



Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN
LESSON 15

Upper Room Discourses John 14

Introduction

A. Emotional State of the Disciples

In the last lesson (John 13,) Jesus celebrated the feast of unleavened bread (Passover) with His disciples in the upper room. It was a festive occasion, but as the meal concluded the disciples experienced a range of emotions. Starting with Christ's humble act of washing their feet, they were ashamed of their exposed selfishness and pride (Luke 22:24-27.)

After Judas was identified and left the room, the Lord announced that the hour of His glorification was near and that He would be leaving them. They became fearful about the somber prospect of Christ's departure and their being left alone in a hostile city. They were confused by the Lord's predictions that one of them would betray Him and that Peter would deny Him. They were stunned by the realization of their Master's imminent and inevitable death.

B. Jesus' Perception

Jesus was keenly aware of the disciples' bewilderment and discouragement. He not only perceived their deeply troubled feelings, He foresaw the traumatic future that lay before them. After His ascension (Acts 1:8), they would be witnesses for Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. Their evangelistic Gospel message would bring them persecution, punishment, suffering and violent deaths as they carried forth God's plan of redemption for mankind. These eleven faithful followers (Judas had left the upper room) needed comfort, assurance and encouragement. Jesus proceeded to console them. Along with the Sermon on the Mount, the Upper Room discourses are among the most precious, the most profound and the most meaningful of Christ's teachings in the Gospels.

Outline of John 14:1-31

- I. The Divine Promise (14:1-4)
- II. The Way, the Truth and the Life (14:5-7)
- III. The Father Dwells in Me (14:8-15)
- IV. Preview of the Holy Spirit (14:16-26)
- V. Parting Word of Peace (14:27-31)

I. The Divine Promise (14:1-4)

A. The Heart

After the discussion about Peter's denial in Chapter 13, Jesus proceeded to comfort the emotionally distraught disciples with these soothing words, "*Let not your heart be troubled.*" He spoke to their hearts as the life organ and center of their personalities. Biblically, the heart is the well-spring of life, the place where the intellect, the emotions and the will coalesce. Scripture tells us, "*Out of the heart flow the issues of life*" (Proverbs 4:23).

B. How to Calm The Troubled Heart

Jesus told the disciples what to do about their troubled hearts, "*You believe in God, believe also in Me.*" His words meant put away your anxious, worried, fearful thoughts and trust in Me just as you have trusted in God. You must believe in My continued love and concern for you even when I am gone (Proverbs 3:5-6).

C. Promise of a Heavenly Reunion

Jesus went on to say, "*In My Father's house are many mansions,*" meaning that in heaven there are many rooms or suites of rooms in which people reside. He was emphasizing the adequacy of space for every believer, not the idea of variety, degrees of glory or luxury. Following His death, resurrection, ascension and return to heaven, He was going to prepare a place for them as well as for all people who have surrendered their lives to Christ. "*I go and prepare a place for you.*" . . . and "*I will come again and receive you to Myself.*" He assured them that this was not a permanent separation, but that His going away had as its purpose a reunion in His Father's house. He added that they knew where He was going and the way to get there.

II. The Way to Heaven (14:5-7)

A. The Great "I Am" Statement

Some of the disciples were confused about Jesus' words. Apparently, they could not associate the Lord's term, "*My Father's house,*" with heaven.

Thomas pointed out that they did not know His destination or how to get there, and wondered what they were to do. In response, Jesus replied, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except through Me."* This was the sixth of Christ's unparalleled claims, spoken on the eve of His brutal scourging, unparalleled humiliation and horrifying crucifixion.

B. Explanation

Merrill Tenney, an evangelical theologian, explains this great "I am" statement well: "This affirmation of Jesus is one of the greatest philosophical utterances of all times. He did not say that He knew the way, the truth and the life, nor that He taught them. He did not make Himself the exponent of a new system." Instead, Jesus said that He Himself was the only Way, He was the personification of truth, and He was the fountain of Life. He was and is the source and fulfillment of all truth and power by which people are enabled to come to God.

C. An Exclusive Claim

Jesus' statement is an exclusive claim as being the only way to heaven. Men and women can be reconciled to God only through faith in Christ's work on the cross and belief in His resurrection and ascension (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:19-29.) If He truly is the Incarnate Son of God, His words, His claims and His miracles are all necessarily true. When people argue with you about this claim, perhaps the best position is to respond with, "I believe God is who He says He is. I believe He gave us infallible truths and instructions to live by in the Bible. Therefore, your argument about Jesus is with God, not with me."

III. The Father Dwells in Me (14:8-15)

A. Philip's Question

Philip's request indicated that the disciples loved Jesus dearly, but that they had not really known Him. They had failed to give close heed to all His words and admonitions. They had not understood the depth of Jesus' teaching about being the express image of God (Hebrews 1:2-3.) If they had paid sufficient attention to His statements to the public crowds and the Jewish leadership, they would have had a richer and fuller perception of Him and His relationship with His Father.

B. Jesus' Reproving Response

Jesus answered Philip with reproving words, *"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known*

Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father, so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'." In other words, if you had listened the past three years and pondered My words and work, you would have known Me and My Father. You have been with Me almost daily and should have realized that I am the exact representation of God. Humanly speaking, we would think that this long exposure to Jesus would have produced greater insight in the disciples, but we must realize that spiritual comprehension is only the product of God's gracious enlightenment.

C. The Father and Jesus

Jesus explained to the disciples once again that He and the Father are in essence, one God that is, they are mutually abiding Holy Beings that have the same divine attributes. They maintain their individual identities as Father and Son in complete unity with one another. Jesus affirmed His mutual indwelling with the Father as the One to execute God's great plan of redemption. J. Orr puts it this way, "The Father and the Son do not exist apart as human individualities do, but in and through each other as moments in one divine, self-conscious life."

D. Further Proof of Divine Unity

In addition to His words, Jesus pointed to His works as evidence of His complete unity with the Father. He reminded them of the miracles that they had witnessed with their own eyes (John 5:36, 10:25, 11:47, 12:37.) His miracles were signs to mankind that signified His divine identity as the Son of God.

E. Greater Works by Believers

He revealed to His disciples the startling truth that those who believed in Him would do not only the works He had done, but even greater works. The basis for this power would be His going to the Father who would send the Holy Spirit to empower them. The Book of Acts describes the disciples performing many of the same physical miracles that Jesus had done (Acts 3:6, 4:16, 9:17-18, 40, 14:10, 20:10). But the greater works of which Jesus spoke meant that the effective work of all believers in witnessing the Gospel to Gentiles and Jews would be greater in numbers. Relatively few people believed in Jesus during His earthly ministry, but since He ascended to heaven, thousands upon thousands have been born again. Jesus' words meant that the mighty work of spiritual conversion by the Holy Spirit, following effective evangelism by believers, has a higher character and is vaster in extent than a few miracles of healing.

F. In My Name

Jesus then pointed out the direct connection between believers doing “greater works” and the prayer-love-obedience cycle. Prayers are to be unselfish and in the interest of God’s Kingdom. “In My name” means coming to the Father in prayer as Jesus’ ambassadors and praying in accordance with God’s will (1 John 5:14-15.) Jesus then pointed to two inseparable conditions for getting answers to prayer : love and obedience. “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Deep love for Jesus inspires and motivates the believer to obey Him (John 14:21, 23, 15:14; 1 John 5:3.)

Application:

A person who loves and follows the Lord Jesus Christ obeys His voice (Exodus 19:5;) obeys His law (Deuteronomy 11:27;) obeys Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5;) obeys the Gospel (Romans 6:17) and keeps His commandments (John 14:15, Ecclesiastes 12:13.) Do you associate love of Christ and obedience to Him as being inseparable? Is your faith based on total love and obedience to God?

IV. Preview of the Holy Spirit (14:16-26)

A. The Spirit of Truth

Jesus told the disciples that after He departed, He would ask and the Father would send another Helper to be with them forever. He identified the Helper as the Spirit of Truth, an exquisite title for the third member of the Trinity. In effect, Jesus was saying our Father will send you another Me, who will be with you and comfort you in My place. This Helper will be “in” you instead of “with” you as Jesus had been in His human life on earth. He will also be your strength and support in moments of weakness. He will counsel you in the difficulties of life and console you in times of sadness and fear.

B. The Trinity

Jewish believers, including the disciples, had grown up believing that there was but one God. It had been hard enough for the disciples to grasp that Jesus was God, but even more difficult to think of the Spirit of God as a Person rather than an influence. In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit had come on believers temporarily to give them strength, but normally He did not remain with them (Psalm 51:11.) The New Testament, on the other hand, clearly reveals that there are three Persons in the Godhead, and that the Holy Spirit is not merely a power but a Person just like the Father and Son (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14.)

C. Functions of the Holy Spirit

The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity. The doctrinal statement of Grace Community Church reads, “He is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal with the Father and the Son and is consubstantial with them” (Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 40:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:11; John 16:13.)

According to Jesus in the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit functions as:

- Supernatural Agent in regeneration (John 3:5-6)
- Drawer of people to God (John 6:44-45)
- Giver of Life (John 6:63)
- Helper who lives in believers (John 14:15-17)
- Teacher and Reminder (John 14:26)
- Witness (John 15:26)
- Prosecutor (John 16:7-11)
- Revealer and Guide (John 16:12-15)

D. You in Me and I in You

After Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit of truth would come, He promised He would not leave them as orphans but would come back to them. He apparently was referring to His post-resurrection appearance rather than His second coming. They, along with over 500 other believers, saw Jesus for forty days before His ascension (John 20:19, 27; 21:1,14; Acts 1:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8.) Because He would overcome death, He said to them, “*Because I live, you will live also . . . you in Me and I in you.*”

All of these truths and many more would become abundantly clear at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit would come to dwell in them.

E. Love and Obedience

Once again Jesus pointed out the conditions necessary to receive God in the heart. “*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*” In order to obey and keep Christ’s instructions and teachings, we first have to read them and know what they say. Because there are so many of them, it is a lifetime privilege and responsibility to read them continuously. One who neglects personal and private reading of the Word cannot keep God’s word. “*He who does not love Me does not keep My words.*” It is diffi-

cult, if not impossible, to have conscious awareness of God and Jesus through the Holy Spirit within our inner being unless we read, understand, know and apply God's Word to our lives.

Application:

Sanctification is the Biblical process of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18.) The Apostle Paul called it "*working out your salvation with fear and trembling*" (Philippians 2:12.) The major part of this process is loving God "*with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*" (Matthew 22:37.) Jesus taught us that this love is inseparably connected with total obedience to His words and commands. As you mature as a Christian, do you regularly spend personal and private time with God and His Word, seeking to know His commandments and applying them to your life? Are you helping others within your sphere of influence to know and keep God's commandments?

F. The Teacher

The disciples did not have the written words of Jesus as we do, so Jesus told them the Holy Spirit would come and "*teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.*" This promise was very important because it meant that a particular work of the Holy Spirit would be to put into the minds of the disciples memories of the teachings and words of Jesus. They then would be able to record God's truth without error. Thus, Christians of every age can now have complete confidence that the Bible is God's Word, not the words of men. The indwelling Holy Spirit is always ready to guide us and help us understand Scripture when we consciously pray for His direction.

V. Parting Word of Peace (14:27-31)

A. Inner Serenity and Assurance

Jesus sensed the uneasiness and perplexity among the disciples at the prospect of His leaving them. He knew they did not comprehend all that He was saying, so He comforted them with these parting words of peace, "*My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.*" The world may offer temporary pleasure, possessions, power, prestige, and honor, but can never give permanent inner assurance of serenity that surpasses human comprehension.

B. Rejoice in My Departure

In addition to the promise of peace, Jesus exhorted them to rejoice in His departure because of their

trust in Him. He must leave them in the flesh and be glorified and exalted with the Father so that He could return to them in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

C. Victory Over Satan

Jesus fore-knew His enemies were at hand to crucify Him. He was about to engage in battle with the ruler of this world, Satan. At Gethsemane and Calvary, the Prince of Peace (Jesus) and the prince of the power of the air (Satan) would be locked in mortal combat. As a result of Christ's victory, Satan has forever lost his power over those who are redeemed and delivered out of his influence.

D. Last Sentence Chapter 14

Most commentators interpret Jesus' last sentence in this chapter as signaling an anticipated change in location and not an indication that His upper room discourse was ended. Whatever the case, the time of departure from the Upper Room is not critical to a correct interpretation of Jesus' teaching.