

**Chapter One**  
**"Questions and Answers"**

(John 13:33-14:14)

**MINI BIBLE COLEGE**

**BOOKLET TWENTY-SEVEN**

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

(Part 5)

**VERSE BY VERSE**

**(Chapters 14-16)**

At the beginning of each booklet of commentary on this in depth study of John, I explain that my purpose is to provide some commentary for those who have heard the one hundred and thirty broadcasts of the Mini Bible College that teach the Gospel of John, verse-by-verse. You will have continuity in your study of this Gospel if you read the first four booklets in this series before you read this booklet, which is the fifth in this series of brief commentaries.

That is especially true of the booklet you are now about to read because the context that helps us understand what we are now about to study is explained in booklet Twenty-six, which precedes this study. If you want to do or lead a verse-by-verse study of John but you do not have the first four booklets in this series, contact us and we will send them to you.

As I explain in booklet Twenty-six, in the middle of the twelfth chapter John begins a new division of this Gospel. Approximately, the first half of his Gospel records the ministry Jesus had preaching, teaching, healing, and training apostles who will continue all that He has started during His three years of public ministry. He begins the second section of his Gospel by devoting four chapters to the way he remembered the longest recorded

discourse of Jesus that is recorded in the four Gospels, which is called, "The Upper Room Discourse." (John 13-16)

The ancient Rabbis often used the method of questions and answers when they taught. In fact, they frequently answered questions by asking another question. When the Rabbi Hillel was asked, "Why do you Rabbis always answer a question with a question?" His reply was, "Why shouldn't we?" As this Gospel emphasizes, Jesus was so much more than a Rabbi. However, as the perfect Teacher, He uses the method of questions and answers when He teaches. He deliberately provokes questions in the hearts and minds of these apostles to whom He addresses His longest discourse.

Jesus gave His longest recorded discourse when He met with His disciples for the last time before His death. Since all this teaching was given in a retreat setting, I call this teaching, "The Last Christian Retreat." Early in His three years of public ministry Jesus gave a discourse, which we call "The Sermon on the Mount". I call that discourse, "The First Christian Retreat," because Jesus gave that teaching in a retreat setting. From among the disciples He challenged on that mountaintop, He commissioned twelve men to be His apostles or "Sent Ones". For three years Jesus taught them, showed them, then coached them as He sent them out on ministry adventures. He is now retreating with them again and He is about to graduate them from their three years of training with Him.

The last verses of the thirteenth chapter record two questions Peter asked Jesus: "Where are You going, and why can I not come

with You? I am willing to lay down My life for You!" Jesus responds to Peter's questions by predicting the triple denial of Peter and Jesus continues to answer these two questions of Peter as the next chapter begins. After Peter asks Jesus his two questions and Jesus answers them, the apostles Thomas, Philip, and Jude also ask Jesus questions. Their questions and the answers of Jesus to their questions are the heart of this fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John.

I am persuaded that Jesus was deliberately encouraging these questions when He used those words of tender affection which are recorded at the end of the thirteenth chapter: "Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you." (13:33) In these two chapters, from verse thirty-one of the thirteenth chapter through verse thirty-one of the fourteenth chapter, you cannot read five verses without coming across this theme of going and coming - that Jesus came into this world and He is now going back to the Father.

When He repeatedly emphasized this concept, He was deliberately provoking those two questions in the minds of all these apostles that were voiced by Peter. Jesus did this because His answers to those questions are the heart of the truth He wants to share with them in this last retreat setting.

When Jesus answered Peter's first question by saying, "Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow

later," be sure to make the observation that Jesus did not really answer Peter's question. He did not tell him specifically where He was going. He simply said: "You cannot come now, but you will come later." Peter then came back with his second question. "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for You."

Peter has apparently realized that when Jesus says He is going away, He is referring to His death. As I observed in our last booklet, the religious leaders are manipulating Rome to close in on the Lord and the apostles. There is great danger and these men are very frightened. They know that it is very possible they will be asked to die with Jesus - especially when He tells them He is going to die, and they are also to die and be buried in the ground like a grain of wheat. (12:24)

Jesus responded to Peter's declaration that he is willing to lay down his life for Jesus when He shared those awesome words with Peter: "Will you really lay down your life for Me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Think how those words must have struck grief and pain into the heart of Peter.

John does not tell us anything about the facial expression or the tone of voice Jesus used when He spoke those awesome words to Peter. I am personally persuaded, even though I cannot prove it, that when Jesus spoke these words to Peter, the eyes of Jesus were filled with great love for Peter and the tone of His voice communicated great tenderness.

Only seconds before He spoke these words to Peter, He addressed them all as little children. Since that was an endearing term of affection, we know that He was being very affectionate and tender with these men at this time. I believe that His love and tenderness carried over into His dialogue with Peter. I even suspect there might have been a smile on His face and that He essentially said: "Really, Peter? The truth is that before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny that you even know Me - not once, but three times!"

Think of how the words Jesus spoke to Peter also disturbed the other men around that table. We read that they were troubled in their spirits. It is fitting that the next words they hear from Jesus - and they are spoken to all of them - are the words: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." (14:1-4)

Observe that when He then says to all of them: "Do not let your hearts be troubled," the word "hearts" is plural. He is clearly talking to all of them when He says, "Trust in God. Trust also in Me." In other words, you believe in God. Believe also in Me. This is a claim to deity since He places Himself on the same level with

God. He then begins this great fourteenth chapter with these very familiar words, which we like to read at funerals.

"Now you know the way to the place where I am going." (14:4) I am convinced that His last statement was deliberately intended to raise another question in the minds of these men. By telling them they knew where He was going and they knew the way to where He was going, the Apostle we call "Doubting Thomas" took the bait and responded by asking: "We do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?"

The response of Jesus to this question of Thomas gives us one of the most wonderful verses in the Gospel of John and in the entire Bible. Jesus answered: "I am the Way the Truth and the Life." Then He adds, "No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus is actually making three dogmatic claims when He answers the question of Thomas. Those three claims are that He is the Way, He is the Truth, and He is the Life. When He claimed that He is the Way to this place He is preparing for them, He was referring to His death on the cross. The cross of our Lord should represent far more than simply a beautiful ornament we wear on a necklace. The cross of Jesus Christ represents the way of our salvation and the way to the place Jesus promised to those who believe in God and in Him as their Savior.

The death of Jesus on His cross represents His ministry as a Priest. A priest is one who intercedes in the presence of God on the behalf of man. That is what Jesus did when He died on the cross. He

made a way for you and me to go to that heavenly place and dwell in that heavenly place for all eternity with God by providing the perfect sacrifice for our sins. (John 1:29, Isaiah 53:7, Hebrews 2:17, 9:11-28)

He could have provided the way for us to be saved by coming into this world one Friday afternoon to die on the cross for our sins. But He came into our world and lived here for thirty-three years because He did not only come here to die on the cross. As I have observed, the number of chapters this Gospel prioritizes to describe the last week in His life shows us that His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead was the most vital and important part of His life and ministry. Why did He not simply spend that one Good Friday afternoon here when He died on the cross? The answer to that question is: "Because He was also the Truth."

Do you remember the prologue to this Gospel? (1:1-18) "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. He was the Word - the vehicle of God's thought - that expressed all the thought of God toward man that man could comprehend. As the Word, He was with God in the beginning, He was God, and He became flesh and dwelt among us so we could behold His glory, full of grace and truth."

The people of God already had truth that came by way of the sacred page through Moses and the prophets. But God wanted the people of this world to have more than a sacred page. He wanted them to have a Living Word that exhibited and demonstrated God's message, a Word that lived out and walked out a perfect life in human flesh. He wanted us to see how the truth of the sacred page

can be worked out and walked out in a human life. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "I am the Truth." In everything He was and in everything He did, He was the Truth. This claim obviously includes all those times when we read that He opened His mouth and taught them.

The third part of His great claim is, "I am the Life." This means that He lived the perfect life, and in that way showed us what life is all about. In other words, He modeled eternal life for us - the quality of life John is telling us about all the way through his Gospel. This claim also means that He came to impart what He called "life more abundantly" by bringing the experience of the new birth to those He taught and interviewed (10:10).

In all three of these claims, the first two words are the most important words He speaks. Those two words are: "I am." As we sharpen our focus on the way Jesus answered Doubting Thomas, we discover another one of the great "I Am's" of Jesus in the Gospel of John. He did not say, "I have come to preach a way of salvation and teach some truth that describes a quality of life." The important words here are, "I am." I am that Way of salvation. I am the Truth you are hearing and I am the Life that is the Light of men.

Again, remember that in the prologue, the Apostle John observed many times that John the Baptist was not, but Jesus was. When John the Baptist appears he is continuously saying that he was not, while Jesus appears repeatedly saying, "I am." One of the most dynamic observations John makes about Jesus is the fact that He was.

Among other things, this repeated "I am" claim of Jesus meant that He was everything He taught. When He made the claim, "I am the Life" at least part of what He was claiming was that the life He lived here was a model of the quality of life God desired for every human being.

The primary meaning of His claim that He was the Life is also found in the prologue to this Gospel. In the first of these booklets, which provide verse-by-verse commentary on this Gospel, I made the observation that in his opening verses John told us what he was going to tell us. We should therefore not be surprised to discover, as we move through this Gospel, that the prologue is like a table of contents, which describes what we are reading in the Gospel of John.

This prologue told us that when people responded properly to Jesus, they received the power to become the sons of God, and they were born from above. They were born: "Not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." (1:12, 13) He was claiming that He was the life in the sense that He gave people the power to become the life that He was modeling for them.

The character studies of the Old Testament demonstrate a principle God uses when He wants to teach us vital truth. That principle is: "When you want to communicate a great idea, wrap it in a person." For example, when God wanted to communicate the concept of faith, He wrapped that concept in the life of a man named Abraham. He wrapped the concept of grace in the life of Jacob and

He wrapped the Providence of God in the life of Joseph (Genesis 12-24; 25-32; 37-50).

When God wanted to convey eternal life - the quality of life He designed for you and me - He wrapped that concept of eternal life in the life that was lived on earth for thirty-three years by Jesus Christ. In his prologue, John not only told us the Word that was made flesh was the Light. He also told us that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus was the Life and the Light He came to give us. He also was and is the Way and the means through which we can experience and live that life that makes us the authentic children of God. The new birth is the vehicle of the transformation that gives us that life. The new birth and the means to the new birth are packaged in these words, "I am the life."

The exciting personal and devotional application of this truth is that the risen, living Christ is the Life and the means to that life today. The Gospel of John is not merely presenting an historical character Who lived more than two thousand years ago. He is alive today and it is possible for Him to be alive in you and me.

Since there are people who actually question the existence of an historical Jesus, an authentic disciple of Jesus has written: "I believe that He is, while they are not even sure that He was, and while they are not sure that He ever did, I know that He still does."

Another has expressed the same devotional application this way: "Jesus Christ is everything He says He is, and He can do anything He says He can do. You are everything Jesus says you are

and you can do anything He says you can do - because He is - and He is in you!"

These two quotes are personal applications of this third dynamic claim of Jesus: "I am the Life."

### **No Other Way**

When He claims: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," He does not stop there. When He adds to this claim, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," He is making a very dogmatic claim about Himself.

Throughout this Gospel John records dogmatic claims made by Jesus. Remember that in the third chapter of this Gospel John tells us that Jesus essentially said to Nicodemus: "I am God's only Son. As God's only Son lifted up on the cross, I am God's only Solution for the sin problem of this world. That means I am God's only Savior. He has no other saviors. I am His only Savior, and you had better believe it. Because, if you believe Me you are saved, and if you do not believe Me, you are condemned!" (3:14-18)

That is dogmatic! However, truth is always absolutely true. If two and two is four that sum will always be four and cannot be anything else. Jesus was essentially claiming that He was the personification of Truth and that everything He was and said was the truth. Therefore, He had no option but to be dogmatic. Jesus had to discredit every other way of salvation because He spoke the truth when He said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." The

apostles therefore preached: "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

I repeat the conclusion of C. S. Lewis: When you examine the dogmatic claims of Jesus, you only have three options: "You must decide that He was a liar; you can be kind and say He was a lunatic; or you must fall on your face, call Him Lord and worship Him!"

Having made these three great claims, He now deliberately raises a question that becomes a request/question in the mind of Philip, when He says: "If you had known me you would have known my Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. Philip said, 'Lord show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered, 'Do you not know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.'" (7, 8)

John records Jesus referencing the Father one hundred and twenty-four times in this Gospel. According to John, Jesus made reference to God the Father forty-three times in this upper room retreat with His apostles. Essentially, Philip is saying, "You are always saying, 'the Father, the Father, the Father.' Show us the Father and we will understand why He is so very important to You - and should be to us."

The way John records the response of Jesus to Philip gives us one of His most extraordinary claims to deity. While Luke presents a Messiah Who was a man and identified Himself with our humanity, the author of this fourth Gospel is presenting a Jesus Who is more

than a man. The Jesus John wants us to know and believe in is God. We saw that emphasis when we listed the claims He made in chapters five through eight.

Like the theme that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, the truth that He was God in human flesh is also emphasized throughout this Gospel (Chapters 5-8; 20:30, 31). When Jesus tells Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" we have one of the clearest and strongest claims of Jesus that He was God. Jesus was still responding to this request/inquiry of Philip when He said: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (14:9-14)

Be sure to make the observation that the questions of Peter, Thomas, Philip and Jude were deliberately prompted by something Jesus said. The response of Jesus to this inquiry of Philip is actually recorded by John in verses nine through twenty-one. Jude will then ask Jesus a question. The response of Jesus to Jude's question is found in the verses that take us to the end of this chapter. The way

Jesus responds to these two apostles brings us to the heart of the dialog Jesus has with these men as He retreats with them before His arrest, death and resurrection.

The heart of this upper room dialog concerns the dynamic they must have if they are going to reach the world for their Lord with the Gospel He has taught them, showed them and coached them to live, preach and teach in all the nations of the world. Jesus now introduces a concept that He will reinforce in Chapter Fifteen with His metaphor of the vine and the branches (15:1-16). He already taught this concept earlier when He said, "I and My Father are one." (John 10:30) In His response to Philip He asks the question, "Do you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" He then challenges them to believe this claim based on the undeniable reality of the works they have witnessed during the past three years.

When He said, "I and the Father are one," He might have clasped His hands together because He was essentially saying: "I and the Father are absolutely together. I am in union with the Father and the Father is in union with me. I am related to the Father and the Father is related to me. I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Every word I speak and every work I do is simply an overflow of the relationship I have with the Father."

He is essentially saying: "For three years now you men have been fascinated by the words you have heard Me speak and the works you have seen Me do. You must understand that the Word of the Father has been spoken on earth through Me and the work of the

Father has been done on earth through Me because We are one - I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. So, every word you hear Me speak and every work you see Me do is actually the Word and the work of the Father - and a byproduct of My oneness with the Father."

We now come to the most exciting part of this Upper Room Discourse when in effect He says: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will even do greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. I am leaving you now, and when I leave you I am going to ask the Father to give you the Holy Spirit. When that Comforter comes, if you will be as at one with the Spirit as I now am with the Father, then My Word will be spoken on earth through you and My work will be done on earth through you." (9-13)

We discover one of the greatest challenges in the New Testament when He essentially promises: "If you are as at one with the Spirit as I am with the Father, you will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." (12)

Until the apostles understood this concept of Jesus being in the Father and the Father in Him, they could not possibly grasp the glorious reality of His promise that those who believe in Him would speak as He spoke and do the works they have seen Him do. They certainly would not understand Jesus when He promises that those who believe in Him would do greater works than He has done.

This has to mean that these works will be greater in a quantitative sense rather than a qualitative sense. Later in this dialog

He will teach that it is expedient for Him to leave and commit His mission of reaching the world to these eleven men (16:7). What He means is that when these men understand and experience the dynamic He is now beginning to teach, and will illustrate later in a garden, this will be a necessary new arrangement since there will be more of them and they will apply this dynamic all over the world simultaneously.

The Apostle Paul writes that Christ emptied Himself of divine attributes like omni-presence, or the ability to be everywhere at one time (Philippians 2:7). One of the intriguing dimensions of the life and ministry of Jesus is that He impacted the entire world without radio, television, writing books, using computers, cell phones, or traveling more than a few hundred kilometers in His entire lifetime. When He speaks these words, Jesus knows that these men will soon be “His body”, and He will be omni-present in and through them all over the world.

Jesus invested the three years of His short life in the training of the apostles. He challenged them at what I call, "The First Christian Retreat." After that retreat, He commissioned them to be His “apostles” or the “sent ones.” The meaning of this word is similar to our word “missionary” today. The teaching at that retreat, which is recorded in three chapters of the Gospel of Matthew is known as, "The Sermon on the Mount." (Matthew 5-7)

They have been with Him throughout His three years of public ministry. They have heard all His teaching, observed all His

miracles and they have heard the hostile dialog with the religious leaders. They were not usually able to hear the conversations, but they have observed the setting and the results of all the interviews He has had with individuals.

We have learned that when some of these men met Jesus, He challenged them to come and see where and how He lived. According to one translation, when He gave them what we call the Great Commission, He commanded them to make disciples and teach those disciples everything He had commanded them to observe (Matthew 28:18-20). They have been living with Him and as His disciples they have been observing His life now for three years.

Someone has said that Jesus did three things with these men: He taught them, He showed them and He sent them out for ministry experience and coached them. We are now about to consider John’s version of how Jesus commissions these apostles and sends them out to reach the whole world for Him.

When John wrote in his prologue, that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, he meant that truth came through Moses and Jesus, but Jesus accompanied the Truth He was and taught with the grace to apply and live out that truth. Among other things, it means that the will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot keep us. It also means that Jesus would not issue a commission without giving the grace to obey that commission.

As Jesus responds to Philip and Jude, He is beginning to describe the dynamic that reached the world for Him. Five hundred

years after He commissioned these apostles, the Gospel of Jesus Christ was known and believed throughout the entire Roman world.

As I have observed, in the sixteenth chapter, He calls this arrangement "expedient" or necessary. In that chapter, John records Jesus essentially saying to these men: "It is expedient that I give up this body because when I give up this body, any place there is one of you, I will be in you and you will be in Me, even as I am in the Father and the Father is in Me right now. So that means that any place there is one of you, I will be there."

This means that when you walk and serve in union with Him and He is working in and through you, when you fall exhausted into your bed at night, on the other side of the world your brothers and sisters, who are also walking and serving in Him are getting up and are beginning their day walking and serving in Him. There is never a time around the globe when He is not being served, or when He is not expressing Himself in and through His Church.

This is a dynamic teaching. It is in connection with this teaching that He gives them this amazing promise: "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you." (23)

This does not mean we can have anything we want. There are some conditions that must be met when we pray. We must ask "in His name" or in a way that makes it possible for the Son to bring glory to the Father. To ask in His name is to ask in His place, or to ask the question, "For what would Jesus ask?" Paul writes that if we love God and are called according to His purposes, then "All things

work together for good." (Romans 8:28) When we read those words we should then ask ourselves this question: "Whose good - our good or God's good?"

In his short letter, which you will find near the end of the New Testament, John emphasizes the condition that when we pray, we must ask in alignment with His will (I John 5:14). To ask in His name means to ask in alignment with the essence of Who Christ is and with that which glorifies the Father. Then we can ask for anything and He will do it.

He now shows them the key to this dynamic when He teaches: "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And (then) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever - the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live.

"On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me and I am in you. Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and make Myself known to him." (14:15-21)

His long response to Philip's question seems to be calculated to prompt a question from another Apostle named Judas. The name Judas, or Jude, was a very common name at that time. The apostle

who asks this question is actually the Apostle Jude and he asked this question: "Lord, how are you going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replies: "If anyone loves Me, he will obey My word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father Who sent Me." (22-24)

Jude's question is really a very practical and excellent question. Jesus has been saying that He is going to die. That is what He means when He tells them He is leaving and going to a place they cannot come at that time. He is also telling them that they will be more intimately related after He goes to this place they cannot come. Jude is essentially asking, "How are you going to have this intimate relationship with us while the unbelievers around us will not be aware of the reality that we are having that relationship?"

Make the observation that as He answers the question of Jude, Jesus is repeating what He taught in His response to Philip's question when He said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (15) When Jesus answers the questions of Philip and Jude, He is giving us another answer to that question, "What is faith?" He is teaching us that faith is synonymous with obedience.

James, the earthly brother of Jesus, agrees with his Brother when he writes that there is no such thing as "faith alone" or faith without the evidence that always accompanies and validates authentic faith. According to James, faith will always be

accompanied and validated by works, or by obedience (James 2:14-24). Essentially, James has written that, "Faith alone can save us but there is no such thing as faith alone." A Lutheran pastor in Germany, named Dietrich Bonhoeffer, wrote: "Only he who believes obeys, and only he who obeys believes."

Jesus is also teaching, that obedience is the way an authentic disciple of His expresses his or her love for Him. In effect, He is saying, "If you truly love Me, you will demonstrate and validate your love for Me by your obedience to what I command." (15, 21)

He is now telling Jude the same thing He told Philip when He answered Philip's question (9-16). When you study the way He answered Philip, observe how the word "and" connects obedience of His commands to His promise: "I will ask the Father and He will give you the Comforter, the Holy Spirit." Essentially, Jesus told Philip: "You do your part and I will do my part. In His response to Jude, observe this very same principle: obedience leads to a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit will make their home in those who obey the Word of Jesus. (23-26)

When God wants to do something in our lives, like the two sides of a coin, we consistently find that there is always God's part and our part. As we consider what Jesus taught in His responses to Philip and Jude, we should ask the question, "What is God's part and what is man's part in the new birth? Do we have a part to play in the miracle when we are born again? According to Jesus and His brother

we definitely do have a role to play when we are born again. Our part can be expressed by one word, and that word is "believe". Our part in the new birth is authentic faith.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that we must be born again, twice the distinguished Rabbi asked Jesus the question, "How?" In one word, the answer of Jesus was "believe". We believe, then God does His part and we are born again. God's part is mysterious, like the wind. In the third chapter, we learned that it is not necessary for us to understand God's part in the new birth to be born again, any more than it was necessary for us to understand obstetrics to be born physically. We only need to understand our part, which is to believe.

When Jesus introduces the apostles to the miraculous reality of the coming of the Holy Spirit, according to what He tells them, what is the dynamic that leads to a relationship with the Holy Spirit? The one operative word that unlocks the ministry of the Spirit in our lives is the word "obey". "If you love me, keep my commandments. And (then) I will ask the Father, and He will give you the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Who will be with you forever." (14:15, 23-26) Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who love Him, then demonstrate and validate that love as they obey Him.

On the Day of Pentecost when all the signs and wonders are taking place, Peter preaches that the risen, living Christ was giving the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 2:33; 5:32). The prerequisite that must be met before Christ will give the Holy Spirit in reality and in power, was and is that we "obey".

When Jesus introduced the apostles to the concept of the coming of the Holy Spirit, He made it very clear that obedience is the key to receiving and relating to the Holy Spirit. We should not therefore be surprised to hear Peter announce that the Holy Spirit was given to those who obey Him.

According to the first chapters of the Book Acts, the Holy Spirit was actually given to equip disciples to obey and implement the Great Commission. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He told His followers not to obey that Commission until they received the power they would receive on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:1, 4; 5:32). The Holy Spirit is not given to believers to merely give them a joyful experience. The Spirit is given to enable believers to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ, especially His Great Commission.

Jesus also tells these men in the upper room that He is going to give them the Holy Spirit because He does not want to abandon them like orphans. Then He makes a promise that is difficult to understand. Summarizing verses like these, which record His answer to the question of Jude, we must conclude that God exists in three Persons, and each one of those three Persons is God. All three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned here: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit all come to dwell in you and me when we obey the words of Jesus - according to what Jesus is teaching here as He answers the questions of Philip and Jude.

Jesus is essentially saying here in chapter 14: "I am going away, but after I go back to the Father, after I do the expedient thing and give up this earthly body, you and I are going to be closer than we have ever been. I will reveal myself to you, and because I live, you also will live. We will be closer and more at one than we ever have been while I have been limited by this body in which I have been living for thirty-three years."

We can see how these words of Jesus prompted Jude to ask, "Lord, how are we going to have this relationship? How are we going to have an intimate relationship with You and the unbelievers around us are not going to be aware of our relationship? How are You going to do that?"

A deeper study of the answer of Jesus to the question of Jude, will show us the dynamic that leads to intimacy with Christ through the Holy Spirit, which is essentially: "If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. And then when He obeys My teaching, My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching and we will not establish a relationship with him." (23-26)

He seals this dynamic answer with the affirmation: "These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father Who sent Me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (24-26)

Jesus summarizes His answers to the five questions these apostles have asked Him when He speaks words of comfort to these troubled apostles: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard Me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would be glad the to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."

His words of peace and consolation are followed by some hard realities: "I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on Me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what My Father has commanded Me.

"Come now; let us leave." (27-31)

In His answers to the questions these apostles have asked Him, He has taught profound truth. For the second time, He now comforts them by telling them that they should not let their hearts be troubled. We must remember that these men are terribly frightened because they know the Jews are plotting ways to convince the Romans to put Jesus to death. From statements Jesus has made to them, they also have reason to believe they are going to die with their Lord. In Chapter Twelve, we read that Jesus told them He was going to fall into the ground and be buried like a seed so that He might be fruitful, and that He required that of those who considered

themselves to be His disciples. Ultimately, all but one of them will follow their Lord and be martyred.

Tradition tells us that the author of this Gospel was boiled in oil but did not die. He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos from which he escaped and as a very old man lived to write this Gospel, which was written several decades after the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. All ten of the other apostles who heard these words died as martyrs. They probably believe that is now about to happen as Jesus is answering their questions.

As He finishes His responses to their questions, in the final words of Jesus we find one sentence, which I have learned can bring much comfort and consolation to those who are losing someone they love who has lived in Christ and served Christ well for many years. When a devout loved one has died, I have read this sentence many times at a graveside: "If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father." (28)

### **The Funeral Sermon of Jesus**

One way to summarize this chapter is to say that Jesus knows He is about to die and He has decided to preach His own funeral sermon. I have often thought that with the sophisticated electronic equipment available to us today, a pastor might consider recording his own funeral sermon to be played to his congregation when they gather to hold a memorial service for him.

This message of Jesus is essentially: "Do not let your hearts be troubled because there is a place. I am going to that place and will prepare it for you. Then I will come again and take you with Me to that place and we will be together there forever!" While it is true that the theme of his letter to the Ephesians is that heaven is a spiritual dimension in which we can live now, the Apostle Paul also writes that heaven is a place in which we will live forever with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

When Jesus tells the apostles the good news that in His Father's house there are many rooms, that declaration could be paraphrased: "In the universe there are many places to live." Heaven is a place. As believers we are going there and we will live there with our Lord forever! Because we believe in that place, we should not let our hearts be troubled.

The second point to the funeral sermon of Jesus is: "Let not your hearts be troubled because there is a Person." The coming of the Holy Spirit is the great Source of the comfort Jesus promised these men in the upper room. The Greek word that is translated as, "Comforter" or "Counselor" is actually the word "Paraclete," which means, "One Who comes along side us and attaches Himself to us for the purpose of assisting us."

Jesus will have more to say about the Holy Spirit in the sixteenth chapter. In this chapter, the promise of a Person their Lord describes as, "The Comforter" is the second reason why their hearts should not be troubled. Even though He is going to leave them in the

sense that He is about to die, their hearts should not be troubled because "There is a Person."

The third point to His funeral sermon is "Let not your hearts be troubled because there is a Peace." The disciple who believes in God and Jesus has the unquenchable optimism that comes from the certain hope that there is a place, and they are going to be with their Lord forever in that place. They believe in the promise of Jesus that there is a Person, the Holy Spirit, Who is a Comforter Who will come along side of them, attach Himself to them to assist and comfort them. In the verses I have quoted above, Jesus says that those who believe in the place and the Person, also experience the peace Jesus promised to leave with them and personally give to them (27-31)

When they believe Jesus and experience a relationship with the Holy Spirit, they have what the Apostle Paul labels as "The peace of God that transcends human understanding." (Philippians 4:6-10) We might call this "The peace that does not make good sense" because it is the peace Christ gives and it is described as the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). It is a peace He gives to His disciples through the Holy Spirit when their circumstances are so adverse, no one would expect them to have peace.

With the possible exception of John, when these apostles all died in horrible ways as martyrs we can know for certain that they died with the peace Jesus promised them in that upper room. Jesus was not speaking of world peace when He made this promise to the

apostles. He promised to give us an inward peace and a peace with others for which all mankind truly longs. Jesus actually taught the opposite of world peace. Before they leave this retreat setting He will tell them that they will have tribulation in this world, but that He has overcome the world by faith and they can overcome the suffering they will experience by faith (16:33; I John 5:4).

## **Chapter Two**

### **"The Magnificent Metaphor"**

The last words we read in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John inform us that Jesus and His apostles are about to leave the upper room. They move into a garden where Jesus uses a metaphor that illustrates and applies the essence of what He has taught these men in the upper room. So far the heart of this dialog we call a discourse has been when Jesus shared with them that the Word and the work of the Father have been spoken and accomplished on earth through Him because He and the Father are one. Everything they have heard Him say and all the works they have seen Him do are an overflow of the glorious reality that He was in perfect alignment with the Father.

He now gives these apostles one of His most profound yet simple metaphors. He pulls down a vine with branches that are

loaded with fruit and, in effect, He says: "As these branches are producing an abundance of fruit because they are in alignment with this vine, if you will be in alignment with Me, you will be fruitful."

He describes three stages of fruit bearing: the one who bears no fruit, the one who bears fruit, and the one who bears much fruit. There are four symbols in this metaphor that have profound meaning: there is a vine, branches, fruit, and a gardener. As Jesus interprets and applies this metaphor, He is the Vine, the apostles are the branches, the fruit is the miracle of His Word being spoken, and His kingdom/church work being done on earth through them. The Gardener in this metaphor is God.

There are two basic propositions that clearly focus in His interpretation and application of this magnificent metaphor: without Him these apostles and His disciples can do nothing, and without them He wills to do nothing. In the metaphor, the fruit does not grow on the vine. It is only as the life giving energy flows from the vine into and through the branches that the fruit is produced. In this metaphor, Jesus is "A Vine looking for branches."

When He has taught, interpreted and applied the metaphor, He gives them an exhortation, which could be called, "Eight Reasons Why You Must Be Fruitful." See if you can identify those eight reasons as you read the first sixteen verses of this fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John:

"I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that

does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.

"I am the true vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in Me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.

"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this; that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name.” (15:1-16)

There is a sense in which the apostles have been attending three years of "seminary" with Jesus. What I have called “The Last Christian Retreat” could also be called their graduation ceremony, and this part of the discourse can be called His graduation message to them. His passionate graduation message is a challenge to them that for at least eight reasons they simply must be fruitful!

### **Reason Number One**

First, He essentially tells them that they must be fruitful because there is no such thing as an authentic disciple of His who is not fruitful (2, 6). He is actually saying here that if there were a branch in Him that was not bearing any fruit at all, His Father would cut it away and throw it away. It would then lie on the ground until men gathered it up and threw it on a fire. In effect, Jesus is saying: "A branch in Me that bears no fruit is unacceptable to My Father, Who is the Gardener."

As Jesus speaks His last words to these men He has trained for three years, His first reason why they must be fruitful is the awesome, clear, and dynamic declaration that they must be fruitful because: "This is how you show yourself to be my disciples."(8). The interpretation and application for us today is that there is no such thing as a fruitless disciple of Jesus. This is an example of what one

scholar has called, "The Hard Sayings of Jesus." There are times, when I am interpreting and applying the teachings of Jesus that I find myself saying: "I did not say that; He said that!" This is one of those times.

For more than twenty centuries, much of this world has divided human history into two divisions: before Jesus lived and after Jesus lived. When a man only lives to be thirty-three years old and the world uses his birth as an historical dateline, we must conclude that such a man significantly impacted this world. Another way of saying the same thing would be to say that Jesus lived a fruitful life. Therefore, anyone who claims to be the disciple of Jesus must demonstrate the validity of his claim by being fruitful. It is unthinkable that we should claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and bear no fruit.

### **Reason Number Two**

In this same verse, Jesus declared His second reason why these men in whom He has invested so much simply must be fruitful: They must be fruitful because this is how they glorify His Father (8). How did Jesus glorify the Father? He answered that question for them when He prayed to the Father, "I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." (17:4) How were these apostles going to glorify God? By finishing the work Jesus is giving them to do. The application for us is that we must be fruitful because we glorify God when we are fruitful.

### **Reasons Three and Four**

Jesus gave them a third and fourth reason they and we as His disciples must be fruitful when He said: "I have told you this so that My joy may be in you (or may be rooted in you), and that your joy may be complete." (11) Have you realized that it is possible for you and me to fill the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ with joy? Seeing fruit in our lives brings great joy to Him. That is the third reason the apostles must be fruitful, according to this commencement address of Jesus.

A fourth reason He told the apostles they simply must be fruitful is: "... that your joy may be complete." (11) Like the peace of God, joy is conditional. Have you considered what the Bible teaches about the conditions that must be met before we can experience the joy of the Lord? The joy of the Lord is one of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). One of my favorite authors reminds us that "Pain and suffering are inevitable, but misery and despair are optional" for the Spirit-filled believer because the Holy Spirit can give joy to a believer even when they are experiencing great adversity.

This joy could be called "Happiness that does not make good sense." The peace and joy described in these verses could be called: "peace anyway" or "happiness anyway!" We can experience the peace and joy Jesus promised to give us - anyway, or in spite of our

circumstances - because they do not come from us. They come from the Holy Spirit, or from the risen Christ, Who lives in our hearts.

Another favorite author wrote, "Some people think joy falls out of the sky in lumps and somehow lands on some people (usually them), and not on others (meaning us). That is not what the Scripture teaches." According to what Jesus teaches here, one of the causes of joy is fruitfulness. Paul writes: "Let every man prove his own work and then he will have cause for rejoicing in himself alone and not in another." (Galatians 6:4)

When I was a very young pastor, the senior pastor of the church where I was serving, who mentored me in Christ and in ministry, placed me in a daughter church he had started in another city. I did not want to leave the pastoral staff of his large church to start a new church. I was rejoicing in the miracle that God was blessing him with a very fruitful ministry. He explained to me that I would experience great joy if I proved that God could give me a fruitful ministry. He applied the verse quoted above to my new assignment.

After thirteen years, when the risen, living Christ blessed me with a fruitful ministry in that new church, I was very grateful to my pastor, for he knew that assignment would ultimately bring joy to my Lord and bring me great joy. I do not want to imply that it must take others thirteen years. My point is that this is the kind of joy Jesus is describing and prescribing when He says: "I am telling you all these

things because I want you to be a source of joy to Me, and I want you to be filled with joy yourselves."

### **Reason Number Five**

A fifth reason Jesus told the apostles they must be fruitful is that He chose them to be fruitful: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you." (16)

These men had chosen to follow Jesus. They had made deliberate choices and commitments to Him. Those who were fishermen had not tried to carry their boats on their backs. They gave up their boats and their businesses as fishermen. Can you imagine the thoughts that raced through their minds when they heard Jesus say, in effect: "I know you have made choices, and you think you have chosen Me. But the truth is, you have not chosen Me. I have chosen you, and ordained you." (15:16)

This word "ordained" in this verse does not mean ordination in the sense that we ordain a pastor today. It is the translation of a Greek word that is only found three times in the New Testament. It means to be strategically placed like the candle on a candlestick metaphor Jesus profiled on the mountaintop (Matthew 5:14-16). In this verse Jesus is saying, "I chose you and I am strategically placing you like a candle on a candlestick in this dark world so that you

might be fruitful. You must be fruitful because I chose you to be fruitful."

### **Reason Number Six**

Then He gave them a sixth reason they must be fruitful. They must be fruitful because they have experienced the love of Jesus Christ and He wants them to share that love with the world: "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love." (9, 10) He is obviously repeating His New Commandment, which is recorded in the thirteenth chapter (34, 35). He is also repeating the teaching that we demonstrate our love for our Lord when we obey His commandments.

When He prays for these men and for those who will believe through them, He prays that they will live in such a way that the world will know and believe that God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son for their salvation. He then actually prays that the people of this world will know from the way His followers love that God loves them as much as He loves His only Son (3:16; 17:22, 23).

These men had experienced the love of Jesus for three years, but the lost people of this world had not experienced that love. He therefore tells these men He had loved for three years that they must share this love with the whole world. This commission to love as He

loved is another reason why those who have known His love must be fruitful.

In the context of this teaching, He makes the great statement that there is no greater love in this world than the love that is demonstrated when one person lays down their life for another. In the inspired New Testament letters that instruct believers, this teaching is applied when husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church when He laid down His life for our salvation. Women are instructed to complete their husbands and be others centered as they lay down their lives for their husbands and children. In our self-centered cultures, most men and women are too self-absorbed to apply these teachings. How we need to hear this challenge of Jesus that there is no greater love than to lay down our lives for others, beginning in our marriages and our homes.

### **Reason Number Seven**

The seventh reason why they must be fruitful is that the Gardener - God the Father - is fiercely committed to the proposition that they are going to be fruitful. Carefully read verse two and then make this observation: When our heavenly Father finds a branch in this Vine that is fruitful, He cuts it back, or prunes it to make it more fruitful.

Many years ago, a devout couple I met helped me understand this profound metaphor of Jesus. They described for me in great detail how they had made the decision to retire early from a very

stressful position in the corporate structure and purchase vineyards in northern California in America. Since they knew nothing at all about tending vineyards, they hired an old and experienced gardener/vinedresser to show them what they needed to know and do.

The first thing the vinedresser told them was to go through all the vineyards they had purchased and cut away all the dead branches that had not produced any fruit during the previous harvest.

After they had finished that project, they were greatly encouraged when tender green shoots appeared on their vines. But their old vinedresser said, "Those are only sucker shoots. You must now go through your vineyards again and cut those back because you will never get the quality and quantity of grapes you want unless you cut back those sucker shoots. They are called "sucker shoots" because they suck up the life energy from the vine on which they are growing. Then the vines do not produce the fruit we want to see them produce."

My friends explained that they were encouraged again when little green grapes appeared on their vines. But, for the third time their old vinedresser said, "Now we are going to go through your vineyards again and cut back these grapes, or you will not have the quality and quantity of fruit that you want to see when you harvest your grapes."

The devout couple told me that for the first time they understood the second verse of this great chapter. Jesus taught that

when the Father/Gardener finds a branch aligned with the Vine and bearing fruit, He cuts it back because He wants to see what He described as more fruit, and much fruit produced from that branch.

I responded by telling them that hearing of their experience as novice vineyard owners had helped me to apply this profound metaphor of Jesus to events that I had been experiencing in my life and ministry. I believe the Lord looked on my ministry in the decade of the '70s and saw that I was fruitful. I was in alignment with Him and I was bearing fruit for Him. But, He was not satisfied with the quality or the quantity of fruit He was receiving from my life. He therefore said: "I am going to cut him back and make him more fruitful.

And so toward the end of the decade of 1980, I was totally paralyzed from an incurable illness. Beginning in the early '80s, I began to experience paralysis. I have been a homebound quadriplegic now for many years. People look at my illness and they say, "My, what a setback!" But I say to them, "No, it is not a setback. It is a cutback. It is the cutback of a loving heavenly Father Who loves me too much to see me go through life an inch deep and a hundred miles wide - busy in many things - fruitful, but not as fruitful as He wants me to be."

Since 1980, I have been involved in the most fruitful ministry of my lifetime. I would never have experienced this fruitful ministry, able bodied and healthy. I love the divine Gardener for cutting me

back so I would not miss my greatest opportunity to bring forth what Jesus called "the fruit that lasts". (16)

The seventh reason Jesus tells these apostles they must be fruitful is that their Father in heaven is committed to the proposition that they are going to be fruitful. In His love there are times when He will cut us back to increase the quality and the quantity of the fruit that our lives are yielding for Him.

### **Reason Number Eight**

An eighth and final reason the apostles must be fruitful is found in the opening statement of this great teaching. I have not taken these exhortations to be fruitful in the order in which they appear in this chapter. I am referencing the first one last because I believe it is the most important exhortation. Essentially, when Jesus challenges His apostles to be fruitful because He is the Vine and they are the branches, He is telling them they must be fruitful because He has no other way to reach the world with His Gospel of salvation.

There is a poem that describes Jesus meeting with angels after His Ascension. The angels ask Him about His thirty-three years on earth and especially about His victory on the cross as validated by His resurrection. Then one of the angels asks Jesus about the Great Commission and the work of world evangelism. Jesus responds that He has committed that task to eleven apostles and about five hundred disciples. The angel then asks, "What if they fail to reach the world for you?" The Lord replies, "I have no other plan!"

## In Summary

It is the plan of God to place the power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God through the people of God, according to the plan of God. That is the spirit of this first exhortation, which I am giving last for emphasis. In this beautiful metaphor, Jesus is a Vine looking for branches. The fruit does not grow on the vine, but on the branches. This is presenting the profound truth that

If I had been there when God made this arrangement, I would have advised Him against this plan because human nature is so weak. Do you think God knew about the weakness of human flesh when He made this decision? In the Bible, the word “flesh” often means, “human nature unaided by God.” Why did Almighty God design a plan that limited Him to sharing His Gospel through what weak human beings would or would not do?

The short answer to that question is that this is God’s plan. There is a sense in which when we ask the question, “Why did God?” The answer is always the same: “Only God knows!” Jesus does give us some answers to that question in this passage. Two reasons why God uses human branches to produce the fruit that remains is that when the life and power of God flow through human branches and they are fruitful, He is glorified, and those branches experience great joy. However, the primary answer to that question is that God and the risen, living Christ have no other plan.

Can you see how Jesus is using this metaphor of the Vine and branches to illustrate and apply the essence of the concepts He taught in the upper room? "If you are as at one with me as I now am with the Father, you will speak the word of God, and do the work of God. In fact, you will do greater works than I have done." (14:12)

That is really what He is saying when He pulls down the vine with the fruitful branches and in effect says: "As these branches are aligned with this vine in a way that makes it possible for the life to be drawn from the vine, then flow through the branches and produce this fruit, if you are to be fruitful you must be in Me and I in you. Without Me you can do nothing and without you, I have chosen to do nothing. I have no other plan for doing My work in this world than to proclaim My Word and do My work through you and those who become My disciples through your fruitfulness."

Before we leave these first sixteen verses of Chapter Fifteen, I must make the observation that some Old Testament scholars believe this is the commentary of Jesus on a metaphor that is found in the in the writing and preaching of prophets like Isaiah (Isaiah 5: 1-7). The way the prophets use this metaphor, Israel is the vine and the vine is not fruitful. The unfruitful vine preached by the prophets is a picture of wickedness and the fact that Israel is not what she should be as God’s people and nation. Jesus uses this metaphor the same way the prophets did in some of His parables (Matthew 21:33-40).

That is why Old Testament scholars believe Jesus began His great metaphor in the garden by saying in so many words, "I am the true Vine, not that unfruitful vine that is profited by the prophets." In this magnificent metaphor, some suggest He is telling the apostles that salvation, peace, the fruit of the Spirit and the abundant, eternal life He promised would never be found by simply being a devout Jew. These supernatural, spiritual blessings were only to be experienced in a vital relationship with Jesus as they knew Him then, and especially when they would know Him as the risen, living Christ.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **“The Awesome Assignment”**

(15:18- 27)

The metaphor of the vine and branches was the profound application of Jesus to the essence of His teaching in the upper room. Jesus now shares some of the hard realities these men will face as they implement the commission with which He has charged them in His “commencement message” to them. He will follow these intensely realistic forecasts of the opposition and persecution they were going to experience with more specific information about the work of the Holy Spirit in and through them when they receive the Comforter: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As

it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of My name, for they do not know the One Who sent Me.

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both Me, and My Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated Me without reason.’

“When the Comforter comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me. And you also must testify, for you have been with Me from the beginning.” (John 15:18-27)

These verses record the way Jesus prepared the apostles for the persecution and suffering that was coming. During the first three centuries of church history, there were many years when it was illegal to be a Christian. There were ten terrible periods of persecution. There were no church buildings until the conversion of Emperor Constantine, who embraced Christianity and made it legal to be a follower or disciple of Jesus (in 312 A.D.). Until Constantine, the church met (often secretly) in homes, or in secluded

places like the catacombs, which were actually tombs like those under the capital city of the Roman Empire.

Since those early days of church history, the practice of meeting secretly because meeting as disciples of Jesus was illegal, has been referred to as an “underground church”. Although many are not aware of it, many millions of believers meet in underground churches today because there are many cultures today in which it is illegal to meet openly as followers of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for house is, "oikos". Scholars therefore refer to the church meeting underground in small groups, or house churches, as the "oikos movement". The inspired instructions in the New Testament about the order, structure, and function of the church are based on the fact that the church was meeting in this small group context (I Corinthians 14:26-40). Because there is terrible persecution of believers all over the world today, the church is again moving in the direction of an "oikos movement" as the final chapters of church history are being written.

When Jesus warned, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first," (John 15:18) He is using the word "world" in the sense of a world philosophy, way of thinking, or secular value system which has no moral absolutes. An authentic follower of Jesus has moral and spiritual absolutes. That is why Jesus taught that His disciples would be like a city on a hill that could not be hidden (Matthew 5:14). According to Jesus, the world will hate them because everything they are, believe, and value is in direct conflict

with what the people of this world believe and value. The personal application for you and me as disciples of Jesus today is obvious.

In verse nineteen He profiles an accurate description of the individual believer and of the church when He says, "I have chosen you to come out of the world." The words, "out of the world," are the literal definition of the church. In the language in which John wrote this Gospel, the word for “church” is "ecclesia," which means literally, “called out ones”. Those of us who are that church are "called out ones". Called out from what? Called out from the secular philosophy, way of thinking, values and lifestyle of the people of this world.

As the followers of Christ, we should realize that we are called out of this world, or to be “other worldly” people, because He calls us out of this world when we come to faith and made the commitment to follow Him. We should not be shocked when we discover that the world does not have the values of Christ. This world will never let us forget that we are marching to a different drumbeat, and we should not be surprised when the people of this world do not have our values, morals, purposes and goals. If we really hear these words of Jesus, we will be prepared for that experience.

He also said, "Remember the words I spoke to you "A servant is never greater than his master." (20) When He spoke these words, He was repeating a statement He had made at the beginning of this retreat with these men. (13:16) He then continues, “If they persecuted

Me, they will persecute you." However, also observe this positive emphasis: "If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also."  
(20)

In other words, "You are to live and serve in the same world where I have lived and served and you can expect the same negative and positive responses from the people of this world I have experienced in their responses to Me. Many have rejected and persecuted Me. But some have believed. Expect many to persecute you, but also know that many will believe and follow Me and live out My values in their lives because of your preaching and teaching."

### **Personal Application**

The word "witness" in Greek is literally, "martyr". Therefore, when you and I live, preach and teach Christ in the world in which we must function every day, we should not be surprised when they respond to our witness with a way of thinking that is intellectually smug, and against the teaching and values of Christ. But we should also remember the hopeful, positive promise Jesus gave these men when He essentially said: "You yourselves are examples of the glorious reality that some have also obeyed My teaching which I have received from My Father. In the same way, you will receive a positive response to your ministry. You also will make disciples who will obey the teaching you have received from Me."

When a man named William Tyndale was persecuted for translating the Bible into English so ordinary people could read their Bibles, he responded by saying, "This is precisely what I expected." When the people to whom we present Christ ridicule, mock, and even persecute us for the values we are trying to live and proclaim, we should follow the example of William Tyndale and not be surprised but expect this unfavorable response.

We should also be realistic enough to remember the warning of Jesus that the world has always responded to authentic prophets and witnesses that way. He had warned these men early in His relationship with them: "Beware when all men speak well of you. They have always spoken well of the false prophet." (Luke 6:26) Therefore, we should expect an indifferent or even hostile response and be more than a little concerned when secular people praise us and honor us with awards. We should expect an adverse response to the Christ we are revealing to the people of this world.

But there is also the hope that even from among those who are very sinful and persecute us for what we are presenting as we live and proclaim the Gospel of Christ, some of them will believe and obey in response to our preaching and teaching. That was not only the experience of our Lord but of these apostles, as you will see when you read the Book of Acts.

When Paul arrived in the corrupt and sinful city of Corinth where Christ had never been preached, before his miraculous church planting ministry in Corinth began, the Lord appeared to him and he

was essentially told by the Lord: "Do not be afraid, Paul. I have many people in this city. You simply announce the Gospel and you will discover who they are." (Acts 18:9,10)

This is exciting! When we proclaim the Gospel, we do not know who they are, but we have this hope and promise of Jesus: there are some who are going to respond positively. If we have the faith and courage to share with others and even preach the Gospel, we will discover who they are.

As he anticipated visiting believers and proclaiming the Gospel in Rome, Paul wrote them: "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." (Romans 15:29) When we are invited to travel somewhere to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or if we are asked to present the Gospel to one individual, the most important thing we can promise those who have invited us is that we will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. We should approach that opportunity knowing that, even though the majority may respond adversely and negatively, or even persecute us, there will be those "called out ones" who will believe and obey our preaching and teaching, even as they believed and obeyed the preaching and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Jesus also says, "They will treat you this way because of My name, for they do not know the One Who sent Me." (John 15:21) Observe how He continuously makes the rejection of Himself and the rejection of the Father and the Spirit inseparable: "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts Me; and whoever accepts Me

accepts the One Who sent Me." (13:20; see also 14:9-11) He and the Father are one and you cannot accept them separately. He repeats this for emphasis, and He explains that rejection of Him merely reveals the deeper problem that they do not know, or have rejected the One Who sent Him.

Then in verse twenty-two and following, His profound statements are very much like the statements He made at the end of the ninth chapter of this Gospel. Do you remember that after healing the blind man, the essence of that passage was expressed when He said, "I am a very special kind of light. I give sight to those who are blind; but I also reveal the blindness of those who think they can see."

The religious leaders understood what He was saying and they responded, "Are you trying to tell us we are (spiritually) blind?" He replied, "If you were blind, you would not have any sin. But now you say you see. Therefore, your sin remains." (9:40, 41) What a profound definition of sin: No blindness, no sin, which means, no spiritual light, no sin. In verse 22 of this chapter and in the ninth chapter of John, Jesus was claiming, "I am the Light of the world." This means that the very definition of sin is the rejection of the One Who is the Light of the world. Therefore, one definition of sin and the most serious of all sins is the rejection of Jesus Christ.

This raises the question, is there a human being on earth, who has had no spiritual light whatsoever? The Apostle Paul writes that everybody has some light (Romans 1:20). The scholars call this

“natural revelation”. The essence of this teaching of Jesus and a teaching of Paul is that if we live up to the light we have, we will be given more light: “It is important that we go forward in the light of such truth as we have already learned.” (Philippians 3:15-18) To not go forward walking in the light we have received is at least one definition of sin.

Many years ago, while I was teaching an evangelistic home Bible class, in the large circle of people gathered in that home there was a Japanese lady who was responding enthusiastically to my teaching of the first chapter of the Bible. Her face was radiant. She waited until the others had left, and asked if she could talk to me.

I shall never forget that conversation. She said, "During the last days of World War Two, when the B-29's were bombing Tokyo, in the bomb shelters I prayed to another God. I knew there was another God, who was the real God, and I prayed to Him. For decades now I have had a strong feeling that some day I would find out all about Him. While you were teaching from that Book tonight, I knew in my heart that this is the real God I prayed to in the bomb shelters."

The essence of sin is the rejection of light. That means we are responsible and will be held accountable for the light we receive. It is a very serious matter to be exposed to spiritual light because spiritual benefits increase our spiritual responsibility. When we have heard the Word of God and have seen miracles of God, we are accountable for what we have seen and heard. What we do about

what we know is a standard of accountability we find throughout the Bible – especially here in this teaching of Jesus and at the conclusion of the ninth chapter of this Gospel.

### **The Comforter Is Coming**

In the last verses of Chapter Fifteen, Jesus says, “When the Comforter comes, He will testify about Me.” (26) One of the important functions of the Holy Spirit is to testify, or show a witness for Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself. He lifts up Jesus. Jesus adds, "And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." (27)

Remember again the essence of what a witness is and does. A witness is someone who has seen or experienced something. Jesus says, "You have been with Me from the beginning. Now the Holy Spirit is going to come and He will testify, but you must testify also." (26)

Being a witness is a matter of who and what we are by the grace of God, and we are all commanded to be witnesses like candles on the candlestick where Jesus has strategically placed us. But, we are not only commanded to be a witness. We are commanded to be a witness, and that means opening our mouths and testifying about what we have seen, heard and experienced. A witness is basically who and what the believer is, but a witness must also verbally testify. According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will testify - and we must testify.

## Chapter Four

### “The Character of the Comforter”

(16:1-15)

As you read the last verses of this fifteenth chapter, once again you must realize there is no break in the content of what Jesus is teaching when the next chapter begins: “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or Me. I have told you this so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.” (1-4)

As you read Chapter Sixteen, be sure to make the observation, that He continuously repeats, for emphasis, why He is telling them the truth He shares with them at this point in their time together: “I have told you this so that you will not go astray. I have told you this so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. Because I have said these things you are filled with grief. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.” (1-12)

It is obvious from the opening verses of this chapter that He is telling them these things because they are going to be put out of the synagogue, like the blind man He healed we learned about in the

ninth chapter. He warns them that the time will come when anyone who kills them will think he is offering a service to God.

“And they will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me. I have told you this so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you.” (4)

Have you ever been persecuted because of your identification with Jesus Christ? I understand there are persecuted believers in parts of this world today who pray for the church in countries like America, where the church enjoys the favor of the government and is not suffering as it is in other countries. The persecution these devout believers have experienced has brought them so close to God and matured them in so many ways, they wonder how believers who are not suffering from persecution mature and grow spiritually.

A great church historian made the observation, that if a church that is not suffering persecution succeeds in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and establishing His church in this world, it will be the first time that has happened in the history of the church.

Could it be that the persecution suffered by believers in the first three centuries of the church was permitted by God because the church has never been as strong, powerful, and as healthy as it was then? I thank the Lord for the peace we enjoy where I live and serve, but if suffering and persecution should come, we should remember the words of Peter, who observed that we should not think it strange when the Lord permits that kind of persecution and suffering (I Peter 4:12).

Also remember these words of Jesus in the upper room as He was preparing the eleven men around the table with Him for the persecution that was going to begin hours from the time He spoke these words.

### **The Three-Fold Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

As we move through verses of the sixteenth chapter and see this last retreat of Jesus conclude, we hear Jesus say to these men: “Now I am going to Him Who sent Me, yet none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine, and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said ‘the Spirit will take from what is mine, and make it known to you.’ In a little while

you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me.” (5-16)

They are grief-stricken because He has made it clear to them that they are about to lose Him. But in this context, we find one of His greatest statements about the Holy Spirit. “It is expedient that I go away; because unless I go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.” (16:7) Another way to express this concept is: “I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away, because unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”

Have you ever thought about the personal charm or charisma of the historical Jesus and what it was like to be with Him when He was here in a physical body? Have you ever thought “I would love to have been with Him then?” I like to think about His physical appearance. We can compile some of the observations about His appearance we find in these Gospels and in the prophets and project a profile of the physical appearance of Jesus.

We know that the Jesus we are introduced to in the Gospels is a thirty-year old man. He is easily recognized as Jewish. The prophets tell us He will be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. They also say that His image will be marred more than any man. (Isaiah 52:14) The Jewish historian, Josephus, writes that Jesus was taller than big fishermen like Peter with whom He walked for three years, because He could be seen above them when they surrounded Him.

We are somewhat surprised when we read that His appearance was a portrait of the happy man. He was criticized for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. Appearance has much to do with a person's character. I have a picture of a young Jesus on the wall of my study with His head thrown laughing heartily. A caption on the picture reads: "The Laughing Jesus."

That picture shocks many who see it. Most people picture Jesus far older than He actually was and they picture a sad, serious-looking Jesus who looks as if the weight of the world is on His shoulders. A book entitled Joshua raises the question, "What would Jesus be like if He lived among us today?" The point the author is making is that we would be very surprised because of the pre-conceived bias we have in our minds about how we picture Jesus.

But the last words of Jesus to these twelve men tell them there is something far better than being with Him as they had been with Him for three years. He essentially tells them and us: "It is for your good; it is expedient that I give up my physical body and return to you in the Person of the Comforter."

While He lived in a body, Jesus voluntarily gave up some of His divine attributes, like omnipresence. He could only be one place at one time. But after this expedient change, which was for the good of the apostles, the church, and ultimately you and me, it will be possible for Him to be all over the world at the same time, everywhere there is a believer. That is what He is saying here. He is putting it this way, "Unless I go away, unless I give up this bodily

form, the Comforter cannot come. But if I give this up, then I can send Him to you - and that is far better for you. It is for your good. It is expedient that I go away and send you the Comforter." (7)

Now He spells out why it is better: "When He comes He will convict the world of sin." (8) A more accurate translation is: "He will expose the guilt of the world." Guilt is not always a negative emotional experience. There is a sense in which guilt can be healthy. A person who is experiencing guilt has some moral integrity - they have moral absolutes - they believe some things are absolutely right and some things are absolutely wrong. The person who experiences no guilt is the person who is indifferent about right and wrong. They are "a moral" which means they do not believe in morals.

This is often described as "moral relativity," which can be another way of saying there are no moral absolutes. Many try to run from and avoid their own guilt and the guilt of others today by stating that there is no such thing as right and wrong. However, that is like sprinkling powder on a malignant tumor that needs to be cut out.

I love to read about the eighteenth century awakening, when men like George Whitfield and the Wesley's in England and Jonathan Edwards in America preached the Gospel with supernatural results. I read a description of a farmer in New England who heard George Whitfield preach when he came preaching in America. The farmer wrote: "When that man began to speak, 'I felt this great hurt

in my heart and I fell to my knees right there in the field, began weeping, confessing, repenting and forsaking my sin."

That is the way the Holy Spirit exposes sin and guilt in this world. Why would a farmer feel a great hurt in his heart when he heard a man preach the Gospel? According to Jesus, that is one of the many functions and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Many people would feel no guilt at all in that farmer's place. They would actually laugh at the very same Gospel message.

As a part of that same spiritual awakening in America, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." As he preached that sermon in his church in New England, people were so convicted of their sins they frantically held on to the pews in front of them. They believed they were slipping into Hell and the only way to escape Hell was to confess their sins and experience salvation.

I sometimes think that if we preached that sermon today without the anointing of the Holy Spirit that was upon Jonathan Edwards, people would think it was a comedy routine. The difference is the ministry and function of the Holy Spirit Jesus is profiling as He describes what the coming of the Comforter will mean to the preaching ministry of those who obey His Great Commission. We find the very same response to the preaching of the Gospel recorded in the Book of Acts. Beginning with the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, throughout this history of the first

generation of the church, we find references to supernatural responses to the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 2:37; 10:44-46).

We consistently find a mixed response to Christ Himself and to the Gospel of Christ. But what is it that makes the difference? Why do some laugh, while others feel a great hurt in their hearts, and desperately cry out to God for salvation? Obviously, the ministry and function of the Holy Spirit accounts for the difference between these two responses.

Jesus told these men that when the Comforter comes, He is going to convict the world of guilt, or expose the guilt of the world, in regard to three things: sin, righteousness and judgment. "In regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me. In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father where you can see Me no longer. And in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned." (9-11)

There are three ways in which the Holy Spirit will convict people of sin or expose their guilt. According to Jesus He will convict them of the sin of not believing in Him. Do you remember that Jesus made His most dogmatic statement when He told Nicodemus He was God's only Son, God's only Savior, and God's only solution to the sin problem of this world? (John 3:14-21) Having made that dogmatic claim, Jesus added something even more dogmatic, the essence of which was: "He who believes this claim will have everlasting life. But he who does not believe this claim I am making will be condemned – not because of his sins but because

he does not believe Me when I claim that I am God's only Son and God's only Savior." (3:18)

The Apostle Paul writes a magnificent Gospel passage in which he tells us God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself no longer charging their sins against them. And He has committed to us the message and the ministry of reconciliation. We are to go out to the world, not to tell them that they are going to go to Hell because of their sin. We are to tell them this good news: "You do not have to go to Hell because, from the moment Jesus died on the cross, God the Father has not been charging your sins against you. He charged them all against His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ!" (II Corinthians 5:13-6:2).

If we understand and believe these words of Jesus and Paul, then we should realize that God does not send people to Hell because of their sins - not even Adolph Hitler. Adolph Hitler will not go to Hell because of his sins. He will go to Hell because of this one sin: he did not believe in Jesus Christ. He mocked Jesus Christ along with His claims, values, teachings and life philosophy. He will go to Hell because he did not believe in Jesus Christ.

According to Jesus, the sin that condemns us is the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ as the only Savior God has provided for the salvation of our souls. With these words, Jesus reinforces the dogmatic statement He made to Nicodemus when He tells the apostles that the Holy Spirit will convict of the sin of not believing in Him. He will actually convict people of three things: sin,

righteousness and judgment. The first of these three is in regard to the sin of not believing in Jesus as the Christ and our personal Savior and Lord: "In regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father." (10) How do we know what is right and what is wrong? Is there an absolute standard of what is right and what is wrong? Devout followers of Christ respond to that question by thinking of the Ten Commandments and of the Sermon on the Mount. According to Paul, all the Scriptures were given to us by God to instruct us in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16,17). The whole Bible shows us what is right and what is wrong.

But, at the beginning of this Gospel, John wrote that while no man has ever seen God, the only begotten Son has fully declared Him. He has revealed God as fully as God can be revealed to man. As much as the human mind is capable of comprehending about God was revealed through Jesus Christ. The Jesus we meet in this Gospel, as the Living Word, is God's absolute standard of righteousness. His life is the absolute walking definition of what is right and what is wrong.

A British poet has written a poem that describes a very sinful soldier who is killed in battle and goes to heaven by mistake. When he meets Jesus, he cannot bear to look at Him and sadly requests, "Please Sir, may I go to Hell?" The life and countenance of Jesus was so pure and Holy when He was here, He was not only the absolute standard of righteousness. He convicted people of their unrighteousness. When we read the New Testament, the righteous

life of the historical Jesus still convicts us and other people of our personal unrighteousness.

Jesus is saying here that the Holy Spirit will now assume the role of convicting people in regard to righteousness because "I am going to the Father and you will not see Me anymore." (16, 17, 19) As long as He was in the world, if you wanted to know what the right values were, you could simply follow Jesus and when He declared a value, you could confess that same value. If you wanted to know the right philosophy of life, you could listen when He gave His simple yet profound teaching.

If you wanted to know about moral rightness, or any other kind of rightness, the life of Jesus Christ was the absolute standard of what was right. But now He says, "I am leaving. I am going back to the Father. You will not see Me anymore. When I am no longer here, the Holy Spirit is going to convict the people of this world of what is right and what is wrong." (7-8)

Then He predicts that the Holy Spirit will convict people in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. Jesus is now declaring that Satan is defeated! There is now no power on earth greater than the power of the name of Jesus Christ. And even though the power of Satan is controlling much of what is happening in this world, to the disciple who is controlled by the Holy Spirit of the risen Christ, there is no power on earth as great as the power found in the risen, living Christ.

He is declaring here that "the prince of this world" (11) or Satan can be conquered by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John is obviously thinking of these words of Jesus when he writes: "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." (I John 4:4) The personal application is that we do not have to be defeated or controlled by the power of Satan. Jesus is giving us a great profile of the ministry of the Holy Spirit as He speaks these words.

Then He says, "I have many things to tell you, but you are not able to bear them now." (12) All the statements of Jesus are so profound we could write many pages on any one of these verses.

Every preacher or teacher must realize that those who are listening to them have a limited capacity for what they can learn each time they hear the Word of God. Too much preaching or teaching on any one occasion can be counter productive. Jesus was the absolute Master of making disciples. His method was that in small segments of time they were continuously learning by doing and doing what they were learning. Most of their education was practical and He lectured very little. That is why He encouraged questions and dialog with these men. Obviously He had a perfect understanding of how much they could learn at any given time.

After making this point that He was aware of the limits of what they could learn at that time and in that setting, He said: "But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth and He will tell you what is yet to come." (13) This prophecy of the future ministry of the Holy Spirit certainly includes what Jesus taught

about future events surrounding His Second Coming in many of His parables and in His teachings like His Mount Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, 25). However, it also relates to the harsh reality that these men were moving into a future that was filled with uncertainty and danger.

They knew they would probably all be martyrs for Jesus - and except for the author of this Gospel, they all were! But how were they going to know the strategy and plan of Jesus for the implementation of His Great Commission in a culture that was hostile toward their Lord and the Gospel He had commissioned them to preach? What were they to do if He was arrested and executed? His answer was that in the future when He was taken from them, the Holy Spirit would make them know what they needed to know.

As we read the Book of Acts we see this clear prediction and profile of the future role and function of the Holy Spirit literally fulfilled. When the Holy Spirit comes on the Day of Pentecost, when they do not know what to do, He gives them the wisdom they need and the grace and boldness to do it. He also gives them the grace to apply the wisdom He gives them. He also shows them what is to come. The Holy Spirit is the real Author of the inspired letters written by the apostles, which tell us in marvelous ways what is to come in this world.

This is the personal, devotional and practical application for you and me: the same Holy Spirit Jesus prophetically profiles with these words can have this role and function in our lives today. He

can show us things to come regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ through our study of the Scriptures. He can also guide and direct our lives - today, tomorrow and the next day - by giving us the wisdom we know we do not have and the grace and boldness to apply the wisdom he gives us. When we do not know what to do, James exhorts us to ask God for wisdom: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God." He promises that God will give us a super abundance of the wisdom for which we ask Him. (James 1:5)

When we realize we cannot apply that wisdom without the help of God, He will also give us the grace to apply the wisdom He gives us. In a verse filled with superlatives, Paul assures us that God will also give us a super abundance of the grace we need when we realize we cannot apply His wisdom without His help: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always, having all sufficiency for all things might abound unto all good works." (II Corinthians 9:8).

After sharing this profile of the future ministry of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says to these apostles: "In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me." (16) Obviously, He is again deliberately baiting them to ask Him questions. They ask each other: "What is He talking about, 'In a little while we will see Him no more and then in a little while we will see Him?'" What does He mean about going to the Father? What does He mean by a little while? We do not understand what He is saying."

As I have already observed, throughout this discourse He is saying that He is going to die, but after His death their relationship will be more intimate than it has ever been. From our perspective, it is easy to understand what He was telling them. However, if you put yourself in the place of these men, can you see how difficult it must have been for them to understand what He was telling them.

As they asked Him these questions about "A little while and you will see Me no more, and then a little while and you will see Me," He uses the beautiful illustration of a woman giving birth to a child. (21-22) This is a metaphor of the little while when they will see Him no more - when He is taken from them, crucified and buried before His resurrection.

During the forty days He was on earth after the resurrection, when He was showing Himself alive to them and proving His resurrection to them with many infallible proofs, they had joy like the joy of that woman after her child was born into the world. As the joy of the birth of her child caused that mother to completely forget about the suffering she had endured, they will have a joy that will erase the sadness they experienced through His death on the cross. This joy will never be taken from them. He adds to this beautiful metaphor the observation that they will ask Him no questions then.

As in the Disciple's Prayer ("Our Father, Who art in heaven" Matthew 6:9-13), He instructs them that they should address the Father when they pray and present their petitions to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. He actually teaches that they are to present

their petitions to the Father in His name. This passage is very important because it gives us the proper protocol for our private and corporate prayers. When we pray as our Lord instructed these apostles to pray, we address the Father (not Jesus), and we talk to the Father in the name of Jesus.

From isolated verses in the New Testament, it is possible to get the impression that prayer is a matter of coming into a prayer closet with a shopping list and sending God on errands. If that is our idea of prayer we really do not understand the essence of Christ-like prayer until we learn what it means to pray in the name of Jesus. To pray in the name of Jesus means to pray in agreement with the essence of Who and what Jesus was and is. The definitive prayer of Jesus was, "Not my will but Thy will be done." (Matthew 26:39) To pray as Jesus lived and prayed is to pray and live in alignment with the will of God.

Praying in the name of Jesus is not an invitation to ask God for anything in His name as if it were some magic formula that unlocks God's heart. It is an instruction to present our petitions regarding the needs we have in agreement with His purposes. That is the same principle the Apostle Paul was teaching when he gave us the great promise that all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purposes." (Romans 8:28)

For example, when we are obeying His Great Commission and building His church as part of the fulfillment of His great mission in the world, then we can ask for anything that is in

agreement with the will of God and we will receive. Our joy will be complete when people believe the Gospel and we are in relationship with the risen Christ as He builds His church in this world. That is all we really want if are authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.

When He concludes this teaching He says, "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about My Father. In that day you will ask in My name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." (25-28)

Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now You are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that You know all things and that You do not even need to have anyone ask You questions. This makes us believe that You came from God. 'You believe at last!' Jesus answered. But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for My Father is with Me.

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world." (25-33) That is the way the Upper Room Discourse of Jesus ends.

When Jesus tells these apostles that He has been speaking figuratively, He was referring to His many parables and endless

profound metaphors. He continuously made use of the metaphor, the parable, the allegory and figurative language. But now He promises that the time is coming when He will speak plainly (25). I find it intriguing that He is teaching them many profound truths at this very time that I am convinced they did not understand.

However, they say to Him, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we see ... and this makes us believe." (29) There is great humor in this passage. Again, as in the response of Jesus to the boast of Peter that the others may deny Him but Peter never would, we do not know the facial expression, the tone of voice, or the body language of Jesus when He responds to their statement - that after three full years of intense relationship and training - they now finally believe. I am persuaded it was with great compassion and love, and perhaps a sparkle in His eye and a smile in the corner of His mouth, that Jesus said, in verse thirty-one, "You believe at last!"

Then He declares an awesome prediction - and this is going to happen very soon. From the other Gospels we know that Judas will come with religious authorities and soldiers. Jesus will be arrested. When that happens, observe that He says, "The time is coming, and it has come, when you will be scattered and leave Me alone. Yet I will not be alone; the Father will be with Me." Do not be too hard on Peter for his denial of even knowing Jesus, because we read that when He was arrested, all the apostles forsook Him and

fled (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50). When Jesus was arrested, the membership in the church of Jesus Christ was zero.

The same thing happened to the Apostle Paul. In his last will and testament called, "Second Timothy" Paul writes: "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them." (II Timothy 4:16) And then he also writes that he will not be alone: "Notwithstanding the Lord stood by me and ministered to me." (17) Jesus says: "You will all leave Me alone, but I will not be alone. The Father will be with Me." (John 16:32)

When Jesus said, "You believe at last!" The essence of His statement could have been, "So now you really believe?" Or it could be translated, "Do you believe even now?" I find it remarkable that He is asking this question at the conclusion of His three years with these men. When did the apostles believe? We are told in the first chapter of this Gospel that they made commitments to follow Him. And yet in the second chapter we read that when He turned water into wine His disciples first believed in Him.

After they had been with Him for some time and had seen Him perform many miracles, when they were terrified by the winds and waves of a terrible storm, they frantically asked Him, "Do you not even care that we are all going to die?" He responded, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" In other words: "Do you not even yet believe in Me?" (Mark 4:40)

I am also intrigued when I read in the Book of Acts that Peter, who in these Gospels denies three times with curses that he even

knows Jesus, a few weeks later is the fearless and courageous leader of the followers of Jesus. We read that Peter and John are called before the Sanhedrin – the Jewish religious leaders. The Sanhedrin formed a circle around the people they summoned to appear before them. Anywhere they looked, they would see harsh Pharisees, Rabbis, and scribes staring at them and asking them hard questions. If they gave the wrong answers to the questions, they could be cruelly beaten or even put to death. Being summoned before the Sanhedrin was a very frightening experience.

We read that these men who are described as ignorant and unlettered - which means they could not read and write - were fearless! They were calm, confident, articulate, eloquent, and they expressed great wisdom when they spoke. We read that the Sanhedrin exclaimed that it was obvious these men had been with Jesus. That was the only way they could explain the extraordinary witness of these men who were all cowards when Jesus was arrested. (Acts 4)

What transformed these men from the frightened, shamefaced cowards we read about in the Gospels into the bold witnesses they are a few weeks later? The only possible explanation is the Day of Pentecost when the promise of the Comforter - the Holy Spirit - was fulfilled. The miraculous behavior of these apostles also answers one of the questions we have asked throughout this study of the Gospel of John: "What is faith?"

## **A Brief Summary of Chapter Sixteen**

In this part of the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus is preparing the apostles for the persecution they are going to face. His presentation of this persecution and their response to it concludes with the last verse of this chapter when He says, “I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!” (33) We can summarize what Jesus told these apostles in verse eighteen of the fifteenth chapter, through the end of the sixteenth chapter under three headings:

### **How To View The World**

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (15: 18, 20) They will put you out of the synagogues. (16:2) ... The time is coming when whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.” (16:2)

### **How To View The Ministry Of The Holy Spirit**

It is significant to observe that it is in the context of His teaching about the persecution the apostles can expect from a hostile world, that Jesus gives an in-depth profile of the ministry the Holy Spirit will have in them and through them (16:5-11). “Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” (16:7)

His profile of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is summarized in these verses: “When He comes, He will convict (expose the guilt of), the world of guilt in regard to sin. When He comes, He will convict (expose the guilt of) the world of guilt in regard to righteousness. When He comes, He will convict (expose the guilt of) the world of guilt in regard to judgment ... in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me. ... In regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer. ... In regard to judgment, because the Prince of this world now stands condemned.” (16:8-11)

### **How To View The Things I Am Telling You**

This is a summary of statements Jesus makes that relate to two themes: the persecution that is coming and the coming of the Holy Spirit Who will enable them to withstand this persecution: “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. (16:1) I have told you this so that when the time comes you will know that I warned you. (16:4) I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. Now I am going to Him Who sent Me.”

In other words, “I am telling you these things now because I am not going to be with you physically then. (16:4,5). Because I have said these things you are filled with grief (6:6). I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now (16:12). Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I

will no longer use this kind of language. (16:25) I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace.” (16:33)

**Conclusion:**

In this brief booklet I have tried to cover some of the last words of Jesus to His disciples, which are some of His most profound teachings. We only have one more booklet to finish this study of the wonderful Gospel of John. I trust that you will write and request that final booklet.

It is my prayer that as we are studying this Gospel together you have come to know Jesus as your Savior and are experiencing the miracle work of the Holy Spirit in your life as His disciples did nearly 2000 years ago. It is also my prayer that these booklets are helping you get into the Word of God and that the Word of God is getting into you. This is my constant prayer because I know God does wonderful and miraculous things when His people continue in His Word and His Word continuously dwells in His people.