

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN14_Jesus Continues His Farewell Address)

John 14

Introduction

As we observed in the previous lesson, chapter 14 is set in a section of the Gospel that is primarily focused upon our Lord's farewell address to His disciples. The first stage of the farewell address (13:31-14:31) revolves around Jesus' instruction to His disciples that is interrupted on four occasions by questions from different disciples: Peter (13:36); Thomas (14:5); Philip (14:8); and Judas – not the betrayer (14:22). After replying to each question, Jesus reverts to His original trend of thought. There is a brief interlude in the conversation/instruction at the end of John 14 as Jesus and His disciples leave the place where they had supper together.

As Jesus continues to instruct the disciples about His upcoming departure, one can sense their increasing concern. However, Jesus commands them to not be troubled, but to trust in Him based upon all that He had taught them and revealed about Himself.

Jesus will also give them advance notice in this chapter of other spiritual assets that will be made available to them (e.g. the Holy Spirit – vv. 15-18, 26). This promise will serve to provide hope and a vision for the disciples as they continue their lives without Jesus physically present with them. Because of the similarities between the nature of these spiritual assets promised by Jesus in the Church Age and the spiritual assets available to believers in Israel's last days and in the Messianic kingdom (e.g. the Holy Spirit – Joel 2:28-32), many have concluded that Jesus was anticipating the establishment of the Church as a new dispensation distinct from Israel. We will briefly deal with this issue in this lesson.

Jesus Encourages His Disciples

Jesus has just announced Judas' betrayal (13:21), His imminent departure (13:33), and Peter's denial (13:38). All of this would have been very disturbing to Jesus' disciples and Jesus knew it. Jesus encourages His disciples to not allow their hearts to be troubled (*tarasso*). This same word has been used of Jesus three times in John's Gospel (11:33; 12:27; 13:21).

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was **troubled**. (Jn 11:33)

Now My soul is **troubled**, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour. (Jn 12:27)

When Jesus had said these things, He was **troubled** in spirit, and testified and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' (Jn 13:21)

In chapter 14, Jesus is encouraging His disciples to apply the faith-rest principle to their situation and He provides them principles and truths upon which they can reflect to stabilize their souls. In verse 1, Jesus equates Himself to God – a well-demonstrated fact in Jesus' ministry and a fact that should cause them to reflect upon the essence of God in the present troubling situation. If they would do so, they would realize that God was still sovereign even though they might not comprehend all of God's purpose in Jesus' death at the time. God's plan had not failed.

In verse 2, the word translated "mansions" (*monai*) in many versions is actually "dwelling places." Jesus predicts His departure in verse 2 and His return in verse 3 – "I will come again."

The allegorical interpretation – Some believe that while Jesus does leave to prepare an eternal dwelling for His disciples, there is a more figurative meaning associated with His return. Rather than viewing this passage as a reference to a literal return, in this figurative usage, the dwelling places would be a reference to the Father’s house and a way of affirming relationship. Using this allegorical method would mean that the “Father’s house” would be the corporate body of believers. The “mansions” or “dwelling places” would be the soul and spirit of each individual believer. Accordingly, the return (“I will come again and receive you to Myself” – v. 3) would be the sending of the Holy Spirit – not Jesus’ literal return. Such figurative or allegorical language is not without any precedence in John (Jn 2:19-22 cf. 8:35)

Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. (Jn 2:19-22)

And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. (Jn 8:35-36)

If this is the sense, then Jesus is saying that His departure allows for a relationship with Him and with the Father. Jesus’ coming to receive them to Himself would be the coming that takes place through the Spirit so that they are incorporated into the family of God. This second view does at least fit contextually, since a significant portion of the chapter is devoted to the coming Holy Spirit. Furthermore, a double entendre in meaning would not be beyond John as we have seen on previous occasions.

According to the allegorical interpretation of this passage, John was using this opportunity to see the literal event (Jesus’ departure) to point to the spiritual truth (the coming of the Holy Spirit).¹ Paul argues that the Spirit is a down-payment of what is to come (Eph 1:13-14). It is obvious that this view will be that of many of an amillennial persuasion.

The traditional dispensationalist interpretation – In verse 3, Jesus uses the phrase – “receive you to Myself.” We’ve just seen one possible figurative interpretation of this passage that includes the meaning of this phrase. However, traditional dispensationalists have understood this prediction to be one of the anticipatory Church Age truths taught by Jesus to His disciples. As such, it would be a reference to the Rapture as taught by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 rather than a reference to the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Traditional dispensationalists therefore do not connect Jesus’ teaching regarding His return in verse 3 with Jesus’ teaching about the Holy Spirit’s ministry to the disciples in verses 15-18 and 25-26.

My preferred interpretation – I prefer to see this passage as a reference to kingdom truths associated with Jesus’ 2nd Advent. Accordingly, this would be a reference to the 2nd Advent of Jesus and His receiving of the disciples into that kingdom. The real question concerns Jesus’ meaning by the words – “to Myself.” Does this refer to His receiving them into the kingdom or something else more literal in nature?

As illustrated above, Jesus had on occasion used figurative language. Certainly Jesus could have been referring to the kingdom by a figurative use of the words – “to Myself.” However, if this is to be taken literally in the sense that the disciples are face-to-face with Jesus in heaven, then we must associate the phrase “receive you to Myself” with the 2nd Advent of Jesus.

¹ See Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 499.

Conjecture regarding the specifics – A reasonable conjecture would be that Jesus' departure results in the completion of the preparation of the New Jerusalem that will be suspended above the earth (specifically Jerusalem) during the Messianic kingdom.² Jesus will rule from the New Jerusalem with resurrected saints of all dispensations (Matt 19:28; Lu 19:12-27 cf. 1 Co 6:1-3).³ Had the Church Age not been intercalated, the disciples (those who endured to the end of the Tribulation – Matt 24:13) would have been allowed access to the New Jerusalem (which is tantamount to heaven) in which they would dwell. Only those who have received their resurrection bodies can dwell in the New Jerusalem (heaven); therefore, it is possible that the disciples would have received their resurrection bodies in similar fashion as the translation of such OT characters as Enoch and Elijah.

Of course, the means by which they are allowed access to Jesus ("to Myself" – v. 3) is subject to speculation; however, we do know several things: 1) a reference to the Rapture of the Church is certainly out of context; 2) Jesus' ministry focus in terms of a kingdom was consistent with OT prophecy about an earthly kingdom; 3) the disciples who were Jesus' apostles will provide the foundation for the New Jerusalem (Re 21:14). Whatever interpretation of this passage one accepts, it must be consistent with the dispensational context of Jesus' earthly ministry and not violate the clear distinction between Israel and the Church.

Jesus Responds to Thomas and Philip (14:5-11)

The way to Jesus is not a geographical route (14:5-7). Rather it is a spiritual route. This point is enforced by the context since in the following verses, Jesus emphasizes the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' response to Philip in verses 9ff includes the plural use of the personal pronoun "you." As Jesus responds to Philip's question, He addresses all of His disciples. Jesus' point in this narrative is that His entire ministry has been a revelation of the Father. Therefore, for the disciples to be asking such questions discloses that they have missed the entire point of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is no mere commissioned agent Who is sent to bring God's message like the prophets. He and the Father are distinct, but inseparable.

² See notes associated with the Prophecy series lesson – "*Proph9A_Review Questions Related to the Eschatological Covenants.*" The following conclusion is extracted from those notes – "Since we now know on the basis of Revelation 20:4 that the Messianic Kingdom will last 1000 years, how do you explain the use of the word 'forever' in 2 Samuel 7:13, 16 and 1 Chronicles 17:12-14 in relation to the promises made to David? See also Isaiah 9:7; Jeremiah 30:9; and Ezekiel 34:23-24.

Apparently, the resurrected David will be assigned a position of co-regency over Jerusalem during the Millennium. The resurrected Jesus continues to occupy the throne in the New Jerusalem. Evidently, the New Jerusalem is positioned above the earth and above Jerusalem to be more precise. The New Jerusalem becomes a part of the 'new heavens and new earth' of the eternal state (Re 22:5 cf. 21:1-4). As one example of a prominent theologian who holds this view, see also John Walvoord on page 397 of his book *Major Bible Prophecies* regarding Ezekiel 45:22.

The reference to the prince seems to be a reference to David, who is considered a prince under Christ (34:23-24; 37:24-25). The setting, of course, is the time of the millennial kingdom after the second coming of Christ and after the resurrection of David.

³ See notes associated with the Prophecy series lesson – "*Proph8_The Davidic Covenant.*"

How could the disciples possibly do more than Jesus did (v. 12)? Jesus had raised a man from the dead, not to mention perhaps thousands of other miracles. The answer is in the extent of what the apostles would do. Jesus' work on earth was limited to Palestine. The apostles would preach everywhere and see people in the thousands respond to their message. Peter's preaching at Pentecost alone resulted in more believers than perhaps Jesus' entire earthly ministry.

Jesus' Teaching About the Coming Holy Spirit

In verses 15-18 and 25-26, Jesus announces the coming of the Holy Spirit. Traditional dispensationalists associate this prediction with the inauguration of the Church Age at Pentecost. I have come to favor a view that interprets this prediction in a manner that is related to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. We know from our study of certain OT passages that the believer in Israel's last days will experience an indwelling of the Holy Spirit akin to the Church Age believer (Ezek 36:27; 37:14; Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2:17ff; cf. Ro 8:9-11; 1 Co 3:16; 2 Co 1:21-22; Eph 1:13; 4:30; Tit 3:5-6; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13).⁴

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezek 36:27)

I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live and I will place you in your own land. (Ezek 37:14)

And it shall come to pass afterward ["in the last days" – Acts 2:17] that **I will pour out My Spirit** on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants **I will pour out My Spirit** in those days. (Joel 2:28-29 cf. Acts 2:17-18)

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But **if the Spirit** of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His **Spirit who dwells in you**. (Ro 8:9-11)

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the **Spirit of God dwells in you**? (1 Co 3:16)

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and **given us the Spirit in our hearts** as a guarantee. (2 Co 1:21-22)

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed with the Holy Spirit**

⁴ Furthermore, the concept of the Holy Spirit was not something new. The Holy Spirit had a role in the earth's restoration (Ge 1:2); He empowered men to do unusual deeds in the period of the Judges (Jud 3:10; 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14); He empowered men to prophesy (Zech 7:12); John the Baptist had prophesied that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lu 3:16; Jn 1:33); and Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). In John 14:16, Jesus uses the word "another" to refer to the "Helper" Whom Jesus is sending. This is the Greek word (allon) and means another of the same kind. See Frank E. Gabelein, general editor, *Expositor's Bible Commentary, New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989-98), electronic version.

of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:13-14)

And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit** of God, **by whom you were sealed** for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and **renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us** abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Tit 3:4-6)

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that **He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us**. (1 Jn 3:24)

By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because **He has given us of His Spirit**. (1 Jn 4:13)

Therefore, the confusion regarding whether Jesus' reference is to the Church Age or the kingdom age is certainly understandable. Nevertheless, I believe an interpretation of this passage that doesn't anticipate the intercalation of the Church is more consistent with the kingdom focus of Jesus ministry and the events following His death and resurrection (e.g. Acts 1-2).⁵

⁵ For a similar interpretation, see Charles Baker, *Understanding the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Grace Publications, 1978), 254-55.