

UNDERSTANDING FEET WASHING

Following Christ's footsteps



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WASHING



Feet washing is an event that was done by Christ during his last day on earth with his disciples before he was crucified. He did this to show fellowship and humility and to set an example for us so that we might follow in his footsteps. This event is introduced in

John's 13th chapter. Verse 8 makes it very important for fellowship with one another and in extension, with Christ. It says in part, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part (fellowship) with me. It is therefore of particular importance for us, to understand this very important event as far as our fellowship and the lord's supper are concerned. Thus,

"If then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." John 13:14-15.

Note here that he really would have wanted his followers to do as exactly as he did. However, there have been varied interpretations, great controversies, and confusions, over the timings of this event with the Lord's supper-the partaking of the bread and the cup which represents the flesh and blood of the Lord respectively. Do you do this event in your church? How is it done? Is it before or after the lord's supper? Follow me closely,

through this article, as we elaborate more on the exact timings of this event based on the bible alone.

Careful study of the chronology of events in this context is very important in understanding this concept. Remember, it is only John who recorded the feet-washing event. Interestingly, he did not record the other events i.e. the bread and the cup! So for us to get the truth, we should be able to place the feet-washing event in its immediate context. In literature, this is done by looking at the events that coincide with it, just before, and after the feet-washing event in this case. John 13 is the feet-washing chapter in the entire bible. Verse 1 introduces events of the whole chapter: it says,

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour has 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..."

Before placing this in its immediate context in other books, the earliest point to note is that these events were before the Passover which was prepared by the disciples as noted in Matthew 26:17-19. Note what verse 2 says, that, "... and supper being ended..." Or "During supper..." the face value of this phrase, '-and supper being ended-' might appear to be after the Lord's supper, but holistically reading together with verse 1 makes it clear that it was actually before the Passover! Leave alone the Lord's supper! Also, nowhere in the Bible is the Passover referred to as the 'Supper.' Having said that, let's now focus on the events that follow and their context in other gospel books. It is, however, a point to note that, it was during this particular supper, that Yahshua (Jesus) washed the disciples' feet, for verse 26 shows that they continued eating after foot washing. If this was the lord's supper, then we should be partaking of the bread and/or the cup halfway, then do feet washing and back to the bread and the cup again!

If the events of these 5 verses (13:1-5), which are talking about the supper, are placed in their immediate context in other gospel books, you'll find it in Matthew 26:20 which says,

".... Now when the event came, he sat down at the table with the twelve..."

This sitting down at the table was to take the Supper that is in John 13:2, evident by the next verse (Mathew 26:21) which starts by saying, "And as they were eating..." So, a certain supper was being taken just before the feet-washing was done. It might have been the Lord's supper as one might want to think, but let's confirm with the events that follow this, in both John and Luke, having been able to locate the context of John 13:1-5 (the feet washing event) in Matthew 26:20.

It is very important for us, studying for the truth in this matter, to note that what came after feet washing was the discussion "Who will betray him" as seen in John 13:13-30, which are the verses after feet washing happened in verse 1- 12. Note what is said in verse 21 thus;

"...When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me"

There was a great discussion among the disciples in trying to know who exactly among them could betray him. Many people erroneously postulate that this discussion happened after the Lord's Supper (partaking of bread and cup of the Lord), but let's chronologically place it in its immediate context which is in Matthew 26 to see if that's the truth. This same statement is found in Matthew 26:21 which says,

"...And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me..."

Wow! What coinciding scriptures! When was this comment made? According to Mathew, it was during the Supper. Was this supper the Lord's Supper bread and a cup of Yahshua-Jesus? Absolutely No! Mathew clearly shows that this comment and the discussion that followed happened before the Breaking of bread and taking of the cup (the Lord's supper), which happened in verse 26 after the identification of the betrayer! Every genuine-hearted bible student can note that, after verses 21,22,23,24 & 25 which flow step by step in one context about the betrayer, Yahshua (Jesus) introduced his meal- the bread and the cup- in verse 26, with the same graduating flow of events from one verse to the next. Thus verse 26 reads;

".... And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, ``Take, eat; this is my body...."

Any sober-minded person, regardless of education level, can see that this taking of the bread and the cup happened after the identification of the betrayer which happened as they were eating supper. Nothing happened between verse 25 and 26 but a lot happened between Mathew 26 verse 20 and verse 21. Going by the context, in between these two verses-(20 and 21)-are events of John 13:1-20, evident by verse 21 in John and verse 21 in Matthew which both talk of the betrayer! (read and compare to confirm the two verses, my dear reader).

Back to our earlier question, according to John, did this statement and the identification of the betrayer happen before feet washing? No! It is clear to us all that these happened after foot washing which is recorded in earlier verses (John 13:1-12). Also, the chronology in Matthew 26:20-26 shows that these two -the statements and the identification of the betrayer happened before the Lord's supper. Therefore, it's clear that foot washing was done first, then identifying the betrayer came next, and then The Lord's supper which was the last event in this context! This point of "One of you will betray me" is very important dear reader, in locating the feet-washing event. It was said after feet washing as in John 13 and before the Lord's supper as in Matthew 26! This makes it clear that feet-washing happened before the Lord's supper (taking of bread and cup). Please read it again and again. I don't understand what confuses people here! For it is very clear.

Another issue of importance as far as feet washing time is concerned, in line with the Lord's supper, is about dipping a sop as they were eating as seen in John 13:26 which reads;

‘Jesus answered, he, to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the soup, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.’

I'm just asking myself, did the Passover have anything to dip like soup? Was it wet? Exodus 12:9 clearly shows that it was not wet but roasted dry! It says, ‘Eat not of it raw, nor sodded with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs and with the purtenance

thereof.' Or could he have dipped the sop into his blood -the grape juice in the cup? Not at all! Therefore, the dipped sop that Judas was given, was not for the Passover and neither was it for the Lord's Supper. To the best of my knowledge, and according to the context in the two books, it was the normal supper-dinner- which had soup to be dipped. Remember the Word 'SUPPER' was not introduced during and exclusively for the Lord's supper. It was there for the normal dinner meal! Note what is said in John 12:1-2 which we all agree was not the Lord's supper:

"Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was.... there, they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him...

A supper like the above was the one going on in John 13 and Mathew 26 before the feet washing and the lord's supper. That is why Luke 22:20 makes it clear that the partaking of the bread and cup (the Lord's Supper) happened AFTER SUPPER. It reads, 'Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you.' Therefore, it was during this supper, which happened before the lord's supper (the bread and the cup), that feet washing was done. This makes it clear that feet washing was done after normal supper but before the Lord's supper

Verse 25 of Mathew 26 coincides with verse 30 of John 13, in which both record Judas Leaving the group. When did that happen? It was after feet washing according to John and before Lord's supper according to Mathew. This, we all agree for it is clear from the scriptures. This again, accurately places feet washing before the Lord's supper! That's why I say, without a lot of references in other scholarly articles/books, in trying to justify the biblical truth, that, only these two books and soberly placing each in its context is enough to pin the truth on this matter- the feet washing which truly happened before the Lord's Supper (the bread and the cup).

Having pinned the time for the feet washing before the lord's supper based on the chronology of events in the book of Mathew and John who were the eyewitnesses, let's now look at the biblical history of feet washing. Yahshua (Jesus) being a Jew, did not originally initiate the feet washing idea. It was in existence as long as during the days of

Abraham. And as he gave the Passover a new meaning, (1 Cor 5:7-8), he also just gave the feet washing a new meaning. It was not a completely new idea, but its meaning and purpose were new. So at what time- in relation to food- did Jews do the feet washing according to their culture, from which Yahshua got the



idea? It was always before food! Read the following verses for your confirmation:

- ❖ Genesis 18:1-5- Abraham and the Angel- feet washing happened first before a meal
- ❖ Genesis 24:32- Abraham's servant - feet washing came first before a meal
- ❖ Genesis 43:24-31- Joseph and brothers - Feet washing came first before eating together
- ❖ Judges 19:21- Feet washing came first before a meal

So, after reading all these, what makes you think that Jesus just changed the Feet washing concept to be the other way round for his supper? Seriously think about this again, brother. This unbiased biblical history clearly shows that the feet-washing event always happened before a meal and not the other way around. This further settles the feet-washing issue during the Lord's supper! He did the feet washing before his supper. He told Peter, 'What I do now you don't know but you shall know later...' (John 13:7), not because it was new and that he had done it after his supper, as some unlearned bible teachers might say, but it was because the master was the one to wash his followers' feet against the norm as above, in which the servant would wash his masters' feet (John 13:14).

Chronologically looking at the context of feet washing time, during the Lord's supper, from the accounts of Mathew, Mark, and John accurately and clearly places the feet washing just before the Lord's supper. However, it is worth noting that the account of Luke, as far as the chronology of these events is concerned, is a bit different from the rest of the gospel writers. It is good therefore for any unbiased and genuine bible student interested in the truth to carefully study Luke's accounts in conjunction with the other gospel writers, given that he was not among the eyewitnesses of the real event like Mathew and John. He was the third party! He did not see these things! He acknowledged this before he gave any account, in Luke 1:1 he says,

"For as much as many have taken in hand to outline in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order most excellent Theophilus."

This introduction clearly confirms to us that Luke wasn't an eyewitness to all these things, no wonder there are some inconsistencies in his account of various events, especially in comparison to Mathew, Mark, and John. For instance, only Luke's account shows different reactions from the robbers crucified with Christ. While Mathew and Mark recorded that both of them mocked him, Luke recorded a contradicting reaction between the two robbers with one mocking him and the other one seeking remembrance from him. Note and compare the following accounts:

Mathew 27:44. "..... The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his feet" (mocked him).

Mark 15:31-32. ".....He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the king of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him"

Luke 23:39. ".....And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, if thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him saying, 'Dost, not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? For we indeed justly; for

we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.' And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'”

From the above scriptures, it is clear that Luke contradicts the other two! Who should we believe in this aspect? Honestly speaking, it is Mathew and Mark for they were eyewitnesses. Also, two witnesses are better than one! Luke also interchanged the order of events in which Jesus was tempted from the second item onwards (read Matthew 4 and Luke 4); he also mixed up the order of the bread and the cup in the lord's Supper issue, starting with the cup and then bread, which we all disagree with him by looking at the chronology in Matthew and Mark. In this, he recorded that the cup was taken twice i.e. the cup, the bread, and then the cup again in that order (Luke 22:17-20). This, we agree, was not exactly what Messiah did! It was the bread first, followed by the cup, going by Mathew and Mark -the eyewitnesses!

Therefore, with these few pieces of evidence of inconsistencies, Luke's chronology of events in the context of the Lord's Supper should not be relied upon, for it contradicts the actual chronology of events as recorded by all the eyewitnesses of the event. He recorded the discussion of who will betray him and the identification of the betrayer just after the bread and the cup (the Lord's supper) which is exactly opposite to what Mathew and Mark -eyewitnesses- recorded! (Luke 22:17-23; Mark 14:17-25 and Mathew 26:20-30). Just read for yourself and decide whose account to believe! It is clear! Blessed is he who believes the word from more than one witness for Paul said, "... In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established..." (2 Corinthians 13:1).

Let me then conclude this article here, by highlighting the following points;

- ❖ In the bible, and the bible alone, Feet washing is done before the Lord's supper (bread and cup), evident by the comparison of the chronology of events in John 13th and Mathew 26th chapters
- ❖ This partaking of the bread and the cup- the Lord's supper-happened just after the identification and leaving of the betrayer which is recorded in both books (John 13:30 & Matthew 26:25). This clearly shows that the Lord's supper

commenced just after he left after the feet washing. Also, Mark recorded the same chronology (Mark 14:17-25)

- ❖ The bread (Sop) that Judas was given was not the Lord's supper Bread, for it was dipped. It was neither the Passover, given that the Passover was dry/roasted (Exodus 12:9). It was the normal dinner meal which was also called supper as in John 12:1-2.
- ❖ Looking at the History of feet washing, it's clear that it always happened before a meal and not after. Yahshua (Jesus) just used the same idea, giving it a new meaning- fellowship among one another and him too.

You are called upon dear reader, to study this issue independently and soberly with no undue influence, so that you can realise this plain truth of feet washing happening before the Partaking of the Bread and the Cup. This can't be overemphasised for it is clear from the scriptures alone. It is good to remember as we close this issue that we should do exactly as the saviour himself did, since he said, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." John 13:14-15. Prayerfully study this article for you to get an understanding of how to do it as Christ himself did. Thank you. Shalom

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