

General Comments on John 14-16

With John 13 the setting of the Last Supper is established. The subsequent ch. 14-17 contain a long series of doctrinally complex sermons. Chapter 14 is given at the end of the Last Supper, and afterwards they depart for the Mount of Olives (cf. 14:31, Matt. 26:30, Luke 22:39) where ch. 15-17 are delivered. Jesus then departs over the brook Cedron (cf. 18:1) into the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:36).

The discourses in ch. 14-16 focus on unity and love. The theme is introduced in 13:31-25 and in these chapters that theme is fully developed as Jesus discusses the unity of the Father and the Son, the need for unity among the disciples, and unity between the Son and the disciples. Jesus emphasizes that despite his imminent death they may still be united with him through the Holy Spirit, which he will send to them.

Underlying the entire message of unity is the doctrine of love, which will bind the Father, himself, and the disciples together through obedience. Jesus contrasts this with the hate the world has for himself and the disciples and warns the disciples off from it (cf. 15:18-16:3). Jesus also commented on the same issue in the New World, cf. 3 Ne. 11:28-30.

Theologically, these chapters signal a change in how the covenant with Israel is going to be administered. From the covenant with Abraham to the present mortal ministry of the Messiah, Israel has been dealt with largely at the corporate level. Various prophets and leaders have been provided to shepherd all of Israel, the whole multitude of them, whether they be good or bad.

Now Jesus announces something entirely different: the salvation of Israel at the individual level, based upon worthiness. Jesus announces the Holy Spirit will abide with those who keep his teachings. Those who do not keep his teachings will not have the Holy Spirit to guide them. While Jesus had hinted previously at the broadening of the ministry (cf. 4:35-38), here he is discussing the doctrine in detail.

Comments on John 14

1 LET not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come

again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

v1-7 These verses continue the message from 13:33 where Jesus tells them he is leaving them. Here he explains why he is leaving them. Jesus tells the disciples not to be disturbed by his leaving, but to continue to believe in him (v. 1). In the Father's estate there are many dwelling places (v. 2) and he is going to prepare them for his disciples (v. 3). The disciples know the place and way Jesus is going (v. 4). Thomas confesses they really don't know where or the way he is going (v. 5), and Jesus tells him the way to the Father is by following Jesus' teachings and example (v. 6) because Jesus and his Father are united (v. 7).

Jesus again, rather gently, tells the apostles he will soon be dead and released to return to his Father in heaven. This leaves the disciples confused over what they should do, so Jesus tells them they too can get to his Father in heaven by following him because he always does what the Father tells him.

v2 "mansions", a better translation would be "abodes" or "dwellings". The same Greek word translated to "abode" in v. 23 is translated to "mansions" here.

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]. 15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

v8-15 Thomas apparently interprets Jesus' comment too literally and asks Jesus to reveal the Father to them (v. 8). Jesus

gently chides Thomas by saying those who have seen Jesus already have seen the Father (v. 9), because the words Jesus speaks are the Father's words and the works Jesus performs are the Father's works (v. 10). That Father and Son are united, as the great works Jesus has performed signify (v. 11). Jesus' disciples must likewise do the same kinds of works Jesus did, and now even greater works will be performed by the Father because the Son goes to Him (v. 12). When the Son is with the Father, then the Father will do great works in the Son's name to glorify both the Son and Himself (v. 13). Whatever they ask for in the name of the Son, the Son will do (v. 14), so long as they love him and keep his commandments (v. 15).

v8 It is unlikely Philip is asking for a personal appearance of the Father as a sign. Rather, he is probably interested in something like the events of Exod. 19. Jesus is telling them he is leaving, so Philip is asking for some kind of blatantly obvious form of divine leadership. Jesus is being somewhat obscure in his discourse as to how they are to proceed, so Philip asks for something more plain.

v12 Given the ambiguity of the pronouns, commentators typically read this verse as follows:

[The disciples] that believeth on me, the works that I do shall [those disciples] do also; and greater [works] than these shall [those disciples] do

However, the idea that Jesus' disciples will do greater works than he did himself is simply impossible. Commentators say the greater work the apostles did was to spread Christianity throughout the known world. Even so, this pales in comparison to the Atonement, and the thing that impelled the apostles to do this was the Holy Spirit which was sent by the Son. A better reading is:

[The disciples] that believeth on me, the works that I do shall [those disciples] do also; and greater [works] than these shall [the Father] do

It is plain from v. 10-11 the works Jesus does are the works his Father gives him to do, as it says "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works". And now that Jesus is returning to his Father, the Father will do great things to Glorify Himself and

his Son, per v. 13. It is plain from the verses surrounding v. 12 that the Father is One doing the greater works, not the disciples. Finally, in v. 28 Jesus states flatly that the Father is greater than he (and see 5:20 where Jesus states the Father will do greater works than he). If there is One who is to do greater works than Jesus, it must be the Father.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20 At that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

v16-21 Jesus now more directly answers Thomas' and Philips questions by telling them he will send the Holy Spirit to guide them in the way they should go. Jesus will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to them to always be with them (v. 16). The Spirit of Truth will dwell with them because they will accept it, but the world will not accept it (v. 17). Thus, will the departing Jesus not leave them alone, but will guide them (v. 18). With the end of his mortal ministry the world will no longer see Jesus (v. 19), but his disciples will discern him (v. 20) because they keep his teachings and he and his Father will manifest themselves to them (v. 21).

Jesus tells them he will send the Holy Spirit to guide them, and in this manner manifest himself to them. The world rejects him, and so they will not have the Holy Spirit to guide them. Thus, the disciples will discern him when the world cannot.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

v22-24 Judas asks for some additional clarification on how

Jesus and his Father will manifest themselves privately to the disciples (v. 22). Jesus tells them plainly that those who keep his teachings will be beloved of him and his Father and they will manifest themselves to them (v. 23). Jesus and the Father will not manifest themselves to those who do not keep their teachings (v. 24).

This question shows the apostles are still looking for some kind of blatantly obvious physical leadership. If Jesus is no longer the leader, then who? Moses departed and was replaced by Joshua. Who then is Jesus' successor, who could be? Jesus tells them it will be the Holy Spirit. But how can this Holy Spirit be revealed only to them and not to everyone? Jesus answers this question by making it plain the Spirit will only manifest itself to those who live Jesus' teachings.

v23-24 A godly walk is essential for a Christian. If a person loves Jesus, they will be working steadfastly to live and do what he taught. If a person is not trying to live and do what Jesus taught, then they do not love Jesus.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being [yet] present with you. 26 But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come [again] unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

v25-31 Jesus now summarizes the discourse by telling them when he leaves he will send the Holy Spirit to lead them in all things. Jesus is telling them these things beforehand so when they do happen they will understand (v. 25, 29). The Father will send the Holy Spirit to teach and remind them what Jesus taught (v. 26). This will bring them genuine spiritual peace, not worldly contentment, so they should not fear (v. 27). As he has told them he will be dying and returning to his Father, so should they rejoice, because his Father is going to do even greater works (v. 28).

Jesus does not have much time left with them. The adversary will shortly have his way in seeing Jesus murdered, but he has no power over Jesus (v. 30). However, Jesus will submit to his imminent death at the hands of the adversary because it is the will of his Father (v. 31).

Jesus' comments in v. 25-29 are clearly intended to mitigate the present gloom the disciples are feeling, but more importantly the despair and fear that will shortly overwhelm them.

v30 The IV differs from the KJV, as follows:

KJV

Hereafter I will not
talk much with you:
for the prince
of this world cometh, and
hath nothing in me.

IV

Hereafter I will not
talk much with you;
for the prince of darkness,
who is of this world, cometh,
but hath no power over me,
but he hath power over you.

The IV changes the meaning of the verse to be both a statement indicating Jesus will be leaving them and a warning against the impending adversity they will face. Compare the IV emendation on this verse to Luke 22:31-32.

v31 "Arise, let us go hence", the Passover Seder is completed, so Jesus takes the disciples and departs for the Mount of Olives where the sermons of ch. 15-17 are delivered (cf. 14:31, Matt. 26:30, Luke 22:39).

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