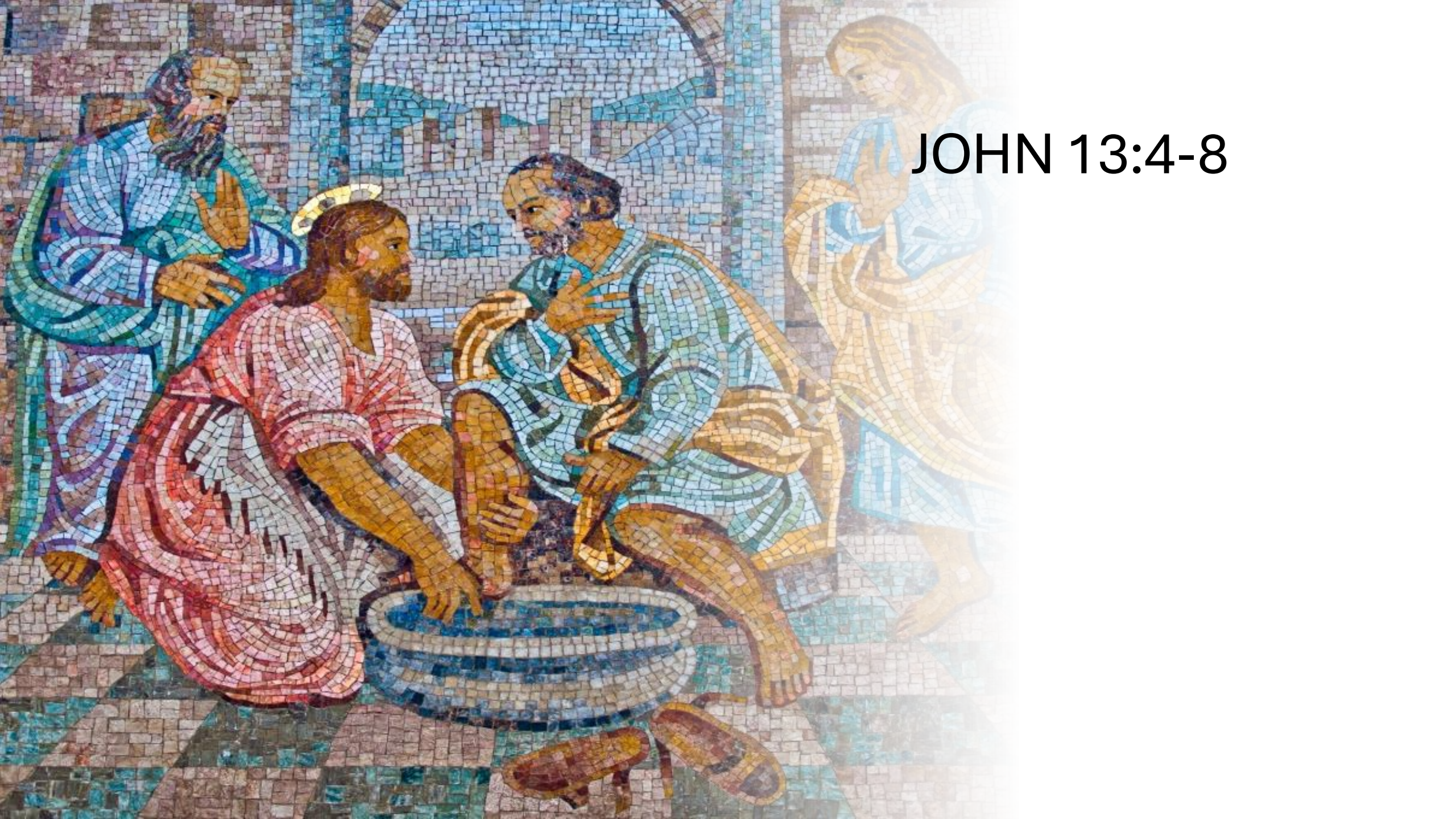


A person wearing a white, flowing robe is walking on water. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a golden glow and shimmering reflections on the water's surface. The person's feet are visible, splashing water as they walk. The overall mood is serene and spiritual.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

PART THIRTY-SIX

The Word of Made Flesh



JOHN 13:4-8

1. Jesus Models Servanthood (vv. 4-8)

a. Jesus reduces himself to the level of a servant; in Greco-Roman contexts, the task of footwashing becomes synonymous with the work of a slave

b. What Jesus does here is important for understanding what he does in the Incarnation (becoming man) and servanthood in general



- i. In this scene, he lays aside his outer garments (better clothes), takes a towel (indicative of a slave), a water basin, and washes the disciples' feet.

- ii. To be noted is that though his actions change, his personhood never changes-- though he is in the role of a servant



iii. This is reflective of the Incarnation (Jesus becoming man) in that he doesn't become someone else in order to take on humanity--he remains the Son of God, but then becomes the solution to humanity's lostness by taking on humanity as his own



iv. He takes on the form of a slave (Phi 2:7), but never ceases to be God. As the God-Man, his divinity remains completely intact, his humanity is real, yet unique and without sin (Heb 4:15).



v. Lessons from Church History

(1) Apollinarianism- Christ was God in a human shell

(2) Nestorianism- Christ was two different people

(3) Eutychianism- Christ's natures were not distinct, but melded together in one blob



vi. All three views were deemed heretical (non-orthodox) at Chalcedon in AD 451. Jesus Christ is forever the God-Man



c. Revisiting servanthood, what Jesus does is also teach us that to serve is not you becoming the act of service you are performing.



i. Just because I wash feet doesn't mean that I am (in my personhood) below those whom I serve

ii. Meaning, my service does not change the nature of who I am

iii. Which also means, I can serve (in Christ) and not worry about being categorized as less of a person



iv. On the flip side, this also means that if I am being served by someone else, this fact does not make me better or superior to them



Interpreting Footwashing (Excurses)

a. Exemplary Interpretation

i. Jesus shows us an example to be followed with a moral implication

ii. It is representative of humble service and self-denial



b. Christological Interpretation

i. Footwashing aligns with Christ's death on the cross and points to the cross prior to its accomplishment



ii. It takes on a spiritual significance referring to Christians having already been cleansed (justified), needing only to be continually washed to maintain the appropriate state of fellowship with the Savior

iii. It is to be applied by being cleansed from daily sin and the affairs of the world, as in 1 John 1:9



c. Sacramental Interpretation

i. Sees the practice of footwashing functioning as sacrament along side of Baptism and Communion or in some way connected to them



d. Arguments for and Against

i. Throughout the rest of Scripture it is only mentioned once in 1Tim 5:10 to refer to one of the expectations of outstanding widows who were supported by the church



ii. Unlike the ordinances of Baptism and Communion, Footwashing has no clear referent to the sacrificial and atoning work of Christ--as a matter of fact, Jesus' explanation to Peter assumes justification for those having their feet washed

iii. Practices throughout Church history have been varied



iv. This does not make footwashing wrong, just not mandatory

v. Because the text seems to point to more than a symbol, but not necessarily a Sacrament, we understand the Christological Interpretation as the correct one



d. Peter's Misunderstanding (vv.6-11)

i. Jesus gets to Peter, and he objects--
my question is, why does Peter wait until
Jesus gets to him to say something?

ii. Yes, perhaps Peter struggles with
the images of unique women having
washed Jesus' feet, and can't fathom
Jesus positioning himself doing such an
act on his behalf



iii. Jesus says, " What I am doing you will not understand now (full stop); this should have been the end of the conversation

iv. Peter then uses the strongest denial one could use in his language (οὐ μὴ), which means, never ever in a trillion years will you wash my feet



v. Is this a noble statement of veneration for his Lord?

vi. Unfortunately, we can't give Pete a hall pass here because this is, after all, the Son of God--by his own confession (Matt 16:18). Would he (Messiah) do anything haphazardly or unintentionally?



vii. How should we best understand this?

(1) It appears to be modesty on the surface, but is really subversive disobedience

(2) Peter, though maybe thrown off by the servant image of Jesus, is really rejecting what God wants to do for him



(3) This is often our failure--where our personal convictions (read traditional beliefs) get in the way of what God wants to do in our lives

(4) We are masters of getting in our own way and hindering the process God has for us to go through.

