

A New Commandment

John 13.31-38

John 13.31-17.26 records Jesus' final discourse. He teaches, prophesies, exhorts, and prays for His disciples. John begins his narrative with three juxtaposed vignettes, which together set the stage for all that will follow, themes Jesus will expand on in the coming chapters.

God is glorified in Christ; Christ is glorified by God (31-32)

- “Now” = the passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension
- The Father is glorified through what Christ does
- Christ is glorified through what the Father does (Phil. 2.6-11)

A New Commandment for after Christ leaves (33-35)

- Where Jesus is going, the disciples cannot follow
- A new commandment: Keeping the spirit of Jesus alive!
- The sign of discipleship: Not doctrine, or service, but love.

Jesus predicts denial, but promises future reunion (35-38)

- Peter's ignorance and overconfidence: Like us?
- Jesus' prophecy is a lesson in spiritual reality.
- Jesus' promise gives assurance: “You *will* follow later!”



1. John 13.31 begins with the news that Judas has left to organize the betrayal of Jesus, moving us one step closer to the hour (13.1) when Jesus will be crucified. Judas' absence seems to produce a change in Jesus' communication with the disciples (e.g., this is the only time He refers to them as “little children”). Why might this be so? What other signs of intimacy do you see in 13.31-38? How does He show His ‘heart’ for His followers? Reading on in chapters 14-17, do you see more evidence of His deep love and affection for them?
2. In vv31-32, referring to His coming suffering and crucifixion, which will be followed by His resurrection and ascension, Jesus says He is (will be) glorified, and that God (the Father) is (will be) glorified in Him, too. How would what Jesus did on the cross glorify God? How would God glorify the Son? Read Philippians 2.6-11. Does this help you answer both questions?
3. In v33, Jesus prefaces His statement “Where I am going, you cannot come” with “As I said to the Jews.” Read John 7.33-34 and 8.21. To whom did Jesus speak on these occasions? What did He mean when He said that they could not come where He was going? Contrast this with Jn. 8.33: To whom is Jesus speaking? His words are the same, but how is His meaning different? (Notice Jesus' response to Peter in v36b, and Jesus' words Jn. 16.16-22!)
4. Why did Jesus give His command to love one another after telling the disciples He was going away? What would them imitating His love for them accomplish after He was gone? What does loving one another this way mean in practical terms? How do you think you are doing with this? How do you think the church is doing with this?
5. Peter, perhaps thinking of what Jesus said in John 10.11, asserts his willingness to live up to this demand in 13.37. Like Peter, we may love the Lord and want to live for Him, but be ignorant of spiritual realities in this life. What did Peter fail to recognize? What did the events of that night reveal? How are Jesus' words in v36b reassuring for Peter (and us), when we are painfully aware of our failures?