

You Shall Never Wash My Feet!

John 13:1-9

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This will be the last feast of the Passover that Jesus will spend with his disciples. John is the only one to record all three feasts during the three plus years of our Lord's public ministry. The first is recorded in John chapter 2, where the context addresses the beginning of our Lord's public ministry which began with Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana.

John 2:11-16 ¹¹ This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. ¹² After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and *His* brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*. ¹⁵ And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; ¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

The second year of Christ's ministry finds him and his disciples ministering to large crowds just before the Passover.

John 6:4-6 ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" ⁶ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

And what he was intending to do was to test the disciples and display the power of the Son of Man in their midst as he miraculously multiplied the five barley loaves and two fish.

And now we come to the last Passover that Jesus will celebrate in this world with his disciples. But before we expound on this section of Scripture there is one Passover that our Lord was actively involved in, before His public ministry, that is worth noting as it actually sets the stage for the last Passover before Christ's death on the cross.

The Passover I'm referring to is the Passover when Jesus was twelve years old. Luke records it for us.

Luke 2:41-47 ⁴¹ Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³ and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴ but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they *began* looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. ⁴⁶ Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

What is fascinating to me about this encounter of a twelve-year old boy, among the learned teachers of the leadership of Israel's religious ruling class, is that he spent three days by himself in Jerusalem, presumably spending those three days with these teachers in some capacity.

We are told that he was sitting in the midst of the teachers. At first glance this seems innocent enough, but keep in mind these learned men had spent years in formal training under some of the best teachers who prepared them for their position as Pharisees.

When the apostle Paul was making his defense before the crowds in Jerusalem, shortly after his arrest by the Romans, he was allowed to address the Jews regarding his ministry for Christ.

Acts 22:3 ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

These highly educated teachers of the law did not fraternize with common people especially those considered children. We get a glimpse of this when a blind man was healed by Jesus and the leaders of Jerusalem sought to get some information from the parents of this person regarding his healing. But because they knew their place and they feared what these leaders might do to them if they answered favorably about what Jesus did for their son, we read this.

John 9:23-34 ²³ For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."
²⁴ So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶ So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear *it* again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" ²⁸ They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." ³⁰ The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and *yet* He opened my eyes. ³¹ "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. ³² "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." ³⁴ They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

No one was going to teach these Jewish elites anything. And yet the irony is that some of these same teachers may have been present so many years before as they sat amazed at not just the questions a 12-year-old Jesus posed to them, but the answers he gave them regarding the Scriptures.

This leads me to my last thought on that encounter with the twelve-year-old Jesus and the teachers of Israel. What did he ask them and what were his answers to questions they asked of him? Did the first Passover come up in the discussion? Surely it did, as this was the reason for he and his family being in Jerusalem.

What would have been our Lord's response to these teachers of the law regarding that time in Israel's history where God was about to bring that

nation out from under the bondage of Egypt as he would ultimately deliver them into the Promised Land, Israel?

Did he opine on the significance of the blood of the lamb placed over the doorposts of every Jewish family? Did he correct the teachers whose traditions may have clouded what the clear teaching of the word of God had to say about that event?

It was the slaying of all the first born in Egypt that eventually led to the nation crossing the Red Sea on dry land, where subsequently Pharaoh's army was trapped and drowned when the Lord caused the waters to destroy the army that was chasing the Jews.

And now, all these years later that twelve-year old boy is a grown man and is about to teach one of the greatest lessons concerning the true Passover. And we will go into some depth as it relates to our Lord's teaching on this most solemn of feasts. But first, back to our text.

John 13:1 ^{NAU} Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

As has been brought out in my previous teaching in the gospel of John, we see here in our text that Jesus seems to make a clear distinction between the world-at-large, and a particular group who are actually secured in his atoning sacrifice identified in this verse as those who are his own as he loved them (that is his own) to the end.

What group is this that can be called, "his own"? Back in John 6 Jesus makes it clear who his own are.

John 6:37-40 ³⁷ "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

Who is coming to Jesus in this context, where he says, "I will certainly not cast out"? Well, the beginning of the verse answers it. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me."

Who are these people who are given to the Son by the Father? They're the same people the apostle Paul identifies in his letter to the church in Ephesus.

Ephesians 1:3-4 ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Who are the “us” whom Paul is addressing? They are the one’s given to the Son by the Father. And when did the Father and the Son come to this arrangement? According to Paul in Ephesians 1:3, it was before the foundation of the world, which is to say, before time and the creation of the world.

In other words, God had made a sovereign choice to place His love on an unlovely people who deserved His wrath and yet were given grace and mercy. Well, that doesn’t seem fair. I thought God so loved the world. I thought the whole world had the capacity to choose Christ. And you’re telling me that only those chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ will come to Christ?

No, I’m not telling you that. God’s word is telling us that. The gospel does go out to the entire world and yet Jesus says this.

Matthew 22:14 ¹⁴ "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

It doesn’t say, many are called but few choose. It says, many are called but few are chosen. Chosen by whom? God. Paul also confirms this when speaking to the Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

You see, the issue here is not that God chose some before the foundation of the world because He saw something in them that was worthy of His choice, or that he saw down the halls of time and saw who would choose him. In that case the ultimate choice falls on man, not God.

And so, the real issue has to do with no one desiring God because of the deadness of our sin. And Paul addresses that with the Ephesian church as well.

Ephesians 2:1-3 ^{NAU} And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Dead men don’t seek anything let alone eternal life. How is this possible?

Romans 3:10-12 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED

ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

So, if we are all spiritually dead as we are born into this world in Adam, then it would make sense that for anyone to have eyes to see or ears to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ a miracle must take place to enable us to hear the call to repent and believe. And that miracle comes from the hand of the Father as Jesus points out.

John 6:44 ⁴⁴ "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

This miracle of bringing life to the dead is what Jesus was discussing with Nicodemus when he told this Pharisee that unless one is born from above, or born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Not that he will not, but that he cannot.

This is the same problem that Jesus pointed out to the crowd of Jews who argued that Abraham was their father. But Jesus points out that the reason they don't embrace him as Messiah is because of an inability to spiritually hear the truth.

John 8:43-44 ⁴³ "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The word "cannot", as in the phrase Jesus uses when he says, "you cannot hear my word," is the Greek word *dunamai*. and it means power, as in you do not have the power or the ability to hear my word.

And so, if one cannot hear and will not seek for God, God Himself must do something to alleviate this spiritually dead condition in those whom He chooses before the foundation of the world. It's called regeneration, bringing life where there was death.

Titus 3:5-6 ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

What Paul identifies as regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, he makes plain when writing to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our

transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

And so, as Jesus is about to go to the cross in our text in John 13, it's important to keep in mind that he is fulfilling the eternal plan to redeem those the Father has given to him.

John 13:1 ^{NAU} Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

But the end must first pass through the means that God has ordained and that involves the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. And this is all part of the Father's plan to redeem a people for Himself. Again, this goes back to the eternal plan that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit had put in place that no man would thwart.

In fact, Peter, on the day of Pentecost announced this eternal plan when addressing all the people gathered in Jerusalem for that feast.

Acts 2:22-23 ²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--²³ this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

Even Judas was part of God's plan to secure salvation for those he knew before the foundation of the world. And notice who is at the heart of the destruction of our Lord.

John 13:2 ² During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, to betray Him,

We need to be careful here not to think that somehow the devil forced Judas into something that was not already on Judas's heart. Again, keep in mind Judas was chosen for the role he would willingly carry out. Jesus pointed this out earlier in this gospel.

John 6:70-71 ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and *yet* one of you is a devil?" ⁷¹ Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

So, Judas' betrayal didn't take Jesus by surprise. It was the very means God would use to secure our salvation in Christ. So, back in our text, when it says that the devil had already put it in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus, it can be assumed that it was some time before the Passover feast.

In fact, we know it was at least two days before the Passover as Matthew clearly tells us that Judas had already betrayed Jesus.

Matthew 26:1-2 ^{NAU} When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, ² "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* handed over for crucifixion."

Matthew 26:14-16 ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. ¹⁶ From then on he *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

And so, we come back to our text in John 13.

John 13:3-4 ³ *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

Notice that even though Jesus knew of what was to transpire in the coming day, he proceeded with the Father's will, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God.

In other words, because Jesus's desire was always to do the will of the Father, his earthly circumstances would not deter him from accomplishing the Father's will as even the next day, after the supper with his disciples, he will pray to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane; "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; (**Matthew 26:39**)

But in the next breath he says, "yet not as I will, but as You will."

There was never a question in our Lord's mind that he would not fulfill all that the Father sent him into the world to accomplish. And yet, as not only fully God, but fully man, Jesus understood the weaknesses we all have in this world, yet without sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

And so, our Lord goes back to his default position and that is to be a servant, not only for the Father, but in our case, a servant for those the Father gave to him for eternal life.

John 13:4-5 ⁴ [Jesus] got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. ⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Jesus girds himself with a towel. For most modern ears this sounds a little strange and yet what is being described here is rearranging the clothing so as to move without any hindrance of the clothing. The customary garments that people of those days wore was a combination of outer and inner garments.

The outer garment was usually longer and covered the shoulders down to the feet. The inner garment could also be full length but was often wrapped around the waist and extended to cover the thighs or even down to the ankles. It is presumed that when the outer garment is taken off for the sake of doing a task, the inner garment would be pulled up to the waist and an additional towel of some length would be placed between the legs and tied off to hold the inner garment up so as to make movement easier and more discreet. This is probably what Jesus was doing since he would be bending down to wash the feet of his disciples.

John 13:6-8 ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." ⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

What is this exchange all about? A couple of things are going on here. The first has to do with the physical washing of the feet that Jesus will further explain as having spiritual overtones.

As to washing feet in those days, it was both a humbling act as well as a practical act. The middle east can get hot and dusty. And the preferred foot covering was usually open to some extent on the top with a leather or cloth sole to protect the feet.

It was customary for a host to wash the feet of the guests after they traveled on a dirt road so as to make the guest clean and comfortable. We see a picture of this when Abraham received three guests into his camp, who turned out to be two angels and the Lord God himself.

^{NAU} **Genesis 18:4** "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;

When two of those angels left Abraham, they went down to Sodom and entered the house of Lot. As they were greeted by Lot, we read this.

^{NAU} **Genesis 19:2** And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way."

And so, foot washing was first a practical custom offered to anyone brought into a home. Even Jesus took offense when he was not offered such a courtesy on one occasion. The particular occasion involved Jesus visiting the home of a Pharisee.

A woman of dubious reputation discovered that Jesus was at the house of this Pharisee and somehow made her way into the house as she then began to repentantly wipe his feet with her tears and then pour perfume over the feet of Jesus, again wiping his feet with her hair.

Even in those days this was certainly a strange thing. But then the Pharisee thought to himself that if Jesus were really a prophet, he would know that this woman who was touching his feet was a sinner, implying that Jesus should be rebuking her instead of receiving her kindness.

Jesus turned to this Pharisee, apparently knowing his thoughts, and asked him a question about two debtors; one who owed his master 500 denarii and the other only 50 denarii. He ended up forgiving both of their debts and then Jesus asked this Pharisee, whose name we know as Simon: So, which of them loved him more?" (**Luke 7:42**)

Luke 7:43-50 ⁴³ Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." ⁴⁴ Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶ "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." ⁴⁹ Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

There is much we could say about this incident that disclosed a repentant heart that led to this woman's salvation, but the point here, for the sake of our text in John 13, is that washing one's feet was expected when a guest invited you in.

And now we find that Jesus, back in John 13, who was known by his disciples as teacher and master, has placed himself in the position of servant who washes feet; something by the way, that should have been addressed before the supper by his disciples.

So, after girding himself we read: **John 13:5-8** ⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." ⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Peter is not thinking of this foot washing as anything more than a servant washing the feet of the master, but he knows who is who, and that he is the one who should be washing the feet of Jesus. But Jesus has something else in mind with this foot washing that carries with it a spiritual connotation.

John 13:8 "...If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

A customary foot washing has just been catapulted into the stratosphere as distinguishing between having a part (which infers having a portion in the inheritance that Jesus came into this world to secure for his people), or being outside of the promises of this inheritance.

Peter, does a double-take as he knows exactly what Jesus means by this. In other words, Jesus is saying that this particular washing has eternal ramifications as it points to a washing that goes much further than your feet. This is why Jesus prefaces the washing of Peter's feet in **John 13:7** with the words: "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

After Peter declines Jesus's offer and after our Lord rebukes him with the judgment that he will not have a portion of the gift that Christ came to purchase for him, Peter understands that this foot washing is disclosing the kind of washing that all Jews understood to be associated with their sins being washed.

^{NAU} **Psalm 51:2,7** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 36:25** "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

This is why Peter responds: **John 13:9** ⁹ "Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

We're going to visit this encounter between Jesus and Peter next time and get some insight into what Jesus was doing with his disciples at this last supper before the Passover.

