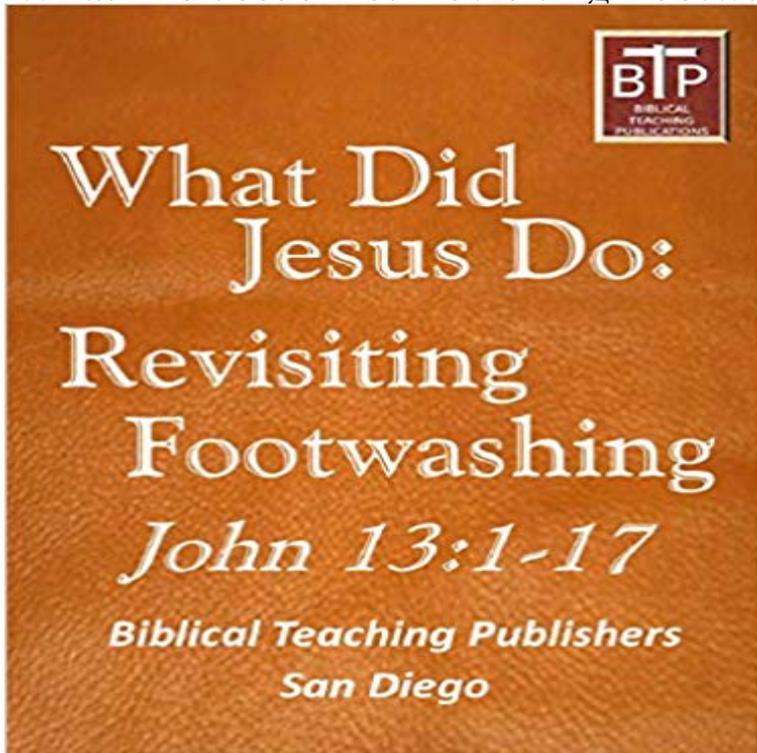


## What Did Jesus Do: Revisiting Footwashing



One of the enjoyable areas of biblical study is attempting to answer questions raised in the text. These are usually challenging, providing a good place to start. Once started, they produce stimulating discussions leading to new, thought-provoking questions. But every now and then the conclusions reached fail to provide a single, unified answer. When this occurs, the result is more conjecture than existed when the study was first considered, requiring another careful examination of the text for any clues to answers that may have been overlooked. Such is the case with John 13, verse 12, providing the basis for this study titled, What did Jesus do? The text reads, After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? Since the reformation, scholars have provided many answers, but most can be grouped in one of three general categories.

A commandment required of all Christians, practiced often as a means of sharing in the body of Christ, acknowledging a need of cleansing, a releasing of any pride, and the exercise of humility and sacrificial love to other believers. A Christian sacrament or ordinance required of all Christians, practiced often as a means obtaining grace when receiving this self-giving service from our brethren, experiencing the humbling reality similar to Jesus in the Upper Room. An action by Jesus in the Upper Room before the Passover supper, as a symbol of His love for them, indicating they have an obligation but not a command. The social custom of washing feet applied in a time of thong sandals. Since we live in an age of shoes offering protection for ones feet, the social custom of washing the feet no longer exists. Accordingly, several major denominations believe this practice is no longer part of Church societys obligation. So, lets return

to our question, What did Jesus do? Many denominations have adopted the practice of washing feet, connecting it with the remembrance of Good Friday and Easter Day services. Others schedule foot washing on Maundy Thursday as part of the Holy Week celebration. The denominations in the first two general categories above may practice foot washing on a regular schedule, perhaps adding this as a third ordinance following baptism and the Lords Supper (or Communion service). However, of those who practice or those who abstain from practicing foot washing, none provide an answer to Jesus question. Did Jesus wash the disciples feet because none of them were willing to perform this service for each other? Certainly, water and a basin were in the Upper Room as Jesus easily found these necessary items. So, did Jesus wash their feet because none were willing to wash each others feet? Or was there a spiritual principal being taught that we have missed? When considering this last question, we ask another, Did Jesus do any signs recorded in the gospels for no other reason than it was a social obligation? We say No as every sign Jesus did was part of His earthly ministry, and each sign was a spiritual teaching lesson. Biblical Teaching Publishers has provided this bible study of John 13:1-17 in support of the spiritual lessons Jesus intended when He got up from his reclining position, took off his outer robe, tied a towel around Himself, and started to wash the disciples feet. The spiritual teachings are found in the text if one is looking for clues that help answer Jesus question, and the obvious answer (foot washing) is not the correct answer, confirmed by the disciples silence.

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