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John 13 - Part I

Wash your Feet

Concerning the Passover supper, John does not mention Jesus' institution of the symbolic use of the bread and wine as his body and blood, as did other writers (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:15-20). However, he includes the part about Jesus washing the disciples feet, whereas the event is not mentioned by the others.

John 13:1-7: *1. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4. He rises from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5. After that he pours water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. 6. Then comes he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now; but you shalt know hereafter.*

The 'foot washing', commonly called Ordinance of Humility, was required by some congregations at one time. It seems to have gradually faded away, though there may be some who still practice it today. Interestingly, the washing of feet is only mentioned by John. It was not taught to the churches in the book of Acts, nor in any of the epistles. Why? Perhaps because it was a common practice in that day (Luke 7:44). Too, it was a symbol of something spiritual which Christ had been doing during his entire ministry, most of which was not understood by the disciples until after the cross.

Notice the response of Jesus to Peter's inquiry: *6. ..Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now; but you shalt know hereafter.* Jesus was actually washing the feet of the disciples. So what did he mean by his statement to Peter: *What I do you know not now; but you shalt know hereafter?* Jesus ONLY taught in parables (Mk 4:34), therefore he was acting out a parable that would be understood after the cross (this was the same night in which Jesus was taken captive).

John 13:8-11: *8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

Like most modern Christians, Peter is thinking of the literal event, but Jesus answers him with a spiritual application to the inward person, or the heart. The feet are a symbol of the direction of the heart - i.e. the application of the thoughts of the heart in one's life: **Psalms 119:105:** *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* **1John 1:7:** *...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.* And a verse from our last study: **John 12:35:** *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes.*

Jesus told his disciples that he only needed to wash their feet and they would be completely clean. This is another clue that Jesus was speaking figuratively of what he did. Clean the inside of the cup and platter and the outside will be clean (Matthew 23:26); clean up our way of thinking, and the things we do will be pure (Isaiah 55:7-9). Metaphorically, Jesus had been washing the feet of the disciples through out his ministry. He also said *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*. Judas Iscariot was not receiving and applying the principles in his own life and ended up betraying Jesus. This is yet another figure of how most in every generation have a form of godliness, but deny the power to change them inwardly, because they do not live up to the light they have. Remember, Judas at one time, went with the disciples preaching the gospel, casting out demons and healing the sick (Mt 10:5-8).

John 13:12-17: *12. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17. If ye know these things, happy [blessed] are ye if ye do them.*

Seeing now, that Jesus acted out a parable, then his command of *ye also ought to wash one another's feet* is not a command to literally wash one another's feet. It is a command to help one another spiritually, to cleanse our ways of thinking about God and free us from various other errors we have been taught. As servants of Christ we are sent to share the light God gives to us through His Son.

John 13:18-20: *18. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eats bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. 19. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receives whomsoever I send receives me; and he that receives me receives him that sent me.*

He that eats bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me - i.e. walked contrary to what Jesus taught. **Psalms 41:9:** *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel^(h6119) against me.* **Psalms 89:51:** *Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps^(h6119) of thine anointed.* Jesus said, "walk in the light," Judas walked in darkness. There are many breaking bread (figuratively speaking) with Jesus today, but for selfish reasons. When they stand before Christ in their judgment day, he will answer them: **Matthew 7:22-23:** *22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

When anyone seeks the Lord for understanding, he will either give you the answer directly, or send someone who will have the answer already. It may appear to you that the Lord is not answering your request. But be patient and be open to another who may address the topic. As *He that receives whomsoever I send receives me*. If truth comes via another individual, the Lord will confirm it in your heart when you study it out.

John 14:27: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* Trust the Lord as you will have peace when the truth comes, no matter the source. Amen.