

# *Feet Washing*

## *E Book Textbook*

*With Lessons*

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# Chapter one: Introduction

Since they usually come in pairs, we will refer to this service as feet washing instead of the more popular term of foot washing.

In this little booklet, we will try to examine this rite from Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. We will focus most of the attention on Jesus' washing of the disciple's feet after the meal, as described in John (many believe this meal to have been the Last Supper, John does not state this clearly, which causes many to believe this may have been a different meal, however I believe we shall see that what John does say can point to this being no other gathering than that final meal); we will look at other occurrences also.

We will look at Abraham's offering of water to the Lord and the angels who accompanied Him, at Laban who offered water to wash the feet of Abraham's servants who had come looking for a bride for Isaac, we will look at Joseph's servant offering water to wash the feet of his brothers, we will take a peek at the feet washing commanded by Jehovah under the law and several other places where feet washing is mentioned in the Old Testament – and all this in the next chapter.

Then, we will look at Jesus performing this task for the disciples, other mentions of feet washing in the New Testament along with Early Church fathers who also made mention of this ritual and then we will take a brief look at the tenets of some denominations that practice feet washing as a sacrament, some who just practice it and some who state categorically that it is not a command or a sacrament for the New Testament Church and virtually ignore feet washing.

It is my prayer that by the end of this, if you haven't participated in a feet washing ceremony, that you will seek one out; that if you have, you will push to have another one so others may share in the blessing and mostly that by the end you will have sufficient knowledge to make up your own mind about the place of feet washing in the New Testament Church.

A few things to note about feet washing that you may or may not have heard over the years; and that may or may not be totally true as we have few actual documents discussing feet washing from the time of Jesus, or before, that survive today, excluding the Holy Scripture.

According to one source, the feet were/are considered to be the dirtiest part of the body in many Middle Eastern cultures. How true this may be, I'm not sure, but it is well reported that feet washing was a job given to the lowest of servants and in Jewish culture a Jewish slave could legally refuse to do this chore. And it is also well documented, including the references to feet washing in Scripture, that mostly this was a chore done by the one who owned the feet, though it is reported that on occasion an especially thankful student may have washed his teacher's feet. Except for the account in John 13:1-20 and of those who later followed Jesus' example, there are virtually no accounts of anyone of rank washing the feet of a subordinate.

Many may have a hard time understanding this in an age where we all tend to wear closed shoes with socks and we don't usually share the places we walk with a variety of animals, some being quite large. Animals, as we are all aware of, are not real particular about where they answer the call of nature, thus the roadways where most of the people did their walking, in the ancient world and in some countries still today, were not only used by others to drive herds of sheep and other animals, to ride camels, mules or other beasts on, but they also became the repository for the dung and urine of these animals.

In the time of Jesus and before (and again in some countries and areas yet today) the people did not have closed shoes, they mostly wore open sandals when outside. The sandals were mostly made of a wooden or heavy leather sole with leather or rope straps to hold it onto the feet. As many of us have had the misfortune of discovering, especially back in the days when we did not have to clean up after Fido, one can not always be aware of where they step and mistakes do happen. Add to this mud, dust and sweat and one can see why the feet might be considered the dirtiest part of the body, why only lowly servants were given the task of washing them and why, most often, the water was given to the owner of the feet and they were to wash their own.

So, what might have occasioned Jesus' washing of His disciple's feet; what would have possessed a woman to wet His feet with tears and dry His feet with her hair; why does Scripture not say whether Abraham offered to wash the Lord's feet and what link might there possibly be between the command of Jehovah for the priests to ritually wash their feet and Jesus' telling the disciples, **"...I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."**<sup>1</sup> – These and many other questions will be considered, and some of them possibly answered, in this little booklet.

Feet washing like speaking in other tongues, holy living, living with a servant attitude, good works and grace can be very divisive as it seems everyone has their own idea on what the Lord Jesus might have really meant by His actions. To say that Jesus was a rather controversial figure who taught rather controversial ideas would be a gross understatement. As He said about Himself on one occasion, **"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."**<sup>2</sup>

Though Jesus did and taught many controversial things, and many of them may well cause us to be persecuted by those we thought were close to us, we, as His disciples, can not turn away from what He did while on earth and especially what He taught us while He was here and in the ministry of His Holy Spirit though the apostles after He went to His Father.

Understand this, Jesus is fully God and He was fully man, He was the only person of whom Scripture says was completely filled with the Holy Spirit, His life was completely given over to doing the will of His Father and He was led every step of the way by the Holy Spirit. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit Jesus knew things that were impossible for a normal man to know, He performed miracles that He said came through the hand of God and He did and taught what He claimed the Father had given Him to do and teach. Nothing Jesus did was without reason; nothing He said was idle talk, without merit or not worth taking note of – especially that which the Holy Spirit caused His disciples to write about His life and His teachings.

Think on this, if you knew you only had about three years to deliver the most necessary teachings the world had ever heard and to convince a few people to sacrifice everything to carry those teachings throughout the world; would you waste time or words? I rather doubt this would be the case and I am firmly convinced this was not the case with Jesus; I believe He applied Himself to His job as no other has done before or since. Thus, we can be assured that everything Jesus did was of great value, to His apostles and to every disciple since. Whether we fully understand why He demanded John baptize Him, whether we comprehend the true ministry of His Holy Spirit and accept His baptism or whether we can grasp the message behind His washing of the disciple's feet – of one thing we can be sure, there is no way that those who might say these events have no importance or that

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 13:15

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 10:34-39

their import has passed away are on the right track. Dare we say that anything God did or had penned is without benefit?

So, why did Jesus wash their feet? Some say it was an expression of agape love, some claim it was to challenge the apostles thinking as they had just been arguing about who would be the greatest in His kingdom, some claim it shows that there is forgiveness of sin after our initial cleansing and some attribute it to the humility of Jesus Christ and His desire to teach His apostles, and through them us, to live the life of a servant. We will look at these thoughts and others as we attempt to gain enough insight so that everyone can use the information to decide why Jesus did this. At this point, I will merely reiterate that it was not without reason.

Did this practice of feet washing become common practice in the first century Church? Has the practice continued down through the centuries? Are there many who practice feet washing in today's denominations? According to the Wikipedia article on foot washing; feet washing is mentioned by Tertullian, it is said to have been practiced at the Church at Milan, the rite is also mentioned by the Council of Elvira and by Augustine. It has been associated with the sacrament of baptism in Africa, Gaul, Germany, Milan, Northern Italy and Ireland. Feet washing is part of the Benedictine order as directed by St. Benedictine's rules, as an expression of humility. Some early Anabaptists groups along with the Albigenses, the Waldenses and the Hussites all practiced feet washing for various reasons.

Today one can find feet washing services practiced regularly in the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Byzantine Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Church and among some Protestant groups, including Pentecostals, Pietistic groups, Anabaptists, Baptists, Anglicans, Lutherans and Methodists. And their reasons behind their practice of this service are as varied as the groups themselves.

We will look into some of these groups, some of their reasons for their practices and some other groups and reasons not mentioned in this particular article. We will also look at some articles by those who do not believe that feet washing should be practiced as a sacrament and those that feel that its import was for the apostles at that particular time and is nothing more than an object lesson for Christians today.

In closing this introduction please let me affirm that I respect the intelligence and opinions of all, I may not agree with yours, but I respect your right under the Lord Jesus to arrive at your own conclusions on certain more vague precepts – that is until or unless the Holy Spirit might show us concrete evidence from Scripture, **His truth**; then we are compelled to accept His revelation. So, you who take this as a course will be welcome to add your own opinions to your answers or to answer, with Scripture backing, in a way not considered in the text. I will consider the answer as to how it seems to relate to the given question, not according to my understanding or what may be written in this text. To paraphrase Paul to the Roman Church, I want us to build each other up in the Lord Jesus Christ as we bless each other by teaching one another and learning from one another.

## Chapter two: Feet Washing in Old Testament Times

That the offering of water to wash the feet of visiting travelers seems to be a well established act among the Jewish people, if not all Middle Eastern peoples, can be easily seen in Old Testament Scripture. Examples of feet washing can be found in several books from Genesis through The Song of Songs and show that at least two groups of Middle Eastern peoples practiced this. By reading between the lines, one could assume that this service was provided to any traveler, including strangers, as was the opening of one's home to them and suggests, especially when taking into account New Testament Scripture, that to not offer this service was considered quite rude behavior.

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The first instance of feet washing is found in Genesis 18:4; in context, we read:

**Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."**

**So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. (Genesis 18:1-8)**

Though this mention is quite brief, it does call into question some thoughts, while answering others. First, we can see that water to wash the feet was definitely mentioned, thus showing that this service was known and an established part of Abraham's treatment of guests. What we don't know however is who washed whose feet. Did Abraham provide the service, did the angel's wash the Lord's feet or did everyone wash his own feet?

The sure answer may well not be known until we may ask Abraham or Jesus in glory, but I think the Scripture here may well provide an indication. When speaking to the trio, Abraham addresses himself to only one of them and he calls this One, Lord. According to *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Old Testament* (Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter) this word translated 'Lord' is not just a generic title, but is, "A masculine noun used exclusively of God. An emphatic form of the word *ādōn* (113), this word means literally "my Lord" (Gen. 18:3). It is often used in place of the divine name YHWH..."<sup>3</sup>

Again, the surety of who washed whose feet is not stated, but knowing the humility of Abraham and his absolute faith in God and in who God was, it would seem to me that upon recognizing not just three heavenly guests, but recognizing that one of them was the Lord God Almighty, I think it stands to reason that Abraham would have washed His feet. Carrying this a step further and perhaps relating this to us, we might think on two New Testament passages.

**Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.**<sup>4</sup>

Here one might come to understand that the washing of a guest's feet or other ways of showing hospitality may well be a good thing for us today. Who knows whether the next stranger you encounter may be an angel sent by God to minister to you; and if you are known by God as one who obeys the command to love and shows it by

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<sup>3</sup>Baker, Warren: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : Old Testament*. Chattanooga, TN : AMG Publishers, 2003, c2002, S. 18

<sup>4</sup>*The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Heb 13:2

extending His hospitality in dramatic ways to others, might He not send the angel to bring you a special blessing as He often did for His saints in both Testaments?

If one looks at the life of Daniel, we often see him doing what we might consider extraordinary acts out of faith to his God regardless of what other people thought or did; we might also notice that he was visited by more of God's angelic messengers than any other person in all of Scripture! We might also note that Daniel was referred to as one who is greatly loved of God. Perhaps these extraordinary acts that shout to our world and even our brethren that our faith stands firm in our God, in Jesus Christ, mightn't be just a chance to learn humility and express the love which Jesus commanded us to, but they may well open up spiritual plateaus which many have not climbed to!?

**“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” (Matthew 25:37-40)**

Now, perhaps this ritual, if done out of a pure heart, may well take on an even deeper meaning. Like I assume Abraham did, which of us wouldn't wash the feet of the Lord Jesus?

We seem, in today's churches, to be somewhat reticent about washing another's feet or serving in any way that might be considered humbling, beneath us or our position, yet Jesus says if you do it to the least of His brethren, you've done it unto Him! And doesn't Scripture also say in several ways in several places that God resists the proud but gives of His grace to the humble? Or are we not told that Jesus humbled Himself by coming to earth to live and die as a man? Surely none of us considers ourselves better than Jesus. I don't know about you, but when I consider the rewards to the saints down through the ages, humbling oneself before our God might not be such a bad idea.

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In the very next chapter of Genesis, we see Lot offering this service to the two angels.

**Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.” But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.<sup>5</sup>**

Again, a rather brief notation of the knowledge and practice of this service, but it does show that it is known and performed, at least in the family of Abraham.

What we might note here is that Lot refers to these angels as 'lords' also; and turning again to The Complete Word Study Dictionary (Baker and Carpenter) we see this is the less emphatic usage of the Hebrew word *ādôn*. Of this word they say, “A masculine noun meaning lord or master. The most frequent usage is of a human lord, but it is also used of divinity. Generally, it carries the nuances of authority rather than ownership.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, we might note two things from this; first that the Lord God did not enter Sodom with the angels and secondly that the righteousness of Lot, which some question, is affirmed with his ability to recognize these two while the other Sodomites could not. Were one observant, they might also note that there is something else that seems to

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<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ge 19:1-3

<sup>6</sup> Baker, Warren: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : Old Testament*. Chattanooga, TN : AMG Publishers, 2003, c2002, S. 15

accompany this service of hospitality besides just clean feet, see if you can pick this out from these Scripture texts.

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Still in Genesis, we find that even the wicked man who deceived Jacob concerning his first wife, changed his wages ten times and pursued him when he left to go back to his homeland, Laban, also knew of and practiced this service.

**Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels."**

**Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. Food was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand."**

**And he said, "Speak on."<sup>7</sup>**

Upon noting the gold jewelry which Abraham's servant had given his sister Rebekah and hearing her story, which may well have included the servant's having said that he represented Abraham who had become very wealthy, Laban wastes no time in going to fetch this honored guest. This time, in conjunction with the offered water to wash the feet and that other service which I hope you've noted by now, Laban also unloads the camels and provides food for them. One might wonder at this going over and above the call of hospitality from Laban, but as always, I believe Scripture explains itself by including the fact that all this service was based upon seeing the jewelry and hearing Rebekah's recounting of the meeting with Abraham's servant.

Again, we note two things about Laban. First, we notice that Abraham's relatives that remained in Syria were also familiar with this service of hospitality, showing that if it was not in practice throughout the Middle Eastern peoples, it was at least known and practiced by more than just the Hebrews. Next we might note that Laban was aware of the God of Abraham for he refers to Abraham's servant as 'Blessed of the LORD'. In doing this, Laban uses the proper name of God, what we transliterate as Jehovah, but which Scripture often translates as Lord (with small caps). We might ask how he knew, but that is not the real important thing to note here. The important thing to me when I recognize Laban's awareness of the One True God is that, contrary to the opinion of many, God was known beyond the confines of the Hebrew people, but as it is today, He is not accepted by many. We know this to be true, for when Laban and Jacob make their treaty, Laban swears by the idols of his people while Jacob swears by God.

By now, you may be wondering how all this discussion of 'Lord' has anything to do with feet washing. And my answer is everything! In these first three examples of the performance or offering of this rite of hospitality, we see three different types of people. First, Abraham. Abraham is righteous, he has faith/belief in his God and he obeys the Lord in what He commands. When he sees these men, he recognizes the Lord God among them, he addresses himself to the Lord and from our knowledge of the person of Abraham, we can surely believe that he offered this service of hospitality in complete humble submission to his Lord and his God.

Next, we have Lot. Lot is a righteous man, but he is living among a people who will soon be judged for their gross sin which includes being inhospitable, and we might also remember that though he is called so and must be considered righteous, Lot has a streak of self gratification in him – this can be seen in his choice of the best pasture land when Abraham offers him his choice and even here, after the angels get him out of Sodom alive, he wants more. He is visited by angels, as we are told later, as compensation to Abraham, but note, he does not get a visit from God Himself as Abraham did. Righteous, yes, but perhaps not as closely walking with the Lord as

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<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ge 24:29-33

Abraham was. And might we not consider Lot to be like many in the Church today, who would perhaps offer the water, but will not stoop to wash feet themselves (just a thought)? As we think on this, let us again note who the Lord God came to visit.

And lastly we have dear Laban. Laban is a beautifully ugly illustration of the world. Small, greedy, self-centered and capable of stooping to anything, even the sale of his daughters, to advance his self in the power structure and material wealth of the world. His visitor is the servant of his forefather's brother. His motive for washing the feet is greed. And we can be quite sure he did not humble himself to wash the feet of a servant, note they were not even given place in the house to sleep.

Please think on this very hard: Abraham's reward is not stated (we might assume he laid up treasure in heaven), Lot's reward was his life and the lives of those in the small town he wanted to flee to (a temporary reward at best, but a chance to come to see the truth of 'uncle Abraham's' Lord) and Laban received some measure of earthly, material, goods from the servant of Abraham (that which will be destroyed on that final day, that which would attach Laban more securely to the world and put him more at enmity with God). To paraphrase Joshua, choose this day whom you would like to copy!

I do not believe that God leaves anything to chance and I do not believe that in this book of the beginnings that it is mere coincidence that He has chosen to illustrate three people who represent the declining status of man's relationship to God and the fellowship which the Lord wants with His children by the way and attitude in which they performed what is one of the most controversial and misunderstood actions of Jesus Christ while God dwelt among men. I also don't believe the union of Joseph (a type of Christ), his steward (the servant) and his brothers (the world) in this final example from Genesis is mere coincidence.

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**When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon." Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.**

**Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."**

**When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house, and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."**

**But he said, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.**

**So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.<sup>8</sup>**

The typology and the lessons in this meeting, the second meeting between Joseph and his brothers, is such that one could teach from this passage alone for about a year or so. However, we will attempt to limit ourselves to that which speaks to this feet washing service. As such, we will look a bit at the background of Joseph as a type of Jesus and his brothers as a type of the world, and then we will bring in the steward of Joseph's house (a rather important and high posting in the ancient world) as we note him as a type of the believing servant.

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<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ge 43:16-26

Joseph's brothers had been told that one day he would reign over them and they reacted by selling him into slavery when the chance presented itself. This was a death sentence in this age as slaves were seldom freed and to the brother's way of thinking this action removed Joseph and his dreams of ruling them from the picture; however they did not take God into consideration. In much the same way the world, of which these brothers are a type, when told in Scripture that Jesus would reign over them, rejected Him and put Him to death, believing that to be the end of the matter; again, they did not take God into consideration in their thinking. Just as Jesus is raised to sit on the throne of His Father until He makes everything subject to Himself and then gives all to the Father, so Joseph is raised to be second only to Pharaoh in the kingdom of Egypt.

His brothers have come with no understanding or recognition of who Joseph is in relation to them, much as the world goes about its merry way having no conception of who the real King of this world is. Just as Joseph immediately recognizes his brethren, so does Jesus know every man, woman and child on this earth; and as Joseph was the only means of sustaining life, so Jesus is to the entire world. Joseph, who could have treated his brothers in any way he desired, treats them rather well, even opening his house to them; has not our Lord done the same for all of mankind? Just as the world is when confronted with the grace of Jesus Christ, so Joseph's brothers are confused and frightened, they react from that which is in their hearts, for they know this is how they would have done were they in charge.

Enter the steward, the Church if you will. His master has appointed him to deal with the world, not with arrogance and malice, but with humility and respect. For see, Joseph was once the steward of a great house, but he had to leave the house to learn humility and obedience, to learn that God had this all under control and this was His plan. Jesus had to leave His great house to come to this place and learn also – **“<sup>8</sup>though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. <sup>9</sup>And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,”<sup>9</sup>**

Just as Joseph's steward was given the duty of caring for his brothers, so are we given the responsibility to deal with the world around us. And the way this steward performed can be a good object lesson to each of us; for he obeyed Joseph's every command, no matter how strange it sounded. Would that we would obey Jesus in such a manner!

The steward, after assuring them that any gift they received came to them from the Lord God, first returns their brother to them and then proceeds to treat them with a decency and respect that may well have been surprising considering the circumstances. He gave them water to wash their feet and saw that their donkeys were also cared for; a symbol perhaps, as we will look at in the next chapter, of the purification needed to enter into the master's presence and receive the gifts he would offer.

This steward really should give us some insight into how we ought to behave towards the world. We need to quit shutting them out of the Master's house and instead do what we can to prepare them for entry. Remember, this steward held a high position, he most surely could have commanded other servants to do these chores, also remember that he did not know these men were brothers and that his master's grace would be extended to them in a big way, to him they were strangers. Yet, there is no other servant mentioned and this steward takes it upon himself to not only offer the water to wash their feet, but also to feed their animals – neither of which were express commands from his master. How might an unbeliever react if, when he came to the house of our Lord, we would treat him with this much respect and honor?

Sadly, many are too proud to even offer this type of service to their brothers and sisters, let alone a stranger and a heathen! Personally, I am seeing that these acts of love toward the Master, humility of self and respectful treatment of those we encounter is more than just a ritual that has no meaning. Perhaps if we would begin to

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<sup>9</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Heb 5:8-9

wash the feet of the brethren, we might come to extend hands of love in service to our communities and be blessed with being able to bring them into our Master's presence.

Who do we imagine taught this steward how to treat guests? Joseph who was once over a large house surely had a hand in instructing this man. Jesus has so instructed us in how to treat our brothers and sisters and how to treat the world around us, how dare we write His words and actions off as allegory and object lessons – not to be obeyed or emulated! In regard to this service of feet washing, Jesus says, “<sup>15</sup>**For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.**”<sup>10</sup> This, is one of those hard sayings of Jesus that men like to write off as being for someone else, as being an exaggeration as a form of teaching a principle, or (as is the reaction of many) they just choose to ignore Him. What you do with this is between you and the Holy Spirit, but I am beginning to see where the Master would have us to go with this. Will you permit the Master to instruct you?

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The next mention of feet washing is as part of the ritual for those who would serve as priests before Jehovah, part of the Levitical or Mosaic Law as found in the latter part of Exodus through the book of Deuteronomy. Here we begin to see that a foot washing is not just a hospitality service, but has a more spiritual connotation of symbolizing purification. Might we not realize that the service that Jesus offered to the disciples and which so many now ignore has significance on more than one level? And might we not consider that as we are all priests of this New Covenant that this ‘ritual’ might have an even deeper, spiritual meaning for us?

<sup>17</sup>**Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>18</sup>“You shall also make a laver (basin) of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, <sup>19</sup>for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it.**

<sup>20</sup>**When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. <sup>21</sup>So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.”<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>30</sup>**He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; <sup>31</sup>and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it. <sup>32</sup>Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the LORD had commanded Moses.<sup>12</sup>**

As stated above, the Lord God begins to show us a deeper meaning to feet washing as He moves it from a ritual of hospitality to incorporate a spiritual meaning. We so often credit things to chance, fate, luck, etc. – but nothing happens on this earth without the knowledge of the Lord God, He is the only One capable of taking into consideration each being's actions, permitting free will and still ordering the world so that His divine plan comes to fruition. It is no more chance that the ancient Middle Eastern culture used feet washing as a way to show respect and hospitality then it was that the Roman civilization settled on crucifixion as their mode of execution. Brothers and sisters, when you look around at the way men and devils seem to order life so as to destroy the righteous, do not fear, the Lord our God has taken each and every action into consideration. I would advise each person to commit to memory Colossians 2:14, 15 “**...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it** (the cross).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 13:15

<sup>11</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ex 30:17-21

<sup>12</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ex 40:30-32

<sup>13</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Col 2:14-15

I realize this digresses from the subject, but this is too important for you to understand. This passage is a direct reference to what the Romans and many other cultures did with those they conquered; there is even Old Testament reference to it in Joshua. When an army or nation was defeated, the Romans would often parade the defeated through the streets of Rome. Being slaves now, many walked roped or chained together, some rode in cages where the populace could pelt them with debris but there was a special indignity reserved for the leaders of the country and/or the head of the army – these rode laying on the floor in the conquering heroes chariot with the foot of the conqueror on the defeated necks. They were made into a public spectacle, brought to open shame. Though the devils thought they had thwarted God’s plan when they nailed Jesus to that cross, they found that this was His way to victory and through it He has brought these principalities and powers to open shame.

We may not understand it and it may even be foreign, silly or detestable to our eyes, but God always knows what He is doing and He will always triumph. Just so, He knew what He was doing when He put into the minds of certain people to institute this hospitality ritual of washing the feet of travelers or offering them water to do so.

In and around the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus, Moses is being instructed by God as to how to build the tabernacle. This construction is very important for two reasons: first, it is a replica of the heavenly tabernacle and thus everything in it must be precisely made according to that model (not that this tabernacle on earth was an exact replica, it was but a type); and secondly, nearly every article in the tabernacle pointed to and typified the Lord Jesus Christ (some also spoke to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as we shall soon see). The very duties of the High Priest and the other priests spoke to the heavenly ministry which Jesus assumed, the Spirit He would send to empower His body and the ministry of the Church; dare we assume that this ceremony of feet washing was just thrown in as a whim?

I clearly see with the aid of the Holy Spirit that this ceremony, this ritual which God demanded, is firmly linked with Jesus’ statement to Peter, **“He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”**<sup>14</sup> and to the statement made to both Joshua and Moses, **“Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.”**<sup>15</sup>

We are unclean and we are not capable of cleaning ourselves up enough to approach a Holy God; if it was left there, God would have no recourse but to destroy all of us; instead He made a way. Just as Balaam stood on the mountain and declared that God had proclaimed Israel to be righteous, so Jesus hung on Calvary’s tree and proclaimed that all who would believe in Him would be given His righteousness – until these events however, God provided covering, not cleansing, but covering so that man might enter into the beginnings of fellowship with Holy God.

So, we have the bronze altar upon which sacrifices were to be made so that Israel’s sins might be forgiven and where they also offered ‘fellowship offerings’ to God; this altar represents the cross which Jesus hung on, where He made the ultimate sacrifice for the complete cleansing of our sins, so that we might enter into fellowship with our Holy God.

Problem: Jesus is pure and sinless, how can a sinful man approach this altar, even though it is but a type. Enter God: long before the building of this altar, God institutes a ritual cleansing, first as a rite of hospitality, but then as a type of the cleanliness of Jesus Christ as He instructs Moses to have a bronze basin made to wash in. These priests, which Hebrews tells us were sinful, could typify Jesus and offer sacrifice for the covering of Israel’s sins only by cleansing their hands and feet first; hands being that which performed the sacrifice and the feet being that which brought the sacrifice and sacrificer to the altar. Remember, Jesus walked to the site of His

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<sup>14</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 13:10

<sup>15</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ex 3:5

sacrifice as both. Even beyond this, God is showing mankind that it is He alone who can declare and make us righteous, so that we can approach Him.

Pure, clean water is shown throughout Scripture to be a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, all our sins wiped clean; we still walk in the flesh, we still falter, stumble and fall – we just can't keep ourselves clean. So, God provides – the water of the Word and the Water which symbolized the Author of the Word, His Holy Spirit; if we will constantly cleanse ourselves by these two methods, we will remain clean.

Typology brothers and sisters! As Paul tells us, everything in the Old Testament is there as an example for us today (paraphrased) and as Jesus said, **“Therefore every scribe (one who had understanding of the Old Testament) instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”**<sup>16</sup>

From an article discussing the meaning of different colors and metals in the Old Testament (found on biblebasics.com) we find the idea of bronze being a symbol of that which cleanses; a type found in many passages besides those mentioned. In part the article says: *Bronze in scripture has a connection with sin and with forgiveness. When the Israelites complained and spoke against God and against Moses, God sent snakes into the camp which bit the people. When they sought forgiveness Moses was told to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. The person looking up in faith to the snake on the pole would live. "So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."* Numbers 21:9

*In the New Testament we see the link between this and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14-15*

Can we doubt the hand of God here, who gave us the bronze basin which contained the water which would cleanse these priests; did this not typify His only begotten Son who was not only filled with the Holy Spirit in His fullness, but also imparted the Holy Spirit to all believers?

My brothers and my sisters, as I said in the beginning, we are missing so much of what the Lord has for us when we relegate this most precious and meaningful of remembrances to be naught but an object lesson. I am praying for each one who reads this that the Lord Jesus would begin to open your eyes to see the reality of the lesson He wants you to remember. Can we not understand that nearly every ceremony we, as Christians, celebrate is that which points to the revelation of God to man? Do we actually believe that God's representation on earth in this age, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is not to be recognized in some way? And can we see in the servant of Abraham, the Holy Spirit seeking a bride for the one He represents, or in Abraham who would plead the cause of the unrighteous, or in Joseph who would 'save' his family? Again, brothers and sisters, God does not leave things to chance! Our God is so great that not only does He take everything into account and still institute His divine plan; He has consistently revealed the truth in His Holy Word. As He speaks to the idols and the idol worshipers in Jeremiah, "Show us your ability!" – but they have none.

Yet He who knows the end from the beginning constantly, through the intertwining of Scripture shows us there is but One God. All that was typified in the Old Testament has found fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Author of the New Covenant, and all that is now seen by faith will be fully known when we step into glory with Him.

Understand these two precepts: 1) nothing is by chance and 2) Jesus did not do one thing that did not have profound meaning to us today. Then as we progress through Scripture, looking at this topic, we would need to be blind not to see that this is not just a ritual, but a ceremony which celebrates God who brings cleansing to mankind.

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<sup>16</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 13:52

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The mention of washing the feet is mentioned but four more times in the Old Testament writings. Shall we see if these continue to show the hand of God and the cleansing that He offers?

<sup>20</sup>And the old man said, “Peace *be* with you! However, *let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square.*” <sup>21</sup>So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” <sup>42</sup>So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>7</sup>When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. <sup>8</sup>And David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.”<sup>19</sup>

**I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet, how can I defile (dirty) them?**<sup>20</sup>

The first of these is from near the end of the book of Judges, it deals with the tale of a Levite who travels to get his concubine from her father’s house. The sun begins to set on them as they near a town of the tribe of Benjamin, so they enter to rest. Again, there were very few hotels/motels in this time and place, travelers relied on the generosity of the town they entered or they slept in the fields; and it began to look as if this Levite, his concubine and his servant would have to sleep in the field as no one invited them into their home.

The men in this town were of the same ilk as those in the Sodom which Lot lived in, they too surrounded the home of the old man who invited them to stay with him and they too demanded that this man be turned over to them so they might abuse him sexually. Instead, these immoral men were given the concubine and they abused her with such force that she died. Her Levite man took her home, cut her into pieces and sent her to every tribe in Israel. All the tribes but Benjamin answered the summons and came together at Gilgal, where the ark of God was.

Before going on, I feel constrained to remind everyone of something. The Word of God is not a group of individual verses, chapters and books put together in a random fashion. All Scripture is interlinked, especially when we read passages or stories that have a definite beginning and end. Thus, we can be sure that the mention of feet washing is joined to the rest of this story just as we can be sure that the entire story is related to those which came before it in the book of Judges and indeed it is related to the entirety of Scripture. So, though the foot washing ceremony may seem to not be joined with the rest of this tale, you can be sure it is.

As all of Israel gathered to Gilgal, they prayed and were told that this evil must be cleansed. They sent messengers to their brethren, the men of Benjamin, but they refused to turn these evil men over and instead mustered for war. After further prayer, the Lord told them to attack their brethren; they did. The first two times, the men of Benjamin beat them back and inflicted casualties, but on the third foray the men of Benjamin and the evil town were defeated. Benjamin suffered the loss of some 25,000 men that day, but the cleansing was achieved and the lessons learned.

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<sup>17</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jdg 19:20-21

<sup>18</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Sa 25:41-42

<sup>19</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 2 Sa 11:7-8

<sup>20</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. So 5:3

You should mark this lesson well, sin in the camp will always bring harm to all, even those who try to purge it. Mark also that the Lord our God does not want us to believe that the removal of people from the ranks of His chosen should ever be done lightly as there is always a heaviness in His heart and it will not be done without cost. The most important thing to recall in light of what we are talking of here is, the cleansing of the feet of the servant of God who brought to light this evil is most certainly linked to the cleansing which was necessary in the tribe of Benjamin.

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In this next lesson, we see God preventing His servant David from seeking vengeance for another's rude behavior and then providing for the cleansing Himself. We might also note a beautiful portrayal of the Holy Spirit in this woman, Abigail; again we might see that this ceremony often speaks to and about this third Person of the Holy Trinity.

A course and foolish man named Nabal has a large flock of sheep which he is pasturing in the same area where David and his men have chosen to hide from King Saul. While his shepherds have dwelt there, David and his men have not only chosen not to help themselves to any of the flock, but they also have protected the men and the flock from both human and animal raiders. When David hears that Nabal is sheering his sheep, he sends some men to request a boon, a gift, during this time of celebration. Nabal not only refuses, he castigates David and his men. David swears vengeance and comes down from his mountain hide-away with 400 armed soldiers to teach Nabal a lesson.

In the meantime, one of Nabal's servants goes to his wife, a godly woman named Abigail, and tells her of her husband's folly. She immediately gathers food and drink to take to David; she meets David coming down off the mountain to slay her husband and all his men. She persuades David to stay his hand in one of the most beautiful and eloquent portrayals of how the Holy Spirit of God speaks to the hearts that are attuned to Him in all of Scripture. The next morning when her husband is sober, she tells him how close he came to death at the hands of David, but for her intervention. Her husband, Nabal, falls into a coma and a short time later, he dies; the Bible makes it quite clear that the Lord brought both of these about.

When David hears of her husband's demise, he sends men to ask her to become his wife. Abigail responds by saying, "**Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.**" This in itself is a wonderful portrayal of the Holy Spirit who cleanses the servants of the Lord Jesus just as this lovely woman consented to cleanse the feet of David's servants.

Note that there is never any conflict within the Holy Trinity, they are never jealous of one another and each is quite willing to take the role of servant to one another and to mankind – would to God that we would let His Holy Spirit so indwell us to make us act in a like manner.

Dare we not offer this cleansing water, which so symbolizes the precious Holy Spirit, to those for whom Christ died to redeem?

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Again, remembering that the mention of the ritual is closely linked with the story itself, we look at one of David's greatest sins; the adultery with the wife of one of his mighty men and the eventual murder of that mighty man of valor at the hands of the Ammonites.

David stays home during 'the time when kings went out to war' and one evening, from his palace roof, he sees a beautiful woman bathing. After inquiring about her, he discovers who she is and that she is married; instead of turning away, David brings her to the palace and has intercourse with her. A short time later, she sends to

inform him that she is pregnant. David devises a plan to get her husband home so he can sleep with her and hopefully believe the child is his. The husband, Uriah, does not act according to David's plan, even when David gets him drunk; so David resorts to plan B and has this man murdered in a manner that could look as if Uriah was a casualty of war.

God is never fooled and He is not to be mocked. He sees that this crime is brought to light and that judgment falls on David.

One might ask how cleansing and/or the Holy Spirit can be seen here.

Not only did David not offer this cleansing to Uriah, but he sent him to his home to obtain the cleansing. David did not understand that the Holy Spirit is not in the practice of aiding in the covering up of sin, thus cleansing was not to be had. Cleansing would have signified that all was well, but all was very far from being well. Uriah's refusal to go to his wife led to his murder, but the significant thing is that this led King David to see his capability to do evil, to his repentance and to his deeper understanding of the Lord His God.

Read David's psalm of repentance and see his new understanding of sin and cleansing:

**Have mercy upon me, O God,  
According to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.  
For I acknowledge my transgressions,  
And my sin is always before me.  
Against You, You only, have I sinned,  
And done this evil in Your sight—  
That You may be found just when You speak,  
And blameless when You judge.  
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.  
Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,  
And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Make me hear joy and gladness,  
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.  
Hide Your face from my sins,  
And blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners shall be converted to You.  
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
The God of my salvation,  
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.  
O Lord, open my lips,**

**And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.  
For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it;  
You do not delight in burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,  
A broken and a contrite heart—  
These, O God, You will not despise.  
Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;  
Build the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,  
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;  
Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.**  
**The New King James Version: Psalm 51**

Can any read this Psalm and doubt that David came to a deeper understanding of the workings of God Almighty and His cleansing agent, the Holy Spirit? Note that David does not want God to take His Holy Spirit away, for it is He who makes us aware of our need for cleansing.

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The final mention of this very precious ceremony in the Old Testament is in Solomon's Song of Songs. Many, including me view this love sonnet to have a representation beyond that of Solomon and his woman; we see this as representing God's relationship to His chosen, whether that is Jehovah and Israel or Jesus Christ and His Church. And there is no more beautiful way to help us to open our eyes to the deep significance of this ceremony than to show us it in this light.

In this passage the beloved of the Lord is taking rest, much as Israel seemed to rest in the assurance of Jehovah's love and care for them. The Lord comes knocking, seeking for fellowship and aid from His beloved, but she refuses. She has disrobed, she is comfortable in her bed and she is cleansed; must she touch what is unclean to approach her Lord?

Could Israel touch the unclean Gentile at the behest of her Lord, can we touch the unclean heathen when our Lord beckons?

She rejects the summons of the Lord and He departs. She then repents and rises, only to find Him gone. Now, it is she who must go in search of Him and in her search she is wounded by those who watch over the city/kingdom.

Oh, beloved, can you not see the Gospel here. How the Lord Jesus woos us and all too often we feel we are clean enough and comfortable, so we reject Him. Then it is up to us to seek Him out, and that can be costly, but He is always to be found by those who will seek Him in earnest and as this woman discovers, the rewards are worth the injury we might suffer.

Know my brothers and sisters; the love of God toward mankind is not enough to bring about cleansing, the cleansing of that the purification rituals of religion offer are not sufficient to make us clean in His sight, the comfort gained by fellowshiping with brothers and sisters is not the rest we need and the touching of that which we may consider unclean is often necessary to truly have an encounter with the Lord of Glory.

Just as this woman had to get out of her comfort zone and diligently seek her Lord at a cost to herself, so must we too. For the end of this equation is each of you! The love of God is extended, but you must seek Him; the cleansing Agent is there for you, but you must come after Him and not attempt to replace the Holy Spirit with any man-devised method of cleansing; and the fellowship of brothers and sisters is great, but if God is not

present, then church becomes nothing but a social gathering. Seek God diligently and He will be found; seek Him with all your being and everything else will be added unto you.

I would challenge each reader to stop at this break and read this Song of Songs with meditation on what has been offered here and with a prayer to the Holy Spirit of the Lord God Almighty that He might open the windows of your soul and breathe His cleansing into you so that you might see your need of His constant companionship. Remember in this age of grace, it is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to us and in us of the reality of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter three: Prelude to Jesus Washing the Feet of His Apostles

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. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 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. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

**The New King James Version: John 13:1-6**

Though it will only be as the Holy Spirit speaks it that I intend discuss any of the several doctrines that come from this portion of Scripture, I do want to reaffirm that this is one of those very controversial issues/passages. I like to refer to them as 'the hard sayings of Jesus', those that we must spiritualize or in some way soften the meaning of, or we may be compelled to act more like He did. I will say this from the beginning, this washing of the apostles feet should speak to us on so many levels that the only doctrine we might find to be totally in the wrong is that which would ignore this practice or write it off as an object lesson.

As stated in the introduction, because John does not specifically say this is that final Passover meal, commonly called 'The Last Supper', some want to argue the fact. Though much of what John says here might dispel this nonsense, verse two should suffice to convince all but the most argumentative, "**And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,...**" If we would but read the Synoptic Gospel accounts we might easily see that satan is declared to enter the heart of Judas and convince him to betray the Son of Man during the supper, after Jesus assures him that He is aware of the planned betrayal. The first verse assures us this is a Passover meal and the multitude of verses after this passage also indicate this was Jesus' last meal with His apostles, for they bring us immediately to His agony in the Garden, His arrest, trials, crucifixion, resurrection and appearances to those chosen to see Him reborn. So, let us disregard this fable!

Jesus Christ was more content with Himself than any other man who has ever lived. He knew from an early age who He was and what His mission entailed. John tells us in an earlier chapter that Jesus was the One upon whom the Holy Spirit descended upon and remained upon in the fullness of His power, thus indicating that it was in fact Jesus who first received the Baptism of/in the Holy Spirit. Those who have been aware of the Holy Spirit's leading know how easy it is to accomplish a coming task with a faith that we can only wish were always ours. Unlike us, Jesus walking in the fullness of submission to the Holy Spirit from the moment He rose out of the Jordan when John baptized Him; we tend to fight Him instead of fully submitting to Him. We seem to desire to disavow the fact that God is the ultimate servant, for that might force us to act the same. Thus, one of the first things we might note about this ceremony is that Jesus was and wants us to be completely confident in our position in God's kingdom, in our ministry and in the power of His Holy Spirit.

He knew His hour of death had come, but the essence of God still controlled Jesus, He was still ruled by His love. He would love those whom the Father had given Him until the end of His life and indeed He will love us all until the end of the age and throughout eternity. Understand that John does not mention the love of Jesus first because, as many 'label' him, he is the apostle of love; he mentions this because love is the essence of God

Almighty, this then is the essence of His Son and this is the essence of the Holy Spirit whom John claims comes to mankind from both of them – but then they all are One. This is the essence, the holy seed He deposits in each of us, agape love.

Also understand that love is that which motivates God and us to submit, to trust and to serve. We tend to look at Jesus as a servant (mostly of His Father), but He served mankind just as His Father did and just as the Holy Spirit does; indeed the Holy Trinity has served mankind since creation, for what was the act of creation if not a commitment to serve. I do pray that you meditate on that and let the Holy Spirit open your eyes to see God as your servant. But loving, submitting and serving is not enough for the Master, He must teach us to do the same.

Thus Jesus, in full knowledge of who He is, where He came from and where He is returning to (not to mention the understanding of the way in which this would be accomplished) rose from the supper and taught us a lesson. He laid aside His outer garment, girded Himself with a towel (a sort of apron), poured water into a basin and proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples/apostles (I say that as no one else is mentioned as being there and disciples and apostles is often interchangeable in the gospel accounts).

The Lord of Glory, the Incarnation of God Almighty, He who is King of kings and Lord of lords took upon Himself the duties of the lowest of servants, the hospitality ritual that had been denied Him by so many, the cleansing rite that was mostly consigned to the owner of the feet, God Himself performed upon these twelve men. Though we will consider more of the why in the next two sections of this passage, we may want to begin to open our thoughts, our hearts, our minds to the Holy Spirit now. We can be assured of the one thing I want to make sure you catch, if you understand nothing else, understand that this action of Jesus was not without deep significance.

As we turn now to look at this beginning from a doctrinal standpoint, we look at the awe, the absolute inability of Peter to conceive that Jesus would wash his feet. This in itself shows us that this was something that was not common, in fact it seems to be unheard of. It seems to be so foreign to their comprehension, that Peter (ever the outspoken one) is so confused by this action that his first response is wonder, as if his mind is just so boggled that he doesn't know how to respond. This might be paraphrased as the Living Bible put it, "**When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, 'Master, you shouldn't be washing our feet like this!'**"<sup>21</sup> Stupefaction might best define the response of the disciples as exemplified by Peter's questioning. And this leads us to consider...

Doctrinal consideration: Jesus Christ portrays the humble servant.

Many consider this is the lesson and thus the impact of the ceremony/action/ritual which Jesus performed upon the apostles. To these, Jesus sought to teach His disciples, including we who have come to Him after His death and resurrection, that we are to be humble servants; this, to them, is the beginning and ending of this performance.

They use the teaching Jesus often brought to His disciples, but made very clear when James and John asked to sit at His sides when He came into His glory, as an illustration. They claim that as this event had just happened as they came to enter Jerusalem and that a similar discussion took place during The Last Supper, concerning which of them would be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom, that Jesus used this as a springboard and chose to teach His disciples a lesson in being humble and serving others.

As we will see when we discuss other doctrinal asides, I think most tend to grasp one facet of the truth and become blinded to all others; or as a common cliché in America declares, 'we fail to see the forest for the tree'.

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<sup>21</sup>Taylor, Kenneth Nathaniel: *The Living Bible, Paraphrased*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House, 1997, c1971, S. Jn 13:6

We severely limit God when we decide to only accept one part of what He has for us; the truth of God is so deep that we can't believe we can understand it from but one side, one man's conception of it/Him. If we focus too firmly on the single aspect, we often are blinded by it from seeing the deeper truths that are reserved for those who want to dig deeper and know more about the Lord Jesus. But let us look at this action of Jesus first from the standpoint of a lesson in being a humble servant.

As noted in the introduction, this was a chore usually given to the lowest of servants and was in fact considered so menial that a Jewish servant could legally refuse to perform this task. This again refers back to what the men and women of Palestine would encounter while they tread the roadways. Surely this was not a pleasant task, but one that Jesus took upon Himself to perform. It was the task of a lowly servant, or the responsibility of the owner of the feet to perform, thus at least a part of the lesson had to be a strong visual lesson on being a servant. We also must consider that in Luke's discussion of The Last Supper, there is a section which deals with the disciples arguing over who would be the greatest (see Luke 22:24-30). Perhaps Jesus was giving another lesson on humility and serving; this one with a very strong and easily remembered visual display.

We must also consider that it is highly likely, though there is disagreement that Jesus also washed the feet of His betrayer, Judas. Disregarding the controversy let us merely consider the implications of Jesus having washed Judas' feet in light of Jesus as mankind's servant. Paul states, **“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”<sup>22</sup>** There is no respecting of personage with Jesus and as is stated in Ezekiel, God has no elation in the death of anyone. He wants us to live; so it is that perhaps Jesus extended His mercy and love in service to even Judas, even when He knew Him to be His betrayer. The implication for us is that we must do the same, we must emulate our Lord and Master, for that is His command. We too must 'wash the feet' or treat with respect and love those whom we may consider to be our enemy.

We must not fail to consider all of Scripture that we can recall and ask the Spirit to bring to remembrance even more that might relate to this ceremony. One thing that comes to mind is that the disciples of Jesus, like most of the Israelites, fully expected the Messiah to be a conquering hero; they expected that Jesus would raise an army and overthrow the Roman oppressors, the hypocrisy of the religious hierarchy and the hedonism of Herod and his followers. **“Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. <sup>12</sup>Therefore He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. <sup>13</sup>So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ <sup>14</sup>But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this *man* to reign over us.’**

<sup>15</sup>**“And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. <sup>16</sup>Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ <sup>17</sup>And he said to him, ‘Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ <sup>18</sup>And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ <sup>19</sup>Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’**

<sup>20</sup>**“Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. <sup>21</sup>For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ <sup>22</sup>And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.**

<sup>23</sup>**“Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?”**

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<sup>22</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ro 5:6-8

<sup>24</sup>“And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.’  
<sup>25</sup>(But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) <sup>26</sup>‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>27</sup>But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.’ ”<sup>23</sup>

Notice that parable deals with a soon to be crowned king dealing with servants, giving them instructions and the means with which to prosper his holdings until he returns, crowned king. As with all Scripture there is always deeper truth. Not only does Jesus want us to realize that His crowning did not take place until He went to His Father, that the kingdom will not be fully instituted until He makes the return trip; but He also wants us to realize that there is work that needs to be done while He is gone and this work is the work of those who commit to Jesus as servants. By the same token, a great part of the feet washing Jesus performs for the disciples has implications of being a humble servant that shine forth without the need to look very deeply; the deeper truths here will come to us also, never fear!

We all would like to see the kingdom of Jesus to come into being, yesterday! And we would all like to have lives full of the goodness which the world offers; money, good friends – a comfortable existence, but this is not what we are promised by Jesus later on in John’s Gospel. We find there, as in The Sermon on the Mount and many other places, Jesus promises that the world will hate us and pretty much do to us as they did to Him. We also find in the latter part of John and many other places Jesus telling us to serve people as He did.

This is not to be our home, we are not to get comfortable here; our home is with Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Savior, our soon and coming King! We are to suffer with Him here, part of which means the forgoing of many material things that could be ours if we worked for other than the Lord; but our treasure is not to be found here where it can and will be destroyed. Our treasure is to be in heaven where moth and rust will not destroy and the thief can not steal. And how do we acquire this type of treasure? We offer up good works, we build on the foundation of Jesus Christ who came to serve all; we offer to wash the feet of even those who have abused us, whom we might consider enemies to us and to the kingdom of God. We are commanded by Jesus and shown in Him that we are to commit ourselves to serving mankind as He did, yet we balk at even ‘humbling’ ourselves to wash the exceedingly clean feet of a brother or sister in the Lord. How my friends do we propose to reign with Jesus if we fail to serve, to take up the cross, to suffer with Him?

**For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building.** <sup>10</sup>According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup>For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup>If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.<sup>24</sup>

Just as Jesus suffered great indignity to bring us to salvation, as He viewed the reward, the glory which came about as a result of His humiliation and thus deemed it/us worth the cost, so we too must look ahead, past the mocking, the persecution and even the martyrdom to the glory which awaits us, if we serve as our Lord did and taught us to do. Though the washing of the feet of others may be seen as a mere ceremony or ritual, it is commanded by Jesus for good reason. May it not show that we too must humble ourselves before all mankind and offer willing service as He did?

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<sup>23</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Lk 19:11-27

<sup>24</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Co 3:9-15

## Practical application: What can we learn about being a humble servant?

I realize that some practical application has been spoken to above and that these headings tend to overlap, but that seems to be part of my nature and the nature of Scripture as all of it tends to intertwine and speak to one great truth; God is! I do want to do a bit of practical application with each reason that I have discovered and which others believe to be the truth behind why Jesus performed this ceremony of washing the feet of the apostles/disciples.

I feel it is necessary to relate all teachings to ourselves first, for if we don't, we tend to become finger pointers, like the Pharisees. If we will relate it to ourselves though, we promote growth into the deeper understanding and seeing of Jesus Christ; and isn't that what we should all seek? So, this time and with each 'understanding' of why Jesus washed the disciple's feet, I will try to come up with 2 – 3 other passages which teach the same principle and/or build upon it so we might all mature a bit in Christ Jesus – no matter how near learned we might consider ourselves.

First, let us look at Jesus as our High Priest and ourselves as the priests who serve under Him. **“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup>He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. <sup>3</sup>Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. <sup>4</sup>And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.”<sup>25</sup>**

One of the main jobs of the High Priest was/is to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people; Jesus did this once and for all time. Those priests under him were to aid him in offering sacrifices, bring the sacrifices to him and sometimes to offer sacrifices themselves, for the people. They were servants of the High Priest, but in fact they served the people by offering aid to him as he served the people. That is what we are to be doing as priests of Christ Jesus our Lord. We are to be offering the various types of sacrifices to the Lord, for the people, just as the priests under Aaron were instructed to aid Aaron in serving the people. Make no mistake; the sacrificial rituals instituted by the Lord God through Moses did not make for an easy task. Imagine laboring as a butcher all day, every day. This beloved, is service with a capital 'S'.

While we are here thinking, let us ponder some of the types of sacrifice these under priests aided in or performed and how they might relate to we who serve under our great High Priest, Jesus. They were responsible for bringing the sin offerings to the High Priest; can we see that we should be bringing people to Jesus for repentance of sin, including brothers and sisters? They offered fellowship offerings; should we not be bringing the people into a place of fellowship with the Lord? They offered praise offerings; should we not be first in leading the people in praise and worship? They were responsible for the sacrifice of peace offerings; what a privilege it is to restore a brother or sister to the peace of Christ Jesus or to lead an unbeliever to the altar, which is Jesus, so that they might offer their sacrifice of repentance and find peace. And they were responsible for the preparation of the Passover lambs, which were a portrait of Jesus our Passover Lamb who causes death to pass over we who trust in Him; again, what a privilege it is to help move one from death to life and/or to serve them in remembering this in communion. Every Christian is called to be an under priest to Christ Jesus and that means our main job is to serve the people, including the Church, as we give aid to our beloved High Priest.

Paul tells us to follow him as he follows Christ, in serving God. Jesus said He did not come to do His will, but the will of He who sent Him. He also said that every work that He did was at the behest of His Father, Jesus just emulated His Father. We are to emulate Jesus; we too are to serve God by serving His creation, all mankind.

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<sup>25</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Heb 5:1-4

**“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.<sup>26</sup> Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.<sup>27</sup> And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”<sup>26</sup>**

**“Let your waist be girded and *your* lamps burning;<sup>36</sup> and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.<sup>37</sup> Blessed *are* those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down *to eat*, and will come and serve them.<sup>38</sup> And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.<sup>39</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.<sup>40</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”<sup>27</sup>**

**If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.<sup>28</sup> 1 to follow one who precedes, join him as his attendant, accompany him. 2 to join one as a disciple, become or be his disciple. 2A side with his party.<sup>29</sup> What we want to look at here is that this word follow indicates joining up as a disciple; and a disciple is one who learns from the Teacher, goes out and does what He does and shares the teaching with other. Service!**

**But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.<sup>30</sup>**

Over and over, we are called upon, commanded and demanded to serve the Lord Jesus, to become His disciple, to serve the Lord our God as Jesus did, to emulate Jesus in every way and to only follow His disciples as they follow Him. There should be no doubt as to whom Jesus came to serve, His Father and the people – and He served the Father by serving His children. We too have been commanded to serve Jesus, as He served the Father. Is there any doubt as to how we should do this?

**For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.<sup>14</sup> For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”<sup>31</sup>**

**But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, *their* wives *must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.<sup>12</sup> Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.<sup>13</sup> For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.<sup>32</sup>**

In case there is any doubt brethren, here we are told clearly whom we should serve. We are to serve mankind, just as Jesus did. And lest you get to thinking that this is limited to Church brethren, ask yourself if you, in all

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<sup>26</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 20:25-28

<sup>27</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Lk 12:35-40

<sup>28</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 12:26

<sup>29</sup> Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G190

<sup>30</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ro 7:6

<sup>31</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ga 5:13-14

<sup>32</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Ti 3:10-13

truth, can predict who will be one of God's chosen? Thus we serve all as the Parable of The Good Samaritan taught us. Jesus' love did not come with limits and if that is what flows in us through His Holy Spirit, our love will have no limits.

The point here however is that we, of all mankind, should be servants. We claim that we knelt to become disciples of Jesus Christ, we claim that we are saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost, but when it comes time to serve we offer excuses; that is if we can even be found. Jesus, in perfect humility knelt and bathed the feet of each disciple and dried them with a towel or apron He had girded Himself with. Perfect humility is knowing full well who you are and what you deserve, laying it aside and performing the job of the lowest of servants. This is what Jesus did for us; this is how He expects us to do for all our fellow man.

Feet washing is to take upon ourselves the attitude and role of a servant, but it is also to understand that in the preaching of the kingdom, in the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no task that should be beneath us. We must give all that is asked of us and then a bit more. As the apostle Paul said, "I have become all things to all men so that I might save some." Can we do otherwise?

We will discuss this in greater depth in later chapters, but I want you to begin to see what the Lord opened my eyes to see. I want you to begin to look at feet washing not as a ritual, a ceremony or even a sacrament; I want you to elevate feet washing, in your minds, to a place near to communion. I want you to ponder the idea of the priests having to cleanse their feet and hands before they served the people, I want you to apply that to yourselves and I want you to see not only the Person of Jesus who brought total cleansing to each of us as He wiped our slate of sin clean, but also the One who continues to keep us clean from the daily wrongs we do.

The Holy Spirit daily convicts us, leads us to the paths of righteousness and helps us to walk the narrow way that leads to life by showing us the truth of Jesus. I firmly believe that the institution of this ritual from the time of God moved it from a mere hospitality rite is confirmed in Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet as being a 'type' of the Holy Spirit and His ministry in, for and through us. We are to see and understand who He is who cleanses us for service!

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## Chapter four: Jesus Interacts With Peter Over Feet Washing

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

**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.”**

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

**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.” For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”<sup>33</sup>**

Peter has a habit of speaking out of turn which usually led to a lesson that is a help to all disciples from all ages; this is just one more example of that happening. We want to look at each of the verses of this exchange between Jesus and Peter closely, but first let's just get a quick overview of what is happening.

Jesus speaks, probably to the entire group, though it is a reply to Peter's question; He tells them that though they can't yet comprehend what He is doing, they will at a later time. Peter declares that Jesus will not be the one to wash his feet, and Jesus responds by telling Peter that if He doesn't wash his feet, then Peter will have no part in Jesus. To which Peter responds, then wash all of me! Jesus then tells him that the washing of the feet will be sufficient to make him totally clean. He then makes an allusion to Judas Iscariot by declaring that they were clean, but not all of them; John makes the connection for us by explaining that this was said in relation to His betrayer.

This is where the text gets very interesting and leaves the door open for several different conceptions as to why Jesus performed this task. We will look at each verse quickly, then put them all together again and discuss this washing of the disciples feet by Jesus Christ in a bit more detail to see where some of these understandings might stem from. Keep aware though that much of Scripture speaks to different people on different levels and indeed can and does speak to an individual on different levels as the Holy Spirit sees that one is able to grasp more truth. What we want to do here and everywhere in Scripture is to grasp as much truth as we possibly can.

**Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”** Jesus' statements here in verse 7 and in the next verse clearly show that this was no ordinary feet washing, nor was it a simple lesson in humility. There is something going on here that is beyond the comprehension of the disciples at this time and as Jesus has already disciplined them concerning their not-so-humble attitudes, several times, this is surely not what He is alluding to.

**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 responds, quite possibly in recognition of Jesus' elevated ranking among them, by telling the Lord that He won't be the One to wash Peter's feet. Peter had a habit of making rather rash statements and of telling Jesus what He could and couldn't do; if we will recall Peter telling Jesus that He would not go to Jerusalem to suffer and die, we have both of these character traits again displayed in one statement. As He rebuked Peter then, so Jesus rebukes him now by telling Peter that if He does not wash his feet, then Peter will have no part with Jesus.

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<sup>33</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 13:7-11

This should indicate to every reader that something very important is taking place here. Surely, as stated above, this is no rite of hospitality, no mere cleansing ritual and not merely a lesson in humility. Whatever this ceremony entails at other times, this time it is different, to not partake of it excludes any disciples from having their part with/in Jesus. Can it be that this is still true?

As the Holy Spirit is often seen to be passed through the laying on of hands, can it be that this feet washing ceremony has the ability to pass some grace onto those who receive this yet today? **“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,<sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**

**<sup>18</sup>And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,<sup>19</sup> saying, “Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”<sup>34</sup>**

Could not one understanding of this be that Jesus, who would send the Holy Spirit to live in us and do His cleansing and changing of us into His likeness, be illustrating this same Holy Spirit in this ceremony? Could it not be that we are to continue this ceremony not only as a means of celebrating the Holy Spirit’s cleansing of us, not only to think on or instill these other virtues we have and will speak to, but that something actually happens during this ceremony. Many say the same sort of thing about water baptism, but I say that nothing we are commanded to do is without merit and Scripture surely tells us that a definite work of grace happens to those who are truly baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity:

**What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.<sup>35</sup>**

**For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.<sup>36</sup>**

***There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.<sup>37</sup>***

**There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,<sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.<sup>38</sup>**

As we see here that water baptism is important as it baptizes us into the death of Christ Jesus, that it is to put on Christ and become one in the family of God, that it is mentioned in this group of necessary ‘ones’ which control our salvation and that Peter in fact says we are saved through baptism – can we not accept that the ceremony which Jesus tells Peter will decide whether he has a part in the King of kings or not is also of great importance?

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<sup>34</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ac 8:14-19

<sup>35</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ro 6:1-4

<sup>36</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ga 3:26-29

<sup>37</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Eph 4:4-6

<sup>38</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Pe 3:21-22

Or that the command to the apostles to continue the practice was not a mere suggestion or simply a way to instill a humble spirit in them? For if one is not humble before washing the feet of the saints, they won't be humble afterwards either; just as a sinner can be baptized and still come out just a wet sinner, so a proud man can wash the feet of a saint and walk away proud that he humbled himself.

Sadly, there are those who choose to ignore this verse wherein Jesus tells Peter of the importance of permitting Him to wash his feet because it does lend a solemnity to this ceremony that transcends what they choose to accept. Just as Jesus told John there was a reason He was to be baptized in water, something we don't fully comprehend as I know of none who have done a Holy Spirit guided study on it, so also this ceremony has a spiritual meaning that goes beyond what most choose to accept. Instead of limiting or ignoring what the Lord is doing shouldn't we assume that the Lord of Glory has within Himself layer upon layer of knowledge and that He would offer it to us in such a way that we can peel back and reveal new layers of understanding for ourselves for as long as we live?

Take this dare: Choose any parable you like. Tonight, spend ten minutes in prayer to ask the Speaker and Author (Jesus and the Holy Spirit) to reveal to you deeper truth, read the parable and then spend 10 more minutes thanking the Lord for His goodness. I will guarantee that if you do this, you will see a layer begin to peel away and a revelation will come to you.

I wrote a daily devotional for over a year and I was often asked how I can come up with new material every day. I tell them as I would tell you, I pray nearly every day that the Lord would open my eyes to see new truth, to give me wisdom, insight, understanding, knowledge and perception beyond my human abilities, that He would show me what He wants me to know and learn so that I might first apply it to my life (always remember that the lesson is for you first – then once you master it, you can share it), that I might hide this truth in my heart so I do not sin against Him and that I might then share it with others so that they too might grow in His knowledge and grace – all this for the honor and glory of my Lord and God. I have never once read my Scripture reading after uttering that prayer and had the Lord not shown me several things! I have tablets filled with His insight and He just keeps building on them. Never fall into the belief that you have all He has for you, 'cause that will never happen. Sorry for the digression, but this is another very important point.

What you need to grasp here in light of this teaching on feet washing is that something over and above what could be grasped by the disciples was taking place and as most of the teachings we will look at where this ceremony is 'explained' offer easily understood precepts, we must assume it is something supernatural. And again, I am convinced by the Spirit that this ceremony speaks clearly to His ministry in and through the saints.

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

One must give Peter credit, he wanted more of Jesus. Just as in the boat when he was the only one to ask Jesus to invite him to walk on water, so here too Peter wants more and asks for it. 'Hey, if washing my feet gives me a part in You, then it stands to reason a complete bath will give even more. Here I am Lord, wash me!' I think Peter exhibits an attitude that is sadly lacking in many Christians today. He wanted more of what Jesus has to offer and he was not afraid to ask for it. He may have gotten rebuked and disciplined, but he always came away with a better understanding of the Messiah and through Him of the Father.

Would that we all would go after Jesus with the diligence and the fervor that Peter did. Would that we would be unafraid to ask questions and maybe even make some rash statements, for at least we would be seeking Him. And would that we would accept the rebuke and the discipline in order to come to know Jesus Christ better as we can trust that He would reveal Himself to us and though knowing Jesus in a more intimate manner we would realize that we were seeing the heart of the Father. Being content in Jesus is just another word for being apathetic, He wants those who will sacrifice all to know Him – Are you one who will do that? Trust me, it is risky and mistakes will be made, but with each rebuke, with each disciplinary action of God, comes

understanding of deeper truths, deeper revelation of the Lord God Almighty. His love for you will not permit it to be otherwise.

**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.” For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”**

Peter’s rebuke is mild, but again there is more than one truth in these two statements. The obvious is that Judas, the betrayer, is unclean. But deeper than this is an understanding that contact with the world dirties one and thus requires a cleansing that goes beyond the daily bath. There is also the spiritual comprehension of this, for we are daily to be in contact with the world and it does dirty us.

In today’s world, there is widespread pornography where ever you turn, even the commercials on TV often offer what used to be called ‘soft porn’ and this is but one example of the filth that can cling to us as we still live in fleshly bodies that still have lusts that like to rise up in us. There was risk in the Palestine of Jesus’ day as there has been risk of contamination in every epoch.

We are still commanded to go out into this sewer and share Jesus and just as walking the roads can dirty the feet, so can contact with the people of the world dirty us.

Again, symbolism my brothers and sisters, the ceremony was not put into the mind of Middle Eastern and other peoples centuries ago merely to show hospitality, Jehovah did not make it a practice for the priests just because dirty feet and hands offended Him and Jesus did not perform this upon His apostles so He could show us how humble He was or to make us aware that we sin and will need additional cleansing after His initial saving of us.

I believe this was all pointing to something or Someone else whom Jesus will discuss in the next few chapters as coming to take His place and make us into instruments to be used to convict and convince the world of their need for repentance among other things; this is also a role we all play in the edifying of the Church. By the infusion of the Holy Spirit, we have the ability to bring others a cleansing from the daily contact with the world when they are overcome by it, we can be used to speak to our brethren without rancor and help them to wash the filth off.

We are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to be Jesus to our world as we become more like Him and bring the light that will lead to a soul’s salvation. Do you think that Jesus might not induce us to remember Him with the same sort of ceremony He would ask us to remember His sacrifice of cleansing? Should we not recall the cleansing which the Holy Spirit brings to each of us and uses each of us to bring to our brothers and sisters more often than once a year when we celebrate Pentecost?

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Doctrinal considerations: Jesus is showing that we must receive repeated cleansings as we continue to sin and feet washing as a demonstration of agape love.

By isolating this section, ignoring other text (including part of John’s relating what happens here) and clinging to the traditions of elders – some have considered different theological theories to be the ‘whole truth’, the entire understanding of Jesus’ motivation and John’s cause for writing this.

Again, I feel it pertinent to digress from the main topic this time to insert an understanding that seems to be oft forgotten. John is most certainly the human tool, who was called upon to pen this account, but he is not the true author; the true Author is God the Holy Spirit. Just as He is the true Author of all Scripture, so it is He who must be understood to have directed John in what to write here. All too often I hear and read solid, evangelical ministers using the fact of a human author to explain some reason for including this or that. Now, I accept the

partial truth of this, God often permits preachers and teachers and writers who are under His anointing to include personal insight and/or experience; however God always maintains the final say as to whether it is included as Scripture or not. We must ever understand and fully embrace as fact that He is the final authority when it came to what was written in Scripture – to do otherwise opens the door to ‘higher criticism’ and other teachings that would detract from the veracity of Scripture.

Thus, if we read that the Pentateuch or Isaiah were written by several persons because the style is varied, we can attribute this to God who delights in doing things to surprise mankind; when we hear that this book or that book had to be written before the fall of Jerusalem under the Romans as it fails to mention the event, we may assume that God did not find the mentioning of it pertinent to what He was trying to enlighten us to; and when we read that John included or excluded certain facts which would have made us more certain as to when this event occurred or why Jesus performed the ceremony – we can also credit this to the true Author, the Holy Spirit. For once again, we must consider that He wrote this with the full knowledge of every person who would ever read it; that means He knew where they were at spiritually, He knew how much of the truth they could accept and, though this may stun some of you, I have found that God always leaves the door open for those who choose to disbelieve Him. The Holy Spirit took this into consideration also and left them enough ‘evidence’ to disbelieve. And so, as I mentioned before, there is layer upon layers of understanding here and everywhere in Scripture, because this was not really penned by a semi-literate Galilean fisherman, this was breathed into Him by Almighty God!

We have two schools of understanding which I chose to discuss that center around this passage. There are surely more, but these are the more prominent ones; shall we look at them...

First: There are some who would have us to believe that this action of Jesus was to show that although we have been cleansed by His blood, our slate wiped clean and all sin forgiven when we initially accepted His offer of grace, we are yet subject to sin and so we will need continual cleansing.

The following is a quote from “What is the profound meaning of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet on the night He was betrayed”, by Bill Keese in an article taken from *Forerunner Magazine*, © 2002 Church of the Great God.

“The New International Version's translation of this verse makes His thought clear: **"A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean."** Obviously, the disciples had bathed before coming to eat the Passover meal. But having to walk along dusty roads in sandals, they collected a small amount of dirt on their feet. Thus, Christ explains that to be perfectly clean again, all He needed to do was to wash their feet. Upon repentance, baptism, and receiving God's Holy Spirit, we are at that point perfectly clean in God's eyes. The blood of Jesus Christ has symbolically washed away all our past sins, and we stand before Him completely sinless. We have been buried in the waters of baptism and resurrected to a new life. However, as we all know, our human nature has certainly not departed from us, and it is not very long until the fact that we have sinned again stares us in the face. The old self has not really gone away; our lives are much as they were—with some important exceptions: We now have the Holy Spirit and have been given God's grace. Having been begotten by God through His Spirit that He has given us, we have entered a unique relationship with God the Father. The veil that once separated us from having access to Him has been torn away by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 6:19-20; 10:19-22). Through Him, we can communicate with the Father to seek mercy and forgiveness for our sins and weaknesses. Upon repentance, God applies again the sacrifice of Christ to us and forgives us by His grace. Now we can see that, even though we were once washed completely clean at baptism, we will occasionally sin as we walk through this life. We will spiritually get our feet dirty, and we will need Christ to wash our feet to make us completely clean again. Thus, He tells Peter, if He did not wash his feet, he would have no part with Him. None of us can carry unforgiven sins and still remain part of the body of Christ. This points out why it is so imperative that we seek His mercy and help

to repent each day. When we do this, He can symbolically wash our feet and make us clean again. Each year at the Passover service, we reenact this to remind us how important it is.”

This is a good representation of the reasoning behind those who believe in this teaching. I highly recommend the article as brother Keesee brings out more of an understanding of feet washing than most of the other articles I’ve read. However, he is still bound by his group’s doctrine and thus doesn’t seem to grasp the truth of there being several layers of understanding, of which this is but one. I don’t want to nitpick, but I do believe we must critique this article and this belief somewhat.

Mr. Keesee writes, “Upon repentance, baptism, and receiving God’s Holy Spirit, we are at that point perfectly clean in God’s eyes.” I would agree with this, but only in part as we must be re-cleansed before the final two. There is often a considerable time between the initial repentance and baptism, would not some sin possibly enter into a life in the interlude?

I am not sure whether he refers to The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but as he lists ‘receiving God’s Holy Spirit’ as a separate work of grace, I have to assume this is what he speaks to, and I would offer the same argument/understanding of a time lapse which would surely include at least one failure in our walk, one sin.

As Paul talks of dying daily in his walk and a young babe in Christ does not have that experience or knowledge yet, I would have to assume they falter and fail Jesus within the first day, making the need for this additional cleansing immediate. I would also argue that water baptism and the Baptism in/of the Holy Spirit are additional works of grace which come as a Christian matures past initial salvation; and lest you refer to Cornelius and his household who rapidly progressed through all these stages of grace, keep in mind that they were devout Gentiles who understood and adhered to the knowledge they had from the Jewish community they embraced, thus they already possessed spiritual maturity, they just needed the correct focus.

Brother Keesee goes on to say, “The old self has not really gone away; our lives are much as they were—with some important exceptions: We now have the Holy Spirit and have been given God’s grace... Through Him, we can communicate with the Father to seek mercy and forgiveness for our sins and weaknesses. Upon repentance, God applies again the sacrifice of Christ to us and forgives us by His grace. Now we can see that, even though we were once washed completely clean at baptism, we will occasionally sin as we walk through this life.” I am in total agreement with the brother, except when he continues to offer us this action of grace after baptism; is this forgiveness not needed before our water baptism; and I think he should make mention of the death of the old self as being a fact, we just fail to walk in this reality sometimes.

I argue, with the backing of nearly all Christian denominations/non-denominational groups, that the Holy Spirit comes to us at initial salvation. He it is who does this continual work of convicting/convincing us that our actions are offensive to God and we are in need of repentance; thus in the interlude between initial repentance and water baptism, He is there; in the time passage between initial repentance, water baptism and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (whether one comes to this point or not) the Holy Spirit is dwelling inside us and doing the job Jesus said He would do.

**Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. <sup>8</sup>And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup>of sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup>of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; <sup>11</sup>of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.<sup>39</sup>**

My argument remains, that among all these other insights, that one of the major understandings of this ceremony has been forgotten; that Jesus instituted a way for us to celebrate the continual cleansing which the

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<sup>39</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 16:7-11

Holy Spirit brings to us by convincing us of sin and bringing us to a place of repentance as often as we might need to come.

My final point of contention with brother Keese is when he says, “None of us can carry unforgiven sins and still remain part of the body of Christ. This points out why it is so imperative that we seek His mercy and help to repent each day. When we do this, He can symbolically wash our feet and make us clean again.” I don’t believe that a Christian will continue to sin each and every day for all their lives, as I read Scripture, it seems to me that the time will come when sin is defeated in my life. The bonds of sin were broken at my initial salvation and as I continue to submit myself to Jesus through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, I will one day cease to sin.

As Paul puts it: **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,** <sup>12</sup>**for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,** <sup>13</sup>**till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;** <sup>14</sup>**that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,** <sup>15</sup>**but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—** <sup>16</sup>**from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**<sup>40</sup>

It seems clear to me, from this passage and others that I am to grow, with the aid of all my brothers and sisters, into a mature child of Christ Jesus. I will grow up to be a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of Christ, in all things into Him who is the head - Christ. I don’t sin daily now and I see that I sin less and less each day as I have given myself over to the Lord Jesus and I fully expect the day to come when I can’t remember when I last sinned. I believe to do otherwise is to give ourselves and others excuses and a license to sin. However, I do believe the ability to sin remains until this corruption becomes incorruptible; I can just choose not to.

Secondly, we have some who teach this was an expression of the agape love of Christ Jesus.

This quote is from an article entitled “Washing the Disciple’s Feet”. I have it downloaded as a PDF document, but it has no author cited or any further information concerning it. I pray the author’s indulgence as I offer this quote (Scripture text added):

“The motivation of Jesus’ foot washing was *love* (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.”** This *agape* love was unconditional and sacrificial. The action showed love to the limit. The “end” does not imply the end of time, nor does it modify the prior phrase of “those in the world”. The “end” modifies “love”. We are building up to a crescendo culminating in the death/burial/resurrection of Jesus – the ultimate definition of love. How can he model that to his disciples just prior to the ultimate sacrifice... by ultimate servitude? Maximum love is not just to become mankind, and die on behalf of mankind but also to serve mankind (even the worst of mankind - Judas). Jesus had the authority of God (sent), he had the power of God (in his hands) over all creation, yet he willingly let it go in submission to God’s will (Phil 2:5-8).”

Again, my agreement is only in part, and actually a far less portion of agreement do I have for this understanding of the cause for Jesus to wash the feet of the disciples. My reasoning is that the person offering this explanation takes too much upon themselves in the interpretation and expects us to just take for granted they have the understanding correct.

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<sup>40</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Eph 4:11-16

That the love mentioned in this verse refers to agape love is true, that love was the motivation for His action is also true; Jesus is God and as God's essence is love (1 John 4:8, 16), thus He can not act otherwise. Everything Jesus has done or will do, everything the Holy Spirit has done or will do, everything the heavenly Father has done or will do has ever been done from their position of love toward mankind and each other. For all they do is for our good and that is an extension of love.

However, there is no indication in the text that 'the end' modifies love. To accept this would be to accept that Christ's love 'ended' upon His resurrection; a statement we all know to be false. But, even should the author choose to say that Jesus' love did not end then and that was not his point, it still remains that there is no evidence that 'love' is modified by 'the end' in this verse. There is no indication what 'the end' is concerned with or modifies, it is not clearly stated. This brothers and sisters is one huge way wrong doctrine has come to invade our churches; people speak for Scripture instead of permitting Scripture to speak to them. God never chose to make the understanding of Him or His Word difficult; it was man's wisdom that did this – God only ordained that one must have a Spirit guide and a desire to understand.

**“<sup>13</sup>These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup>But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>41</sup>**

Understand that we will never be able to comprehend all the nuances of Scripture until Jesus opens our eyes in glory, much as He did for the apostles after His resurrection.

This writer then goes on to indicate that this feet washing action by Jesus was only part of the building to the climax which reached a 'crescendo culminating in the death/burial/resurrection of Jesus'. I find no real fault with this statement in and of itself. It does have the shaky foundation of 'the end' modifying love however and it also fails to take into consideration that there are layers of truth in all Scripture.

This speaks to another problem teachers, preachers, writers, etc. seem to have, they enter into the interpretation and the elucidation of Scripture with preconceived ideology and they then attempt to have the Scripture attest to their doctrine. Scripture must be read with a mind open to God, we must always ask the Holy Spirit to be our Instructor, not some man, as we are all capable of error, He is not! So, let us agree that agape love was the motivation for Jesus' actions, but that love was but one layer of His complete reasoning.

In concluding this portion, I would be negligent if I did not speak to another point this author makes. "Maximum love is not just to become mankind, and die on behalf of mankind but also to serve mankind (even the worst of mankind - Judas)." Many argue that Jesus did not wash Judas' feet, stating that he left the meal early, but no narrative in any Gospel points to this. They all point to Judas being present until challenged and dismissed by Jesus. Contrary to many who would have us to feel remorse for Judas, he made his own choices; he was given every opportunity to repent of his actions and refused. And this is the one understanding that lends great credence to Jesus' action of feet washing being steeped in love and mercy. He was well aware of Judas' betrayal, but He still humbled Himself to wash Judas' feet. This should speak volumes to the churches and Christians who would relegate nonbelievers to a 'second class citizen' status and say things like we are to only love our brothers, our fellow believers.

We will also note the following from the above cited work, but as after diligent search with no results, I assume this is not a very widespread belief and thus will not discuss it further than to say that I can not see any true Christian accepting this. We have a few who would seemingly have us to accept that as John does not mention

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<sup>41</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Co 2:13-14

the Holy Communion ceremony and he seems to replace that ceremony with this one of Jesus' washing the feet of the disciples that he does this to show that the feet washing ceremony replaces Communion.

From the same article cited in the discussion on the reason being agape love we have this: "If one argues John's gospel as the basis for foot washing as an ordinance (when it is not in the synoptics), the Lord's Supper should be eliminated (since it is not illustrated in John). Some argue that John intentionally noted foot washing to be a replacement for the Lord's Supper as an ordinance (Weiss, ABD)."

As stated, this is the only mention of this I could find, so I must assume it is not a very widespread belief.

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Practical application for going to the Lord for repeated cleansing as we sin  
and for showing agape love to those around us, including unbelievers.

There are a few disagreements over sin that comes into a life after our initial regeneration and what to do about it, so let me state my position clearly. I believe that until we grow into the maturity Paul speaks to in Romans, Ephesians and elsewhere and which Peter and John also speak to, we will occasionally sin. I believe that as we grow and give ourselves over to the Lord Jesus in obedience to the Holy Spirit's leading, guiding and protecting us (especially from own lusts) – we will find ourselves sinning less frequently until, as we make Jesus our focus, we will cease from sin. In the meantime, I believe we must turn to the Lord in repentance as the Holy Spirit convicts us and convinces us to do. I further believe that it is the duty of every born again believer to watch over their brothers and sisters so that sin can be cut off immediately, so it does not build a stronghold in the heart.

I believe that when sin is seen and recognized, we must, as a Church, follow the precepts Jesus Christ gave us, regardless of any reprisals. We have forgotten Christian discipline and we need to return to our Lord in repentance and begin to do as He said. This is also a demonstration of true agape love.

**"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? <sup>47</sup>Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: <sup>48</sup>He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. <sup>49</sup>But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."<sup>42</sup>**

Make no mistake beloved, there are and will be rewards and punishment regarding obedience. Justice demands it be so.

**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup>Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>43</sup>**

Most scholars say the letter to the Philippians was probably written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, as Scripture is written for all peoples in all ages, I rarely comment upon dates, but I want to show that Paul had been a Christian for some time when he wrote this. Though he had labored hard in the harvest fields of his Lord and Savior, he admitted that he had not come to a place in the Lord Jesus wherein he did not commit sin; at least that is my understanding here.

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<sup>42</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Lk 6:46-49

<sup>43</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Php 3:12-14

Some argue that we can not achieve sinless perfection while still in human form, but wouldn't that make Paul's statement and indeed his entire argument sound a bit silly. I mean if one can not be sinless or perfect while in human form, which Paul most assuredly was, then why mention it as part of his argument?

There are others that say one becomes sinless upon being sanctified or when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. As Paul has laid claim to both of these acts of grace in letters written before this one, this too must be seen to be false. What we can be assured of is that many years after his conversion, Paul understood himself to still sin.

In case this one is too vague for you:

**Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; <sup>12</sup>for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. <sup>13</sup>And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.**

**<sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? <sup>15</sup>We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup>knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.**

**<sup>17</sup>"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! <sup>18</sup>For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."<sup>44</sup>**

And here we see Paul standing up to Peter and taking him to task before the entire group (this is done this way for Peter had influenced the whole group). As can be clearly seen from the final statement, Paul considered this to be transgression, or sin. And again, this incident occurred long after Peter's conversion, his sanctification and his baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Thus, as we can see in the lives of these two pillars of the early Christian community, Christians do sin, at least for a time, after receiving the three works of grace which Scripture speaks to as being available here. The question now becomes what we do with the sin.

**"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'* <sup>17</sup>And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."<sup>45</sup>**

**Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup>And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup>But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. <sup>26</sup>The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' <sup>27</sup>Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt."<sup>46</sup>**

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<sup>44</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ga 2:11-18

<sup>45</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 18:15-17

<sup>46</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 18:23-27

As this is all from one discussion concerning sin offered by Jesus Christ, we will look at the two sections together.

In the first section, Jesus tells us how we, as individuals and as a collective Church, should react to sin. The first point that should be clearly understood here is that sin is not to be tolerated. It is not acceptable in individuals, races, nations, churches or denominations and if it is not dealt with, God will judge it and the sinner will pay for their offense; His righteousness, holiness and sense of justice demands this.

As He continues the discussion, Jesus shows clearly what the sinner should do and to whom. Confession must be made to the Master and then forgiveness is awarded. Lest there be any doubt:

**But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.<sup>47</sup>**

Forgiveness always requires that the individual recognize they have sinned, this is seen in Jesus' instructions to go to the brother and explain his sin to him; it also requires a confession of the sin to the one offended, which David tells us in Psalm 51 is ever the Lord God and one must then repent, which means to turn away from the sin and leave it, one does not overcome any sin by keeping it around like a somewhat 'wild' pet.

Regarding whether we can overcome sin in this world and live free from it, I would refer back to the passage in Ephesians which I've spoken to above. I would also direct you to the several places in Scripture wherein we are commanded to be holy and perfect as our Father in heaven is. Wouldn't it be rather odd for God to command something that was impossible for us to achieve? And I am sorry I will not even discuss those who would change the meaning of perfect to mean mature; there is a major difference in both Greek and English.

My final argument is that one of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to show us that through the indwelling Holy Spirit sinless perfection, a complete adherence to the Law was indeed possible. Jesus was a human being in all ways, just as you and I; the only difference was a complete submission to and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the power of Jesus and He is ours also.

If you do not know this to be true, then I suggest a lot more reading of Scripture. Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus was a man just like we are and there are several passages, especially in the Gospel accounts that show Jesus' powers to have come from the indwelling Holy Spirit. For Jesus to have been otherwise would defeat the entire purpose for which Scripture clearly shows Him to have come here. If we are to emulate Jesus and indeed do greater works than He, then it stands to reason that we must have the same chance as He did, and if Jesus relied upon His deity while here, then we are placed at an unfair advantage.

So, if we have not yet arrived it is because we have not yet fully submitted.

To relate this to feet washing, I would again refer to my belief that part of the understanding of this celebration is to recognize and honor the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in regards to sin in a person's life, we should all be in full agreement that it is the Holy Spirit who calls us out of a life of sin and into a life with Jesus Christ. We can also see that it is the Holy Spirit who is often represented by water, a cleansing agent; we might also note that He is called the Holy Spirit, indicating that He brings holiness into those He indwells; He is also called the Spirit of Truth as it is He who leads us into the truth of Scripture, another cleansing agent (**"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup>that He might sanctify and**

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<sup>47</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Jn 1:7-9

cleansing her with the washing of water by the word,<sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”<sup>48</sup>); and His fruit is said to be righteousness, which He also brings to the believer who is indwelt by Him (“For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light<sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),<sup>10</sup> finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”<sup>49</sup>).

We will also make note of Titus where Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as being the One who renews us which speaks to me of a further cleansing that will lead us to the perfection spoken of in Ephesians 4 and elsewhere, as He takes us from glory to glory. “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,<sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,<sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”<sup>50</sup>

If we were to take this thought of the Holy Spirit to the logical conclusion we would see that this is indeed, at least in part, a ceremony of remembrance to Him. Not only is He the One who brings agape love into the heart’s of believers, but He is also clearly seen in nearly every other theory as to why Jesus performed this ceremony. Then, think on what the subject of Jesus entire discourse here is. Does He not use this time to explain to His chosen ones that though He must soon depart in death, that He will not leave them alone as orphans are left, but He will send Another Comforter, that is One just like Him to be with them. And indeed it behooves mankind that Jesus die and go to the Father because when this Other comes, He will permit us to be Jesus to the world and to show His love to all the world.

This Promised One is prominently featured in the next three chapters, indeed He is the focus of nearly this entire final discourse as Jesus explains all about Him; might Jesus not have introduced this One who walks alongside of us as our Helper through this ceremony that seems to speak so clearly of Him and His ministry?

If we would then consider that it is this other One who comes along side of us who is said throughout Scripture to be He who sanctifies us, He who brings the holiness of God to dwell in clay vessels, we could understand that by His very name and attributes that it is He to whom Jesus is pointing to as the one who will continue to cleanse those who, though forgiven and having the slates of their lives cleansed by Jesus’ blood, still need the occasional washing that is provided by the Holy Spirit.

It is my contention that we have fallen far from where we should be in our recognition of the deep ministry of the Holy Spirit to the point we accept the ‘speaking in tongues’ as the be all and end all when it is but the tiniest portion of His ministry to the saints. O brother, sister, that you would reach out to Him even now and embrace all that He has for you; then you would be overjoyed to enter into this celebration of memorial to our Comforter. Let us all commit to the performance of this ceremony as Jesus commands, regardless of reason; though I say embrace them all and look for still others.

The other theory or belief we looked at as being the reason Jesus performed this task was that He wanted to show the disciples His great love for them and to encourage them to lead lives of agape love. There are so many passages that speak to Jesus loving us and desiring that we love others that we could all name and preach on several without notes. So, instead of belaboring the obvious, I thought we might digress again with a short word study on what Paul calls the ‘more excellent way’.

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<sup>48</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Eph 5:25-27

<sup>49</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Eph 5:8-10

<sup>50</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Tit 3:4-7

**“Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup>does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails.”<sup>51</sup>**

First, note that there are 7 things love is and 7 that love is not; 7 is a number which speaks to completeness – this tells me that to walk in agape love is to be complete in God.

In this word study, the left hand column is what the word has been translated to in a modern text, and in the right column there is a clearer understanding of the word gleaned from Greek lexicons, English dictionaries and the like.

Patient	To be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others; bearing our own pains or trials calmly with-out complaint
Kind	To show ones self useful; to act benevolently; to be gentle in behavior
Not envious	To not be heated, to not boil or to not be moved with envy, hatred or anger; to not be painfully or resentfully aware of an advantage enjoyed by another, joined with a desire to possess this same advantage; to not be jealous
Not boastful	To not make a vain (empty) display of one’s own worth or attainment; to not be vain-glorious
Not arrogant	To not speak or assert one’s self with excessive pride
Not rude	Does not act contrary to established standards of good form or taste; is not indecent
Does not insist on its own way	Does not seek its own interests, but is interested in the needs of others; to not further the profit or advantage of one’s self, but of others
Not irritable	Is not easily incited to anger; not having irritation or sharpness of spirit
Not resentful	Does not keep a record of wrongs (what is contrary to law, either divine or human); to not take account of as in a ledger or note book the evil done with a view to settling the account
Does not rejoice in wrongdoing	Does not to rejoice in unrighteousness of heart and life
Rejoices in truth	Takes part in one another’s joy over what is true in any matter under consideration (opp. to what is feigned, fictitious or false); to sympathize with gladness over truth personified as opposed to unrighteousness

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<sup>51</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Co 13:4-8

Bears all things	To endure, or protect, or cover to keep away something which threatens someone or something
Believes all things	Believes that all God says is true.
Hopes all things	To hope in a religious sense, to wait for salvation with joy and full confidence; to see the bright side; to persevere; to doubt not
Endures all things	To remain firm under suffering or misfortune with-out yielding; to bear bravely and calmly all that comes our way, knowing You have everything under control
Never ending	To not fail; to not fall to the ground or be without effect; to not fall powerless; to survive everything

I am quite sure we can all see the Lord Jesus expressing this love and desiring to inspire His chosen to also live in this agape love. I pray that we can all see our need to live in agape love, to see in this word study wherein we might need to grow some and to pray asking the Lord to lead us into this most excellent way.

## Chapter five: Jesus Discusses His Action of Feet Washing

As we have looked at the understanding of men, let us now turn to see what Jesus says concerning this ceremony of feet washing.

**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? <sup>13</sup>You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.<sup>52</sup>**

Jesus does not explain the ‘why’ of His actions, which leads me to continue to say that there are levels of understanding here that go even beyond what we have covered. For what Jesus does do is to ask questions and offer statements that should speak to all of us. One such statement is very similar to what He had already said to Peter, which leads me again to say that He was truly addressing all the apostles when He answered Peter’s question as to ‘why’ He would do this.

We might also think on the fact that as they are promised to have understanding at a later time (verse 7) and it is the Holy Spirit who brings us the understanding of Scripture, then perhaps we need seek Him more for understanding of this and other Scripture. Quite often a Scripture passage is not always fully explained in its limited context. Let us look at what Jesus does say however and see if we can’t get some understanding.

**“Do you know what I have done to you?”** Jesus has already told Peter and in my opinion the other apostles that they will not understand His actions until a later time; but now He asks a rhetorical question, that is one there is no answer to or one to which the answer is already well known. The answer has already been given by Jesus in verse 7 when He stated that they could not yet understand what He was doing, but that they would understand later. Obviously there is some understanding to be had now however because Jesus continues.

I believe He states the obvious and intimates that they should continue in the performance of this ceremony with other disciples for in the repetition, it may well be that further understanding would come. I think most of us have had a thing shown to us that we did not quite grasp the full understanding of, but as we continued to apply the theorem, the full understanding came to us over time. I think this is what Jesus is instituting here.

On a basic level, the disciples could accept that He was their Teacher and Lord. As they grasped this, Jesus could lead them a couple of steps further to embrace a little more, but not too much at this time. Remember some of what has been said about them and some of their actions. Again and again Jesus has proclaimed them as being ‘dull and slow of heart’ (in Greek and Hebrew thought the heart was not the seat of emotion, but the seat of wisdom and understanding), as having ‘little faith’ and we see many passages that declare they had no real concept of what was going on around them in the life of Christ Jesus. Peter has withstood Jesus’ decision to go to Jerusalem to die, he and the others will fail to pray with Jesus in His hour of need, Peter will deny Him, they will all forsake Him and they won’t even believe He has been resurrected until He stands in their presence.

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<sup>52</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 13:12-17

They can't understand what He is saying for they are not yet walking in His Holy Spirit; it will not be until He breathes the Holy Spirit onto them and opens their hearts to understand Scripture that they even begin to comprehend.

**“So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”<sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”<sup>53</sup> -- “Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.”<sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,<sup>47</sup> and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>And you are witnesses of these things.”<sup>54</sup>**

Spiritual concepts can only be grasped by those who have and walk in the Holy Spirit; the apostles at this time were not walking in the Spirit as they had not received Him yet. The same is true of many in our churches, they are babies, carnal minded, they do not walk in the Spirit and can only grasp the basic understanding. And, so, as Jesus did, let us begin there.

Jesus is the Teacher, the Rabboni, the Lord, the Holy One, the Master and He has washed your feet – not those twelve apostles, YOURS! Let's think on these terms to see whom we deal with here. Though Jesus did not accept the term teacher or rabbi in the way the Jewish religious hierarchy had come to conceive it to be, He did not deny the title when rightly applied, for He is all this and more.

From 'The Complete Word Study Dictionary', "In Hebr. *rhabbi* means a great one, chief, master. This was introduced as a title into the Jewish schools under a three-fold form, Rab, as the lowest degree of honor; Rab with the first person suffix *i*, Rabbi, my master, with higher dignity; and Rabboni, meaning my great master, the most honorable of all."<sup>55</sup>

As the most honorable of all Jesus can and does command us to follow His lead and do as He does. Jesus is Lord; again, from 'The Complete Word Study Dictionary': "*kuriou*, masc. noun from *kúros* (n.f.), might, power. Lord, master, owner. Also the NT Gr. equivalent for the OT Hebr. Jehovah."<sup>56</sup>

In case you missed it we are speaking of Jesus acknowledging that He is God and as God He is the Master of all, but He is especially Master to those who submit to Him and willingly choose to follow Him.

We have this Jesus who acknowledges that we call Him Lord, Master, and Teacher... rightly, for so He is. He came to serve mankind, secure in the knowledge of who He is, He had nothing that would stop Him from humbling Himself to wash the feet of every follower of every age, in fact He would even wash the feet of every betrayer from every age! When it came to giving Himself in service to mankind, to bring mankind back into relationship with His heavenly Father, there was no task beneath Jesus and there was no task too arduous, including the events leading up to and including Calvary.

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<sup>53</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 20:21-22

<sup>54</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Lk 24:44-48

Hebr (Hebrew)

<sup>55</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN : AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, S. G4461

OT (Old Testament)

Hebr (Hebrew)

<sup>56</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN : AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, S. G2962

As we accept this most basic of premises, we are told, **“If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”**

I honestly don’t see the conflict. I don’t see how it could be clearer. Jesus states that He, as Master Teacher and God, has performed this task of washing their feet, so they should follow His example and do the same to one another, he says; and thus so should you. We can look at and ponder the many reasons, the layer upon layer of why, but understand or not, we are told by the Lord to follow His example and perform the ceremony. And again, I say that the understanding and then the deeper understanding may come from obedience to what we are told to do.

Why we would balk at this command and try to explain it away is unclear to me. Do we not want to follow His example? Do we not care to be like Jesus? Once again, the clarity of the command does not allow for private interpretation so that one can say Jesus meant something else or was merely stating this as an object lesson; He does not leave the door open for one pleading ignorance of His wishes; and He did not intend this for just those He was speaking to (as some like to say of those passages of Scripture that are hard to swallow).

In conclusion, Jesus states this even more clearly, <sup>16</sup>**“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. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”**

And herein, as I know mankind, I believe we have the reason most do not want to perform this ceremony. They actually believe they should be treated differently than Jesus Christ and His apostles. It is beneath them to wash dung, urine and other filth from the feet of others, they can not dirty themselves for a wayward brother and they surely will not sully themselves for an unbeliever. Their Jesus has called them to be ever healthy, possessed of the material wealth such as the world desires and to never suffer at the hands of satan and his minions. All the good things the Lord promises are for us here and now and the suffering and such was for someone else; kinda makes me wonder why or if some want to go to heaven!

Jesus ate with thieves and whores and tax-collectors, the lowest of the low, to show that God understood it was these people who needed Him more than any other. He commanded Peter to rise, kill and eat to show, not that all foods were clean, but that all of mankind could be clean before Him and His Father. And you can be sure that as He has commanded us all to perform this celebration of washing the feet of another so that we might come to understand the deeper cleansing which this is to represent. Perhaps it is also to show that sometimes we must humble ourselves and get a little of the world’s dirt underneath our fingernails in order to bring His cleansing to those who may need it.

I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but the unsaved are not beating down the doors of our Bible preaching churches to get in, in fact most strong evangelical churches are suffering loss as many flock to the new social clubs that pass for churches; they go to where they can have their ears tickled by those who preach that which is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In those places, no one need get dirty because we are all clean before the Lord and in His love He just wants to bless us with everything our little hearts desire, mostly money, health and acceptance/power in the world. Sadly, for many, we may need to get out of the pews and go out to compel them to come in or as this older generation passes on, we may find our churches nearly empty.

As Jesus twice refers to Himself as the Lord of His disciples, so it is in the deeper understanding of this title there can be seen that there are layers of meaning and that feet washing is not a suggestion, but a command.

The Greek word used here, as stated above, and the meaning are: **κύριος** *kúrios*; gen. *kuríou*, masc. noun from *kúros* (n.f.), might, power. Lord, master, owner. Also the NT Gr. equivalent for the OT Hebr. Jehovah.<sup>57</sup>

As the Old Testament writers rarely used the proper name of Jehovah or Yahweh they used a term that we see in English translations as LORD (small caps); this term and its meaning are: **אָדוֹנָי** [*'Adonay* /ad·o·noy/] n m. Am emphatic form of 113; TWOT 27b; GK 151; 434 occurrences; AV translates as “Lord” 431 times, “lord” twice, and “God” once. **1** my lord, lord. 1A of men. 1B of God. **2** Lord—title, spoken in place of Yahweh in Jewish display of reverence. And of 113 we note: **אָדוֹן** [*'adown, or (shortened), 'adon* /aw·done/] n m. From an unused root (meaning to rule); TWOT 27b; GK 123; 335 occurrences; AV translates as “lord” 197 times, “master(s)” 105 times, “Lord” 31 times, “owner” once, and “sir” once. **1** firm, strong, lord, master. 1A lord, master. 1A1 reference to men. 1A1A superintendent of household, of affairs. 1A1B master. 1A1C king. 1A2 reference to God. 1A2A the Lord God. 1A2B Lord of the whole earth. 1B lords, kings. 1B1 reference to men. 1B1A proprietor of hill of Samaria. 1B1B master. 1B1C husband. 1B1D prophet. 1B1E governor. 1B1F prince. 1B1G king. 1B2 reference to God. 1B2A Lord of lords (probably = “thy husband, Yahweh”). 1C my lord, my master. 1C1 reference to men. 1C1A master. 1C1B husband. 1C1C prophet. 1C1D prince. 1C1E king. 1C1F father. 1C1G Moses. 1C1H priest. 1C1I theophanic angel. 1C1J captain. 1C1K general recognition of superiority. 1C2 reference to God. 1C2A my Lord, my Lord and my God. 1C2B Adonai (parallel with Yahweh).<sup>58,59</sup>

From this, we see that Jesus was not only referring to Himself as God, Jehovah or Yahweh, but also intended for His disciples, after they became fully aware of His true place when He was resurrected and ascended, and for us, to understand the depth of the understanding of this title. As the disciples well understood the Hebrew and the Greek, perhaps He was speaking more to us than to them.

As He took the title of The (one and only) Teacher, so Jesus now takes the title of LORD; He claims that He has all might and power, that He is lord, master and owner of all and that He is Lord of the whole earth.

Now, go back to the very beginning of the passage – **“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside**

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gen (genitive)

OT (Old Testament)

Hebr (Hebrew)

<sup>57</sup>Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN : AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, S. G2962

n n: noun

m m: masculine

TWOT Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

GK Goodrick-Kohlenberger

AV Authorized Version

n n: noun

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<sup>58</sup>Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. H113

<sup>59</sup>Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. H136

**His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 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."**

It is as and because Jesus understood Himself to be God that He chose to perform this ceremony and it is as we recognize Him as such that we too should practice this ceremony. He is God and He understands what that title implies more than anyone else! He is Master and Owner of all! **"You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,"**<sup>60</sup>

As God He can and does issue commands that are to be obeyed by His creation, but as God He has also committed to serving His creation by providing for our every need. In Jesus Christ, we see God as servant of mankind and as Lord of mankind - **Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 'In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. '7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.' "**<sup>61</sup>

Everything Jesus did was in the perfect will of the heavenly Father and everything was to reveal the Person of God to mankind; thus, when He knelt to perform this task He shows us God as our servant, but also remember He is Lord of all. In choosing the role of Servant, Jesus embodies all the reasoning we have looked at for performing the ceremony and many more besides.

It goes without saying that a servant or slave is humble; their position would not let them be otherwise.

Understand that Jesus is the willing Servant, the One who has his ear pierced by the Master to show that He ever more belongs to Him. The why of this is clearly stated in Old Testament Law: **"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' '6 then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever."**<sup>62</sup>

Love is the motivation for the Servant, but note that it is not just love for the Master (the Father), but also love for us, His wife (bride) and His children (again us, as Isaiah says He is the Father)! Hallelujah!!!! Isn't God just awesome? Can you see just a small part of the mind of God as He planned this in eternity? Could any doubt but that Jesus performing this ceremony has deep, deep meaning? And can you not see that His command to us to continue in it also has deep meaning for us?

Layer upon layer and meanings within meanings, brothers and sisters; our God is indeed a mighty Lord!

And where is the theory of Jesus introducing the Holy Spirit to be found in this? Is He not the other Comforter, the One who comes after, but performs the same tasks as Jesus? Oh beloved, our precious gift, the Holy Spirit is indeed to be seen here as both Servant of mankind and Lord of all the earth. Is it not His gifts we use to serve Christ and His body, the Church? Is it not His power that resurrected Jesus and brings continual new life to us as we are moved by Him from glory to glory until we reach the perfection of Jesus Christ? **"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"**<sup>63</sup>

Let us be sure to understand that Jesus is also representing God as Lord of all the earth and special Lord to those who claim to be His. As the owner of each of us, Jesus tells us three times to perform this ceremony and He

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<sup>60</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ps 8:6

<sup>61</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Heb 10:5-7

<sup>62</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ex 21:5-6

<sup>63</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ro 11:33

also emphasizes it with the same teaching He uses to tell us that we will suffer with Him as the world will also reject us, if we are truly His.

Could we imagine the leader of our country telling us to do something three times and then finishing it by saying any \_\_\_\_\_ (put the name of your country here) should be more than happy to serve as I have served, for we are all the same in our love and service?

One might also note that in the final time He tells us to perform the ceremony, Jesus tells us we will be blessed if we do. I often get the idea when God says something like this that we can expect the opposite if we don't do what He is speaking of.

Finally, we have the very fact that Jesus reiterates this three times. Nearly every Bible scholar will tell you that if something is repeated in Scripture it is to show that it has meaning even beyond that of other Scripture, thus to see it repeated three times, one might assume this command to wash the feet of others has very deep meaning.

Thus, we have He who bought us with a great price, our Owner and the One we have sworn allegiance to telling us to perform this ceremony; we have this repeated three times, giving it an even more special place and we have the promised reward of blessing to those who will obey – do we dare disobey?

Can we look at this evidence and continue to make excuses? Can we not see that the God who chooses to serve mankind, who sent His only begotten Son to serve, who came in the form of mankind to serve, who now indwells those who come to Him believing with the power to cause them to serve – that He now commands and demands that those who claim to be His disciples also be servants? That all His blessings rest upon our submitting to Him as servants of mankind? Can we not see that to perform this celebration, for this is truly what it is, is to celebrate the Lord our God, our Adonai and our servant? And can we not understand that this is not optional, but is indeed a command?

# Chapter six: Feet Washing in the Early Church, Down Through the Centuries and Yet in Today's Churches.

In Scripture

**“Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. <sup>37</sup>And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, <sup>38</sup>and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. <sup>39</sup>Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, “This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”**

**<sup>40</sup>And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”**

**So he said, “Teacher, say it.”**

**<sup>41</sup>“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.**

**<sup>42</sup>And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”**

**<sup>43</sup>Simon answered and said, “I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.”**

**And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” <sup>44</sup>Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. <sup>45</sup>You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. <sup>46</sup>You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. <sup>47</sup>Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.”**

**<sup>48</sup>Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”**

**<sup>49</sup>And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”**

**<sup>50</sup>Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.””<sup>64</sup>**

**“Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, *and not unless* she has been the wife of one man, <sup>10</sup>well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.”<sup>65</sup>**

Though there are but two other mentions of the washing of feet to be found in Scripture, one prior to Jesus’ celebration of washing the disciples feet and one afterwards; they both speak volumes to those whose ears are opened to listen.

First, perhaps a few points to consider. The woman in the first passage is often said to be Mary Magdalene, but there is no conclusive proof of this in Scripture and as we have often discussed, the use of men’s wisdom in interpreting the Bible can be a dangerous thing as we tend to add what is not there or take away from what is; both being clearly condemned by God.

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<sup>64</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Lk 7:36-50

<sup>65</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Ti 5:9-10

We can clearly see from the first passage that the ritual of feet washing, or the offering of water to do so, was still common in the time of Jesus and it was considered rather rude not to provide water so a guest might wash his/her feet.

We might also consider that the ritual of feet washing was still practiced by the saints of the first century church, perhaps not as a celebration, but certainly as a ritual when one visited another saint.

As to the woman just walking into this Pharisee's house, I am told that it is still permissible for people in the Mideast to enter a home where there is a guest dining whom they wish to interact with, it is kind of an 'open house' while the celebration is going on. And as to her standing behind Jesus and shedding tears onto His feet, they did not sit on chairs in the Palestine of Jesus' time; they ate in a reclined position with their heads at the table and their feet behind them, pointing away from the table.

In the passage where Jesus castigates the Pharisee for his behavior, we find this woman who comes in weeping, washing the Messiah's feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. By looking at this entire passage we can infer that Jesus believed that He was worthy of this as He did not prevent the woman's behavior and in His discourse with Simon, He indicated that as the lender, He was due this.

What we want to consider is the woman's actions, however, and her reward. What was her motivation in washing Jesus' feet with tears, and what was she crying for in the first place. Jesus answers the first question, 'she loved much', that was her motivation.

I believe that she probably had heard of Jesus and knew something about Him which brought her into His presence, once one with a heart open to feel, one who is truly searching, comes into the presence of One so holy, it often causes them to become very aware of their sin and need. Many of us have heard of preachers like D.L. Moody, John Wesley and others coming into a place and without saying a word people would come to them in repentance, I believe something similar happened here.

Not totally the same, for we see this woman came prepared, she had her bottle of perfume, but I am not sure if the feet washing ceremony was planned; it just doesn't seem the sort of thing one would plan out. "Hey, Jesus is at Simon's house eating, I think I'll go in and cry a bunch, get His feet wet and dry them with my hair." Just doesn't seem to have the ring of truth to it ☺!

I believe she came to anoint Jesus, quite possibly seeking forgiveness, but the weeping, the kissing and the feet washing were done on the spur of the moment. When mankind encounters God, if our hearts are not so hardened, things happen. I believe that in that instant, she fully realized who Jesus was, understood her sinning had separated her from God and that Jesus could reconcile her; as 'proof' I would cite that absolutely no words and especially no preaching passed between the two, yet Jesus forgave her when He did speak directly to her. I believe that, as many have, when she realized the depth of her sins and what they had done to her in relation to the Almighty, she broke into tears and I believe that Jesus as God saw her heart.

As many of us have experienced at many altars, I don't think she was fully conscious of what she was doing; she just did what seemed right to her soul. In her love of the Lord, she brought tears of repentance and actions of humility that showed she was conscious of who Jesus was and how mankind should treat Him. <sup>18</sup>**“But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”**<sup>66</sup> <sup>18</sup>**“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in**

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<sup>66</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jas 2:18

**deed and in truth.”<sup>67</sup> Thus when Jesus does speak to her, He says what we all need to hear, “Your sins are forgiven.” Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”**

Note that what Jesus told her also proves what I’ve said about the woman to be true. He recognized that she had faith in Him – and what is it to have faith in Jesus but to believe in the totality of Who He is, God Incarnate; to have your only hope to be placed in Him, in all that entails; and to love Him with all that is within you. But faith must also be coupled with deeds, or as James tells us, it is dead; for even the demons have a sort of faith, they know beyond the knowledge of many Christians, who Jesus is, but that is not sufficient to save them. Jesus demands that if we are His followers, we are to love as He did; and how did He show His love to us?

**“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”<sup>68</sup>**

**<sup>8</sup>“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”<sup>69</sup>**

**<sup>45</sup>“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”<sup>70</sup>**

This woman beautifully illustrates what it means to put action to your faith and as a result she came to possess that peace which is beyond the understanding of so many. These widows in the second passage show the same humble faith this woman does, for they wash the feet of the saints. They don’t have a servant do this and they do not merely offer water, they do the chore themselves; just as Jesus did.

Keep in mind, not only does Jesus command us to wash the feet of others, to love as He did by serving mankind, to serve in humility if we want to be celebrated in His kingdom, but He also states that when we come before Him we will be judged by our deeds to others.

**<sup>40</sup>“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’<sup>71</sup>**

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### Outside of Scripture

As mentioned in the introduction, feet washing is mentioned by several Early Church Fathers. Clement says this about widows who practice this, "If she has washed the feet of the saints'—that is, if she has performed without shame the lowest offices for the saints..." (Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 195). While Tertullian speaking also of widows and feet washing, mentions the practice in his *De Corona*, but gives no details as to who practiced it or how it was practiced. He says, "What unbelieving husband will permit his wife to offer water for the saint's feet?" (Tertullian, A.D. 205). And Irenaeus says, "For He who washed the feet of the disciples sanctified the entire body, and rendered it clean." (Irenaeus, A.D. 180). It is rather obvious that the practice continued in at least some groups within the Early Church and both Clement and Irenaeus seem to indicate that they believe there is merit to the performance.

Benedictine or Saint Benedictine (480-543) established the order of the Benedictine monks by starting their first monastery at Monet Cassino in Italy around 529 and founding the first dozen such monasteries. One of the

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<sup>67</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. 1 Jn 3:18

<sup>68</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Jn 15:12-14

<sup>69</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Ro 5:8

<sup>70</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mk 10:45

<sup>71</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 25:40

orders or rules of the Benedictine order required the washing of the feet of the brethren and others as a sign of humility.

Though not practiced as a sacrament, it is a ritual in many Catholic churches, performed during Holy Week on Thursday. Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia (where much of this information is gleaned from), says, "Evidence for the practice on this day goes back at least to the latter half of the twelfth century, when the Pope washed the feet of twelve sub-deacons after his Mass and of thirteen poor men after his dinner." The article goes on to say, "From 1570 to 1955, the Roman Missal, printed, after the text of the Holy Thursday Mass, a rite of washing of feet, unconnected with the Mass." Though there is just as much controversy within the Catholic Church concerning the 'why', the 'how' and the 'who' of this ceremony, it is clearly still practiced by many, even today.

After the Eastern Church split with the Roman Catholic Church they continued to practice many of the rituals and sacraments of the mother church, one of these was the Washing of the Feet. The same Wikipedia article on 'Feet Washing' has this under the section on the Eastern Church. "The Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches practice the ritual of Washing of Feet on Holy and Great Thursday (Maundy Thursday) according to their ancient rites. The service may be performed either by a bishop, washing the feet of twelve priests; or by a Hegumen (Abbot) washing the feet of twelve members of the brotherhood of his monastery. The ceremony takes place at the end of the Divine Liturgy."

"After Holy Communion, and before the dismissal, the brethren all go in procession to the place where the Washing of Feet is to take place (it may be in the center of the nave, in the narthex [a vestibule leading to the nave of a church], or a location outside). After a psalm and some troparia (hymns) an extenia (litany) is recited, and the bishop or abbot reads a prayer. Then the deacon reads the account in the Gospel of John, while the clergy perform the roles of Christ and his apostles as each action is chanted by the deacon. The deacon stops when the dialogue between Jesus and Peter begins. The senior-ranking clergyman among those whose feet are being washed speaks the words of Peter, the bishop or abbot speaks the words of Jesus. Then the bishop or abbot himself concludes the reading of the Gospel, after which he says another prayer and sprinkles all those present with the water that was used for the foot washing. The procession then returns to the church and the final dismissal is given as normal."

It would seem that here too we find the ritual practice of this ceremony and in this group; it seems to have come down nearly unchanged over the centuries.

The Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches are not the only ones to have practiced and continue to practice this ceremony, for there are many Protestant churches that also practice feet washing ceremonies.

From the Grace Brethren Fellowship of Churches we have this noted as their 9<sup>th</sup> ordinance; this can be found online at the Grace Brethren Fellowship of Churches website, under Ordinances.

"9. ORDINANCES. The Christians should observe the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ which are (1)baptism of believers by triune immersion (Matt. 28:19) and (2)the threefold communion service, consisting of the washing of the saints' feet (John 13:1-17), the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude 12), and the communion of the bread and the cup (1 Cor. 11:23-26)." As you might note, this group has elevated the ceremony to that of a sacrament and has in fact added it to Holy Communion as having an equal part in this celebration.

Wikipedia has this to say about Feet Washing during the times of the Protestant Reformation, "The Albigenses observed feet washing in connection with communion, and the Waldenses custom was to wash the feet of visiting ministers. There is some evidence that it was observed by the early Hussites. The practice was a meaningful part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century radical reformation. Foot washing was often 'rediscovered' or 'restored' in revivals of religion in which the participants tried to recreate the faith and practice of the apostolic era." As this

period was a time in which many who broke with the Catholic Church were martyred for their stance, there is not a lot known of the way they 'held' church, as they had to be very careful of detection. Both the Mennonite community and the Grace Brethren have carried this tradition into the present as noted above the Brethren hold the practice in high regard, as do the Mennonites.

The Methodist and Lutheran churches also continue to practice the ceremony of Feet Washing. Wikipedia says, "Within the United Methodist Church foot washing is most often experienced in connection with Maundy Thursday services and, sometimes, at ordination services where the Bishop may wash the feet of those being ordained." The Lutheran's also seem to practice this as a part of their Maundy Thursday services. As with the Eastern Orthodox, this ceremony seems to be separate and after the regular services.

The Pentecostal Church of God, founded in Chicago, Illinois, in 1919 by a group of ministers who had decided not to join the Assemblies of God (founded in 1914), accepts Feet Washing at the discretion of the local congregation, but has no formal statement concerning the practice. This is sadly true of most 'modern' day Pentecostal groups; though some individual churches are very intense in their belief and practice of the service, just as many are not. From what I have gleaned, their most common belief seems to be that the ceremony is one that speaks to humility.

As can be seen in the token groups mentions above (there are many, many more that could have been referenced), Feet Washing has been a practice in churches down through the centuries and is still practiced by many in this present age; clearly showing that many believed and still believe this to be something that should be done by Christians and the Church.

Many find reason to disagree however. But then, Jesus also commanded us to love and serve, many do not practice this either; He told us to be perfect, many want us to believe He really was calling us to be mature; He commanded us to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel', many believe they can circumvent this by paying another to do their job and they will offer many good excuses as to why they don't preach or witness of Jesus – is it any wonder they refuse to humble themselves to obey this command. Judgment Day is coming, beloved, don't be found wanting.

**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup>And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"<sup>72</sup>**

Dare we believe He will accept our excuses? Dare we believe it will only be the Israelites who failed to obey Him and offered excuses that will not be present at His supper?

**"Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, <sup>17</sup>and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' <sup>18</sup>But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' <sup>19</sup>And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' <sup>20</sup>Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' <sup>21</sup>So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here *the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.*' <sup>22</sup>And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' <sup>23</sup>Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup>For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"<sup>73</sup>**

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<sup>72</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Mt 7:21-23

<sup>73</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1982, S. Lk 14:16-24

The illustration here shows that many are so concerned with their place and 'needs' in the world that they apply themselves to taking care of them and forsake the spiritual growth, which is far more necessary. If we don't come and obey Jesus now, one day we may wake up to find it is too late.

## Chapter 7: Some Doctrinal Ideas Concerning Feet Washing; Conclusion

We have at our hands today several excellent Study Bibles, representing a wide variety of beliefs or doctrinal stances. There are Bibles that delineate what the Catholic beliefs are, those of the Reformation denominations, those who accept Calvinist doctrine, Pentecostals and mainstream Evangelical ideology; to name a few. As we have taken a brief look at what some of them believe concerning the washing of feet by Jesus and whether we should continue to do so, I thought that before my conclusion we might look at what some of the noted scholars from some of these groups say in their Study Bibles. Please make note of where each quote came from by placing your cursor over the number at the end of the quote; I want to assure that each of you give credit, as I do, to these learned people. Thank you.

BTW: A dotted line will separate each work, so as not to confuse anyone. I believe we can all gain some insight into the beliefs of other Christians as nearly each Study Bible give a majority consensus of their group's belief concerning this ceremony.

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**13:1** Jesus knew certainly that the hour of His Passover sacrifice was at hand. Since “His hour had come” and Jesus loved His own, He carried out that love to its perfect conclusion by (1) His humble service, (2) His teaching, and (3) His death on the cross; He loved them “to the end” or perfectly (*telos*, Gk.). The word “depart” describes Jesus’ death in terms of a journey, and in a Passover context may indicate that His death was a second and ultimate Exodus, with deliverance from spiritual bondage. His death is not the termination of a life, but an act providing freedom from sin’s captivity. The washing of the disciples’ feet could well emphasize cleansing in relation to redemption.

**13:5** Ordinarily the cleansing of feet was done before the meal by the lowest-ranking servant in the household. It seems that none of the disciples were willing to assume this posture, so Jesus rose during (or at the end of) the meal to dramatize symbolically what His humility would mean redemptively, and what their humility would mean in terms of the believers’ fellowship (sanctification). The description can only have come from an eyewitness who was one of the Twelve.

**13:6–8** To stress the substance of Peter’s emphatic refusal, the Greek construction places “you” and “my” first in the sentence, i.e., “You, my feet are washing?” This illuminates the sharp contrast of persons. The same is true in v. 8, in which the Greek double negative *ou mēg* (“absolutely never”) is added; thus, “Absolutely never shall You my feet wash.” Jesus’ reply to Peter is most emphatic. To have part with another is to share in his work and reward. In essence, Jesus tells Peter, “Unless you allow Me to wash your feet, you cannot be My partner.” The principle is that of absolute surrender, of dependence. As the result of Jesus’ reply, Peter asked to be bathed all over (v. 9) lest he be deficient. Jesus uses Peter’s reply to make an important distinction (v. 10). This washing is not an ordinance, but serves as a teaching tool to explain the nature of believers’ relationship to their Lord.

**13:10** Instead of the Greek word *niptein* (for “washing” in general), a new word is introduced. “Bathed” is from *louein* (Gk.), the word for bathing the whole body. An added symbolism is also introduced. Those who have experienced the bath of regeneration need only to be washed of the daily stains contracted in life (cf. Titus 3:5; 1 John 1:9).

**13:14, 15** Christ’s act is an example of the dignity and responsibility of Christian reciprocal servitude. The act was never taken by the church as an initial rite or an ordinance. Only in 1 Tim. 5:10 is its practice mentioned, and there the devout widows who performed the washing did it as an act of hospitality. In the early church it did become a custom, and in A.D. 694 at the Synod of Toledo, it was officially prescribed. However, since “pedilavium,” or footwashing, is not given as an ordinance, nor commanded and developed in the N.T.

church, most evangelical denominations do not perform the ritual. The intended lesson in Christ's example, however, is clearly not to be set aside. There is no service too extensive, costly, or humiliatingly modest to be performed for another of God's children.<sup>74</sup>

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**Jn 13:8** — There are three major viewpoints that deal with Jesus' statement in this verse. First, it has been suggested that in refusing to have Christ wash his feet, Peter was rejecting salvation from his sins. This opinion is based on the definition of the word translated "wash." It has been suggested that the "washing" represents free forgiveness or pardon from sin, the "newness of life," or both.

Another view proposes that Peter sought physical cleansing as opposed to spiritual. In focusing on himself for this "cleansing," Peter missed the whole point to Christ's illustration—that is, humility.

A third interpretation of this passage reflects two particular perspectives on this verse. In the first place it states that Jesus was warning Peter that he would be disobeying the Lord if he did not allow Him to wash his feet. In other words, Peter would be standing apart from Christ, renouncing Him as Lord. It also emphasizes the importance of a person being washed spiritually. A person cannot enjoy the blessings which result from a close, personal walk with Jesus Christ without being spiritually cleansed. This last interpretation is supported best by the text because obedience to Christ is not the focus of the verses in context.<sup>75</sup>

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**13:4, 5. Began to wash the disciples' feet:** Washing the guests' feet was always done by the humblest of the servants. It was considered a menial task. Perhaps Jesus had waited for one of the disciples to perform this task, but they were evidently debating who should be the greatest (cf. Luke 22:24–27). The purpose of the action was to set an example (v. 15), not to establish an ordinance. He said, "Do *as* I have done to you," not "Do *what* I have done to you." It was a lesson on humility and service they sorely needed.

**13:9, 10.** If a guest had bathed properly at home, only his **feet** needed cleansing. **Jesus** says the whole bath is not necessary because **Peter** has already been **washed** (saved). Jesus uses Peter's comment to suggest that a traitor was in their midst. One of them needs the whole bath, but it is not Peter. *Washed* (*leloumenos*) should be translated "bathed." The whole body needed this. **Wash** (*nipsasthai*) is properly translated. Only the hands and feet needed this. This same word is used in verses 5, 6, 8, 12, and 14. In verse 13, washing their feet did not mean that He was not their Lord; rather it showed that the work of the Lord was service (cf. Phil. 2:6–8).

**13:14, 15. Wash one another's feet:** Jesus is merely setting an example, not establishing an ordinance. There is little evidence that the early church practiced foot-washing, except as a social custom. The practice is not mentioned in Acts. The only other mention in the New Testament is 1 Timothy 5:10, where widows may be provided for by the church only if they have practiced this custom specifically on the saints.<sup>76</sup>

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**13:4, 5** The dusty and dirty conditions of the region necessitated the need for footwashing. Although the disciples most likely would have been happy to wash Jesus' feet, they could not conceive of washing each other's feet. This was because in the society of the time footwashing was reserved for the lowliest of menial servants. Peers did not wash one another's feet, except very rarely and as a mark of great love. Luke points out (22:24) that they were arguing about who was the greatest of them, so that none was willing to stoop to wash feet. When Jesus moved to wash their feet, they were shocked. His actions serve also as symbolic of spiritual cleansing (vv. 6–9) and a model of Christian humility (vv. 12–17). Through this action Jesus taught the lesson of selfless service that was supremely exemplified by His death on the cross.

**13:6–10** These proceedings embarrassed all of the disciples. While others remained silent, Peter, perhaps on behalf of others (see Matt. 16:13–23), spoke up in indignation that Jesus would stoop so low as to wash his feet.

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<sup>74</sup> *Believer's Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Jn 13:1-10

<sup>75</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros ; Baker, Warren: *The Complete Word Study Bible : King James Version*. electronic ed. Chattanooga : AMG Publishers, 2000, c1991, c1994

<sup>76</sup> *King James Version Study Bible* . electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1988, S. Jn 13:4

He failed to see beyond the humble service itself to the symbolism of spiritual cleansing involved (v. 7; cf. 1 John 1:7–9). Jesus' response made the real point of His actions clear: Unless the Lamb of God cleanses a person's sin (i.e., as portrayed in the symbolism of washing), one can have no part with Him.

**13:10 needs only to wash his feet.** The cleansing that Christ does at salvation never needs to be repeated—atonement is complete at that point. But all who have been cleansed by God's gracious justification need constant washing in the experiential sense as they battle sin in the flesh. Believers are justified and granted imputed righteousness (Phil. 3:8, 9), but still need sanctification and personal righteousness (Phil. 3:12–14).

**13:11, 12 not all clean.** This verse refers to Judas (6:70), who was soon to lead the mob to capture Jesus (18:3).

**13:15 an example.** The word used here suggests both "example" and "pattern" (Heb. 4:11; 8:5; 9:25; James 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:6). Jesus' purpose in this action was to establish the model of loving humility.<sup>77</sup>

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**13:2 Being ended** may also be translated "having begun." It was customary for slaves to wash guests' feet as the guests arrived, before they sat down to eat (vv. 4, 5). In any case, it appears that the supper had not ended, but was in progress. The statement of Jesus' complete love in v. 1 is contrasted with the fact that Judas would soon **betray Him**.

**13:4 His garments:** Jesus **laid aside** His outer garment, which would have impeded His movements. **towel:** By putting on an apron, Christ looked like the slave to whom the task of washing the feet of guests was assigned. Though the disciples realized what Jesus was doing, none of them offered himself for the task. Servanthood was not on their minds. Jesus loved them knowing all about them, including the worst one of them, Judas.

**13:8 no part with Me:** The washing was a symbol of spiritual cleansing (vv. 10, 11). If Peter did not participate in the cleansing, he would not enjoy fellowship with Christ (see 1 John 1:9).<sup>78</sup>

**13:9, 10 but also my hands and my head:** Given Jesus' dramatic statement, Peter had no choice but to submit. Only this time he went too far in the other direction. At first he wanted to tell the Lord what to do (v. 8). Now he wanted to dictate the manner in which Jesus did it. But Jesus told him he did not need a bath; he only needed Jesus **to wash his feet** that were dusty from the road. This is symbolic. A believer has already been "cleansed." He or she only needs the cleansing of daily sins that comes through confession (see 1 John 1:9). Thus Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet not only is a model of service, but it represents the ultimate in service—forgiveness of sins.<sup>79</sup>

**13:11 You are not all clean:** This is the second indication of the presence of a traitor among the apostles (6:70). Apparently this comment did not attract much attention.

**13:13 Teacher and Lord** were the ordinary titles of respect given to a rabbi.

**13:14, 15 you also ought to wash one another's feet:** The Lord was using His practical action to give **an example** of love to His disciples (v. 1).<sup>80</sup>

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▪ **13:1 He loved them to the end.** Great emphasis is placed in chs. 13–17 on Christ's love. This love is illustrated in the moving scene of the foot-washing in which the Son of God does not disdain performing the most menial tasks of a servant (Phil. 2:7, 8).

▪ **13:2** A vivid contrast between self-serving Judas and self-giving Jesus.

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<sup>77</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 13:4

<sup>78</sup>Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Jn 13:2

<sup>79</sup>Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Jn 13:9

<sup>80</sup>Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Jn 13:11

- **13:3 Jesus, knowing.** Jesus’ humble conduct was not because He forgot His rank as incarnate God the Son. His act demonstrates that rank and privilege are not occasions for arrogance, but are higher credentials for service.
  - **13:5 wash the disciples’ feet.** Foot-washing was a common element of hospitality in a dusty country where people wore sandals (cf. Luke 7:44). This task was usually performed by the lowliest member of the household.
  - **13:6–10** Peter, with his usual impulsiveness (Luke 5:8; Matt. 16:22; Acts 10:14), objected to Jesus’ action of washing His feet. He could not understand the humility of Christ. Jesus answers that whatever Peter’s own expectations may have been, Peter must accept Jesus in the path that God has chosen for the Messiah to follow (Is. 55:7–9; Matt. 16:23).
  - **13:11 He knew.** John emphasizes that Judas’s betrayal was not an unforeseen development, but that Jesus proceeded in full awareness of coming events and of Judas’s role in them. Judas’s action was his own free and responsible decision—yet carried out according to the plan of God.
  - **13:13 Teacher and Lord.** This double title gives special significance to the claim of Christ over the disciples’ lives. Later, they would call Him “Lord” in acknowledgement of His deity (20:28).
  - **13:15 I have given you an example.** The humility of Christ is a pattern for His disciples. Instead of aspiring to dominate, they must be eager to serve (Matt. 20:26–28; Phil. 2:5–8; 1 Pet. 2:21).
  - **13:17 if you do them.** Intellectual perception is not enough, but must be backed up by commitment of life. This does not mean that our works are the basis of our acceptance by God, but that they are the evidence of a true faith. Trust and obedience are inseparable.<sup>81</sup>
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**13:2** Whether or not the **supper** was the Last Supper or the Passover meal described by the other Gospels is immaterial to John’s emphasis on the lesson Jesus taught in the washing of the disciples’ feet.

**13:5** Usually a servant performed the menial task of washing the guests’ feet, but since no servant was present and no one else assumed the role, Jesus used the occasion to teach a lesson in humility and selfless service.

**13:10** The disciples of Christ already enjoyed a special relationship to Him. Therefore, what is needed is not another “bath,” but cleansing from defilement contracted along the way. **Not all** refers to Judas.

**13:13** Jesus was probably not seeking to institute a literal practice to be observed continually in the church, although some feel this to be the case. But He shows great concern that the meaning of true servanthood be well understood, that no one deem it beneath his dignity to perform the most menial of tasks for others. Ultimately, servanthood is a disposition of the heart and spirit, which expresses itself in concrete actions.<sup>82</sup>

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**13:1–20** Leadership is a fascinating topic. Business books offer models of leadership as diverse as Attila the Hun, Oriental warlords, and Abraham Lincoln. But Jesus painted a different picture of leadership.

As He wrapped up His work, Jesus held a dinner for his closest associates. Instead of delivering a state-of-the-union address or naming a successor, He chose to leave His seat at the head of the table and pick up some household servant’s equipment—a basin of water and a towel. He then washed the feet of every person at the table—even Judas, His betrayer (John 13:1–20). Foot-washing was usually performed by household servants as an act of hospitality to weary, dusty guests (compare Luke 7:44). Leaders and hosts did not stoop to such a menial task. But Jesus did.

Seated once again at the table, the Lord asked whether His followers understood what He had done (John 13:12). He then exhorted them to adopt the same posture of serving others, thereby following His example. He assured them that they would be blessed if they did (13:15–17).

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<sup>81</sup>Whitlock, Luder G. ; Sproul, R. C. ; Waltke, Bruce K. ; Silva, Moiss: *Reformation Study Bible, the : Bringing the Light of the Reformation to Scripture : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson, 1995, S. Jn 13:1-17

<sup>82</sup>*Spirit Filled Life Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1991, S. Jn 13:2-13

Jesus still calls believers today to become members of the “Order of the Towel.” As Christ’s followers, we need to lead others by serving them.<sup>83</sup>

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And finally we have this from ‘The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible’ (copyright 1975, 1976; Grand Rapids, MI; volume 2, from the article entitled ‘Foot Washing’ pg. 588):

“At the Last Supper the Lord, taking a towel and basin during the meal (John 13:4-10), proceeded to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel. It was not to observe a custom, for the disciples were mystified by it. There is no doubt that Jesus gave it the spiritual significance of symbolic cleansing of the believer from the defilement of present sin as baptism symbolizes cleansing from all guilt—the one partial and temporary, the latter complete and permanent. ‘He that has bathed, does not need to wash, except for his feet’ (John 13:10). This is the main lesson, rather than humility (viz. note in Scofield Bible, loc cit). Whether or not it is an ordinance (viz. John 13:14, 15) must be decided on the basis of whether or not it meets the three qualifications of a church ordinance: (1) instituted by Christ, (2) of universal, and (3) permanent application. A number of smaller denominations developing out of the “Left Wing of the Reformation” (Bainton) believe it to be an ordinance, citing in addition to John 13, 1 Timothy 5:10. The National Fellowship of Brethren Churches has developed quite a cogent theology and defense of it as an ordinance (viz. H. A. Hoyt, *This Do*, Brethren Missionary Herald Co., Winona Lake, Ind., also C. F. Yoder, *God’s Means of Grace*, o.p.). R. D. Culver

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As can be seen from all the above cited texts, none of them will elevate feet washing to the status of an ordinance as it fails to meet, in their judgment; the criterion man has decided it must. One even uses the argument of Jesus’ choice of words to ‘prove’ his point, stating that Jesus said do ‘as’ I have done, not ‘what’ I have done. He seems to be clutching a straw, as they used to say, but that is his learned opinion. Regardless, it would seem that only what is now known as The Grace Brethren believe this to be an ordinance.

Again, we find several reasons why Jesus performed the service offered and proven, some even giving two or more reasons. Generally we have a consensus agreeing Jesus was showing a servant attitude and humility to His disciples, that this was done out of love and as an example.

Still, I can’t understand why He thought His disciples wouldn’t understand then, but would understand later. He had already instructed them thoroughly in both humility and having a servant’s heart. Regardless, this is the opinion of the learned men who annotate our Study Bibles. We also have some who see this as symbolic of spiritual cleansing, but they relegate it to an even less important position than water baptism which they mistakenly feel to be an ‘outward expression of an inner cleansing’ – more of a rite or ritual. And one refers to this as ‘a model of loving humility’.

As stated earlier, most believe this is a ritual that can or can’t be practiced; it should be left to the local church to decide. Some few have decided and shown that it is not to be practiced, while a few others believe that, though it is not an ordinance as such, we ought to practice feet washing; and then you have The Brethren who stand alone in believing it to be an ordinance for the Church.

As I have already stated, I do not see the argument, Jesus told us to do this and I certainly don’t need some man telling me to do or not do what my Master has commanded – regardless of the semantic argument. And this is what I base my conclusion on:

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<sup>83</sup> *Word in Life Study Bible* . electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996, S. Jn 13:1

As I see it there are essentially three questions that we much ask ourselves concerning feet washing. First we must determine what, in our minds, according to the teachings of Jesus and the leading of His Holy Spirit, was Jesus' reason for washing His disciples' feet. We must then consider whether this ceremony has meaning for us, today. And finally we must decide what place this service has (i.e. none, of individual choice or a commandment of Jesus) for this will decide whether we will wash the feet of others or not. These are the questions I will give my opinion on and this is what I would ask that you, dear reader, consider for yourself.

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### Why did Jesus wash the feet of His disciples?

We have discussed several 'reasons' as to why people believe Jesus performed this action, there are others that we haven't considered and there may well be ones the Spirit has not enlightened me to, yet. The opinion I held from the beginning of this project remains the same. I believe there are layers upon layers of meanings as to why Jesus did this. I believe a visual lesson concerning humility and being a servant to all has a place in His actions. I believe that agape love certainly was part of His thinking when He took up the basin and towel. I firmly believe that this was part of Jesus' introduction of the Holy Spirit as it is He who holds a prominent place in this extended lesson (John 13-17). And I believe there may very well be an act of grace that takes place in those who practice this celebration, just as a real dying and resurrection in one's spirit takes place during water baptism and the laying on of hands to commission someone in the work to which Jesus has called them brings a certain grace of God upon all those involved. As I have stated, I do not believe God calls us to do anything without reason and merit; if we obey we receive the blessing, if we do not obey, the blessing is not ours.

I even accept that Jesus performed this ceremony as an example that we are to follow, for I believe there are many ways in which one could and should wash the feet of the other disciples. I don't believe any of these other ways of washing negate the fact that we are to literally wash each others feet.

I do not believe that any of these is 'in and of itself' the sole reason for Jesus washing His disciples' feet. As I have spoken to, many of them have 'holes' when they are viewed closely as being the sole reason; this is mostly based upon Jesus telling His apostles that though they did not understand now, they would at a later time.

As Jesus had been instructing His apostles on love, humility, a servant's heart and doing as He did to bring further honor and glory to the Father, it just doesn't make sense to say they would understand a lesson if any of these were the sole reason for His washing their feet; this would also hold true for the belief that this was done solely to 'symbolize' the need for spiritual cleansing, surely they understood the need to be spiritually clean.

However, there are elements of all in place and if we take them all together we may begin to get the deeper understanding of Jesus' doing this. Perhaps taken all together, they point to the Holy Spirit and His ministry, for they surely encompass those gifts and fruit that He brings to a believer's heart, not to mention His being the catalyst to bring awareness of the need for continued spiritual cleansing in a believer's heart. As this other or new Comforter who will take the place of Jesus, have His authority and point others to the fullness of His righteous truth, we might also see this ceremony as showing us a deep truth about the Holy Trinity and what they expect of us. For if God humbles Himself to perform the task of the lowest of servants in order to bring them to a deeper understanding and closer spiritual walking with God, can we as humans be expected to do less?

I believe all these elements and more are to be found in this celebration, but I really believe the true depths of exactly what all Jesus wanted to convey are to be discovered only by those who enter into performing this ceremony with the heart of Jesus, God's Servant.

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### Does feet washing have relevance to us today?

In my opinion, the simple answer is yes! For all those reasons mentioned above, that we might develop the heart of God.

The most important reason however is that Jesus told His disciples, and thus us modern day disciples, to follow His example in this. I do not care how one might twist this truth with semantics or by ‘spiritualizing’ this celebration, this is just as much a command of Jesus as His command to love others, to serve others or to go and preach.

I do not see myself or the Church as a whole as being so mature in Christ Jesus that we don’t need lessons in humility, a servant’s attitude or practicing agape love. I don’t see any of us being so Christ-like that we need no more lessons or practice. As stated before, I see in today’s modern church their being far more infused with the attitude of a benefactor than I see those who possess a true servant’s heart and I can easily recognize in myself the propensity to cater to my own flesh and take attitudes that are far removed from agape love, humility and being a bondsman. Personally, I’ll take all the practice and aid I can get to move me toward the ‘perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’; perhaps some have ‘arrived’, I haven’t.

And if, as I believe the Holy Spirit has witnessed to me, there is an act of grace that comes only to those who partake of this celebration; well, I want all of God I can get, so count me in. I’m like Peter here, if I can get some grace by washing the feet of the saints, then let me wash their hands and their heads too! And I think this is also part of why we should perform this service, often – it brings into our hearts a bit of the Lord our God as we do as Jesus did, as we follow His example; perhaps this is the grace that is bestowed upon those who celebrate being a servant as Jesus did.

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What place should this ceremony have in the Church?

As I have stated repeatedly, I see this as a commandment of Jesus Christ to His body, I see this as God telling His servants to do as He did. Thus, to me, this should be an ordinance in every church and should be practiced by every believer. For all those reasons we have discussed, I see this as being very beneficial to the Church, if practiced, and as being detrimental as we have chosen to ignore the practice. Perhaps the ignoring of this is part of the reason why so many in the Church have elevated themselves to be benefactors instead of servants, preachers, ministers and right reverends (when they don’t assume the title of bishop, pope or apostle) instead of pastor or shepherd. Again, I pray that each of you will seek to attend or institute feet washing in your group if it is not practiced and if it is, then I pray you will ask that it be celebrated more often and by more believers.

## Epilogue

First, I would like to thank my Lord and God for the privilege of writing this and getting a deeper understanding of the Servant heart of God. I thank Him dearly for the knowledge and wisdom He gave me throughout this task, for indeed, I am not as intelligent as this work might reflect; it is only as I call out to Jesus and accept what He reveals to me that I have any ability, for it is only as I recognize my weakness that He can give me of His strength.

I would also like to thank each of you for taking the time to read this booklet; I appreciate your trust in me, that you would give me of your time. I also thank AFOL for giving me this opportunity and privilege to share Jesus.

I pray for each of us that we continue to grow in His love and grace so that the full knowledge of His truth may one day be ours – and I believe the development of a servant’s heart will be a huge stride toward seeing the face of our Lord Jesus. May He bless each of us with more of Himself. Amen!

To any who may care to receive the devotional the Lord has me to write, it will be sent to your mailbox upon request by writing me at [rforrester001@nc.rr.com](mailto:rforrester001@nc.rr.com) or you can view nearly all of them by going to <http://devotionals.thekingsfamily.org> Again I thank you for your time.

In His name and by His grace,  
George Forrester  
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