

Studies from the Book of John

Jesus Washes the Feet of the Disciples – Chapter 13:1-20

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

1It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

2The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. **3**Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; **4**so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **5**After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

9"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

10Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." **11**For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

12When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. **13**"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. **14**Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **15**I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **16**I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17**Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

18"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'

19"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. **20**I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

A Symbolic picture of Christ and the new covenant

⁴so he got up from the meal,

God stepped down from the throne. The time of the old covenant (covenant of the Law) was over.

took off his outer clothing,

God laid aside his power. He shed his royal raiment. He removed his robes - the brilliant light of his unapproachable holiness.

and wrapped a towel around his waist.

He took on the garment of servitude, submission and humility. He became man in his son Christ. He became human. He took on a human body as Jesus.

⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet,

God gave to his son, Jesus (the basin) the authority to address our sins. The water poured out is the grace of salvation through the power of Christ's shed blood. The washing is his innocent sin free blood poured out as a sacrifice for our sin.

We must remember the work of Jesus, all that he came to do - his sinless life, and his willingness to forgive the disciple's - the believer's - our sins. The feet of the disciples represent what is dirtiest in our lives, our sin. That which separates us from God is what Jesus came to cleanse away.

drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Our sins were wiped away (forgotten - as if they never existed in God's eyes) by the human sacrifice of Jesus.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

Peter's refusal to allow the washing mimics our inability to understand and accept the gift of Christ. His refusal paints a picture of how difficult it is for us to comprehend salvation.

However, if we do not allow Christ into our lives (the washing of our sin), he will have no part of us. Inviting him into our lives is a matter of our free will.

⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" ¹⁰Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When we submit to the call of the Holy Spirit and invite Jesus into our lives, all that is required for salvation at that point is the intercession of Jesus.

We may think that more is required, but Jesus' intercession is all that is needed.

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.

This verse is a clear picture of the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus back to his father and the throne of heaven.

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Do we know what Jesus did for us?

As Jesus came to provide forgiveness for our sins, so must we forgive others. If we refuse to forgive, we refuse to accept the blood of Christ as a forgiveness of our sins.

¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus said this to his disciples, but today, we are the disciples.

This growth in understanding as we become more like Jesus is the source of great peace in the life of a Christian.