

Fourth Gospel ended with a comment about the need for faith in the Messiah.

III. Private Ministry: Farewell Instructions to Jesus' Disciples (13:1–17:26)

The farewell remarks of Jesus comprise the second major unit in John. These private instructions to His disciples began in an upper room. But at 14:31, Jesus and the eleven remaining disciples left the upper room and wandered through the streets of Jerusalem where Jesus continued to instruct them and to pray. Finally, at 17:26, they left Jerusalem and crossed the Kidron Valley.

A. Washing the Disciples' Feet (13:1-20)

13:1. Of the three Passovers cited in John, this **Feast of the Passover** is the only one recorded in the Synoptics. Jesus was fully aware that the time of His death had come (cf. 12:23). His disciples were not. **He loved** His disciples, even Judas, **to the end** (*telos*)—to the cross where He cried, “It is finished” (*teleo*, 19:30). Up to this point in John, it was said that his hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Now it is said that **His hour had come**, i.e., the time of His death, resurrection, and ascension as described in the words, to **depart out of this world to the Father**.

13:2-5. The idea of betraying Jesus was not an original thought of Judas; **the devil had already put** the notion **into** his faithless **heart** (cf. 6:71; 12:4). Once again (cf. v. 1), Jesus had a complete self-awareness of His universal authority (cf. Mt 28:18), His origin, and His destiny (v. 3). That **He had come forth from God** was symbolized as He **laid aside His garments** to take the role of a servant (v. 4). In Israel, one's feet became dirty as one walked from place to place. Washing the feet of a guest was a common courtesy provided by a host but performed by a household servant, and never by the head of the home. Jesus became His disciples' servant, breaching social customs. Instead of saying that Jesus “took off” and then “put on,” John said He **laid aside** (*tithemi*, v. 4) and “took up” (*lambano*, 13:12) His garments—words used earlier for His death (10:17-18).

13:6-8. Some of the disciples submitted as Jesus washed their feet. But when Jesus **came to Simon Peter**, he questioned the Lord's lowly act. Jesus knew Peter's limited understanding (**you do not realize now**, v. 7). The meaning of the foot washing would become clear **hereafter**, i.e., after the upper room teachings and/or after the resurrection. Peter still resisted (v. 8), using a strong negative in Greek: **Never shall You wash**

my feet! Jesus replied that if Peter refused to have his feet washed by Him, then he could **have no part with** the Messiah. Ongoing partnership or fellowship with Jesus is conditioned on the recurrent cleansing of the believer as he confesses his sins (1Jn 1:9).

13:9-11. In Peter's enthusiasm to be in companionship with his Lord, he asked Jesus to wash his whole body. Jesus' instructions to Peter about two distinct cleansings must not be overlooked. **He who has bathed [louo] needs only to wash [nipto] his feet**, because he **is completely clean** (v. 10). The bath represents the complete, unrepeatable cleansing of new birth; the washing of the feet pictures the repeated cleansing needed for intimacy with Christ after salvation (cf. 15:14). This intimacy requires walking in the light and confessing sins (see 1Jn 1:6-9). The apostle interpreted Jesus' words (v. 11), **you are clean, but not all of you**, to single out Judas. Since Judas had not believed, he was not clean, i.e., regenerated.

13:12-15. For Jesus to have **taken up His garments** again forecasted His glorification at the resurrection. After a rhetorical question to gain their attention, Christ reasoned that He was rightfully above them. They themselves called Him **Teacher and Lord** (v. 13), terms relevant for ongoing discipleship. Since a servant is not above his master (Mt 10:24), the disciples needed to humble themselves like their Teacher and serve others. To **wash one another's feet** (v. 14) included laying down their lives for their brothers or sisters (10:11, 14, 17; 15:13; 1Jn 3:16). Foot washing is not set down as an ordinance but as an **example** (v. 15) of all forms of humble service modeled by the Lord's foot washing (cf. 1Tm 5:10).

13:16-17. Since a **slave** is never more privileged than the **master** who owns him, and an ambassador is never more important **than the one who sent him**, so logic must compel the disciples to humble themselves in lowly service as their Master had done in washing their feet. The “one who is sent” (*apostolos*, lit., “apostle”) hints at the apostolic mission of the Eleven. The disciples must **know these things** (v. 17) Jesus had spoken before they could obey them. Knowledge is a prerequisite to obedience. But being **blesed** or spiritually happy is conditioned on obeying Christ's call to servanthood.

13:18. **I do not speak of all of you** refers to Judas. Jesus knew all about the **ones** He had **chosen**, including Judas. He was not caught by surprise at Judas's betrayal. “Chosen” does

not refer here to election for salvation, but to the choosing of His twelve disciples (cf. 6:70). The selection of the disciples resulted in Ps 41:9 being **fulfilled**. In the psalm, David's close friend Ahithophel (**HE WHO EATS MY BREAD**) betrayed David (**LIFTED UP HIS HEEL** is a cultural sign for contempt). Later Ahithophel hung himself (2Sm 16:20-22; 17:23), foreshadowing how Judas would betray the Greater David (Messiah) and later hang himself (Mt 27:5; Ac 1:18).

13:19-20. Jesus declared that the prophecy about Judas was designed to increase the faith of the disciples in Jesus' divine status, sovereignty, and omniscience once it was fulfilled. For **believe that I am He**, see comments on 4:26 and 8:28. Taking the gospel to the world was in the Lord's heart. The disciples must be sent to carry out the task. But the one who is sent is nothing (**whomever I send**, v. 20). The authority rests in the Lord who sends them. Therefore, anyone **who receives** a person sent by Christ receives Christ Himself (cf. 1:12) and the Father as well.

B. Identifying His Betrayer (13:21-30)

13:21-22. For the third time, the sinless Jesus was **troubled in spirit** (cf. 11:33; 12:27). Although Christ had previously hinted that He would be betrayed (6:64, 71; 13:11), He now directly **testified** that the betrayer would be **one of the Twelve**. By pointing out that the disciples were **at a loss to know of which one He was speaking** (v. 22), John again underlined the ignorance of the disciples. Judas must have insincerely joined in the interchange that followed (cf. Mt 26:22; Mk 14:19; Lk 22:23).

13:23-25. The beloved disciple, presumably John (see Introduction: Author), was **reclining on Jesus' bosom**, or chest, not only because of the cultural style of eating (see comment on 12:2) but also because this was a Passover meal where reclining to the left was part of the ceremony. This is the first of five times the author identified himself as the disciple **whom Jesus loved** (19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Each reference occurred within the events of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus was flanked by Judas and John (both honored positions), but John was between Jesus and **Peter** (v. 24). So Peter prompted John to ask Jesus for the identity of the traitor. In this reclined position, **leaning back thus** (v. 25), John could speak to Jesus.

13:26-27. Jesus revealed the identity of the traitor to John alone (see comment on 21:20). For a person to **dip a morsel and give it to another** was a sign of friendship and honor. Judas's

heinous character was his own responsibility. Calling him **the son of Simon Iscariot** showed that he was an ordinary human person. But **after** Judas ate **the morsel, Satan then entered into him** (v. 27). As the bread entered Judas, so did the Devil. Jesus, in full control of the moment, precipitated the betrayal Himself by releasing Judas to **do quickly** his dastardly deed.

13:28-30. Surprisingly, **no one understood for what purpose** Jesus told Judas to carry out his activities quickly. Judas had been entrusted with the funds given to the disciples for their traveling ministry or for the needy they encountered (cf. 12:6). So the disciples thought (v. 29) Judas was sent out to **buy some things** needed for the Passover **feast**, or to **give something to the poor**. Nighttime almsgivings were part of Passover. After Judas **went out** (v. 30), the author remarked climactically, **it was night**—darkness had descended both literally and symbolically. Though John did not record it, sometime after Judas left Jesus introduced the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:15-20).

C. Revealing His Departure (13:31-14:31)

13:31-32. Again Jesus' knowledge of the precise time of His death is revealed: **Now is the Son of Man glorified**. This is the first of 23 uses of the verb, "glorify" (*doxazo*) in the Fourth Gospel (14 uses in the Synoptics). Sometimes it refers to building one's own status (8:54; cf. 5:41, 42; 8:50); the enhancement of God's reputation by Jesus (12:28; 14:13) or the believer (15:8; 21:19); or the enhancement of Jesus' reputation by accomplishing God's work (11:4; 17:4; cf. 2:11). Here it refers to Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension by which He will receive an exalted status from God (11:4; 12:16, 23; 13:31, 32; 17:5). Jesus' miracles manifested His glory (2:11). But it was in supreme weakness—His death on the cross—that His glory was most displayed. **God was glorified in Jesus** (v. 32), and reciprocally **God will also glorify Jesus in Himself**. Since Christ's death was within hours from that moment, the crucifixion would **glorify Jesus immediately**.

13:33. A Jewish teacher called his disciples **little children**. This is the only time Christ used this address in all the Gospels. John later adopted the term (1Jn 2:1, 12, 28). Jesus told the Jewish authorities (Jn 7:34; 8:21), **Where I am going [the cross, the ascension] you cannot come**. Now He was telling His disciples the same (but see 14:3).

13:34-35. Love for others was commanded in

the OT (Lv 19:18, 34; Dt 10:19). The love Jesus commanded was **new** since it called His followers not merely to love but to love sacrificially even as Jesus loved them. Paul referred to this one aspect of the law as the law of Christ (1Co 9:21; Gl 6:2). Since love is one of the primary marks of discipleship, others **will know** (identify) Jesus' **disciples** by their **love for one another**.

13:36-38. When Peter questioned where Jesus was going, Christ promised Peter **you cannot** [*ou dynasai*, lit., "are not able to"] **follow Me now** [to the cross] **but you will follow later**, i.e., to his own death. Peter impetuously boasted that he would willingly **lay down** his life for the Lord. According to Mk 14:31, all the disciples made the same claim. Ironically, it would be Jesus who would die for Peter. Then Peter would follow Jesus (but not **right now**) to his death (Jn 21:18-19). A strutting, crowing **rooster** fits Peter's boastful claim and forms a prophetic rebuke. Peter gave no response to the prediction and did not speak again in the narrative until his denial (18:17).

14:1. The thought of Jesus' betrayal and departure (13:21-38) would have greatly disheartened the disciples. To console them, Jesus instructed, **Do not let your** [pl.] **heart be troubled**. The disciples could calm their hearts by faith [**believe in God** and **believe also in Me**]. The two occurrences of the verb "believe" are spelled the same (*pisteuete* in both), but that spelling could make either or both verbs a statement of fact (an indicative mood verb, "You do believe"), or a command (an imperative mood verb, "Believe!"), or a combination of the two (one could be a statement and the other a command). The first phrase could also be a question ("Do you believe in God?"). It is a complicated issue. The NET Bible (p. 2073 n. 8) is most likely correct in its reasoning: "[Jesus] is about to undergo rejection by his own people as their Messiah. The disciples' faith in him as Messiah and Lord would be cast into extreme doubt by these events, which the author makes clear were not at this time foreseen by the disciples. After the resurrection it is this identification between Jesus and the Father that needs to be reaffirmed (cf. Jn 20:24-29). Thus it seems best to take the first *pisteuete* [transliteration added] as indicative and the second as imperative, producing the translation "You believe in God; believe also in me."

14:2-4. Jesus' teaching about His **Father's house** with **many dwelling places** evokes the image of a first-century wealthy home with beautiful additions. Jesus would not **go to**

prepare a place for His disciples unless He would also **come again and receive** them to Himself (v. 3). This "coming" is the pretribulation rapture (see the comments on Mt 24:36-44; 1Th 4:13-17) rather than the second coming since at the latter Jesus returns to stay on earth (Zch 14:3-4; Mt 24:29-31; Rv 19:11-21). This is Jesus' second revelation about the rapture (Mt 24:36-44 was a few days earlier, probably on Tuesday of Passion Week). Jesus deeply desires us to be with Him **where** He is (cf. 1Th 4:17). The disciples **know the way** (v. 4) Jesus will take to the Father's house. He has told them repeatedly of the cross.

14:5-6. Thomas questioned Jesus' logic. **Lord . . . how do we know the way?** Jesus affirmed (v. 6) their faith with the sixth **I am** claim in John. He is not one way but **the way** to God. He is not only true. He is **the truth**. Truth is embodied in Christ, and so is eternal **life** (1:4). **No one comes to the Father** for eternal life or for Christian living except first by way of faith in Christ.

14:7. Although born again (2:11; 14:10-11), the Eleven had not begun true intimacy with Christ. They lacked a more complete understanding of who He was. That He was the only way or access to the Father (v. 6) escaped their thinking so far. **If they (you is pl. in Gk.) had known** Christ intimately (cf. Php 3:10), they would have known the Father intimately as well. But they had not (v. 9). **From now on** references that moment forward. Through the farewell instructions (chaps. 13-17), they could gain an intimate knowledge (**know**) and full spiritual vision (**have seen**) of the Father.

14:8-9. Philip, in his request **show us the Father**, demonstrated the very unfamiliarity with the Father Jesus had just mentioned. Jesus had spent three years with the disciples (v. 9) and yet they had **not come to know** Him fully (v. 9). To "know" or "see" Christ (**He who has seen Me**) is to recognize God Himself fully (**has seen the Father**). God the Father is completely revealed in Jesus the Son, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is distinct from God the Father in terms of their respective personhood. For this important point, see the comments on 1:1, 18. This claim of Jesus is nothing less than a stupendous declaration of deity, leading to the NT teaching of the Trinity.

14:10-11. Jesus is **in the Father, and the Father is in** Jesus—a holy, eternal fellowship and unity in the Godhead. The **words** that Jesus **speak[s]** are never on His **own initiative**, independent of the Father. **The Father abiding in Christ does His works**. The mutual indwelling of the Father and

the Son stresses inseparability, yet maintains a distinction within the Trinity. If the disciples **believe because of Jesus' works themselves**, they would see the truth of this abiding relationship between the Father and the Son.

14:12. What are the **greater works** Jesus says believers will do? These greater works were made possible **because Jesus went to the Father**, i.e., after His ascension when the Holy Spirit was given. The "greater works" took place at Pentecost and ever since when people are brought to faith in Christ.

14:13-14. The promise that the disciples will do greater works than Jesus was now directly linked to their prayers in His Name. **Whatever you ask** (*aiteo*, a request from an inferior to a superior) begins the subject of prayer for the first time in the upper room teaching (15:7, 16; 16:23-24, 26). It also instructs Christians for the first time that prayer is to be made through Christ (**in My name**) to the Father (15:16; 16:23-24, 26). Prayer in Jesus' name suggests that the one who offers it understands that Jesus is the sole mediator between the one who prays and the Father (v. 6). The prayer is made for Jesus' sake, not primarily for personal benefit (cf. Ps 25:11). So we can ask in prayer as if Jesus were asking it. This implies that our prayers must be designed according to His will, character, and purpose (1Jn 5:14-15). But **if you ask Me** (v. 14) authorizes prayers also made to the Son of God (cf. Ac 7:59; 2Co 12:8). The promise **I will do it** must be harmonized with other conditions for prayer (e.g., Ps 66:18; Jms 4:3; 1Pt 3:7; 1Jn 5:14-15).

14:15-17. To **keep Jesus' commandments** is a test of devotion to Him. The coming of **another Helper** (*parakletos*; v. 16), i.e., the Spirit at Pentecost, implies that Jesus Himself is a *parakletos*. This Greek word is used five times in the NT, all by John (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1Jn 2:1). The various functions of the *parakletos* in these contexts make it difficult to translate with a single term. The word often means "one who helps, by consoling, encouraging, or mediating on behalf of" another (L&N, 1:141). Most translations capture something of its meaning (cf. "Helper," ESV, NKJV; "Counselor" NIV, HCSB; "Advocate," NET, NRSV; "Companion," CEB; though in its use in 1Jn 2:1 it means "advocate" in a legal sense). The Spirit is **with** the believer **forever**, securing his salvation. Just as Christ embodies the truth (14:6), the Spirit is **the Spirit** who promotes and spreads **truth**. Like Christ (1:10-11), **the world**

cannot receive the Spirit either. By saying that the Spirit **abides with you**, Jesus depicted the relationship of the Spirit in the OT with OT saints, i.e., the Spirit was "with" them. But at that time the Spirit did not reside within them as He does following Pentecost (when He **will be in** them).

14:18-19. Christ would **not leave** His disciples permanently **as orphans**, i.e., helpless. He promised to **come** to them during the 40 days after His resurrection (16:16-24), and later through the coming Holy Spirit. After His death, **the world** would **no longer see** Christ (v. 19), but the Eleven, and other disciples, would. The resurrection appearances were only to believers (cf. 1Co 15:6). His resurrection (**because I live**) is the guarantee of our resurrection (**you will live also**).

14:20-21. The words **you in Me, and I in you** speak of the believer's ongoing intimacy with Christ, maintained by obedience (v. 21; cf. 15:1-11). Verse 21 returns to the love-theme of v. 15 and connects it to the mutual indwelling of Jesus and the believer in v. 20. It is not merely the one who **has** the **commandments**, but the one who also **keeps them** who is identified as **the one who loves Me** (cf. v. 15). "The one who loves Me" is broader than just the Eleven. Jesus promised to **disclose** more and more of His heart to each believer who loves Him by his obedience (see the comment on 2:23).

14:22-23. This is the only time that **Judas** (but **not** the betrayer, Judas **Isca**riot), one of the Twelve, speaks in the Gospels. He may be Thaddaeus of the Synoptics (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18). Judas asked why the Lord was **going to disclose** Himself to the disciples **and not to the world**. Judas thought of the Messiah setting up His earthly kingdom publicly. To Judas's question, Jesus restated His previous teaching (v. 23) that the full experience of His and His Father's love required obedience to His word. Then the Son and the Father would **make** their **abode** (their home) in the obedient follower. Jesus' self-disclosure would come through the gift of the Spirit and the abiding or friendship relationship explained further in chap. 15.

14:24. The Lord then declared the reverse of v. 23: **He who does not love Me does not keep My words**. The reference to Jesus' "words" (pl.) recalls His commandments (v. 21), and is now identified as **the word** [sg.] **which you hear**. One cannot claim obedience to Christ's word without keeping all of His individual commands and teachings, especially the instructions to love one another (13:34, 35).

14:25-26. These things I have spoken to you (14:25; 15:11; 16:1, 4, 25, 33) refers to the teachings Jesus gave while **abiding with** the apostles in the upper room. Jesus also promised (v. 26) that **the Holy Spirit would teach** the apostles (including Paul) **all things** (the rest of the NT). “Helper” (Gk. masculine) and “He” (Gk. masculine) suggest the Spirit is a person. The Spirit would guide the memory (**bring to your remembrance all that I said**) of the apostles as they wrote down the teachings of Christ (cf. 2:17-22; 12:16; 20:9). “I have spoken to you” and “bring to remembrance all that I said” limit the specific promise of this verse to the apostles. The result is the completeness and inerrancy of the NT record of Jesus.

14:27-28. Jesus pledged to give the disciples His **peace**, far superior to the deficient and fleeting peace the **world gives**. The disciples are again informed of the Lord’s departure and promised return (v. 28). The disciples should **have rejoiced because** Jesus was going **to the Father**, instead of selfishly desiring that He stay. In their essence and nature, Christ and the Father are equal (10:30) while also being distinct Persons. But in Christ’s incarnation and humanity, **the Father is greater than** the Son in function, not in possessing a superior essence. Both the Father and the Son are equally divine, though distinct in their personhood. But **the Father is greater than** the Son from the standpoint that Jesus submitted to and obeyed the Father, and came to do His will. In this Christ submitted fully to Him.

14:29-31. Christ had predicted His death and resurrection (13:31-32) **so that when it happened**, the disciples would **believe**. Fulfilled prophecy builds faith. Satan, **the ruler of the world**, holds control over the minds and hearts of the unbelievers (8:44; cf. Lk 4:6; Eph 2:2; 6:11-12; 1Jn 5:19). Although believers have divine protection (Jn 17:15), they are tempted by Satan (2Co 2:11; Eph 4:7; 1Pt 5:8). But the Devil was defeated at the cross and will ultimately be destroyed (see the comment on 12:31). Jesus said he was soon **coming** (cf. 12:31; 16:11), i.e., in Judas (cf. 13:27), in the garden to betray Him. As the sinless Messiah (8:46; Heb 4:15; 1Jn 3:5), Jesus could declare **he [Satan] has nothing in Me** (i.e., no sin through which to gain control). To the end that **the world may know that** Christ loves **the Father**, He did all things **exactly as the Father commanded** Him, including the crucifixion and all the events leading to it. With the command **let us go from here**, the disciples left the upper room. At 18:1, they would leave the city.

D. Abiding in the Vine (15:1-17)

15:1-2. Israel was God’s unfaithful vine (Is 5:1-7; Ezk 17:5-10; Mt 21:33-41). But Jesus is the **true** and faithful **vine** and the **Father is the vine-dresser**. See “Jesus’ Seven ‘I Am’ Claims” at 6:35. Two views predominate the identification of the various elements of the extended metaphor.

First, both the fruitless branch and the fruitful branch refer to true believers. This view is supported by the phrase **every branch in Me**, which refers to genuine believers. Elsewhere in the NT, nonbelievers are never said to be “in Me (Christ)” in any sense of the term. “In Me” in John denotes ongoing fellowship and is not identical with “in Christ” in Paul’s epistles. The verb translated **takes away** can just as easily be translated “lifts up,” denoting the Vinedresser’s action in stimulating growth in a fruitless branch (God helping a fruitless believer to produce fruit). In the viticulture of Israel, late fall was the season for removing dead branches (v. 6). The springtime (the time of the upper room message and Jesus’ death) was the season to “lift up” fruitless branches from the ground to encourage productivity. The fruitful branch (i.e., a fruitful believer) receives pruning (divine discipline) so that it might be even more fruitful.

A second approach understands the metaphors this way. There are two different kinds of branches here, one that is fruitless, is taken away (*airo* is used frequently with this sense in John’s gospel; cf. 2:16; 11:39, 41; 17:5; 20:1, 2, 13, 15), is thrown away, dries up, and is burned (v. 6). The fruitless branch represents one who, like Judas, is associated with Jesus (**in Me**), but who had no true connection with Him and thus no fruit. The other category is one that bears fruit, receives pruning, abides, and bears more fruit (vv. 2, 4-5), and represents the true believer. This view is supported by the common meaning of *airo*, and the contrast between the two kinds of branches. Under the first view, the two branches receive the same treatment, namely nurturing so that fruitfulness might result. But Jesus seems to intend a contrast between them, punctuated by the discarding and burning of the fruitless branch. Finally, in v. 16, Jesus chose the disciples to bear fruit, suggesting that if there is no fruit, then they were not chosen (in a salvific, elective sense) by Him, and thus would face judgment (burning).

The majority of scholars favor the second view, but both views share the common concern of the need to maintain intimacy with Christ (to

abide in Him) and to produce fruit in keeping with that relationship.

15:3-5. “Clean” (*katharos*) is a related Greek word to “prune” (*kathairo*) in v. 2. **Because of the word which Jesus had spoken to them** that night, the eleven disciples were “cleansed” or “pruned” for sacrificial service (13:12-17). **Abide in Me** (v. 4) sets the necessary condition for fruit-bearing and the vital union in which Christ lives dynamically in the believer (cf. Eph 3:17). Just as a **branch cannot bear fruit in and of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can** believers bear fruit **unless they abide in** (remain intimate with) Christ.

15:5-6. Christ is **the vine**, the life source, and believers **are the branches**, the place where fruit is produced. Before Christ abides in the believer, the believer must **abide in** Christ. Followers of Jesus are not commanded to bear fruit but to abide. The believer who does not abide is **thrown away as a branch and dries up** (v. 6). According to the first view mentioned above under 15:1-2, the passage is parabolic, involving symbolism (cf. “as a branch”). So **fire** and **burned** are not references to hell. They symbolize (1) the uselessness of these branches (Mt 5:13); and/or (2) divine discipline now and reproof at the future evaluation of believers (1Co 3:13-15; 1Jn 2:28). According to the second view, the fruitless branches represent unbelievers who never abided in Christ, never produced fruit, and who are taken away from the vine and burned (i.e., will face God’s eternal judgment in hell). But this second view is unlikely since in the analogy, there is no such thing as a branch that has never been joined to the vine. “Branches” that have never had life in the vine are non-existent and can never be “burned.”

15:7-8. **If . . . My words abide in you** adds another qualification for abiding: the need to internalize Christ’s teachings (cf. Col 3:16). Then believers can **ask whatever they wish**, and their prayer is answered because they will be praying according to God’s will. Some believers lack fruit (vv. 2, 6) and are not “disciples” in the fullest sense (see comment on 8:31). When believers **bear much fruit** (v. 8), they **prove** to others that they are His **disciples**. Love is this proof (13:34-35; 15:12-13, 17).

15:9. **Just as the Father has loved Me** remarkably parallels the Son’s love for the disciples with the Father’s love for the Son. “Abiding in Me” is now defined as abiding **in My love** (cf. Jd 21; Rv 2:4). “Abiding” is a love relationship with Jesus.

15:10-11. The construction of this particular conditional statement (a third class condition using *ean*, “if,” plus an aorist subjunctive verb, “keep”) projects the action as hypothetical, as something to consider, without actually making a statement about the reality or degree of likelihood of its fulfillment. The idea is, “When people keep my commandments, they abide in My love.” **My commandments** refers to the new teachings of Christ in the NT, especially the command to love sacrificially (cf. Mt 5:21-48; see comment on 13:34). Believers cannot have Christ abiding in them without having His joy abiding in them as well (v. 11). As they abide, their **joy may be made full**. But as abiding can be lost, so can joy.

15:12-13. The command to love requires a supernatural component to fulfill, requires faith, and is more a choice than an emotion (for a definition of “love,” see the comments on 1Co 13:1-3). The priority for believers is to **love one another** first, since every believer is part of the family of God. Love may involve reproof (Gl 6:1-2). No love will ever be **greater** than when someone **lay[s] down his life for his friends**. Jesus was applying this principle foremost to His own death, but secondarily to all His followers (cf. 1Jn 3:16).

15:14-15. **You are My friends** parallels abiding in Christ since both result in intimacy (friendship). This friendship is conditioned on obedience as is demonstrated in the words **if you do what I command you**. Here the conditional statement indicates that if one is obedient to Jesus’ commands, it is correct to infer that such a person is Jesus’ friend. James informed us that Abraham’s works (not merely his faith), flowing out of his righteous standing before God by faith, made him a friend of God (Jms 2:22-23). **No longer** marks a dispensational change from the OT where the believer was treated like a servant (cf. Gl 4:1-5). New revelation (**all things that I have heard from My Father**) disclosed in Christ’s farewell teachings **have** now been **made known** to His disciples. See comments on 2:23 and 14:21.

15:16-17. **I chose you** does refer both to election to salvation for the eleven disciples and to Jesus’ choice of them to be His apostles (Lk 6:13; Ac 1:2) and carry out the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20). They were **appointed to go and bear fruit**—a love (cf. v. 17) that brings others to Christ (cf. Ac 2:41-47; 4:32-35). This **fruit would remain** because salvation is a permanent gift. **Whatever you ask** may specify asking for all that is necessary to win people to Christ. For **ask of the Father in my name**, see the comment on 14:13.

E. Ministering in the World (15:18–16:33)

15:18-19. Since the disciples are chosen to “go and bear fruit” (v. 17) in the world, they must be warned of the opposition they will face. The **world**, the evil spiritual order controlled by Satan (12:31; 14:30; 16:11), **hates** believers because they are identified with Jesus and **it has hated Him before it hated** any disciple of Christ. In saying this, Jesus called all believers to persecution with Him. The Eleven (and by application, all believers) have been chosen **out of the world** for a mission as Christ’s apostles (v. 16; 6:70; 13:18; Lk 16:13; Ac 1:2, 24). The world’s hatred is to be expected.

15:20-21. Jesus called the apostles to **remember the word** He had **said** to them about a **slave** not being **greater than his master** (13:16). The disciple will be treated like his master. Negatively, **if they persecuted the Master, they will also persecute** the disciple. Positively, **if they kept the master’s word**, they will keep the disciple’s word **also**, since the disciple will teach exactly what his master taught. Rejection of Christ’s followers (v. 21) reveals that such people **do not know the One who sent** the Messiah.

15:22-23. If the Messiah **had not come** to the Jewish people and **spoken to them**, revealing the nature of God, they could have continued unchallenged to claim their faith in God. But with the appearance of Jesus, it became evident that they were guilty of the sin of rejecting God because they rejected Jesus. **They now had no excuse for their sin** of rejecting their Messiah. **He who rejects and therefore hates Jesus** (v. 23) unconsciously rejects and **hates God the Father also**.

15:24-25. If Jesus **had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin**. The latter phrase means the Jewish people would not have the specific sin of rejecting their Messiah. Because of Jesus’ words (v. 22) and **works**, the nation’s abandonment of their Messiah was inexcusable. The miracles of Jesus, **which no one else did**, were unmatched by even the prophets (cf. 7:31; 9:32). For **written in their Law** as the whole OT, see comment on 10:34. Jesus cited Ps 69 as messianically fulfilled (cf. 2:17). David, who is hated for no sin of his own, represents the sinless Messiah who is hated **WITHOUT A CAUSE**.

15:26-27. As the disciples went into the world to testify, the world would respond with hatred, not friendship (vv. 18-25). Jesus was now promising the assistance of the Spirit in their testimony. For **Helper**, see comment on 14:16. Jesus said

that **He will send the Spirit from the Father**. The **Spirit of truth** (see comment on 14:17) is essential for witness. Jesus promised the Eleven (v. 27), **you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning**. A condition for apostolic witness was having been with Jesus from the time when John the Baptist was still free and active in his ministry, a time that overlapped with Jesus briefly (Ac 1:21-22). In Acts, Christ continued His ministry through the presence of the Spirit’s testimony in the Church.

16:1. **These things I have spoken to you** (see comment on 14:25) picks up the forewarnings about persecution (15:18-21). Without Christ’s warnings, the disciples may not have been **kept from stumbling** (*skandalizo*, a failure of faith causing one to discontinue being a disciple; cf. 6:61).

16:2-3. Two kinds of persecution are predicted: being expelled **from the synagogue** (cf. 9:22; 12:42) and being martyred. Perpetrators will reach the height of deception when they kill Christ’s disciples and **think that they are offering service to God** (cf. Ac 7:58-60). Such persecutions (**These things**, v. 3) arise from an ignorance of both the **Father** and the Son.

16:4-5. The coming time of persecution (v. 2) is now called **their** [the persecutors’] **hour**. The term implies the illusion of victory the persecutors will have over the disciples and is set in irony to Jesus’ “hour” (see comments on 2:4 and 4:21), the ultimate victory of the cross. **At the beginning** of His ministry, the Lord was personally with His disciples and received the brunt of maltreatment. After His death and resurrection, Jesus was **going to the Father** (v. 5) and would no longer be on earth to help. **None of you asks Me** forms an apparent contradiction with 13:36 and 14:5, but there the questions of Peter and Thomas were superficial and not pursued.

16:6-7. **Sorrow had filled the heart** of Jesus’ disciples over His departure. But His departure would be to their **advantage** (v. 7). The advantage may include: (1) without His departure, there is no death of Christ to cover sin; (2) the omnipresent ministry of the Spirit will be greater than the bodily presence of Christ; or (3) Christ’s departure will usher in the ministries of the Spirit (worldwide mission, baptism of the Spirit, etc.) and result in a fully spiritual experience (cf. 7:37-39).

16:8-11. **When the Spirit comes** He will reside in believers. His ministry to **convict** [expose and prove wrong] **the world** will be mediated

through them (Mt 5:13-14) and the NT Scriptures. The Spirit proves the world wrong concerning: (1) **sin** (v. 9). The Spirit will expose the world's guilt both for putting Jesus to death and for sin in general. This is necessary **because they do not believe in Me**. Unbelief is the primary sin of the world, and leads to all other sin; (2) **righteousness** (v. 10). The death and resurrection of Christ (**because I go to the Father**) proves the Savior's righteousness and establishes the world's false "religious" righteousness; (3) **judgment** (v. 11). On the cross **the ruler of this world has been judged** (see comment on 12:31). If the world's ruler has been judged, the world is also implicated in judgment.

16:12-13. Although Jesus desired to say **many more things** to the disciples, He refrained from revealing truths they could not **bear** or understand before the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is subordinate to the Son as the Son is to the Father. So the Spirit **will not speak on His own initiative**. He speaks only what **He hears** from Christ (v. 13). The Spirit **will disclose** to the apostles **what is to come**. This could refer to prophecy (e.g., Christ reveals the book of Revelation; Rv 1:1) or to all NT truth.

16:14-15. The Spirit **will** always **glorify** the Son, not Himself. Ministries that overemphasize the Spirit more than Christ are inappropriate. The Spirit will also **take** the truth that belongs to Jesus and **disclose it to** the disciples. The three persons of the Trinity share truth equally. So, **all things that the Father has** belong to Christ (v. 15), and the Spirit **takes** from Christ and imparts truth to us through the apostles' writings (cf. 17:10).

16:16. In vv. 7-15, He taught that the Spirit would be their Advocate during His absence. Now in vv. 16-24, Jesus returned to the subject of the sorrow the disciples would have when He was gone (vv. 5-6). It was within hours (**a little while**; 13:33; 14:19) that Christ would die and the apostles would **no longer see** Him. Then **again a little while**, and they would **see** Jesus—a reference to the resurrection, not the second coming.

16:17-18. **Some of His disciples** were confused about His remark (v. 16) that in **a little while** they would **not see** Him, but then **again a little while** they would see Him. They were also puzzled about His earlier statement that He was soon to **go to the Father** (v. 10; cf. 14:2-3, 28). **So they were saying** (v. 18) suggests a private discussion ensued and that Jesus' teachings on that night were not an uninterrupted sermon.

16:19-20. **Jesus knew** hints at the Lord's supernatural knowledge (2:24-25; 13:1, 11; 19:28) as is implied in the rhetorical question that follows, **Are you deliberating together about this . . . ?** In v. 20, Jesus answered His own question. **Truly, truly** (see comment on 1:51) introduced a seriousness in Jesus' announcement. In drastic contrast to the disciples' coming sorrow over Jesus' upcoming crucifixion (v. 20), the **world will rejoice** with a sinful joy. This corrupt joy reveals the depravity of the human heart. But the **grief** of the Eleven will be short-lived and **will be turned into** long-lasting **joy** by the resurrection.

16:21-22. A short parable that the Lord gave illustrated the emotional changes that would come to the disciples. The OT pictured the age that leads to the Messiah (both first and second coming) as the pain of a **woman who is in labor**. The words **her hour has come** parallel Jesus' statements about His "hour" (2:4; 13:1). Like a woman's **joy** when her **child has been born**, the disciples' **heart[s] will rejoice** at Messiah's resurrection (v. 22). That **no one will take your joy away** points to the indisputable evidence that will confirm the Lord's resurrection.

16:23-24. **In that day you will not question Me** looks to the time after the resurrection when Jesus' death will be understood. For **ask the Father for anything in My name**, see the comment on 14:13. **Until now** (v. 24) designates the NT era when believers pray in Jesus' name. Prayer is not restricted to praise or thanksgiving. Jesus repeatedly taught that believers can **ask** and they will **receive** (cf. Mt 7:7-8). Answered prayer results in **joy being made full**.

16:25-28. Coherent prayers could not be offered in Jesus' name (v. 24) if the disciples lacked understanding. Jesus had been speaking in **figurative language** (e.g., the woman in labor, v. 22; the vine and branches, 15:1-8). However, after the resurrection (**an hour is coming**), He would **tell them plainly of the Father** (cf. Lk 24:27; Ac 1:3). For the sixth time that evening (v. 26), Jesus taught the disciples to **ask in My name** (Jn 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26; see the comment on 14:13). Jesus did not need to **request of the Father on the disciples' behalf**. The Father was already well disposed toward them (v. 26; **the Father Himself loves you**). God loves everyone (3:16). But here the Father's love is dependent on the believer's love for Him (**because you have loved Me**). This expresses the deeper intimacy that the Father has with obedient believers (see comment on

14:21-22). Just as our love for our enemies (Mt 5:44) will differ from our love for an obedient child, so the Father has a special love for the believer. Jesus summarized His entire mission (v. 28) by describing His divine origin (**I came forth from the Father**), His incarnation (**and have come into the world**), His death and resurrection (**I am leaving the world again**), and His ascension (**and going to the Father**).

16:29-30. Jesus spoke of a future day when His words would become clear (v. 25). How little the disciples truly understood will be exposed in the coming hours when they would all fall away (v. 31; Mk 14:27, 50). Yet they claimed, **Lo** [behold, look], **now you are speaking plainly . . . Now we know . . . we believe that You came from God** (v. 30). The disciples thought the time for clear understanding had just begun, and they confessed their “confident” faith in Jesus’ heavenly origin. But their faith was soon to be shaken. Jesus needed to confront their overconfidence.

16:31-33. Christ recognized the disciples’ self-assurance in His question **Do you now believe?** Instead of their acting in faith (v. 32), He predicted that they would all **be scattered** in fear (cf. Zch 13:7; Mt 26:31) and would **leave Him alone** to be arrested and crucified without human support. Only the **Father** would be **with Him**. Jesus’ words that evening (**in Me you may have peace**, v. 33) would lead the disciples to peace when they returned to abiding in Him (Jn 15:1-11). This peace will be possible despite future **tribulation**. Christ’s promise **I have overcome the world** will lead the disciples to **take courage**. The final words of Jesus to His disciples end on a note of victory (cf. Rm 8:37-38; 1Co 15:54-57).

F. Praying for All Believers (17:1-26)

The verses of chap. 17 comprise the longest prayer of Jesus in Scripture, sometimes called Christ’s High Priestly Prayer. Jesus first prayed for Himself (vv. 1-5), then for his disciples (vv. 6-19), and last for all believers (vv. 20-26).

17:1-3. Jesus began His prayer by **lifting up His eyes to heaven**, a common Jewish custom suggesting His confidence in the Father (cf. 11:41; Mk 7:34). His first request was for the Father to **glorify His Son** (see comment on 13:31). This was not self-seeking since its purpose was **that the Son may glorify the Father** in return. Jesus received delegated **authority over** all people (v. 2), including authority to **give eternal life** and to judge (5:27). For **all whom You have given Him**, see vv. 6, 9, 24 and comments on 6:37, 39. **Eternal**

life is defined as coming (by faith) to **know** personally both **the only true God, and Jesus Christ**.

17:4-5. Jesus **glorified** God in that He **accomplished the work** (the earthly ministry) God gave Him **to do**. The verb “glorify” in these verses means “to manifest the splendid greatness of another,” in this case God and Christ. This work was finalized on the cross when Jesus cried, “It is finished” (19:30). The request for the Father to glorify the Son (v. 1) is repeated in v. 5. Since this glory will be equal to **the glory** that Jesus **had with God before the world was created** (cf. 1:1-3), Jesus’ resurrection and ascension (exaltation) are included in the “work.” “Glory” and “glorify” in vv. 1-5 carry slightly different nuances. (1) The Son is to be glorified in His “hour,” i.e., the cross and resurrection (v. 1). (2) The cross/resurrection would glorify the Father in that it would complete the Son’s authority to give eternal life to all who believe (v. 2). (3) The Son has glorified the Father on earth by His works (v. 4). (4) The Son will be glorified in heaven together with the Father in the ascension and eternity future (v. 17:5a). (5) The future glory of the Son will equal the glory He had with the Father in eternity past (17:5b).

17:6-8. To manifest God’s **name** means to reveal His character and attributes. The disciples (and all believers) are given as a gift from the Father to the Son (cf. v. 2) and spiritually taken **out of the world**. This expresses the divine side of salvation. The disciples also responded by faith (**they have kept Your word**), the human side. Their faith included the understanding that **everything** the Father had **given** the Son (v. 7) originally belonged to the Father. Jesus’ additional words underscored the disciples’ faith (v. 8): **they received . . . and truly understood . . . and they believed**.

17:9-11. In vv. 9-11, Jesus prayed for His disciples. **I ask on their behalf** points primarily to the Eleven (cf. vv. 6, 8). What belonged to the Father is now in the omnipotent care of the Son (**those whom You have given Me**; cf. v. 2). The shared divine status of the Father and the Son is conveyed in the statement **all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine** (v. 10). After Jesus’ departure, the unity of the apostles would be under attack. So Jesus prayed, **keep them in Your name** (v. 11). A person’s name represented his character. For the Father to “keep” the apostles in His name meant that He would maintain among them the whole truth His Son had revealed about the Father (cf.

v. 6). The outcome would be a complete unity among the Eleven (**that they may be one**). This unity among the apostles is modeled on the impeccable unity of the Father and the Son (**even as We are**), and evidences itself in the harmony of NT Scriptures.

17:12-13. Your name which You have given Me is another of Christ's astounding claims. The name given to Jesus is "I AM" (see comment on 8:24, 58). By identifying Himself as "I AM," Jesus revealed Himself with the Father's own name. Like the term "sons of light" (12:36), **son of perdition** means "belonging to" destruction, not predestined to hell. **That the Scripture would be fulfilled** alludes to Ps 41:9 (cf. Jn 13:18). Judas fulfilled at least three OT prophecies (Ps 69:25; 109:8; cf. Ac 1:20). In v. 12, Jesus had spoken of the time He "was with them" on earth. **But now I come to You** (v. 13) is set in contrast to v. 12. The statement is not a reference to Jesus' coming to the Father in prayer but to His future ascension (vv. 11, 12).

17:14-16. The communication to the disciples is now complete (**I have given them Your word**). Jesus reminded the Father that **the world has hated** His disciples because of their identity with their Savior. But instead of asking the Father to **take them out of the world** (v. 15), Christ asked Him to **keep them from the evil one** (vv. 11, 15). This phrase could be translated, "keep them from evil." But Johannine usage strongly favors "evil one," i.e., Satan (1Jn 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18, 19). Paul also mentioned this protection (1Co 10:13; 2Co 12:9). Verse 16 repeats v. 14b, showing that our new relationship to Christ is the foundation for His request for our protection. For more on v. 15a and its implications for Rv 3:10, see the comment on Rv 3:10.

17:17. Sanctify means to "set apart" for God's use which, according to v. 18, is the mission to the world. All sin involves being deceived in some regard. Sanctification or growth in holiness (Rm 6:22; 1Th 4:3) includes the process of replacing lies with truth. God's **word** is the source of this **truth**. Scripture is not just "true," as if there were another standard to which the Bible rightly conforms. All Scripture is "God-breathed" (see comment on 2Tm 3:16) and therefore is the source of truth, just as Jesus is truth (14:6).

17:18-19. Sanctification (v. 17) is not isolation from but mission to the world. Just as the Father **sent** Christ **into the world**, so too Christ has sent His disciples **into the world** (cf. 15:6; Mt 28:18-20). Jesus prayed, **For their sakes I sanctify**

Myself, signifying how He has set apart Himself to the Father's will (i.e., to go to the cross in fulfillment of Jesus' mission). There is nothing commanded of the Christian, even being **sanctified in truth**, that Christ has not first modeled.

17:20-21. Christ prayed for **those also who would believe in Him through** the disciples' **word**—their preaching and writing of Scripture. His prayer was specifically for the unity of all believers (**that they may all be one**; v. 21; cf. v. 11). The prayer is answered foremost through Spirit baptism in which every believer is placed into the one body of Christ (cf. 10:16; 1Co 12:13; Rm 12:5; Gl 3:28; Eph 4:4). Elsewhere believers are commanded to live out this integral unity (13:34-35; Rm 12:16; 1Co 1:10).

17:22-23. Jesus prayed for a unity parallel to that between the Father and the Son (**that they may be one, just as We are one**). The full answer to Jesus' prayer will not come until heaven, when all believers are **perfected in unity** (v. 23). But to maintain that His prayer has not been answered is to suggest that He has failed in His mission or that His prayer was not in accordance with the Father's sovereign will. It is better to argue that there is fundamental unity among all believers in the key points of the Christian faith (for example, the authority of Scripture; salvation by grace through faith; the deity of Christ; the trinity of God; the resurrection of Christ, and the second coming), while the details are clearly disputed. The problem arises, however, when believers become divisive about the secondary issues. In order to reach **the world**, Christians are to practice their positional unity in Christ (see comments on vv. 11, 21). There is no more shocking truth about believers than that God has **loved them even as** He has **loved** His own Son.

17:24. For the fifth time, Jesus addressed God as **Father**. For **they . . . whom You have given Me** (cf. v. 2). As a direct result of Jesus' prayer, every believer will **be with** Christ in heaven **where** He will be (cf. 14:2-3).

17:25-26. Despite knowing the unjust treatment ahead, Jesus called God loving (v. 24) and **righteous**. This came about only because Jesus had **known** the Father. That Jesus **will make** [future tense] the Father **known** (v. 26) points to the role of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost (14:26; 16:13-14). The result will be that love will dominate the lives of the disciples (**the love with which You loved Me may be in them**) and Christ will abide **in them** (cf. 15:1-11).