The Last Supper and the Washing of Feet

Bible Stories Anthology — John 13; Luke 22

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

The Night He Knelt

Thirteen men were reclining around a low table in an upstairs room in Jerusalem. The lamps were lit. The meal had begun.

No servant had washed their feet. The roads were dusty, and every man there knew that someone ought to do it. Nobody moved. Earlier that evening, some of them had been arguing about which of them was the greatest.

Then Jesus got up from the table. He took off his outer garment. He tied a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin, knelt down, and began to wash his disciples' feet — the work of the lowest servant in the house.

He washed the feet of Peter, who protested. He washed the feet of John, who leaned against him at the table. And he washed the feet of Judas, who had already agreed to betray him for thirty pieces of silver.

That same night he took bread and said, *This is my body which is given for you.* He took the cup and said, *This cup is the new testament in my blood.* He gave them a new commandment: *love one another, as I have loved you.* And then he went out to the garden, where they came to arrest him.

This is the story of the Last Supper — the last meal Jesus ate with his disciples before he died — and of the night the Lord became the servant of all.

The Setting

When. The night before Jesus died, at Passover, about A.D. 30 by the reckoning this series uses. The Jewish day began at sunset. Jesus was crucified on the fourteenth day of the first month, Nisan, **"the**

preparation of the passover" (John 19:14), the day the Passover lambs were killed (story 52). This series understands that the supper was eaten on the evening that *began* that same fourteenth day, the night before the lambs were slain. In this series' reckoning the fourteenth fell on a Wednesday, so the supper was on what we would call Tuesday evening.

That is why John says plainly that these things happened **"before the feast of the passover"** (John 13:1); why some of the disciples thought Judas had gone out to **"Buy those things that we have need of against the feast"** (13:29); and why, the next morning, the priests would not enter Pilate's hall, **"lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover"** (John 18:28). Luke calls it **"the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed"** (Luke 22:7), and the day of the killing had begun at sunset. The Gospels never mention a lamb at this supper. The Lamb was at the table.

Where. A large upper room in Jerusalem, **"furnished"** (Luke 22:12) — set out with couches and cushions for reclining. The owner is not named. Later tradition places it on the southwestern hill of the city, called Mount Zion today; the building shown there now is from the Middle Ages and cannot be the room itself.

Who.

- **Jesus**, the Son of God, on the last night before his death.
- **The twelve apostles**, among them **Peter**, **John** (the disciple **"whom Jesus loved"**), and **Judas Iscariot**.
- **A man carrying a pitcher of water**, and **the goodman** (the master) **of the house**.

The administration. The **Christ administration**, under the Law of Moses — its last night. Within days, by his death, resurrection and ascension, the way would be opened for the **grace administration**, which began at Pentecost.

The Story, Told Faithfully

"Go and Prepare Us the Passover"

> **Luke 22:7** *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.*
> **Luke 22:8** *And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.*
> **Luke 22:9** *And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?*
> **Luke 22:10** *And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.*

"The day of unleavened bread." The Passover on the fourteenth and the seven days of Unleavened Bread that followed (Leviticus 23:5-6) were spoken of together, as one feast. Before the lamb was killed, every scrap of leaven had to be cleared out of the house (Exodus 12:15; story 14).

"There shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water." Carrying water jars was women's work in the East; men usually carried water in skins, if at all. A man with a pitcher on his head would stand out in the crowd. Jesus gave a sign no one else would notice. Perhaps it was arranged in advance to keep the place secret from Judas, so that the supper would not be interrupted; perhaps Jesus simply knew. Either way, everything happened just as he said.

> **Luke 22:11** *And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?*

> **Luke 22:12** *And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.*
> **Luke 22:13** *And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.*

"The goodman of the house." *Goodman* is old English for the master of a household. At Passover every room in Jerusalem was wanted, as thousands of pilgrims crowded into the city, and householders were expected to open their homes to them freely. This man had a large upper room — a room built on the flat roof or upper storey, reached by an outside stair — and he gave it to Jesus.

"The guestchamber." The Greek word *katalyma* is the same word used of the place in Bethlehem where there was no room for Joseph and Mary: **"because there was no room for them in the inn"** (Luke 2:7; story 38). At his birth there was no guest room for him. On his last night, a guest room was made ready.

"With Desire I Have Desired"

> **Luke 22:14** *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.*
> **Luke 22:15** *And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:*
> **Luke 22:16** *For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

"He sat down." Literally, *he reclined*. At a feast, guests lay on cushions or couches around a low table, leaning on the left elbow and eating with the right hand, with their feet stretched out behind them, away from the table. That is how Mary could stand behind Jesus at a supper and anoint his feet (John 12:3), and how a disciple could lean back against Jesus' chest to ask a question (John 13:25). It is also why the washing of feet mattered: at table, every man's feet were right there.

"With desire I have desired." Repeating the word like this was the Hebrew way of saying *with great desire*. It is the figure called **polyptoton** — the same word repeated in different forms for emphasis. Jesus had longed for this night, to be with his own one last time **"before I suffer."**

"I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Jesus was about to fulfil the Passover himself. Some ancient manuscripts read simply *I will not eat it*. This series understands that Jesus longed to eat this Passover with his disciples, but would not eat it with them: before the lambs were slain the next afternoon, he himself would be slain as **"our passover"** (1 Corinthians 5:7). The next Passover he eats will be in the kingdom of God.

"He Loved Them unto the End"

> **John 13:1** *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.*

"When Jesus knew that his hour was come." All through John's Gospel his "hour" had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Now it had.

"That he should depart out of this world unto the Father." His death was not only an ending but a going — through the cross and the grave to his Father, by resurrection and ascension.

“Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” *Unto the end* can mean *to the last* and also *to the uttermost* — completely. Both are true. He loved them to the last hour of his life, and he loved them as fully as love can go. What follows shows it.

> **John 13:2** *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him;*
>
> **John 13:3** *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;*

“And supper being ended.” The supper was not over yet; the sop was given later (13:26). The Greek means *supper being in progress*, or *supper having been served*. The meal had begun.

“The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot … to betray him.” Judas had already gone to the chief priests and agreed to deliver Jesus to them for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16; Luke 22:3-6). The thought came from the devil, but Judas welcomed it and acted on it. He was not forced.

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.” Here is the setting of everything Jesus is about to do. He knew who he was. *All things* had been *given* into his hands by his Father. He knew **“that he was come from God, and went to God”** — sent by God, and going back to God. Jesus did not wash feet because he had forgotten his position. He washed feet *knowing* his position — the Son of God, to whom the Father had given all things.

Girded with a Towel

> **John 13:4** *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.*
>
> **John 13:5** *After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

“He riseth from supper.” In the middle of the meal, Jesus stood up.

“And laid aside his garments.” He took off his outer robe, leaving only the tunic — dressed like a slave at work. Many readers have noticed that John uses the same verb, *laid aside*, that Jesus had used of his own life: **“I lay down my life, that I might take it again”** (John 10:17). And when he had finished, he **“had taken his garments”** again (13:12), with the verb Jesus used for *take it again*. This series notes the parallel as a picture readers have drawn: he laid aside his garments and took them again, as he would lay down his life and take it again — **“This commandment have I received of my Father”** (10:18).

“And took a towel, and girded himself.” The *towel* (*lention*) was a long linen cloth. Tied around the waist, it was a servant’s apron.

“He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” In the East, men walked the dusty or muddy roads in open sandals. When a guest arrived at a house, the host provided water for his feet; in a wealthy house a servant washed them. When Simon the Pharisee failed to give water, Jesus noticed: **“I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet”** (Luke 7:44). Washing another man’s feet was the lowest of tasks. Abigail, offering herself as David’s wife, said, **“let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord”** (1 Samuel 25:41) — the humblest thing she could think of. A later Jewish writing even said a Hebrew slave should not be made to wash his master’s feet; that was left to Gentile slaves. Whether that rule was known in Jesus’ day is uncertain, but it shows how the task was regarded.

There was no servant in the upper room, and none of the twelve offered. So the Master did it.

"Thou Shalt Never Wash My Feet"

> **John 13:6** *Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*
> **John 13:7** *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*
> **John 13:8** *Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" In the Greek the words *thou* and *my* stand side by side: *Lord, you — my feet?* Peter could not bear it.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." After the cross, after the resurrection, after the ascension, Peter would understand.

"Thou shalt never wash my feet." Literally, *you shall not wash my feet, not unto the age* — never, ever. It sounds humble. It was really Peter telling the Lord what he could and could not do.

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." To *have part with* someone is to share with him, to have a share in what is his. Jesus was speaking of more than feet. Unless Peter let himself be served and cleansed by Jesus, he could have no share with him. No one can serve his way into fellowship with Christ; he must first let Christ serve him.

> **John 13:9** *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*
> **John 13:10** *Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*
> **John 13:11** *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Peter swung to the other extreme. If washing meant belonging to Jesus, then wash all of me!

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." Two different words. *Washed* is *louō*, to bathe the whole body. *To wash his feet* is *niptō*, to wash a part. A guest bathed at home before a feast; walking through the streets, only his feet got dirty again, and they were washed at the door. Jesus' disciples had been made clean through his word (John 15:3). They did not need to be made clean all over again; only the dust of the road needed washing off.

"And ye are clean, but not all." One of them was not. Jesus washed Judas's feet too, knowing exactly what he was about to do.

"I Have Given You an Example"

> **John 13:12** *So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?*
> **John 13:13** *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.*
> **John 13:14** *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*
> **John 13:15** *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

“Know ye what I have done to you?” A question to make them think — the figure **erotesis**, a question asked for effect.

“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.” *Master* is *Teacher*; *Lord* is *master*, *owner*. Jesus did not deny his place. That is the point: the Teacher and Lord took the place of the servant.

“Ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” If the Lord served them, they could not refuse to serve each other.

“For I have given you an example.” The word *example* (*hypodeigma*) means a pattern to copy. Some churches wash feet as a regular ceremony, and nothing forbids it. But the example Jesus gave was the attitude behind the act: lowly, loving service to one another, in whatever form the need takes. Paul, writing to the churches of the grace administration, never instructs foot-washing as a church rite; he speaks of it once, as one of the good works of a faithful widow who had shown hospitality — **“if she have washed the saints’ feet”** (1 Timothy 5:10).

> **John 13:16** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*
>
> **John 13:17** *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

“Verily, verily.” Greek *amēn*, *amēn* — *truly*, *truly*. Jesus alone in Scripture begins sayings this way, doubling the word for emphasis. Repeating the same word immediately is the figure called **epizeuxis**.

“The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.” If the Lord does not think himself too great to serve, neither should his servants. And Jesus applies the same principle to himself: the one who is sent is not greater than the one who sent him. Jesus was sent by God. As he would say later that same night, **“my Father is greater than I”** (John 14:28).

“Happy are ye if ye do them.” Knowing is not enough. The blessing is in doing.

“One of You Shall Betray Me”

> **John 13:18** *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*
>
> **John 13:19** *Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

“He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Jesus quoted Psalm 41:9, where David spoke of a close friend who turned against him: **“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”** In the East, to eat bread with a man was to bind yourself to him in friendship and loyalty. To betray someone you had eaten with was the deepest treachery. *Lifted up his heel* pictures a horse kicking, or a man raising his foot to trip or trample. Jesus left out the words *in whom I trusted*; he had known from the beginning who would betray him (John 6:64).

“That, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.” *I am he* — Greek *egō eimi*, the same words the blind man used when he said **“I am he”** (John 9:9). Jesus told them ahead of time, so that when it happened their faith would not be shaken: they would know he was the one he claimed to be, the Christ.

> **John 13:21** *When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*
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> **John 13:22** *Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.*
>
> **John 13:23** *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*
>
> **John 13:24** *Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.*
>
> **John 13:25** *He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?*

"He was troubled in spirit." The same word used at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:33; story 50). Betrayal by a friend grieved him deeply.

"One of you shall betray me." The others did not suspect Judas. Matthew records that each of them asked, **"Lord, is it I?"** (Matthew 26:22).

"Leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." This is the first time John's Gospel uses this phrase. The disciple is never named, but from early times he has been understood to be John himself, the writer. Lying on the left elbow, each man's head was near the chest of the man on his left. The beloved disciple was on Jesus' right, so he had only to lean back to speak to him quietly.

"Lord, who is it?" Peter could not ask himself without being overheard, so he signalled to John.

> **John 13:26** *Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*
>
> **John 13:27** *And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.*

"He it is, to whom I shall give a sop." A *sop* was a piece of bread dipped in the common dish. For the host to dip a morsel and hand it to a guest was a mark of special honour and friendship. Even at the moment he identified his betrayer, Jesus offered Judas a token of love — one last appeal.

"And after the sop Satan entered into him." Judas took the bread and hardened his heart. Luke says the same: **"Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot"** (Luke 22:3). The devil had put the thought into his heart (13:2); Judas had made the bargain; now Satan took hold of him. God did not make Judas betray his Son. Judas gave himself over to the adversary. Jesus had said of him a year before, **"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"** (John 6:70).

"That thou doest, do quickly." Jesus was not giving Judas permission or command to sin. He was saying: *I know what you are about to do. Go and do it.* His hour had come, and he would not hide from it.

> **John 13:28** *Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.*
>
> **John 13:29** *For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.*
>
> **John 13:30** *He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.*

"Because Judas had the bag." Judas kept the common purse; John tells us he was a thief who stole from it (John 12:6).

"Buy those things that we have need of against the feast." The feast was still ahead — another sign that this supper came the evening before the Passover lambs were killed. **"Or, that he should give something to the poor."** It was the custom to give to the poor at Passover.

"And it was night." Four words. It was literally night — the lamps were lit and the streets were dark. But many readers hear more. Jesus had said, **"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness"** (John 8:12), and, **"if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him"** (John 11:10). Judas walked away from the light into the night. John does not explain the words; this series notes how readers have understood them.

"This Is My Body"

Luke records what Jesus did with the bread and the cup. The Gospels do not agree on whether Judas was still in the room at that moment — Luke mentions the betrayer after the cup (Luke 22:21), while John says Judas left immediately after the sop — and Scripture does not settle it. What matters is what Jesus said.

> **Luke 22:17** *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:*
> **Luke 22:18** *For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*
> **Luke 22:19** *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*
> **Luke 22:20** *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

"He took the cup, and gave thanks." At a festive Jewish meal, cups of wine were blessed and shared at set points. Luke mentions a cup before the bread and **"the cup after supper."**

"I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." This was his last meal with them before his death. He looked beyond the cross to the kingdom.

"He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it." As at the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus gave thanks to God before he broke the bread (story 46).

"This is my body which is given for you." Jesus was sitting at the table, in his body, holding the bread in his hand. The bread *represented* his body, which would be given for them the next day. Saying "this is" for "this represents" is the figure called **metaphor** — one thing called by the name of another it stands for. Jesus spoke the same way when he said, **"I am the door"** (John 10:9) and **"I am the true vine"** (John 15:1).

"This do in remembrance of me." *Remembrance* (*anamnēsis*) means a calling to mind. The Passover had been given as **"a memorial"** of what God did when He brought Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12:14). Now Jesus gave his disciples a remembrance of what God would do through his death.

"This cup is the new testament in my blood." The *cup* is put for what is in it — the figure **metonymy**. *Testament* is *covenant*. God had promised through Jeremiah: **"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah"** (Jeremiah 31:31). When the old covenant was made at Sinai, Moses sprinkled the people with the blood of

sacrifices and said, **"Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you"** (Exodus 24:8). The new covenant would be made in Jesus' own blood, **"which is shed for you."**

"Which of Them Should Be Accounted the Greatest"

> **Luke 22:24** *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*
>
> **Luke 22:25** *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*
>
> **Luke 22:26** *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*
>
> **Luke 22:27** *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

"There was also a strife among them." It seems hard to believe: at this table, on this night, they were arguing about rank. Places at table showed rank, and perhaps the quarrel began over who would recline nearest Jesus. It may be why no one would stoop to wash the others' feet. Luke places it here; John does not mention it; this series notes how well the two accounts fit together.

"They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." *Benefactor* (*Euergetēs*) was an actual title Gentile kings gave themselves — several kings of Egypt and Syria took it. They ruled harshly and wanted to be called *Do-gooders*.

"But ye shall not be so." In Christ's kingdom greatness is turned upside down. **"He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger"** — the youngest did the serving in an Eastern household. **"And he that is chief, as he that doth serve."**

"But I am among you as he that serveth." He had just shown them.

"A New Commandment"

> **John 13:31** *Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*
>
> **John 13:32** *If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.*

"When he was gone out." With Judas gone, the events that led to the cross were in motion.

"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Jesus spoke of the cross, still ahead, as if it had already happened — *now is … glorified*. Speaking of a certain future event as though it were already done is the figure called **prolepsis** (*anticipation*). The cross would glorify the Son by showing his perfect obedience and love, and it would glorify God, whose plan of redemption it fulfilled. **"God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him"** — God would raise him from the dead and exalt him to His right hand. Peter later preached: **"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus"** (Acts 3:13). God is the one who glorifies; the Son is glorified by Him.

> **John 13:33** *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.*

> **John 13:34** *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*
>
> **John 13:35** *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

"Little children." *Teknia*, a tender word, used only here in the Gospels. John, who heard it that night, used it often in his letters as an old man: **"My little children"** (1 John 2:1).

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Love for one's neighbour was an old commandment (Leviticus 19:18). What was new was the measure: **"as I have loved you."** They had just seen that love kneeling at their feet. By the next afternoon they would see it on the cross.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." Not by their knowledge, their titles or their miracles, but by their love for one another.

"Simon, Simon"

> **Luke 22:31** *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*
>
> **Luke 22:32** *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

"Simon, Simon." The name doubled — epizeuxis again — a sign of deep feeling, as in **"Martha, Martha"** (Luke 10:41).

"Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." *You* here is plural: all of them. Wheat was sifted by shaking it violently in a sieve. Satan wanted to shake them until nothing was left. Comparing their trial to the sifting of grain is the figure called **simile**. As in the story of Job, the adversary was the one who wanted to do harm (story 37).

"But I have prayed for thee." *Thee* is singular: Peter. Jesus had prayed for Peter by name, **"that thy faith fail not."** Peter would stumble badly. But his faith would not fail completely, because Jesus had prayed for him. **"And when thou art converted"** — *turned back* — **"strengthen thy brethren."** Jesus already saw Peter restored and strengthening others. On the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who stood up and preached (Acts 2:14; story 54).

> **John 13:36** *Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*
>
> **John 13:37** *Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.*
>
> **John 13:38** *Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.*

"Thou shalt follow me afterwards." Peter would indeed follow him one day, even in the manner of his death (John 21:18-19).

"I will lay down my life for thy sake." Peter meant it. He drew a sword in the garden a few hours later (John 18:10).

"The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." Before dawn Peter would deny three times that he even knew Jesus (Luke 22:54-62). The man who said he would lay down his life for Jesus would be saved by the one who laid down his life for him.

Out to the Garden

Jesus talked long with his disciples that night (John 14–16). He told them he was going to his Father, and he promised them **"another Comforter"** — the gift of holy spirit his Father would send (John 14:16; story 54). He prayed for them, and for all who would believe through their word (John 17). **"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives"** (Matthew 26:30) — probably the Hallel psalms, Psalms 113 to 118, sung at the Passover season. Among their words: **"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner"** (Psalm 118:22).

They crossed the brook Kidron to a garden called Gethsemane. There Judas came with a band of soldiers, and the events of the next day began — the cross, the tomb, and the ascension (story 52).

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

The Lamb at the table. Fifteen hundred years earlier, on the night of the first Passover, Israel ate the lamb whose blood marked their doors (Exodus 12; story 14). At this supper no lamb is mentioned. The next afternoon, at the hour the Passover lambs were being slain, Jesus died. **"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"** (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The servant of the LORD. Isaiah had spoken of God's servant: **"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth"** (Isaiah 42:1); and of his suffering: **"he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors"** (Isaiah 53:12). At the supper Jesus quoted those very words of himself (Luke 22:37). The Messiah came not to be served, but to serve: **"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"** (Mark 10:45).

The new covenant. The blood of the old covenant was the blood of animals. The new covenant was made in the blood of God's own Son. **"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"** (Matthew 26:28).

He laid it down, and took it again. Jesus laid aside his garments and took them again. The next day he laid down his life; and God raised him from the dead and took him up to His right hand.

Betrayed, yet faithful. He washed the feet of the one who betrayed him, and offered him the sop of friendship. **"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34) was spoken by the same heart.

To the Grace Administration

The Lord's supper. Paul received from the Lord himself what happened that night, and passed it on to the church at Corinth:

> **1 Corinthians 11:23** *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:*
>
> **1 Corinthians 11:24** *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

> **1 Corinthians 11:25** *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 11:26** *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

"In remembrance of me … till he come." The bread and the cup look back to the cross, and forward to his return. Every time believers remember him this way, they proclaim his death and their hope.

Ministers of the new covenant. The new covenant Jeremiah promised to Israel is the covenant in Christ's blood. Paul calls himself and his fellow workers **"able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit"** (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The mind that knelt. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him" (Philippians 2:5-9). In the upper room the disciples saw that mind with their own eyes: the Lord with a towel around his waist. And they saw what follows: God exalted the one who humbled himself.

By love serve one another. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). **"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another"** (Romans 12:10).

Walk in love. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2). The new commandment's measure — *as I have loved you* — is the measure for the church.

Washed and clean. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). The believer is bathed once for all; what remains is daily walking in the light of what God has made him.

Restored, not rejected. Peter fell, and Jesus had already prayed him back. **"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness"** (Galatians 6:1).

To the Topic of Servant Leadership and Love

- **Greatness is service** — "I am among you as he that serveth."
- **Knowing who you are frees you to serve** — Jesus knew the Father had given all things into his hands, and he picked up a towel.
- **Let him serve you first** — "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."
- **Serve even those who will hurt you** — he washed Judas's feet.
- **Love as he loved** — the new commandment.
- **Love is the mark of a disciple** — "By this shall all men know."
- **Remember him** — the bread and the cup, till he come.
- **Failure is not the end** — "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

The Main Takeaway

On the evening that began the fourteenth of Nisan, the night before the Passover lambs were slain, Jesus ate a last supper with his twelve apostles in a large upper room in Jerusalem, saying, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer"; knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God, he rose from supper, laid aside his garments, girded himself with a towel, and washed his disciples' feet — Judas's too — telling Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," and all of them, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"; troubled in spirit, he said, "one of you shall betray me," gave the sop to Judas, and Judas went out, "and it was night"; he took bread and said, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me," and the cup, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you"; when they argued over who was greatest he said, "I am among you as he that serveth"; he gave them a new commandment, "That ye love one another; as I have loved you"; and he told Peter, who promised to die for him, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," and that he would deny him three times before the cock crowed. The next day, at the hour the lambs were slain, Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; God raised him from the dead and exalted him to His right hand, and his church remembers his death till he come.

- **The Lord became the servant** — and calls us to serve one another.
- **Let him wash you,** and then wash others' feet.
- **Love one another as he loved you.**
- **Greatness is measured by service, not rank.**
- **Remember his death, and look for his coming.**
- **He prays for his own,** even when they fall.

For Our Learning — The People

- **Jesus.** The Son of God, sent by God and going to God, who knelt to wash his disciples' feet and gave them the bread and the cup.
- **Peter.** Who would not be washed, then wanted to be washed all over; who vowed to die for Jesus and was told he would deny him.
- **John.** "The disciple whom Jesus loved," leaning on Jesus' breast; sent with Peter to prepare the supper.
- **Judas Iscariot.** Keeper of the bag, who received the sop and went out into the night to betray him.
- **The twelve.** Who argued over who was greatest, and were told, "love one another."
- **The man with the pitcher and the goodman of the house.** Unnamed men who prepared the place for the Lord's last supper.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **The day began at sunset** — the supper began the same day on which Jesus died.
- **The Passover and Unleavened Bread** — spoken of as one feast; leaven cleared out first.
- **Men carrying pitchers** — women's work; a man doing it was a sign easy to follow.
- **Opening homes to pilgrims** — Jerusalem's householders gave rooms freely at the feasts.

- **The upper room** — a room on the roof or upper storey, reached by an outside stair.
- **Reclining at table** — on the left elbow, feet stretched out behind; a man could lean back on the chest of the one beside him.
- **Foot-washing** — open sandals and dusty roads; water given by the host; washing feet the work of the lowest servant.
- **Bathed versus washed** — the whole body bathed at home, only the feet washed on arrival.
- **The girded towel** — a servant's apron.
- **Eating bread together** — a bond of friendship and loyalty; betraying a table companion the worst treachery.
- **The sop** — a morsel dipped and handed by the host, a mark of honour.
- **Giving to the poor at Passover.**
- **The cups of a festive meal** — blessed and shared; "the cup after supper."
- **"Benefactor"** — a title Gentile kings gave themselves.
- **Sifting wheat** — shaken hard in a sieve.
- **The hymn** — the Hallel psalms (Psalms 113–118) sung at Passover.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Polyptoton (the same word repeated in different forms)** — "With desire I have desired" (Luke 22:15).
- **Epizeuxis (a word repeated immediately)** — "Verily, verily" (John 13:16); "Simon, Simon" (Luke 22:31).
- **Erotesis (questions for effect)** — "Know ye what I have done to you?" (13:12); "whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?" (Luke 22:27).
- **Metaphor** — "This is my body" (Luke 22:19): the bread represents his body.
- **Metonymy (one name put for a related thing)** — "This cup is the new testament" (Luke 22:20): the cup for what it holds.
- **Simile** — "that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).
- **Idiom** — "hath lifted up his heel against me" (13:18), for treachery; "thou hast no part with me" (13:8), for having no share with him.
- **Prolepsis (anticipation)** — "Now is the Son of man glorified" (13:31), the cross spoken of as already done.
- **Antithesis (opposites set against each other)** — "he that is greatest … as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:26).
- **Irony** — kings called "benefactors" (Luke 22:25); Peter's "I will lay down my life for thy sake" (13:37) on the night Jesus would lay down his life for Peter.

What the Bible Actually Says

- **The supper came “before the feast of the passover.”**
- **Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare it, with the sign of a man carrying water.**
- **Jesus longed to eat this Passover with them before he suffered.**
- **Knowing the Father had given all things into his hands, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet.**
- **He washed Judas’s feet too, knowing he would betray him.**
- **He told them to wash one another’s feet, and gave them an example to follow.**
- **He identified the betrayer by giving him the sop, and Judas went out into the night.**
- **He gave them bread as his body and the cup as the new covenant in his blood, “in remembrance of me.”**
- **The disciples argued about who was greatest; Jesus said he was among them as one who serves.**
- **He gave a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.**
- **He prayed for Peter’s faith, and foretold his three denials.**
- **Scripture does not mention a lamb at this supper.**

God’s Will and Intent

- **God gave all things into His Son’s hands** — and the Son used them to serve.
- **God sent His Son to be the Passover Lamb,** slain at the very hour the lambs were killed.
- **God made a new covenant** in the blood of His Son, as He promised through Jeremiah.
- **God glorified His Son** — through the cross, and by raising him from the dead and exalting him.
- **God wants His people to love one another** as Christ loved them.
- **God wants His people to remember** the death of His Son until he comes.
- **God restores the fallen** — the Son prayed for Peter, and Peter strengthened his brethren.