

More About Jesus, Week 13: Jesus Loved His Disciples

(Luke 22:15)

by Paul Hammons

We live in an age in which personal relationships with Jesus are often amplified beyond what the Bible teaches, taking on an individualistic tone in which my relationship with Jesus and your relationship with Jesus might find their basis in different ideas and activities.

Some of our hymns almost take on the tone of a romance novel - using the same sort of expressions and emotions that we might reserve for our spouse or the one we hope will one day become our spouse! *“He walks with me and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own...”* for example. The idea seems to be that I share a relationship with Jesus that’s unique to me and him!

Sometimes in reaction to that, it’s easy to go to the other extreme, and make our relationship with Jesus almost aloof and impersonal. After all, as we might rightly respond, Jesus may be my brother (**Heb. 2:11**), but he is also my king and my God (**John 20:28**).

But in reading the gospel, we see a much more complex picture of Jesus’ relationship with his disciples. This comes into greater clarity in the final days of Jesus’ life. In **Luke 22**, as Jesus and the disciples assembled in Jerusalem to share in the Passover meal, Jesus told them in v. 15: *“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”*

The word that’s used there is the word for a longing, or a craving. It’s the same word that is used negatively in the sense of *“the cares of the world... and the desires for other things,”* (**Mark 4:19**). It’s also used to describe a longing for spiritual things – and spiritual connections!

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you... - 1 Th 2:17–18 (ESV)

In Luke 22, Jesus expressed a longing to spend one last evening with those closest to him before he endured the cross. Part of that was because he knew there was a lot they still needed to hear and understand before the events of that night (“Who is greatest in the kingdom?” **v. 24**).

But part of it was a genuine kinship with people who had heard and believed his words when the overwhelming majority had rejected him. He told the disciples in John 15:13:

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what

his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. - Jn 15:13–15

Jesus was their lord and teacher (**13:13**), but he was also their friend. More importantly, he was willing to give his life for them, and for us as well. He didn’t die for an idea or a principle, but for individual souls that he valued enough to seek out and call back into the fold of God.

As Jesus said: *“I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn 10:14–15).*

Jesus extended his love to each one of us individually - not in a customized, specific way that might vary from person to person, but in the sense that the sacrifice of his life is offered for the redemption of anyone and everyone willing to accept it.

The purpose for all of this was that one day, man and God could finally be reunited, to live in fellowship as they had when God walked with His creation in the Garden of Eden. So that we could have a closeness greater than when God sojourned with Israel in the wilderness by way of the tabernacle, or when he made his abode in Jerusalem by way of the temple.

Today, the Lord walks among His people in the church (**Rev. 2:1**), which is his body. It’s a foretaste of a much deeper and close relationship, that Paul predicted in **1 Thes. 4:17**: *“Then we ... will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”*

Paul anticipated that reunion using the same word Jesus used in Luke 22, when he told the Philippians that *“my desire is to depart and be with Christ” (Phil. 1:23).*

Jesus genuinely loves his disciples and desires their presence – so much so that he went *“to prepare a place ... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).*