

"WHY NOT FOOT WASHING?"

By Dr. Hoyt W. Allen, Jr.

Some have wondered why the Churches Of Christ/Christian Churches do not practice foot washing during the Communion Service. We will attempt to answer this question.

It is only in **John's Gospel (13:1-17)** that we find a record of foot washing during the "Last Supper", not in the other three Gospels. Jesus and His twelve apostles had gone to an upper room in Jerusalem to observe the Passover Feast together. While they were eating the feast, Jesus got up, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. When He finished, He said to them, "Do you understand what I have done for you?...I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (vv.12-15).

Notice why Jesus washed the disciples' feet. There was strife among the disciples over whom of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). The custom of that day was that the host provided a servant to wash the dust-covered feet of his guest or he himself would do so. During this time period, the guest always had dusty feet, since everyone wore sandals and the roads were of dirt.

When Jesus saw an opportunity to teach His disciples humility, He took advantage of it. He did this by stooping to do a servant's job.

Today we do not practice foot washing in our worship service because:

1. Jesus never commanded us to do this, as He did in telling us to remember Him through the loaf and the cup in the Communion Service.
2. It is not the custom in our day to wash a guest's feet. We now have concrete and asphalt streets. We take our guest's coat and hat, offer him a seat, and then usually offer him something to drink. This is our way of showing hospitality, not foot washing.
3. Foot washing was never observed in the New Testament church. It is mentioned only once in the Bible, after the Passover meal. That reference is to a home where strangers were lodged (I Timothy 5:10).

Some who practice what they call "**The Complete Lord's Supper**" by washing one another's feet along with Communion are not following the actual example of Jesus, because He washed both feet of the disciples', not just one.

When Jesus commanded, "Teach disciples to observe all things I have commanded", He was not speaking of foot washing, thus we do not do it.

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1541 S. 7th Street * Ironton, OH 45638-2175
740/532-8020