

**JESUS MINISTERS TO HIS NEW PEOPLE**  
**“THE LAST SUPPER”**  
(John 13:1)

<sup>1</sup> Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

John 13:1

Jesus concludes his ministry to the Jews.

Before we begin to take a look at the trees of chapter 13, let's take a step back and look at the forest. There is a major division between chapter 12 and chapter 13. Something very important has happened in chapter 12. You might remember that up until this point Jesus' ministry has been in and around Jerusalem. He came to the lost sheep of Israel. And, he told his disciples, don't go to the Gentiles.

*These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Matthew 10:5, 6

So, the first twelve chapters of John record the public ministry of Jesus among the people of Israel. You remember that the public ministry of Jesus was inaugurated with a voice out of heaven. At his baptism, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And that marked the beginning of his public ministry. And then in chapter 12 at the conclusion of his public ministry, a voice was heard from heaven (John 12:28, 29) announcing that the Father has been glorified (by the life of Christ) and would be glorified (by the death of Christ). And then, after a few closing words, John says,

*These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

John 12:36

And so, the public ministry of Jesus on this earth came to an end. Oh, it would be a few days yet before he would offer himself up as the true Passover Lamb, but the days of his public miracles and his great healing ministry were over. No more would he walk openly among the people. No longer would he feed them and heal them. It says that Jesus hid himself from them. When it says that Jesus hid himself from them, this implies that the people were looking for him. But Jesus found a place where he could not be found. And he would never be found by the people again.

This was a sad day for the Jews there in Jerusalem, wasn't it? Never again would Jesus walk openly up and down the streets of Jerusalem. Never again would the people gather to hear him teach. Never again would the children come to sit on his lap and be blessed. And it says, "Jesus did hide himself from them." And we should learn from this that we should walk in the light while we have the light. This principle is stated by John.

*Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light . . .*  
John 12:35

This principle was stated by John with reference to the bodily presence of Jesus on the earth. While he was with them, they should have heeded his message. They should have obeyed every word of his doctrine. They should have opened their hearts to his glorious truth. And they should have received him as the Messiah and as the Savior of the world. But the people of Jerusalem, for the most part, never heeded his spiritual message. They were astonished by his miracles. They loved to have their bodies healed and their bellies filled. But the Jews as a nation rejected him as their Messiah. And it says volumes when it says that Jesus did hide himself from them.

You see the Jews had a window of opportunity when Jesus came personally to them in Israel. And what an opportunity! The Son of God himself became a man and walked among them. And he ministered to them with words and works. His ministry and his person were confirmed by many miracles. And the people had the light of the world with them, but only for a very short time. And when the time ran out, Jesus hid himself from them.

For fifteen hundred years, the Jews looked for their Messiah. And when he came he was with them for only three short years. And that was their great day of opportunity. But the nation blinked their eyes and then the opportunity was gone. Jesus looked down over the city as he came into Jerusalem this last time and he wept for them and he said,

*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Luke 19:42

Do you see the sad significance when it says that Jesus departed and did hide himself from them? The light of the world shined in Jerusalem for a moment in time and then . . . He was gone and they could not find Him.

When Jesus looked down on the city, he predicted that Jerusalem would be surrounded by her enemies and that she would be utterly laid to the ground and that the people would be helpless in the face of a great slaughter. And in AD 70 all of this came true when the Emperor Titus came calling on Jerusalem acting as the Lord's arm of judgment. And all of this came to pass because the Jews slept during the day of their opportunity.

This is the way it is for sinners. The door of opportunity is not forever. The door of opportunity is open but for a moment and then it is closed.

*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.*  
Isaiah 55:6

Compared with the ages of eternity, the day of God's grace on the earth is but a twinkling of the eye. And it is imperative that we walk in the light while we have the light. When God

extends his hand of grace it is foolish to turn away. But this was the way of Israel and so Jesus did hide himself from them.

Jesus ministry to the Jews can be summed up just as John summed it up in the first chapter.

*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

John 1:11

We are looking at the big picture now, and what I want you to understand is that from chapter 13 forward, Jesus will engage in a very private ministry to a new people. He has hid himself from that old people. And now he will open his arms to a new people – represented by his twelve disciples. And notice what he calls his disciples.

*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

And so in the next few chapters we find Jesus loving a new people. This chapter marks a change in dispensations. Israel has shut her eyes to the True Light and the True Light has now hid his face from Israel. To use biblical language,

*The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.*

Joel 3:15

That is the language that the Bible uses when a kingdom is coming to an end. And the sun and the moon finally went dark for the kingdom of Israel. But God is never without a people. And we find in chapter 13 that when one people is cast off, another people is raised up. And the disciples are the new people of God. Christ has a new people and it will soon be called the church. He is hiding from Israel, but he is meeting for supper with the twelve whom he loves.

So that is the setting. It is just before the feast of the Passover and Jesus and the twelve disciples are secreted away in a room somewhere. And they are having supper. Now this last supper (as we call it) is recorded in all four gospels. However, the account by John records what the other gospels omit and omits what the other gospels record. In John's account, the theme of the supper was the washing of the disciples' feet. But the synoptic gospels don't record the foot washing at all. The synoptic gospels all focus on the institution of the ordinance of the Lord's Table at this last supper, where Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

And continuing to look at the big picture I would like for you to consider that,

The Lord's Table is not an essential element of salvation.

It is notable that the Gospel of John does not record the observance of the Lord's Table at this final supper. We are not sure why John chose to leave it out, but we can draw some important conclusions from its omission which I think are important to observe.

John's gospel has long been recognized as perhaps the greatest book for the gaining of salvation.

*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

John 20:31

This is the stated purpose of John – that readers might believe and that they might have life. And so we infer that John would have everything necessary for salvation in his gospel. If his gospel is written that his readers might be saved, then his gospel must contain the necessary elements of salvation. But John does not even mention the ordinance of the Lord's Table!

This is proof positive that the ordinance of the Lord's Table is not a saving instrument. The fruit of the vine does not become the literal blood of Jesus. The unleavened bread does not become the body of Christ. Jesus did not institute this ordinance as a saving instrument at all. He did it to show forth his death and for it to serve as a remembrance of his death. (I Corinthians 11:26) But he didn't institute this ordinance to save us.

This wonderful gospel of John plainly instructs us in the way of salvation. It talks about the depravity of man when it says,

*No man can come to me.*

John 6:44

It talks about unconditional election when it says,

*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.*

John 6:37

It talks about particular atonement when Jesus said,

*I lay down my life for the sheep.*

John 10:15

It talks about irresistible grace when Jesus said,

*No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*

John 6:44

It talks about the preservation of the saints when Jesus said,

*And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

John 6:39

It talks about the necessity of regeneration when Jesus told Nicodemus,

*You must be born again.*

It talks about the necessity of faith when it says,

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

John 3:16

All of these great doctrines of salvation are found in the gospel of John so that people might read this gospel and be saved. But there is not one word about the ordinance of the Lord's Table. And why is that? It is because the ordinance is not a saving ordinance. Partaking of the Lord's Table has no saving effect whatsoever. The Lord's Table is not a saving sacrifice as taught by the Roman church. There is one sacrifice that saves your soul and that is the sacrifice of the True Passover Lamb. No other sacrifice will do. No other ritual will do. No other work will do. It is the work of Christ alone that saves. And it is utterly sufficient so that nothing else shall be required. And so, in God's providence and in his great wisdom, the institution of the ordinance of the Lord's Table is omitted completely from John's Gospel to show that the observance of the Lord's Table is not a saving sacrament. We don't look to the Table to save us. Rather, we look to the Great Person of Jesus Christ to save us. The Table only causes us to remember the saving work of that Great Person.

The death of Christ and the time of his death was predetermined and known by Christ himself.

*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come . . .*

John 13:1

You will notice here that Jesus knew that his hour was come. It did not catch him by surprise. Rather, Jesus knew.

1. The death of Christ was an event that was planned before the foundation of the world.

The suffering of Jesus and his death on a cross were all contemplated by God in his eternal counsels. This event is the centerpiece of the plan of redemption. Before the Son of God ever came to this world he agreed to die. It was the purpose of his coming. If there would be no death, then there was no need of the incarnation. Jesus didn't come to this world merely to be a good example. Rather, he came to be a substitute for sinners. He came to bear the penalty for sin. He came to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Of all men ever born, this man was born to die. All other men have some purpose in life. But the purpose of Christ was to die. In his life, all roads led to Calvary. Every street sign along the way pointed him to the cross.

The Scriptures say that Jesus was delivered to his executioners,

*By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*

Acts 2:23

The Scriptures call Jesus the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

*And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

Revelation 13:8

He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world because his death was decreed by God for the redemption of sinners. The death of Jesus was an absolute certainly according to the unchangeable decree of God and so it says that Jesus “knew” that his hour had come.

So, we have seen that the death of Christ was an event planned before the foundation of the world. Now, let’s consider that,

2. The death of Christ was an event that was always in the mind and consciousness of Jesus himself.

It seems that there was always knowledge in the mind of Jesus of his destiny at Calvary. Even when Jesus was a child, Jesus seemed to have an idea of his divine destiny. He told his parents,

*I must be about my Father’s business.*

Luke 2:49

And of course, the Old Testament Scriptures clearly foretold of his death. And Jesus, being an expert in the Scriptures, surely knew that they spoke of him.

*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

Isaiah 53:2-7

Furthermore, Jesus knew the significance of the Passover Feast. Many of the Jews supposed that the purpose of Passover was to look back and to remember Moses and the escape out of Egypt. But Jesus knew that the true meaning of Passover was to look forward to Jesus and the escape from the bondage of sin. You see, those things which happened to Israel were mere pictures and types. They were required to kill lambs and to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts so that the death angel would pass over them that night. But all of this was to picture the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God. And Jesus knew that he was that true Lamb. And he knew that his blood would be poured out at this last Passover Feast.

Jesus has just said in John 12,

*Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

John 12:24

So, it is clear that Jesus knew. He knew he would die. And he knew how he would die. He told Nicodemus, “The Son of Man must be lifted up.” (John 3:14)

Jesus knew the particulars of his suffering and death because he was God. Just as he knew Peter would deny him three times, he also knew what the soldiers would do to him. He knew how many lashes they would administer. He knew how many times they would hit him. He knew how many spikes would be driven into his hands and feet. He knew how many hours he would hang in torment on the cross. He knew the agony ahead of time. And he said, “My soul is troubled” (John 12:27) because he knew he was about to suffer all things.

The death of Christ was a journey from one world to another.

*When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father . . .*

John 13:1

The great truth that sustained his soul during this time of trouble was the truth that his death ultimately was not a loss but a great gain. His death would be the vehicle that would take him from this world to the next; from an unholy place to a holy place; from a sinful place to a sinless place. But most of all, it would take him to the Father. Though death was an unpleasant experience for Jesus, it was the avenue unto the Father.

Now many claim that the soul of Jesus did not go directly to heaven. But the Scriptures teach that when Jesus died he went unto the Father. He told the thief on the cross,

*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Luke 23:43

And in our text it says that “Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.” Now the lifeless body of Jesus was left behind in this world, in the tomb, but the living soul of Jesus departed and went unto the Father.

What was true of Jesus is also true of all believers. Our death is the vehicle that transports us from this world unto the Father. We should view death not as a great tragedy but as a glorious journey. And it will be the most amazing journey of your life! Paul so looked forward to this journey that he said,

*For I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*

Philippians 1:23, 24

The death of Christ was the supreme act of love toward his people.

*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

John 13:1

Now Jesus was about to take his journey from this world unto the Father. And John took a look at the life of Jesus and concluded that Jesus had loved his own which were in the world. Of all that could be written about the life and times of Jesus; all of his miracles; all of his sayings and sermons; all of his fame; all of his merciful acts; his personal purity and loveliness; perhaps the most glaring thing about his life was how he loved his people that were in the world. And so John says,

*Having loved his own which were in the world.*

I want you to notice here that John says he, “loved his own.” This is a special people and this is a special love. Jesus hid himself from the Jewish populace, but he ate supper with his own disciples. And he loved them. Jesus loved them when he called them. Jesus loved them when he taught them. Jesus loved them when he took them along during his public ministry. And now he loves them when he about to die.

We are going to see in the next five chapters how Jesus instructed his beloved disciples in light of his imminent death. Knowing he was going to die, Jesus called his family in to give them his parting words and in this way he loved them to the end.

The disciples were his new people. The old people were the Jews. But he came to the Jews and they received him not. And so Christ has a new people. The disciples were the New Testament church in embryo. And Jesus called them “his own.” They were his possession. He was their teacher and he was their master. And for reasons known only to himself he chose to love them. And you will notice in our text that he chose to love them to the end. This is the nature of the love of God. Once he sets his love upon you he will love you with an unchanging love.

Just before his betrayal and arrest, Jesus prayed for these disciples and this prayer is found in John 17:6-19. But these disciples were just the tip of the iceberg of those whom Jesus loved. Jesus also loved all those who would believe on him through their testimony. And that is you and I if we believe the Scriptures.

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

John 17:20

You can see that Jesus has turned his attention to this infant church. And the church will be the focus of his love and attention to the end of time.

Next time we will see how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples at this last supper. And we will consider the meaning of this humble act.