ghost” (Pieper’s Dogmatics, Volume II:31).

Today, we need to be on our guard against those who teach that the means of grace isn’t sufficient enough to produce faith; that human cooperation is necessary for the production of one’s faith; and that we “answer that call,” that is, we make what is called a “self-decision” in regards to our faith.

The next point of doctrine these verses teach is that mystery of God we call Election. The “*crux theologorum*”—Why aren’t all men converted and saved?

We still have Calvinists living among us today who deny universal grace, and synergists who deny that we are saved by grace alone. God’s Word is clear. In 2 Peter 3:9 we’re told that the Lord does not want “*anyone to perish, but (wants) everyone to come to repentance.*” And in 1 Timothy 2:4, God “wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.”

We believe that the doctrine of Election is a mystery of God which cannot be solved in this life. And we hold to Scriptural truths that both the *universalis gratis* and *sola gratia* must be taught and upheld side by side. Again to quote Pieper, “Whoever is saved, is saved by grace alone, and not because of a lesser guilt or a better conduct over against grace; whoever is lost, is lost through his own fault, and not through a lack of the grace of God or of the gracious operation of God” (Volume II:33). The Bible gives us the example of God’s dealing with Pharaoh in Exodus. (For additional insight read “The Formula of Concord,” *Concordia Triglote*, 1091:84-85.)

In this area also we dare not let “human reason” enter in. Holy Scriptures clearly teach the universality of saving grace. So believe it and teach it thus. We are not to interpret this doctrine or mystery according to our understanding. In heaven, when our understanding of God and his mysterious ways are known to us, then this obscure matter, as well as many others, will become clear. We need to “watch ourselves” and those entrusted into our care that we not reject Christ’s gospel, because as the writer to the Hebrews tells us in 10:26-31,

*{26} If we keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, {27} but only a fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire that will consume the enemies of God, {28} Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. {29} How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? {30} For we know, him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” {31} It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

42 ὅμως μέντοι καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχόντων πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ’ διὰ τοὺς Φαρισαίους οὐχ ὠμολόγουν ἵνα μὴ ἀποσυνάγωγοι γένωνται· 43 ἠγάπησαν γὰρ τὴν δόξαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων μᾶλλον ἢπερ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ. {42} “Nevertheless however many rulers believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess lest they should be put out of the synagogue; {43} for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

#### verse 42

τῶν ἀρχόντων - the rulers  
- the Sanhedrists  
ἐπίστευσαν - the Aorist tense expresses a certain fact  
οὐχ ὠμολόγουν - “did not confess” Impf, of  
- the tense shows the continued shrinking from the act of faith  
ἀποσυνάγωγοι - “put out of the synagogue” - excommunicated

#### verse 43

- ἠγάπησαν - “they loved” Aor. of  
 - “love which recognizes the worth of someone and esteems them highly; love a person by rational choice because of who he is” (“Greek New Testament Insert”, Benjamin Chapman, Baker Book House, p.40.)
- ἤπερ - emphatic form of  
 - stresses the fact that compared to the glory and honor of men, the glory of God is much greater than that of men
- τῶν ἀνθρώπων  
 τοῦ θεοῦ >both are Subjective Genitives

Here is strong evidence to the power of the Word. Though their faith was not strong enough for them to give a fearless confession, John tells us there were many among the Sanhedrists who secretly believed in Jesus. (Perhaps John learned of this movement among the national leaders through his acquaintance with Nicodemus.) But those who believed were afraid of the Pharisees’ anger, persecution and threat of excommunication. And because they loved the glory, the lime-light and basking in their fellow man’s praise, they failed to acknowledge Christ before men. Confessing Christ would rob them of that glory. Earlier, these religious and spiritual leaders, heard a simple confession by the blind man in chapter 9. Now they were put to shame.

Should we be surprised at those men who secretly believed, yet failed to acknowledge Christ? Not really. Perhaps we have members like this. Today, the sentiment is expressed that one’s religion, one’s faith is a private matter, and should remain just that. Yet we see the advocates of “false religions” publicly and boldly professing their “faith.” We need to “combat” these types of people. We must and need to confess the Truth. We cannot remain silent and neither can our members.

### Christ’s “Sermon Conclusion” or Final Appeal

44 Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἔκραξεν καὶ εἶπεν, Ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ πιστεύει εἰς ἐμὲ ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸν πέμψαντά με, 45 καὶ ὁ θεωρῶν ἐμὲ θεωρεῖ τὸν πέμψαντά με. 46 ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλήλυθα, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ μὴ μείνη.

{44} “Then Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in me does not believe in me but in him who sent me.

{45} And he who beholds me beholds the One who sent me. {46} I have come a light into the world, that everyone who believes in me may not remain in the darkness.”

#### verse 44

- δὲ - “then” connects with the foregoing
- ἔκραξεν - “cried out”  
 - denotes a public address
- Ὁ πιστεύων - “believes”—receive in confidence and trust  
 - Present Participle Qualitative  
 |→ no note of time; for believers of all time
- εἰς ἐμὲ - “in me”  
 - object of true faith  
 - in Jesus (his person, mission, word and work)
- τὸν πέμψαντά - “sent” Aor Aorist tense shows the certainty of that great historic act of God’s love

#### verse 45

- ὁ θεωρῶν - “who beholds” Pres. Ptc. Qualitative of θεωρέω  
 - literally - “the one beholding/seeing”  
 - more than a natural vision—knowing who Jesus is and what he stands for
- θεωρεῖ - “beholds” → FAITH

## verse 46

- ἐγὼ - “I”—placed first for emphasis  
φῶς - “a light”—no article—focuses on the quality of this light as compared to the darkness  
εἰς τὸν κόσμον- modifies φῶς  
ἐμὲ - emphatic position  
τῇ σκοτίᾳ - “the darkness” of sin and death  
- spiritual darkness of unbelief

Did Jesus reappear again after he hid himself and impress upon the people the great responsibility of rejecting him? Or was his discourse only given to the disciples? Again commentators have disagreed. And the Bartz commentary is uncertain in this point also. (No doubt Jesus spoke these words, or they wouldn't be in red letters.) But this is true: Jesus had presented these truths at different parts of John's Gospel as Ylvisaker (“The Gospels”) points out on page 597:

- Compare vs. 44 with 5:43; 7:16; 8:42  
vs. 45 with 8:19; 14:9  
vs. 46 with 8:12; 9:5; 12:35  
vs. 47-48 with 3:17; 18:15  
vs. 49 with 7:16; 18:28  
vs. 50 with 8:40

Jesus could have appeared again and made these remarks some time later, even possibly the next day. We're not really told. The important thing is that these closing remarks of Jesus were the essentials of his testimony to the Jews. Jesus' own words exalted himself. He is one with the Father. Quite simply, Jesus stated that faith in him is faith in the Father. Unbelief in him is unbelief in the Father. He and the Father cannot be separated. In him (Jesus) we see the Father because the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.

That is why John tells us the world need not look for any other light. It will never find one greater than Jesus. Jesus' exalted mission was to illumine a sin-darkened world with his divine truth and holiness. Christ is the Reconciler and Light of this world, and whoever believes in him is, by that very faith, illumined. Our prayer is that we, and all believers continue to live and be illumined by that Light so that our light may shine before the unbelievers in this world (Matthew 5:16).

47 καὶ ἐάν τις μου ἀκούσῃ τῶν ῥημάτων καὶ μὴ φυλάξῃ, ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω αὐτόν· οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον ἵνα κρίνω τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ' ἵνα σώσω τὸν κόσμον. 48 ὁ ἀθετῶν ἐμὲ καὶ μὴ λαμβάνων τὰ ῥήματά μου ἔχει τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν· ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα ἐκεῖνος κρινεῖ αὐτόν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. 49 ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐξ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐκ ἐλάλησα, ἀλλ' ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ αὐτός μοι ἐντολὴν δέδωκεν τί εἶπω καὶ τί λαλήσω. 50 καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐστίν. ἃ οὖν ἐγὼ λαλῶ, καθὼς εἶρηκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως λαλῶ.

{47} “And if anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. {48} He who rejects me and does not receive my words, has one who judges him; the word which I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. {49} For I did not speak of myself, but the Father himself who sent me has given me a command, what I may say and what I may speak. {50} And I know that this command is eternal life; therefore that which I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

## verse 47

- ἐάν - Future More Vivid Clause  
- states the condition as possible and the conclusion as positively certain in the future  
μου τῶν ῥημάτων - “my words” with an article—specific  
- Jesus' words are God's Word  
- idea of spoken and audible utterances

φυλάξει - “keep” also means guar.d/obey/follow/protect/defend  
 ἐγὼ - emphatic position implies that another will “judge”  
 σώσω - “save” Future Indicative  
 - idea of rescue for mortal danger and being placed in permanent safety

#### verse 48

ὁ ἄθετῶν - “rejects” Pres. Ptc. Qualitative of ἄθετέω  
 - idea of having no use for  
 τὰ ῥήματά μου- “my words”—the gospel of himself as the Savior  
 ἔχει - Present and in emphatic position  
 τὸν κρίνοντα - “Judges” Pres. Ptc. Qualitative  
 ἐκεῖνος - in apposition to ὁ λόγος

#### verse 49

ἐντολὴν - “command” not legal or Mosaic sense but in the gospel sense—gracious “directions” for our salvation  
 δέδωκεν - “has given” Pf. of δίδωμι  
 εἶπω - “I may say” Aor. Subjv.  
 λαλήσω - “I may speak Aor. Subjv.  
 αὐτός - in apposition to πατήρ

#### verse 50

οἶδα - “I know” perceive/see in the mind  
 - Jesus knows the contents and substance of God’s command  
 ἐντολὴ - “this command” cf. note on previous verse  
 ζωὴ αἰώνιος - “life eternal”—the very content and substance of God’s command!  
 ἐγὼ λαλῶ - “I speak” Jesus’ public testimony  
 - (Lenski) “the great theme of the twelve chapters of John”

Here we see the significance of Jesus’ words. His word is equivalent to the Word of the Father. Jesus’ words are the sweetest sound one could ever hear. His words are the Gospel; the Gospel that is to be spread, proclaimed and taught. And it is this Gospel that will judge people on the last day.

In Volume 1, page 307 of Christian Dogmatics, Pieper states:

Holy Scripture possesses divine authority, that is, in all that it says it is entitled to the same faith and obedience that is due God... He that rejects, or even openly criticizes Scripture, affronts the very Majesty on High; he is committing a *crimen laesae maiestatis divinae*. This divine authority of Scripture is absolute...rests solely on its nature, on its *theopneusty*. It is a correct theological axiom: “Scripture is αὐτοπιστος (worth of credence on its own account) because it is θεόπνευστος.

This Gospel might seem insignificant to many still today, but in the end it is this world’s greatest treasure. Not only are they Jesus’ words but they are also the Father’s. They are even backed by the Father’s divine command. They are life-giving. That’s what makes Jesus’ words stand out. That’s what makes them so precious. Let us always faithfully hold on to them!

What words to wrap up, or conclude one’s public ministry! If that does not motivate, what can? Jesus’ concluding remarks tells us the reason why men ought to believe in him. For whoever despises the Gospel of Jesus, despises a word spoken by God’s commands, and actually despises God himself. Accepting or rejecting these words of Jesus depends where the person wants to spend eternity.



## Jesus Washing His Disciples' Feet

It was now Maundy Thursday evening. Jesus' public ministry was now over and soon he would suffer the untold agonies upon the cross. One's thoughts at this time would naturally turn inward. But at this time Jesus' thoughts were for "his own." He knew he still had work to do, and that was to prepare his disciples for the work they would have to carry out. We're told at the end of verse 1 that Jesus "loved (his disciples) to the end." Throughout this chapter we will see Jesus' love and devotion as he ministers to the disciples by washing their feet.

13 Πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῆ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς, 2 καὶ δεῖπνου γινομένου, τοῦ διαβόλου ἤδη βεβληκός εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ἵνα παραδοῖ αὐτὸν Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου, 3 εἰδὼς ὅτι πάντα ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ πατήρ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπάγει, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." {2} And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, of Simon, should betray him, {3} (Jesus) knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, and that he had come forth from God and was going back to God,"

### verse 1

- ἑορτῆς - feast
- εἰδὼς - "knew" Perf. Part, concessive; from οἶδα
- ἡ ὥρα - "the hour"—with article,—special period of time
- μεταβῆ - "he should depart" Aor. Subjv. μεταβαίνω
  - signifies a change from one place to another (the end of his earthly life/beginning of his life with the Father; from humiliation to exaltation)
- ἀγαπήσας - "having loved" Aor. Ptc. Concessive
  - |→ Constativ;
- εἰς τέλος - "to the end"
  - primary sense—"throughout, continually"

### verse 2

- δεῖπνου - "supper"—the Passover meal
- γινομένου - "during"/literally, "taking place"
  - Aor. M. Ptc. Gen. Abs.
- βεβληκός - "having put" Pf. Ptc. βάλλω throw; place or put something into the heart
- παραδοῖ - "should betray" Aor. Subjv. παραδίδωμι
  - also mean "deliver over"

TEXTUAL NOTE: "This verse contains two serious textual problems. The first involves but a single letter: δεῖπνου γενομένου is generally taken to mean "supper being ended" (AV), whereas, δεῖπνου γινομένου means "during supper" (RSV). The former reading is by far the more difficult, for it stands in opposition to the following context, which indicates that the supper was still in progress (verses 4 and 26)... The Committee preferred the present tense." *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pg.239. Bruce Metzger.

### verse 3

- εἰδὼς - "knowing" (same as in vs. 1)
  - advances object of first
  - shows Jesus' omniscience
- ἔδωκεν - "had given" Aor.

- πάντα - “all things”—object of ἔδωκεν  
 - without restriction  
 - includes Jesus’ triple office as prophet, priest and king and everything belonging to these offices.  
 - Jesus’ exaltation is included
- ἐξῆλθεν - “he had come forth” Aorist

The Passover celebration started at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, and lasted till 6:00 p.m., Friday. These last few hours would not be wasted. Jesus had come into this world for a purpose, and that was to carry out his Father’s mission, namely, to redeem the sinners of this world. His heart was filled with tender, compassionate care for his twelve disciples who had been with him now for three years. Jesus knew what lay ahead for him in “his hour.” That hour would certainly be bitter, but he looked beyond that hour and turned his omniscient thoughts to the glorious hours that would follow, when he would be exalted with the Father (vs 3).

Christians also ought to thicken these thoughts when our hearts are troubled. We need to remember that trouble will last a little while, but the glory after this world shall be an endless glory. As Paul states, “Therefore we do not lose heart... For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 9:16a, 17,18).

And so Jesus’ thoughts turn toward “his own.” This verse concludes with a very loving truth, namely, “he loved them to the end.” Here John records for us the love of Jesus as a faithful Savior and Shepherd who never wavered. To the end he displayed in words and actions a love to sustain his disciples in the hour Satan would try to lead them away from their high calling as believers and apostles. His love even extended to Judas, the one who would betray him.

We don’t know how long Judas was planning this evil. But we do know that for some time now Satan had a good foothold on him. About a year previous, right after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus announced this betrayal (John 6:70-71). Jesus was letting Judas know that he, Judas, was allowing Satan to run rampant as Judas nursed the sin of covetousness in his heart. Later instances (John 11:57; 12:4-6) show that Judas did not take Jesus’ words to heart.

4 ἐγείρεται ἐκ τοῦ δείπνου καὶ τίθησιν τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ λαβὼν λέντιον διέζωσεν ἑαυτόν· 5 εἶτα βάλλει ὕδωρ εἰς τὸν νιπτῆρα καὶ ἤρξατο νίπτειν τοὺς πόδας τῶν μαθητῶν καὶ ἐκμάσσειν τῷ λεντίῳ ᾧ ἦν διεζωσμένος.  
 {4} “rose from supper, and laid aside his garments, and taking a towel he tied it around himself. {5} Then he poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.”

#### verse 4

- ἐγείρεται - “rose” (Historical) Pres. Pass.  
 διέζωσεν - “tied it around” Aor. διαζώννυμι gird  
 λαβὼν - “taking” Aor. Act. Ptc. of λαμβάνω  
 λέντιον - “towel” “apron”—made of linen

#### verse 5

- νιπτῆρα - “basin”  
 - washing was done by pouring water over the feet from one vessel into another  
 διεζωσμένος - “he was girded”

It was customary that when guests arrive at the home, the service of washing the guest’s dusty feet usually fell to the non-Jewish servant. Jewish slaves were not required to do this. Or if there were no servant, then the host. (If left undone, it was considered a faux-pas (Luke 7:44). Problem. Which of the disciples were

going to “lower themselves,” be the servant, and wash one another’s feet? None of them. Jesus was going to do this. Showing his disciples the full extent of his love, he appeared in a servant’s garb and performed a lowly servant’s duty. We see the masterful Teacher at work. In washing his disciples feet, it was not Jesus’ intent to shame them. It was intended to show them how sinful their attitude was. With his humble service, Jesus instructed them on the subject of humility which was to mark their whole future as “his own.”

### Jesus’ Dialogue with Peter

6 ἔρχεται οὖν πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον· λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, σὺ μου νίπτεις τοὺς πόδας; 7 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ὁ ἐγὼ ποιῶ σὺ οὐκ οἶδας ἄρτι, γνώση δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα.

{6} “Then he came to Simon Peter, (who) said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ {7} Jesus answered and said to him, ‘You do not know what I am doing now, but later you will know.’”

#### verse 6

- Κύριε - “Lord” (address) higher title than “Rabbi”  
- brings out the greatness of Jesus
- σὺ μου - both pronouns are emphatic, though more emphasis on μου

The thought that Jesus should be on his knees washing his (Peter’s) feet is too much for Peter and he impulsively protests this action. He did not grasp the importance of this act. It was only natural that he protest against Jesus washing his feet since he (Peter) was a sinful man. Some commentators again were not sure why the “Simon” was added. Lenski states on page 914-915 his commentary, “Whether the addition of his name ‘Simon’ intends to convey the thought on this occasion he is following his old nature and not the new, is doubtful.” You be the judge.

#### verse 7

- ἀπεκρίθη - Aor. Passive ἀποκρίνομαι to answer
- μετὰ ταῦτα - plural pronoun “after these things”  
- longer interval of time  
- refers to the whole chain of events which would begin that very evening
- γνώση - expresses knowledge of real understanding
- ἐγὼ σὺ - places of emphasis

Jesus’ reply is full of love and kindness. He is excusing Peter’s ignorance. He tells Peter that in due time he will come to full understanding of what he is doing. Right now his protest is ignorant bliss. By adding the promise of later realization, Jesus is asking Peter, and making it easy for him to submit without question or any misgivings.

Usual interpretations has “what I am doing” referring only to the foot washing. Peter and the other disciples knew the implications of foot washing. They all could see that Jesus was teaching them a lesson. But what they didn’t realize was the spiritual implications symbolized. Ylvisaker says on page 652 in *The Gospels*, “The person who through faith in Jesus has been justified and purified from sin needs nothing further than a cleansing from the blemishes of sin which will make him unclean as long as he lives in the world. Augustine says: Daily we confess that we need to have our feet washed when we pray: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

What Jesus says to Peter may well be taken to heart by all Christians. Often times we get dissatisfied with the way the Lord leads us and we get impatient with him. We want to know the why’s and how come’s in our life, and right away. It is then that we need to remember that we are Christ’s servants and that Jesus is the Master who knows exactly what is best for us. And so we ought to pray, “Thy will be done,” and say, “Use me as You will, O Lord, that your kingdom come.”

8 λέγει αὐτῷ Πέτρος, Οὐ μὴ νίψῃς μου τοὺς πόδας εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς αὐτῷ, Ἐὰν μὴ νίψω σε, οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ' ἐμοῦ. 9 λέγει αὐτῷ Σίμων Πέτρος, Κύριε, μὴ τοὺς πόδας μου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν.

{8}”Peter said to him, ‘By no means, will you ever wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’ {9} ‘Lord,’ Simon Peter said to him, ‘not only my feet but also my hands and my head.’”

### verse 8

- Οὐ μὴ - strong negative—“By no means!”/“No way!”  
- used with –νίψῃς—volitive
- νίψῃς - Aor. Act. Subjv.
- εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα - “to the age”/“forever”/“ever”  
- enhances Peter’s boldness
- ἔχεις - Present (timeless)  
- universal thought
- Ἐὰν νίψω - protasis with νίψῃς  
- “I wash”—figurative language  
- expression meaning to share in somebody’s fate or possession, or in general to have a part in his lot. Here the latter is meant  
- means an inward cleansing
- μέρος - “part”—participate in or share in the forgiveness, the salvation, and the heaven Jesus won for sinners

In the strongest terms Peter rejected the idea that Jesus should wash his feet. He had been guilty of not showing love and respect to Jesus by not washing His feet. And now he didn’t want to compound his guilt.

Note that Jesus reply doesn’t speak about “washing Peter’s feet,” not to mention his disobedience. Peter will not accept Jesus’ self-humiliation and the example Jesus is now giving him. By his refusal to have Jesus wash his feet, Peter disowns the Lord as he is and demands a Lord who is otherwise.

Jesus’ lesson here is that it’s nothing we do, but what Jesus did for us. That’s what being a part of him involves.

Note the symbolism. Here washing symbolizes the cleansing and refreshing of the Holy Spirit.

Frightened at the thought of having no part in Jesus, Peter goes to the other extreme. He does not distinguish between the physical and the spiritual washing and by his statement again show his impulsiveness.

10 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὁ λελουμένος οὐκ ἔχει χρεῖαν εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας νίψασθαι, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν καθαρὸς ὅλος· καὶ ὑμεῖς καθαροὶ ἐστε, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ πάντες.

{10} “Jesus said to him, ‘He who has been bathed, has no need to wash, except his feet, but is clean entirely; and you are clean, but not all.’”

### verse 10

- Ὁ λελουμένος - Pf. P. Part. λούω to wash, bathe (νίπτω tends to be used for washing part of the body; here λούω for the entire body)  
- Perfect tense emphasizes the state and character of one who has been bathed  
- Passive—in light of verse 8 with Jesus as the agent who does the washing
- νίψασθαι - Middle Inf.
- ὅλος - “entirely” / “wholly”  
- includes both the pardon of justification and the holiness of good works
- ὑμεῖς - emphatic “you”

οὐχὶ - “not”—excludes Judas

Jesus sheds more understanding to what he said in verse eight. We are spiritually clean when Jesus has washed away our sin and guilt. We are in need of a minor bath as we move about in this sinful world getting our feet dirty. The “washing” reminds us of the blessings we receive from the Word and Sacraments.

All, except for one, were justified sinners. Judas forfeited his discipleship, to say nothing of his apostleship. He no longer had a part in Jesus.

### Jesus’ Love and Appeal to Judas to Repent

11 ἦδει γὰρ τὸν παραδιδόντα αὐτόν· διὰ τοῦτο εἶπεν ὅτι Οὐχὶ πάντες καθαροὶ ἐστε.  
{11} “For he knew who would betray him; for this reason he said, ‘not all are clean.’”

#### verse 11

ἦδει - Pluperfect  
τὸν παραδιδόντα - “who would betray” Literally-“the one betraying”  
- Pres. Part.  
Οὐχὶ - strong negative

This verse explains the last part of the previous verse. What a severe blow to Judas’ conscience. Jesus lets Judas know that his treachery is known. Again, note Jesus’ love to the end. Here we see Jesus, the lover of souls, trying to turn the sinner from his hell-bound way. Even though Jesus knew it would all be in vain, he spoke these words to hopefully frighten Judas out of his security and drive him to repentance. Out of love Jesus leaves nothing undone morally or spiritually. How he loved!

### The Meaning of the Foot Washing

12 Ὅτε οὖν ἔνιψεν τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν [καὶ] ἔλαβεν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνέπεσεν πάλιν, εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Γινώσκετε τί πεποίηκα ὑμῖν; 13 ὑμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με Ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ Ὁ κύριος, καὶ καλῶς λέγετε, εἰμὶ γάρ.  
{12} “When he had washed their feet and had taken his clothes and sat down again, he said to them, ‘Do you understand what I have done to you? {13} You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for I am.

#### verse 12

Ὅτε οὖν - temporal clause  
ἔνιψεν - Aorist  
ἔλαβεν - Aorist > all simply state the facts  
ἀνέπεσεν - Aorist

#### verse 13

ὑμεῖς - “you” in emphatic position  
φωνεῖτέ - “call” Pres. Act. Ind. 2 sg. from φωνέω to address  
Ὁ διδάσκαλος - “the Teacher” Nominative, sg.—refers to the divine words he spoke  
|→ the articles make the titles specific (In both titles lies Jesus’ deity)  
Ὁ κύριος - “the Lord” Nominative, sg.—refers to the divine power manifested in him

The mental and visual imprint that Jesus left with his disciples was deeply imbedded. His question is a rhetorical one; not aimed at merely rebuking the apostles’ pride but giving them an example of true humility. There was more to it as we will see.

Jesus stated that they addressed him as the true Teacher and Lord. These were not just titles of respect. The disciples actually believed and held Him to be *the* Teacher and *the* Lord. Emphatically and briefly, Jesus declared that he was exactly what they held him to be.

Today his status hasn't changed. As the writer to the Hebrews points out, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8).

14 εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ ἔνιψα ὑμῶν τοὺς πόδας ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ διδάσκαλος, καὶ ὑμεῖς ὀφείλετε ἀλλήλων νίπτειν τοὺς πόδας· 15 ὑπόδειγμα γὰρ ἔδωκα ὑμῖν ἵνα καθὼς ἐγὼ ἐποίησα ὑμῖν καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιῆτε.

{14} "Therefore, if I (your) Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. {15} For I gave you an example that as I did to you, you also may do."

#### verse 14

- εἰ οὖν - "If then/therefore"  
ἐγὼ - "I"—emphatic position  
ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ διδάσκαλος - "the Lord and the Teacher" - in apposition to - note the inverted word order of Jesus ("Lord" before "Teacher" brings out Jesus' greatness"  
καὶ ὑμεῖς - "you also"—emphatic position  
ὀφείλετε - "ought" ὀφείλω to owe a debt, be obligated  
- their obligation is a moral and spiritual one naturally growing out of their relation to this Lord and Teacher  
νίπτειν - "to wash" Pres. Inf. Durative (Continuing action)

#### verse 15

- ὑπόδειγμα - "example" also "pattern/illustration"  
ἵνα - non-final clause  
- states what this example this:  
ἐποίησα - Aor.—states the fact  
ποιῆτε - Pres. Subjv. ποιέω to do

Here is Jesus' own explanation of his action and the key to understanding it. This was more than an example of humility, it was an example of love. It is not seeking recognition or reward but rather Jesus' approval. It is to serve as an example to his disciples and us as well. His example is to guide his disciples in what they do for each other.

By "washing one another's feet" we practice genuine love toward one another. In Galatians 6:10, Paul writes, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." We learn this love only from Jesus. In his first epistle John writes, "We love him, because he first loved us" (4:19) KJV. And we can't help but see the love displayed for us on the cross upon which Jesus died. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who made himself nothing... He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5,7,8).

16 ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ ἔστιν δοῦλος μείζων τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ ἀπόστολος μείζων τοῦ πέμψαντος αὐτόν. 17 εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε, μακάριοί ἐστε ἐὰν ποιῆτε αὐτά.

{16} "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his lord; neither is a messenger greater than (the) one who sent him. {17} If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

#### verse 16

- ἀμὴν ἀμὴν - a solemn declaration of truthfulness  
- Jesus was going to say something very important  
- "Listen up!"  
μείζων - comparative; from μέγας  
- used with genitive of comparison

- ἀπόστολος - “messenger” also “apostle”/“one sent”  
 - Lord’s own representatives  
 - commissioned to found the church and to lead it for all time (by their writings)
- πέμπαντος - Aor. Ptc. πέμπω to send

**verse 17**

- εἰ - “if”—used with indicative  
 - introducing a condition and carries implication that in fact they did know them
- ταῦτα - Plural—“these things”  
 - object of οἶδατε
- μακάριοι - “blessed”/“truly happy”  
 - in emphatic position  
 - denotes the joy and satisfaction from possessing and experiencing the divine favor
- ἐάν - “if”—Conditional Clause
- ποιῆτε - “you do” Pres. (Durative) Subjv.

Jesus’ lesson is this: if anyone ,thinks themselves too great to stoop to menial tasks in serving his fellow-disciples, he can only do so by thinking himself greater than Jesus, his Lord. We are to have a spirit of humbleness as did Jesus. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

It’s one thing to know certain facts. It’s another to actually put them into effect. And so to procure this knowledge and action Jesus attaches a promise. Try it out. See how it works for you.

Did the disciples follow Jesus’ advice and example? The book of Acts records it. They learned first hand that Jesus was right. 20:28

**Conclusion**

May this portion of John’s gospel further strengthen our commitment to our Savior; to follow his example; to serve one another in love; to hold fast to the life-giving message. And may our ministry never do damaged to the Word, and to those hurting souls still seeking the Truth. Let our public ministries be patterned after Jesus’ public ministry—one filled with love, even to the end!