

Christ as Servant

Key Verse: *“I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”*
—John 13:15

Selected Scripture:
John 13:1-20

son. He did so by using, as he often did, a simple illustration, but one which unmistakably got his point across.

The account reads, “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” (John 13:4,5) Foot-washing in olden times was a task normally reserved for slaves or servants to perform. It was a very humble service and one which, according to the flesh, appeared menial and distasteful. Yet to the one receiving it, it must have been a source of great refreshment, especially after a long day walking in sandals on the dusty paths of the city, or roads of the countryside. It was in this spirit of meek, humble service that Jesus took it upon himself to perform this loving act.

One might think that since the disciples looked to Jesus as their master and teacher, and since they also had the hope that he would soon be king over Israel, they would have, as his servants, taken it upon themselves to

ONE OF THE MOST FAMIL-
iar scriptural accounts of Jesus’ ministry, shortly before his death, is the focus of today’s lesson. As he met with his disciples in the upper room the night before his crucifixion, Jesus took the opportunity to teach them, and us, a great les-

carry out this service on his behalf—washing his feet, and perhaps those of one another. Rather, though, they had not matured spiritually to the level where they saw this as an opportunity for service, and so Jesus, their Lord and Master, took the servant's role.

Peter, seeing Jesus begin this service toward the other disciples and perhaps humbled by the realization that they should have taken the role of servant, told him, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." (John 13:8) Peter evidently thought it should be beneath the Lord to take the role of a servant and wash his or the others' feet, thus resisting the Master's purpose. Jesus quickly replied, however, as recorded in the remainder of verse 8, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He then explained to Peter and the other disciples that the reason he had done this was not because they were unclean, either literally or figuratively, except for Judas, who was to betray him and was unclean in heart. (vs. 10) There was, in fact, a deeper lesson Jesus wished to leave with his disciples than that of mere cleanliness.

Jesus told his disciples in the ensuing verses of our lesson what the real purpose was in his washing of their feet. "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. I tell you the truth, 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 13:12-17, *New International Version*) The primary lesson of this experience is that contained in our Key Verse. He was giving an example of how his footstep followers should be servants one to another, just as he was to them. As Apostle Paul later explained the matter to us, "By love serve one another."—Gal. 5:13 ■