

# Lesson Twenty

*(John 14:1-31)*

The Passover meal is finished. Judas is walking through the darkened streets on his evil mission. And the disciples are astounded at Jesus' announcement that Peter would betray him by daybreak. Doubt and fear are in their eyes. So Jesus responds to their need for encouragement.

## **Jesus: The Way to the Father**

*(John 14:1-14)*

<sup>1</sup>"Do not be worried and upset," Jesus told them. "Believe in God and believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. <sup>3</sup>And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am. <sup>4</sup>You know the way that leads to the place where I am going."

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way to get there?"

<sup>6</sup>Jesus answered him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me. <sup>7</sup>Now that you have known me," he said to them, "you will know my Father also, and from now on you do know him and you have seen him."

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need."

<sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "For a long time I have been with you all; yet you do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe, Philip, that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I have spoken to you," Jesus said to his disciples, "do not come from me. The father, who remains in me, does his own work. <sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. If not, believe because of the things I do. <sup>12</sup>I am telling you the truth: whoever believes in me will do what I do — yes, he will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it."

The 14th chapter of John is a wonderful treasury of truth concerning the relationship between God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. And the promises which Jesus makes here are based upon his divine nature. If he is not the one he claims to be — the Son of God — then he has no right to make such promises and has no way to fulfill them. But we believe, on the basis of the evidence presented in the Bible, that Jesus really is the Christ (or Messiah), the divine Son of God.

So we believe that Jesus is preparing a place in heaven for those who love and obey him (14:2). And we also are convinced that someday he will return from heaven to take the saved back with him (14:3). There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate that he will return in order to set up an earthly kingdom. Nor will he at that time offer to unbelievers another chance for salvation, for "everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God" (Hebrews 9:27).

Instead, the second coming of Christ will be for the purpose of raising the dead to life (5:24-29). He will send those who have never obeyed him "off to eternal punishment, but the righteous will go to eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). And then he will present his followers — those who have loved and served him to the best of their ability — to God the Father. As Paul says, after God's people

are raised from the dead "then the end will come; Christ will overcome all spiritual rulers, authorities, and powers, and will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father" (1 Cor. 15:24).

In 14:4 the "place" where Jesus says he is going is, of course, heaven. No extended treatment can be given here, but we should note that heaven is a prepared place (14:2) for a prepared people (14:23-24). The fact is that there is a literal place somewhere beyond our own universe (or at least beyond our human perception) which is the home of God (Psalm 80:14; Matt. 5:45). Jesus left heaven to come to earth (1:1; 3:13) and went back there after his resurrection (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Heaven is the home of God's angels (Matt. 22:30), a place of joy and peace (Luke 15:7; 19:38). But as John also explains, there will one day be a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21), where God will be in close fellowship with the saved. "God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared" (Rev. 21:3-4).

In response to Thomas' question in 14:5, Jesus makes this magnificent statement: "I am the way, the truth, the life" (14:6). Jesus is the only *way* of escape from the punishment which awaits the unsaved. Contrary to the misconception that "all religious roads lead to heaven," the fact is that salvation is only in Jesus (Rom. 1:16; 3:22; Acts 2:38). The Hindu people are lost. Moslems are lost. Jews are lost. Nature worshippers are lost. Anyone today who looks for salvation from any person except Jesus is lost. Peter said of Jesus: "Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us" (Acts 4:12). It is interesting to note that the followers of Jesus became known, collectively, as "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22).

Jesus is also the *truth*. Teachers can say, "We try to teach the truth." Philosophers and scientists can say, "We search for the truth." But only Jesus could say, "I am the truth." In his unique life we see the truth about God: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life" (3:16). And, through his death upon the cross, we see the truth about ourselves: "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free" (Romans 3:23-24).

And Jesus is also the *life*. Man's greatest fear is death, and few

people are willing to talk about it. Instead of saying "John died," we say "John passed away." We pay hundreds of dollars to have makeup applied to the corpse so as to make it look "natural"; but all the cosmetics in the world will not change the fact of death. So Jesus came to offer us life eternal, a promise that the grave will not be the final resting place for those who love him. Because Jesus was resurrected from the grave, we have assurance that as Christians we, too, may overcome death. We know that "when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed. For what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die. So when this takes place, and the mortal has been changed into the immortal, then the scripture will come true: 'Death is destroyed; victory is complete!' " (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

Philip's request of Jesus to "show us the Father" (14:8) brings forth a fundamental fact about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son: they are one (14:9-11). We cannot fully grasp the mystery of the Trinity, of how there can be three personalities in the Godhead yet only one God. But by faith we accept it.

In 14:12 Jesus says that his followers would do "greater things" than he did. J.W. McGarvey and W.K. Pendleton wrote, "By this the Lord does not mean that the disciples shall perform greater miracles, but that they shall produce moral and spiritual revolutions which are intrinsically more divinely wonderful than miracles. For instance, at his death Jesus had converted about five hundred disciples, but at Pentecost the apostles converted three thousand in one day. The converts of Paul also greatly out-numbered those of Christ's own ministry" (*The Fourfold Gospel*, p. 622).

In 14:13-14 Jesus speaks of the divine power which is available to those who pray for it. Just as cables are essential to the operation of an elevator, prayer is an essential communication link between us and God. But just as an elevator's power is not in the cables but in the motor or engine, the power Jesus speaks about is not in prayer itself but in God.

### **The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

(John 14:14-31)

<sup>15</sup>"If you love me, you will obey my commandments. <sup>16</sup>I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. <sup>17</sup>He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God.

The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you.

<sup>18</sup>“When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>When that day comes, you will know that I am in my Father and that you are in me, just as I am in you.

<sup>21</sup>“Whoever accepts my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. My father will love whoever loves me; I too will love him and reveal myself to him.”

<sup>22</sup>Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “Lord, how can it be that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

<sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, “Whoever loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him and live with him. <sup>24</sup>Whoever does not love me does not obey my teaching. And the teaching you have heard is not mine, but comes from the Father, who sent me.

<sup>25</sup>“I have told you this while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you.

<sup>27</sup>“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid. <sup>28</sup>You heard me say to you, ‘I am leaving, but I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father; for he is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>I have told you this now before it all happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe. <sup>30</sup>I cannot talk with you much longer, because the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, <sup>31</sup>but the world must know that I love the Father; that is why I do everything as he commands me.

“Come, let us go from this place.”

Jesus promises the apostles that God will send them a “Helper” (14:16). The Greek word *parakleton* is sometimes transliterated as “Paraclete.” It literally suggests one who is called alongside in order to assist, as a nurse might stand near a physician in readiness to help with the care of a patient. The Old Testament shows that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, was the source of both physical and spiritual life (Genesis 6:3; Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 42:5), and that he instructed certain people in a direct way (Nehemiah 9:20; Numbers 24:2; Hosea 9:7). The New Testament gives even more insight as to the Holy Spirit’s personality and function. The Holy Spirit personally instructed the apostles (16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10-13; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Luke

12:11-12), and gave them the power to work miracles (Acts 6:8; 8:6; 8:12). Today the Holy Spirit is active in convicting the world in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8). He lives in the heart of every immersed believer (3:5; Acts 2:38; 5:32; 1 Cor. 6:19), enabling us to live godly lives (Gal. 5:22-23). And he also intercedes for us before the Father (Romans 8:26-27).

Jesus teaches that *loving obedience* is what God expects of us before he will shower us with blessings (14:15,21, 23-24). That kind of heart is the only kind in which the Holy Spirit will dwell. As Paul Butler states, "There are no requirements of mystical rites to be performed to place one in a mood to receive the Holy Spirit. There are no promises here of any ecstatic trances or emotional fits that one may know he has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. The very simple and plain promise is that the one who believes, trusts, loves and obeys Christ will be indwelt by the Spirit of God" (*The Gospel of John*, II, 255).

The promise given in 14:26 was specifically for the apostles and for the express purpose of reminding them, in an infallible way, of all that Jesus had taught them during his three year ministry. With that divine assistance the apostles went on to write the various documents of the New Testament.

But today there are many people who assume that the Holy Spirit bestows new teachings upon Christians today. Such people soon find themselves adrift on a sea of hallucinations, mysticism, dreams, and lies which invariably begin with someone announcing, "The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said . . ." Let's listen, instead, to Paul's wise words: "We have said it before, and now I say it again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel that is different from the one you accepted, may he be condemned to hell!" (Gal. 1:9).

In 14:28 Jesus does not suggest that he is actually inferior to God the Father. He simply reminds them that he voluntarily left the glory of heaven and became a lowly human in order to save them (Phil. 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:9-18). While here he did not receive the praise he deserved; but when he returns to heaven that honor will be given to him (12:28; 2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 12:2). In the meantime, he will continue to obey God's commands — no matter what the cost (14:31).

### Thought Stimulators on John 14:1-31

1. Explain the saying, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

2. What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles?
3. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today?
4. How does the peace which Jesus gives differ from the peace which the world gives?
5. How do we prove our faith in and love for Jesus?
6. In what sense is Jesus "the way"?
7. In what sense is Jesus "the truth"?
8. In what sense is Jesus "the life"?
9. Why will Jesus return a second time?
10. Where is heaven and what is it like?
11. What "greater things" would Jesus' disciples do than he did?
12. How was the Father "greater" than the Son at the time Jesus spoke?