# John 13:1-30

(A small group Bible Study.)

John devotes four whole chapters to what Jesus taught his disciples on that last Thursday evening.
Chapters 13 and 14 reveal what transpired in the upper room.
Intriguingly, John says nothing about the institution of the Lord's Supper (which all the synoptic gospels report).
John 14:31 ("Rise, let us go from here") marks their departure from the upper room, heading via the Kidron Valley to the Garden (John 18:1).
Further teaching takes place (chapters 15 and 16). Jesus prayer to his Father is related in chapter 17.

1. 13:1: Just before Passover.
   John's gospel is demarcated by references to various Jewish festivals; it begins with a Passover and ends with this, the third and last Passover.[1]
   This is the seventh and final festival, introduced already in John 11:55 and 12:1. (See endnote 1.)
   "Passion Week" had begun in 12:1:
   John shows that our Passover Lamb is now irrevocably heading to the cross.
   John the Baptist had earlier called Jesus the "the Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world (1:29).
   **What is the significance of the Passover, and how does Jesus' death relate to it?**
   (Exodus 12:5, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6; Endnotes 2 and 3)

2. John emphasizes, for his readers, that Jesus "knew" that his work on earth was nearing completion and he would soon return to the Father (13:1, 3b).
   He knew the Father "had given all things into his hands" so that he might finish his assigned task (13:3a).
   He "knew" Judas was about to betray him (13:11; cf. 18:4).
   **Given that Jesus foreknew and had full control over what was about to transpire, what can we deduce from his allowing them all — his betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion and death — to happen?**
   (Matthew 26:53-54; John 10:17-18; Philippians 2:8)

3. Jesus' action in washing his disciples' feet demonstrated his love for them (13:1).
   Washing feet was a menial task normally reserved for the lowest of servants, to be performed on arrival.
   But there was no servant here.
   Jesus alone volunteered to perform this task, and that during the meal as if to emphasize the point.
   It sets forth the principle of selfless service, soon to be exemplified in the cross.
   **Why did Peter not want Jesus to perform this lowly service for him (13:6, 8a)?**

[1] This reminds us that Jesus' public ministry lasted at least two years. And it is possible that John has omitted one Passover celebration. Most scholars suggest 3 or 3½ years as the length of Jesus' ministry.

4. **What is the significance of Jesus' reply to Peter: "If I don't wash you, you have no part with Me" (13:8b)? What does our need for washing suggest about how God views us in our natural state?**
(Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 1:7, 9; Revelation 7:14; 22:14)

**What role does the "word" of Christ play in the work of cleansing and sanctification?**
(John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26)

5. In verse 9, Peter is still dictating to Jesus (as in verse 8a).
Jesus' reply in verse 10a could be paraphrased thus:
The one who has bathed has no need to wash himself again except for his feet, because he is already clean.
Explanation:
At that time a person would bathe prior to going to a feast. When he arrived, he would only need to have his feet washed in order to be entirely clean again.
**With respect to spiritual cleansing, what is Jesus saying in 13:10?**
(John 13:10b; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5; 51:2)

6. Jesus commands his disciples to follow his example of humble service (13:14-15).
As our Lord, Teacher and Master, we need to emulate him (13:13, 16-17).
Jesus returns to this in 13:34-35:

> 34 *"A new commandment I give to you: that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you also should love one another.*
> 35 *By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

On the cross we see the supreme example.
Paul in Philippians 2:1-8 urges us to imitate Jesus in our attitudes and actions towards fellow believers.
**List some of these attitudes and actions**.
**Are there similar passages, elsewhere in Paul's letters or other NT epistles, that urge believers to follow Jesus' example?**

7. The washing of feet was particularly necessary in the Near East:
Roads were unpaved and dusty, the climate hot and dry, and travelers wore open sandals or none at all.
Some churches and traditions practice foot washing, often just prior to Easter.
**How should we view such practices?**
**Is Jesus issuing a universal command to literally wash each other's feet, or is the focus on humble service, whatever form that might take in different times and places and cultures?**
(Luke 7:44; 1 Timothy 5:10)

8. In verse 19 Jesus tells his disciples, with regard to his imminent betrayal by Judas:

   *"I am telling you this now, before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe that I AM."*

   This is one of the many I AM (Greek: *egō eimi*) declarations uttered by Jesus that John reports.
   Of special significance are those I AMs that occur at the end of a clause or sentence — those without any (stated) subject complement that are translated as "I am he", or as "I AM".
   John records seven of these:
   John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-8. (See endnote 4.)
   The background for these is the divine name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14.
   But it is probable that the latter chapters of Isaiah are also in view, where (in the Septuagint that John's Greek-speaking readers used) one encounters many, emphatic I AM (*egō eimi*) declarations.
   See Isaiah 41:4, 10; 43:10, 25; 45:8, 18, 19, 22; 46:4, 9; 48:12, 17; 51:12; 52:6.

   Throughout Isaiah 40 – 46 the Lord is contrasting himself with the idols of the nations, showing himself to be Israel's only Savior. In Isaiah 41 we have the "trial of the false gods", where, as if in a court of law, Yahweh challenges these gods to do or predict something (see 41:1, 21-23).
   Another court scene follows in Isaiah 43:9-13.
   **What divine prerogative is Jesus claiming for himself in John 13:19?**
   (Isaiah 41:22-23, 26; 42:9; 43:9-10; 44:7-8; 45:21; 46:10; 48:3-5)
   **Why do you think Jesus made this claim in the context of warning his disciples about his betrayal?**
   (John 13:18-21; 14:1; Endnote 5)

9. John notes that Satan was behind Judas's actions (13:2, 27; cf. Luke 22:3; John 6:70).
   And, unbeknown to Judas, he was fulfilling OT Scripture (13:18, cited from Psalm 41:9).
   After Judas had received from Jesus the morsel of bread, he "immediately" left and went outside.
   John comments: "And it was night." (13:30)
   **Given John's emphasis on the conflict between light and darkness, how might this comment relate to the spiritual darkness that must then have enveloped Judas — the state of his soul?**
   (John 3:19-20; 8:12; 11:10; 12:35; Matthew 27:5)

**Endnotes**

1. The following are the seven festivals (or feasts) in John's gospel:
   1. Passover (2:13, 23).
   2. Unstated (5:1). Possibly Purim, which celebrates God's deliverance through Esther.
   3. Passover (6:4).
   4. Tabernacles or Booths (7:2).
   5. The Great Day (7:37); the closing assembly (8th day) of the Tabernacles' feast — Leviticus 23:36.
   6. Dedication (10:22); aka Hanukkah, the festival of lights. Celebrates the temple's rededication in 165 BC.
   7. Passover (12:1; 13:1).
2. Jesus is "the Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36).
   The lamb sacrifices of the Law fulfilled in Jesus include the following:
   The Passover Lamb of Exodus 12, the Sin Offering of Leviticus 4:32-35; 5:6, and the daily Morning and Evening Sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-41; Numbers 28:1-8).
   But in principle, all atonement sacrifices (including non-lamb ones) are in view.
3. In the Passover, the Israelites were to sacrifice a lamb without blemish, and mark the top and both sides of the doorframe of their houses with its blood (Exodus 12:5-7). When God passed through the land of Egypt to kill the firstborn sons, he would "pass over" those houses with the blood (Exodus 12:13, 22-23).
   In this way the Passover lamb substituted for the firstborn sons of the Israelite families.
   The Exodus from Egypt became the model for God's redemptive actions.
4. John records a number of I AM (Greek: *egō eimi*) claims made by Jesus during the course of his ministry.
   Some claims take the following form:
   I + AM + Subject Complement.
   Examples: "I am the light of the world, the good shepherd, the true vine."
   In each instance, the Subject Complement helps define or identify the subject (the "I").[2]
   With these the focus should not so much be on any implied deity, but on the complement part — on Jesus as the light, shepherd, vine.

   Sometimes *egō eimi* is employed for self-identification:
   In John 9:9 we read that the blind man kept saying, *egō eimi* — "I am."
   Here we have an implied complement: "I am that man."
   Jesus himself uses *egō eimi* in this sense in John 8:18.

   However, John records seven I AMs uttered by Jesus that are suggestive of deity:
   John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-8.
   With these claims Jesus is seemingly appropriating for himself the divine name, I AM.
   God first revealed this name when he appeared to Moses at the burning bush.
   Moses enquired about his name, so that he could tell the Israelites just who it was who had sent him.
   And God responded:
   *"I AM who I AM." … "[tell the Israelites]: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"* (Exodus 3:14)
   Here, the Hebrew for I AM is *ʾehyeh*, from the verb *hāyâ* — "to be".
   This verb is linguistically related to God's personal name: Yahweh.

[2] These subject complements in John are all predicate nominatives, consisting of a noun phrase that defines or identifies the subject.

Some of Jesus' I AMs have no subject complement stated or implied (e.g., 8:24, 28, 58, 13:19).
The three I AMs in John 18:5-8 do have an implied complement: "I am the One you are seeking."
With the middle I AM in 18:6 John himself draws attention to Jesus' reply (in 18:5) and to the soldiers' response. They fell to the ground, stunned by his claim. These I AMs are clearly significant.
We need to keep in mind that in John there is a requirement to believe that Jesus is divine:
John 8:24: "for if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins."
John 8:58: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."
(See also John 1:1; 1:18; 12:41; 20:28.)

It seems that with these I AMs Jesus is identifying himself with Yahweh.
Additional support for this comes from the likelihood that with these claims Jesus is not just alluding to God's name in Exodus 3:14, but also to the numerous, emphatic I AM declarations that Yahweh makes in the latter chapters of Isaiah.
In this latter section of Isaiah, Yahweh is emphasizing his sovereignty over history and over the nations, and that he alone is Israel's Savior.
Many (but not all) of these I AMs are rendered in the pre-Christian Greek Septuagint version as *egō eimi*.
This is the Old Testament version that most of John's readers used and were familiar with.[3]

Jesus' claim in John 13:19 seems to be a deliberate echo of Yahweh's claim in Isaiah 43:10.
In Isaiah 43:8-13 Yahweh invites Israel and the nations to a court case.
He challenges their gods to match his proven ability to achieve his purposes in history.
Since he foreordains all things he can announce things in advance. But the idols can do no such thing!
This point is made repeatedly: Yahweh alone controls and can announce and predict the future.
See Isaiah 41:22-23, 26; 42:9; 43:9-10; 44:7-8; 45:21; 46:10; 48:3-5.
And that divine prerogative is precisely what Jesus is claiming for himself in John 13:19.
He informs them of his imminent betrayal, so that when it happens they might believe in him.[4]

5. Why did Jesus make this claim (to deity) in the context of warning his disciples about his betrayal?
The answer is probably to be found in John 14:1, where Jesus says to them:
*"Let not your hearts be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me."*
The disciples had just received disturbing news: Jesus was about to leave them (John 13:33, 36).
Add to that the traumatic events about to transpire — his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death.
The disciples' faith in their Lord was about to be sorely tested.
Jesus warns them of his imminent betrayal so that when it happens they will recognize that he both foreknows, and has full control over, all that is happening. For he is none other than God himself.
They need to believe in him in the same way they already believe in and trust in the Father.
After the resurrection it is this very identification between Jesus and the Father which needs to be reaffirmed (John 20:24-29).

John writes so that his readers, who have not witnessed these events, might believe (John 20:30-31).
John emphasizes Jesus' foreknowledge and control of all that is happening (13:1, 3, 11; 18:4).
Indeed, even as he heads to the cross he is truly God (John 13:19; 18:5-8).
For the reader, too, these facts are intended to engender faith in Jesus.

[3] For this reason too, New Testament authors, when referencing the Old Testament, more often than not cited from this version.
[4] Other I AM claims made by Jesus similarly echo specific (divine) declarations in Isaiah: John 4:26 echoes Isaiah 52:6, while John 6:20 echoes Isaiah 41:10 and 43:5. And in Revelation 1:17 John records Jesus as saying: "I am (*egō eimi*) the First and the Last" — the very claim that Yahweh makes in Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12.