

53. Jesus Explained Why He Washed the Feet of the Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop a growing fellowship with the Lord. We saw that is why it is so important to help them understand the importance of confession of sins so that they experience daily cleansing in their lives. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus explained to His disciples why He had washed their feet.

We saw in our last topic that Jesus explained to Peter why it was necessary to experience daily cleansing from sins. Then, Jesus finished washing the feet of the disciples. John 13:12-14 says, “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.’” Here, we see that after Jesus had finished washing the feet of the disciples, He then sat down again and began to explain to the disciples why they ought to wash the feet of one another.

He began that explanation by asking the question, “Do you know what I have done to you?” Jesus had said in verse seven, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.’” Jesus knew that the disciples did not realize that He was trying to teach them a much greater lesson than just the need to wash the feet of one another. That is why He had told them while He was washing their feet that they did not understand at that time but they would be given understanding at a later time. We are going to see by the answer that Jesus gave that He wanted the disciples to understand why they did what they did. That was the reason why Jesus began with this question after He was again seated with them.

Jesus then said, “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am.” Jesus had spent more than three years teaching these men the things of God. That teaching had changed and transformed their lives. In just a few weeks, Jesus would go back to heaven and they would be left on earth to teach what they had learned to others. Even the religious leaders that would condemn Jesus to death before daylight the next morning were forced to admit that Jesus had transformed the lives of the disciples. Those leaders that condemned Jesus heard Peter and John speak in Acts 4 and Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The religious leaders could not deny that Jesus had transformed the lives of the disciples.

In addition, the disciples also called Jesus, Lord. Their use of this title for Jesus was a result of their recognition that He is God. In Matthew 16:16 Peter had said, “Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” The disciples realized that Jesus is God and yet He had just washed their feet. Jesus then said to them, “If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” The word translated “ought” means *to be in debt or to owe money*. The word is used twice in Matthew 18:28 where we read, “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’” As God, Jesus had given the disciples and all future disciples a pattern to follow.

Growing Godly Family Series – Helping Our Children Present Jesus as the Son of God 53. “Jesus Explained Why He Washed the Feet of the Disciples”

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Jesus was going to serve each one of us in love that next day when He took our sins on Himself as He hung on the cross. He paid the full penalty for our sins. As a result, Jesus said that we also have a debt. We see here that we have a debt to serve one another in love because Jesus has served each of us in love by paying the full penalty for our sins. This can include the actual washing of the feet of one another but it also includes much more. The disciples had been disputing about which of them would be the greatest. Luke 22:24-27 says, “Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.’” Here, Jesus made it very clear that they and we are to serve one another with an attitude of humility and humble service.

That is why Jesus went on to say in John 13:15-17, “‘For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’” Here, we see that Jesus makes a clear distinction between just knowing something and actually doing that thing. The word translated “know” in verse 17 means *to see with the eyes or to understand with the mind*. In contrast, the word translated “do” means *to take action to do what you know is right*. John 15:14 says, “‘You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.’” Jesus gave us an example of how to serve one another with humble service so that we can take action and regularly serve one another with that same humble service.

Jesus then gave two illustrations. If we are unwilling to serve one another with a humble attitude, Jesus said that we would actually be like a servant who thinks that he is greater than his master. In a different context, earlier, Jesus had used two words for “servant.” Mark 10:43-45 says, “‘Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” If a person wants to be great, Jesus said he is to be like a hired servant. If he wants to be even greater or first, he is to be a “slave” to all. The word translated “servant” here in John is the word that is translated slave. Therefore, to be unwilling to serve one another with a humble attitude is to be like a slave who thinks that he is greater than his master.

The second illustration that Jesus used is a messenger who is sent with a message that thinks that he is greater than the one who asked him to carry the message. John the Baptist clearly understood that he was just a voice or a messenger sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for Jesus. That is why he said in John 1:22-23, “Then they said to him, ‘Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’ He said: ‘I *am* “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.’” Jesus also called us to be His messengers to deliver His message. Acts 1:8 says, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem,

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and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Jesus told the disciples that they and we would be blessed if we have the attitude of a slave or a messenger as we learn to serve one another in love.

However, Jesus knew that there was one disciple who did not have that attitude and would never have that attitude. Jesus went on to say in John 13:18-20, “I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, “He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am *He*. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” By these words, Jesus was telling Judas that He knew exactly what Judas was going to do later that evening. Judas was going to lift up his heel against Jesus by betraying Him to the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus also explained to the other disciples why He told them these things in advance. Jesus did not want the disciples to misunderstand and think that He was talking about all of them. Christ had chosen the other eleven to carry on His ministry when He returned to heaven. John 15:16 says, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Jesus spoke these words to the other disciples later that evening when Judas was no longer with them.

Jesus went on to explain that the one who would betray Him would fulfill a prophecy that was written in the Old Testament. Psalm 41:9 says, “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up *his* heel against me.” Judas had walked with Christ and they had eaten many meals together. Judas even knew how to act just like the other disciples so that even the other disciples did not suspect that He would betray Jesus. However, Jesus knew that Judas would lift up His heel against Jesus because of the fact that Jesus knows the hearts and was not deceived.

Jesus also explained why He had let the disciples know in advance. Jesus did that so that they would believe in Him. Then, he told the disciples that those who received the disciples would also receive Jesus. Jesus went on to explain that those who received Him would also receive the Father who sent Him. Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that if people rejected them, they did not need to feel personal rejection because they were actually rejecting Jesus. In contrast, those who listened to them would be open to receive the message that Jesus is God and receive both the Father and the Son. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that those who listen to the message about His death and resurrection will often be ready to receive Jesus once they get their questions answered. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand this important lesson.