

The Upper Room Ministry

An Introduction to John 13-17

Subjects: The doctrinal section of John's gospel divides into *three* parts. The main themes are **life** (John 1-7); **light** (John 8-12) and **love** (John 13-17). The remaining chapters are largely historical in their character (John 18-21). These themes can also be delightfully traced in John's Epistles and the book of Revelation.

	Life	Light	Love
John 1-7	37	13	5
John 8-12	13	11	7
John 13-17	8	0	33

Table One: Words associated with *life* (e.g. live, living), *light* and *love* (e.g. loved, loveth, lovest) in John's Gospel. **Note.** There are six references to *light* in the prologue (John 1.1-18).

Love: In **John 13-17** the theme of **love** is prominent. It is not so much love for the world that is in view (John 3.16), but love within the family of God. There is the: love of the *Father* for the *Son* (17.24, 26, cf. 3.35; 5.20; 10.17; 15.9); love of the *Son* for the *Father* (14.31); love of the *Father* for His *children* (16.27; 17.23); love of the *Lord* for His *own* (13.1; 15.9; 13); *believer's* love for the *Lord* (14.15, 21-24; 16.27); love of *believers* one to *another* (13.35; 15.12).

Priesthood: In John 1-12, Christ is **Prophet**, performing signs and preaching. In John 13-17, Christ is **Priest**, washing His disciples' feet and interceding for them. In John 18-21, Christ is **King**, the word being mentioned *twelve* times out of 16 references in the entire gospel.

Tabernacle: Aspects of the Tabernacle can be seen throughout John's gospel and especially in John 13-17. The following outline was suggested by **Thomas Bentley** and will repay careful study.

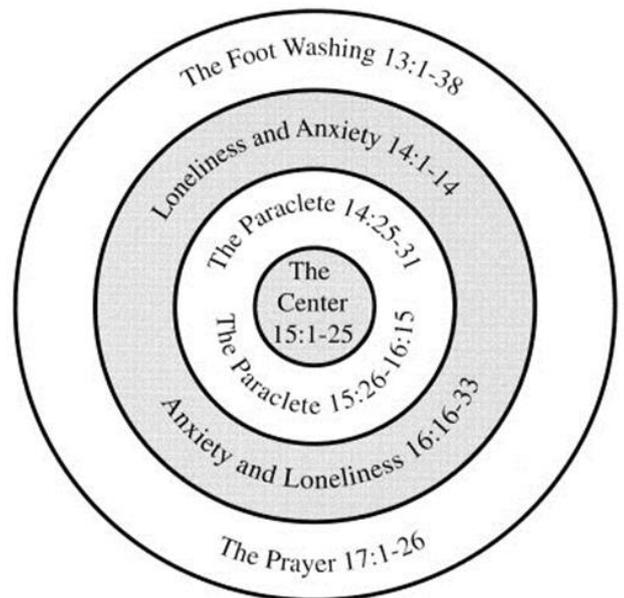
- John **10**: The Door of the Tabernacle - The *Claim* of Christ;
- John **11**: The High Priest - The *Comfort* of Christ;
- John **12**: The Brazen Altar - The *Cross* of Christ;
- John **13**: The Laver - The *Cleansing* of Christ;
- John **14**: The Table of Shewbread - The *Communion* of Christ;
- John **15**: The Lampstand - The *Capacity* of Christ;
- John **16**: The Golden Altar - The *Certainty* of Christ;
- John **17**: The Holiest - The *Completeness* of Christ.

Signs: The seven signs of John's gospel are contained within chapters 2-11. Several of these signs are immediately followed by extended discourses which explain the significance of the sign (cf. John 6). However, in John 13-17 the order is reversed. The discourse occurs first, explaining the significance of the great sign that follows; namely the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus.

Structure: Some see a concentric structure to John 13-17 focussing on the importance of *abiding* in Christ (the Vine and the branches) and *love* in the life of discipleship. The outer ring might better be termed: *Our Great High Priest - Cleansing (John 13) and Communion (John 17)*.

Others, such as **David Gooding**, see a difference between the teaching of John 13-14 which took place in the Upper Room and that of John 15-16 which seems to have taken place as the Lord Jesus and the disciples journeyed towards Gethsemane (see 14.31). His outline is as follows:

Inside the Christian Community (John 13-14)	Outside in the World (John 15-16)
<i>The Enacted Parable of Footwashing (13.1-20)</i>	<i>The Parable of the Vine and Branches (15.1-17)</i>
<i>Christ's Exposure of Judas (13.21-32)</i>	<i>Christ's Exposure of the World's Hatred (15.18-27)</i>
<i>Christ's Going Away (13.33-14.31)</i>	<i>Christ's Going Away (16.1-33)</i>



Significance: A simple word/concordance study of John 13-17 will reveal its key themes and therefore purpose. The most significant **verb** is 'to love' (x25 out of 37 in the gospel); the most significant nouns are *Father* (x53 of 138), *world* (x41 of 79), *name* (x12 of 25), *truth* (x9 of 25) and *fruit* (x8 of 10).

In highly significant words, John records that the Lord Jesus had been rejected by the world and thus hidden Himself from the nation. **John 12.36-37:** *While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.* He is now found standing on the very eve of His departure from this world. He knew He was going back to the Father and to God. Though He was leaving, His desire was that the disciples might continue to enjoy fellowship with Him in heaven (13.8). They must thus be taught and prepared for His departure and the commencement of something completely new in God's programme – the church. The major themes thus taught are: communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son through the coming Comforter (Holy Spirit); love for God and one another; fruit bearing and witness in a hostile world. *Note. These disciples were unique. They were not only representatives and foundational members of the future church (Ephesians 2.20) but they were also apostles. As such, certain aspects of this teaching could only apply to them as apostles (e.g. 14.12; 26).*

Table Two: Examples of Doctrine Introduced in the Upper Room Ministry (J Gibson, *Believer's Magazine*, August 2006)

Subject	Upper Room Ministry	Epistles
Unity	John 13.14-15, 34-35; 15.12, 17	Philippians 2.1-4; 4.3
Rapture	John 14.1-4	1 Thessalonians 4; 1 Corinthians 15
Prayer	John 14.13-14; 15.7, 16; 16.23-24	1 Thessalonians 5.17
Fruitfulness	John 15.1-6	Galatians 5.22-23
Holy Spirit	John 14.16-26; 15.26; 16.7-15	Romans 8.14
Obedience	John 14.15; 15.10	1 Corinthians 11.16
Persecution	John 15.18-21	2 Timothy 3.12
Joy	John 15.11; 17.13	Philippians 3.1
Peace	John 14.27; 16.33	Philippians 4.7

John 13.1-3: The Prologue to the Discourse (Setting the Scene)

It was the night before the crucifixion. Being omniscient, the Lord **Jesus knew** (a key theme of John's gospel) His hour was come. There are *three* things in this section that He knew (cf. v.3).

First, his *hour* (x26 in John's gospel) was come. This was not the hour of His manifestation in glory to the world (2.4), nor the hour of His grace to sinners (5.25) or the hour of His suffering (8.20). This was the hour of His departing (transferring from one scene to another) to the Father. This involves His death, but goes far beyond it.

Second, He knew that *the Father had given all things into His hands* (v.3). That is, as an expression of love (cf. 3.35), the Father has placed all things under His authority. Nothing is outside His control, whether it be the destiny of mankind (3.35-36), universal judgment (5.27-30) or universal sovereignty (Revelation 2.27). **William Reid:** *As Man the Father had entrusted all His interests to the Son, for the Son had come into the world, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who had sent Him. Everything that the Father had purposed was given to the Son to fulfil, and all the resources of the Father had been given to the Son to carry out His will.*

Third, He knew that *He was come from God and went to God* (v.3). He had 'come away' from God indicating His commission and authority. He was returning to God. The use of 'God' (as opposed to 'Father') is suggestive of holiness. If His disciples are going to enjoy communion with Him, as the one who is now in the presence of a holy God, then cleansing is necessary (vv.4-17).

In the knowledge of all this, and as an expression of His love to the uttermost (or 'end', v.1), He laid aside His garments and stooped to wash His disciples' feet. *For a fisherman to pour water over a fisherman's feet was no great condescension, but He in whose hands are all human affairs and whose nearest relation is the Father – this is unparalleled condescension.* In the full knowledge of who He was and what lay ahead, He took into His hands the feet of sinful men, even Judas Iscariot. What a lesson in humility. What a lesson in love.