

# The Kingdom Understanding of Feet Washing

In the Ancient world everyone wore sandals (or something similar) in the hot weather. As a consequence, everyone's feet became filthy with dirt, mud and animal manure. A normal home protocol of those days was to keep the filth on the feet out of the house by washing entrant's feet. Everyone who came into the house would be refreshed by washing their face and hands, but it was the duty of the lowest person in the household to wash everyone's feet to enhance their refreshment.

Jesus did the same thing to his disciples when he shared his last Jewish Passover with them. At that time he directed his disciples to wash each others feet.<sup>1</sup> This injunction appears to have been taken literally because it is included in Paul's outline of the characteristics of a virtuous widow who deserves to be on the Kingdom welfare system.<sup>2</sup>

The act of washing another person's feet was a necessity in ancient times, but it was considered to be humbling for anyone other than a servant to do the job. Eventually, feet washing became a sign of humility among the clergy in the Romish church system after that religion developed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century following the corruption of 'Jesus-following' early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

As part of our reprogramming from the religious system into the reality of Kingdom knowledge, like everything else, we need to address the ceremony of feet washing.

Let's see what is recorded that Jesus said at the time:

**John 13:3-15** (TLB<sup>3</sup>) – *So he got up from the supper table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his loins, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he had around him.*

*When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Master, you shouldn't be washing our feet like this!"*

*Jesus replied, "You don't understand now why I am doing it; some day you will."*

*"No," Peter protested, "you shall never wash my feet!"*

*"But if I don't, you can't be my partner," Jesus replied.*

*Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well—not just my feet!"*

*Jesus replied, "One who has bathed all over needs only to have his feet washed to be entirely clean. Now you are clean—but that isn't true of everyone here." For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."*

*After washing their feet he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Master' and 'Lord,' and you do well to say it, for it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow: do as I have done to you.*

Have a look at the text in the scripture reference I've highlighted in yellow.

These highlighted areas show that what Jesus did was much more than instigate the ritual of feet washing.

- **"You don't understand now why I am doing it; some day you will."** – Jesus spoke many things parabolically, in riddles. This method was to signal that there was an underlying, deeper spiritual, Kingdom meaning that needed to be comprehended. In these cases the 'face-value' of the message was incidental. Much of what Jesus taught his disciples would need the Spirit's interpretation after the outpouring at Pentecost 10 days after Jesus' ascension. This is just another case of the need for

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1 – John 13:14

2 – 1 Timothy 5:10

3 – The Living Bible

revelation.

- **“Now you are clean—but that isn’t true of everyone here...Not all of you are clean.”** – What Jesus did was to highlight spiritual cleanliness in juxtaposition to spiritual uncleanness. So, the point of Jesus’ demonstration was not about physically washing feet but being sanctified. They were already ‘clean’ because of the teaching he had given to them and their responsibility was to remain “grafted” into him.<sup>4</sup>
- **“One who has bathed all over needs only to have his feet washed to be entirely clean”** – The disciples were spiritually clean (sanctified) but there was a need to clean part of them that connected with the filth of daily life. Spiritual uncleanness, as exhibited by Judas Iscariot, was to be contaminated by the secular world and the flesh so that spiritual cleanliness is lost.
- **“Do you understand what I was doing?”** – Highlighting the need to see behind the activity, Jesus reminds them that he was doing a kinaesthetic parable. It was up to them to find out what the Kingdom principle that was behind the feet washing and to understand it.
- **“I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet”** – Jesus had cleansed the disciples spiritually – his job was already done. The onus was on each of the disciples to spiritual cleans each other from the corruption of the world through daily living.

One of the outward expressions (what is properly known as religion) of genuine inward spirituality is to keep yourself unpolluted<sup>5</sup> or uncontaminated<sup>6</sup> by the world system.<sup>7</sup>

## RESOURCE

Insurgence podcast #41 “Keeping Unstained by the World” (Frank Viola)  
[insurgence.podbean.com/e/41-keeping-unstained-by-the-world](http://insurgence.podbean.com/e/41-keeping-unstained-by-the-world)

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4 – John 15:3

5 – James 1:27 (NIV)

6 – James 1:27 (AMP)

7 – James 1:27