

John 13:36-14:14

- III. Jesus Reveals Himself to His Disciples (13:1-17:26)
 - A. The Lord's Supper (13:1-30)
 - B. Concerning a New Commandment (13:31-35)
 - C. Concerning Heaven (13:36-14:14)

With just Jesus and His disciples in the Upper Room, and in response to His statement that *where I am going, you cannot come*, we pick up the narrative in v. 36 with Peter's response: *Lord, where are You going?* There continues to be a disconnect – and understandably so! – between Jesus' teachings and His disciples' understanding of those teachings. Why couldn't they follow Jesus to, say, Capernaum or Galilee? They've been following him all this time, what's different now?

Jesus tells Peter that he can follow Him *afterward* (v. 36), which is unacceptable to Peter. He wants to follow Jesus *now* (v. 37), including to the point of death. The irony of it all is, Jesus is indeed going to put to death, and Peter is going to end up denying Jesus *three times* before the morning. That's how close we are to the crucifixion! The Upper Room Discourse is immediately before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

Yet, Jesus' death isn't the last stop in where He is going. Jesus encourages His disciples to *believe* in Him (14:1), because He is going to *prepare a place for* them (v. 2). Once that place is completed, He will *come again and receive* them so that they would be together again. Of course, we read this from our twenty-21st Century perspective, and we know that Jesus is referring to His resurrection and ascension, and that He is now in Heaven awaiting His Second Coming. The disciples, however, are still thinking according to the things of earth. Thomas, scratching his head, replies in v. 5:

Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?

In vv. 6-7, we read Jesus' response, one that we know well:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.

This is another one of Jesus' *I am* statements in the Gospel of John, and here He is three things. First, Jesus is *the way*. As He goes on to explain, *no one comes to the Father except through Him*. In a world with many religions and subjective standards of what is good, Jesus is dogmatic and clear. There's only one way to have eternal life, there's only one way to have God's wrath removed from us that we would become His friends, and it's through Jesus.

This is one of those statements that always brings my mind back to the three choices popularized by C. S. Lewis: Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. There are no other options. There is no accepting Jesus as a "good man" and nothing more, because He made claims of Himself that can only be explained in one of those three ways. It's logically inconsistent for an unbeliever to claim that Jesus was a good man but not the only way to God, for Jesus Himself tells us that He is! The only way to Heaven and friendship with the Almighty God is through Jesus.

Second, He is *the truth* (cf. 1:14; Eph 4:21; 1 John 5:20; Rev 3:7, 14; 6:10; 19:11). In our world today, truth is seen as a quality or characteristic. People may believe a statement to be true. They may also believe that truth is subjective: "that may be your truth, but my truth is. . ." Yet, when we turn to the

Word of God, we see that truth is a perfection (or attribute) of God. It's not that God is truthful or always does what is true, He is truth. God defines what truth is by His very being. There isn't some external standard by which God is measured; He is the standard. In the same way that He is grace and mercy and omniscient and omnipresent, He is truth.¹ He embodies truth; He is truth in the flesh (cf. John 1:14).

Third, Jesus says that He is *the life*. His life has given believers life. His resurrection life is the firstfruits of our resurrection life. The way to the Father is through the life afforded by Jesus' death on the cross (cf. John 6:51).

With that, the focus then shifts to the second half of Jesus' statement, dealing with the unity of the Father and the Son. Philip simply wants to see the Father (v. 8), but Jesus tells him that to see Him is to see the Father. As Jesus said in John 10:30, *I and the Father are one*. This does not mean that Jesus is the Father; rather, both Jesus and the Father (along with the Holy Spirit, whom we will get to next week, Lord willing) are fully God. Each one of them is the fullness of deity. To know the Son is to know the Father. Jesus is fully God, and only as fully God could He be the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Finishing up in vv. 12-14, we once again see the emphasis on belief as the sole conduit through which we have eternal life. This time, however, Jesus says that it's through belief that His followers will work *greater works*. His disciples saw an incredible explosion of faith beginning on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Those gathered around Jesus in the Upper Room would go on to become His apostles, being sent to places that Jesus Himself never went, leading others to faith in Jesus. The sharing of spiritual life is far greater than anything that can be accomplished in the physical realm.

He will also continue to do His works through us as we pray. Yet, this isn't an open-ended, blanket promise. As Leon Morris notes:

Whatever the disciples ask in his name Christ will do. This does not mean simply using the name as a formula. It means that prayer is to be in accordance with all that that name stands for. It is prayer proceeding from faith in Christ, prayer that gives expression to oneness with Christ, prayer that seeks to glorify Christ.²

It is, as Jesus Himself prayed, for the Lord's will to be done (Matt 6:10). As Grant Osborne adds:

To assume we can get anything we want through prayer is not just wrong, it is exceedingly dangerous. We become "spiritual" hedonists, greedy people living for the things of this world and pretending they're spiritual. This is the problem of prosperity theology. It is a worldly approach to life under the guise of prayer power. If what prosperity preachers say is true, we and not God would be in control, and he would become a mere puppet serving our whims. This movement is heretical.³

¹A common definition in Christian circles is to say that truth is that which corresponds to reality; however, I don't think that is precise enough. My current best definition of truth is that which corresponds to the mind of God.

²Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 574.

³Grant Osborne, *John*, 341.