

## **Bi123 The Gospels 2**

### ***Lesson Bi123-15 Washed Feet***

Have you ever reflected on what the perfect job might be? It might be one that takes the least work, but earns the greatest amount of money and honor. Now think about the worst job you might have. Would it involve people or places that most people don't like? Would you be willing to humble yourself to show those people your best effort? This story focuses on Jesus' love for the disciples. He demonstrated his love by doing something special for them.

It was just before the Passover. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He loved his own who were in the world, even to the very end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Christ knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Judas had already met with the religious leaders and had agreed to deliver Jesus into their hands. But Judas was still present; having made the decision to betray of his own free will. Jesus continued to love all his disciples, including Judas, though he was aware of both his past and his future. Despite this knowledge, Christ did an amazing thing. He got up from the table, removed his outer flowing robe, and began to wash their feet (John 13:1-5).

In those days disciples would perform all sorts of service for their teachers, but only slaves would untie sandals and wash feet. It was a menial lowly task. Usually done by a servant, it refreshed a guest and removed dust from their journey when they entered a house. Jesus' action, however, was during the meal, not upon their arrival. It was done deliberately to emphasize a point. He worked around the table, washing and drying the feet of the disciples, one by one. Peter probably watched as the others received this ministry. By the time Jesus came to him, as usual, Peter was ready to object. Apparently no one else had refused this strange behavior by the Master.

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Peter, as he often did, spoke for himself and probably the others. In a mixture of pride and embarrassment, he strongly objected to Jesus performing this lowly service. Peter had not learned that in this new kingdom, the greatest person was the one who served the others. Jesus' reply to him looked beyond the incident to what it symbolized. Peter too needed spiritual cleansing. The external washing was a picture of cleansing from sin, which Christians also sometimes need.

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

“Then Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “Wash not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” Peter seemed to understand, realizing that only Jesus could fully cleanse him. Peter’s response was wholehearted, but he was still dictating to Jesus.

Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

Finally Jesus was speaking again about physical dirt. Peter would have taken a bath before the feast. When he arrived, he only needed his feet washed to be entirely clean again. But then Jesus looked into the future again and saw all the disciples as spiritually clean, except for the betrayer.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:6-17). It was a lesson in humility, but it also set forth the principle of selflessness that was soon to be exemplified on the cross. Jesus explained the meaning of this event, this acted-out parable.

Based on early church history, this did not become another ordinance for the church to practice regularly. Here Jesus was just teaching that all believers should see themselves as servants, not kings soon to inherit a kingdom. They should be willing to perform the lowliest services for one another. Humility, based on love, was the example Jesus set for them to follow. We are to make it our goal to be like our Master.

This story is **important** because it shows the attitude of love and humble service that believers should demonstrate when they interact with people. Jesus’ life of service ended with his death on the cross for all mankind.

The **main truth** of this story is that humility and serving others rather than ourselves should be our life’s goal. Since Jesus humbled himself and came to serve, his disciples should do the same.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What unusual thing did Jesus begin to do after the disciples ate at the table?  
A. [Pause] If you said that Jesus began to wash the disciples’ feet, you are correct.
2. What did Peter say to Jesus when he came to wash his feet?

A. [Pause] If you answered that Peter said, “No Lord, you shall never wash my feet,” you are right.

3. What did Jesus want to teach believers by washing the disciple’s feet?

A. [Pause] If you said that Jesus wanted to teach believers to see themselves as servants, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory to someone else. After you tell this story, discuss this question with some believers, “By serving others and not ourselves, what can be established between us and a person in need?” This is the same thing Jesus had with his disciples. It was a relationship built on love and service. Memorize this verse, “No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16).