

Jesus washes the disciples' feet

John 13:1-17 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

⁸ Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!"

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

This is generally seen as a passage about serving one another. And, at a very face value, it is.

Why did people get their feet washed in the Bible?

- This was part of the custom.
- It was dusty and feet got dirty.
- Generally the servant of the household would wash the guests feet.
- It was always done upon entering the house. First thing.
- It was needed. Otherwise **the outside dirt got all over the inside.**

But what was different here?

- Jesus did not wash their feet when they entered, but actually during the supper.
- **John 13:2** And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,
 - A better translation is "as supper was underway." This is reflected in almost all translations except KJV and NKJV.
- Jesus was the teacher, so He would have the most prestige, but He took the role of a servant by doing this.

The Backdrop of Jesus' Actions

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

- Jesus knew that His time left in person with the disciples was coming to an end. With very little time left, Jesus would only do the most important things. This is one of them.

John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

- Jesus was acting from a place of authority. He knew His identity. He knew that the Father had given Him all things. He knew of His death, but also of His resurrection. He knew the victory that was coming.

This is the backdrop we are given to understand the text. Jesus did this out of love. He did this during the Passover supper, which was an image of Christ as our sacrifice. And He did this in complete authority with a full understanding of the victory that was His.

John 13:4-6 [Jesus] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

- The disciples are caught a little off-guard here, particularly Peter. So it is obvious that Jesus has not done this before.
- Has Jesus taught on servanthood before this?
 - **Matthew 20:25-28** But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
- This was before they had gone to Jerusalem while they were in Judea.

Since Jesus had not done this before, does that mean that Jesus only did this for show? Like He only served them when He was teaching them that they should serve? No, of course not.

But if that's not the case, then there must be something more to what is happening here. The key is in Vss. 7-10

John 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

- Peter asks if Jesus is washing his feet. Jesus responds that what He is doing Peter would not understand until after.
- Obviously Peter would have understood a lesson on being a servant. So we know this is deeper.
- What is this? What comes after that will make it so Peter understands?
- I think Jesus is talking about the upcoming series of events including His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost.
- The first time we see the dramatic shift in Peter is after Pentecost. I think that is where Peter fully understands.

So what is Pentecost all about that would make it so Peter understood, and what was the result of that?

- Baptism of the Holy Spirit – The infilling of the Holy Spirit is what caused Peter to fully understand.
 - **John 16:13** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
- What is the end result of that? – The Creation of the church

By the way – do we ever see the disciples wash anyone's feet? Do we ever hear them teach on that? Maybe there is a lot more to this then.

In fact, concerning serving –

- **Acts 6:2-4** Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

So understanding what Jesus was doing when washing their feet did not lead them to actually was people's feet.

John 13:8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

- Peter recoils at the thought of Jesus washing his feet. Peter is thinking about this in terms of serving and position of importance.
- But Jesus declares that if He does not wash Peter, then Peter has no part with Him.
- Is serving others so important that it can cost us our relationship with Jesus? No. Obviously not. So what is Jesus talking about?
- Salvation. – Only Jesus can save us. And He has to do it. Only He can make us clean. Only He can serve us this way.
 - In fact, Jesus mentions that there is one there who is not saved.
 - **John 13:10-11** Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."
 - It is possible to spend years hanging around Jesus and true followers of Jesus and never make Jesus Lord of your life – as evidenced by Judas.
- You cannot clean yourself. And you can certainly not clean Jesus! Your role is to allow Him to cleanse you. Put your faith in Him.

John 13:9-10 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

- Peter says then that Jesus should wash all of him. Jesus responds that "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean..."
- Old Testament bathing routines – Public Bath houses. But had to walk home in dust.
- Bathed = Saved. We become clean. But now we need our feet washed. What is that about?
- Bathed means bathed. Wash = nipto = ceremonially wash
- **Ephesians 5:26** that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
- Essentially, this is about cleansing off the world from us. Keeping us separate from the filth we collect by walking around in this world.

So Jesus is talking not about physically cleansing feet. He is talking about holiness. Righteousness and sanctification.

He then concludes

John 13:14-15 If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

- Jesus is saying that the disciples should do just as He did.
- But we do not see the disciples ever actually wash anyone's feet.
- And they do not tend to be what we typically define as servants. In fact, when someone was needed to oversee feeding widows and orphans, they outsourced to Stephen.
- The disciples do 2 things (mainly) – bring the Gospel, teach unto maturity.

- Bathing means bringing the Gospel to unbelievers.
- Washing = helping Christians grow in their faith and keep separate from the world.
- This is the serving that Jesus is talking about. Real serving is helping others grow in Christ.
- Sometimes that may look like what we think of as serving.
- Sometimes it will look like teaching, mentoring, counseling
- Sometimes it will look like hugging, encouraging.

Let's look at the way Hebrews says it should look like in the church:

- **Hebrews 10:22-25** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.
- It starts with your own assurance of faith
- Then being washed in the water – Scripture. Keeping the world off us and His Word in us.
 - Remember, they washed feet otherwise the outside dirt got all over the inside
- The considering each other
- Stirring up love and good works
- Coming together
- Encouraging each other