

Literal Interpretation & “Beautiful Feet”

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1 The “Feet” of the Evangelist

Many Protestants insist that the Scripture always must be interpreted literally. But the folly of such a position becomes apparent upon the encounter of a passage such as that in the *Book of Romans* which speaks of the feet of the Evangelist:

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!
— Romans 10:14–15

In the passage, the Apostle Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! — Isaiah 52:7

The question which Paul poses is rhetorical: “*How then shall they **call** on him in whom they have not **believed**? and how shall they **believe** in him of whom they have not **heard**? and how shall they **hear** without a **preacher**? And how shall they **preach**, except they be **sent**?* as it is written, *How beautiful are **the feet** of them that proclaim the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*”

1.1 Literal Feet Do Not Send Forth the Evangelist

In his question, the Apostle enumerates a series of dependencies. But most readers fail to notice that “*them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*” are *sent* or *dispatched* by the feet. By sending forth the Evangelist, the feet provide the impetus which ultimately results in Salvation!

It should be evident that, though the Evangelist is carried or transported by his physical feet, the physical feet of the man do not constitute the *agency* or *impetus* whereby the Evangelist is sent forth or dispatched. Clearly, the feet which both the Apostle and the Prophet have in view are figurative, rather than literal.

1.2 Members of the Body of Christ Comprise the Feet of the Evangelist

The feet of the Evangelist are members of the Body of Christ who minister to the Evangelist, providing physical support to equip, transport, and supply every physical need of the Evangelist. As the epistles of Paul reveal, Christians, often independently of a congregation, provided monetary support to meet the physical needs of Paul. These are the feet which, in the sight of the Lord Christ, are beautiful.

2 Figurative Language in the Scripture

The Scripture abounds in figurative language, particularly in prophetic passages. The *Beautiful Feet* passage is but one of numerous instances of passages of Scripture which are not to be taken literally. A oft-cited passage is the sixty-fifth chapter of the *Prophecy of Isaiah*, which foretells “*new heavens and a new earth*” in which the wolf and the lamb shall feed together. The Protestant Pulpit, providing a “literal” interpretation of the passage, makes several claims which are not only outlandish but absurd:

- The sin of Adam somehow contaminated not only the Earth, but also the entirety of the universe, rendering it odious to the Lord.
- The only remedy for the contamination is destruction by fire.
- God shall destroy the Earth and the entire universe, and, immediately thereafter, instantaneously create a new universe and a new Earth.
- Death was unknown, even in the animal realm, before the sin of Adam.
- In the present Earth, death was the consequence of the sin of Adam. But in the new Earth, there is no sin and, therefore, no death.
- God shall alter the nature of animal life, so that there are no carnivorous animals.

Of course, the “literal” interpretation of the Protestant has no validity; it is illusory, being nothing more than a pipe dream.

3 Divine Provision for Discernment

A measure of discernment is essential for comprehension of the Scripture. Discernment is provided by the indwelling Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God is imparted to the individual upon obedience of the command to be baptized for the remission of sins. Baptism is the moment of justification and the point of entry into the *Way of Life*. While most Protestant denominations practice baptism, Protestants in general reject the necessity of baptism *for the remission of sins*, and thus do lack the indwelling Spirit of God.

4 The Proper Criterion for Interpretation

Rather than concern as to whether an interpretation is literal or figurative, the Christian ought be focused upon whether the interpretation is *correct*.

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