

The Farewell Ministry of Christ

T. Ernest Wilson

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Author's Preface

The following pages are the substance of a series of addresses given at the All-India Assembly Workers' Conference, held in Madras December 26-31, 1973. Over two hundred ministers of the Word and pioneer evangelists from every part of India were gathered for the study of the Word, and for mutual encouragement. It was a time of rich blessing and refreshment from the presence of the Lord.

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Quite a large circle of friends have suggested that the addresses be edited and extended and republished under the title, The Farewell Ministry of Christ. As the years have gone by, the author has been impressed more and more with the tremendous importance of these chapters of John's Gospel. They are the heart and core of the teaching of Christ and of Christianity itself.

T. Ernest Wilson

Sea Girt, New Jersey

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Introduction

The central section of John's Gospel, from chapter 13 through chapter 17, is one of the most important passages of Holy Scripture. It is the final teaching of Christ to His disciples before He went to Gethsemane and the cross. In these chapters He outlines seven vital doctrines of Christianity, which are later elaborated and expounded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the apostles John, Peter, and Paul. Here we find the germ and basis of the teaching, and later the full fruit and flower. Our Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would bring all things to their remembrance and would guide them into all truth. This we find in the great doctrinal epistles.

A careful reading of John's Gospel shows that it is divided into three sections, with a preface and an appendix.

John 1:1-18 is the preface, giving a marvelous exposition of the deity, humanity, and the creatorial power of that One who is called the Word and the only begotten Son of the Father.

John 1:19-12:50 is a record of the public ministry of Christ. There are seven miracles called "signs" and a number of sermons or discourses, linked with and explaining the signs. In this section our Lord is a Prophet.

In John 13-17, Christ takes the disciples to the upper room. So to speak, He leaves the world behind and, opening His heart, gives them the great foundational truths of Christianity, ending with His solemn intercessory prayer of chapter 17. Here He is Priest.

John 18-20 records Christ's agony in Gethsemane, His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. In this section he is called King nine times. He was called King of the Jews in mockery by those who crucified Him.

Thus in John's Gospel He is Prophet, Priest, and King.

Chapter 21 is an appendix or epilogue linking the Gospel with the Acts of the Apostles. There are three main subjects:

- a lesson in catching fish, illustrating evangelistic work.
- a lesson in feeding sheep, illustrating pastoral work.
- a final exhortation to discipleship: "Follow Me."

The public ministry of Christ lasted approximately three years, but the private discourse in the upper room may have occupied only about three hours. Yet how profound and important is the teaching contained in it! The record of these few hours of one day in our Lord's life occupies one fifth of the entire text of John's Gospel.

Jacob's dying blessing to his sons in Genesis 49 gives us a prophetic history of the people of Israel. Likewise Moses, in Deuteronomy 32-33, before he ascended Mount Nebo where he died and was buried, leaves the twelve tribes a parting song and blessing.

David's last words in 2 Samuel 23 give a catalog of the mighty men who had helped him win the kingdom and who were suitably rewarded when he was on the throne.

Similarly Paul's last message to Timothy gives a list of the men who were linked with him in his work, as well as a warning concerning those who were the enemies of Christ (2 Tim. 4:10-21).

So in John 13-17 our Lord gives His final teaching to His own and then commits them to the care and control of His Father.

Dr. T. D. Bernard calls this section of John's Gospel "The Central Teaching of Jesus Christ." Dr. Wilbur M. Smith lists eight principal subjects in the upper room discourse: God the Father, Christ the Son of God, the Word of God, Christian conduct and character, the Holy Spirit, the life to come, the world in which the believer lives, Satan and his work.

The name "Father" occurs forty-eight times in these five chapters, the reciprocal love of Father and Son six times, and mention of the Son being sent by the Father ten times (six times in ch. 17).

The emphasis in this exposition of the discourse will be on seven principal doctrines:

- The second coming of Christ (14:3).
- The way of approach to the Father: priesthood (14:6).
- The relations in the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (14:8-17).
- The Holy Spirit (14—16).
- The inspiration of the Word (14:26; 16:13).
- A new principle in prayer (14:13-14; 16:23-24).
- A new testimony: the Vine and the branches (15:1-8).

All of these indicate something new, a change in God's dispensational dealings with His people.

The Upper Room

The term “upper room” as it is used in Scripture is an intensely interesting one. A middle-class home in the Middle East would usually consist of three stories. The ground floor is called the kataluma, from kata, down, and luo, to loose or loosen. This was a place where travelers and their beasts untied their loads, girdles, and sandals. This is the word used of the inn in Luke 2:7. When Christ was born there was no room for Him in the inn (kataluma). On an upper floor was a reception room called a pandoecheion, from pan, all, and dechomai, to receive. This is the word used in Luke 10:34 where the Good Samaritan brought the wounded traveler to an inn (pandoecheion), a place where all were received. Then there was the upper room called anogeon, from ana, above, and ge, the ground. It was the most private and the best room in the house.

This is beautifully illustrated in Luke’s account of the last Passover and the institution of the Lord’s Supper (Lk. 22:7-13). The Lord asked for a guest chamber (kataluma) but the good man of the house gave Him a large upper room (anogeon) furnished.

Four words in the synoptic Gospels describe it. It was large, an upper room, furnished (Luke), and prepared (Mk. 14:15).

It was large. So it is that when under His sacred ministry, there is room for all the Word of God, room for the Spirit of God, and room for all the people of God who are not disqualified by doctrinal or moral evil.

It was an upper room. The ground floor was for business and rest; the second floor was for reception and fellowship; but the upper room is for revelation and worship. We sense ourselves in these chapters above the earth:

Shut in with Thee, far, far above.

The restless world that wars below....

It was prepared. All the furniture was there prepared (Mk. 14:15) but not their hearts. Those had to be regulated before there could be any teaching.

It was furnished. There was a pitcher of water, a table, a basin, a towel, bread, a cup, and a roast lamb. But most important of all, the Lord Himself was at the head of the table, in the midst as the Host. It is noticeable that one important feature is missing. There was no household servant to perform the task of welcoming and of washing the disciples' feet.

Naturally, questions swarm in one's mind. Was it the home of the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12)? Was it the same upper room in which our Lord appeared in resurrection (Lk. 24; Jn. 20)? And was it the place where the early disciples met (Acts 1:13)? It is probable but not certain.

Two other questions have caused a good deal of controversy among theologians. Did our Lord actually partake of the Passover, and on the appointed day, the fourteenth of Nisan? And are the events in the upper room recorded by John in chapters 13-14 the same as those given by Luke in chapter 22? Was it the same occasion and the same place?

Many commentators have wrestled over the question of the chronology and the order of events during the last week of our Lord's life ending with the crucifixion, and have come up with different answers. Dogmatism may be out of place, but the following facts seem beyond question.

Luke 22:7-23 and the parallel passages in Matthew 26:21-25 and Mark 14:18-21 leave no reasonable doubt that our Lord and His disciples did observe the Passover and it is highly unlikely that they did so before the prescribed time.

Luke's account especially makes clear the difference between the Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper (Lk. 22:17-20). It was the end of the Passover and the beginning of something new, the declaration of the New Covenant.

A careful comparison of the above accounts in the Synoptic Gospels with John 13-16 indicates that it was the same occasion and not two distinct evenings and suppers. John does not mention the institution of the Lord's Supper; that already had been done in detail by the other three evangelists, but as in so many other places in his Gospel, he adds details which are not mentioned by the other three. They complement one another.

There are three distinct incidents that run parallel in the Synoptists and in John: the lesson with respect to true greatness, the announcement about the betrayer, and the prediction of Peter's denial. It seems clear that the Synoptists and John are describing the same supper and not two different meals on two different occasions.

Immediately prior to the cross, there were five great events which took place in the upper room. John describes three of them; the Synoptic Gospels give the other two:

- The contention and the feet-washing (Lk. 22:24; Jn. 13:4-11).
- The Last Passover (Lk. 22:14-18).
- The exclusion of Judas (Jn. 13:21-30).
- The institution of the Lord's Supper (Lk. 22:19-20).
- The teaching (Jn. 13-14).

After the resurrection of Christ there are seven recorded events that took place in the upper room:

- The benediction of peace (Jn. 20:19, 21, 26).
- The revelation of the wounds of Calvary (Jn. 20:20; Lk. 24:39-40).
- Proofs of bodily resurrection demonstrated (Lk. 24:39-43).
- Exposition of the Scriptures (Lk. 24:44-45).
- The commission: "So send I you" (Jn. 20:21).
- The breathing into them: the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22).
- The restoration of Thomas (Jn. 20:24-29).

We shall look at these later in further detail.

An Analysis of John 13-17

The Preparation for the Teaching (13:1-35)

Introduction (vv. 1-2).

Painful heart adjustment (vv. 3-35).

Three men: John, Peter, Judas.

Three conditions: pride, presumption, perversion.

Three actions: laying aside garments, feet-washing, the sop.

Three lessons: humility, purity, supremacy.

The Teaching in the Upper Room (13:36-14:31)

Four men and four questions:

Simon Peter: "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?"

Thomas: "Lord, how can we know the way?"

Philip: "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

Jude: "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?"

Four Answers:

To Simon Peter: The untroubled heart and the return of the Lord.

To Thomas: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

To Philip: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the father."

To Jude: The divine indwelling.

The Teaching on the Way to Gethsemane (15—16)

The vine and the branches (15:1-17).

The world and its hatred (15:18-25).

The Holy Spirit (15:26-16:15).

The little while (16:16-22).

The new principle in prayer, “In My Name” (16:23-27).

The benediction of peace (16:33).

The High Priestly Intercessory Prayer (17:1-26)

He prays for Himself (vv. 1-6).

He prays for the apostolic band (vv. 6-19).

He prays for those who believe through their word (vv. 20-26).

A Fivefold Adjustment—The Apostles Set Right:

John 13: In relation to one another.

John 14: In relation to the divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John 15: In relation to witness and fruit-bearing.

John 16: In relation to the world’s hatred.

John 17: In relation to preservation, sanctification, and unification.

The Discourse and the Tabernacle

John 12: The brazen altar, the cross.

John 13: The brazen laver, feet-washing.

John 14: The table, the questions and answers.

John 15: The seven-branched golden candlestick.

John 16: The golden incense altar, the Holy Spirit and prayer.

John 17: The holy of holies, the high priest inside.

The Preparation for the Teaching John 13:1-35

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father....” (Jn. 13:1).

Recognizing the problem of the order of events during that tragic evening and night before Gethsemane and the cross, we take the view that the supper of verse 2 was the gathering for the last Passover supper. The Synoptic Gospels give us the details of that last meal with His disciples.

The complete knowledge of Christ is emphasized three times. He knew that the hour of His impending death had come (v. 1); He knew that the Father had committed all things into His hands (v. 3); and He knew who should betray Him (v. 11).

The term “His hour” occurs ten times in John. Five times we read that His hour had not come, then in 12:23 for the first time He intimates that His hour had come. This is the hour marked out in the divine counsels for the suffering and death of the Saviour. It is the watershed between two eternities. Everything in eternity past looked forward to it and everything in eternity future will look back to it. God’s timetable of history will be inexorably fulfilled, not a moment too soon nor a moment too late. Our Lord was fully aware of this and acted according to the divine will and purpose. Five times we read that His hour had come (12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (“unto the uttermost,” rv). The word could be applied both ways, both in time—to the very end—and in degree—to the greatest intensity.

In the earlier part of the Gospel, recording the public ministry of Christ (chs. 1-12), the emphasis is on the word “life” (fifty times) and light” (thirty-two times). Love is mentioned only six times. But in this section (chs. 13-17), the emphasis is on love. The great divine word for love occurs thirty-one times. In chapter 13, where the Lord has to deal with serious conditions among His disciples, the section is completely enclosed in love. In verse 1 He loves His own with a ceaseless, immeasurable love, and in verse 35 He tells them, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

The group here called “His own” is very different from that in 1:11: “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” There it was His own people, the nation of Israel, who deliberately rejected Him. Here it is a little group who were the gift of His Father and who had accepted His claims and His Person. In John 10:3 they are called “His own sheep.” They had heard the Good Shepherd’s voice and He had led them out of the Jewish sheepfold. They had been gathered out to Him and had His mark on the ear and foot (v. 27). They had heard His voice and they followed Him.

Three Men and Three Conditions

While all twelve members of the apostolic band were present at the supper table, only three specific names are mentioned: John, Peter, and Judas. They represent three conditions present at the table. In John it was

pride; in Peter it was presumption; in Judas it was perversion. Before the Lord could commence the teaching, these conditions had to be dealt with.

We often think of John as the apostle of love; he certainly was that at the end of his life. As an old man moving among the disciples, his constant exhortation was, "Little children, love one another." But when he and his brother James first met the Lord, He called them Boanerges, "sons of thunder" (Mk. 3:17). This trait was manifested when our Lord was rejected in a village of the Samaritans. When James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" They were in the mood to go into the thunder and lightning business! The Lord rebuked them with the words: "Ye know not what manner of spirit we are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Lk. 9:51-56). John also had a bigoted and intolerant streak. Luke 9:49 records: "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name: and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

As well as the spirit of vengeance and intolerance, pride was lurking in John's heart. Apparently all the disciples were expecting the Lord to immediately set up a visible earthly kingdom in which they would have positions of importance. His repeated statements concerning His rejection by the nation and His sufferings and death had not penetrated their minds. He had used the object lesson of a little child in its simplicity and innocent humility to teach them that overweening ambition to

have the first place would be brought down. But this too was ignored in their thinking.

Matthew 20:20-24 records:

Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on My right hand and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

In Mark 10:35-45 it is the two brethren, James and John, who make the request. There we read that "when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John." Luke 22:24-27 informs us that the indignation and displeasure had been carried into the upper room at the Passover supper: "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." This is the condition which we find in John 13. The request of John and James seems to be the cause of it. Pride of place was simmering in all their hearts.

The second man mentioned is Simon Peter. He is a true believer, the genuine wheat and not chaff, but he has already started on a slippery downward path that would end in his threefold denial of the Lord. For the moment

he is a type of the carnal man. It all started with self-confidence. He had been warned: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Lk. 22:31-32).

Peter's reply was, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." In Matthew 26:33-35 he declared, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended...Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." In John 13:37 he told the Lord, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake."

Peter was not a hypocrite. He was honest and sincere, but he knew very little at that point of Satan's power and subtlety, or of the weakness and deceitfulness of his own heart. Within twenty-four hours he denied with oaths and curses that he had ever known the Lord! As he sat at the table in the upper room, his great failure was presumption.

The third man is Judas Iscariot. He is the first individual mentioned in the passage and there are seven references to him. In fact he is mentioned in the passage more frequently than any of the others. None of the apostles seemed to have a suspicion that there was a traitor in their midst. But John 13:11 informs us that Jesus knew who would betray Him. At the close of John 6 the words of the Lord are recorded which show that He thoroughly knew him from the outset: "Have no? I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil [diabolos]?" Yet the terrible fall of Judas was a real grief to the heart of the Lord, which was not lessened by His divine foreknowledge. Satan is mentioned twice in connection with Judas' treachery. First, he put it into his heart to betray

the Lord (13:2), and then, after he had received the sop, Satan entered into him (13:27). Satan sifted Peter and he became a backslider. But Satan seduced Judas and he became an apostate. Peter was tripped, but Judas was trapped. There is a decided difference. The sin of Judas was perversion. He was a natural man, never regenerated.

Three Action Parables

This chapter contains three actions of the Lord that are parabolic in nature. The first is the laying aside of His garments: "And during supper (rv)...Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself" (Jn. 13:2-4).

Notice here five statements that remind us of: His deity, dignity, and destiny (v. 3); followed by His humanity and condescending humility (v. 4). These remind us so graphically of the doctrine in Philippians 2:5-8. This action is apparently directed to John and his pride. It must have been a tremendous shock to his ego when he saw that One, whom he had come to regard as Lord and as the Messiah, strip Himself of His outer garments, tie the towel around His waist, and get down on His knees like a domestic slave to wash His disciples' feet! There is no record that John said anything, but the lesson must have sunk in. Genuine humility is a very subtle thing. It has been defined as "not thinking badly of oneself, but not thinking of oneself at all." When John wrote his Gospel many years later, he never mentions his own name. Whenever he comes into the picture, he calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," In his epistles

he calls himself “the elder” and in the book of Revelation, in addressing the churches, he says: “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” He uses no high-sounding titles or hierarchical pretensions. He had learned the lesson of true humility.

The Feet-Washing

The second action parable was directed to Simon Peter and his presumption.

After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?

First Peter registers surprise and embarrassment.

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shall know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord. not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed [bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For He knew who should betray Him (Jn. 13:5-11).

It is obvious that there is a profound meaning behind our Lord’s symbolic action in washing the disciples’ feet. The key is in the words to Simon Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” It was a question of communion and fellowship with Christ. If there is unconfessed sin, communion is broken and there must

be the cleansing of water by the Word before it can be restored.

In verse 10 the Lord uses two words for wash, the first of which means “to wash all over, to bathe.” He said in essence that he who is bathed needs only to wash his feet. Apparently He was alluding to the twofold washing of the priests: the bathing when they were consecrated (Lev. 8:6), which was once for all, and the subsequent frequent washings of hands and feet whenever they entered the sanctuary (Ex. 30:19). We receive the once-for-all bathing when we are born again, but we need daily cleansing from the defilement contracted in our walk through this world.

The lesson taught to Simon Peter—and to us—is that of personal purity and the necessity of cleansing when communion is interrupted by sin. It is clear that Peter learned the lesson. In his two epistles he uses the word “holy” and “holiness” many times. In 1 Peter 5:5, he exhorts us to be clothed with humility. The word “clothed” is the term used in John 13:4-5 where the Lord “girded” Himself with the towel.

The Sop

The third action parable is directed at Judas. There are seven references to him in the chapter. First, the devil puts it into his heart to betray Jesus (Jn. 13:2); then Satan comes into his heart (v. 27). There are four attempts to reach his conscience. “Ye are clean, but not all” (v. 10). This is followed by the quotation of Psalm 41:9: “He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me” (Jn. 13:18). Then the Lord gives the direct statement: “One of you shall betray Me” (v. 21).

Finally our Lord gave him the sop, an act of love, courtesy, and kindness.

Alfred Edersheim, who offers proofs that the supper of John 13 was the observance of the Passover, has this to say of the sop:

We have direct testimony, that, about the time of Christ, "the sop" which was handed round consisted of these things wrapped together: flesh of the Passover lamb, a piece of unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. This we believe was the sop, which Jesus, having dipped it for him in the dish, handed first to Judas as occupying the first and chief place at the table...it was the last outgoing of the pitying love of Christ after the traitor. Coming after the terrible warning and woe on the betrayer, it must be regarded as the final warning and also the final attempt at rescue on the part of the Saviour. (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 506).

Judas' sin was covetousness, the love of money, which Satan used to bring about his downfall. After receiving the sop he went out immediately into the night. For him that was a night which never was to know a sunrise. He is a type of the natural man and his characteristic was utter perversity.

So these were the three conditions among the disciples on that tragic and solemn evening around the table: pride in John, presumption in Peter, perversity in Judas. Before our Lord commenced His teaching they had to be recognized and dealt with. This is revealed in the three action-parables which He performed: humility, when He laid aside His garments; purity, when He washed their feet; and the lesson of supremacy and Lordship when He excluded Judas from the Passover table.

It was at this point that the cloud on our Lord's spirit was lifted. The evil genius represented by Judas was gone. He uses the term "glory" or "glorify" five times. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." He is speaking of the glory of the cross, as the next verse makes clear.

He addresses the disciples tenderly as "little children." "Yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said to the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come," His sufferings and death are not mentioned. He had done this repeatedly previously, but here He says simply that He is going away and they cannot follow Him now.

This section of the "Preparation for the Teaching" is rounded off by His giving them the new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The chapter opens with the supreme love of Christ for His own, and it ends with the mutual love of the believers for one another. It is the badge of the true Christian and of Christianity itself. The whole passage is completely enclosed in love. Under law, in the old commandment, the principle was "thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." But under the new commandment it is, that "ye love one another as I have loved you." John comes back to this again and again in his first epistle. The great example and basis of all true love is the love of Christ for His own.

Question Time at the Table John 13:36-14:31

In John 13 there are three men and three conditions which the Lord deals with. In chapter 14 there are four men asking four questions and the Lord gives them answers to each of these inquiries.

It is interesting to note that a part of the Passover ritual recorded in Exodus 12 was a question and answer period. When the children at the table asked: "What mean ye by this service?" it was the responsibility of the father of the family to explain its meaning (Ex. 12:26-27). In John 13:33, the Lord had called the disciples "little children." They had their problems in view of the fact that He had said He was about to leave them.

Just as the three men of chapter 13 were typical representative characters, so the four men of chapter 14 are different in their disposition and thinking. Simon Peter is the dogmatist, very vocal and sure of himself. Thomas is the pessimist, always looking at the dark side of the picture. Philip is the realist, wanting an explanation of the teaching of Christ concerning the Father. Jude is the traditionalist, thinking of an immediate visible inauguration of the kingdom.

Just as chapter 13, with its solemn preparatory teaching, is completely enclosed in love, so chapter 14, with its four answers to the four problems troubling the four disciples, is enclosed in comfort ministered to the troubled heart (vv. 1, 27).

In many ways, John 14 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. The great truths revealed in the answers given to the disciples are the foundations of Christianity. All of them are new, marking a change of dispensation.

It is significant that each man, in asking his question, prefixed it with the title, "Lord," They had learned the lesson of 13:13-14: "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

This is a lesson that Judas never learned. He called Him "Good Master" and "Rabbi," but never used the term "Lord."

Peter's Question: A Threefold Revelation in Reply (Jn. 13:36-44:4)

The Lord had told the disciples that He was going away and that they could not follow Him now. The fact that He was going to die had not sunk into their minds. They were puzzled and upset. Peter voiced their problem: "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." In reply the Lord warns him again of his impending fall and his blasphemous denial that Peter had ever known Him, but then adds: "Let not your heart be troubled," and gives him a threefold remedy for heart trouble.

"Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Here is Christ as an object for faith. The ark must go down into the waters of Jordan alone. The atoning death of the Saviour is unique. It was a transaction within the Godhead. No mere human being could share in His vicarious suffering

on the cross. But later the people could pass over dry-shod into the Promised Land (Josh. 3:9-17).

Peter had already confessed his faith in Christ as the Son of the living God (Mt. 16:16). But he had resented the fact that the Lord was going to suffer and die (Mt. 16:22). Here he is told that while he could not participate in the unique vicarious sufferings of the Saviour, yet the Lord assured him: "Thou canst not follow Me now, bid thou shalt follow Me afterwards." This is probably a reference to Peter's martyrdom (Jn. 21:18). Peter had no doubt as to the existence and power of Almighty God, but here he is commanded, "Believe also in Me." The word "believe" is an imperative. The same word is translated "commit" in John 2:24, not just a mental assent to a statement but a definite commitment to a Person. This is essential to salvation and also to the life of faith, Peter later speaks (2 Pet. 1:1) of "like precious faith," to which foundation can be added the lovely graces of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, etc. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Then follows the great exhortation: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher [pioneer and perfecter, Moffat] of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

The second revelation to Peter was the prospect of a heavenly home. "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:2). In John 2:16, He calls the temple in Jerusalem "My Father's house," but it had become a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. At the end of His public ministry He calls it "your house" and adds: it is "left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:38).

“Ichabod” (where is the glory?) was written over it and it was destined to be torn asunder.

But here is another building, the Father’s house, the eternal and heavenly home of the saints. It has many abiding places; no eviction, heavy mortgages, or moving vans standing at the door. It is described in Hebrews 11:16 as a country; in verse 10 as a city; in Hebrews 12:22 as the heavenly Jerusalem; and in Revelation 21:2 as the new Jerusalem. It is a definite place, not just a condition (Jn. 14:2). Paul was caught up there, to paradise, to the third heaven, “and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:2-4). In another place, Paul says: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

This is the place Christ has gone to prepare. First of all at the cross, and then at the Father’s right hand on the throne. In this prepared place there are many abodes, just as there were many chambers in the earthly temple. This is what He has gone to prepare. Have we any part in the furnishings? We read of laying up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:20-21). It would appear that it is possible to send on ahead some of the materials and decorations for the heavenly habitation.

The Lord continues: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn. 14:3). This third great revelation to Simon Peter is the first clear doctrinal intimation in Scripture of the coming of the Lord for His people at the rapture, hence its importance.

In the Old Testament and in the Synoptic Gospels there are many passages that describe in detail His coming in glory, when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, when every eye shall see Him, and after dealing with His enemies at Armageddon, shall inaugurate His millennial kingdom. But this, in verse 3, is not His coming to earth in visible glory. It is His coming to receive His own and take them to the Father's house. The details of this coming are revealed in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Here it is both the place to which we are taken and the Person who receives us. He receives us unto Himself.

Some would apply the promise to the coming of Christ for the believer at death and this alone. But the epistles of Paul and of John make it clear that the words refer to the catching up (rapture) of the saints. It was the "blessed hope" of the early church (Titus 2:13) and, thank God, still is today.

Thus in answer to Peter's question, three items of comfort and revelation are given: Christ as the object of our faith; the heavenly home as the place of permanent rest and peace; and the second coming as the climax of our hope. This is the threefold balm for the troubled heart of Peter—and for us.

The Question of Thomas: The Way to the Father

"Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (Jn. 14:5) The Lord had just told Peter: "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." But Thomas flatly contradicts Him. He was the constitutional pessimist. He is a type of so many today. "Except I see I will not believe!" But the Lord was very gracious, very

patient and kind. After Peter's great confession in Matthew 16 and the transfiguration in Matthew 17, the Lord had told them again and again where He was going. The way into the Father's presence He had taught them in His instruction concerning prayer. But again it had not penetrated their understanding.

Our Lord's reply to Thomas reveals another great truth indicating a change in dispensation. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Up until this point anyone who wished to approach God had to come by way of the altar of burnt offering and through the mediation of the priest. Both in the tabernacle and in the temple this was the way of approach to God. Aaron and his successors were the God-appointed mediators. But here is something new. He declares categorically that through Him alone is the way of approach to God.

First He uses the great divine title, "I AM." Then there is a new name for God—the Father. We never find any Old Testament saint addressing God in prayer with this title. But at the beginning of the ministry of Christ it is used seventeen times in Matthew 5-7. He taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." "Father" is used 118 times in John—fifty times just in John 13-17. This is one of the greatest utterances of all time. It sweeps away all the Old Testament ritual of ceremony and sacrifice. Jesus is the fulfillment. It rules out any other approach to God, either of the virgin, saint, angel, or man. Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). As Thomas a Kempis said: "Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no growing."

There are four great truths incorporated in the statement of John 14:6.

Salvation: This is illustrated in the early chapters of John. The Lord showed the way to Nicodemus in chapter 3; He exemplified the truth to the Samaritan woman when He exposed her past life in chapter 4; He laid claim to being the resurrection and the life in chapter 11 when He raised Lazarus from the dead. Peter emphasized it in Acts 4:12 when he declared: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Priesthood: A major portion of the epistle to the Hebrews is occupied with the superiority of the priesthood of Christ. His Person is expounded in chapters 1-2, His preeminence in chapters 3-4, and His priesthood in chapters 5-10. Some aspects of that priesthood are typified by Aaron, Israel's high priest, but essentially it is after the order of Melchisedec. Chapter 10 shows us the new and living way to God and the throne, through our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Worship: The greatest passage on worship in the Bible is the teaching of Christ in John 4:20-26. Again He speaks of a change in dispensation: "The hour cometh, and now is" (v. 23). He expounds to the woman at the well the place of worship, neither at Mount Gerizim nor at Jerusalem; the Person whom we worship, the Father; and the principles of true worship, in spirit and in truth. The overall teaching in the New Testament concerning worship is that it goes up to the Father, through the mediatorship of the Son, and it is offered in the power

and unction of the Holy Spirit. There are also many passages showing that worship and equal honor are offered to the Son (Jn. 5:23; 20:28).

Prayer: In John 14:13-14, the Lord introduces a new formula in approaching God in prayer, "in My name." He emphasizes this six times in these chapters. So to speak, it is the key to the audience chamber. This great revelation to Thomas must have had a profound effect on his character and subsequent service. There is solid foundation for the tradition that he introduced Christianity to southern India. It is said that about ad 56 he landed at Malabar with some Syrian Christians. He founded six churches in Kerala, and was killed by a Brahman priest with a lance about twenty years later. He is buried at Mylapore, a suburb of Madras. Whether all the details of the tradition are authentic or not, there is little doubt that the main facts are correct.

Philip's Question: Lord, Show Us the Father (Jn. 14:8-21)

Philip the realist wanted a theophany, as some of the patriarchs had in the Old Testament. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and Manoah had seen visible manifestations of the Godhead and he too wanted to see. The answer which the Lord gave to Philip is the great foundation doctrine of the discourse and of Christianity itself, Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

The Gospel by John is preeminently the manifestation of the Father and the Son. It is the exposition of the mysterious relationship of Matthew 11:27, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any

man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." The problem of the Trinity is how one essence or nature can manifest itself in three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. We must avoid utilitarianism, on the one hand and three Gods (tritheism) on the other. There is distinction of personality, but unity of essence. To lean to either side is error. The three-in-one and one-in-three is a deep mystery transcending our finite minds.

In the four places where Philip is mentioned in the Gospels, he always wants a demonstration (Jn. 1:45-46; 6:541; 12:21-22; 14:8). Jesus tells him, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father...I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." This mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son is twice repeated here and again in the final prayer in 17:23. In the reply of our Lord to Philip's question, the revelation of the interrelation of the Persons in the Godhead is in four stages.

The inter-abiding of the Father and the Son: In John 10:30, Jesus had said, "I and the Father are One [essence]." There is unity of nature, of love, and of action. There was a demonstration of harmony, fellowship, communion between the Father and the Son in our Lord's life on earth. He never acted independently. There was equality (Jn. 5:18, 23) but also voluntary submission to the Father's will. This harmony and fellowship was demonstrated in His words and works, in His oral ministry, and in His miracles.

Some have taught that the words in 14:10, "the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works," indicate that the Lord Jesus never acted out of His deity and that all His miracles were performed by the Father and not by Him, by His own inherent power. But other passages in

the Gospels repudiate this idea. In His first recorded miracle, when He turned the water into wine at Cana of Galilee, we read: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him" (Jn. 2:11). Again in John 5:17 we read: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Statements must not be taken out of their context.

The seven miracles recorded in John's Gospel are called "signs," that is, they had a deep spiritual meaning and application. All three members of the holy Trinity, in happy harmony and fellowship, were involved in their performance (cf. Jn. 14:11; Mt. 12:28).

Then He gives the promise: "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." Before His death, resurrection, and ascension, the Lord was "straitened" or constrained (Lk. 12:50); but when that was accomplished and the Spirit given at Pentecost, He could freely operate through His disciples. There was no day in our Lord's ministry when three thousand souls were converted, as on the day of Pentecost; nor did His labors cover the mighty circuit "from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum" as did those of Paul. The "greater works" cover the operation of the Spirit of God in the dispensation of grace.

The new principle in prayer (Jn. 14:13-14): "In My name" occurs here for the first time. This new principle in prayer is emphasized six times in these chapters (14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26). In the old dispensation Abraham, David, Daniel, and others prayed to Jehovah, the Most High, the God of heaven, etc. But today prayer is addressed to the Father, in the name of the Son, in the

power of the Holy Spirit. As we have already pointed out, this does not mean that prayer should not be addressed directly to the Son. There are many examples of this in the New Testament, but the emphasis here is that in approach to God, Christ is the Mediator and Intercessor. It is in His Name. There is power and fragrance in the Name.

The promise of another Comforter (Jn. 14:16-18): This is the beginning of a most important body of teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. It is the fullest, deepest revelation in the Bible concerning His Person and work. Here it is in relation to the believer. John alone uses the term "Comforter" (Paraclete). It is a delightful title of the Holy Spirit, the One who is called alongside to help and encourage. He is another Comforter. The Lord Himself had been a Comforter to the disciples, and still is, on the throne (1 Jn. 2:1). There the title is translated "Advocate." He (the Holy Spirit) is another of the same kind (allos, one of the same kind, not heteros, one of a different kind).

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (Jn. 15:26). This would indicate that He is a real Person and that He is divine.

It is important to notice that the Lord uses three prepositions in John 14:16-17 concerning the coming of the Comforter. "That He may abide with [meta, among] you for ever...He dwelleth with [para, alongside of] you, and shall be in [en, in] you." Among, alongside, and in you.

The indwelling is future, pointing to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and His personal indwelling of every believer (1 Cor. 6:19). This too marks a change of

dispensation. In the Old Testament the Spirit “came upon” or “clothed Himself with” certain individuals, e.g., Othniel (Jud. 3:9-10); Gideon (Jud. 6:34); Samson (Jud. 14:5-6, 19); etc. But it is only since Pentecost that the Spirit comes in permanently to indwell the believer.

A threefold intimate relationship (Jn. 14:19-20): “Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more... At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father.” This points to His crucifixion, resurrection, and restoration to His preincarnate glory (see Phil. 2:9-11).

The statement “Ye in Me” is a preview of the relationship of the believer to the body of Christ, while “I in you” speaks of the mystery of the indwelling Christ in the believer (see Col. 1:27).

This great volume of precious teaching given to Philip in answer to his question is concluded by an appeal to manifest His love in knowing and keeping His commandments, and the promise that the Father and the Son would love him and manifest themselves to him.

The Question of Jude the Traditionalist (Jn. 14:22-24)

“Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?” Jude, not Iscariot, is called Thaddaeus and Lebbaeus in the other Gospels (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18). He, like the other disciples, was expecting an immediate inauguration of a visible earthly kingdom with Christ as King and they as His ministers of state. He was only voicing the thoughts of the others. This idea of a literal political kingdom persisted after the resurrection (Lk. 24:21; Acts 1:6). There certainly will be an apocalyptic manifestation to the world at the end

of the age (2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 1:7). Philip and Jude wanted to see some outward display to bring the world to its knees. But what did they see? A Man sitting at a table in peasant Galilean dress, making sweeping claims visible only to faith. The Lord apparently ignored Jude's question. Instead, the man of faith is promised three things.

"If a man love Me he will keep My Word [singular], and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23). The distinction between the "commandments" and the "Word" is referred to by John in 1 John 2:4-5. "Commandments" are specific injunctions which it would be rebellion to disobey; the "Word" means the whole body of revealed truth from Genesis to Revelation.

The promise of the abiding of the Father and the Son is contingent on obedience. The word "abide" means "to make one's home" with a person. This statement staggers the imagination. The Lord had already promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Here it is the Father and the Son indicated by the pronoun "We."

Some have interpreted the statement as meaning that the Father and the Son would make Their home with the believer through the indwelling Spirit. But that is not what the Lord said. He promised "We" will come and make Our home with him. There is a condition, of course, but nevertheless it is an astounding revelation.

In Ephesians 3:17, Paul prays: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." And in Colossians 1:27, he says: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is

Christ in you, the hope of glory,” While it is true that the mystery is the Church as the body of Christ, yet that which is true of the body in the aggregate is also true of the individual. The precious truth of the indwelling Christ can be realized by faith. We can have the consciousness that the Father and the Son are always with us, abiding with us. Living thus in the atmosphere of the divine presence, our hearts are comforted and encouraged.

The Holy Spirit as a teacher and inspirer of the Word (Jn. 14:26): Here He brings all things to their remembrance—the Gospels; in John 16:13, “He will guide you into all truth”—the Epistles; “and He will show you things to come”—the book of Revelation. In the Old Testament, holy men of God gave us the prophetic Word as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit, and in the new dispensation, the same Holy Spirit is the divine power to complete the canon of holy Scripture. He is also the Interpreter and Illuminator of the Word.

Notice the legacy, the gift, and the benediction of peace. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

The answer to Jude’s question ends with the same words that the question and answer period in the upper room commenced—with the peace and rest of the untroubled heart!

There are two statements at the close of chapter 14 that need to be carefully considered.

First, “My Father is greater than I” (Jn. 14:28). The equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is clearly

taught in many passages of Scripture. In John 5:23, the Lord Jesus claims equal honor with the Father. In 5:26, He says: "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." All judgment has been committed to Him (5:22, 27). The Jews sought to slay Him, because He said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (5:18). In Philippians 2:6, Paul writes about Christ: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not a plunderer's prize [literally] to be equal with God." He already was that.

What then do the words mean, "The Father is greater than I"? The Father is not greater in His Person, but in His position. Christ voluntarily took the bondman's form and became subject to the Father's will. There was no inferiority in His glorious Person as the Son, but He gladly lived His life on earth in dependence and obedience to His Father.

The second statement is in John 14:30: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." It indicates the sinlessness and impeccability of the Saviour. Throughout the temptation in the wilderness, at the commencement of Christ's public ministry, Satan attempted to pierce the armor of His holy character and utterly failed. There was no tinder in His heart on which the spark of temptation could fall. And here at the end of His ministry, Satan, the prince of this world, would try again. But all the attempts of hell miserably failed. He remained the sinless, impeccable, holy, incarnate Son of God. As such He could become our substitute and sacrifice on Calvary's tree.

On the Way to Gethsemane John 15-16

It would seem that the words “Arise, let us go hence” (14:31) indicate their departure from the upper room, and that the teaching recorded in chapters 15-16 was given on the way to Gethsemane. There is a marked difference in the discourse of chapter 14 and that of chapter 15. One was inside, the other outside; the theme of the former was relationship; that of the latter, responsibility. First, His work for us; second, our work for Him. This is the method of the Apostle Paul in his epistles—first doctrine and then devotion. In chapter 14 we are brought into the sanctuary; in chapter 15 we go out in service and testimony.

Chapter 15 is in three sections: union with Christ—the Vine and the branches (vv. 1-11); union with one another—four names of believers (vv. 12-17); the hatred of the world—fivefold (vv. 18-27).

Union with Christ

The Vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1-11): In Scripture there are three horticultural symbols associated with the nation of Israel: the vine, the fig, and the olive tree. Dispensationally these have an important meaning. The vine represents Israel as a witness for God in the past; the fig is the national symbol, a picture of Israel at the present time; the olive indicates Israel repentant and restored, bearing fruit for God in the future (Rom. 11:16-26).

There are many references in the Old Testament to Israel as the vine. Jotham in Judges 9:8-15, Asaph in Psalm 80:8, Isaiah in chapter 5:1-7, Ezekiel in chapter

15:1-8, etc., all use the figure. The vine, brought out of Egypt and planted in the land, is Israel as God's witness and testimony-bearer on earth. But unfortunately there was miserable failure. The vine was devastated by the boar out of the wood, indicating the captivity to Babylon. Israel as a vine failed to bear fruit for God among the nations (Ps. 80:13).

The fig tree: Three times in our Lord's public ministry He speaks of the fig tree.

In Luke 13:6-9, He gives the parable of the fig tree in the vineyard which bore no fruit. The tree is threatened with being cut down. The three years when the owner sought for fruit and found none might represent our Lord's public ministry to Israel, resulting in His rejection and the subsequent loss of national identity by the nation. The digging and the fertilizing produced no result and it was consequently removed.

In Matthew 21:18-21, during the last week of His ministry, the Lord comes to a fig tree looking for fruit to satisfy His hunger. He finds nothing but leaves and pronounces the sentence: "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away." This is another parabolic picture of the nation, especially in the emptiness of its religious activity.

But in Matthew 24:32-33 there is the promise and sign of the second coming, the budding fig tree: "When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." The fig tree is budding today. After two thousand years, Israel is a nation once again. The generation that sees

the return of Israel's priesthood, temple worship, and sacrifices, will also see the coming again of the Lord of glory.

The olive tree: Then the olive tree in a coming day will bear fruit for God. When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and the Church is taken up to the Father's house, the wild branches will be removed and the natural branches (Israel) will be grafted in once again. Israel has a glorious future predicted in the prophetic Word (see Rom. 11:26; Zech. 12-14).

The vine: But it is at this critical point, at the end of His public ministry, when Israel had rejected His claims as their Messiah, that our Lord says: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman." This again points to a change of dispensation. Israel, as God's witness on earth to the nations, had largely failed and He declares that a new era of testimony for God had dawned. He, and those associated with Him as the branches in the true Vine, take the place of Israel who would be set aside. Instead of the leaders of the nation, who formerly were the husbandmen in the vineyard, He says: "My Father is the husbandman." He is the One who holds the pruning knife and will exercise control and discipline.

The Lord mentions three branches, each with a deep spiritual meaning: the fruitless branch, the fruitful branch, and the withered branch. It should be emphasized here that the teaching has to do with fruit-bearing and witness. It has nothing to do with salvation and eternal security. The passage has been used as a proof text for the falling-away doctrine. It is another instance of a text lifted out of its context, which could be a pretext!

The Fruitless Branch: "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away." The only function of a branch in the vine is to bear fruit. If it fails in this, it is removed. It is a solemn thing for a Christian to live a carnal, materialistic, worldly life with little or no thought of responsibility to God, to the Church, and to a perishing world. Sometimes God has to act in discipline and cut a life short, taking the delinquent prematurely home to heaven. Paul, in speaking to the carnal Corinthians, says: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30). Hebrews 12:5-13 speaks of chastening or child training in the family of God. If this is despised or ignored, it can be serious (see 1 Jn. 5:16).

But the word *airo*, here translated "taketh away," occurs one hundred and two times in the New Testament. In more than forty places it is rendered "take up" or "lift up." Parkhurst says that the general meaning of the word is "to lift, raise, bear up." So also in Grim-Thayer, Liddle and Scott, and Soutter lexicons. The context would decide which meaning is applicable. The vine cannot stand up by itself, but trails along the ground. The husbandman first builds an elevated framework or trestle and lifts up the branch so that air and light and the heat of the sun can surround it. Lying on the ground in contact with the earth, it could be destroyed by insects and crawlers. The vine is helpless by itself; it climbs and clings like a tomato plant. But lifted up from the earth and supported, the luscious clusters of grapes hang down and develop.

The lesson for the believer is obvious. In Ephesians his natural home and environment is said to be "in the heavenlies." While in the world, he is not of it; he is a

member of a heavenly commonwealth (Jn. 17:14; Phil. 3:20). Only from this position can there be effective witness and fruit-bearing for God.

The Fruitful Branch: "And every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (Jn. 15:2). This involves the pruning knife and washing for removal of mildew and parasites. It would correspond to modern spraying. The feet washing, the basin, and the towel were committed to erring Peter (Jn. 13:14), but the husbandman keeps the pruning knife in his own hand. Dead wood must be cut out and living wood cut back. Pruning is a highly skilled operation. It is the work of an expert, not an amateur. It looks cruel and wasteful, the ground littered with bleeding shoots. But the heavenly husbandman knows what He is doing. The divine object is to produce more fruit.

Many experiences in the life of the believer are painful and mysterious. Bereavement, accidents, and the sudden loss of health or material things indicate the operation of the pruning knife, but they can be profitable to those that are exercised by this work of the Father (Heb. 12:11).

The Withered Branch: "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (Jn. 15:6). The reason for withering is either a break, or a disease, or the work of an insect. The sap from the vine is not reaching the branch. Isolation from the stem means loss of vitality and ultimate withering. Some would apply this to a false professor who gives up his profession of Christianity and goes back into the

world. But this branch was a part of the vine, indicating a true believer.

Others would insist that it means a true believer who commits apostasy and who finally is lost. But we must be careful to keep in mind that the allegory of the vine and the branches is teaching the truth of witness and testimony. It is possible for a genuine, born again believer to fall into a trap and commit sin of such a nature that his public testimony before the world is ruined. He may be restored to the Lord but the repercussions from his sin last as long as he lives.

Lot in Sodom is an example. When he attempted to witness to his sons-in-law, "he was unto them as one that mocked." Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." It is not a question of losing one's salvation or of being lost forever, but of being disapproved and becoming a withered branch with no testimony for God. Note, it is "men" who gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

The antidote to this tragic situation is abiding in the vine. It is a reciprocal relationship: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). The word "abide" occurs ten times in the passage. In John's first epistle it is used twenty times, emphasizing its importance and that, as far as John was concerned, the lesson had sunk in. The Lord speaks of fruit, more fruit, much fruit, and permanent fruit; fruit that remains. There is definitely a progression in fruit-bearing.

It may be asked, what is fruit? The New Testament describes four kinds of fruit in the life of the believer.

The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), is portrayed as a sevenfold cluster produced by abiding in the vine. In contrast to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19) we have the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.

The fruit of our lips is borne through the praise and worship of the grateful heart. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Hob. 13:15).

There is fruit in the gospel, "the gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth a ho in you, since the day ye heard of it" (Col. 1:5-6).

And fruit will result in ministering to the needs of poor saints.

But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the taints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem...For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain (Rom. 15:25-28).

A further threefold result of abiding in Christ is found in chapter 15:

The promise of answers to prayer (Jn. 15:7): "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Abiding love (v. 10): Repeating the new commandment that we love one another, and the supreme example of the love of Christ: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (15:13-14).

Fullness of joy (v. 11): This "full joy" is one of John's favorite expressions. He uses it four times in his Gospel (3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:11-13); and twice in his epistles (1 Jn. 1:4; 2 Jn. 12). Perhaps he was thinking of Psalm 16:11: "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Union with One Another (Jn. 15:12-17)

"Abiding in the vine" expresses our relationship with the Lord, but parallel with it is our relationship with fellow Christians. The binding element is love. The word occurs eight times. The passage opens and closes with the command: "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (vv. 12, 17). First we have its supreme standard, "As I have loved you," then four ways in which this love is practically expressed:

Sacrifice: even to laying down one's life for a friend (v. 13).

Intimate intercommunion: we are not called servants but friends. The communion between the Father and the Son is communicated to them (v. 15).

His sovereign choice and ordination: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (v. 16). This is "The ordination of the pierced hands."

The object of the ordination; “That ye should...bring forth fruit” expresses the practical outworking in the life of fellowship and communion with Christ.

Note the three distinguished names of believers in the passage: disciples in God’s school (v. 8); friends in God’s house (v. 14); and witness-bearers to the world (v. 27).

This attribute of love for one another, so frequently emphasized here, is made the test of genuine Christianity in John’s epistles. He comes back to it again and again. To hate one’s brother is equated with murder (1 Jn. 3:15). Love for one’s brother in Christ is the badge and hallmark of the true believer (Jn. 13:35).

The Hatred of the World (Jn. 15:18-27)

The verb “to hate” occurs seven times here. It is not just personal animosity, but a mental attitude toward Christ and everything linked with Him.

For the first time in this great farewell discourse, the Lord refers to the subject of the believer’s relationship to the world, that sinister system which is in antagonism to God and His program. In John 14:30, He mentions the prince of this world, Satan, and his attitude to Christ. Now He warns the disciples of the attitude of the world to themselves: it will also be one of hatred. The reason for this hatred is twofold.

First, the Lord has called His people out of this world, and now they do not belong to it. They are aliens in a foreign environment. Dr. Merrill Tenney has said:

Throughout all nature, either animal or human, there is a tendency to dislike any individual that differs from the average type.

Birds will drive from the flock one of their number that differs radically from them in plumage. Men will look with suspicion or jealousy on one who possesses abilities or features that make him stand out from the crowd. Men chosen out of the world are placed in a different category from others. The world does not understand their motives or feel comfortable in their presence. The second reason for the world's hatred is their association with a rejected Christ. That hatred came to a climax at the cross. He was hated without a cause (Ps. 69:4). They persecuted and crucified Him, and will persecute and put His followers to death as well. Throughout the centuries the world has not changed. One has only to open a Bible and quietly read it in a plane or bus to see the reaction. No one would notice a person reading a newspaper or a magazine, but a Bible! The world's hatred is against both the Father and the Son, and the works which He did (Jn. 15:23-24). It has its root in covered-up sin in the human heart (v. 22).

Later, in His great high priestly prayer in chapter 17, our Lord comes back to this important subject of the attitude of the world to the Christian. "The world" is one of the most frequently used expressions in His intercession, occurring eighteen times. John in his first epistle emphasizes the world, along with the flesh and the devil, as the great enemies in the life of the believer.

At the close of this magnificent exposition of the Christian's relationship to the Lord, to his fellow believer, and to the world, there is another reference to the Holy Spirit. This is the third mention of the Comforter in the teaching of Christ before He goes to Gethsemane and the cross. In John 14:16-17, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, in John 15:26, the

reference is to the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. His supernatural power in illuminating the truth and bringing all things that Christ had taught to their remembrance. This would involve the writing of the Gospels, the doctrinal Epistles, and the book of Revelation under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

But in John 15:26-27, the reference is to witness. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Son and proceeds from the Father. Once again we see the intimate relationship and fellowship between the members of the Trinity. He is the Spirit of Truth and He testifies concerning Christ. He keeps Himself in the background, but one of His functions concerning Christ is to glorify Him and to testify about Him. This is repeated and emphasized in John 16:14.

“And ye also shall bear witness” (Jn. 15:27). The test of all Holy Ghost ministry is this: does it exalt Christ? The preacher who continually talks about himself and leaves the impression that he is a wonderful man assuredly is out of line with the mind of the Spirit of God. These disciples had been with Christ since the beginning of His public ministry, and now their task was to bear witness to what they had seen and heard. The Holy Spirit would be the power and dynamic behind the message.

The Golden Incense Altar John 16

John 16 has often been compared to the golden altar on which fragrant incense was burned every morning and evening in the holy place of the tabernacle before the veil. The two main subjects are the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus, with a delightful parenthesis concerning “the little while” in the center.

There are seven sections:

- Persecution on account of witness in the world (vv. 1-6).
- The mission of the Holy Spirit to the world (vv. 7-15).
- The little while (vv. 16-22).
- Prayer in the Name of Jesus (vv. 23-27).
- Fourfold summary of the life and work of Christ (v. 28).
- The disciples’ declaration of faith in Christ (vv. 29-30).
- The final benediction of peace (v. 33).

Persecution on Account of Witness in the World

This first section is actually the conclusion to the subject of witness to the world in chapter 15. It would result in persecution and martyrdom. Some of those who were there that night would soon feel its sting. James would shortly be executed by Herod (Acts 12:2), and most of them sooner or later would die a martyr’s death. The record of persecution is narrated in the Acts, first from the religious world of Judaism, and then from the

political world of Rome. It did not stop there but continues to the present day.

Papal Rome in the Middle Ages and godless Communism in modern times have taken their toll of suffering and death on the faithful witnesses to the truth. The history of the Inquisition and Foxe's Book of Martyrs spell out some of the details. It has been estimated that in the past fifty years more people have been martyred for the cause of Christ than in all the previous years since Pentecost. The full story of what has happened to God's people in Russia, China, Uganda, Angola, the Chad, Sudan and scores of other countries has never been told and is known only to God.

We know that another terrible day of persecution is coming after the Church is raptured. A faithful remnant of Israel will be the chief target of Satan's hate. Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing the will of God when he persecuted the saints, and he has had many successors. But the blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the Church and has authenticated the validity of the gospel. A man will not readily give his life for a lie. These men were not offered a life of ease and luxury, but one of suffering, torture, and death.

"Now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?" (Jn. 16:5). This does not contradict 13:36, when this question of His departure was first mentioned in the upper room. The last thing to penetrate the disciples' consciousness was the fact that their Lord was going to leave them. A literal kingdom with Him on the throne horizoned their thinking. The kingdom today is in people's hearts. It is in its mystery form (see Mt. 13). It is spiritual and not

material. One day it will be manifested when Christ will be literally and visibly on the throne. Then He will reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. But in the meantime, “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17).

The Mission of the Holy Spirit to the World

This is the fourth and fullest passage in the discourse concerning the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. We have already considered Him as the Indweller (Jn, 14:16-17); the Teacher (14:26); and the Witness to Christ (15:26).

In this final passage He has a threefold ministry:

- His work of conviction to the world (16: 8-11).
- As the Guide and Interpreter of holy Scripture (16:13).
- As One who glorifies Christ (16:14).

First of all, it is important to notice that the personal pronoun “He” is used of the Holy Spirit in these chapters. He is a real Person, not just an influence or power. He has omnipotent authority as an equal member of the Trinity, He is the Advocate (Paraclete) for His people in chapter 14, but here He is the Prosecutor of the world.

His Work of Conviction to the World

When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged (16:8-11).

The word “reprove” is used seventeen times in the New Testament. John uses it four times: “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (Jn. 3:20). “And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one” (Jn. 8:9). “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (Jn. 8:46). The fourth occurrence is in this passage: “He will reprove the world of sin.” Thus the word would mean that the work of the Holy Spirit in the world is to reprove, convince, or convict people of their sin. The greatest sin is not adultery or murder. These sins can be forgiven when there is true repentance. The greatest sin is the deliberate, willful rejection of the claims and the Person of Christ. Unbelief was also the cardinal sin of Israel (Heb. 3:7-12).

“Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more.” In spite of six witnesses, including the Roman judge who testified to His innocence and sinlessness, He was condemned by the religious and civil leaders, and in a travesty of justice was executed by the world as a criminal. But He was vindicated by God in His glorious bodily resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand. The world will have to face the consequences of that dark deed committed at Calvary!

“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” The world is judged in the usurper to whom they bow. Satan, the devil, has temporary dominion in three spheres: he is the god of this world—the religious sphere (2 Cor. 4:4); the prince of the power of the air—the infernal sphere (Eph. 2:2); and the prince of this world—the political sphere (Jn. 14:30). He was judged and his power annulled at the cross (Jn. 12:31; Heb. 2:14). But his final overthrow and destiny will occur

when he is cast into the lake of fire, with all those that have followed him and are linked with him in rebellion against God (Rev. 20:10, 15).

The three words—sin, righteousness, and judgment are frequently left out or lightly passed over in popular preaching today. It is not palatable to tell people that they are lost sinners and that God is a righteous God who will send the unrepentant and unbelieving to hell and ultimately to eternal punishment in the lake of fire. The faithful preacher of the Word will constantly cooperate with the Holy Spirit of God in reminding people of these facts and warning them to flee from the wrath to come.

As the Guide and Interpreter of Holy Scripture

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come (Jn. 16:13).

Other passages in the New Testament reveal the fact that the Holy Spirit is both the Inspirer and Interpreter of Holy Writ. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21).

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the wisdom which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

This truth is important in view of the modern attack on the inerrancy of holy Scripture. The divine origin of the

Word and the operation of the Holy Spirit in its inspiration, insures the complete authority and infallibility of the Word of God in the original autographs. We can be thankful that we have an infallible Christ and an infallible Bible!

He Glorifies Christ

Another important statement about the Holy Spirit is found, in John 16:13-14: "He shall not speak of [or from] Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak...He shall glorify Me." Like Abraham's servant in the house of Laban, He opens and displays the treasures of the heavenly Isaac to the wondering gaze of the bride (see Gen. 24:53). This is the outstanding feature of all true ministry of the Spirit.

The Little While

"A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father" (Jn. 16:16-22). The term "a little while" occurs seven times in the passage. The Lord's enigmatic statement provoked a discussion among the disciples. They did not understand its meaning and seemed reluctant to ask for an explanation. It is another indication of their lack of perception of what was about to happen to their Lord and Master. He relieved their perplexity by offering a solution to the riddle of the two periods, each of which is called "a little while." "A little while, and ye shall not see Me...Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Then He uses the illustration of a woman in childbirth. In her travail and pain she has sorrow because her hour

has come, but when her child is born, the pain and anguish are forgotten for joy that a man is born into the world.

The “little while” of sorrow and lamentation: “A little while and ye shall not see Me.” This would include the trial, the cross, His death, and burial in Joseph of Arimathea’s new tomb. It was a time of desolation. After his denial Peter went out and wept bitterly (Mt. 26:75). On the way to the cross “there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him” (Lk. 23:27). The little while of sorrow would especially apply to the period in which the body of Christ lay in the tomb.

The exact amount of time has been a matter of much debate and controversy. This is mostly based on the statement in Matthew 12:40, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Then about twelve times in the New Testament we are told that the resurrection took place on the third day. Many expositors insist that our Lord was crucified on the Wednesday of the Passover week and was a full seventy-two hours in the tomb (Dr. R. A. Torrey; Dr. M. R. DeHaan). Others argue for the Thursday; while most hold to the traditional day, that He was crucified on the Friday. They explain that the expression “three days and three nights” was an idiomatic figure of speech and that a part of a day was regarded as a whole day of twenty-four hours (Sir Robert Anderson). One thing is certain, however. It was on the first day of the week that our Lord rose triumphantly from the tomb.

The events connected with the burial of Christ are minutely detailed in the Gospels. His atoning vicarious death for sin is supremely important. But His burial is also a part of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:4). It was an evidence that He had really died. Two rich men, honorable councilors and members of the Sanhedrin, were responsible for the burial. Joseph provided the place, Nicodemus the perfume.

After Jesus died, Joseph went boldly to the Roman governor and asked for the body. Permission was granted. It was reverently taken down from the cross and placed on a large linen cloth (Mt. 27:59). Nicodemus brought 100 pounds of aromatic spices and these were placed around the body. A linen cloth or bandage was wound around it, from the feet right up to the neck, and a napkin tied Lip the dead chin. Then the body was laid in the rock-hewn tomb and the door sealed. It was the clean place outside the camp (Lev. 6:11).

He who was conceived in the virgin's womb was laid in a virgin tomb. Men had planned to bury Him in an unmarked grave at the foot of the cross, but God had other plans. "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth" (Isa. 53:9). Instead of being given the burial of an executed criminal, He was given the burial of a king (see 2 Chron. 16:13-14). It is estimated that the cost of the rock-hewn tomb and the huge amount of myrrh and aloes, the embalming materials, must have been enormous. Only rich men of the spiritual caliber of Joseph and Nicodemus could have done it. But that period of repose in the tomb was the "little while" of sorrow and lamentation of which the Saviour spoke.

The “little while” of rejoicing: “But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (Jn. 16:22). This “little while” would cover His post-resurrection ministry and the ten recorded appearances among His disciples. Three of these appearances are called “manifestations”— twice in the upper room, first on the resurrection day, then eight days later in the same place (Jn. 20:24-29). The third manifestation was by the sea-side (Jn. 21:14). Luke tells us in Acts 1:3 that “He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” These ten appearances could be summarized in five categories and in five places.

In a garden He appeared to a weeping woman (Jn. 20:11-18). Mary Magdalene on the resurrection morning had remained at the sepulcher weeping. Jesus appeared to her and said: “Woman, why weepest thou?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said: “Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” and she replied, “Rabboni!” His first act in resurrection was to appear to a weeping woman. Here He is seen as the Comforter.

On a highway He appeared to two discouraged and disappointed disciples (Lk. 24:13-35). This was during the afternoon of resurrection day. They were on their way home to Emmaus. They had lost their hope, their joy, their spiritual warmth. As they discussed the sad events of the past few days, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. When He inquired about their discussion and problems, the Revised Version puts it graphically: “They stood still, looking sad!” They had

turned their back on their brethren in the upper room and this was the result. But as they walked along the highway, He opened to them the Scriptures and expounded the things concerning Himself. What a Bible exposition that must have been! Then, in their home in Emmaus, their eyes were opened and He was made known to them in the breaking of bread. They regained their hope, their joy, and their warmth. "Did not our heart burn within us...as He opened to us the Scriptures?" was their comment to each other. Then they hurried back to the gathering place in the upper room. Here He is seen as the Companion on life's highway, the One who can transform desolation and disappointment into joy.

The third appearance was in the upper room during the evening of resurrection day (Lk. 24:36-49; Jn. 20:19-23). There He was in the midst of His gathered disciples. He showed them the evidence of His bodily resurrection in His wounded hands and side (John), and His pierced feet (Luke). "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." He followed this by giving them a worldwide commission: "As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you," Then He breathed into them and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." First He gave them the commission and then the power to carry it out. Over all was the twofold salutation and benediction of: "Shalom—peace be unto you." In the upper room the Lord is revealed as the Gathering Center of His people.

The fourth appearance was by the seaside (Jn. 21). The first section of the chapter tells of a fishing expedition with unexpected results. The second paragraph speaks of an outdoor breakfast prepared by the risen Lord on the seashore. Simon Peter had been the leader in the

effort to catch fish, and had been taught the lesson that to engage in any project without the command and presence of the Lord of sea and land was an exercise in futility.

But there was a second important lesson. Peter had denied the Lord with blasphemy as he warmed himself at a fire in Pilate's judgment hall. He had done it publicly and now he needed to be restored publicly in the presence of his brethren. It is very likely that the Lord had a private interview with Peter on the morning of resurrection day (1 Cor. 15:5). There is no record of what transpired at that interview. Perhaps it was too intimate and sacred to describe. But seated beside another fire on the seashore in the midst of his brethren, Peter was graciously and kindly restored and recommissioned as a shepherd of God's flock. Here the risen Christ is the Confessor of His people.

The fifth appearance was on a mountain in Galilee (Mt. 28:18-20). There He gave the disciples the great missionary commission.

All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen!

Here He is the Commissioner of His people.

These five appearances of our Lord during the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry are a little preview and sample of His present ministry for His people at God's right hand. He is the Comforter of those that weep; the Companion of the discouraged traveler on life's

highway; the Gathering Center of His people; the Confessor of those who have fallen by the wayside; and the Commissioner of His servants in the great harvest field. This is the “little while” of jubilation of which our Lord speaks in John 16:22.

There are two subsequent references to the “little while” in the Epistles. First, in 1 Peter 5:10:

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a little while [rv] make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Here it is a little while of suffering.

Then in Hebrews 10:37, after a very solemn warning about the danger of apostasy, the writer offers a delightful word of encouragement: “For yet a little while, He that shall come will come, and will not tarry,” Here it is a very little while of anticipation of the second advent of the Saviour.

Prayer in the Name of Jesus (Jn. 16:23-27)

Six times in these chapters the Lord mentions praying in His name (Jn. 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26). It is a new approach and a new principle in prayer. It is the change from the covenant name of Jehovah, given to the patriarchs, to the family name of Father and praying in the name of the Son. After His sacrificial work on the cross, Jesus is about to ascend to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and there He is Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, and High Priest. We approach the Father through Him. It is the fulfillment of the teaching linked with the incense altar. Christ today is the Intercessor

with the golden censer (Rev. 8:3-4). Early in His ministry He had taught His disciples to say “Our Father” (Mt. 6:9). Then He was with them in the flesh. Now He goes on high as their Mediator. It is a new relationship. The fact that He mentions it six times shows its importance. We pray in His Name. There is power in the Name.

Westcott emphasizes the value of the different prepositions linked with the Name: epi, on; eis, into; en, in. The power and value of the Name is used in the preaching of the gospel (Acts 4:10-12); in church gathering (Mt. 18:20); in baptism (Mt. 28:19); and in discipline (1 Cor. 5:3-5).

Song of Solomon 1:3 speaks of the fragrance of the Name. One day that Name will be engraved on the forehead of the glorified body of the saints (Rev. 22:4). On earth there is power in the Name in our work in the gospel, but in our devotions we pray in the Name. Not just in the name of Jesus but using His full title, the Lord Jesus Christ. The result is our joy is filled full.

A Fourfold Summary of the Life and Work of Christ (Jn. 16:28)

The verse gives a concise outline of John’s Gospel: “I came forth from the Father”—His preexistent glory with the Father. “And am come, into the world”—His incarnation (Jn. 1:14). “Again, I leave the world”—His death, burial, and resurrection. “And go to the Father”—His ascension and glorification (Jn. 17:5).

The prologue in John 1:1-18 gives a more detailed summary of the preexistence, incarnation, life, and work of the Saviour, but here at the end of His ministry, before the suffering of the cross, He mentions it again.

Apparently His words made a profound impression on the minds of the disciples. Up to this point their thoughts had been on the earthly level, the hope of an immediate literal kingdom with their beloved Lord and Master on the throne and they reigning with Him. But now a glimmer of light seems to be penetrating their consciousness with regard to the Master's words. It was only after His resurrection and glorification that the full light of revelation dawned. He would reign literally in millennial days, but for the meantime it would be in their hearts.

The Disciples' Declaration of Faith in Christ (Jn. 16:29-30)

All the teaching of the discourses had the object of getting the disciples into the frame of mind which we find in verse 30: "Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God." What a clear confession of the omniscience of Christ, of His preexistence, and of His deity! And what a rebuke to the pundits of today who deny that our Lord in His Manhood had the attributes of deity including omniscience.

The Gospel records demonstrate again and again that He had all knowledge and all power, and that the "kenosis" of Philippians 2:7 did not involve laying aside any of the divine attributes. The word "know" is used three times in John 13: "Jesus knew that His hour was come" (v. 1); "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God" (v. 3); "For He knew who should betray Him" (v. 11).

These men had seen that divine knowledge displayed for three years and now they openly confess it. They were utterly convinced of the deity of their Lord. His reply was: "Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (Jn. 16:31-32). Mark tells us that on that same night, after the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, and after Peter's abortive show of force with the sword, "they all forsook Him, and fled" (Mk. 14:50). How soon the words of Christ about their scattering were fulfilled!

The Final Benediction of Peace (Jn. 16:33)

While their belief and confession of faith was genuine as far as it went, yet perils awaited them of which they were ignorant. There would be persecution and even death for most of them on account of their testimony and loyalty to Christ. But then comes the word of consolation and comfort: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace, in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Twice before in the discourse He had used the word "peace": "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27). There it is peace as a legacy and peace as a gift. But in this final benediction it is peace in a Person: "In Me ye might have peace." In both passages the contrast is with the world. The world is characterized by hatred of the Father and the Son, and tribulation for the people of God. But the farewell message ends in a note of

triumph and victory: "I have overcome the world." After His travail in Gethsemane and the cross, He will use the word "peace" three times in the upper room in resurrection. The three great key words of the upper room ministry are love, joy, and peace. Throughout the church age, they have been the watchwords of the people of God in the midst of trial and tribulation.

Peace, perfect peace,

In this dark world of sin?

The blood of Jesus

Whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace,

With sorrows surging round?

On Jesus' bosom

Naught but calm is found.

It is enough:

Earth's struggles soon shall cease,

And Jesus call as

To heaven's perfect peace.

—Edward H. Bickersteth

Inside the Sanctuary: Our Lord's Intercessory Prayer for His Own John 17

In the Gospels there are fifteen instances of our Lord praying. Eleven of these are in Luke's Gospel. The records tell us that He spent two whole nights in prayer (Lk. 6:12; Mt. 14:23; Jn. 8:1-2). In Luke He prays as the dependent Man, but in John as the Son with the Father. It is Deity speaking to Deity. Our Lord taught His disciples to pray, but we never find Him praying with them. In this great intercessory prayer He says: "Father, I will..." (v. 24), indicating equality, a term which no disciple can use.

In 1 Timothy 2:1, Paul mentions four kinds of prayer: supplication, prayer, intercession, and giving of thanks. In the ministry of Christ we find an example of each kind.

Prayer is a man on his knees. In Matthew 6:8-13, He taught His disciples to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven," etc.

Supplication is a man on his face. It is an intensified form of prayer. In Gethsemane, with strong crying and tears He agonized: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Mt. 26:39; Lk. 22:40-45).

Thanksgiving is a man with hands uplifted in praise: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Mt. 11:25).

Intercession is one entering the holiest with the golden censer in his hand pleading on behalf of others. This is John 17.

Is our Lord functioning as a priest in John 17? It has been asserted that our Lord only entered His priestly work in resurrection when He ascended to the throne at God's right hand. Hebrews 8:4 is quoted to defend this position: "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." He certainly was not a Levitical priest and never functioned as such in the temple. But His priesthood is superior to that of Aaron, as the writer to the Hebrews is careful to point out. His sacrificial work on the cross was a priestly act (Heb. 9:14).

The upper room ministry of John 13-17 is an anticipatory illustration of His present work on the throne. In washing the disciples' feet, in chapter 13 and the teaching relating to it, He is the Advocate; in His ministry of comfort, in chapters 14-16, He is our Great High Priest; and in chapter 17 He is the Intercessor. On the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), the first entry of Aaron into the holiest was with the golden censer, followed by his second and third entries with the atoning blood. In John 17 Christ is our Great High Priest with the golden censer. It is a preface to His sacrifice on the cross, and is a specimen of the intercession which He now carries on for us at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

Comments of Some Expositors on John 17

It is a Scripture which has well been called the Holy Place of the Bible; let him who would presume to comment upon it, prepare himself first, as it were, kneeling at the threshold —H. C. G. Moule The

discourses begin with the Lord looking down, laying His hands on the dusty feet of the disciples, and ends by His lifting up His eyes to heaven, and laying His hands on the Father's throne.

—Harold St. John

Like the mighty angel of the Apocalypse, He stands with one foot on time and the other on the eternal shore, and lifts up His voice which God always heareth for us, tossing on the billows. The glorified Christ is the interceding Christ...Moses lifted up his rod, Christ lifts up Himself. His work of bringing God to men is substantially complete. His work of bringing men to God begins.

—Alexander Maclaren

Of all the chapters in the Word, this is the simplest in word and the profoundest in thought. Here only is the full text of His intercession for His own.

—Bengel

John Knox when dying said: "Read to me John 17; it was there I first cast anchor!"

The Outline of the Lord's Prayer

There are three distinct sections:

- He prays for Himself (Jn. 17:1-5).
- He prays for the apostolic band (Jn. 17:6-19).
- He prays for the wider circle of the Church (Jn. 17:20-26).

He prays for Himself; John seldom depicts the looks or gestures of the Lord, but after more than fifty years that upward look to heaven here described was never

forgotten. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come." Here He is not a suppliant before the throne, but a coequal, co-eternal Occupant. He uses the term "Father" six times in the prayer, "That special Fatherhood whose secret lies wholly in the Son" (Moule). Praying for Himself He says, "Father." Praying for His people, He says, "Holy Father." Speaking of the world, He uses the term "Righteous Father." Praying in Gethsemane, He employs the gentle, tender term, "Abba Father." It is a unique relationship existing between the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son (Mt. 11:27). Note the holy reverence and the absence of endearing adjectives in addressing His Father in prayer.

"The hour is come." It has already been pointed out (Jn. 13:1) that the "hour" is mentioned ten times in John. Five times His hour had not come, and five times it had come. It is the central point in time and the climax between two eternities. When the time or hour had not come He was untouched by harm or danger, but when the hour had come, He was betrayed and crucified.

The Bible shows that God has a chronological plan for time. The atoning work of Christ on the cross is its center and watershed. It was all planned in eternity past (1 Pet. 1:20) and was executed to the hour and minute. Calvary did not take Christ by surprise. His incarnation in Bethlehem and His life of ministry and mercy was a steady march to Golgotha, the grave, and His glorification.

"Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." The word "glory" or "glorify" is the key word of the prayer for Himself, occurring five times. The glory here

is threefold: "I have glorified Thee on the earth" (Jn. 17:4). This would be His perfect moral glory in His life and walk among men (Jn. 1:14). The request of John 17:1, "Glorify Thy Son," would include the cross and His glorious resurrection, which He was about to undergo and fulfill.

He prays that He might be restored to that preincarnate glory which He had with the Father before the world was (v. 5). The Authorized Version is a little ambiguous, "with Thine own self," It means, "by Thine own side."

It is the same idea as John 1:1 "The Word was with God," meaning "face to face." The thought is of place and position. "The incarnate Son looks to be lifted in His incarnation to universal empire beside Him who sent Him" (Motive).

In John 17:2 we find the first of a series of love gifts to His disciples: the gift of eternal life (v. 2); the gift of the Father's words (v. 8); and the gift of His own glory (v. 22). Then note the Father's gift to Him. He mentions "the men which Thou gavest Me" seven times (vv. 2, 6—twice, 9, 11, 12, 24). It is for them that He intercedes.

Eternal life is defined in verse 3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Note the complete equality of the Father and the Son in this tremendous statement. The world is characterized by ignorance of God (v. 25). Salvation is not in getting to know a theory, or giving assent to a dogma, or observing a ceremony. It is in a vital contact with, and commitment to, a Person. Life is communicated through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice on the cross. From that point on, we

get to know God and the value and work of His beloved Son. Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, could say: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It was his ambition in life: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3:8, 10).

"I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (Jn. 17:4). Here we have the wonderful anticipatory past tense. It would include His birth, childhood, miracles, and ministry, as well as His death and resurrection. It would be consummated by His ascension and glorification on the throne. It is for this that He prays.

Thus the prayer for Himself, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee," has had its complete fulfillment.

The Lord prays for the apostolic band: In John 17:6-19, there are four requests: preservation—notice the word "keep" four times; unification—"that they may be one" (v. 11); fulfilled joy (v. 13); and sanctification (v. 17).

Preservation: While on earth the Lord had personally kept the disciples by His power and presence. None had been lost; only the son of perdition who had never been His. Now He commits the little band to the safety of the Father's power and care (cf. Jn. 10:27-30). There was a twofold danger:

The World: He had already spoken in chapter 15 of the world's hatred of His Father, of Himself, and of the believer. He had warned them of its persecution and of its ignorance of God. John never uses the word *aion* (age) in a moral sense, but always *cosmos*. It is used

sixty-seven times in John's Gospel. It occurs thirty-four times in 13-17, and eighteen times in this intercessory prayer, showing how much it was in the Saviour's mind.

"The world" is the most frequently used word in this section. He mentions four prepositions concerning the disciples' relation to it. They were given to Him out of it (v. 6); they are in it (v. 11); they are not of it (v. 14); He has sent them into it (v. 18). The world hates them (v. 14), and therefore He prays that they may be kept. Separation from the world is insisted on in the teaching of Paul, John, and James.

The attitude of the world toward the Lord Jesus has not changed, and they that have fellowship with Him must be willing to walk apart with Him. The world is always demanding of the Christian either alliance or open war. Men may attempt to mark off neutral territory between Christ and the world, but there is in fact none. —Ford Ottman The word in verses 12 and 15 for "keep," *tereo*, means to "watch over." It occurs again in Jude 1, *rv*. Another word (*phroureo*) is used in 1 Peter 1:5, "kept by the power of God." It means kept secure by a military garrison inside a fortress. A third word (*phulasso*) occurs in 2 Timothy 1:12, "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." It means to guard as a sentry.

In the tragic days of World War II, Dover, a town on the south coast of England, found itself in the front lines, bombarded by long-range guns located on the occupied French coast, and in imminent danger of being invaded by victorious German forces. But it was protected in a threefold way.

First, by an internal garrison of artillery that was able to trade shot for shot with the enemy (Ottman, Ford. *The Unfolding of the Ages*, p. 16). Secondly, by the ships of the Royal Navy that patrolled the English Channel and kept at bay the invasion forces in the French ports. Thirdly, by the fighter planes of the Royal Air Force that kept a protective umbrella overhead. In spite of mortal danger, Dover survived the war and shared in the total victory!

The believer today has a threefold protection from the world on his pilgrim pathway: the indwelling Spirit in his heart as a garrison, the Word of God in his hand as a guard, and the interceding Christ on the throne as a guarantee of his safety and preservation.

The Evil One (Jn. 17:15): Satan is a powerful enemy and, like a chameleon, can change his disguise to suit the circumstances. He can be a roaring lion or an angel of light or a wily serpent. In persecution he takes the form of a great red dragon to attack and destroy. But here again we have an impregnable fortress and are protected. "He that was begotten of God [i.e., Christ] keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not" (1 Jn. 5:18, rv).

Unification: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are" (Jn. 17:11). The unity of God's people is mentioned five times in this great intercessory prayer of the Saviour, showing how much it must have occupied His mind and heart. This first mention in verse 11 relates to the apostolic band and is compared to the unity in the Godhead between the Father and the Son, "that they may be one, as We are."

The other four occurrences are in relation to the Church, those “which shall believe on Me through their word” (v. 20). But here it is an organic, invisible union of life and nature, made by God Himself. We can neither make nor break it. It is not outward uniformity. The visible church was “one” in the dark Middle Ages, but it was never more corrupt than at that time. Uniformity is based on compromise, but this unity of life is founded on God’s sovereignty and eternal purpose. He keeps it in His own hands. There are many illustrations of this in the Bible.

In the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, described in Exodus 36, the upright boards stood in sockets of silver, but were held together by a middle bar “shot through the hoards, from one end to the other,” like a dowel. It was hidden and unseen. Then there were four bars outside, threaded through golden rings, uniting bands which were visible, fn Ephesians 4:3, 13 Paul speaks of the unity of the Spirit and of the unity of the faith. One is the internal, invisible kind, while the other is the external type which all can see.

Another beautiful picture of the unity of God’s people is in Psalm 133:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.

The fragrant anointing oil, a type of the Holy Spirit, united the head and the body. It was there that the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore!

Fulfilled joy: "These things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (Jn. 17:13). Three main topics of His teaching in the upper room had been love, joy, and peace. He had spoken of sorrow, tribulation, persecution, and the hatred of the world. He was perfectly aware of what awaited them when He left them and went up to the throne. But above and beyond it all was that deep abounding joy that the world could not dilute or destroy. He Himself, "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

Paul's Epistle to the Philippians is the exposition of joy. He himself was in a prison cell, chained to a Roman soldier and expecting the executioner's ax. Yet his joy in Christ overflowed. He uses the noun and the verb, "joy" and "rejoice," sixteen times. This is the cure for despair and depression. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound [the gospel]" (Ps. 89:15). "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Lk. 15:10). "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3). At creation the sons of God "shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126:5). "In thy presence is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11).

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). In this passage, in Christ's intercession, He prays that it may be fulfilled in us. There is so much in modern life to rob us of our joy. Carnality and unconfessed sin can do it. David prays: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me...Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit" (Ps.

51:10, 12). What a glorious prospect lies ahead when we are presented “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24), and to hear the commendation: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mt. 25:21).

Sanctification: “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (v. 19).

The disciples were flanked on either side by the world and the evil one. The sanctifying agency is the Word (v. 17). The great example of One sanctified and set apart for God is Christ Himself (v. 19).

When Aaron, Israel’s high priest, was dressed in his garments of glory and beauty, there was a golden plate on his forehead with the words “Holiness to the Lord” indelibly inscribed on it (Ex. 28:36). He was sanctified and set apart for the work of the sanctuary when he was consecrated. He had to bear the heavy burden of the iniquity of the holy things. If the precious stones on his shoulders and on his breast, with the names of the twelve tribes indelibly inscribed on them, represented security, the golden plate on his forehead would speak of sanctification.

Sanctification in Scripture means to be set apart for God. Holiness (the same root word) of life and conduct should accompany that position.

Sanctification means practical separation from anything that is not consistent with God’s holiness. There are four phases of it in the New Testament:

- Primary—in God’s plan and purpose (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2).
- Positional—simultaneous with conversion (1 Cor. 6:11).
- Practical and Progressive—(Jn. 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:25-26).
- Perfected—at the rapture (Eph. 5:27; 1 Jn. 3:2; Jn. 17:23).

From God’s standpoint we are set apart for Him when we are born again. But from the believer’s standpoint, this setting apart continues as long as life shall last.

The two agencies of practical sanctification are the Name (v. 11), and the Word (v. 17), James tells us that the world blasphemes that worthy Name by which we are called (Jas. 2:7). The Apostle Peter writes to the suffering saints: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye” (1 Pet. 4:14). “Yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God” (1 Pet. 4:16, rsv).

The story is told that Alexander the Great had a soldier in his army who was brought before him on trial for a crime. When the emperor learned that the soldier’s name was Alexander, he told him, “Either change your conduct or change your name!”

Secondly, God uses His Word in the sanctification of the believer. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (Jn. 17:7). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Ps. 119:9). “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it: that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word” (Eph. 5:25-26). As the newly-born Christian reads and

meditates on the Word of God, the Holy Spirit applies it in power, showing up the imperfections in his heart and conduct. When there is obedience to the Word, the person is gradually conformed to the image of Christ. The old nature will always be there as long as life shall last, but the new life in Christ and the indwelling power of the Spirit of God enables him to be “more than a conqueror” while dwelling in the alien environment of this world. It is God’s will that His people should be a holy people with a tender conscience about sin, and He has made every provision for us to live in the sordid and corrupt atmosphere of this world. The Apostle Paul in Romans 6-8 and the Apostle John in his first Epistle emphasize this great truth.

Finally, sanctification will be complete and final at the second coming of Christ or when He takes us to our heavenly home. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Jn. 3:2).

He prays for the wider circle of the Church:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word” (Jn. 17:20).

These are the “other sheep” of John 10:16. There are three requests made for the Church:

- That they may be one—a threefold union (Jn. 17:20-23).
- Glorification—a twofold glory (Jn. 17:22, 24).
- Indwelling love and the indwelling Christ (Jn. 17:26).

Unity: “That they may be one”: The unity of God’s people is one of the most prominent themes of the prayer. He has already asked for it in His intercession

for the apostolic band. Here He repeats and enlarges upon it as He prays for His Church.

First is the invisible organic unity of life: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (v. 21). It is patterned after the perfect model of the unity between the Father and the Son. It is the unity of the body of Christ, He is the risen, glorified Head and every truly regenerate soul is a member of His body, united to the Head and to every member of the body. This is God's ideal of unity. It is, so to speak, a golden chalice which He keeps in His own hand.

Secondly; there is the visible unity of testimony, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (v. 21). Here is the point where failure comes in. A replica of the golden chalice has been committed to the hand of man, but sad to say it has been shattered. We are exhorted in Ephesians 4:3: "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (rv).

In the early Church they were of one mind, one heart, one soul, and of one accord. There was great power, great grace, and great fear, and many people were added to the Lord (Acts 4:24, 32-33). But these conditions did not last long. Satan and the hidden leaven of sin started working, and instead of addition and multiplication, there was subtraction and division. The sad history of the visible church is a dismal commentary on our Lord's prayer, "that they...may be one...that the world may believe."

The modern ecumenical movement is Satan's counterfeit to remedy the situation. It is based on compromise and the ignoring of the great fundamental doctrines of the

Word of God concerning the Person of Christ and His atoning work on the cross. After the Church is removed at the rapture, the counterfeit will end up as Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots, and will be judged by God (Rev. 17-18).

But, thank God, in spite of the failure on the ecclesiastical scene, there is—and always has been—a godly remnant that recognizes the truth of the One Body and seeks to act accordingly. While the visible professing church gradually sinks into the apostasy of the last days, “by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,” the true members of the body, known only to God, seek to be loyal and faithful to the revealed Word, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

Thirdly, “that they may be perfected into one” (Jn. 17:23, JND). This can be fully realized only when Christ comes back for His own at the rapture: “That the world may know that Thou hast sent Me.” J. N. Darby refers this to millennial days when the Church will be manifested with Christ in His glorious reign. God’s purposes for His people will be fulfilled in spite of the opposition of Satan and the failure of man.

Glorification: The word “glory” or “glorify” is used five times at the commencement of the prayer. There it refers to His preincarnate glory with the Father before the world was (v. 5); to His moral glory in His life among men (v. 4); and to the glory which He would bring to the Father by His work of redemption on the cross (v. 1).

But at the end of the prayer, the Lord speaks of the glory which He had received from the Father, and which He had given to His disciples, “that they may be one, even

as We are one." The glory of the union and the unity of the people of God!

Then comes the tremendous request in verse 24:

"Father, I will..." Only Deity could use these words! A very short time later in Gethsemane He could say: "Abba, Father...not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mk. 14:36). In this final request of His intercessory prayer for His own, we see the authority, majesty, and autocracy of love. "Father I will, that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory...for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." It is not only His preincarnate glory, but His acquired glory as Saviour, Redeemer, and Restorer of the kingdom to the Father. What a glorious prospect lies ahead for those who have knelt at the cross, and received Him as Saviour and Lord!

Indwelling love and the indwelling Christ: In the waiting time until Christ shall come, along with the indwelling Spirit of God and the love of Christ, we have the promise of the Person of Christ dwelling in our hearts (Jn. 14:23). Paul prays for it in his great intercessory prayer for the saints at Ephesus (Eph. 3:16-21):

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be

glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages,
world without end. Amen!

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