

John 13:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

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? Having completed the foot-washing, Jesus resumes His position as teacher (ἀνέπεσεν πάλιν/anepesen palin—reclined again at table) to explain the acted parable. The question **Know ye what I have done?** (Γινώσκετε τί πεποίηκα ὑμῖν;/Ginōskete ti pepoiēka hymin?) uses present tense γινώσκω (ginōskō)—do you understand, perceive, grasp the significance?—with perfect tense πεποίηκα (pepoiēka), emphasizing completed action with abiding results.

Jesus distinguishes between witnessing an action and comprehending its meaning. The disciples saw Him wash feet; the question is whether they understood the theological, Christological, and ethical implications. This pedagogical method—symbolic action followed by explanation—appears throughout Jesus's ministry (cleansing the temple, cursing the fig tree, instituting the Lord's Supper). Physical actions convey spiritual realities.

The phrase **what I have done to you** (τί πεποίηκα ὑμῖν) positions disciples as recipients, not spectators. Jesus didn't perform a demonstration for them to observe but an act toward them requiring response. The foot-washing wasn't abstract theology but personal service with direct application. Verses 13-17 will unpack the meaning: Jesus is Lord and Teacher, yet serves; therefore disciples must serve one another. But the deeper meaning connects to verses 8-10:

cleansing through Christ brings fellowship, foreshadowing His atoning death that washes away sin.

Historical Context

Ancient pedagogical methods emphasized imitation of teachers. Disciples watched rabbis' actions as carefully as they heard their words, replicating lifestyle not just learning. Jesus's question 'Know ye what I have done?' invites reflection on meaning, not mere repetition of action. The foot-washing occurred within the Passover meal celebrating Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Just as Passover commemorated physical redemption through the lamb's blood, Jesus's actions pointed toward spiritual redemption through His blood. Church tradition has debated whether to practice literal foot-washing as ordinance (some Anabaptist groups) or understand it as ethical principle (mutual service and humility). Most Reformed interpreters see both spiritual meaning (cleansing through Christ's work) and ethical application (humble service), without making foot-washing a required ritual. Jesus's resumed teaching position after washing feet signifies the union of authority and humility—He serves without surrendering lordship, combining majesty and meekness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between observing Jesus's actions and understanding their significance, and how does this apply to reading Scripture?
2. How does Jesus's question 'Know ye what I have done to you?' shift focus from watching to participating, from spectatorship to discipleship?
3. In what ways does the foot-washing scene reveal both the humility and authority of Christ, and how should this dual reality shape Christian leadership?

Interlinear Text

Ὅτε οὖν ἔνιψεν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῖς καὶ ἔλαβεν τὰ
after **So** **he had washed** G3588 **feet** **their** **and** **had taken** G3588
G3753 G3767 G3538 G4228 G846 G2532 G2983

ἱμάτια αὐτοῖς ἀναπεσὼν πάλιν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς
garments **their** **and was set down** **again** **he said** **their**
G2440 G846 G377 G3825 G2036 G846

Γινώσκετε τί πεποίηκα ὑμῖν
Know ye **what** **I have done** **to you**
G1097 G5101 G4160 G5213

Additional Cross-References

John 13:7 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

John 13:4 (Parallel theme): He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.