

We think of dust as something to we have to clean, but God created it, and used it to create something He deemed very valuable. Thus, man was created from the dust of the earth¹. Abraham had a great realization that he was made of “dust and ashes”², but knew that God loved him. Indeed, God made a great nation flow from him. We can think of ourselves as insignificant specks that still carry on the work of His kingdom. God loves every speck He created, and that includes each of us.

As we walked from town to town, talking to people about the Christ, our feet would get extremely dusty. With the open movement of flocks of domesticated animals all around the countryside, those feet could be very nasty indeed³.

It was a show of hospitality when a traveler was welcomed, and their dusty feet washed clean by the host. Jesus told us that if anyone or any place refused to listen to us, we should “shake the dust off” of our feet as a testimony against them that the kingdom of God had come near them⁴. This was more of a sign than anything, for it was much more difficult to just “shake” the dust off. It did not get our feet clean.

I remember that Mary, considered a “sinful woman” by some, created a very emotional scene when she interrupted a dinner in honor of Jesus, and washed His feet with a bottle of perfume and her own tears⁵. There was such intimate contact that she had with Him in doing this; she even kissed His feet! I realize that she must have had some of the dust of His feet transferred by means of her tears to her own hair. Some of what she collected had to be some of His skin cells – part of His body. Perhaps, in her love for the Teacher, she thought that she would never wash it off.

The greatest example of foot-washing was shown by how Jesus treated the disciples during His Last Supper⁶. It was a loving service that demonstrated how He welcomed them⁷, and in doing so He prepared them for the life of service that He expected of them in pursuit of their mission. I think of it as more than just a hospitable service, or a lesson to us. It was a prelude to His real gift to us – His self-sacrifice on the cross.

We followed Jesus at many times during His ministry, often so closely that we found ourselves covered in the dust of the Great Teacher⁸. We were not ashamed of this at all, but it did take on a new meaning to His disciples (and to us as well) when He washed it off their feet.

There is a certain parallel between this transfer of dust and what Christ did for all of us, as He took our sins away in a loving, embracing, sacrificial transfer to Himself⁹. I meditate on the intimacy of that act, as He gently cleanses us and metaphorically kisses our feet. As the Psalmist wrote¹⁰: “You stooped down to make me great.” Indeed, He took on the form of a servant, came to us in human likeness¹¹, and became obedient unto death on the cross. The power of this sacrifice is that it is able to lift us up into God’s presence.

Because Satan corrupted mankind, our bodies are destined to return to dust¹². But as God gave us life from that which was not alive, so Christ gives us life through His death. We must worship Him, as He will ultimately shake off the dust of those who reject Him¹³.

meaningless correlation; “out comes this “calf””; we worship it; then there is a disaster; then we have to eat the dust (Aaron’s calf); the serpent eating dust as punishment Gen 3:14;

1. Genesis 2:7
2. Genesis 28:14
3. Dust, Hapiru, “the dusty ones,” the old Egyptian slang word for the Hebrews – God remembers that we are dust. The Bible Jesus Read, Yancey, p. 103
4. Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5, and Luke 10:11
5. John 12:1-11
6. John 13:1-17
7. I often wonder, as I read this story, what Jesus must have felt as he washed the feet of Judas. Walking with Jesus, Greg Laurie, p.209
8. see <https://followtherabbi.com/get-dusty/>
9. Consider Imbese’s law of the conservation of filth: “In order for something to become clean, something else must become dirty.” See <https://www.bytesdaily.com.au/2010/04/laws-of-universe-imbese-law-and.html>

10. Psalm 18:35, an echo of 2 Samuel 22:36; note from BibleGateway: Dead Sea Scrolls; Masoretic Text shield; / “you stoop down to make”; see <https://www.biblegateway.com> for 2 Samuel 22:36; parallels the concept of Christ coming down in human form... Philippians 2:5-11
11. Philippians 2:5-11
12. Genesis 3:19, and Psalm 22:15 (the “dust of death”, related to Christ’s death)
12. Matthew 10:14

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