

Passover Season – Foot-Washing

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The foot washing part of the Passover is kept by few and poorly understood.

For most who profess Christianity, foot washing is not a part of any communion service that they may keep, and most know little about it. The pope ceremoniously washes the feet of a few people at easter time, and perhaps that event is the only time people hear about foot washing. This is rather sad, because I believe that foot washing emphasises Christ's second great commandment to its fullest extent. (For more about the Passover and the first holy day season see [The Passover Must Come First](#) and [Passover and the First Holy Day Season](#).)

Let's start by looking at the example Christ gave us and see if we can then piece together the depth of meaning behind this event and what it means for us.

[John 13:3](#) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

[V4](#) He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

[V5](#) After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

[V6](#) Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

[V7](#) Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

[V8](#) Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

[V9](#) Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

[V10](#) Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

[V11](#) For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

This event is only recorded in the gospel of John, but what we do know is that the washing of feet was a common practice. There weren't paved roads and footpath, so walking any distance on a path meant that your feet would be dusty if it was dry and muddy if wet. It was common to have the lowliest servant wash the feet of those who arrived at your home. But the washing of feet was also commanded by God to the priesthood of Arron when they came into the temple.

[Exodus 30:17](#) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

[V18](#) Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.

[V19](#) For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:

[V20](#) When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:

[V21](#) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

So washing was a life and death matter when coming before God, and indeed we just read this in [John 13 verse 8](#) where Jesus said; “...*Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*”

There are other examples of feet being washed, perhaps the foremost being when the Lord appeared to Abraham.

[Genesis 18:1](#) And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

[V2](#) And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

[V3](#) And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

[V4](#) Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

[V5](#) And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

Here Abraham offered water to wash their feet, and as is states in verse 5, they accepted and asked him to do as he had offered. In this instance Abraham was not only cleaning the feet of his visitors as was custom, he was seeking to honour them as a servant, in this case a holy servant. And as verse 3 shows, Abraham knew that it was the Lord in human form who was visiting him.

But Jesus gives even more explanation to the significance of the washing of feet in the gospel of John.

[John 13:12](#) 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?

[V13](#) Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

[V14](#) If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

[V15](#) For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

[V16](#) 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.

[V17](#) If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Foot washing is an act of service, but it is also an act of faith.

Jesus told Peter that he could have no part in Him unless he allowed Him, Jesus, to wash his feet ([John 13 verse 8](#)).

In a similar manner we are to wash one another's feet (verse 14). We must allow our feet to be washed. It is particularly intimate thing to have someone wash our feet, and a humbling experience. Conversely, to wash another person's feet is an act of humility. Further, Jesus has told us that He and our Father are one, and here that He is not greater than the Father, verse 16. In a similar manner, we are not greater than our fellow human beings. Yes, some of us are fortunate to be called by God at this time, but that does not make us better, greater or more righteous. There are numerous scriptures that speak to us falling short of God, being sinners and subject to death.

Indeed, God says; “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*”; [Jeremiah 17 verse 9](#).

But, as we journey through life developing Godly character, we learn that loving our neighbour is intrinsic with loving God.

[Matthew 22:37](#) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

[V38](#) This is the first and great commandment.

[V39](#) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

[V40](#) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

[Mark 12:29](#) And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

[V30](#) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

[V31](#) And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

These verses are the key to foot washing. If we are to claim our love to God and accept His sacrifice in place of our own death, the first great commandment, then we equally must do as is in the second great commandment, to love our neighbour.

In fact, how can we love God if we don't unreservedly love our neighbour, our fellow human beings.

[Mark 12:32](#) And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

[V33](#) And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

[V34](#) And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Here the word *discreetly* (verse 34) does not mean privately, but rather *with discretion, wisely or prudently* Strong's Concordance **G3562** Greek word *νοῦνεχῶς* (*nounechōs*)

The scribe, a person who was familiar with the scriptures, as it was his job to copy them, summed up not only what Jesus had said, but also understood the enormity of what was being taught. That these two great commandments transcended all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices that pointed to them.

Jesus commended the scribe for his understanding; *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*

Is that why our Saviour instituted the foot washing before the Passover?

We are to demonstrate our love to our neighbour, to acknowledge our fleeting human existence and to humble ourselves with all humility by washing one-another's feet, and only then are we ready to be acceptable to God and to receive the Passover sacrifice He laid down for us.