

GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

13



CHRYSOSTOM

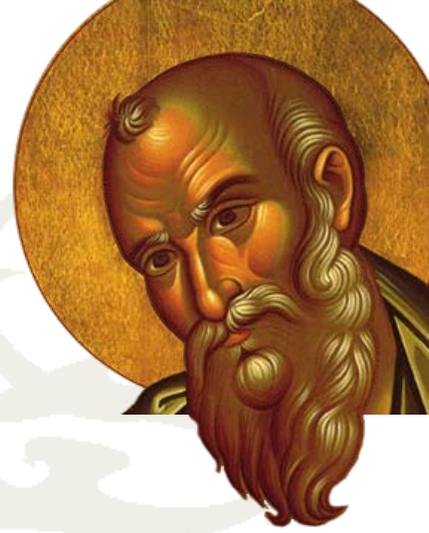
Read St. John Chrysostom's homilies on John chapter 13.



PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of John chapter 13.

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Chapter thirteen begins a five-chapter segment in which the apostle describes Christ's Passion and Resurrection, beginning with the Last Supper. This celebration of the Feast of the Passover is momentous: Jesus knew that the time of His Passion had arrived, and He lovingly prepared His disciples both for this and for the way in which they should live from this point forward (13:1).

Jesus began by washing His disciples' feet (it was traditional for a servant to wash the dusty feet of guests) (13:4-5). St. Peter objected to having his feet washed by His Lord, but Jesus replied that St. Peter must be washed by Christ to be part of Him (13:6-8); St. Peter, desiring to be united with Christ, then frantically replied that Jesus should wash his hands and head as well (13:9)!

It is interesting that Jesus said they were clean—with the exception of Judas (13:11)—and therefore needed only their feet washed (13:10). The disciples were clean, St. John Chrysostom explains, "Insofar as (they) have received the light and been

freed from error." This does not mean, however, that they were freed from all sin; Jesus therefore washed their feet, Venerable Bede says, because "this washing of the feet indicates pardoning of sins, and not only that which is given once in baptism but in addition that by which the daily guilty actions of the faithful that everyone lives with in this life are cleansed by His daily grace."

After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus went on to explain His action: He was demonstrating the humility with which these disciples—and, in fact, all Christians—should serve others. As St. Cyprian of Carthage says, "If 'the servant is not greater than his master,' let those who follow the Lord humbly and peacefully and silently tread in His steps, since the lower one is, the more exalted one may become." This is directly related to Christ's words in verses 31-35: Christians are called to love each other. St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches, "Christ commands us to love as He did, putting neither reputation, wealth or anything else before love of our brothers and sisters. If need be, we even need to be prepared to face death for our neighbor's salvation as our Savior's disciples did, as well as those who followed in their footsteps."

During the meal Jesus announced that He would be betrayed by one of the disciples; fulfilling Psalm 41:9 (see John 13:18), Jesus handed bread to the person who would betray Him—Judas Iscariot (13:26). The Church Fathers point out two things about this incident. First, there is great significance in the fact that the bread given to Judas was dipped. St. Ephrem the Syrian says dipping the bread "washed the blessing

from it," and therefore "Judas did not eat from the blessed bread, nor did he drink from the cup of life." Secondly, Satan entered Judas immediately after this; St. John Chrysostom points out that the same thing could happen to us, "Thus you may learn concerning those who partake unworthily of the divine mysteries, that these especially are the ones the devil invades and enters at once, just like he did to Judas of old."

The chapter ends with Jesus' prediction that St. Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed (meaning St. Peter would deny Him three times before the night was over).



LIFE TIP

St. Peter of Damascus teaches us to be humble: "The more a man is found worthy to receive God's gifts, the more he ought to consider himself a debtor to God, who has raised him from the earth and bestowed on dust the privilege of imitating to some degree its Creator and God. For to endure injustice with joy, patiently to do good to one's enemies, to lay down one's own life for one's neighbor, and so on, are gifts from God, bestowed on those who are resolved to receive them from Him through their solicitude in cultivating and protecting what has been entrusted to them, as Adam was commanded to do (Genesis 2:15).