

# Foot-Washing and Communion

**1.**

**The Ordinance of Foot Washing:**

Scripture states that in celebrating the Passover, Jewish families were to remove all leaven, representing sin (1 Corinthians 5:8), from their homes before the first day of the Week of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15, 19-20). So believers today must confess and repent of all sin – including pride, rivalry, jealousy, resentful feelings and selfishness – before they can be in the right spirit to have Communion with Christ at this deepest level.

To this end Christ instituted the ordinance of foot washing. Not only did He set an example but stated they ought to do the same and promised them a blessing: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” John 13:17.

This ordinance, preceding the Lord’s Supper, fulfills the injunction that all should examine themselves so as not to participate in the Communion to “eateth and drinketh damnation to himself”, 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

## **2.**

**The meaning of the Ordinance:**

This ordinance reveals something about both Christ’s mission and the participants’ experience.

**A memorial of Christ's condescension – Memorializes Christ's humiliation in His incarnation, life and death of service.**

**“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”  
Philippians 2:6-8.**

**Humiliating for God's Son to give so selflessly, so lovingly, only to be rejected by the majority of those He came to save.**

**“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28.**

**Through the act of foot washing He showed that He would do any service, no matter how lowly, including to traitors, to save people.**

**Though participation in this service is humbling, it is far from degrading. Why? Who would not feel privileged to bow before Christ and wash the very feet that were nailed to the cross? Jesus said “Inasmuch as**

ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Matthew 25:40.

### **3.**

A type of higher cleansing – The foot washing did more than clean feet. It represented a higher purification – a cleansing of the heart. When Peter asked Jesus to wash him all over, Jesus said “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit”. John 13:10.

One who takes a bath/shower is clean. However, open, sandaled feet soon became dusty and needed washing again. So it was with the disciples. Their sins had been washed away through baptism, but temptation had led them to cherish pride, jealousy, evil and sin in their hearts. They were not ready to have intimate Communion with their Lord nor to accept the New Covenant He was about to make with them. Through the foot washing, Christ desired to prepare them to take part in the Lord’s Supper. Except for Judas, the betrayer, their hearts were cleansed by Christ’s grace from selfishness and sin and they were united in love for one another; through Jesus’ selfless act they were humbled and became teachable.

“These ordinances are established for a purpose. Christ's followers are to bear in mind the example of Christ in His humility. This ordinance is to encourage

humility, but it should never be termed humiliating, in the sense of being degrading to humanity. It is to make tender our hearts toward one another.”—Review and Herald May 31, 1898.

Like the disciples, when we have accepted Christ as our personal Saviour and been baptized, we have been cleansed by His blood. But as we walk the Christian life, we fail. Our feet become dusty. We must come to Christ again and let His cleansing grace wash away the defilement. However, we do not need to be baptized again, “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet”, John 13:10.

So foot washing as an ordinance reminds us of our need for regular cleansing and that we are totally dependent upon Christ and His blood. Foot washing itself cannot cleanse from sin. Only Christ can purify us.

## **4.**

### **A fellowship of forgiveness -**

The attitude of forgiveness among the participants indicates that the cleansing this service symbolizes has become effective.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men

their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matthew 6:14-15.

Jesus said “ye also ought to wash one another's feet”. John 13:14. We need both to be willing to wash another's feet and to be willing to be washed by another. In the latter case we admit our need of spiritual help.

When the service is over, our faith assures us that we are clean because our sins have been washed away. By whom? By Christ. But it is fellow believers who administer to us the symbols of Christ's ministry and so this service becomes a fellowship of forgiveness.

## **5.**

### **A fellowship with Christ and believers -**

This foot washing service demonstrates Christ's love for His followers “unto the end”, John 13:1. When Peter refused to have His feet washed, Christ responded “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”, John 13:8. No cleansing, no fellowship. Those desiring continuing fellowship with Christ will participate in this ordinance.

That same evening Jesus said “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”. John 13:34. The message of the ordinance is clear, “by love serve one another”, Galatians 5:13.

Having this kind of love means that we will concede the highest place to others by esteeming them better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). It mandates us to love those who differ with us. It allows us to hold neither feelings of supremacy nor partiality. Our lifestyles will reflect our love for fellow believers. Kneeling before them, washing their feet, we rejoice that we will live with them throughout eternity. All who follow Christ's example in this ordinance will in some way experience what it means to love as Christ loved. And such can be a powerful witness.

## **6.**

**“13:1** Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was 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.

**13:2** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son], to betray him;

**13:3** Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

**13:4** He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

**13:5** 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.

**13:6** Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

**13:7** Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

**13:8** Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

**13:9** Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also [my] hands and [my] head.

**13:10** Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash [his] feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

**13:11** For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

**13:12** So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

**13:13** Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for [so] I am.

**13:14** If I then, [your] Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

**13:15** For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

**13:16** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.



**13:17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” John 13:1-17.**

**[Foot-washing  
time. 😊]**

## **7.**

### **The Celebration of the Lord's Supper:**

**The Lord's Supper is to be a joyful season, not a time of sorrow. The preceding foot washing service provides an opportunity for self-examination, confession of sins, reconciliation of differences and forgiveness. Having received the assurance of being cleansed by the blood of the Saviour, believers are ready to enter into special Communion with their Lord. We turn to "the Lord's table" (1 Corinthians 10:21), with thanksgiving and blessing, standing in the saving**

light, not the shadow of the cross, ready to celebrate the redemptive victory of Christ.

## **8.**

### **The Meaning of the Lord's Supper:**

The Lord's Supper replaces the Passover festival of the old-covenant era. The Passover met its fulfillment when Jesus Christ the Paschal Lamb gave His Sinless life. Before His death Christ Himself instituted the replacement, the great festival of spiritual Israel under the new covenant. Thus, the roots of much of the symbolism of the Lord's Supper extend back into the Passover service.

## **9.**

### **Commemoration of the deliverance from sin –**

As the Passover festival commemorated Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, the Lord's Supper commemorates deliverance from spiritual Egypt, the bondage of sin.

The Passover lamb's blood applied to the lintel and doorposts protected the inhabitants from death; the nourishment its flesh provided gave them the strength to escape from Egypt (Exodus 12:3-8). So Christ's sacrifice brings liberation from death; believers are

saved through partaking of both His body and blood (John 6:54). The Lord's Supper proclaims that Christ's death on the cross provided our salvation, provided forgiveness, power to overcome all sin and guaranteed eternal life.

Jesus said, “this do in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). This ordinance emphasizes the substitutionary dimension of Christ's atonement. “This is My body,” Jesus said, “which is broken for you” (1 Corinthians 11:24; cf. Isaiah 53:2-12). At the cross the Innocent was substituted for the guilty, the Righteous for the unrighteous. This magnanimous act satisfied the demands of the law for the death of the sinner, providing forgiveness, peace, and the assurance of eternal life to repentant sinners. The cross removed our condemnation and provided us with the robe of Christ's righteousness and with the power to overcome evil.

## **10.**

### **The bread and the fruit of the vine –**

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” John 6:35.

The Passover bread Jesus ate was unleavened and the fruit of the vine unfermented. Leaven (yeast), which

produces fermentation that causes bread to rise, was considered a symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5:8), so it was unfit to represent the Lamb “without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). Only unleavened or “unfermented” bread could symbolize the sinless body of Jesus Christ. Likewise, only the unspoiled fruit of the vine — the unfermented wine — appropriately symbolizes the spotless perfection of the cleansing blood of the Saviour.

Since we appropriate the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice by faith, the Lord's Supper is much more than a mere memorial meal. Participation in the Communion service means a revitalization of our life through Christ's sustaining power, providing us with life and joy. In short, the symbolism shows that we are as dependent on Christ for spiritual life as we are on food and drink for physical life.

## **11.**

### **Corporate Communion with Christ –**

Paul said “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

**“None should exclude themselves from the Communion because some who are unworthy may be present. Every disciple is called upon to participate publicly, and thus bear witness that he accepts Christ as a personal Saviour. It is at these, His own appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. Hearts and hands that are unworthy may even administer the ordinance, yet Christ is there to minister to His children. All who come with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed. All who neglect these seasons of divine privilege will suffer loss. Of them it may appropriately be said, "Ye are not all clean." Desire of Ages, p. 656.**

**As the old covenant was ratified by the blood of animal sacrifices (Exodus 24:8), so the new covenant was ratified by Christ's blood. At this ordinance believers renew their pledge of loyalty to their Lord, recognizing anew that they are a part of the amazing agreement by which, in Jesus, God bound Himself to humanity. Being a part of this covenant, they have something to celebrate. So the Lord's Supper is a memorial, blessing and thanksgiving of the sealing of the everlasting covenant of grace. The blessings received are in proportion to the faith of the participants.**

## **12.**

**Anticipation of the Second Advent –**

**“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” 1 Corinthians 11:26. The Communion service spans the interim between Calvary and the Second Advent. It links the cross and the kingdom. It joins the “already” and the “not yet”, which is the essence of the New Testament world view. It holds together the Saviour’s sacrifice and His second coming—salvation provided and salvation consummated. It proclaims that Christ is present through the Holy Spirit till He comes visibly.**

**[Have unleavened bread ready to break  
and eat. 😊]**

**13.**

**“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:**

**And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.” 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.**



**[Have unfermented grape juice ready  
to drink. 😊]**

## **14.**

**“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.**

**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.**

## **15.**

**Christ's vow, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom”, Matthew 26:29, is prophetic. It directs our faith to a future celebration with our Saviour in the kingdom of God. The occasion is the great festival of the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9).**

**In preparation for this event Christ instructed:**

**“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;**

**And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he**

cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” (Luke 12:35-37).

“The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery. The angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the powers commissioned to cooperate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven.

To His church, Christ has given ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. The church, being endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display. The

declaration in His intercessory prayer, that the Father's love is as great toward us as toward Himself, the only-begotten Son, and that we shall be with Him where He is, forever one with Christ and the Father, is a marvel to the heavenly host, and it is their great joy. The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich, full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against. In their untainted purity and spotless perfection, Christ looks upon His people as the reward of all His suffering, His humiliation, and His love, and the supplement of His glory,--Christ, the great center from which radiates all glory. 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" Sons and Daughters of God, p. 356.