

John 14:1-14: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 0 0] John chapter 14, verses 1 to 14. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.

Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

[1 : 0 1] The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. Discussing Jesus' farewell discourse in the Gospel of John, Frederick Dale Bruner suggests that we find a Father sermon, a Son sermon, and then a Spirit sermon.

In this part, Jesus reveals the way to the Father, the truth of the Father, and the life from the Father. The big question that hangs over John chapter 14 and the chapters that follow is that of how the disciples would relate to Jesus after he had gone, and the question of how Jesus would in some form come to his disciples after that point.

Of course, Jesus would come again to his disciples in the resurrection. He would come again to his disciples in the gift of the Spirit. He would come again to his disciples in his presence at particular moments and particular acts, and then he would come to his disciples in a climactic manner on the great day of the Lord.

[2 : 1 9] But at this point, the disciples are unsettled. They've been told that Peter is going to deny Jesus. They have some inkling, perhaps, that Judas is about to betray him. And they know that something is going to happen to Jesus in the coming day.

All of this is weighing upon them. Jesus speaks to them in that condition. Do not let your hearts be troubled. The charge that he gives here is one that contrasts with his own internal state.

He is very troubled in his spirit at this point. The charge that he gives them is one that recalls the sort of charge that Moses gave to Joshua. Joshua was called to be strong and courageous, not to lose heart, to be confident as he went forward.

Like the departing leader Moses, Jesus addresses his disciples on his departure. He is concerned for his disciples at this point, calling them to believe in God and to believe also in him.

The connection that he establishes between faith in the Father and faith in himself at this point is significant. Perhaps it reminds us of the statement we find in the story of the Exodus in chapter 14 verse 31, where the people believe in God and in Moses following the Red Sea crossing.

[3 : 2 4] Jesus goes on to talk about the fact that there are many rooms in his Father's house. Where is the Father's house? Perhaps the best way to think of it is as the temple of Jesus' own body. This is less a dwelling place than it is an indwelling place.

Jesus will take his disciples to himself. Many understand this as a reference to heaven and the eternal state. This may be part of the picture. However, I think there is a much more immediate fulfilment than this.

I don't believe that the place that Jesus is preparing is heaven per se. Rather the place is his body, the church. As we will see in the book of Revelation, the church is prepared in heaven.

But it is prepared on earth too. In order to prepare this place, Jesus must die, rise again, ascend into heaven, and give the spirit to form the church, bringing us into God's presence.

This interpretation can be strengthened by other references to God's dwelling in this chapter, especially in verse 23. Jesus and the Father will make their home with the believer, making the believer a room in the new temple that Christ is preparing.

[4 : 25] On the last day, the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven, as we see in Revelation chapter 21 verse 2. Jesus declares that he is the only way to the Father here. He is the one who comes from the bosom of the Father, and he is the one who will lead his people into the presence of the Father.

He speaks of himself as the way, the truth, and the life. He is the truth throughout the Gospel of John. Throughout, he has been describing himself as the true version of things. He is the true light coming into the world.

He is the true bread from heaven. He is the true vine. And he is not just the true this or that or the other. He is the truth. He is also the one who has life in himself.

He is the source of eternal life. He is unique in all of these aspects. There is no other person like him, and there is no other way to the Father save them through him. He is the image of the Father. He is the only begotten Son. He declares that if you have seen him, you have seen the Father. The Father is known in Jesus. Jesus does the Father's work. He acts with the Father's authority.

[5 : 27] He speaks the Father's words. And the Father is in him. If you want to know the Father, you will know the Father in Jesus. And Jesus is the way. On several occasions in the Old Testament, there are contrasts between different ways.

The way that leads to life and the way that leads to death. The way of wisdom and the way of folly. The early church came to be known as the way. Jesus is the way into God's very presence.

He is, as the author of Hebrews states, the new and living way into heaven itself. The movement that Jesus will make in his death, resurrection and ascension will blaze the trail and lead the way by which his people can have access to God, by which they can approach the Father.

Jesus declares to his disciples that whatever they ask in his name, he will do for them, for the Father's glory. They will act as representatives of Jesus' personal rule. They will act as authorized agents continuing his work.

As they do so, he promises that they will perform greater works than he has done. They are continuing his work in the power of his Spirit. It is because he goes away, ascends to God's presence, and receives the fullness of the authority of the Spirit which he gives to his church, that they will perform these greater works.

[6 : 38] As we proceed through this chapter and those that follow, we will see a lot more said about Jesus' disciples and how they should relate to him after his death, resurrection and ascension and Pentecost.

This is all preparing them for what is about to come. Jesus is speaking to them in their doubts, struggles, difficulties, fears and anxieties, giving them the confidence and the comfort that they need to go forward.

A question to consider. Working through these chapters, we can see that there is a progression in Jesus' argument, an argument that is presenting a response to a very immediate problem, the problem of the fear of the disciples and their anxiety.

However, it speaks to something far beyond this, speaking to the continuing life of the church and what it means to relate to a Saviour who has seemingly left the scene. What are some of the ways in which Jesus' teaching here, and John's framing of his gospel narrative more generally, equip us to live when Christ seems to be absent?