

Lessons from the Upper Room: The Knowledge & Love of Christ

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Throughout the Lord's Upper Room discourse, He demonstrates His deity. Perfect knowledge and perfect love are two of the most frequently displayed divine attributes in this section of God's Word. As one reads His final teaching to the disciples before the Cross, one realizes that He is in total control of the circumstances, and is working all things together for their (and our) good. Christ's all-encompassing knowledge and unlimited love provides the assurance of the Almighty's ability to channel all events for the accomplishment of His will and the believer's eternal blessing.

The Introductory Statement Reveals His Complete Knowledge

John 13:1 reads: "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." The impending betrayal, arrest, trials, and crucifixion did not take the Lord Jesus by surprise. He knew that His hour had come. Previously, He had evaded unwanted attention and life-threatening danger, because His time had not yet come (Jn. 2:4; 7:6, 30; 8:20.) Now it is upon Him, and He approaches the hour with calm determination, knowing that these events will accomplish the divine mission of redemption, eventually leading Him back to eternal glory with the Father (Jn. 13:1; 17:5.)

Several times the Lord informs His disciples of coming events in order that they may look back on that dark night, and realize that it all unfolded "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23.) He openly tells them this in John 13:23: "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *He*." In preparing them for His physical departure, Christ identifies His betrayer, clearly predicts the persecution that the disciples will face in the world, and details the coming of the Holy Spirit, as well as other future events (Jn. 13:10-11, 21, 25; 16:1-4; 14:16-17.) If He had not mentioned these things, after they occurred the disciples might wonder if the Lord was ignorant of the happenings that led Him to the Cross. With His perfect foreknowledge, however, the Lord Jesus displays compassion for them. Now they could look back and say, "The Lord knew it all the time! It all took place according to His will. He went willingly to Calvary."

The Introductory Statement Reveals His Unlimited Love

The second half of John 13:1 says that the Lord "having loved His own who were in the world loved them to the end." Some scholars translate the last phrase: "to the uttermost" or "to the fullest extent possible." His love not only encompassed all of His dealings with the disciples, it also surpasses anything else in its quality. This type of love is humble (as seen in the feet-washing, Jn. 13:4-11), faithful in the face of the disciples' unfaithfulness (Jn. 13:26-14:3; 16:31-33), and makes provision for their ongoing instruction, protection, and comfort (Jn. 14:16-27.)

The caliber of this love is evidenced by our Lord's own description of the greatest demonstration of love: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13.) In thinking of the Lord's sacrificial death for them, His disciples could not deny that His love transcends anything else in the world. Romans 5:8 reminds us that "...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We could not even say that we were His friends in our natural, lost state. He loved us when we were unlovely, and brought us freely into the fellowship of His love by grace. Indeed, this is a love that goes beyond the world's usual trite usage of the word.

Love: The Believer's Natural Habitat

Christ's love has a powerful impact on the life of a believer. He describes the practical significance of love in the Upper Room teaching. His doctrine may be outlined thus:

1. Love's Standard: Jn. 13:34 – "...as I have loved you" – It humbly imitates Christ's selfless love.
2. Love's Requirement: Jn. 14:21 – "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me..." – It obeys Christ's Word. Compare 14:31 where Christ shows the world His love for the Father through obedience to the latter's command, which will lead Him to the death of the Cross.
3. Love's Result: Jn. 15:9-10, 13, 16 – "...ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." – It produces the Vine's fruit in the believers' lives, while they lay down their lives for each other.
4. Love's Completion: Jn. 17:26 – "...that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" – It unites them with the love of the Father and the Son.

Therefore, love has a dramatic practical effect on the believer by leaving an example of humility, obedience, and fruitfulness. Manifesting the love of Christ towards one another is the mark of true discipleship (Jn. 13:35.)

The Lord's perfect knowledge and love repeatedly appear in John 13-17, showing their essential part in the accomplishment of God's will. As Christ sends forth His followers into the world as witnesses, they go forth accompanied by the Triune God, Who knows all. There are no obstacles that He is unaware of, nor any problems that He cannot solve. What is more, His love ensures their protection, provision, and empowerment. The love that led the Savior to Calvary and the tomb will surely not spare anything in working for their good. The love that conquered death through resurrection will ultimately take believers to the Father's house, where they will eternally behold the Christ's glory (Jn. 14:1-3; 17:24.) Nothing can defeat the Lord Jesus Christ, nor thwart His purposes. As Romans 8:37 says: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."