

FOOTWASHING QUESTION

There seems to be some concern about the Passover service in regard to the timing of the foot washing, and this is understandable.

In both versions of the King James Bible, John 13:2 is translated, “And supper being ended,” and would have one believe that the foot washing occurred after the meal. Our present procedure is to have the foot washing first, as was always done in the WCG under Mr. Armstrong. This is the correct procedure as shown in God’s word.

It should be remembered that the book of John was written last of the gospels for the purpose of making clear and adding to what the first three did not cover or emphasize. Therefore, John lays out for us the foot washing, its purpose and the important concluding address of Christ to His disciples; which the other books do not. The first three books cover the symbols, from the slain lamb to the bread and the wine, but leave out the foot washing.

With this in mind we can now look at John 13:9 to see its real meaning. The word “ended” in Strong’s is #1096. THE COMPLETE WORD STUDY DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT gives the following definition: “This verb is middle despondent intransitive, primarily meaning to begin to be, that is, to come into existence or any state, also to have come into existence or simply to be.”

Under the number one definition “To begin to be, to come into existence as implying origin, result, change of state, place, etc.”

The following example was given, “Of a meal to be prepared, made ready, John 13:2.” This shows that it clearly could not mean that the meal had ended.

The COMPANION BIBLE comments on this verse as follows: “It means supper being laid.” Verse 26 shows that the supper was in progress after the foot washing, because it tells us they were eating.

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS by A.T. Robertson, comments on verse 2, “During supper,” ‘rather implying that verse 1 before Passover,’ was just before the meal began.” The proper etiquette of the time would require a foot washing to precede the meal as the guests arrive. In Luke 7:44 Christ castigates the Pharisee who had invited Him to supper for not at least providing water to wash one’s feet. The custom of the time was to have a servant wash the feet of the guest before the meal was served.

Christ waited until all the guests had arrived, but before the meal was commenced, to wash their feet. At this point He washed their feet to demonstrate a vital point of their ministry; that is to serve as He Himself set the example. We sometimes address our wives with the question, “Is supper finished,” meaning, “has the cooking been completed?” We are not asking, “has the meal been eaten,” but rather, “is it ready to eat?”

In addition, after Christ washed the disciples' feet He said they were clean, but not all - referring to Judas not being clean, knowing what Judas was about to do. John 13:10,11

When asked later during the meal who it was that would betray Him, Jesus told John what the signal would be, during supper.
Judas then left before the new memorial was instituted. Incidentally, Judas wouldn't have kept it in a worthy manner had he been there.

Without any doubt, the correct procedure for the Passover service is to wash the feet first, and then to serve the bread and the wine.

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