

The Upper Room (John 14)

John 14 is largely a question and answer session between the Lord Jesus and His disciples. There is the dialogue with *Simon Peter* (13.36-14.4); *Thomas* (14.5-7); *Philip* (14.8-21) and *Judas*, not Iscariot (14.22-24). All of these disciples prefix their questions with the word 'Lord'. Perhaps they had learned the lesson of 13.13-14. The chapter emphasises the **Son** (vv.1-3); **Father** (vv.4-14) and **Spirit** (vv.15-26) and considers the themes of *faith* or *belief* (vv.1-14) and *love* (vv.15-31). David Gooding suggests that the chapter develops the 'I AM' statement of v.6, emphasising 'the way' (vv.7-14); 'the truth' (vv.15-17) and 'the life' (vv.18-24).

John 14.1-4: The Preparation of a Place

v.1: The disciples were 'troubled' or 'shaken' and 'disturbed'. As 'heart' is in the singular, the focus of the Lord's words may have been Simon Peter who was troubled because the Lord had predicted his denial (13.38). But the words of the Lord Jesus clearly have a wider application to all the disciples. They were surely affected by Judas Iscariot's exposure as a traitor (13.30) and, most of all, their Lord would only be with them a little while longer (13.33). Where He was going, they could not go (13.36). No wonder they were 'agitated' (cf. 5.4, 7). But, the Lord encourages them not to be worried.
Carson: *It is Jesus who is heading for the agony of the cross; it is Jesus who is deeply 'troubled' in heart (12.27) and spirit (13.21). Yet on this night of nights, when of all times it would have been appropriate for Jesus' followers to lend him emotional and spiritual support, he is still the one who gives, comforts, instructs.*

'Ye believe in God' can be translated as either **indicative** or **imperative**. If indicative it is a statement of fact, i.e. 'you have believed in God'. Then the thought is – *You believe in God whom you have never seen. Shortly I will leave you and be unseen, but continue to believe in me as you have always believed in God.* However, some translations (RV, JND) and most commentators prefer the imperative which denotes a command. Despite the disciples' fears and worries, they were not to doubt, but trust God and Christ. The word 'believe' has the force here of 'trust' and definite 'commitment' to a person. All things are in the hands of God. No matter the circumstances, let us never fear or doubt but commit ourselves and ways unto Him. Perhaps both the *indicative* and *imperative* are to be kept in mind. Note. This is an incidental confirmation of the deity of Christ. No mere man would dare place themselves alongside God as an object of trust. Believe in God, believe also in Me! Christ, as a Man in the glory, becomes the resource and refuge of the heart.

v.2: The Lord Jesus called the temple in Jerusalem 'my Father's house' (2.16), but this is no reference to an earthly building. The Father's house is *heaven* and the *home* of *deity*. In Luke 15 it is connected with the Father's *love*, *abundant provision* and *joy*. As connected with the temple it suggests *communion* and *worship* in the *presence of God*. Heaven is described in Scripture by a number of different metaphors such as a: **country** (Luke 19.12, Hebrews 11.16, emphasising size); **city** (Hebrews 11.10, emphasising the great number of inhabitants); **kingdom** (2 Peter 1.11, emphasising order and rule); **paradise** (Luke 23.43, Revelation 2.7, emphasising delight, blessing and rest). Paradise is the same place as the Father's house, but relating to the *disembodied* state.

In this house are many (abundant provision) 'mansions' (*mone*) or 'abodes', 'dwelling places'. The word is only used elsewhere in Scripture in 14.23, where the believer, indwelt by the Spirit, becomes the *dwelling place* or *home* of the triune God. Thus, the Father's house will be our eternal abiding place (permanency). In this world we are merely pilgrims passing through. Heaven is our home. The picture of 'dwelling places' may originate from Solomon's temple where rows of chambers were built alongside the walls (1 Kings 6.5-6). These were present in Herod's temple too and acted as abodes for priests to occupy whilst they served their courses. **Gooding:** *The priests and Levites were accommodated in these rooms, each according to the particular task he had to do (incense, shewbread etc.).* **Leckie** proposes these abodes are not for individuals but families. Ephesians 3.15 speaks of 'every family in heaven and on earth', with each family having an abode in the Father's house, e.g. OT saints, martyred saints of the tribulation, the church. *There will be a family in heaven in a unique way associated with the Son and for that reason closer to the heart of the Father.* All this may have seemed *unbelievable* to the disciples, but the Lord was well acquainted with the house and would not have told them if it wasn't true. He would never give us a hope which He was incapable of fulfilling.

The Lord Jesus was going to the Father (13.1) via the cross in order that He might prepare a place for us. This does not involve *action* on the part of the Saviour. He is not actively involved in building a mansion in the sky! It rather involves His *presence*. There is a Man in the glory. This has prepared the place for us that we might be there in our glorified bodies. As soon as Christ entered heaven, the abode was prepared. **Leckie:** His blood shed at Calvary prepares the people; His bodily presence in heaven prepares the place.

v.3: 'If I go... I will come again'. The word 'if' does not introduce *doubt*. Rather, His coming again is guaranteed by His departure. 'I will come again' is in the *present* tense, suggesting immanency and certainty. What a delight to know that the Lord is not sending for us, He is coming in person to conduct us to the Father's house (1 Thessalonians 4.14). The word 'receive' is *paralambano* which means 'to take us near to Himself', 'to take possession of', 'to take by the hand'. His desire is that we might be with Him. This will take place at the **rapture**, which ever has the thought of a presentation of the church to *Christ*, not the *Father* (cf. Ephesians 5.27; John 17.24). **Renald Showers:** *It is important to note that Jesus did not say that the purpose of this future coming to receive believers is so that He can be where they are—on the earth. Instead, He said that the purpose is so that they can be where He is—in heaven.* This is therefore a reference to the rapture, not the second coming to earth.

v.4: The disciples knew *where* the Lord was going and the *way* to get there. This was a statement which baffled Thomas (v.5) and yet, it was precisely because they knew Him they also knew the way to the Father's house. **He** is the way!

John 14.5-7: The Perplexity of Thomas

vv.5-6: It seems that Thomas did not fully grasp the meaning of the Lord's words. He knew the Lord was going to the Father's house, but where exactly was that? And if he didn't know where, how could he know the way? Thomas may have been thinking of a journey to an earthly destination. But, the Lord was not so much going to a *place* as to a **Person** – the Father. And a personal relationship with Christ is the only way to the Father (v.6).

'I am the way, the truth and the life'. The context demands that Christ is the **way** to the Father, the **truth** about the Father and the **life** of or from the Father. Christ is the **way** because He is the **truth** and **life**. Note. Before Adam fell he was in possession of spiritual life and enjoyed the privilege of communion with God. But, after believing the devil's lie, he became alienated from God (Genesis 3.8), was no longer capable of perceiving the truth (Genesis 3.7) and died spiritually (Genesis 2.17). Ever since, every sinner has required *reconciliation* (Christ is the Way); *illumination* (Christ is the Truth) and *regeneration* (Christ is the Life). **Leon Morris:** *We should not overlook the faith involved both in the utterance and in the acceptance of those words, spoken as they were on the eve of the crucifixion. 'I am the Way,' said one who would shortly hang impotent on a cross. 'I am the Truth,' when the lies of evil people were about to enjoy a spectacular triumph. 'I am the Life,' when within a matter of hours his corpse would be placed in a tomb.*

'I am' signifies that Christ Himself is the personification of the way, truth and life. *He is not merely a guide to show the way – He is the way. He is not merely a teacher to reveal doctrine about God – He is the truth. He is not merely a Physician who came to repair mankind – He is life (John 10.10).* The **Way** is emphasised as this was particularly on the mind of Thomas. Christ is the only way to the Father and the Father's house (heaven). He is the only Saviour and means of salvation. **AW Pink:** *Christ spans the distance between God and the sinner. Man would fain manufacture a ladder or way of his own to get to heaven. But the Way (Christ) has come down to sinners.* He is the **Truth** because He is the full and supreme revelation of the Father. Truth came by Him (1.17) and His teaching was truth (8.45-46). He Himself 'narrates' God (1.18) and only spoke the words of the Father (8.28). He is God's gracious self-disclosure; the Word made flesh (1.14). *Truth is not to be found in a system of philosophy, but in a Person. What will it avail you in Hell, dear reader, even though you have mastered all the sciences of men, were acquainted with all the events of history, were versed in all the languages of mankind, were thoroughly acquainted with the politics of your day? O, how you will wish then that you had read your newspapers less and your Bible more; that with all your getting you had got understanding; that with all your learning you had bowed before Him who is the Truth!* He is the **Life** in which the truth of the Father can be enjoyed. He is the source of life and imparts life (cf. 1.4; 5.26; 11.25). Sin has brought death, but life is in Christ.

Consequently, no man can come to the Father (which is greater than coming to a place) except 'through' (faith in) the Lord Jesus. He is here presented as a door, gate or entrance. All other ways and roads are ineffective. Therefore, all religions or spiritual teachers that diminish the person of the Lord Jesus cannot bring people to God or eternal life.

v.7: The interpretation of this verse depends on textual variants. The verse can read as a gentle rebuke or a statement of fact. *If you really knew me [and you don't], you would know my Father as well; **OR**, If you have come to know me, you will know my Father also.* If a rebuke, then the thought is that they knew Him as the Messiah, but had not yet recognised Him as the One who was revealing the Father. However, the weight of manuscript evidence favours the simple statement of fact. In addition, not knowing the Lord Jesus (as the AV reads) would put the disciples in the same camp as the Pharisees (8.19). Rather, since the disciples had come to know the Lord *by experience* and through *recurring revelation* (*ginosko*), they had also come to know the Father as well. The Lord Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Father. 'Henceforth' is 'assuredly' and acts as an encouragement to the disciples. Since they had come to know the Lord Jesus, they had *assuredly* come to know the Father as well. In fact, they had 'seen Him'. How? Because they had seen the Lord Jesus who is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1.15). Seeing Him was the same as seeing the Father. What a claim to deity!