

# WHO IS THE GREATEST

## **1. AT the last Passover, what did Christ say to His disciples?**

“And he said unto them, With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” **Luke 22:15, 16.**

## **2. Concerning what had there been a strife among the disciples?**

“And there was also a strife among them, *which of them should be accounted the greatest.*” **Verse 24.**

## **3. How did Christ rebuke this spirit?**

“And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but *he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*” **Verses 25, 26.** See **Mark 10:42–45.**

## **4. What did the Saviour say of His own position?**

“For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but *I am among you as he that serveth.*” **Verse 27.**

## **5. Notwithstanding that He was their Lord and Master, what example of humility and willing service did Christ give?**

“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.**

## **6. What was the custom anciently respecting feet-washing?**

“Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and *wash your feet.*” “And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night, and *wash your feet.*” “And the man brought the men into Joseph’s house, and *gave them water, and they washed their feet.*” **Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 43:24.** See also **Judges 19:21; 2Samuel 11:8.**

**7. How did Christ reprove Simon for misjudging Him in permitting a woman who was a sinner to wash His feet?**

“And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, *thou gavest Me no water for My feet*: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.” **Luke 7:44.**

**NOTES** — From the scriptures just cited, it appears that the usual custom in Christ’s time was for the guests to wash their own feet.

“As sandals were ineffectual against the dust and heat of an Eastern climate, washing the feet on entering a house was an act both of respect to the company and of refreshment to the traveler.” *Complete Dictionary of the Bible, by Smith and Barnum, article, “Washing the Hands and Feet.”*

At a feast it was an Oriental custom for servants or slaves to wash the feet of guests. See **1Samuel 25:40, 41**. It was not the custom, however, of *equals* to wash the feet of *equals*, much less for *superiors* to wash the feet of *inferiors*. But this is the very thing that Christ did when He washed the disciples’ feet, and instituted the ordinance of feet-washing. In this lies the lesson of humility and willingness to serve which He designed to teach.

**8. What question did Peter ask concerning this proffered service?**

“Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, *Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?*” **John 13:6.**

**9. What answer did Jesus make?**

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

**10. How did Peter feel about the Saviour’s washing his feet?**

“Peter saith unto Him, *Thou shalt never wash my feet.*” **Verse 8.**

**11. What was the Master’s reply to Peter?**

“Jesus answered him, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.*” **Same verse.**

**NOTE** — This ordinance is a type of a higher cleansing,—the cleansing of the heart from the stain of sin. It is a rebuke to all

selfishness and seeking of place and preferment among Christ's professed followers, and a witness to the fact that, in God's sight, it is true humility and loving service which constitute real greatness.

**12. Learning that union with Christ depended on this service, what did Peter say?**

"Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, *not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*" **Verse 9.** See **verse 10.**

**13. After having washed their feet, what did Christ say?**

"*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*" **Verse 15.**

**14. What did He say about their washing one another's feet?**

"Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; *ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*" **Verses 13, 14.**

**15. What did Christ say would be their experience in obeying His instruction?**

"If ye know these things, *happy are ye if ye do them.*" **Verse 17.**

**16. How does Christ regard an act performed toward the humblest of His disciples?**

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, *ye have done it unto Me.*" **Matthew 25:40.**

**NOTE** — The great lesson intended to be taught by the instituting of this ordinance evidently was such humility as would lead to willing service for others. The ordinance itself has been practiced by many of the most devout followers of Christ during the Christian era, and is still observed by some. Kitto, in his Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, says it became "a part of the observances of the early Christian church," and that "traces of the practice abound in ecclesiastical history." The Waldenses held it as an ordinance of the church (see their "Confession of Faith," page 12); and according to the Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature (Vol. 111, page 616), "the Church of England at first carried out the letter of the

command.” It is a great test of character, and its observance tends to unite hearts in Christian fellowship and love.

I WILL never, never leave thee,  
I will never thee forsake;  
I will guide, and save, and keep thee,  
For My name and mercy’s sake:  
Fear no evil,  
Only all My counsel take.