

Dust is all around us. We think of dust as something that we must clean, but God considered it as something to create with; so, man was created from the dust of the earth<sup>1</sup>. He gave us life from that which was not alive, and though we indeed return to the dust of death<sup>2</sup>, Christ gives us the promise of a life beyond.

The dust that we fight to clean in our homes is mostly made up of particles of our dead skin. In the outside world, dust is more related to finely reduced dirt and other materials. In Jesus' time of open movement of flocks of domesticated animals everywhere, one can imagine what those other materials might be.

This is one reason why the washing of feet was a hospitable thing to do when receiving visitors, and makes the loving service of Jesus as He washed His disciples' feet<sup>3</sup> even more meaningful. But was it merely service, or a lesson to the disciples, or actually a prelude to His real gift?

In another foot-washing episode, we find that Mary, a "sinful woman", creates a very emotional scene when she crashes a dinner honoring Jesus and washes His feet with a bottle of perfume and her own tears<sup>4</sup>. What intimate contact she had with Him in doing this, even kissing His feet! Consider that she must have had some of His dust or dirt transfer by means of her tears to her own hair.

There is a certain parallel between this transfer and what Christ did for us, as He took our sins away in a loving, embracing, sacrificial transfer to Himself. Think of the intimacy of that act, as He gently cleanses us and metaphorically kisses our feet. In the words of the Psalmist, "You stooped down to make me great<sup>5</sup>." But He carried our sins outside the gate and returned to stand at the right hand of God. And He will keep us clean until we meet Him there.

1. Genesis 2:7
2. see Genesis 3:19 and Psalm 22:15
3. John 13:1-17
4. Luke 7:36ff
5. Psalm 18:35 (NIRV)