

MAUNDY THURSDAY

EASTER: MYTH OR REALITY?

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OVERVIEW

Passion Week (a.k.a. Holy Week) refers to the last seven days of Jesus' earthly ministry. It begins on what is traditionally called Palm Sunday and includes Holy Monday (Fig Monday), Holy Tuesday (Temple Tuesdays), Spy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday (Day of Mourning) and Easter Sunday (Resurrection Sunday).

Passion Week is so named because of the passion with which Jesus willingly and so purposefully went to the cross. The week contains many significant and important commands, teachings and events.

These are recorded in all four Gospels here: Matthew chapters 21-27; Mark chapters 11-15; Luke chapters 19-23; and John chapters 12-19. ¹

Maundy Thursday, also known as "Holy Thursday," is the day on which Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples, known as the Last Supper. The word Maundy is derived from the Latin word for "command." It refers to the command Jesus gave to the disciples at the Last Supper. ²

Having honored it every year for their entire lives, Jesus and the disciples would have been very familiar with the specific and ordered steps required in a Passover day and meal. It is in this very familiar context that Jesus introduces several significant additions. Let's briefly examine three of them.

THREE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF MAUNDY THURSDAY:

1. Jesus initiates washing his disciple's feet. (*Servant-Sacrificial Love Modeled*)

John 13:4-5 ESV

*[Jesus]... rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin **and began to wash the disciples' feet** and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

- The cleaning of feet guests or before a communal meal / celebration was common practice in 1st Cent Palestine.

...the dusty and dirty conditions of the region and the wearing of sandals necessitated foot-washing when a guest in a home or before a communal meal, especially since people reclined at a low table so close to feet.^{3,4}

- The cleaning of the disciple's feet by Jesus, rather than a servant of the home, would have conveyed a very powerful and specific message.

Although the disciples most likely would have been willing to wash Jesus' feet, they most likely would not have conceived of washing each other's feet. This was because in the society of the time, foot-washing was reserved for the lowliest of servants in a home or at an event. Peers did not wash one another's feet, except very rarely and as a mark of great love.

When Jesus rose from the table and began to wash the feet of the disciples (John 13:4), He was doing the work of the lowliest of servants. The disciples must have been stunned at this act of humility and condescension, that Christ, their Lord and master, should wash their feet.^{3,4}

- Jesus the Servant King

Isaiah 53—Jesus prophesied as The Suffering Servant

*Matthew 20:28 "I did not come to be served but to **serve**..."*

Philippians 2:3-7 ESV

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 **but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,***

2. Jesus institutes communion (the Lord's Supper). *(Servant-Sacrificial Love Displayed & Made Possible)*

1Cor 11:23-26 ESV

*... the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this **in remembrance of me.**" 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me.**" 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

- The humility expressed by His act with towel and basin foreshadowed His ultimate act of humility and love on the cross.

3. Jesus issues a new commandment. *(Servant-Sacrificial Love Mandated.)*

John 13:34-35 ESV

*A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to **love one another**. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have **love for one another.**"*

Agape—Sacrificial, Covenant-Keeping, Forever Love

- When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He told them (and us),
"I have given you an **example**, that you should do as I have done to you" (*John 13:15*).

As His followers, we are to emulate Him, serving one another in lowliness of heart and mind, seeking to build one another up in humility and love. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus taught the lesson of selfless service that was supremely exemplified by His death on the cross.

AT HOME RESPONSE:

1. **Brainstorm** ways to "wash one another's feet" in our current time period & culture.
What would powerfully communicate sacrificial love to people in your life?
2. **Thank Jesus** for His sacrifice, and then **take communion**.
3. Read John 13:34,35 and make it into a prayer. **Pray these verses** over your life and/or one another's lives.

Works Cite and Recommended Resources

The Case for the Resurrection—Gary Habermas

¹ *What is Passion Week / Holy Week, gg.org—S. Michael Houdmann*

² *What is Maundy Thursday, gg.org—S. Michael Houdmann*

³ *What Does the Bible Say About Foot-washing, gg.org—S. Michael Houdmann*

⁴ *The New Manner & Customs of Bible Times—Ralph Gower*

The Case for Easter—Lee Strobel

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"New Law" - Valley Bible Worship