

Foot Washing—John 13

At the Beginning of the Passover or At the End?

What follows in the letter is taken from what I wrote **January 19, 1975** to answer some false assumptions, while I was still a minister in the WCG. I have edited it and made some additions.

The Timing of the Foot Washing

Dear M. K.,

It has been brought to my attention through the Theological Research Project Team that you had submitted a paper to the First Year Bible Class, “The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ.” You wrote on the subject of a seemingly obvious misplacement of verses and the sequence of the New Covenant Christian Passover as outlined in the Harmony of the Gospels authored by me.

I was furnished with a copy of your paper. Thank you very much for your interest and the things you showed in your paper. I hope that this direct answer from me, the author, will be helpful to you in many ways, especially for any of your future endeavors along these lines.

Before we get into the subject, several things must be borne in mind when dealing with topics like this.

1) The Bible is inspired [God-breathed] by God as written in the original language. Translations may or may not retain varying degrees of inspiration.

2) When there is an apparent conflict between scriptures, every facet of the problem must be considered.

3) When there is a difficulty with the KJV then an investigation into the Greek or Hebrew is necessary to clarify the situation.

4) Especially when dealing with the Gospels, a key to understanding is that no single Gospel contains all the facts and evidence alone, when one or more relate the same event. Overall the four Gospels are complimentary to each other and must be properly coordinated for a complete understanding.

Each Gospel account is essential. For example: Matthew and Mark show only one Passover; Luke, two; and John, three. If we did not have John and Luke we would not have certain keys related to the time period and the chronology of Jesus Christ’s ministry.

At Jesus’ last Passover, when He instituted the New Covenant ceremony, we would have some major problems if all four accounts were not available to coordinate all the activities. Here some examples:

1) John does not show the bread and wine ceremony, only the foot washing. So if John alone were used as a guide, or if Matthew, Mark

and Luke were not there, we would only know of the foot washing ceremony and nothing about the bread and wine.

- 2) Matthew, Mark, Luke and I Corinthians only show the bread and wine ceremony, but we would know nothing about the foot washing. Therefore, if these three accounts were used without John's account, we would only observe the bread and wine ceremony of the Passover, as does much of professing Christianity of the world.
- 3) Matthew, Mark and Luke do not show that Judas ever left the meal to betray Jesus.
- 4) Matthew, Mark and Luke do not show the long discourse that Jesus gave to His disciples after the supper as does John in chapters 14-16.
- 5) Only Luke records the argument that occurred between the disciples during Jesus' last Passover as to who would be the greatest among them.
- 6) Only Luke records that the disciples took two swords with them when they all went to the Mount of Olives with Jesus.

So, it is obvious that if the approach was of pitting each account against the other in a negative way, the list of problems and difficulties throughout the entirety of the four Gospels would be immense indeed. Because many scholars have taken this approach, they are in hopeless confusion as to how to solve many of these problems because they believe that the differences between the four Gospels are contradictions, when they actually are not.

The Apparent Problem at Hand

Your paper deals with a section which projects all the options that were open to me while reconstructing the chronology of the events of Jesus' last Passover when I wrote the Harmony. All of the factors that you have brought up were deeply considered by me before arranging Luke's account, which was not placed in the numbered verse sequence.

Why did I arrange verses 21-23, then 19, 17, 18 and 20 of Luke 22 in that order? Was this arrangement merely done to satisfy Worldwide Church of God doctrine? (If so, then the scholarship of the book is greatly limited in proper understanding, as any other scholar and author who is bound by personal views, prejudice, bias or a doctrine of his church that prejudices him to distort the truth to appease doctrine, tradition or whatever and to please humans and not God. Please be assured that the WCG is on public record [at the time this letter was written in 1975] and has proven its desire to have all of its teachings and doctrines to be in complete agreement with biblical truth.) Or, on the other hand, were there good reasons for making the arrangement in the way that I did? If so what were the reasons?

First, I arranged Luke in the way that I did because of the order that Matthew and Mark used. **Second**, Luke 22:17-18 was when Jesus passed the larger container of wine to the disciples to have each one pour a

small amount of wine in a smaller for himself. This was distributed to each one before Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread, symbolizing His broken body. Next, in verse 20, after giving thanks, Jesus instructed them that the wine they were drinking was symbolic of His blood, the blood of the New Covenant. **Third**, Matthew, Mark and Luke all show that the ceremony of the broken bread came before the drinking of the wine, and the drinking of the wine came after the Passover supper. Luke chapter 22 verse 19 in the Harmony was placed before verses 17-18 in order to coordinate it with Matthew and Mark. In fact, the partaking of the wine was nearly the last thing that was done before Jesus and the apostles left for the Mount of Olives.

In order to determine when Judas left to betray Jesus—before the bread and wine, or after the bread and wine—we need to carefully examine John 13. John in his narration of the foot washing specifically shows that Judas left shortly after the foot washing. The basic key to understanding when the foot washing took place is found in the context and in the Greek words, which clarify everything.

Perhaps the whole supposition for your rearrangement of the verses would have been clarified or could have been seen as not accurate if you had only researched the subject in any Greek-English Interlinear. In addition, if you had some basic understanding of the Greek verbs and participles used in the verses in question, you would have seen the error of your premise.

In order to understand the proper order of the Passover ceremony, we need to begin with the account of the foot washing. In the KJV in John 13:2, there is a mistranslation, which seems to indicate that the supper had ended by the time the foot washing began. It reads: “And supper being ended ...” However, the Greek actually shows that that phrase should have been translated: “during supper.” Unfortunately, this removes the basic premise of your paper. So let’s begin by examining the critical verses in John 13 one by one:

1) John 13:2: Supper Being Ended, or When/After Supper began: In the KJV it reads “And supper being ended ...” and this is a most unfortunate mistranslation. Not knowing the New Testament Greek, some have taken this to mean that the foot washing did not occur at the beginning of supper, but at the end after every thing else was finished.

The Greek-English Interlinear translation by George Ricker Berry reads “and supper taking place ...” If you had only used this interlinear English translation, you would have realized the foot washing did not take place after supper had ended but “during supper” or “when/after supper began,” meaning shortly after supper began. In other words, “at the beginning of the supper.” The Greek word *γινομενου* *ginomenou* translated “supper taking place,” or “during supper,” is an aorist participle and should never be translated to mean that the supper had completely ended. This participle is derived from the prime verb *γινομαι* *ginomai*,

which means “to be, to become” or “to come into being.” Therefore, **γινομενου** *ginomenou* has the meaning of “during the taking place of supper,” or “when supper began” or “after supper began.” As such then, since the prime verb **γίνομαι** *ginomai* is the root verb of the participle **γινομενου** *ginomenou*, it can also be translated “After supper began.” Berry’s translation, “supper taking place,” does indicate that the foot washing took place at the beginning of supper. Finally, because **γινομενου** *ginomenou* is an aorist participle, it is completely incorrect to translate it in the completed past tense, “supper being ended” as translated in the KJV. This erroneous translation has caused a great deal of confusion. Those who do not understand the Greek do not know that this should be translated, “When supper began” or “After supper began.” In other words, the supper had just started.

Other Greek Words That John Would Have to Have Used to Mean That Supper Had Ended: The main Greek word for “end” is **τελος** *telos* which means “end, conclusion of” or “termination of.” The Greek word for “being ended” is **συντελεσθεισων** *sunteleostheison* as used in Luke 4:2, referring to the end of Jesus’ forty-day fast and temptation by Satan the devil. Notice that the prime root **τελ** *tel* for the meaning “end” is the basic root for this word. John could have used this word to express the fact that the supper “had ended.”

In addition, we find that the drinking of the wine did, in fact, occur “after supper,” as the Greek clearly shows in Luke 22:20 and I Cor. 11:25 where the Greek phrase, **μετα το δειπνησαι** *meta to deipnesai* is used, which means “after supper.” There is no question that the Greek word *meta* means “after.” John could also have used this word to show that the foot washing took place “after supper,” as did Luke and Paul to show that the drinking of the wine took place after supper. However, he did not use this word.

As a result, the whole supposition you presented, that the foot washing took place after supper, is not confirmed by the Greek. In fact, the Greek clearly refutes any such claim.

Now let’s follow the sequence of events of John 13, and we’ll see that the foot washing took place at the beginning of the Passover supper and continued past the time that Judas left to betray Jesus.

13:2 “And during supper (the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot ...”

13:3 “Jesus, knowing ...”

13:4 “Rose from supper ...” (additional proof that supper was in progress)

13:5 “to wash the disciples’ feet ...”

13:12 “sat down again ...”

When we take into account the entire context of John 13:2-12 we get the complete picture. Thus, the sequence of events from verse 2 through verse 12 is as follows: “When supper began (i.e. the beginning of supper), Jesus knowing ... Rose from supper ... washed the disciples feet ... sat down again.” “Sat down” was actually a reclining position. With

all the disciples in a reclining position, Jesus easily carried out the foot washing.

When we put all the facts together, it becomes clear that Jesus instituted the foot washing at the beginning of the Passover ceremony. Then He sat down again, or reclined, which was the position for eating the Passover supper. If the supper had been completed, there obviously would be no reason for Jesus to recline again.

13:13-17 Jesus gives the explanation for the foot washing.

13:18 Jesus indicates that He had chosen Judas to betray Him, "... he who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." The Greek verb "he who eats" is a present tense participle *τρωγων* *trogon*, which can also be translated: "the one who is eating with Me ...". As the Greek indicates, it was an active present tense fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus' betrayal. When Jesus said this about Judas, they were still eating, the supper was still in progress, after the foot washing had already taken place. In Mark 14:18, we find a more direct statement. Jesus is quoted as saying in the first person, "... that one of you will deliver me up, **who is eating with me**" (EGNT, Berry).

13:26 Jesus dips the sop or "morsel," then gives it to Judas. Satan enters into him and he leaves to betray Jesus to the Jewish religious authorities. However, when Judas left, supper was still in progress.

The Jews had a custom that the master of the paschal supper gave a morsel to all who were at the table. So there was nothing particularly unusual about Jesus giving a morsel to Judas. If supper had already ended and was not still in progress when Jesus gave the morsel to Judas, there would have been no need for the disciples to think that Judas was leaving in order to buy something for the feast (i.e. the Passover supper that they were eating) or to go out and give something to the poor who were also eating the Passover supper in nearby houses.

Conclusion From John 13: The context of John 13 alone shows that supper was still in progress past the time that Judas had departed. An important point to keep in mind: **Only John's account shows when Judas left. None of the other Gospel accounts do. Without a doubt, John shows that Judas left while supper was still in progress, and it continued after he had left. Therefore, the foot washing had to have taken place at the beginning of the meal and could not have taken place after the Passover supper was completely finished. The Greek and the flow of the context of John 13 prove this.**

2) The Breaking and Eating of the Bread Took Place While They Were Still Eating the Passover Supper: Matthew 26:26 and Mark 14:22 show that while they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, etc. Therefore, supper was still in progress at this point. It would only be proper for Jesus to institute the breaking of the bread of the New Covenant Passover ceremony after Judas had left. Judas only received an unceremonial morsel from Jesus to symbolize that he would betray Him.

Therefore, Judas did not partake of eating the bread that Jesus had broken and blessed for the New Covenant Christian Passover.

3) Matthew, Mark, Luke and I Corinthians Show That the Drinking of the Wine Was After the Eating of the Bread: Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:20 and I Corinthians 11:25 are all in agreement in the sequence of the bread and wine part of the ceremony.

4) The Wine Was Taken after Supper—Not the Foot Washing: As we have seen, Luke 22:20 and I Cor. 11:25 show that it was **after supper** when they partook of the wine as shown in the Greek phrase **μετα το δειπνησαι** *meta to deipnesai*. This phrase cannot mean “during supper” in any way. It can only mean “**after supper**.” Remember that Judas had already left **during supper**, and the drinking of the wine was **after supper**. This means that Judas could not have taken part in the wine ceremony.

Was Luke “Confused” About the Sequence of Events? Did He Have a “Bad Memory” or What?

Now we will address the crux of the final problems in Luke’s account, which on the surface gives the appearance of a different sequence than the other Gospel accounts; or, does it really? Let’s examine what Luke wrote, because his order of the events was actually clarified very simply by Luke himself.

Luke 22:20 is the key verse because the drinking of the wine is stated before the announcement by Jesus that one of the disciples (Judas) would betray Him. Luke does not show that it was Judas who was the betrayer; neither does he show Jesus dipping of the sop and giving it to Judas. But does Luke really show that the partaking of the wine occurred before the announcement of the betrayal just because it is stated first? That is the key question. In verse 20, Luke wrote, “In like manner also, He took the cup **after supper** ...” Luke is clearly stating that the sequence of the cup was **after supper**. Now we know that according to John’s account, Judas left during the supper. Therefore, Judas could not have been there during the drinking of the wine. Luke agrees with John because he wrote that they partook of the wine, symbolizing the shed blood of Jesus **after supper**, as the Greek phrase clearly shows: **μετα το δειπνησαι** *meta to deipnesai*.

But does this mean that Luke is not permitted to narrate something that had actually occurred prior to this? Of course not!

Now we can examine Luke 22:21 and understand that there is no contradiction in what Luke had written, although he placed it after the partaking of the wine. “Moreover the hand of him (who is) delivering me up (is) with me on the table ...” (EGNT, Berry). The Greek phrase **επι της τραπεζης** *epi tes trapezes* means “at the table.” This clearly shows

that when Jesus said that the hand of the one who was betraying Him was with Him at the table, **He said it while the meal was still in progress**, even though it is placed after the drinking of the wine, which took place after the meal. The Greek clearly shows the difference through the use of the verbs and participles: in verse 20, past tense, “after supper,” and in verse 21, a previous present tense, “Moreover the hand of him (who is) delivering me up (is) with me on the table ...” How Luke used the Greek words and their tenses actually shows that the chronology in the Harmony is correct, even though the narration in Luke appears to be slightly different from Matthew and Mark.

Conclusion: This is the basis for the difference of the sequence of verses in the Harmony— rather than any fault on Luke’s part, or a fault on the part of the WCG, or a fault on my part. (Please be sure that we are not teaching heresy! And please be careful not to use the Word of God so carelessly because it might cause you and others trouble that perhaps you never intended.) However, in the Harmony, for the sake of the actual progression of the events as they occurred, I arranged Luke 22:17-23 in the order as found in the book..

I hope that this answer will help you come to a clearer understanding of this section of the book. If you have any more questions, please feel free to write or call me or to see me personally. I will be glad to be of any assistance possible.