

Copycat Christianity

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[0 : 00] Now, we're going to be reading from the Bible, and I don't know if there's anyone perhaps who doesn't know, that the first part of the Bible, known as the Old Testament, are the sacred scriptures of the Bible.

Where we read about the life of Christ and the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and also letters that are sent to the very first and early Christian churches.

And you might wonder, why have we got the Jewish scriptures? Why not just the New Testament? And the answer is this.

That in the first part of the Bible, it is moving towards and predicting and prophesying the coming of the world's Savior.

And that Savior has come by the time we get to the New Testament. And what I want to do this evening is read from one of those four gospels, John chapter 13.

[1 : 26] And we're going to be reading the first 17 verses. Let's read these verses then from John chapter 13.

Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it round his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

Jesus answered him, Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand.

[3 : 05] Peter replied to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered if I do not wash you you have no share with me Peter said Lord not my feet only but also my hands and my head Jesus said to him the one who is bathed does not need to wash except for his feet but is completely clean and you are clean but not every one of you for he knew who was to betray him that was why he said not all of you are clean when he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place he said to them do you understand what I have done to you you call me teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am if I then your Lord and teacher have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet for I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you truly truly I say to you a servant is not greater than his master nor as a messenger greater than the one who sent him if you know these things blessed are you if you do them

Amen may the Lord add his own blessing to the public reading of his word we're going to explore this amazing event which Jesus carried out on the eve of his crucifixion with three headings if you like powerful revelation Peter's reaction and the parable's lesson now before I go into the the actual event of Jesus washing the feet of disciples I'm going to use the introduction to the that section of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples the first three verses of chapter 13 because some people have described those first three verses of chapter 13 as a kind of mini prologue it's as if John is very briefly summarizing the great truths about Jesus Christ Christ and is more or less saying that once I have expressed those truths to you there is a connection between those truths and this event of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and it is really I think very important for us to understand that Jesus is on the eve of being crucified literally within a day and when I've preached from John before I've said to people John is somebody who has illusions in the language that he uses he likes doing that and that often there's deeper meanings in the surface meanings of

what

John writes at any point and this is true here as it is in every part really of the gospel I mean look at how this starts now before the feast of the Passover John throughout his gospel has been very interested in the concept of the Passover the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians calls Jesus Christ our Passover and I don't want to spend a lot of time in the Passover but so that you maybe get what John is at here the birth of Israel happened because of a festival called the Passover and that was where

God was going to judge the people that held Israel or what became Israel in slavery by coming to judge the Egyptians if you like and they said because the Israelites might have been or the proto Israelites might have been fairly scared as the angel of judge was going through the land he said to them you sacrifice a lamb and sprinkle some of its blood on the doors and I will pass over you and you will have no worry about judgment coming to you now so that word is that John is using now before the feast of the Passover its associations are with death with the sacrificial lamb and John wants his readers to realize that it was just before the feast of the

[9 : 22] Passover! has soaked up and taken that judgment that we deserve for our sin and guilt to himself in order that we might be liberated just like the people of Israel and notice the next line when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father now it's interesting that in John's Gospel at the beginning of it chapter 2 in verse 4

Jesus is at a wedding with his family and his mother and a conversation emerges and I don't want to go into the conversation but Jesus says this my hour has not yet come but when we get to John chapter 13 then that's a different state of affairs Jesus is saying he knows that his hour indeed has come and what was this hour and we read in chapter 12 of this gospel in verse 23 and Jesus answered them the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified that motif about the hour is throughout

John's gospel and Jesus is identifying that hour with the son of man to be glorified and just before that he's been talking about a grain of wheat if it's to become anything it's got to go into the ground and die glory and so Jesus is understanding this hour as the supreme moment and the supreme summit of the reason that he has come into this world and that's important I think for us to understand while it's true that the moral teaching of Jesus was brilliant while it's true that he performed miracles or as John calls them signs the real mission of Jesus was coming for this hour where as he puts it in

John 12 there that the son of man is to be glorified truly truly I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies and he talks about whoever loves his life loses it if anyone serves me he must follow me and all that and then in verse 27 now is my soul troubled and what shall I say father save me from this hour but this is the very hour that he came into the world for that he might be our redeemer that he might be our hope that he might be our savior and so John is saying Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world and to the father but notice what he says as well having loved his own which were in the world having loved his own which were in the world he loved them to the end and you can think of that last statement there having loved his own which were in the world and having loved them to the end as a temporal thing or you can think of it he loved them to the nth degree to the very degree that he came for this hour that he came that he might be glorified on the cross and that his father might be glorified through him being on that cross because he spared not his own son to be on that cross so

John is saying just before the feast of the Passover Jesus knew that his hour had come and he knew that he was departing out of the world and back to the father and he loved his own that were in the world and indeed he shows this love to the utmost even in this parable of the cleansing of the feet of the disciples but notice verse 3 Jesus knowing that the father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God rose from supper you see there there is some scholars don't think that these three verses have any connection with what follows in Jesus drying!

[15 : 15] washing the feet of the disciples I do believe they have a connection and I think the very literature there and the grammar of it indicates that as well because Jesus is saying here I know that my hour has come I know that I have come from the father and I'm going to the father and I know that he has given me all things given all things into my hands and that is why I'm going to rise on the eve of my crucifixion on the eve of my torture and pain and ignominy and shame and disgrace I am going to rise even now and perform this parable for my disciples even for Judas

whom

I know is going to betray me I wonder are we sensitive if you like to the hour of our life whatever that hour might be our way people who are conscious that there is a time to think about God there is a time to repent before God there is a time to make our peace with God do we have that idea in our head okay let's let's look then at this powerful and amazing event of

Jesus washing the feet of the disciples he rises from supper he laid aside his outer garments taking a towel tied it round his waist then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round them now what we have to remember is this is a parable there are some people who have included feet washing as a ritual in their services but we have to bear in mind the genre of literature that we're dealing with in the Bible as we read it and this is a parable this is not to be taken literally

John wants to convey great truths to the disciples in this whole parable acted parable inacted parable he wants to convey great truths to them and remember what I said before when I was preaching on the prodigal son Jesus is not only our redeemer he's our revealer he is the the revelation of God and you must always remember this I believe every word that Jesus spoke every action that he did every attitude that he showed and all his actions were revelatory every single one of them and what was it that he was revealing well he was revealing many things at many different times but the most profound thing that he was revealing was

God and that's why he says he that has seen me has seen the father and in this event of the washing of the feet of the disciples he's revealing God but he's also revealing the nature of what it is to be a servant of Christ and he's also revealing the nature of his messiahship and kingship and that's what we need to watch out for in this passage so he pours water into a basin and begins to wash the feet of the disciples one of the rabbis that lived long before Jesus in his notes said it's forbidden that any Jew takes the form of a slave that washes people's feet this was something that they would ask a non-Jew to do and could imagine the scene there they are in the midst of this meal and suddenly

[20 : 46] Jesus gets up and takes off his outer garment and gets water and starts to wash the feet let alone was that a correct protocol or something that a Jew person would do any Jew the lowest of Jews here is Jesus the Christ of God moving to take this role of astonishing humility to take from the people to take from the people to take from the people to the people to Jesus is revealing many things about his own role in fact I would even go as far as to say it's not illegitimate!

I'll put it that way to take from the words that Jesus knowing that the father had given all things into his hand laid aside his outer garments I almost think that this is a parable about the person and work of Jesus obviously the washing is relative to the atonement but I even think his action in getting up and laying aside his garments and taking then the station and the status and the position of the lowest of the low is a communication after all John begins his gospel by saying that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us it surely could have been in John's head that this was what Jesus was trying to convey as he rose that a memorable day or evening and started washing the feet of the disciples and he comes to

Peter and Peter is aghast Peter cannot believe what he's been doing he comes to Peter in other words he'd been going round some others before he came to Peter and Peter has been watching this and thinking what on earth is he playing it what's he doing and Peter being Peter when he eventually comes to Peter he says to Peter Peter says to him Lord do you wash my feet Jesus answers what I'm doing you don't understand but afterwards you will understand and then Peter says you will never wash my feet and then Jesus responds by saying if I do not wash you you have no share with me if I do not wash you you have no share with me now for us today that means if we haven't been washed in the sacrifice of

Christ the Passover if we haven't been bathed in the blood of Christ if we haven't come to him as the only redeemer as the only savior if we haven't availed ourselves of his salvation and forgiveness which he offers us like he's offering Peter at this point who initially is saying no Jesus utters these words you will have no share with me you will have no share with me and here we're in I believe the very heart and pulse of what it is to be a Christian a Christian is someone who has a relationship with Jesus Christ a Christian is someone who has come to

Christ and received him as their saviour John said in his first chapter of his gospel to those who received him gave he the power to become children of God have you come to Christ have you been bathed have you been washed by Jesus Christ one of the old times is wash me in the blood of the

lamb and I shall be whiter than snow Peter's reaction but I want you to notice something just before we move away from Peter in verse 8 please note that Peter says to him Lord do you wash my feet so that

[26 : 19] Peter has a great sense of who he's speaking to he knows he's much more than a prophet he knows he's much more than a teacher and he knows he is Lord do you want Jesus to wash you or like Peter was at first are you saying no and as I've asked already have you been bathed in the blood of Christ Jesus also went on to say to Peter when Peter says what about my hands and my head and Jesus could say the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet before people came if they were invited as guests to a house in that time they would bath so that they would be completely clean and the only part of their body that was needing cleansed was their feet from the dust and the dirt and everything else and

I think this is very easily applied to Christians to you and I we've been bathed if we've come to Christ washed in the blood of the lamb forgiven our sins have been cast into the sea of his forgetfulness but yet it's not that we're free from sin every single day we need to ask God for forgiveness for our sins every single one of us and that is why Jesus I think is saying to Peter you're clean but you also need your feet washed and when he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place he said to them do you understand what I have said you call me teacher and

Lord and you are right for so I am if I then your Lord and teacher have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet what is Jesus actually saying I said earlier on we shouldn't take this literally this is revelatory Jesus is seeking to convey truths about himself that he's a servant saviour he said himself I have not come to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many but he also said in chapter 12 there that you must be a servant is not above his master and you have to be ready to give up your life whoever loves his life in chapter 12 25 and loses it and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life and in chapter 12 in verse 26 it says if anyone serves me he must follow me that where

I am so I think what Jesus is trying to say here is that if there is such a thing as authentic Christianity it's serving Christianity and not only is it serving Christianity it's serving in the most menial of tasks like I've just given you the example now let's be honest with ourselves do we want to cultivate people who are what shall I say have got good kudos have got good status and good standing do we want to gravitate towards those people is that the kind of influence that we want to be involved in the lesson that I think Jesus is showing us here that he was willing to do what even an ordinary

Jewish slave would not do and would not be allowed to do in demonstrating what would be an authentic following and as a serving type of Christianity Christianity the heart of authentic Christianity therefore according to this acted parable that Jesus did on the eve of his crucifixion with his disciples is this kind of servant Christianity and serving one another in love because if we ask ourselves this question how can it come about that I am willing to do what Jesus did in its real meaning not simply get a basin of water and a towel and go about washing people's feet but how willing am

[32 : 04] I to do what he did his entire life which was go to the margins of people people who were considered outcasts and untouchables and problem people and people that were very far from his dignity and his glory and his honor in a sense Jesus is saying remember what I said about Revelation this is God God washes people's feet that is to say God reaches for the poor and needy God reaches for the people that nobody wants to have any company with God reaches for the people that nobody wants to befriend and I think this is the kind of truth that Jesus is seeking to enact!

in this parable Do we like to hobnob with the gifted the successful the intellectual are we found gravitating to the poor the maimed and the blind and those who are in great need or do we pass them by like the story of the that Jesus gave of the good Samaritan the only way that we can do that the clue is remember I said there's a connection the clue is this love it tells us there that Jesus having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end and what made and allowed and enabled Jesus to be a servant saviour and to seek and save that which was lost and to come not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom was love and without that love it could not have been done and that love is the love of God the love of Christ said Paul in another place constrains us and that love that causes God as it were to plunge into such humility and

reaching out for those who are in the margins of society is done because of his love may it be that we too will follow our master may it be that we will do what Jesus has said here if then I your Lord and teacher have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet may the Lord bless these thoughts to each one of us for his glory and for our eternal good