

## BELIEVE EXCLUSIVELY

John 14:1-14, 27-29

If you ask many young people today why they feel negatively toward the church, the likely answer would have something to do with their perception that the church is intolerant. Apparently, we have come to the point in our culture where we think that “if you don’t approve of what I am doing, then you hate me.” This seems to be a result of an apparent inability to make a distinction between a “person” and the “behavior” of the person. If someone were to notice that your house is on fire as he was driving down the street and then goes to your door and “bangs” on your door and yells that you need to get out of the burning house, then you would never say that the person hates you for making you aware of the danger. So, why is it that when we tell someone that his lifestyle will cause him irreparable damage in this life and in eternity that the reason is because we hate him?

It is so easy to buy into false ideas, because false ideas are many times what is popular. In our efforts to avoid seeming to be “intolerant” some will dilute the truth by making such a statement that “it doesn’t matter what you believe in, just as long as you believe in something.” Many times such a statement is made to try to counteract apathy or lack of being committed to anything.

My guess is that if you ask most people what is “apathy,” they would tell you that they don’t know and don’t care. On the other hand, it is dangerous advice to teach people that “commitment” is more important than “truth.” **Nothing** could be further from the truth. What we “believe in” is serious business since it not only influences how we behave and relate to the world around us, to other people and to God Himself (right now and tomorrow), **but** it also has profound influence on our eternity. If we doubt the idea that what you believe is important, then we need only to look at communism, to look at the gay community, to look at what Hitler did before and during WWII, to look at what is happening in the Middle East with Israel and the Arabs.

The proof text that most Christians cite for being exclusive (which is interpreted as intolerance by the world) is found in the final discourse Jesus had with His disciples immediately before He was arrested and put on trial.

### The Way to Be with God – 14:1-6

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. <sup>4</sup>“And you know the way where I am going.” <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do 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 but through Me. John 14:1-6 (NASB95)

Before addressing the implication of Jesus being the only way, the only truth and the only life, let’s first look at what was happening with Jesus and His disciple as the time approached for His being offered up as the “Lamb of God” that takes away the sin of the world.

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. 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.

The Greek word for “place” (topos) can literally mean “the condition or station held by one in any company or assembly” or “opportunity, power, occasion for acting.” We can make a legitimate case that He was preparing a place of service or ministry in His body (the church) for us. The word “house” could also mean *household*. In Paul’s writing to the church at Ephesus, he referred to the church as the “household of God.” Therefore, in the church (which we frequently referred to as the “Lord’s House”) there are many “rooms” (stations or offices) of ministry or service and Jesus has prepared one of these for each and every believer. These ministries were His very life – His abiding place – while He went about His earthly ministry. They are still what He is all about. As we put our lives into the ministry of service for which He has prepared for us, we will be living (abiding, mansionsing) where He is abiding or dwelling.

Hughes and Laney have the following observation in *The Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* about verses 2 and 23: “Jesus will prepare a dwelling place for those who believe, and he and the Father will dwell with the obedient believer on this earth (14:23). The preparation of the place is certainly not heavenly carpentry but relates to Jesus’ ascension and sending forth of the Spirit to take up his dwelling place with believers, whether now on earth, or later in heaven.”

The way to get to where Jesus lives (abides, dwells) is the way of self-sacrificing love. We are to love one another as He has loved us. Later on, Jesus used the same word translated as mansion in the KJV in what seems to be a different context. (This Greek word “mone” appears only in the 14th Chapter of John in verses 2 and 23.) In verse 23 “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode (mansion) with him.” We see now another part of the “way” to where Jesus abides. He said He did only the will of His Father. Therefore, the way Jesus showed us is “self-sacrificing love that is guided by obedience to the word of God.” Notice Jesus said (verse 23) He would come unto us and live with us. Does this not refer to the promise of the second half of verse three? “I will come back and receive you unto Myself?”

Thomas and the rest of the disciple were still thinking in physical rather than in spiritual terms. The things of God are spiritually discerned. The very life of Jesus, the essence of Who He is (*the way of self-sacrificing love – God is Love, His word is truth and Jesus is the Word of God, God is the I AM, the essence of being or life, and we know that “in Jesus was life and that life was the light of the world”*) is the way to the Father.

It is certainly by the grace of God that the way has been opened and made known to those who will believe. It would be a mistake to think that we will arrive at the destination of where we want to be if we fail to walk or travel on the road (the way) that goes to that destination. This is the essence of the meaning of Jesus’ teaching on the dangers of simply hearing and not doing.

The reason that Jesus is the only way for mankind to be saved is that He is the only one Who was (is) qualified to break the hold of the evil one on us has those born of the seed of Adam. All other attempts are comparable to a slave bringing a lawsuit against the slave owner to obtain

his freedom. Why will that not work? A slave has no standing in a court since slaves have no rights. A slave cannot buy his freedom (redeem himself) since all that the slave has (owns) is the property of the slave owner. Since Jesus was not born of the seed of Adam and since He did not give up His liberty by ever being obedient to the devil (lived a sinless life), then He (alone) is worthy (able, capable) to redeem mankind.

### The Way to Know God – 14:7-11

<sup>7</sup>“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” <sup>10</sup> “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. <sup>11</sup> “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. John 14:7-11 (NASB95)

One could question whether verse seven is a “promise” or a “rebuke” of the disciples. The basic truth in this statement is that to really (intimately) know Jesus is the only way to know God the Father. By experiencing Jesus we get to know Him beyond a superficial acquaintance of only information about Him. We must move beyond the superficial to the supernatural. As we see Him in the light of His glory, then we see all that can be known of God the Father.

The second part of verse seven appears to be a promise that following the upcoming events (the arrest, beatings, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, appearing to His followers, the ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit) they would “know” Him to be exactly what Jesus had been teaching them by words and actions over the past several years. They would “see” Him with spiritually sensitive eyes and, consequently, would realize that they essentially knew and had seen the Father.

Philip was still thinking of a physical picture of God. How can we have a literal picture of a spirit? Jesus came as God embodied in human flesh and by His character and conduct we can see a “picture” of God.

One of the things that had caused a lot of problems for the nation of Israel from the very beginning was the lack of a physically discernible “object” they could call “God.” The other nations had their idols and they could describe the appearance of those idols. The God of Israel cannot be represented by a statue or painted picture. When Philip requested that Jesus show them the Father, he was still stuck in the paradigm of the past. The answer Jesus gave Philip was essentially this: “I have been showing you a ‘picture’ of God the Father for the past three and a half years.”

In stating that He was in the Father and the Father was in Him is the same as saying “the Father and I are One” or that they are the same.

We make a similar statement about our relationship with Christ. We say that “we are in Christ and Christ is in us.” Such a statement should cause us to ask the reflective question: “Are we living our lives in such a way that others can see Jesus in us?” It will not be a literal, physical picture of Jesus; however, our character and conduct should be illuminated by the glory of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. People should be able to observe us and conclude that Jesus lives and He changes lives in a supernatural way.

How can such a result be accomplished in a practical sense? One obvious way is that the words we speak must align with the words of God (see the second part of verse ten). This does not mean we have to go around quoting scripture verses. It does mean that the truth and wisdom of God should be the basis (foundation) of all we think, say and do. If people are hesitant to believe what we say, then our lives may need to change to testify to the power of the cross and

the Lordship of Jesus. Each of us is a miracle of the grace of God and our very lives must give evidence of that miracle by what we think, say and do.

#### The Way to Pray to God – 14:12-14

<sup>12</sup>“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father. <sup>13</sup>“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*. John 14:12-14 (NASB95)

The fact that Jesus will do whatever we ask Him to do (provided that it is in agreement with His character and nature) is what enables us to do even greater things than He had been doing. In His earthly ministry, He was confined to a particular area of the world. In His ministry through the church, He is working in all the world. The limitation in what “He will do” is “whatever we ask that aligns with His character.” If we do not ask, then why would we expect Jesus to act? If we ask Him to do something that is not in agreement with His character and principles, then why would we expect Jesus to act?

#### The Way to Enjoy God’s Peace – 14:27-29

<sup>27</sup>“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. <sup>28</sup>“You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>“Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. John 14:27-29 (NASB95)

When we know that God loves us, cares for us, knows what is best for us, and has the power to act on our behalf, then we can have an inner quietness that comes from the confidence this brings. Resting in God frees us from anxiety and fear. It also frees us from pride and competitiveness.

Jesus set aside His glory to take on the humility of humanity and now He would return to the glory in which God the Father dwells. The disciples were sad because of their perceived loss with the pending departure of Jesus. They were not considering the greatness of the joy He would experience. They also had no idea of the joy they would experience when the Holy Spirit came upon them to empower them for ministry.

When we are faced with the loss of a Christian friend or relative, we grieve over our loss and sometimes fail to rejoice regarding the joy they will experience in the presence of God. We may also find ourselves failing to rejoice by neglecting to have a conscious awareness of the presence of God through the Spirit in our very lives right now. Jesus said “I and My Father will come and mansion (dwell or abide) with you.” Such peace that comes of the conscious awareness of being in Christ and Christ in us is exclusively available to those who repent and believe, who trust and obey in God’s only provision for salvation, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.