

## I WILL COME AGAIN

John 13:31-14:6

One of the consistent and recurring features we see in the interactions Jesus had with people in general and with His disciples was that He was always teaching them what they needed to know about the way we are to live in the Kingdom of God. We also see that they (even the disciples) did not always learn these essential lessons of what they were being taught.

Even as the final hours approached before Jesus would be arrested and executed, Jesus used every opportunity to get His disciples ready for a really significant change in their interactions and relationship with Him. During the Passover meal with them Jesus told them about a New Covenant that would replace the Old Covenant which was closely associated with the Passover observance. It was during this time together that Jesus told them about a betrayal that was unfolding and He even let Judas (the betrayer) know that He (Jesus) knew what Judas was going to do. Jesus could have stopped Judas simply by telling the others what Judas had done, but He didn't. He just let Judas leave the group and then continued to teach those who remained.

### Honor Through Love – 13:31-35

<sup>31</sup> When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:31–35 (ESV)

It is safe to assume that the significance of the statement Jesus made after Judas left the room was not understood by any of them. At this point in time, the events leading up to why God came into the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth were rapidly coming together. We learned from previous statements Jesus made that everything He did had the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God. The route to achieving this outcome was for Jesus (God Incarnate) to be glorified. Most people thought that event would involve eliminating Roman domination and Jesus (the Messiah) would be in control as King of Israel. No one associated “glorification” with physically dying on a Roman cross which was (in the mind of most people) the ultimate humiliation.

When God Incarnate (on the earth) was glorified, then God Divine (in heaven) was also glorified. God is ultimately seen (discerned) in His “greatest essence” (His glory) when His pure and selfless love is realized in its fullness. This is exactly what happened when Jesus died for our sins.

Jesus had just assured them that what was about to happen would be the “glorification” of which He had been teaching about for the past three (plus) years. If they had fully believed what He said, then they would not have been in ultimate despair and hiding in fear when He was arrested, executed and buried. They could not “get their minds around this truth” and so they could not go “there” and realize that “death on a Roman cross” was a “victory for the Kingdom of God.” Is this what Jesus meant when He told them, “Where I am going, you cannot come?” We might also conclude that they were not able to die as the penalty payment for the sins of all mankind.

Since they (the disciples) were not able to go the route Jesus was about to travel, they needed to do all they could do which was presented to them as a “new commandment.” On

several occasions people would quiz Jesus about the Old Testament scriptures such as “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus summarized the Law and the Prophets with just two commandments: Love God with your total being, and Love your neighbor as yourself. These tell us the targets and the extent of love; however, there are variations in the quality of love. It was in this upper room that Jesus defined the quality of love that He meant. He said, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” This is a self-sacrificing kind of love. It is love that goes the second mile and turns the other cheek and it is the kind of love that even washes dirty feet. It's the kind of love that doesn't find fault and that doesn't brag, it looks out for others and does not understand the idea of “looking out for number one.” It's the kind of love we must show if we are to win the world to Jesus Christ.

This “new commandment” (as they would later discover) would need divine help (the advent of the Holy Spirit) in order to obey it. Obeying this new commandment would be the most convincing evidence (to the world) that they were really followers of Christ and that the claims of Christ were true. One of the biggest detriments to the progress of the Kingdom of God is the non-alignment of the claims of Christians with their behavior.

### Honor Through Loyalty – 13:36-38

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” <sup>37</sup> Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” <sup>38</sup> Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times. John 13:36–38 (ESV)

Did Peter hear the “new commandment?” No, he was still thinking about Jesus going away to some place here on earth and wondering where He was going. It almost seems as if Peter suspected that Jesus was talking about His death. However, his later actions (the denials) more or less proved that he did not have any idea His death was what Jesus meant.

Jesus had just described to them the route to “where He was going.” That route is the way of self-sacrificing love which is the essence of the “new commandment” that is essential for living under the New Covenant that Jesus introduced to them earlier during the Passover meal. Jesus is the personification of godly love; therefore, He is the way (see also John 14:6).

Peter could not follow Jesus at that time since “the way” had not been developed in him. This is not something we can do in human strength. It is only by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us that we are able to “work out” in our lives the love of God that He has put into our hearts at our conversion. What needs to follow is a transformation from the “way we were” to the “way Jesus is.” We call that process “sanctification.” The best Peter’s human resolve could manifest was demonstrated when he denied Christ which confirmed the truth of the statement that Jesus made about them not being able to follow Him on the path He was walking. If we find ourselves constantly failing to follow Jesus, it is likely that we are hindering the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives by failing to deny self.

### Honor Through Believing – 14:1-6

<sup>1</sup> “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going.” <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:1–6 (ESV)

The disciples were troubled because Jesus had told them (John 13:33) that He was going to leave them and that they could not follow Him then, but they would follow Him later (verse

36). Since they were thinking in physical terms of “where” Jesus was going, they thought they did not know the way to “where” He would be. Jesus was in the process of demonstrating the “way” and the truth of the matter is that “without being empowered by the Holy Spirit, people are essentially incapable of voluntarily laying down their lives and dying to self.” Notice that Jesus did not say in verse 13:33 that you “may” not come but that you “can” not come. It was not a question of permission but of ability. They would need to be empowered to have the ability.

We have difficulty understanding the work of Jesus beyond His earthly ministry. According to most translations, He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Most of us take what He said about the house with rooms quite literally and we picture some sort of heavenly palace or mansion that has a space for us to live – pretty much like a super condo complex. My conviction is that Jesus was really referring to something more spiritual and abstract than the condo idea.

We remember that John’s gospel has teaching passages that are parallel to Old Testament passages with a New Covenant interpretation of the Old. In Chapter one he used the Genesis creation account to present Jesus as God the Son, the Agent of Creation. In Chapter fourteen, he paralleled the Exodus account of God’s instructions to Moses to building a dwelling place for Himself among the people of God. From Exodus 25:8 we see the physical antitype from the Old Covenant that points to the spiritual reality that Christ revealed to His disciples regarding the “sanctuary” for God among those who were associated with the New Covenant. “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.”

It was a “sanctuary” (a holy place) that was to be a dwelling place for God to occupy. The New Testament passage tells us about the dwelling place for God under the New Covenant that we see in John chapter fourteen.

Under the Old Covenant, there was one central location that was to be positioned in the midst of the encampment of the people and there was a division or separation of the people from the very presence of God. In contrast, under the New Covenant, there are many dwelling places rather than one central location. We find a similarity: the physical sanctuary was in the midst (core) of the encampment of the people and the spiritual sanctuaries (dwelling places) will be in the core (inner most being or spirit of the believers). These “many dwelling places” where God dwells are individual Christians. Just as God came to dwell in the tabernacle, He comes to dwell or abide within each born-again child of God and receives each one unto Himself so that He and they are in the same place. Another contrast between the Old and the New is that the Old had an element of “separation” between God and the people, in the New there is a “oneness” in that we are united with Christ by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament, the people were to take the materials that they voluntarily contributed and they were to prepare the actual physical structure and all the furnishing. This was to be done in a specific way. This “way” was the pattern of what God had shown Moses while he was on the mountain. In Hebrews chapter eight we learn that this pattern was “a copy and shadow” of what is in heaven. If we are looking at this in a parallel fashion with the information in the New Testament regarding the abiding place of God, we would logically assume that the dwelling place for God in each individual Christian must be prepared from what each person has brought and contributed and it is to be put together in the prescribed “way” so that it is like the heavenly reality.

Who is capable of putting all of this together? Paul tells us in Philippians 2:13 “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” We know that “His good

pleasure” or His will is that each believer is to be transformed into the image of His Son as we see in Roman 8:28-29. We also know that the pattern or the specific or prescribed “way” these “many dwelling places” are to be fashioned is Jesus Christ Himself who said in John 14:6 “I AM the Way.”

Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:16-19 that we have been (are being) strengthened by the Holy Spirit in the inner man which allows Christ to dwell in our hearts by preparing our hearts to make them suitable for a divine dwelling place. The preparation is needed because the heart of unregenerate man is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” and is not a suitable residence for God. This realization might cause some to think that they need to “clean up their lives” before they come to God for salvation. We know that will not work since it is not possible for man to do that in his own strength. At the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit is present in the life of a believer and that presence of the Holy Spirit is evidence of salvation (Rom. 8:9). This is a result of the work of the Cross.

Christ is present in our hearts by His own Spirit. It is the presence of Christ which prepares (makes ready or makes fit) the heart to be a suitable dwelling place for God. Alexander MacLaren’s Commentary stated it this way: “*It is Christ in the heart that makes the heart fit for Christ to dwell in the heart. You cannot do it by your own power; turn to Him and let Him make you temples appropriate for Himself.*” It would appear that a distinction is being made between Christ being present and Christ dwelling in our hearts.

Let’s now look at the statement “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Most of us take this to mean that we believe that Christ is in our hearts, it is something we possess by faith. We can look at this statement in a slightly different way and see that it can simply mean that because we believed and trusted in God’s provision for our salvation (by faith) that we were saved and because we have been saved, Christ dwells in our hearts. However, the word “dwells” carries a meaning beyond the mere presence of Christ which is the situation of every believer. Paul was going a step further in that the Greek word translated as “dwells” has the concept of Christ “settling down and being at home” in our hearts. (We might state this as He is “not just visiting” but has “taken up residence.”)

This idea may be what is meant when Jesus told His disciples in John 14:23 “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 (translated as mansion in John 14:2) with him.” If there is any “parallelism” intended between this passage (John 14) and the Exodus 25 passage, then we would have to conclude that the dwelling place is to be occupied by God as stated in verse 23 of John 14. The “many dwelling places” would then mean that God resides in each believer – which would be in agreement with our understanding that each believer is the “temple” of God. The contrast of “each believer” with the “tabernacle” of old is that the people were to carry out the preparation for the tabernacle to be suitable for God, while Jesus is the One doing the preparation in us and doing it for us since we are incapable of doing it ourselves.

It would have been of little comfort for the confused and soon-to-be-grieving disciples for the promised preparation and reuniting with the Messiah to believe that Jesus was referring to something that would be happening two thousand years later rather than something in their life time.