

AHH LIFE!

REFLECTING ON JESUS' UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE

Water from Rock, October 10, 2017, Tim Smith

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

John 10:10

In this series we reflect on Jesus' teaching about experiencing the life He came to give us. We will focus on what is customarily called "The Upper Room Discourse", or, Jesus' teaching in the Upper Room (and prayer afterwards) a few hours before He died. In John 13-17 Jesus describes how followers can live in God's "eternal life", *zoe ainos* ("life of the age to come").

Key to the Gospel of John: 20:31

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Chapters 1 – 12: *"so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God..."*

Chapters 13 – 17: *"...that through believing you may have life in his name."*

THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE: JOHN 13:1-20

1. Chapter 13 sets the scene for the whole of chapters 13-17. Love is one of the key terms in these chapters, occurring 31 times in these 5 chapters compared to 6 times in chapters 1-12.
2. The love demonstrated in Jesus laying down His life on the cross is also demonstrated in laying down His life in humble service by washing His disciples' feet. In this is revealed what God is like; He washes feet, even the feet on the one who will betray Him.
3. John emphasizes the context of the Passover, as Jesus is the Lamb who will be sacrificed to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
4. On this fateful night *"Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father."* In John's first 12 chapters Jesus repeats that His "hour had not yet come" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Now *"the hour has come for*

the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23).

5. What about the apparent contradiction between the Synoptics and John’s Gospel as to the time of the Passover? The Synoptics show Jesus celebrating Passover with His disciples, while John has Passover celebrated the following day when Jesus was killed.

Solution: The *Mishnah* says that for theological and logistical reasons the Galileans and Judeans celebrated Passover on different days: “the Galileans slew their lambs on Nisan 13, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted eight days whereas the Judeans celebrated on Nisan 14.” (Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*)

Because Jesus and His disciples were Galileans they celebrated Passover on Thursday night. His death on Friday at the time the residents of Jerusalem and Judea celebrated would surely have spoken to some of the priests and people in Jerusalem.

6. The Synoptics report that a dispute arose among the disciples in the Upper Room as to which of them would be regarded as the greatest (Luke 22:24). It was in that context Jesus washed their feet.
7. “*And during supper* ³*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,* ⁴*got up from the table...*” Jesus washed His disciples’ feet fully aware of His divine authority from the Father, His divine origin, and His divine destiny. John mentions this awareness of Jesus to emphasize His humility and love. His sharing in the divine essence is what leads Him in such a humble act. This is a revelation of who God is!
8. Jesus uses two different Greek words in His dialogue about washing with Peter:

v. 10 “*Jesus said to him, ‘One who has bathed (louo) does not need to wash (nipto), except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.’*”

louo – means a total bath; to bathe all over

nipto -- means to wash parts of the body

9. Louo ‘total bath’ refers to the total forgiveness people receive when they trust in Christ. The result is a total cleansing with lasting results). This is emphasized by the perfect tense of the Greek verb – a

completed action with results extending to the present.

10. Nipto ‘wash’ refers to the cleansing Christ does as believers confess their sins (1 John 1:9). This is what the foot washing symbolizes. That is why Christ says that one who has “bathed” (trusted Him as Savior) needs only to wash his feet when they are dirty (confess sin). Notice Jesus says, “*you are clean, though not all of you*” (i.e. Judas)
11. After washing the disciples’ feet Jesus said: “*For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.*” Jesus called his actions an “example” (Greek: hypodeigma, pattern) implying that there are other examples of the same attitude. This was an example of humble service in a culture where people wore sandals and often soiled their feet. What would be some examples in our culture?
12. Peter appears to have learned to follow Jesus’ example. See for instance, 1 Peter 5:5: “*And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*”

The word Peter uses for “humility” (egkomboma) is a word derived from a Greek word meaning “knot” (kombos). It was a knot by which a slave attached an outer garment of slavery to his inner garment. So to be clothed with humility would have suggested a slave’s humble actions to the readers. It denoted taking a lowly place of humility. “The word may have well been chosen for the sake of some of the associations which this its history suggests.” (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*)

13. Jesus repeatedly said that the Father sent Him and that He came from the Father. Likewise He sends His disciples into the world to follow His example of humble, self-giving love.
14. The pattern of life exemplified in Jesus washing His disciples’ feet is true life and joy; it is to participate in the ‘life of the age to come’. Not to follow His example is to miss the experience of Christ’s abundant life.

John 13:1-20

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' ⁷Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' ⁸Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' ⁹Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' ¹⁰Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?' ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ¹⁸I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, "The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." ¹⁹I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. ²⁰Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.'