

John 13: Washing Feet

07-31-16 PM

In John 13 Jesus does something very unusually in the night of the Passover: He disrobes and begins washing the feet of the disciples. There was a custom of washing hands ceremoniously in the Passover, but this was quite different. It is so shocking, that when Jesus comes to Peter, Peter refuses at first. Ultimately, Jesus says that this event was meant to teach an important lesson.

There are some churches today that practice the sacrament of washing feet (called Maundy). Was Jesus instituting a church work (such as the Lord's Supper He introduced at this time)? The practice of washing feet is an ancient one, as seen in Genesis 18 and 19 (Abraham and Lot). It demonstrated the act of hospitality and service, as seen with Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:41. However, it is not mentioned as a work of the church in the New Testament. It is only mentioned again in 1 Timothy 5:10, where it is described in a list of individual good works. Generically, it is an act of hospitality, a work of Christians (Hebrews 13:2). It is not a ceremony of the church.

However, Jesus said He was teaching us something important in this action. That lesson was that we are to be servants of God and of one another. In Romans 6:11-23 Paul described the purchase of the Christian by God. He says that we are slaves now to God; we are to submit ourselves to serve Him, and not ourselves.

How does a Christian serve God? First, we are to put on the mind of Christ in humility. Philippians 2:1-13 describes that mind as being one that submitted to all things in humility. It also points to that mind being thoughtful of others. Putting on Christ is all about serving others

How does a Christian serve others? In 1 John 4:20 we are told that we must see to the needs of other Christians. In Hebrews 10:22-25 we are told to be part of the assembly of Christians (the assembling of Christians) so that we might encourage one another. Galatians 6:1-2 speaks about admonishing each other and bearing each other's burdens. Ultimately, we are told in that passage that such service is the Law of Christ.

Jesus did something remarkable in washing the feet of the disciples. We are not greater than our Master; thus we ought to consider one another worthy of any service.