

# **A Verse-by-Verse Study of John Chapters 13-17**

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The original version of this paper has been slightly modified in preparing this internet version of the paper.

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## John Chapters 13-17 and the Lord's Supper

The setting for these five chapters is the *Lord's Supper*.<sup>1</sup> Most of the verses of these chapters quote things that the Lord Jesus Christ said to His apostles on that occasion.<sup>2</sup> (If you have a red-letter edition of the New Testament, you will notice that about half the verses of chapter 13 are printed in red and that almost all the verses of chapters 14-17 are printed in red.) That last meal together took place the evening before Jesus was crucified. I assume that the traditional view is correct, that that meal took place on a Thursday evening and that Jesus was crucified the next day (on Friday).

There is widespread agreement that the apostle John knew the content of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke when he wrote his Gospel. Those Gospels were written long before he wrote his Gospel (about AD 90). Back in the days when I was just beginning to study the Bible (as a born-again believer) I came across the viewpoint that one of the goals of the apostle John as he wrote his Gospel (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) was to correct some wrong impressions left by the earlier Gospels. That viewpoint had the ring of truth to me back then and further studies have further convinced me of its truthfulness.

One of the most important (apparent) examples of John's correcting wrong impressions deals with the *Lord's Supper*. The accounts of the *Lord's Supper* contained in Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; and Luke 22:7-38 communicate the idea that Jesus and the apostles were participating in the Passover meal along with the rest of the Jews at Jerusalem that included eating a lamb that had been sacrificed in the temple that afternoon. The apostle John shows that that supper took place on the evening before the Jews ate the Passover meal. The lambs for that meal were slain the afternoon after the *Lord's Supper* (see John 13:1; 18:28; and 19:14, 31, 42). It is interesting and probably significant that none of the accounts of the *Lord's Supper* mentions their partaking of a sacrificed lamb at that meal. Apparently there was no such lamb at that meal; however, the true Passover Lamb was present at that meal.

There is no doubting the fact that Jesus and His apostles were eating what could be called a Passover meal together, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke reported,<sup>3</sup> but apparently

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<sup>1</sup> The words of Jesus contained in John chapters 15-17 may have been spoken after He and the apostles left the room where they ate the *Last Supper*, as they were on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane (see John 14:31), but these words were part of that same discourse. In John 18:1 Jesus and His apostles crossed the Kidron valley to go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; and Luke 22:14 indicate that the twelve apostles were the only ones present with Jesus at the *Last Supper*. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, left that gathering early (John 13:10, 11, 21-31).

<sup>3</sup> Jesus initiated the *Lord's Supper* for Christians for this entire age at that last supper. He was the true Passover Lamb. His sacrifice was foreshadowed by all the old-covenant sacrifices, including the sacrifices of Passover and the Day of Atonement. His sacrifice made those sacrifices effective to the extent they were effective. The old covenant was ratified with sacrificial blood (cf. Ex. 24:3-8); the new covenant was ratified on the basis of the shed blood (the atoning death) of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf., e.g., Matt. 26:26-29 [quoted below]; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Forgiveness of sins was provided through the sacrificial offerings of the old covenant, but those sacrifices were not able to take away the sin of Adam with the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin, or to take away the willful, defiant sins of the Israelites with their penalties. The one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ availed to overthrow sin, spiritual death, and Satan, to provide complete

that meal was a day earlier than the Passover meal celebrated by the rest of the Jews. Jesus had a very important reason to eat that meal a day early. It would have been appropriate for Jesus and His apostles to eat the Passover meal with the rest of the Jews. It was much more appropriate, however, for Him (who was the ultimate Passover Lamb) to be sacrificed at the time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, on Friday.

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forgiveness, and to impart spiritual life (starting with the new birth) and the righteousness and holiness of God, and to take believers to eternal glory. The old-covenant sacrifices and the infinitely greater sacrifice of the Lamb of God are discussed in some detail in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

I'll quote Matt. 26:26-29, "While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take eat; this is My body.' (27) And when He had taken the cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them saying, 'Drink from it, all of you'; (28) for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." The Greek noun (*aphesis*) that was translated "forgiveness" here often means much more than forgiveness. The context here favors a translation that includes the idea of being released from our sins with the guilt and the penalties (including the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin, not to mention the penalty of hell). This important noun is discussed in some detail in Extended Note G of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. On the *Lord's Supper* see on 1 Cor. 10:16-22; 11:17-34 in my paper dated March 2000.

## JOHN CHAPTER 13

**Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father** [Compare John 13:3; 16:28. Acts 1:1-3, 9-11; 2:33 show that Jesus was not taken to heaven, to (the right hand of) God the Father, until forty days after His resurrection.], **having loved His own who were in the world** [It was necessary for “His own” to remain in the world for a while.], **He loved them to the end.** [In the margin the NASB has, “Or *to the uttermost*; or *eternally*.” The NIV has, “he now showed them the full extent of his love.” There is very widespread agreement that these words mean more than He loved His own *to the end*. The BAGD Greek Lexicon says that the prepositional phrase used here (*eis telos*) “combines...the meanings *to the end*...and *to the uttermost*...”<sup>4</sup>

A dominant theme—a glorious theme indeed—that permeates John chapters 13-17 is that the Lord Jesus Christ loves His disciples with a very special love, that God the Father loves them with that same love, and that this love also applies to those who are to become Christians in the years to come. He manifested His love for them in washing their feet, in the spectacular things He said to them in these chapters, in His dying for them on the following day (cf. John 15:13), in the things He shared with them during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, in His giving them the Holy Spirit in the glorious new-covenant fullness, etc. I’ll quote a sentence from what A. T. Robertson says here,<sup>5</sup> “The culmination of the crisis (‘his hour’) naturally drew out the fullness of Christ’s love for them as is shown in these great chapters (13-17).” (2) **During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him** [Compare Matt. 26:6-16; Mark 14:1-11 (cf. John 12:1-8); Luke 22:1-7, 21, 47, 48; John 6:70, 71; and 13:21-31.], (3) **Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands** [cf., e.g., John 3:35; 16:14, 15], **and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God** [Jesus knew that He had to go through a very difficult trial that would only end when His atoning work was finished (cf. John 19:30), but He also knew that He was committed to do the Father’s will and that He would go back to the Father having fully accomplished His mission.], (4) **got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.** (5) **Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.** [Compare Gen. 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Jud. 19:21; Luke 7:44; and 1 Tim. 5:10. The first six references mention the ancient custom of providing water for people to wash their feet when arriving at someone’s dwelling. The last reference speaks of Christian women who had “washed the saint’s feet.” In our country, with the type of shoes that we wear, the places that we walk, etc., people don’t need to wash their feet when arriving at a dwelling, but it was quite different in the ancient world. I’ll quote what Edwin A. Blum says here,<sup>6</sup> “Foot washing was needed in Palestine. The streets were dusty and people wore sandals without socks or stockings. It was a mark of honor for a host to provide a servant to wash a guest’s feet; it was a breach of hospitality not to provide for it (cf. 1 Sam. 25:41; Luke

<sup>4</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pages 289, 290.

<sup>5</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 5 (Broadman Press, 1932), page 236.

<sup>6</sup> *Bible Knowledge Commentary-Old Testament* (Victor Books, 1984), page 320.

7:40-50; 1 Tim. 5:10). Wives often washed their husbands' feet, and the children washed the parents' feet. Most people, of course, had to wash their own feet." It is clear that Jesus humbled Himself before the apostles to a shocking extent. As the account continues He explains His actions.] **(6) So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"** **(7) Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter** [more literally, "after these things"]." [Peter (and the other apostles) would have understood more after Jesus spoke to them about what He had just done in verses 12-17. Also, Jesus went on in verses 34, 35 to give them a new commandment, that they must love one another as He had loved them, and He spoke further of His and the Father's love for them and of their need to love one another with the love of God in chapters 14-17. They would have understood more yet as the events unfolded over the next few days: Jesus died for them; He was raised from the dead on the third day and appeared to them and spoke with them on numerous occasions until He was taken up after forty days. Their receiving the Spirit in the full new-covenant sense on the day of Pentecost (which Jesus spoke about in some detail in this last discourse, chapters 13-17) was needed for them to understand many things in an adequate way. Their receiving the Spirit also enabled them to begin to walk/live by the Spirit, including His enabling them to experience God's love in a much fuller sense and enabling them to walk in the love of God in a much fuller sense.] **(8) Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!"** [Peter's response here and in verse 9 demonstrates his typical impulsiveness.] **Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you** [singular "you" in the Greek, referring to Peter], **you have no part with Me."** [Peter was speaking of not washing his feet in a literal sense. Jesus' answer dealt (at least for the most part; see under verse 10) with being cleansed from sin in a spiritual sense. (On being washed/cleansed from sin, compare, for example, Psalm 51:2, 7; Ezek. 36:25-27; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; and Heb. 10:22.) Jesus also required Peter to permit Him to literally wash his feet. His disciples are never permitted to say *No Lord!* If we call Him Lord, we must submit to His will in every area (cf., e.g., Luke 6:46).] **(9) Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."** [Peter's response here was undoubtedly oriented toward a literal washing of the body.] **(10) Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet** [First I'll give a more literal translation of the Greek, "Jesus said to him, He who has bathed [I prefer "He who has been cleansed (or, washed)" (see below).] does not have a need to wash, except for the feet," which is the equivalent of the translation of the NRSV, "...does not need to wash, except for the feet" and that of the NAB, "...has no need to wash [except for the feet]." The NAB has the words "except for the feet" in brackets, which indicates that there is some doubt regarding whether these words were part of John's original manuscript.<sup>7</sup> The NRSV has a footnote which says, "Other ancient authorities lack

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<sup>7</sup> I'll quote most of what Raymond E. Brown (*Gospel According to John*, Vol. 2 [Doubleday, 1970], page 552) says regarding the evidence for omitting the words "to wash [except for the feet]." "M.-E. Boismard, *Revue Biblique* 60 (1953), 353-56, favors the shortest possible text, omitting all these words [including "to wash"], as did the Greek minuscule ms. 579, Tertullian, and some OL [Old Latin] witnesses. It is more common to question only the bracketed words ["except for the feet"], the omission of which is supported by Codex Sinaiticus, some Vulgate witnesses, and important Church Fathers. In fact, the Latin Fathers betray no knowledge of the bracketed phrase before Ambrose's time in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century when that reading came into the West from the East (see Haring, N. M. 'Historical Notes on the Interpretation of John 13:10,' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13 (1951), 355-80). ...."

*except for the feet.*” The *Amplified Bible* includes the disputed words in italics, “Jesus said to him, Any one who is bathed needs not to wash *except for his feet....*” (In the front of that Bible they inform us that they use italics to “point out certain familiar passages now recognized as not adequately supported by the original manuscripts.”) The NEB omits the disputed words, “Jesus said, ‘A man who has bathed needs no further washing....’” So does the *Jerusalem Bible*, “Jesus said, ‘No one who has taken a bath needs washing....’” Many commentators believe that the ancient manuscripts that omit the words “except for the feet” represent the original (correct) text.<sup>8</sup>

I rather strongly prefer the shorter reading, which omits the words “except for the feet.” It seems that Jesus was speaking of a *spiritual* cleansing/washing from sin here with these first words of verse 10, as He was in verse 8.<sup>9</sup> *There can be no doubting the fact that Jesus’ last words in verse 10* (“and you are clean, but not all of you”) *speak of being cleansed/washed from sin* (not of a literal bath/washing with water): Jesus said the eleven apostles were *clean*, but not Judas Iscariot (see verse 11). Judas was as clean as the other apostles were in a physical sense, but not in a spiritual sense.

The words “except for the feet” were probably added by a scribe at an early date because of confusion caused by thinking that Jesus was speaking of a literal bath with water here in verse 10.<sup>10</sup> That viewpoint led to an apparent contradiction before the words “except for the feet” were (apparently) added: Jesus was washing the apostles’ feet (which undoubtedly needed to be washed), but He said, “He who has bathed (and

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<sup>8</sup> The United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (fourth revised edition, 1983) gives a B rating (that rating means they believe “the text is almost certain”) to the longer reading that includes the words “except for the feet.” I’ll quote part of what George R. Beasley-Murray says regarding this issue (*John* [Word, Incorporated, 1987], page 229), “... The longer reading was accepted by most older scholars (e.g., Westcott, 2:150; Bernard, 2:462; Schlatter, 282-83), but also recently by Haenchen (457) and Bruce (282-83). The UBS committee included it in view of its superior external attestation; they assumed that the phrase was omitted either by accident or through the difficulty of reconciling it with the immediately following clause ([“but is completely clean”], see Metzger, 240). Nevertheless the overwhelming majority of modern scholars believe the short reading is correct (so Lagrange, 353-55; Bultmann, 469-70; Hoskyns, 438-39; Boismard, 353-56; Braun, 25 n. 1; Lohmeyer, 81-83; Wickenhauser, 250, 251; Barrett, 441-42; Lightfoot, 273; Brown, 566-68; Lindars, 451; Schnackenburg, 3:20-22; Becker, 2:424; Thyen, 348; Schulz, 173-74; Michl, 702-3; Dunn, 250-51). The omission seems to be demanded by the context. ....”

<sup>9</sup> It was very common for Jesus speak in a non-literal, figurative sense; in His speaking of His body as a temple in John chapter 2, for example; in His speaking of a *spiritual* birth in John chapter 3; and of His speaking of *food* and *water* in a spiritual sense in John chapter 4. He was often misunderstood by those who heard Him, and He is often misunderstood by those reading what He said in the Gospels. It is desperately important for us to discern non-literal, figurative, spiritual language for what it is. (A good illustration of key importance of the need to take Jesus’ non-literal language in a non-literal sense is the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation: They base that doctrine, which is so clearly wrong from my point of view, in large part on a few statements that Jesus made at the Last Supper and in John chapter 6. It’s clear to me that Jesus did not intend those things that He said to be understood in a literal sense, when He said of the bread, for example, “Take, eat; this is My body” in Matt. 26:26. For one thing, He was present with the apostles when He spoke these words. John chapter 6 will be discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated October 2005.) It is also of key importance that we don’t take the words of Scripture in a non-literal sense when they were intended in a literal sense. (For example, many, including the Roman Catholics, deny that Revelation chapter 20 teaches that there will be literal millennial kingdom on the earth after Jesus returns to judge the world by interpreting what is said there in a non-literal sense. It seems to me that there is no reasonable basis to deny a future millennial kingdom in Revelation chapter 20.)

<sup>10</sup> Some think He was referring to water baptism. I don’t agree.

the apostles had undoubtedly bathed with water) does not have a need to wash, but is completely clean.” Why was He washing their feet if they were completely clean? The added words “except for the feet” eliminated this apparent contradiction: Those who have bathed will, on occasion, have a need to wash their feet, or to have them washed. There was, however, no apparent contradiction without the added words if, as I believe, Jesus was speaking of a *spiritual cleansing from sin* throughout verse 10.<sup>11</sup>

As I mentioned, I prefer a translation like “He who has been cleansed [or, washed],” instead of “He who has bathed.” The KJV has, “He that is washed.”<sup>12</sup>], **but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.**” [Peter and the apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, *had already become clean*—Jesus didn’t say, “you will be clean”; He said, “you are clean.” They had become clean (“completely clean”) through submitting to Christ and His Word (cf. John 15:3, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”). The fact that Judas was excluded (John 13:10, 11, 18, 21-31) confirms that Jesus was speaking here of a *spiritual cleanness*. It was true in a very real sense that the apostles were clean (completely clean) already, but it was also true that they were to be made clean in a more extensive sense and on a deeper level through receiving the fullness of new-covenant salvation (which included receiving the promised life-giving, *sanctifying* Spirit) that Jesus was to gain for them through His atoning death.] **(11) For He knew the one who was betraying Him** [Judas Iscariot (John 6:64, 70, 71; 13:21-30)]; **for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”** **(12) So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? (13) You call Me Teacher [cf. John 11:28] and Lord [Greek *Ho Kurios*, where *ho* is the definite article. The fact that His disciples called Him *Ho Kurios* here does not demonstrate that they understood His deity at that time. (There were a lot of things they didn’t fully and adequately understand at that time, even things that Jesus had clearly told them [cf., e.g., John 20:9].) This word (*kurios*) was often used in the New Testament in a lower sense than the way we use the word *Lord* for God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ.]; and you are right, for so I am. (14) If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. (15) For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.** [If Jesus could humble Himself to wash the disciples’ feet, how much more can (and should) the disciples

<sup>11</sup> M. Vökel (*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2 [Eerdmans, 1991], page 361), under *louō* (the Greek verb translated *bathed* by the NASB in John 13:10) opts for the shorter reading of John 13:10 and the viewpoint that this verb is used in John 13:10 of *cleansing* in a metaphorical sense, of a “christological-soteriological” *cleansing*, which speaks of being saved and cleansed from sin by Christ.

<sup>12</sup> The apostle John used the Greek verb *nīptō* twice for *wash* in verse 8 and once in verse 9 (also in verses 5, 6). The Greek verb (actually it’s a perfect participle, passive formed from this verb) behind “He who has bathed” is different, *louō*, but this verb can also be translated *cleanse*, or *wash*, and it is common for John to use two different verbs with the same meaning. I’ll quote a few sentences from what D. A. Carson says here (*Gospel According to John*, page 465). “It is far from clear that the move from *louō* to *nīptō* is critical to a proper interpretation, for not only is the older semantic distinction between the two verbs often ignored by hellenistic writers (as most scholars admit), but John is particularly given to using pairs of verbs synonymously, for purely stylistic reasons (e.g. *oida* and *ginōskō* for ‘to know’; *pempō* and *apostellō* for ‘to send’; *agapaō* and *phileō* for ‘to love’; cf. especially Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 293-319. ....”

humble themselves to wash one another's feet. Instead of competing with one another in prideful ways, Christians are called to love one another, which includes humbling ourselves before one another—even as Christ loved the apostles and humbled Himself before them. The New Testament shows that the apostles were often competing with one another (cf., e.g., Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45; Luke 9:46-48; and 22:24-27). Luke 22:24-27 indicate that the apostles were even disputing *at the Lord's Supper* regarding "which of them was regarded to be greatest."

I don't believe that Jesus was very concerned that the apostles (or Christians in general) literally wash one another's feet, but I know that He was very concerned that they maintain a humble, loving attitude before one another.<sup>13</sup> Pride (with unbelief) is at the root of sin, and Christians must make it a top priority to humble themselves and maintain humility, and especially with respect to other believers in the body of Christ, where unity in love is so important. Jesus spoke much of the need for unity (unity that goes with love and humility), and of the grace to maintain that unity in the following chapters.

We desperately need unity in the body of Christ, but there is no true Christian unity if it isn't built on the foundation of a true love for God, the God of the Bible, and on His truth, righteousness, and holiness. We cannot unite (and we are not called to unite) with heresy or sin. We don't have to agree on every detail, but we must agree on the foundational doctrines of Christianity, and we must live for God in righteousness and holiness in accordance with His Word.] **(16) Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave** ["servant" KJV; NKJV; NIV] **is not greater than his master** [cf. Matt. 10:24; Luke 6:40; and John 15:20], **nor is one who is sent** [The Greek noun behind "one who is sent" here is *apostolos*, which is the noun translated *apostle* in the New Testament. The apostles were sent in a special sense; they were commissioned to take the gospel to the world and to lay the foundation for the Christian church, which included establishing the content of the gospel as contained in the New Testament.] **greater than the one who sent him.** [The Lord Jesus Christ was the Master of the apostles, and He was the One who sends them (and the Christian church) on an extended (age-long) mission; He was the greater One. As the next verse shows, they will be blessed if they do the things He has commanded them to do. On the other hand, they will have to answer to Him if they fail to be obedient to Him in every area.] **(17) If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (18) I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen** [to be apostles/disciples]; **but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.'** [As noted above (under verses 10, 11), Judas Iscariot was the exception. Jesus quoted part of

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<sup>13</sup> Literally washing one another's feet would have been appropriate in that ancient setting, but there can be no doubting that even then the primary thing Jesus was after was a humble, loving attitude towards one another in the body of Christ, and that attitude must begin with those in leadership. For one thing, those in leadership have the greatest ability to cause strife and chaos through wrong attitudes and motives. Literally washing another person's feet with a wrong attitude or motive does more harm than good.

I'll quote a paragraph from what William E. Hull says here (*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 [Broadman Press, 1970], page 329). "A problem is raised because the practice which Jesus utilized to provide an example of humility is nonexistent in our culture. For the first disciples nothing could have dramatized the role of a servant more forcefully than the washing of their feet (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10); whereas for contemporary western man this act would have no self-evident significance at all. This means that to carry out the intention of Jesus we must search for new servant forms which have the same equivalent impact in our society as footwashing did in ancient Palestine."

Psalm 41:9 here.] **(19) From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass** [Compare John 14:29; 16:4. One thing that Jesus told them before it came to pass was the imminent betrayal of Judas, and He went on to tell them of other things as these chapters continue.], **so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.** [Compare John 8:24, 28, 58.<sup>14</sup> The Greek behind “I am *He*” here and in John 8:24, 28 and behind “I am” in John 8:58 is *egō eimi*. The words “believe that I am *He*” here include believing (with full assurance and commitment) that He is God the Son, who was sent from heaven and became the God-man, and who is the promised Messiah/Christ, the Savior and Judge.<sup>15</sup> I’ll quote John 20:31, “but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”] **(20) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me** [Compare Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; 10:16; John 20:21; and Gal. 4:14. The twelve apostles and the apostle Paul were sent by the Lord Jesus Christ in a special sense, but verses like Matt. 10:40-42; Mark 9:33-37; and Luke 9:46-48 show that any person who receives a disciple of Jesus Christ because he is a disciple of Christ, no matter how insignificant (or even hated) that disciple is in the eyes of the world, receives Christ and the One who sent Him. These words include the idea that Christ has a special love for all His disciples. He takes it very personally when people receive or reject them, when people bless them or curse them (cf., e.g., Matt. 25:31-46<sup>16</sup>; Acts 9:4, 5; 22:7, 8; 26:14, 15; and 2 Thess. 1:4-10). The next words of this verse show that God the Father has the same special love for Christians. As I mentioned, the glorious love relationship that Christians have with God the Father and God the Son is a dominant theme of these five chapters we are studying. What a blessing!]; **and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.** [What a privilege to be sent by God the Father and God the Son!] **(21) When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit** [I’ll quote what Leon Morris says here.<sup>17</sup> “A very human Jesus is described as ‘troubled in spirit’ (see on John 11:33). Though John pictures Jesus as in control of the situation he does not want us to think of Him as unmoved by the events through which He is passing.”], **and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”** [Jesus had known of His betrayal for a long time (see John 6:64, 70, 71; 13:11; also see Matt. 26:20-25; Mark 14:17-21; and Luke 22:21-23), but He was clearly grieved by this betrayal. His being troubled in spirit undoubtedly included His knowledge of the great trial that He must pass through as He faced the crucifixion and all that it entailed.] **(22) The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. (23) There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His**

<sup>14</sup> John chapters 5-8 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated October 2005.

<sup>15</sup> I’ll quote part of what Leon Morris says here (*Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1971], page 623). “...they are to believe ‘that I am.’ The expression almost certainly has overtones of deity as in 8:28....” And I’ll quote part of what F. F. Bruce says here (*Gospel of John* [Eerdmans, 1983], page 288). “The Greek words *egō eimi* (‘I am’)...are sometimes used in the most everyday sense, ‘it is I’ (as in John 6:20; 9:9), but in this Gospel especially (cf. John 8:24, 28) they tend to be used with overtones of the Ineffable Name of Ex. 3:14 or even more, of the affirmation ‘I am He’ of Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 13, etc (...rendered *egō eimi* in the LXX), in such a way as to hint at the speaker’s oneness with the Father [God the Father was the speaker in Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 13].”

<sup>16</sup> I believe Christ’s “brothers...even the least of *them*” of Matt. 25:40 are Christians. Matthew chapter 25 is discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated November 1998.

<sup>17</sup> *Gospel According to John*, page 624.

**disciples, whom Jesus loved.** [John, the apostle who wrote this Gospel, was that disciple (cf. John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20 with 21:24).] **(24) So Simon Peter gestured to him** [to the apostle John], **and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.”** **(25) He, leaning back thus on Jesus’ bosom** [cf. John 21:20], **said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”** **(26) Jesus then answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.”** **So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot** [cf. John 6:71]. **(27) After the morsel, Satan then entered into him** [cf. Luke 22:3; John 13:2]. **Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”** **(28) Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.** [The apostle John knew that Judas was the apostle who would betray Jesus, but apparently he didn’t know that the words that Jesus spoke to Judas in verse 27 dealt with His *immediate* betrayal.] **(29) For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box** [cf. John 12:6], **that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”** [cf. John 13:1]; **or else, that he should give something to the poor** [cf. John 12:5, 6]. **(30) So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.** [Most commentators make the point that John probably meant more by the words “it was night” than the literal fact that it had become dark. I’ll quote Luke 22:53, “While I with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.” Jesus spoke these words to “the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders” when they came to arrest Him in the garden.] **(31) Therefore when he** [Judas Iscariot] **had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified** [The verb *glorify* (Greek *dokszō*) is used five times (in some form) in verses 31, 32. This first use is unusual,<sup>18</sup> but not shocking when we consider that the voluntary sacrificial offering of the Lamb of God was the heart and foundation of God’s plan of salvation. Every true Christian understands that what Jesus did on the cross was the ultimate victory, not defeat. Judas’ leaving to betray Christ set in motion the events that would lead to the all-important atoning death of Christ (which embraced the beatings, mocking, scourging, etc., and the crucifixion). In this context the words “Now is the Son of Man glorified” apparently refer to Christ’s atoning death. He was glorified in that death by perfectly fulfilling the assignment He had been given, an extremely difficult, all-important assignment, thereby glorifying the Father who had given Him that assignment (cf. John 12:23-25, 27, 28, 31-33; 17:4). In fulfilling that assignment He earned the right to save all believers, to judge and remove all rebels from God’s kingdom (starting with the devil and his underlings and including all the people who continue to follow him), and to bring forth the new heaven and new earth with the new Jerusalem at the proper time.

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<sup>18</sup> The Bible typically speaks of Christ’s being glorified *because of* His atoning death and *after* that death on the cross, as in John 13:32 (the following verse). In most ways being crucified was the opposite of being glorified: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ ” (Gal. 3:13). “He made Him who knew no sin *to be sin on our behalf* [when He bore our sins with the guilt and penalties as the sin offering], so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). “...who for the joy [and glory] set before Him endured the cross, despising [disregarding] the shame [which is the opposite of glory], and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [having been glorified]” (Heb. 12:20).

I'll quote part of what Henry Alford says here.<sup>19</sup> "The glorification is spoken of by anticipation, as if accomplished, because the deed was actually in doing, which was to accomplish it. The glorifying spoken of here, and in verse 32, is not the same. *This* is the glorifying of God by Christ on earth, in His course of obedience as the Son of Man, which was completed by His death ('he became obedient even unto death' Phil. 2:8). And His death was the transition point between God being glorified in Him, and He being glorified in God—manifested to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection, and received up to the Father, to sit at the right hand of God. This latter (verse 32) is spoken of by Him here as future, but immediate...on His death, and leads on to the address of verse 33."

I'll quote a sentence from what Alfred Plummer says here.<sup>20</sup> "He was glorified in finishing the work which the Father gave Him to do (17:4); and thus God was glorified in Him." And I'll quote part of what Everett F. Harrison says here.<sup>21</sup> "In death Christ would be glorified in the eyes of the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18, 24). The Father would see in the death of the cross the fulfillment of his own purpose. Only after the Resurrection would the disciples sense the glorification."], **and God is glorified in Him** [Compare John 12:27-33; 17:4. God the Father was glorified through the submission of His Son to His will, even when it involved extreme suffering, and He is glorified by all the good fruit that results from the atoning death and present ministry of His unique Son.]; **(32) if God is glorified in Him** [This is a class 1 condition in the Greek; the "if clause" is assumed to be true. There was no doubting the fact that the Father would be glorified in the Son.], **God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.** [This glorification of the Son in the Father undoubtedly includes His resurrection; He was the first man (though He was much more than just a man; He was the God-man) to have a glorified body, but the emphasis here seems to be on His being taken up to glory, to the right hand of God the Father, with the authority to carry out God's plan of salvation (cf. John 17:5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was"). Having been glorified, He has the authority to save all who submit to the gospel in faith, including pouring out the Spirit on them in the new-covenant dimension and taking them to eternal glory; He has the authority to judge and remove the devil and his underlings and all unrepentant men from God's kingdom forever; and He has the authority to bring forth God's new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem, all at the proper time. Having been resurrected, but before He was taken up to glory, Jesus could say, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18).] **(33) Little children, I am with you a little while longer.** [It was already night (apparently Thursday evening), and He would die the following afternoon (Friday), at about 3 p.m. (cf. Luke 23:44).] **You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews** [cf. John 7:33, 34; 8:21], **now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'** [Jesus was going to the Father (to heaven), and His disciples could not follow Him there, not at that time. Verse 36 (and many other verses, including John 14:2, 3) shows that they (and all true Christians) will follow Him to heaven later. This verse (in a way that is typical for these chapters) seems to skip the detail that the disciples would see Jesus on numerous occasions throughout the forty days that started with His resurrection and ended with His being taken up to glory.] **(34) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** [Compare

<sup>19</sup> *New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 2 (Baker, 1983 reprint), page 582.

<sup>20</sup> *Gospel According to St. John* (Baker, 1981 reprint), page 271.

<sup>21</sup> *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Moody Press, 1962), page 1103.

John 15:12, 17; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11, 14, 23 (3:10-23); 4:7-5:3; and 2 John 1:5. Christians are called to love all people, but we are called and enabled to have a special love for other Christians. Jesus' words here about *loving one another* speak of loving other Christians, and that is the case with all of the references I just cited. This commandment (like all the commandments given to Christians) was not, of course, optional. We must make it top priority to fulfill God's commandments (cf., e.g., John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10, 14). Keeping His commandments is big part of what loving God means, and loving *Him* is more important than loving His people.

The commandment to love wasn't *new* in itself. The Mosaic Law (which was the foundation for the old covenant) had commanded God's people to love God (this was the first great commandment) and to love their neighbors (cf. Matt. 22:36-40). But Jesus and the *new* covenant (the *new* commandment goes with the *new* covenant) that was established on His atoning death took love to a new level, including the fact that He enabled and commanded the apostles (and all Christians) to love one another *even as they had been loved by Him*.<sup>22</sup> Christians, knowing (which includes their having an *experiential knowledge* of) the love that God the Father and God the Son have for them, and having being born again and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are enabled to love on a higher level. The first *fruit* of the Holy Spirit (that is mentioned in Gal. 5:22, 23) that is produced by the Spirit as born-again Christians walk in/by/after the Spirit is *love*.

One of the primary problems we have in the body of Christ is that many Christians are not experiencing much of a love relationship with God. It is quite difficult (probably impossible) for us to love other Christians with the love of God when we are not experiencing God's love ourselves. To the extent Christians are living in sin/the flesh (which includes doubting God and His Word) it keeps them from abiding (or from fully abiding) in His love (cf., e.g., John 14:21, 23; 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."]; and Jude 1:21). There is no substitute for Christians making it a top priority to live in the righteousness and holiness of God by His grace/Spirit through faith.

We Christians cannot solve the sin/fleshiness problem by putting all the emphasis on forgiveness and talking about God's supposed *unconditional* love that supposedly guarantees that He will always love us just the same no matter what we have in our hearts, or what we do. But many Christians in our day are trying to solve the sin/fleshiness problem that way. It is true, of course, that we cannot *earn* God's love, but the Bible makes it quite clear that if we continue to *spurn* His love and continue to fail to respond to His grace, it will keep us from abiding in that grace, and in the worst-case scenario will result in loss of salvation.<sup>23</sup>

I'll quote a paragraph from what J. Carl Laney says here.<sup>24</sup> "Jesus introduces the disciples to the command to 'love one another' (cf. 15:12). The word [verb] Jesus uses for 'love'

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<sup>22</sup> Jesus had just manifested His love for the disciples by humbling Himself before them and washing their feet as an example of how they should treat one another. And at that very moment He was headed for the cross, where He would manifest His love for them (and all of us) in the ultimate sense of laying down His life for them (cf., e.g., John 10:11-18; 15:13; Rom. 5:5-8; and 1 John 3:16).

<sup>23</sup> See under the words "that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love" of Eph. 1:4 on pages 5-8 of my paper dated July 2000, and see the further discussion that goes from pages 19-26 that is titled, "Further Discussion Aiming for a Balanced Biblical Understanding Regarding God's Love and the Love He Expects from His Born-Again Children." Also see my paper "Once Saved, Always Saved?"

<sup>24</sup> *John* (Moody Press, 1992), page 250.

is *agapao* and refers in this context to a volitional [the *will* is involved] love that can be commanded. Jesus is not speaking of a merely emotional attachment or personal affection, but rather a commitment that seeks the ultimate good of the other person—even to the point of personal sacrifice. The present tense of *agapao* calls attention to the continuous nature of the action, that is, ‘keep on loving.’ ” **(35) By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**” [To the extent Christians love one another with a supernatural love, God’s love (by God’s Spirit; all good things come from God, including love, truth, light, life, righteousness, holiness, peace, order, etc), it serves as a powerful manifestation of the reality of new-covenant salvation. When Christians love one another with God’s love it is, for one thing, a manifestation of God’s (God the Father’s, God the Son’s, and God the Holy Spirit’s) love for His people (Christians).

As I mentioned, many Christians aren’t manifesting much of that love in our day. That is no surprise to me. To the extent Christians are continuing in sin, fleshiness, and worldliness, it will necessarily hinder their ability to experience God’s love and to walk in love toward other Christians. To the extent we are walking in pride, for example, it will lead to strife and competition instead of love and unity. Love and unity in the body of Christ go together (cf., e.g., John 17:21-23).

Another closely related problem is that God’s love will not (cannot) be manifested much in the body of Christ if we are not united on the foundational truths of Christianity; most Christians just assume that what they believe is very close to the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches and everybody else (if they disagree) is wrong. If “Christians” are given over to sin (characterized by sin) or continue to hold heretical doctrines, they forfeit salvation. God is the Judge and He determines those who have salvation and a place in the body of Christ, and those who don’t; we must fear God (fear sinning against Him and fear being out of His will) and make it a top priority to make sure we are believing what He requires us to believe and living as He commands us to live (by His grace through faith.) **(36) Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.”** [See verse 33.] **(37) Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.”** **(38) Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times** [cf. Matt. 26:33-35, 69-75; Mark 14:29-31, 66-72; Luke 22:33, 34, 56-62; and John 18:15-27].” [Peter was sincere, but subsequent events proved that he was not (not at that time [cf. John 21:18, 19]; for one thing he wasn’t born again yet) ready to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus Christ. True Christians go to heaven at death (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21, 23; and 1 Thess. 4:14, 16). In that sense they follow the Lord to heaven, but they do not follow Him in the full sense spoken of here. That fully glorified sense, which includes receiving a glorified body (and the rapture), will not come to pass until the time of Christ’s second coming (cf., e.g., John 14:2, 3; 1 Cor. 15:50-52; and 1 Thess. 4:13-18).]

## CHAPTER 14

**“Do not let your heart be troubled [cf. John 14:27]; believe in God, believe also in Me.** [“Trust in God; trust also in me” NIV. The Greek plurals make it clear that Jesus was speaking to all the apostles here, not just to Peter (cf. John 13:36-38). The betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus would greatly affect His disciples, and they would be tempted to doubt and discouragement. The only satisfactory answer in such times is to keep believing and trusting in God (the triune God), no matter how difficult it is; there is no other satisfactory option. What Jesus said here applies to all Christians of all ages in times of trial/trouble. We can and we must press on in faith, not allowing doubt to have a place in our hearts. God is faithful to make all things work together for our good as we stay faithful to Him (cf. Rom. 8:28); furthermore, we glorify Him as we walk by faith (cf. Rom. 4:20 KJV; 2 Cor. 5:7).] **(2) In My Father’s house [heaven] are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.** [Jesus was going back to the Father, back to heaven, back to eternal glory (cf., e.g., John 13:1, 3, 36; 17:5). He had just told Peter that he (and this applies to all true Christians) would follow Him to heaven later (cf. John 12:26; 13:33, 36; and 17:24).

The translation of the words starting with “if” by the NASB is a common translation; it is essentially the same as that of the NIV, KJV, and NKJV. But I rather strongly prefer a translation that follows the punctuation in the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament*, which has a question mark at the end of this verse. F. F. Bruce, for example, translates, “if there were not, would I have told you that I am going to get a place ready for you?”<sup>25</sup> The translations of the *New American Bible, New Testament* by J. B. Phillips, RSV, and the NRSV are in essential agreement with the translation given by Bruce.

I’ll quote part of what D. A. Carson says regarding the *dwelling places*.<sup>26</sup> “The Greek *monē*, cognate with [closely related to] the verb *menō* (‘to remain,’ ‘to stay,’ ‘to dwell’), properly signifies a ‘dwelling place.’ Because the Latin Vulgate rendered it *mansiones*, the AV/KJV, followed by the RV used ‘mansion.’ However, since heaven is here pictured as the Father’s *house*, it is more natural to think of ‘dwelling places’ within a house as *rooms* (NIV) or *suites* or the like. ....” **(3) If I go and prepare a place for you** [The “if” here didn’t infer there was any reason to doubt that Jesus would go and prepare a place for His disciples; He had just told that He was going to do this in verse 2.], **I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.** [Jesus was speaking here of His coming again at the end of this age and taking His disciples to heaven, to eternal glory, but back then the disciples would have thought of His coming again rather soon, certainly within their lifetimes (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:34).<sup>27</sup>] **(4) And you know the way where I am going.**” [Jesus was going to the Father, to heaven, to eternal glory (cf. John 14:6). John 14:6 shows that the only *way* people can come to the Father is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to the Father includes coming to Him in repentance and

<sup>25</sup> *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 297.

<sup>26</sup> *Gospel According to John* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), pages 488, 489.

<sup>27</sup> True Christians go to heaven at death (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21, 23; and 1 Thess. 4:14), but it is a preliminary stage of heaven. For one thing, they will not receive their glorified bodies until the time of the glorification and rapture when Christ Jesus returns (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:14-17).

faith to become His born-again children through the saving work of Christ Jesus and coming to Him in heaven in the full and final sense after being glorified and raptured at the end of this age through the saving work of Christ Jesus.] **(5) Thomas** [cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; John 11:16; 20:24-28; and 21:2] **said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?”** **(6) Jesus said to him, “I am the way** [cf. John 10:9; Rom. 5:1, 2; Eph. 2:18; and Heb. 10:19, 20], **and the truth** [Compare John 1:14. The *truth* that man must know centers in the Lord Jesus Christ.], **and the life** [Compare John 1:4, 12, 13; 5:21-29; 11:25; and 17:3. The *life* spoken of here includes the spiritual/eternal life that begins with the new birth and the fullness of eternal life that begins with the birth into the fullness of eternal life and glory at the end of this age.<sup>28</sup>]; **no one comes to the Father but through Me** [See under verse 4.]. **(7) If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.**” [The plurals in the Greek show that Jesus was speaking to all the apostles (cf. John 14:5, 6), minus Judas Iscariot (cf. John 13:30). The apostles had already come to know Jesus and God the Father on one level, but they would come to know them on a much deeper level before long. (As verses 8-11 show, the disciples had already seen God the Father in one sense in that they had seen the Lord Jesus Christ, and they had heard the things that He had said and seen the things He had done from the Father.) They came to know Jesus and God the Father better through the things Jesus said to them that last evening (before the cross); they came to know Him and God the Father much better through seeing the resurrected Christ and having Him share with them on numerous occasions throughout the forty days that started with His resurrection and culminated with His being taken up in a glory cloud from the Mount of Olives to return to the Father and eternal glory while they were watching; and their knowledge of God the Son and God the Father was greatly enhanced through receiving the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit brought the new birth and enables Christians to participate in spiritual/eternal life; He sanctifies; He reveals; He convicts; He anoints to minister; He distributes the charismatic gifts; etc.

In verse 18 Jesus says He will come to the disciples, and in verse 23 He says the Father and the Son will make their abode with the disciples. Those glorious intimate relationships come to pass through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in new-covenant believers.] **(8) Philip** [cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; John 1:43-48; 6:5-7; and 12:21, 22] **said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”** **(9) Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father** [Compare John 12:45; Col. 1:15, 19; 2:9; and Heb. 1:3. Oneness Christians appeal to this verse (and John 10:30<sup>29</sup>) as if it demonstrated (proved) that God the Father and God the Son are the same Person. If you isolate these words, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” from the overall context

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<sup>28</sup> The birth into the fullness of eternal life/glory is discussed in some detail in my eschatological writings. Start with Rev. 12:5 on pages 314-316 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>29</sup> In John 10:30 Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” Jesus was emphasizing His unity with God the Father; He wasn’t saying that He and the Father are the same Person (cf., e.g., John 10:15, 17, 18, 25, 29, 32, 36, 37). In John 17:22 Jesus spoke of Christians being *one, just as God the Father and God the Son are one*. He was emphasizing the glorious relationship and unity that Christians are enabled to have with God (the triune God) and with one another; He certainly wasn’t saying that Christians become the same person with God the Father, God the Son, or with the other Christians.

here<sup>30</sup> and forget the multitudinous number of other verses in John and throughout the Bible that confirm that God the Father and God the Son are different Persons within the Godhead (one God, three Persons), you could argue that God the Father and God the Son are the same Person based on what John says here, but that would not be advisable.<sup>31</sup> I don't want to offend oneness Christians,<sup>32</sup> but I believe it is desperately important for all of us to humble ourselves and seek God for the balanced truth, and especially in these last days. Errors in foundational doctrines are a very serious matter indeed; the Bible makes it quite clear that errors in foundational doctrines can exclude "believers" from salvation. Furthermore, errors in doctrine keep Christians from being united and from loving one another in any full sense.]; **how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?** (10) **Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me** [cf. John 10:38; 14:11, 20]? **The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative** [cf. John 3:34; 8:45-47; and 17:8], **but the Father abiding in Me does His works** [cf. John 5:19, 36]. (11) **Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.** [It is significant, for one thing, that the Old Testament had prophesied that the Messiah/Christ would do these works (cf., e.g., Luke 4:17-21; 7:18-23; and John 10:24-26).] (12) **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also** [The New Testament (especially the book of Acts) confirms that the apostles did many miraculous works in the name of Jesus and by the anointing/gifts of the Holy Spirit, but these works were not at all limited to the apostles or to that first generation. Note that Jesus spoke here of all *who believe in Him*. Each Christian of each generation must be faithful to God in every area and be open to do the works He would have them do.]; **and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.** [What are the "greater works"? I agree with the widespread viewpoint that the greater works speak of the new-covenant works that Jesus could not do when He ministered on the earth because the new covenant had not yet been ratified through His atoning death. New-covenant salvation could not be manifested in the full sense until Jesus had been crucified, resurrected, and then exalted to the right hand of God the Father some forty days after His resurrection.

Jesus could not give (pour out) the promised Spirit—the all-important life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit—to those who believed in Him until after He had

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<sup>30</sup> In John 14:1 Jesus exhorts His disciples to believe/trust in the Father *and* in Him, two distinct Persons. In John 14:2 He speaks of His Father's house, the Father being a distinct Person from Himself. In John 14:6 He again distinguishes between the Person of the Father and Himself. In John 14:10, 11 He speaks of the relationship between the Father and the Son which permits the Son to be in the Father and the Father to be in the Son. (In a somewhat similar manner the New Testament can speak of Christians being in Christ and Christ being in Christians.) In John 14:10 Jesus says that the words that He speaks and the works that He does are of the Father in that the Father is in Him. (He always did the will of the Father in the words that He spoke and the works that He did, and He did them by the authority and power of the Father, and for the glory of the Father.) In John 14:12 Jesus speaks of His going to the Father, a Person distinct from Himself. And in John 14:13 He again differentiates between Himself and the Person of God the Father.

<sup>31</sup> On the triune God see under John 1:1 and under Col. 1:15-17 and the references cited there in my paper dated November 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Some (many) orthodox evangelicals do not consider oneness Christians to be true Christians. I agree that oneness is a serious error, but I believe that many oneness Christians are true Christians (Christians in the eyes of God).

gone back to the Father.<sup>33</sup> Note that Jesus said here in verse 12, “because I go to the Father.” He went to the Father by way of the cross, resurrection, and ascension from the Mount of Olives. I’ll quote Acts 2:33, which speaks of what started on the day of Pentecost (some ten days after Jesus ascended), “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.” Jesus could not give (pour out) the promised new-covenant Spirit (the Holy Spirit) until He had received the Spirit from the Father. He received the Spirit from the Father in the sense that He was now authorized to give the Spirit to those who repented and submitted to Him and the gospel in faith.

The *greater works* refer (at least for the most part) to the fact that the apostles (and to some extent all believers) could now offer full new-covenant salvation to those who would repent and submit in faith to Christ and the gospel of salvation. This full salvation centered in the fact that now (for the first time since the fall of man) people could become born-again, sanctified (sanctified in the full, new-covenant sense) children of God, united with God the Son and through Him with God the Father, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are destined to inherit a much higher existence than what Adam had before the fall (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-53), which includes having a glorified body (which Adam did not have) and reigning with God forever (e.g., Rev. 22:5). The apostles (and to some extent all Christians) were commissioned to take this offer of salvation to the world (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; and Acts 1:8).

This glorious work started on the day of Pentecost when the disciples first received the Spirit and some three thousand souls were added to the body of Christ (Acts 2:41). With our modern communication systems Christians can minister to hundreds of millions, even billions, of people at the same time. A prime example of a miracle-packed ministry with a worldwide impact will be the soon-coming ministry of the two end-time prophets/ministers of Rev. 11:3-12.

It is very important to understand that the *greater works* that Christians do are the *works* of the resurrected, glorified Christ, who is our great High Priest at the right hand of God the Father. Note the two following verses (John 14:13, 14). (God the Father and God the Spirit are very much involved with these greater works too, even as they were involved with the ministry of Christ Jesus when He ministered on the earth.) John 5:19-30 are quite relevant here. I’ll quote John 5:20, “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel.” Significantly, Jesus went on in the following verses (5:21-26) to speak of the fact that He would give spiritual life to those who were spiritually dead (all mankind has been spiritually dead since the fall of Adam and Eve). Being born again and having spiritual life (which enables us to be righteous and holy with the very righteousness and holiness of God) is a big part of what Christianity is all about. Jesus also went on (in John 5:22, 27-29) to show that His *greater works* would include the ultimate resurrection and judgment of all mankind. For believers (“those who did the good deeds [works]” [John 5:29]) there will be a “resurrection of life” (a resurrection

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<sup>33</sup> On believers receiving the Spirit (baptism in the Spirit), see pages 125-128 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* with the endnotes; pages 109-112 of my “Paper on Faith”; pages 35-42 of my paper dated March 2000; and pages 17-20 of my paper dated May 2001. You could start with the last reference; for one thing, the other references are cited there.

into the fullness of eternal life and glory); for unbelievers (“those who committed the evil deeds [works]” [John 5:29]) there will be a “resurrection of judgment [condemnation (cf. NIV)].”<sup>34</sup>) **(13)** [The older (1977) edition of the NASB; KJV; and NKJV better demonstrate the connection between verses 12 and 13 in the Greek by starting verse 13 with “And”; the Greek has *kai* here, a word often translated “and.” This connection helps demonstrate that the greater works of Christians are the works of Christ.] **Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.** [Here the idea is that the Father will be glorified in the Son through the things that the Son does in answer to the prayers of the apostles (and our prayers too). The apostles (and, to some extent, all Christians) were commissioned to continue the mission that Jesus started. One obvious qualification to the words that Jesus said here is that the apostles (and all Christians) must ask for things that are in accordance with the will of God (cf., e.g., 1 John 5:14; John 15:7).<sup>35</sup>

For the apostles (and all Christians) to pray in Jesus’ name included the idea that the answer to their prayers would come by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, with whom they were united and by whom they had been sent to take the gospel to the world. Jesus and the One who sent Him must receive all the glory for the answer to their prayers. Jesus is the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5); cf. Acts 4:12. Sometimes (as in Acts 3:6, for example) the apostles didn’t technically pray in Jesus name, but used His name to effect healings, cast out demons, etc. In cases like that the works still were the works of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest who makes things work.

This verse and verse 14 are unusual, and especially if the translation of the NASB for verse 14 is correct, “If you ask Me anything in My name I will do *it*” (see under verse 14). It is in line with the overall teaching of the Bible for the Son to speak of His answering the prayers of the apostles, but it would not be in line with the overall teaching of the Bible to say that the Son, *not the Father*, is the One who always, or normally, answers the prayers of Christians. And it would not be in line with the overall teaching of the Bible to say that Christians should typically address their requests to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup> Jesus was the One who taught us to pray and make requests *to the Father*. See, for example, Matt. 6:5-15; John 15:16 (“...so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give it to you”); 16:23-28 (“... In that day you will ask [the Father] in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; (27) for the Father Himself loves you, ... ..”). We must never ignore God the Father, whether in prayer or worship; God the Son, who is subordinate (I didn’t say inferior) to God the Father,<sup>37</sup> would be the first One to exhort us to never ignore the Father.] **(14) If you ask Me** [The United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* includes the Greek pronoun *me* here, with a B rating (which “indicates [from their point of view] that the

<sup>34</sup> Revelation chapter 20 shows that the resurrection of the unbelievers will not take place until it is time for the great-white-throne judgment at the end of the millennium.

<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, we cannot have an assurance that our prayers will be answered if we are violating our covenant with God through continuing in sin, fleshiness, and worldliness (cf., e.g., John 15:7; 1 John 3:21, 22), or if we are allowing doubt in our hearts regarding the things we are praying for (cf., e.g., Mark 11:22-24; James 1:5-8).

<sup>36</sup> Acts 7:59 (“...Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”); Rev. 22:20 (“Come Lord Jesus”) are verses where the Lord Jesus Christ is addressed in prayer.

<sup>37</sup> See under John 1:1 in my paper dated November 2004.

text is almost certain”). The NIV has “Me,” but the KJV; NKJV; and the *Amplified Bible* do not include this word. It is possible, but I doubt that Jesus included the word “Me” in what He said here. For one thing, it tends to clash with the following words about asking *in His name*. And note the verses I quoted from John chapters 15, 16 under John 14:13.

I’ll quote part of what F. F. Bruce says under verses 13, 14.<sup>38</sup> “If something is asked for in Jesus’ name, the request is probably viewed as addressed to the Father. The Father denies nothing to the Son, and a request made in the Son’s name is treated as if the Son made it. The textual evidence in verse 14 is fairly evenly divided between the omission and retention of ‘me’; but the logic and the thought here favour its omission, which indeed seems to be demanded by the plain sense of 16:23a. ....”] **anything in My name, I will do it. (15) If you love Me, you will keep My commandments** [“If you love Me, keep My commandments” NKJV; KJV]. [Compare John 14:21, 23; 15:10; 17:6, 8; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6; and Luke 6:46. The words of this verse and the verses just cited are extremely important. See under John 13:34 in this paper. I’ll quote part of what C. K. Barrett says here.<sup>39</sup> “John never permits love to devolve into a sentiment or an emotion. Its expression is always moral and is revealed in obedience. This is true even of the love of the Son for the Father; cf. 15:10.”<sup>40</sup>

The Bible puts a very strong emphasis on the fact that the Holy Spirit, when He comes to indwell new-covenant believers (e.g., John 14:16, 17), enables them to keep God’s (moral) Law and makes them righteous and holy (cf., e.g., Ezek. 36:26, 27; Matt. 3:1-12; Acts 15:8, 9; Rom. 2:26-29; 7:4-6; 8:1-17; 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:1-18; Gal. 5:5, 16-25; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5-8; and 1 John 5:3, 4, 18).<sup>41</sup> But it seems that Christ spoke here (and in verses 21, 23) of the apostles keeping His commandments *before* the life-giving, sanctifying Spirit was given (see John 14:16, 17).<sup>42</sup> Acts 5:32 speaks of God’s giving the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him.

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<sup>38</sup> *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 301.

<sup>39</sup> *Gospel According to St. John* (Westminster Press, 1978), page 461.

<sup>40</sup> It is probably even more important to point out that the Father’s love that John (and the Bible in general) speaks of is not merely *sentimental* or *emotional* and that His love (or lack of love) for people is ultimately *conditioned* by their response to Him and His grace. His love (in the ultimate sense) is not *unconditional*. The widespread teaching of God’s unconditional love (that He will always continue to love people just the same forever no matter what they have in their heart or what they do) in the Christian church of our day is doing tremendous damage. No wonder there is so little fear of God and so little motivation to even speak of repentance and the need for obedience (righteousness and holiness).

John 3:16 speaks of God’s love for the world (which includes all people), but other verses in that chapter (and many other verses throughout the New Testament) show that those who reject, or who later turn their backs on, His saving grace in Christ (which is a grace that sanctifies, for one thing) will ultimately experience His abiding *wrath*, not His abiding *love* (cf., e.g., John 3:18-20, 36). Any love that the Father has for those who willfully continue in sin and rebellion (whether they consider themselves to be Christians, or not) would be (at the most) a *sentimental* or *emotional* love that has nothing to do with how He judges and deals with them. God knows (and foreknows) the hearts of all people, including how they will respond to Him and His grace.

<sup>41</sup> It must be understood that born-again Christians are not automatically made holy or kept holy; they must continually cooperate with the Word of God and the grace/Spirit of God by faith. I’ll quote what the apostle Paul said in Gal. 5:16, 24: “But I say, walk by [in/after] the Spirit [by grace through faith (faith in God and His word)], and you will not carry out the [sinful] desire of the flesh [in other words, you won’t sin]. ... Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh [by grace/the Spirit through faith] with its passions and [sinful] desires.”

<sup>42</sup> Jesus speaks much in these chapters (John chapters 13-17) of the Spirit’s coming to the apostles to enable them to fulfill their all-important ministry of laying the foundation for the new-covenant church.

Keeping God's commandments was, of course, required for those living under the old covenant, and Christ's disciples (before the new-covenant Spirit was given) had a special grace by virtue of their relationship with Christ (cf., e.g., John 17:12). If Christ required the apostles/disciples to keep His commandments *before* they received the life-giving, sanctifying Spirit, we can be very sure that He requires them (and all Christians) to fully obey Him *after* they receive the Spirit, and on a deeper level. We'll discuss this important topic further as we continue, always aiming for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We desperately need the balanced truth. One problem we have in the body of Christ is that most Christians are not seeking God for the balanced truth because they assume that what they (and their group) happen to believe must be the balanced truth already—those who differ with them must be wrong.

The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (Fourth Revised Edition) has a semicolon instead of a period at the end of verse 15, and the first word of verse 16 (*kagō*; from *kai egō*) would typically be translated "and I," not "I," which the NASB has. The NIV; KJV; NKJV; and the older (1977) edition of the NASB have a period at the end of verse 15, but they all start verse 16 with the word "And." This "and" helps demonstrate that verses 16, 17 are tied to verse 15.

Jesus was speaking here of the obedience to His commandments—obedience that goes with having faith in Him (faith includes obedience) and loving Him—that He required of His apostles even before they received the life-giving (cf. John 3:3-8; 4:10-14; 5:24-26; 6:63; and 7:37-39), sanctifying,<sup>43</sup> gift-dispensing Spirit.<sup>44</sup> (See, for

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For example: "He [the Spirit] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (14:26). "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning" (John 15:26, 27). "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He has come, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment... I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...and He will disclose to you what is to come. ..." (John 16:7-15).

Jesus didn't specifically mention in these chapters (John chapters 13-17) that the Spirit's coming would enable the disciples to be righteous and holy and to maintain that set-apart state, but He requested the Father that (after He left His disciples to go back to the Father) He would keep them from evil/the evil one and sanctify them (John 17:11-19), and He spoke of their loving one another as He had loved them and of their being one as He and the Father are one (John 13:34, 35; 15:12-17; 17:21-26). These things (which things go with being righteous and holy) come to pass (for the most part) through the work of the Spirit. And Jesus prayed (in John 17:2, 3) that the disciples would be given eternal life, which includes knowing God; that prayer was answered through the coming of the Spirit; and it is understood that new-covenant righteousness and holiness (the righteousness and holiness of God) come with knowing God and participating in His eternal life by the Spirit.

<sup>43</sup> See the second paragraph above under verse 15.

<sup>44</sup> There were quite a few sincere, relatively righteous Jewish believers living in Israel in the days that Jesus came to Israel, including, for example, the apostles (excluding Judas Iscariot); John the Baptist and his parents (cf. Luke 1:6); Mary, the mother of Jesus; Simeon (Luke 2:25); and Anna, the prophetess (Luke 2:36-38). But it is important to understand that such people were *relatively* righteous. Believers like them were typically quick to respond to God's call to repent (through John the Baptist and then through the Lord Jesus Christ) and to submit (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ and God's plan of salvation. They were humble, quick to repent, and receptive to God's grace.

God, who knows the heart, requires repentance and faith of all converts before He imparts the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit to them (cf., e.g., Matt. 4:17; Luke 13:1-5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; and 26:20). There is, of course, a limit to how much repentance God requires *before* we become born-again

example, John 13:10; 15:3; and 17:6.) The apostles had a special relationship with the Holy Spirit through their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the days before Jesus was crucified; they had spent most of their time with Christ for a few years, and they had been working miracles, casting out demons, etc.; this relationship undoubtedly had a sanctifying effect on them, but it is also clear that they had much room for improvement and very much needed to receive the life-giving, sanctifying, new-covenant Spirit.

It must be understood that our ability to love God (the triune God) always starts with Him. He takes the initiative, “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Furthermore, it must be understood that the love Christians have for God and one another is a supernatural love that comes from God; it is His love in us (by His Spirit) that we walk in and manifest by grace through faith (cf., e.g., Gal. 5:22; 1 John 2:5; 4:12).] **(16)** [“And”; see under verse 15.] **I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper** [Compare John 14:26; 1:33; 7:39; 16:7; Luke 24:49; and Acts 2:33. In the margin (for the word translated “Helper”) the NASB has, “Greek *paraklētos*, one called alongside to help; or *Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor.*” The NIV has, “another Counselor.” This same Greek noun is used in 1 John 2:1 of the Lord Jesus Christ, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” As 1 John 2:1 shows, Jesus still is a *paraklete* for Christians, even though He left them (in one sense) to go to the right hand of God the Father. In general His present help is mediated through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has indwelt believers since He was given (poured out), starting at Pentecost. “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ [the Holy Spirit], he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9).], **that He may be with you forever** [The glorious relationship we have with the Holy Spirit will continue forever, but it will be taken to a higher level when we are glorified at the end of this age. And we can and should continually grow in that relationship (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).]; **(17) that is the Spirit of truth** [Compare John 14:6; 15:26; 16:13 (“But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth...”); 1 John 4:6; and 5:6. The *truth* of God includes His righteousness and holiness (cf. Eph. 4:24). We desperately need to learn/know, to be committed to, and to live in agreement with the truth (by grace/the Spirit through faith).], **whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him** [Compare John 1:10;

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Christians (the Spirit comes to dwell in us to enable us to get our lives in divine order), but He requires us to turn from sin and begin to cooperate with His saving grace and make righteousness and holiness top priority as part of our conversion to becoming Christians. Very often in our day prospective converts are not even informed of the need to repent and of the requirement that Christians make living in righteousness and holiness by grace through faith a top priority. Saving faith includes a commitment from the heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, which includes a commitment to love Him and to live in line with His word and commandments by His grace/Spirit.

It must be understood, of course, that the Spirit was active among the people of God in the days of the old covenant, before the promised new-covenant Spirit was given, starting on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit was much more active in the transitional period when the Lord Jesus Christ (who was anointed with the Spirit without measure [John 3:34] ministered on the earth) than He was in the days of the old covenant. So too it must be understood that the Spirit works with prospective Christian converts *before* they receive the Spirit (before they are born again/from above): He draws, convicts, reveals, teaches, etc. We are totally dependent on the grace of God in Christ, but we must respond to/appropriate/cooperate with that grace.

12:31; 14:30; 15:18-25; 17:6, 14-19; and 1 Cor. 2:14. The people of the world cannot see or come to know God or receive the Spirit of truth (the Holy Spirit) until they are willing to respond to Him and His saving grace with repentance and faith. They are spiritually dead; they live in a different dimension; they function on a different wavelength.], **but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.** [The apostles had come to know the Holy Spirit on a level far beyond what was available to believers under the old covenant through their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (who had been given, anointed with, the Spirit without measure [John 3:34], even before they received the Spirit. (Christians are anointed with the Spirit by measure.) The Spirit had been *abiding with* them. Starting on the day of Pentecost He would dwell in them in the full new-covenant sense, which includes the new birth, His new-covenant sanctifying work, and His work of anointing for ministry and dispensing charismatic gifts. The apostles had already experienced something of His anointing for ministry and being used in charismatic gifts through ministering under the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>45</sup>

I believe the Father's giving of the Spirit spoken of here (actually, as Acts 2:33 shows, Christ pours forth the Spirit on His disciples after He receives the promised Spirit from the Father, starting on the day of Pentecost) can be equated with baptism in the Spirit. I have discussed these things in some detail. Start with footnote 25 on page 18 of my paper, *Charismatic Gifts and Charismatic Chaos.* **(18) I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.** [I believe (in agreement with many) that Jesus was speaking here of coming to His disciples, in a permanent (age-long) sense, through the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:19-23, 28; 17:23; Rom. 8:9, 10 ["However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ [the Holy Spirit], he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you...."]; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; and Matt. 28:20). Jesus had already told them (in John 14:3) that He would come again and receive them to Himself (take them to heaven), but that is a later coming than the one spoken of here in verse 18.

Subsequent events show that Christ also came to His disciples on several occasions *after* He was resurrected (starting on the day of His resurrection) and *before* He went back to the Father—then He came to them in a very real *spiritual/Spiritual* sense through the coming of the Holy Spirit.<sup>46</sup> (See Matt. 28:1-20 [with Matt. 26:32]<sup>47</sup>; Mark

<sup>45</sup> God's ministers in the Old Testament were anointed by the Spirit to minister and some of them were used in charismatic gifts.

<sup>46</sup> Christ's post-resurrection, pre-ascension appearances to His disciples (especially to the apostles) were extremely important to their having a full assurance regarding His resurrection and their taking the gospel to the world. His resurrection was a very important part of the gospel of the new covenant. His resurrection proved that He was the righteous Son of God and that His atoning death had availed to overthrow death, sin, and Satan. He was the first man (though He was much more than just a man; He was the God-man) to be born into the fullness of eternal life and glory; He was the "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). The resurrected Christ's authority over death was further manifested by the events described in Matt. 27:51-53, "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split [at the time Jesus died]. (52) The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised [They were raised after Jesus was raised; He was the "firstborn from the dead."]; (53) and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many."

<sup>47</sup> The account in Matthew chapter 28 is different than the account in Luke chapter 24; John chapters 20, 21 in that it mentions only that Jesus appeared to some women on the morning of His resurrection and told them to take word to His brethren to go to Galilee, where they would see Him (Matt. 28:9, 10). An

16:1-18 [with Mark 14:28]; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:11-21:23; and Acts 1:1-11). The resurrection appearances spoken of in these references were all *before* Jesus returned to the Father and *before* the Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost. Jesus didn't go back to the Father until after forty days (Acts 1:3).

It is possible that Jesus intended to include those post-resurrection, *pre-ascension* appearances in what He said here ("I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you"), but I doubt it.<sup>48</sup> It seems that Jesus was speaking here in John 14:18 of a *permanent* coming (of His coming to stay throughout this age), so His disciples wouldn't be *orphans*, and the next verse (14:19) seems to speak of the apostles seeing Him in a very real *spiritual/Spiritual* sense (after receiving the Spirit and being born-again on the Day of Pentecost), which the spiritually dead world won't be able to do. Anyway, we know, based on the word of God, that those post-resurrection, *pre-ascension* appearances did take place.] **(19) After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me** [As I mentioned under verse 18, Jesus was apparently speaking here of His born-again disciples being able to see Him in a very real *spiritual/Spiritual* sense after the Spirit comes and they are born again. The last words of this verse speak of believers having spiritual/eternal life through (and in union with the resurrected) Christ by the Holy Spirit, and the following verse (verse 20) also speaks of a time after the Holy Spirit has been given (at Pentecost).]; **because I live, you will live also.** [Jesus would be raised from the dead into the fullness of spiritual/eternal life, but also, "In Him (in God the Son) was life" (John 1:4). He (after His atoning death, resurrection, and ascension) had the authority to impart life, spiritual/eternal life (cf., e.g., John 5:19-29). He imparts life to His disciples (all believers), starting with the new birth, and they (in union with Him and the Spirit of life) *live also*; at the end of this age, they will be born into the fullness of eternal life.] **(20) In that day you will know that I am in My Father** [cf. John 10:38; 14:11], **and you in Me, and I in you.** [From the time believers are born again by the Spirit and are in the Spirit, they are in Christ, and He is in them (e.g., Rom. 8:9, 10). And they are

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angel had given them essentially the same message a little earlier (Matt. 28:7). This builds on Matt. 26:32, where Jesus had told His disciples that He would go ahead of them to Galilee after He was raised from the dead. Mark 16:1-8 (with Mark 14:28) is similar to the verses in Matthew, except Mark doesn't mention that the women saw Jesus, only that an angel told them to tell His disciples that He was going ahead of them to Galilee, as He had told them, and that they would see Him there (Mark 16:7; 14:28).

Apparently the unbelief of Jesus' disciples (especially unbelief regarding His resurrection; cf. Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-43; and John 20:1-10, 24-29) led Him to modify what He had told them about going at once to Galilee, where they would see Him; He appeared to them in Jerusalem first. He did, however, eventually appear to His disciples in Galilee (cf. Matt. 28:16-20; John 21:1-23).

I'll quote part of what John D. Grassmick says under Mark 16:7, "The disciples did not go to Galilee immediately. Jesus' additional appearances to them in the Jerusalem vicinity were necessary to convince them of the reality of His resurrection (cf. John 20:19-29)" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary-New Testament* [SP Publications, 1983], page 193). And I'll quote part of what H. L. Ellison says under Matt. 28:1-10, "Jesus did appear to the Eleven in and near Jerusalem, because He knew their need. Ideally, however, the meeting place was to be Galilee (Matt. 28:7, 10; 26:32; Mark 14:28), so Matthew omits all the Jerusalem appearances, except the one that attested His resurrection...[cf. Matt. 28:9, 10]." (*New Layman's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1979], page 1221).

<sup>48</sup> Some commentators see Jesus speaking only of His post-resurrection, pre-ascension appearances here (I can't live with that viewpoint); others see both His post-resurrection, pre-ascension appearances and His coming to them through sending the Spirit to dwell in them. We will further discuss these things under John 16:16-22.

better able to understand the union that Christ has with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit.] **(21) He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me** [See John 14:15, 23; 15:9, 10.<sup>49</sup> Jesus put a strong emphasis here on the need for the disciples to obey Him and keep His commandments. He wasn't speaking here (at least not for the most part) of a need for believers to keep His commandments so that their lives and ministries could be fruitful (though that much was true). He was speaking here (at least for the most part) of a need to love Him and keep His commandments (which is included in what saving faith means) so that they could establish and maintain a born-again, life-flowing relationship with Him and with God the Father (cf., e.g., John 14:23). We can't earn God's love, but if we don't respond to His grace with faith (which includes loving Him and obeying His Word by His grace) we forfeit His grace.<sup>50</sup> See under John 13:34; 14:15.]; **and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father** [cf. John 14:23; 16:27; contrast, e.g., John 3:36], **and I will love him and will disclose** [make known, reveal, manifest] **Myself to him.**" [In this context it seems that Jesus was speaking of disclosing Himself (making Himself known) to them by coming to dwell in them by the Spirit (cf. John 14:23) and then relating to them and working through them by the Spirit (cf. John 14:12-14). Anyway, it is also true that Jesus appeared to the apostles (and other disciples) after He was resurrected and *before* He went back to the Father and *before* they had received the Spirit (cf., e.g., John 20:11-21:23; Acts 10:40-42).] **(22) Judas (not Iscariot)** [See Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13; there is widespread agreement that this is the apostle called *Thaddaeus* in Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18.] **said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose** [The Greek verb used here (*emphanizō*) was also used in verse 21.] **Yourself to us and not to the world?"** [What *has happened* is that Jesus is crucified, resurrected, and goes back to the Father. Then He pours forth the promised super-blessing of the new-covenant Spirit (starting on the day of Pentecost), but the Spirit just comes to believers, and He works in and through believers. Jesus will disclose, make known, reveal, manifest Himself to His disciples in various (very real) ways throughout this age.] **(23) Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word** [Compare John 14:15, 21. Keeping Christ's word includes keeping His commandments, which includes keeping the moral law of the old covenant; cf. John 8:51; 1 John 2:5; but it also includes holding the truths He taught about who He is, His atoning death, the new covenant, etc.]; **and My Father will love him** [See under verses 15, 21. I'll quote John 16:27, "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father."], **and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.** [Compare 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 3:17; 1 John 2:24; and Rev. 3:20. Apparently this refers to God the Father and God the Son's coming and making their abode with

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<sup>49</sup> The words of John 14:15-23 were spoken to the apostles *before* they received the Spirit. John 14:16 speaks of the coming of the Spirit to dwell in the disciples of Christ; verse 23 speaks of the coming of the Father and the Son to make their abode with the disciples – apparently they come in the Person of the Spirit, when He comes to dwell in the disciples; here in verse 21 Jesus speaks of disclosing Himself to the disciples – apparently that disclosure starts with His coming in the Person of the Spirit to indwell them.

<sup>50</sup> It is possible for Christians to be fleshly and disobedient to some extent and still be born-again Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-15), but it is an unacceptable and dangerous place to be, and all the more so if we are in positions of leadership (starting with the apostles), if we have been Christians for a while, and/or if we are living in the very last days before the Lord Jesus Christ returns for the day of judgment, which it seems we are.

believers through God the Spirit's coming to dwell in them.] **(24) He who does not love Me does not keep My words** [cf. John 14:23]; **and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me** [cf. John 7:16; 14:10]. **(25) These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. (26) But the Helper** [the Paraklete], **the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name** [The fact that the Father will send the Holy Spirit *in Christ's name* includes the idea that He was sent to Christ's disciples in answer to the request of Christ (see John 14:16; cf. Acts 2:33). The Spirit glorifies Christ; He draws people (the elect) to Christ; He ministers to, and through, the disciples of Christ; etc. The Holy Spirit can even be called the Spirit of Christ (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; and Phil. 1:19).], **He will teach you all things** [See John 16:13-15; 1 John 2:20, 27.], **and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you** [This includes the Spirit's enabling the apostles to understand things that Jesus had said when He was with them (cf. John 2:18-22; 12:12-16).]. [These words were spoken to the apostles, and they have a special application for them. They were the ones commissioned to lay the foundation for the Christian church and to lay out the truths on which the new covenant is founded (contained in the New Testament). But it is also true that the Spirit is involved with teaching all Christians of all generations (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27); most of His teaching involves helping believers understand the Bible and much of that help comes through God's appointed and anointed (by the Spirit) ministers. Also, the Spirit will help us remember the things we need to remember, especially dealing with spiritual matters, but not limited to spiritual matters. God is interested and involved with every aspect of the lives of His people.] **(27) Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.** [Compare John 16:33 (quoted below); 20:19-21. This peace, which is a glorious gift indeed, centers in having peace with God (but it includes having inner peace and peace in the body of Christ) through the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving work, including the gift of the indwelling Spirit. This peace comes to Christ's disciples through His having solved the sin problem through His atoning death (and His resurrection and ascension). Doubt and disobedience (in partnership with Satan) bring separation, strife, confusion, chaos, the wrong kind of fear (where we fear beings or situations instead of fearing God and staying faithful to Him by His grace), and every other problem.

The fact that Christ spoke of giving *His peace* ("My peace") speaks of the fact that He Himself experienced this peace (even though He was at that time facing the extremely difficult trial of the crucifixion) through the trusting, obedient, loving relationship He had with God the Father. He calls His disciples to a similar relationship with God the Father.<sup>51</sup>

Christ didn't say that we would have peace with the world, which hates God and His Son, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). **But that** doesn't mean we cannot have peaceful relations with most non-Christians, "If possible,

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<sup>51</sup> In John 15:11 Jesus goes on to call His disciples to partake of *His joy*, the joy that He experienced, that "My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full." In the preceding verse (15:10) He told them that they would abide in His love if they kept His commandments, as He had kept the Father's commandments and abided in His love.

so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). We can and should have peace in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Christ has given us peace, but like most of the things that God has given us, peace will not be manifested in our lives to much of an extent if we do not continue to do the things we must do by God's grace through faith. Walking in faith and by the Spirit (which includes making God and His Word top priority in our hearts and walking in righteousness and holiness) is far from being automatic, and the enemies of God work overtime trying to get us out of faith and the Spirit into things like doubt, fear, and sin (the things of the world, the flesh, and the devil).

Jesus went on to say "Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." In Phil. 4:6, 7 the apostle Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." In 1 Pet. 5:7 the apostle Peter said, "casting all your anxiety ["care" NKJV] on Him [in faith and prayer], because He cares for you." We must do the things God requires of us, by His grace/Spirit through faith on a continuous basis, for His glory, and for our good.

Jesus said these words ("Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful") to His apostles in the context of His leaving them. Apparently the words, "not as the world gives" make the point that though the people of Israel would often greet one another, or depart from one another, with the word *peace* (*shalom*), the world cannot give this peace—but Jesus can! (The Gospel of John shows that most of Israel was part of the "world.")

I'll quote part of what William Hendricksen says here.<sup>52</sup> "... That the peace here indicated implies absence of the troubled and fearful feeling is clear from the words which immediately follow, namely, 'Let not your hearts any longer be troubled, neither let them be fearful.' ... In the light of the entire chapter we believe that the word *peace* here in 14:27 indicates that absence of spiritual unrest and that assurance of salvation and of God's loving presence under all circumstances which results from exercising faith in God and in his Son (14:1) and from the contemplation of his gracious promises (see especially 14:1, 2, 3, 12-14, 16-21, 25, 26). It is the peace of which Paul speaks in Phil. 4:6, 7. When Jesus says, 'Not as the world gives do I give to you,' the context makes clear that what he means is, 'I give *my* peace,' which the world can never bestow, no matter how often it may say, 'Peace to you,' or 'Go in peace.' ..."] **(28) You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you [cf. John 13:33; 14:2-4, 12, 18, 21-23]. 'If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I [cf. John 10:29]. [Apparently the idea here is that if they loved Jesus, they would have rejoiced *in His behalf* because it was a great blessing for Him to go back to the Father. His going back to the Father would include, for one thing, His being exalted and glorified together with the Father with the glory He had with Him before the world was (John 13:31, 32; 17:5). He also informed them in this discourse that it was to *their advantage* that He go to the Father because, for one thing, having gone to the Father, He would be able send the Spirit to them (cf., e.g., John 16:7; Acts 2:33).] (29) Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.** [Compare John 13:19; 16:4. I'll quote a sentence from what Edwin A. Blum says here.<sup>53</sup> "Fulfilled prophecy is a great comfort and support to believers (cf. Isa. 46:8-

<sup>52</sup> *Gospel of John* (Baker, 1953), page 287.

<sup>53</sup> *Bible Knowledge Commentary-New Testament* (Victor Books, 1983), page 324.

10).”] **(30) I will not speak much more with you** [That very evening Jesus was arrested, and He did not speak with His apostles again until after He was resurrected (cf. John 20:19-27).], **for the ruler of the world** [cf. John 12:31; 16:11] **is coming** [Satan, who had motivated Judas to betray Christ (e.g., John 13:2, 26-30), was coming. For one thing, Judas would come that very evening to lead the soldiers, etc. to Christ to arrest Him, which would lead to His crucifixion. Little did Satan and the rulers of this world know that the crucifixion of Christ would result in their ultimate total defeat (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8).], **and he has nothing in Me** [Satan and his followers succeeded in their plot to have Jesus put to death, but that was only because it was the will of God; the Son voluntarily submitted to (obeyed) the Father’s will (see verse 31; cf., e.g., Matt. 26:53, 54; John 10:11-18; and Phil 2:8). *Satan had nothing in Christ*: He had no authority over Him; Christ was not spiritually dead, and there was nothing sinful or dark in Him that Satan could work with. He could tempt Christ, but He couldn’t entice Him to sin or to deviate from the perfect will of God for Him (cf. Heb. 2:18; 4:15). We as Christians, by the sufficient saving grace of God in Christ, through faith, must not give Satan any place in *us*, “do not give the devil an opportunity [“Lit. *a place*”] in you” (Eph. 4:27; cf., e.g., 1 John 4:4).]; **(31) but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me** [Jesus was speaking here (at least for the most part) of His going to the cross, in accordance with the commandment of God the Father. Note the following words to His apostles.]. **Get up, let us go from here.** [There is a minor problem here in that it isn’t clear whether Jesus and His disciples left the upper room (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12) at that time, or whether they ended up staying there until after Jesus had spoken the words of chapters 15, 16 and prayed the words of chapter 17. It doesn’t make much difference where they were when He spoke these words. They could have left the upper room at that time and Jesus continued to speak as they headed for the garden of Gethsemane, and surely (if that is what happened) they would have stopped at some location(s) on the way to the garden. John 18:1 says, “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth [This Greek verb could just as well be translated “He went out,” which would fit their going out of the upper room at that time. The NKJV; NRSV, for example, have “He/he went out.”] with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron [a valley between the temple (on the east side of the temple) and the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives], where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.”]

## CHAPTER 15

**“I am the true vine** [God’s *true* vine with its branches represents *true* Israel.], **and My Father is the vinedresser. (2) Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away** [*Bearing fruit* goes with having saving faith and continuing in that faith, a faith that cooperates with God’s saving grace and manifests itself in good *fruit* like faithfulness, love, obedience, and works of righteousness (the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit [cf. Gal. 5:22, 23]). In this context (with the words that follow in verse 2 and the words of verse 3), these words at the beginning of verse 2 could be limited to “branches” that never do manifest a solid faith commitment to Christ and His word in their hearts; they are “believers” who do not continue in His word, or become disciples, or bear fruit. See John 8:31. I’ll quote John 8:31-36.<sup>54</sup> (John 8:31-36 are also quite relevant to the second half of John 15:2 and to what it means to be *disciples* of Christ in verse 8.)

“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed in Him [They had become “believers” in one sense, but as the following words show, they needed to continue in His word to learn the truth and become His “disciples” and be set free from sin (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; John 2:23-25).], ‘If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’ ... (34) ...everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin ... (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

John 6:60-69 provide an example of “disciples” withdrawing from Jesus and not continuing with Him and His word. John 6:64 indicates that these “disciples” never did truly “believe” in Christ (they never became true “believers”) and that Jesus knew this from the beginning. John 6:70, 71 speak of Judas, who was a “devil” and was going to betray Him (cf., e.g., John 12:4; 13:2, 10, 11, 18, 21-30; and 18:2, 3). The parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; and Luke 8:9-15) speaks of those who, for various reasons, fail to continue with Christ and His word by faith (the seed that was sown by the Sower was the *word* of God).

If John 15:2a is limited to “believers” who never had saving faith to begin with (which is possible in this context),<sup>55</sup> these words don’t demonstrate that true believers can lose their salvation, even though this verse speaks of these branches being *in the vine* (Christ) in some sense before God takes them away. John 15:6, however (with the strong exhortation regarding the need for the apostles and all Christians to continue to abide/remain in Christ in John 15:4-6), seems to clearly warn that true believers (will become unbelievers and) will be lost if they don’t abide/remain in Christ (by faith). There are many passages in the New Testament that clearly demonstrate that born-again Christians can fall away from Christ. We must take such warnings seriously and make it top priority to stay faithful to God by His sufficient grace. God doesn’t give us saving faith to begin with, and He doesn’t compel believers to continue in faith.<sup>56</sup>]; **and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes** [The Greek verb used here (*kathairō*) means *to make clean*; it can also be translated *prune* when speaking of branches. The translation “prunes” fits the picture of the vine with its branches and the vinedresser well, but I

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<sup>54</sup> John chapters 5-8 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated October 2005.

<sup>55</sup> “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:26); that is, it isn’t real (saving) faith.

<sup>56</sup> Start with my paper titled “Once Saved, Always Saved?” and my “Paper on Faith.” Also see my paper dated April 2002

believe it would be far better to translate “He cleans. (In the margin the NASB has, “Lit. *cleans*; used to describe pruning.” The NEB has, “he cleans”; the ASV has, “he cleanseth”; the NT by Henry Alford, “he cleanseth”; the KJV “he purgeth”; the *Amplified Bible* “He cleanseth and repeatedly prunes”; and Hendricksen translates, “he cleanses.”) That translation shows the (apparent) important relationship with the adjective *clean* in verse 3 (Greek *katharos a, on*). The Greek verb and adjective are closely related; the verb was derived from the adjective. We’ll discuss the meaning of these words further as we continue.] **it so that it may bear more fruit.** [It seems that the words of verse 3 are important in establishing the meaning of these words at the end of verse 2 (starting with the words, “and every branch that bears fruit...”). In verse 3 Jesus says, “You [speaking to the eleven apostles] are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you [which they had received, and had been continuing in, by faith].” Compare John 17:6, 8, “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were *Yours* and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word... for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.”

The apostles were representative of disciples who had a solid, abiding faith commitment to Christ and God’s word. They submitted to Christ’s word in faith and continued in that word. They bore fruit; they were for real; their lives/works demonstrated that they were genuine disciples of Christ. They made God and His Son top priority in their hearts; they submitted in faith to the words He spoke and took them into their hearts and made it a top priority to understand them and to live in line with them. God can work with those who submit to Him and take His word seriously; they are receptive to (they appropriate and cooperate with) His saving grace.

On the need for Christ’s true disciples to continue in God/Christ’s word, see John 8:31-36, which is quoted above under verse 2 (cf., e.g., John 14:21, 23). As John 8:31-36 show, those who continue in the word of Christ are set free from sin; they are *cleansed* from sin. The apostles, as John 15:3 shows, had become *clean* through the word which Christ had spoken to them (which they had submitted to and continued in by faith). On the apostles being *clean*, see John 13:10, 11.<sup>57</sup> **(3) You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.** [See under verse 2. God and His word had made the apostles clean, but the apostles had to submit to God and His word in faith, and they had to continue in that faith. It was understood that the apostles (and all Christians) must stay clean (and continue to grow in the things of God) through the saving grace of God in Christ.] **(4) Abide** [“Remain” NIV] **in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides** [“it must remain” NIV] **in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide** [“remain” NIV] **in Me.** [The words of this verse and most of the rest of the verses that follow in this chapter have their primary application for the days after Christ has died His atoning death, been resurrected, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and come back to His disciples through sending the Spirit to dwell in them (cf., e.g., John 14:12-23; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 4:13; and 1 John 2:6). We abide/remain in Christ by continuing to walk in line with the word of God (in the “righteousness and holiness of the truth” [Eph. 4:24]) and in/by/after the

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<sup>57</sup> As we discussed under John 13:8-10, there was a definite limit to the depth of the *cleansing* from sin that could be accomplished before the new covenant had been established on the shed blood of Christ and in the outpouring of the Spirit of life and holiness.

Spirit of God by grace through faith.] **(5) I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides** [“remains” NIV] **in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.** [Christians are totally dependent on Christ and the grace/Spirit of God to partake of spiritual/eternal life and to bring forth good fruit (even as a branch is totally dependent on the vine to which it is attached), and God (the triune God) must receive all the glory for the good fruit. It is helpful to distinguish between two different categories of fruit. So far in discussing the fruit that Christ’s disciples must bear in this chapter we have only discussed one category of fruit, the fruit that includes a life lived in obedience to God’s word in righteousness and holiness by faith, which includes the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22, 23 give a partial listing of the good fruit the Spirit produces in the lives of believers as they walk in/by/after the Spirit (in accordance with God’s word) by faith, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control....”

The other category of fruit is the fruit of the ministries of the apostles (and all Christian ministers and the “ministries” of all Christians). Jesus, not surprisingly, spoke much of the ministries of His apostles in these chapters (cf. John 13:16, 20; 14:12-14, 26; 15:4-8, 16, 18-27; 16:1-15, 23-28; and 17:6-26). John 15:16 (with 15:18-27) is especially relevant, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go forth and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain....” There is much overlap between these two categories of fruit; both categories come by the grace/Spirit of God in Christ. For one thing, the apostles could not have had fruitful ministries if they did not have an abundant supply of the fruit spoken of in the preceding paragraph. Sin, fleshiness, and worldliness destroy ministries. Furthermore, the transformed lives of the apostles and other Christians testified to the truthfulness of the gospel (cf., e.g., John 17:23).] **(6) If anyone does not abide** [“remain” NIV] **in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up** [cf. Rom. 11:20-22]; **and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.** [See under verse 2.] **(7) If you abide** [“remain” NIV] **in Me, and My words abide** [“remain” NIV] **in you** [If His words abide/remain in us, we will think and live in line with His words, which include His commandments. If we have faith in God’s word, we will continue to be doers of His word (cf. James 1:22, 23); faith without works is dead (James 2:26), that is, it isn’t real faith.<sup>58</sup>], **ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.** [Compare John 14:13, 14; 15:16. Those who abide/remain in Christ and have His words abiding/remaining in them will be living in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, and their attitudes, priorities, and motives will be right. Apostles (and other ministers and all Christians) like that will ask for the right things (in accordance with the will of God and in line with their commission and assignments from God), and they can be sure of receiving the things they ask for (cf. 1 John 5:14, 15). (Believers like that will always be seeking God to know His will in specific areas too. His will, not our will, be done, and His name be glorified!) In this context the emphasis was on the apostles asking for things that went along with fulfilling their commission to take the gospel to the world and establishing the Christian church in the truth of the gospel (cf. John 15:16), but this promise that their prayers (and

<sup>58</sup>If we are living for God and keeping His commandments, we can have an assurance that our prayers will be answered (assuming that we are praying in line with His will [cf. 1 John 5:14, 15]). See 1 John 3:18-22. I’ll quote 3:22, “and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things pleasing in His sight.” We must also pray in faith (cf. James 1:5-8; Mark 11:22-24).

ours) would be answered was not limited to that area.] **(8) My Father is glorified by this** [We were created to glorify God (and to enjoy Him and His salvation and creation—especially His *new* creation—forever).], **that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples** [“showing yourselves to be my disciples” NIV]. [The Father was glorified by the faithful, loving obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ when He lived on the earth, especially by His atoning death (cf. John 13:31, 32; 17:4 [“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do”]). Now the Father is glorified as the Lord Jesus Christ continues His work on the earth in and through His disciples, who love and are faithful to the Father and the Son. I suppose we should see both categories of fruit included here that I mentioned under verse 5. There can be no doubting that the Father is glorified by the righteous, holy lives of Christians (cf., e.g., Matt. 5:16), even as He is glorified by His disciples fulfilling their assigned ministries. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The Father was glorified through the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is glorified through our lives to the extent we live in the center of His will, because, for one thing, people can see something of what God is really like and what He can do—it is all good, very good. The fleshiness, sin, etc. of Christians rob God (the triune God) of glory; it also gives a bad witness regarding the truthfulness and glory of the gospel.

Regarding the last words of this verse, “and so prove to be My disciples,” Jesus said in John 8:31, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine.” (On John 8:31 see above under verse 2.) **(9) Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you** [This is a *very special* love indeed. We become united with the Lord Jesus Christ in such a glorious way that we even share in the love that the Father has for His unique Son. (We have also become partakers of the righteousness and holiness of God through our union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and after we are glorified through our union with Him, we will reign with Him forever.) In John 17:23 Jesus mentions (in prayer) that the Father loves (true) Christians even as He loves His unique Son. If these words were not in the Bible, we would have a very hard time believing that they are true. What a privilege! What a salvation plan! We must be faithful to such a God (by His grace) for His glory and for our good!]; **abide** [“remain” NIV] **in My love.** [As the next verse shows, there are conditions (at least one condition) for abiding/remaining in the love of God. (See under John 13:34; 14:15, 21, 23 and the references cited there. Jude exhorted his readers to “keep [themselves] in the love of God” [Jude 1:21]. The epistle of Jude shows that they were to do this by staying faithful to God and His word by His grace [cf. Jude 1:24] in days when many were falling away from the faith.) In the next verse Jesus speaks of keeping His commandments (by grace through faith) as the condition.

Jesus was speaking throughout this chapter to those who had already repented and submitted to God in faith. They were already loved by Jesus in a very special sense (cf. John 13:1); the issue here was their need to continue to abide/remain in His love by meeting God’s condition(s). We could also say that the condition is that we continue to appropriate God’s saving grace (which includes His sanctifying grace, which enables us to keep His commandments) *by faith*. Or, we could say it this way: The condition is that we continue to respond to His love (by faith) and love Him in/by the Spirit. If we love Him, we *will* keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23).

We must understand that God loved us before we love Him (cf., e.g., 1 John 4:19); He loved us while we were still ungodly sinners (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:6-8).<sup>59</sup> We did not, and we could not, earn His love, but we must respond to His love and His offer of salvation with repentance and faith, and we must stay faithful to His covenant (the new covenant) by His grace/Spirit through faith if we expect to abide/remain in the love of the Father and the Son.] **(10) If you keep My commandments, you will abide** [“remain” NIV] **in My love** [Compare John 14:21, 23; 15:14, “You are My friends, if you do what I command you.”]; **just as I have kept My Father’s commandments** [cf., e.g., John 14:31] **and abide** [“remain” NIV] **in His love.** [Compare John 8:29, “And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone [cf. John 16:32], for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him”; John 10:17, “For this reason [at least this is one reason] the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.”]

This verse (John 15:10) is typical of the teaching of the Bible in general in that it speaks in black and white terms, not gray. Jesus speaks of His disciples keeping His commandments (and not sinning), just as He had kept the Father’s commandments without sinning, and we must begin to think that way in our hearts (in faith). Many Christians in our day think it’s impossible to live without sinning, and they aren’t even setting that as a goal; they expect sin to continue and make much room for it. They don’t have faith that they can stop sinning; most don’t think they are supposed to have such faith; very often Christians even refer to verses in the New Testament that supposedly prove that it is impossible for Christians to stop sinning this side of glory. I believe they are making a serious mistake. I believe the New Testament is quite clear on the fact that God has truly called us, and enables us, to live in His righteousness and holiness with the victory over sin.<sup>60</sup> One thing is for sure, if God’s sanctifying grace in Christ is sufficient for us to live above sin, which it is, we will not live above sin if we don’t appropriate that sanctifying grace on a continuous basis by faith.

What happens if born-again Christians sin? It’s clear that God doesn’t immediately stop loving Christians if they commit a sin, and when we repent (which means more than asking for forgiveness; we must do everything we can to make things right, and we must make it a top priority to stop sinning), He is quick to forgive and to forget. Compare, for example, 1 John 2:1, 2. The Christians at Laodicea that Christ was speaking to in Rev. 3:14-22 (and what He said to them applies to all Christians in the same situation) needed to do quite a bit of repenting, and He still loved them (Rev. 3:19), but I am quite sure that they were not fully abiding in His love, and He powerfully warned them that if they didn’t repent He would “spit [them] out of His mouth” (Rev. 3:16). Having been spit out of His mouth, it doesn’t seem that they would abide/remain in His love at all. In a similar way Jesus warned the Christians at Ephesus that if they didn’t repent they would no longer be His people (Rev. 2:1-7), and He warned the Christians at Sardis who were in sin that if they didn’t repent He would erase their names from the book of life (Rev. 3:1-6). These verses in Revelation chapters 2, 3 make it quite clear that Jesus was speaking (at least for the most part) to

<sup>59</sup> The fact that God *foreknew* that we would submit to Christ and the new covenant in faith (e.g., Rom. 8:29) does not detract from the fact that He had to take the initiative in our salvation or the fact that we are saved one-hundred percent by the grace of God in Christ—we did not (and we do not) merit/earn salvation at all.

<sup>60</sup> Start with my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*; this super-important topic is also discussed in many of my papers.

born-again Christians, Christians who were on the verge of losing their salvation if they didn't quickly repent.

We desperately need more transformation in the body of Christ. We need to raise the standard to where the New Testament puts it and make it top priority to live like God wants us to live (by His grace/Spirit through faith) for His glory and our good. We certainly shouldn't tempt God to see how much sin, fleshiness, and worldliness we can get by with and still be Christians in the eyes of God. That's dangerous, evil experimentation!

I trust all serious Christians will agree that it really is a good thing for us to fully live in line with God's commandments. He didn't give them to us to hurt us or to deny us what is good or needful. The devil is still trying to convince those who will listen (like Eve listened) that God's commandments are burdensome (cf. 1 John 5:3) and need to be broken for our greater good. God really is a good God! He is for our ultimate good! That's what love does! Real *joy*, as the next verse shows, comes with living in the center of God's will, fully abiding in His love.] **(11) These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.** [Compare John 17:13, "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world [while He is still with His disciples, before He goes to the Father] so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." It isn't clear how much "these things" include here in John 15:11, nor does it make much difference. It could be limited to what Jesus said in John 15:1-11, or it could include all that He said starting at John 13:1. The point that Jesus was making here is clear, and it is a glorious point indeed: If the apostles (and all Christians) are faithful to Christ (and the Father) and keep His commandments, they will abide/remain in His love and will have the same joy (the same fullness of joy) that He had experienced through keeping the Father's commandments and abiding in His love.<sup>61</sup>] **(12) This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.** [See John 13:34; 15:17; 1 John 3:23; and 2 John 1:5. It was to be understood, of course, that loving God, which is the first great commandment given in the Mosaic Law (cf. Matt. 22:36-38), was even more important than loving one another, but (as John 13:34 shows) Christ's disciples loving one another *just as they have been loved by Him* (which included His dying for them, which is mentioned in the following verse) was a *new* commandment (a *new* commandment that goes with the *new* covenant). Born-again Christians are enabled, and required, to love God and one another on a higher level than was required under the old covenant.

In John 15:10 (and 14:15, 21; cf. 14:23), Jesus spoke of keeping His "commandments"; also cf. John 15:14, 17 (see under 15:14, 17). His one "commandment" cannot be fully equated with His "commandments," but many of His commandments are embraced in His one commandment, and He puts great emphasis on this new commandment to love one another just as they have been loved by Him by calling this commandment "My commandment" here.

I'll quote what the apostle Paul said in Rom. 13:8b-10 (also see Gal. 5:14), "for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. (9) For this, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR

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<sup>61</sup> In John 14:27 Jesus spoke of His apostles (and all Christians that meet His conditions) having the same *peace* that He had (as they love Christ and keep His word).

NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' (10) Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the law*." What Paul said here (as the context shows) was not limited to the special love Christians are to have for other Christians. We must understand, of course, that we haven't begun to *fulfill the law* if we love our neighbor while skipping the greater commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.] **(13) Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends** [On being Christ's "friends," cf. John 15:14, 15; Luke 12:4; Matt. 12:50.]. [Compare John 10:11-18; Rom. 5:8.] **(14) You are My friends if you do what** [The Greek relative pronoun (*ha*) behind "what" in the United Bible Societies *Greek New Testament* (fourth revised edition) is neuter *plural*. It could be translated "the things that," for example, instead of "what."<sup>62</sup> *The things that* Jesus commanded His disciples is equivalent to the "commandments" He gave them (cf. John 14:15, 21; 15:10). The Greek noun (*entolē*) translated commandment(s) in John 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12 (the noun is singular in 15:12 and plural in the other verses) was derived from the Greek verb *entellomai*, the verb translated "I command" here in verse 14, and in verse 17.] **I command you.** [The words of this verse (15:14) are comparable in meaning with the words of John 15:10, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love."] **(15) No longer do I call you slaves** ["servants" NIV], **for the slave** ["servant"] **does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you** [cf. John 16:12]. **(16) You did not choose Me but I chose you** [Jesus chose them, for one thing, to be apostles (cf., e.g., John 6:70; 13:18; 15:19; and Acts 1:2).<sup>63</sup> His sharing with them all things that He had heard from the Father (verse 15) and His choosing them, etc. (verse 16) were manifestations of His love for them.], **and appointed** [cf. 1 Cor. 12:28] **you that** [The Greek behind "that" here is *hina*. This will become relevant as we continue with this verse.] **you would go and bear fruit** [On bearing fruit, compare John 15:2-5, 7, 8, 18-27.<sup>64</sup> Here in verse 16 it seems that Jesus was speaking (at least for the most part) of the *fruit* that His apostles (and all ministers, and to some extent all Christians) would bear through their appointed ministries.], **and that your fruit would remain** [The NIV has, "and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last." Jesus chose them and appointed them to bear fruit, fruit that would remain, "fruit for eternal life" (cf. John 4:36). To the extent the apostles (including Paul) were faithful to their commission (and they were faithful, at least for the most part<sup>65</sup>), they were laying the foundation for the Christian church and giving us the New Testament, and they were bearing much good spiritual/eternal fruit in the lives of those who were being converted and sanctified.

To the extent their converts went back into heresy, back into sin, etc. the fruit of their ministries would *not* remain (cf. Phil. 3:14-16), but it doesn't seem that Jesus included that idea here. If God's ministers are faithful and do the things required of them, they will *not* have to answer to God for the failure of others, but the more the fruit that remains to the end the better.], **so that** [I would translate "that" (or the equivalent)

<sup>62</sup> George R. Beasley Murray (*John*, page 266) translates, "the things [I command you]."

<sup>63</sup> The Greek verb (*eklegomai*) behind "I chose [you]" (and behind "You did [not] choose [Me]" here in verse 16 is also used in verse 19. In verse 19 the verb is used of their being chosen *out of the world*; all true Christians have been chosen *out of the world* (elected) to be His disciples/people.

<sup>64</sup> Under verse 5 we discussed the fact that there are two different categories of fruit.

<sup>65</sup> God made sure that the apostles would lay a solid foundation for the Christian church and leave us with the writings of the New Testament.

instead of “so that.” The older (1977) edition of the NASB has “that”; so does the KJV; NKJV. We will discuss the meaning of these words as we continue.] **whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.** [The Greek behind “so that” or “that” is *hina*. It seems that those commentators (e.g., Carson, Lenski, Godet, Alford, Meyer, and Barrett) are right, who believe this second *hina* clause is coordinate with (parallel with), not subordinate to (not dependent on), the first *hina* clause in this verse. The translation “that” fits the “coordinate with (parallel with)” idea. The “so that” translation of the 1995 edition of the NASB (and other translations, including the *Amplified Bible*; NAB; and NIV [Instead of translating “so that” the NIV starts a new sentence, “Then the Father will give you....”]) takes the clause that starts with the second *hina* as subordinate to (dependent on) the first *hina* clause, which communicates the idea that the Father will only give the apostles what they ask for *after* they have gone forth and borne fruit, fruit that will remain. But the primary things they were to ask for related to their bearing fruit (abiding fruit) for the kingdom of God *before* they bore that fruit.

I’ll quote a few sentences from what R. C. H. Lenski says here.<sup>66</sup> “To friends chosen entirely by Himself [Jesus was led by the Father in choosing the twelve apostles] Jesus commits his great work. But he speaks of it not as a task, a burden, or the like, but as an honor, a gift, a blessing. ... What a high and glorious position for these friends of Jesus: one graced with abiding fruit! ....” It is a great privilege, not a burden, to be called to work for God. He didn’t create us to use us like slaves or robots. And He chooses people He loves to work in hard places for Him—and He gives them grace sufficient to stay faithful and to fulfill their assignments.] **(17) This I command you, that you love one another.**<sup>67</sup> [D. A. Carson points out that this verse “sets the stage for the contrasting hatred displayed by the world and discussed in the ensuing verses.” And I’ll quote what Everett F. Harrison says here.<sup>68</sup> “This verse is transitional. The disciples had to share love among themselves, for they would not get it from the world. At this point the word ‘love’ all but disappears from the passage, being replaced by ‘hate’ or ‘hatred’ (eight times in as many verses).”

The more we know (with full assurance and experiential knowledge) that God (the triune God) really loves us as individual Christians and that He has the same love for every other true Christian, the more we will love one another in the body of Christ (being enabled by His grace/Spirit). Furthermore, if we love God (the triune God), we will keep His commandments (cf. John 14:15, 21, 23), very much including His commandment to love one another as we are loved by Him.] **(18) If the world hates you, you know that** [“Or (imperative) *know that*” (margin of NASB); “keep in mind” NIV] **it has hated Me before it hated you.** [Compare Matt. 10:22; John 7:7; 15:19-27; and 17:14. I’ll quote John 7:7b, “but [the world] hates Me because I testify of it, that its

<sup>66</sup> *Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), page 1052.

<sup>67</sup> The Greek behind “that you love one another” is exactly the same in verse 12 and verse 17, and (apparently) the meaning of these two verses is essentially the same. However, as the more literal translations of the KJV; NKJV show, the Greek of verse 17 starts with the words “These things” (Greek *tauta*) instead of “This.” Apparently Jesus used the plural (“these things”) here in verse 17 to further emphasize the key importance of this command for Christians to love one another. This command was especially important for the apostles who had the commission to lay the foundation for the Christian church, and it is all the more important in times when Christians are facing intense hatred and persecution from the world (like the apostles did; cf. verses 18-25).

<sup>68</sup> *Gospel According to John*, page 524; *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Moody Press, 1962), page 1105.

deeds are evil.”<sup>69</sup> The apostles (and, to some extent, all true Christians) also testify to the world that its deeds are evil (cf. John 15:26, 27 with 16:8-11). Satan, the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. John 12:31; 16:11), hates God (the triune God) and all who are loyal to Him, especially those who are the greatest threat to his kingdom, very much including the apostles. The following verses (see verses 22-25) make it clear that the “world” here in verses 18, 19 very much included the Israelites who rejected Christ.] **(19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world [See footnote 63.], because of this the world hates you.** [I’ll quote a few sentences from what J. H. Bernard says here.<sup>70</sup> “One of the characteristics of the writings of John [John was quoting Jesus here and he was inspired by the Holy Spirit] is that he always paints in black and white, without allowing for intermediate shades of colour. He will have no compromise with evil. For him the Church and world are set over against each other, and he does not contemplate their reconciliation.”<sup>71</sup> There can be no compromise with the god of this world or those loyal to him, but God has chosen to save a large number of individuals out of the world to become part of His kingdom.

I’ll quote James 4:4, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whosoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”] **(20) Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave [“servant” NIV] is not greater than his master [cf. John 13:16; Matt. 10:24].’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you [cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-12; and 2 Tim. 3:12]; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.** [The last words of this verse are interpreted two different ways. I believe Jesus intended them in a negative sense (which fits this context very well, with Jesus consistently speaking of [the people of] the world in a negative sense throughout verses 18-25, very much including verse 21, which builds on, and helps interpret, verse 20); these words then communicate the idea that they will *not* keep your word (which is the word of Christ through the apostles) any more than they have kept My word. I’ll quote what R. V. G. Tasker says here.<sup>72</sup> “The force of the last clause in this verse is well brought out by Knox ‘they will pay the same attention to your words as to mine; that is, none.’ ” Many commentators understand these words in a positive sense; that is, some will keep the apostles’ word even as some had kept Christ’s word. It is true, of course, that some did keep the apostles’ word even as some kept Christ’s word, but I don’t believe Jesus included that idea here. Those who did submit to Christ and keep His word were no longer people of the world; they united with the people of God in the kingdom of God.] **(21) But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake** [Compare Matt. 10:22; 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:12, 17;

<sup>69</sup> This helps explain the strong tendency among so many evangelical Christians to modify the message of the gospel in our day. (But God hasn’t modified His gospel!) If the gospel is presented in a way that doesn’t force people to see that they are sinners who need to repent and begin to live for God in His righteousness and holiness (by His saving grace in Christ) the world isn’t that offended, but the heart of the gospel hasn’t been presented either. In many “evangelical” churches today you won’t hear the word *repent*, or about God’s wrath against sin and the coming day of judgment, but you probably will hear how God loves you unconditionally and always will, and you probably will hear about forgiveness and about a watered-down version of the new birth.

<sup>70</sup> *Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. 2 (T&T Clark, 1999 reprint), page 491.

<sup>71</sup> Bernard has a footnote, “See for this contrast, Hobhouse, *The Church and the World*; cf. Westcott, *Epistles of St. John*, p. 250f., and Gore, *Epistles of St. John*, p. 154f.”

<sup>72</sup> *Gospel According to St. John* (Eerdmans, 1960), page 178.

Acts 5:41; 9:14; 26:9; 1 Pet. 4:14; and Rev. 2:3. In other words, since they hate Me, they will hate you and persecute you, because of your relationship with Me. They will especially hate and persecute the apostles because of the foundational importance of their ministry.], **because they do not know the One who sent Me.** [Compare John 8:19, 55; 16:3; 17:25; and 1 John 3:1. They did not know God the Father because they were following the devil in his rebellion against God, and, significantly, they were not going to repent. Those who reject God and are committed to persist in rebellion, without repentance, will naturally reject God the Son and God's offer of salvation.] **(22) If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse** ["valid excuse" BAGD (under *prophasis, eōs*)] **for their sin.** [The last words of this verse, starting with the words "but now," (and much other scripture) demonstrate that the words of this verse preceding "but now" must be substantially qualified. The Jews had sin (sin for which they were responsible before God) before Jesus came (cf., e.g., Matt. 3:1-10; Luke 13:1-5); they were living in sin and rebelling against God (even though many were not aware that they were rebelling against Him; men are typically slow to see their sin and to admit their sin). The Gentiles were living in sin too, and they, like the Jews, had no legitimate excuse for their sin. See, for example, Rom. 1:18-3:23.

By sending His Son (and then the gospel of the new covenant, which came in great power through the ministry of the outpoured Spirit; see, for example, John 16:8-11), God forced the issue. Those who continued in sin and darkness and rejected Christ (or God's offer of salvation in Christ) when they were solidly confronted with Him (or the gospel) demonstrated that their hearts were unrepentant, rebellious, and hostile to God (the triune God). They demonstrated that they chose the darkness and the ruler of the darkness instead of God and the light (cf., e.g., John 3:18-20). In the next verse (John 15:23) Jesus goes on to say that those who hate (and reject) Him demonstrate that they hate the Father too (even those who were boasting of their love for the God of Israel). In verse 24 Jesus adds the fact that their rejecting Him while knowing the works that He had done further strips away their masks of hypocrisy and further demonstrates that they truly are in rebellion against, and even hate, God the Father, who sent His Son to save and to judge. Most of Christ's judging will take place after His second coming.

When people are solidly confronted with the Lord Jesus Christ (or the gospel) and make the decision to reject Him (or the gospel), they are in a very real sense having their *final* judgment and determining their eternal fate—*condemnation*. They are rejecting God's *only* plan of salvation. See, for example, John 3:18-20, 36; 8:21, 24. The only way they can get out from under that *condemnation* is to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation through Him. The New Testament (cf. John 3:18; 5:24) also shows that those who have submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ (or the gospel) have, in a very real sense, already had their *final* judgment, and they have passed out of death into spiritual/eternal life. The only way they could undo that judgment (not the will of God! not a good idea!) would be for them to turn from God and salvation back into rebellion and darkness, resulting in condemnation.

It *is* true, of course, that no one would, or could, have been guilty of the great sin (the watershed event) of rejecting God the Son and God's plan of salvation if the Lord Jesus Christ had not come.

I'll quote part of what Craig S. Keener says here.<sup>73</sup> "Jesus' coming unveiled the 'world's' sin (15:22, 24); this claim fits both his earlier exposure of his enemies' sin (8:21, 34 [24?]) and the claim that those who try to conceal their sin are those who cannot be rid of it [John 3:19 shows that they love the darkness, which includes sin; they don't want to repent] (3:20; 9:41).<sup>74</sup> **(23) He who hates Me hates My Father also.** [See under verse 22. It is not possible for people to hate the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by the Father and perfectly manifested the Father, and to love the One who sent Him.] **(24) If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin** [The words of verse 24 must be qualified in a substantial sense, just like the words at the beginning of verse 22 (see there).]; **but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.** [The fact that they saw Christ (which included hearing His words and knowing of His works, which words and works came from the Father [cf. John 5:36; 10:37] and rejected and hated Him exposed the religious hypocrisy and powerfully demonstrated that they were in rebellion against God in their hearts and hated Him. Multitudes (both those who lived back then and those who have lived in subsequent generations) have not seen Him with their physical eyes, but they have been confronted with Him through the gospel, through the enlightening, convicting work of the Spirit, and through the testimony (the words, works, lives) of Christians.] **(25) But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE** [apparently quoted from Psalm 69:4; cf. Psalm 35:19;] [The fact that Christ spoke here of "their Law" confirms that when He has been speaking of the *world*, He has been speaking (at least for the most part) of the Jews who rejected Him. "ME" here refers to Christ Jesus. They hated Him without a legitimate cause. He was perfect in every way (but He didn't follow all the Jewish traditions, and the Jews accused Him of blasphemy for claiming too much for Himself—actually He claimed less than the reality), but His primary problem (from the world's point of view) was that He insisted that men were sinners who needed to repent and submit to God and the gospel in faith, which includes forsaking sin and loving and serving God from the heart. This was not, of course, a *legitimate* excuse for hating and rejecting Christ. Mankind owes the Creator (the triune God) their allegiance. The world's hatred of Christ demonstrates how deep the sin problem is, far deeper than most people realize.] **(26) When the Helper [Paraklete] comes** [cf. John 14:16-26], **whom I will send to you from the Father** [cf., e.g., Acts 2:33], **that is the Spirit of truth** [cf. John 14:16, 17] **who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me** [cf. John 16:8-11; Acts 5:32; and 1 John 5:7, 8], **(27) and you will testify also** [cf. Luke 24:48; John 19:35;

<sup>73</sup> *Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 (Hendrickson, 2003), pages 1020.

<sup>74</sup> Keener has a footnote, "This text does not exonerate those who did not see or hear him, as if negating the Gospel's earlier statements that the world stands condemned before his coming (3:17-18 [3:16-21; 8:21-47; 12:25, 31; Rom. 2:2-13; 3:9-23; 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 11:32; Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13, 14; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19]) or that Jesus is the only way to the Father (14:6); *prophasis* [this Greek noun was translated "excuse" by the NASB] simply means 'pretext' ["cover-up"] (Whitaker, *John*, 382-83, note)."

21:24; Acts 1:8; 5:32; 1 John 1:2; 4:14; and Rev. 1:2], **because you have been with Me from the beginning** [cf., e.g., Luke 1:2; Acts 1:21-26].”

## CHAPTER 16

**“These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling** [“so that you will not go astray” NIV]. [“These things” here refer to the things Jesus just said to them in 15:18-24, warning them that many would reject the gospel and hate those who had been commissioned to take the gospel to the world. He goes on to speak of these things in 16:2-4. Verse 2 makes it clear that Jesus was speaking here (at least for the most part) of their taking the gospel to Israel and being rejected there. If they had not been warned of the hatred and persecution they would often encounter, it could have led to their getting discouraged and falling away from Christ, or at least to their falling away from faithfully carrying out their all-important foundational ministries.] **(2) They will make you outcasts from the synagogue** [cf. John 9:22; 12:42], **but** [“in fact” NIV; “indeed” NRSV] **an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.** [Most of the Jewish leaders (and many other Jews) had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, calling Him a sinner and a blasphemer (cf., e.g., John 5:5-18; 8:48-59; 9:13-34; and 10:19-21, 31-39), and the very next day (after Jesus spoke these things to the apostles) they clamored for Him to be crucified for His extreme sinfulness (cf., e.g., John 18:28-32; 19:6-15; and Matt. 27:19-25). They thought they were “offering service to God.” The apostles (and other Christians) would be hated and persecuted by the same people (and others) because of their association with Jesus (cf. e.g., John 15:18-21; Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-42; 6:8-8:3; 9:1-5; and 12:1-4).] **(3) These things they will do because they have not known the Father** [cf., e.g., John 15:21; 8:19, 55] **or Me.** [The Jews thought they knew God the Father, but their rejection of God the Son/the Messiah proved that they didn’t really know the Father. They should have known Him, but most of them, very much including most of the leaders, did not know Him. Jesus frequently spoke of the sinfulness of that generation and of their need to do some serious repenting (cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5).] **(4) But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.** [Now that Jesus was about to leave His disciples and go back to the Father, it was necessary for Him to tell them these things.] **(5) But now I am going to Him who sent Me** [cf. John 7:33; 14:12, 28; 16:10, 17, 28; and 20:17]; **and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’** [Peter had asked Jesus where He was going (John 13:36), and Jesus had already told them where He was going. He had also already informed them that His leaving would work for great good, including His great good and their great good (see John 14:1-3, 12-29), but the message hadn’t really sunk in yet. As verse 6 shows, they were focused on the negative and sorrow had filled their hearts. They hadn’t asked Him about where He was going in any positive sense. As Jesus continues throughout the rest of this chapter, He further informs them of His need to go back to the Father, and how His leaving will work for great good, great good that will far overshadow the persecution, etc. they will have to endure. All things will work together for great good (cf. Rom. 8:28).] **(6) But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. (7) But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper** [Greek *paraklētos*; as in John 14:16, 26; 15:26] **will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.** [The new birth wasn’t available, for

one thing, until Jesus had gone back to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to them. Jesus had already told them that He/the Father would send the Holy Spirit earlier in this discourse (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26). As Jesus continues He speaks of the Spirit's ministry to the world in verses 8-11. Jesus then speaks further of the Spirit's ministry to the apostles in verses 12-15.] **(8) And He, when He comes** [starting on the day of Pentecost], **will convict the world** [Israel is in the spotlight here.] **concerning sin and righteousness and judgment** [or, "condemnation." The Spirit uses the apostles (and all Christians) in His work of *convicting* the world. There is no idea here, of course, that all will repent and be converted. Some will repent and become Christians; many will reject the Spirit's *convicting* work and go deeper into sin. When people become Christians they become part of the kingdom of God (in a preliminary sense), and they (though they still live in the world) are no longer part of (the kingdom of) the world (cf., e.g., John 17:14-18).]; **(9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me** [Verses 8-11 deal (for the most part) with the Jews of that generation (the generation when Jesus and the apostles lived on the earth), but the message of these verses has a strong application for all the people of the world of that generation and all following generations.<sup>75</sup> The Spirit of God, when He comes (starting on the day of Pentecost), will use the fact that the Jews did not submit to Christ in faith to prove that they (though they thought of themselves as being the people of God) were far from God and quite sinful. He will convict many of the people of the world (all who have ears to hear) of the fact that they are sinful and need to repent and submit in faith to God's new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus. People aren't interested in the gospel (the good news) of salvation until they see their need (their very serious need) for the only Savior from sin, spiritual death, and from their being part of the world system whose god is the devil.

You often hear Christians say that the only really important sin, the sin that condemns people, is the sin of (rejecting and) not submitting to the gospel in faith. That viewpoint is faulty. For one thing, it minimizes the seriousness of the other sins that men have committed back to Adam. There can be no doubting the fact that the sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel is a unique, super-serious sin, but it isn't the only sin that condemns people. One reason that it is such a serious matter to reject Christ and the gospel is because rejecting Him means rejecting God's only plan of salvation and *dying in your sins*. I'll quote what Jesus said in John 8:24, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." In John 8:21 He said, "you will die in your sin." The Bible frequently speaks of men being judged according to their works/what they have done (cf., e.g., Matt. 16:24-27; Rom. 2:5-16; and Rev. 21:7, 8; 22:10-12, 14, 15).<sup>76</sup> Our works must demonstrate that our faith was/is real.

Words like those of John 3:18 ("he who does not believe [in Christ] is judged [condemned] already") demonstrate the seriousness of the sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel. John 3:19, 20 go on to tell why many Jews rejected Christ, the Light: "men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [Their works showed where their hearts were; their hearts were far from God; such people typically did not repent.]

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<sup>75</sup> If the Jews, who had a covenant with God, were far from God and enslaved to sin and the god of this world, how much more were the peoples who did not have a covenant with God.

<sup>76</sup> Romans 2:1-16 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper, *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*. Revelation chapters 21, 22 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated November 1998.

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” These words about being condemned already speak of the fact that these people have their final judgment (in a very real sense) at the time they reject God’s only plan of salvation.<sup>77</sup>]; **(10) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me** [The primary idea here is that, even though the Jews (the world) had condemned Jesus to death for His supposed *sinfulness* against God, the fact that He was resurrected and went back to the Father, to sit at His right hand,<sup>78</sup> effectively demonstrated His *righteousness*, His righteousness according to verdict of the ultimate Judge, God the Father. If He was righteous, which He certainly was, then they must have seriously blinded by the god of this world and in serious bondage to sin (and in desperate need of the Savior) since they rejected the *Righteous One* as a sinner (cf., e.g., Acts 2:14-42; 3:13-15; and 7:51-60). Satan, the god of this world, was actively involved in the murder of Christ Jesus (cf. Luke 22:3-6; John 13:2, 27; 14:30; and 1 Cor. 2:8).

Christ is the *Righteous One*, and He has the authority to make alive (starting with the new birth) and make *righteous* those who submit to Him and the gospel in faith (cf., e.g., John 1:12, 13, 33; 3:1-21; 5:19-29; 7:39; Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-17; and 1 Pet. 2:24). Christ imputes and imparts His *righteousness* (the *righteousness* of God) to believers.]; **(11) and concerning judgment** [or, “condemnation”; the NAB has “condemnation”], **because the ruler of this world has been judged** [or, “has been condemned”; the NAB; NRSV have “has been condemned”; the NEB “stands condemned”; the *Amplified Bible* has, “is judged *and* condemned *and* sentence already is passed on him”; the *Jerusalem Bible* “being already condemned”]. [The ruler of this world was judged/condemned (judged/condemned in a preliminary sense; his final overthrow is still future, but it is a settled issue and it will be manifested at the right time) by the cross of Christ (cf. John 12:31-33; Heb. 2:14-18). Both of the references just cited go on to speak of salvation coming to the world (that is, the salvation of the people of the world who submit to Christ and the gospel in faith) because of Christ’s overcoming sin and spiritual death and stripping the devil of his authority through His atoning death on the cross. When people become Christians they leave the world and its ruler behind and become part of the kingdom of God (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 1:13).

<sup>77</sup> The New Testament also speaks of the glorious fact that when people submit (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ and God’s plan of salvation, they too (in a very real sense) have had their final judgment. The first words of John 3:18 speak of that judgment, “He who believes is not condemned.” In John 5:24 Jesus speaks of that glorious judgment, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment [I would translate “into condemnation”; the NIV has “will not be condemned”], but has passed out of death into life.”

Born-again Christians have already had their final judgment and inherited eternal life (*eternal life* in a preliminary form; cf., e.g., Titus 3:7). It must be understood, of course, that if born-again Christians later rebel against Christ and become unbelievers, they pass to a state of condemnation. The *believing in Christ* spoken of in John 3:18 and 5:24 (and in general) is not a one-shot deal; those verses speak of those who continue to believe in (to have faith in) Christ. Faith in Christ and the gospel of the new covenant includes a commitment from the heart to Christ and the gospel. We must remain faithful to Christ and the gospel by God’s enabling grace.

<sup>78</sup> Many Jews, including the apostles, testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-21:25; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; also see Matt. 27:51-53), and the apostles even saw Jesus ascend from the Mount of Olives in a glory cloud when He returned to the Father (Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9-12). The fact that Christ was reigning at the Father’s right hand was manifested in many ways, starting with His pouring forth the promised gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Many of the Jews who had rejected Christ when He ministered on the earth (or at least who had not submitted to Him in faith) would now have their eyes opened to the fact that they were sinners who desperately needed the Savior from sin (the Lamb of God), through the work of the Holy Spirit, including His *convicting* work and the anointed (by the Spirit) preaching of the apostles (which was also *convicting*). What happened on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2:1-42, provides an effective illustration of what Jesus prophesied here in John 16:8-11. The apostle Peter, as he preached on the day of Pentecost, emphasized the fact that the Jews had (rejected and) crucified God's Christ, even though He was *righteous* in every way (cf. Acts 2:22, 23). Peter showed that God the Father had attested to Christ's *righteousness* by raising Him from the dead, in accordance with the prophetic Scriptures (Acts 2:24-32) and by exalting Him to His right hand and giving Him the promised Holy Spirit to pour out on His disciples, in accordance with the prophetic Scriptures (Acts 2:33-36).

Acts 2:37-42 go on to speak of the remarkable results as thousands of Jews were convicted of their sins, repented, and submitted to God's new-covenant plan of salvation. In Acts 2:38 Peter spoke of their being saved from their *sins*, not just from the one sin of having rejected Christ. In Acts 2:40 he spoke of the need to "be saved from this perverse generation." They were being saved from the state of being aligned with (being part of) the kingdom of this sinful world that is headed up by Satan. It is to be understood that if Satan has been judged/condemned, all those who continue to be aligned with him and part of his kingdom will also be judged/condemned along with him. That's what the lake of fire is all about (cf. Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:10, 14, 15).] **(12) I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.** [Things would be different after Jesus was raised from the dead and the disciples were born again (through His atoning death) by the Spirit, etc.] **(13) But when He, the Spirit of truth** [cf. John 14:17], **comes** [The promised life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing, anointing Spirit *comes* on the day of Pentecost (cf., e.g., John 7:37-39; Acts 2:33). Jesus Himself also taught them more during the time He spent with them after His resurrection and before His ascension and the coming of the Spirit (cf. Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-21:23; and Acts 1:1-11).], **He will guide you into all the truth** [cf. John 14:26]; **for He will not speak on His own initiative** [literally, "He will not speak from Himself."<sup>79</sup> What the Spirit will speak to them is, in a very real sense, Jesus continuing to speak to them. Note that Jesus said in verse 12 that "He [had] many more things to say to [them]." Also, everything that Jesus (or the Spirit) spoke to them was from the Father. Jesus is emphasizing the continuity (and full agreement) of what the Spirit will teach them (or, we could say, what He will teach them through the Spirit) with the things that He had already taught them. Jesus did not, of course, intend to communicate the idea that if the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth," spoke *from Himself* the disciples could not be sure that He was speaking the truth—God the Spirit doesn't lie!

Verses 14, 15 emphasize the point that the Spirit (who comes to believers from the Father through the Son) comes to exalt and glorify Christ Jesus, which includes revealing truths about Him, who He is, what He has, and the things He will accomplish in the following days and years. In brief, He, the Messiah/God the Son, will fully save and take to eternal glory those who align themselves with Him through faith. And He

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<sup>79</sup> In John 12:49 Jesus said, "For I did not speak on My own initiative [more literally, "from Myself"], but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak."

will judge and totally remove the devil and those who continue to be aligned with him (evil angels, demons, and a large number of men).], **but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (14) He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (15) All things that the Father has are Mine** [cf. John 17:10]; **therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you. (16) A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.**” [The disciples will no longer see Him because He will be crucified, buried, raised from the dead on the third day,<sup>80</sup> and go back to the Father (cf. John 13:33, 36; 14:2, 3, 28; 16:10, 28); but then they will see Him because He will return to them in a very real *spiritual* sense by the Spirit (cf. John 14:18-23, 28). That’s probably what Jesus meant here; at least that seems to be the best way to interpret the words of Jesus that were recorded by the apostle John.<sup>81</sup> Anyway, whether He meant that here, or not, the Gospels make it clear that the resurrected Christ appeared to His disciples on several occasions *before* He went back to the Father (starting on the day of His resurrection and culminating some forty day later when He was taken up to heaven from the Mount of Olives before their watching eyes). Even if we’re not sure exactly what Jesus meant here (as He spoke with His apostles on the night before He was crucified), we (thankfully) know what happened in some detail, based on the scriptural record.

There is much difference of opinion regarding what these words “and again a little while you will see Me” meant. As we discussed under John 14:18-23, the disciples would *see* Jesus again in a very real *spiritual* sense when He came back to them through the Person of the Holy Spirit *after* He had gone back to the Father. Some commentators, but not the majority, opt for that view here.<sup>82</sup> There can be no doubting the fact that that *spiritual* coming is emphasized in John chapters 13-17. Anyway, the New Testament (very much including the Gospel of John) makes it clear that the disciples also saw the resurrected Christ on several occasions *before* He was taken up to heaven (cf., e.g., John 20:11-21:23; Acts 1:1-11). Many commentators opt for the viewpoint that Jesus was speaking of His appearing to His disciples *before* He goes back to the Father in John 16:16-22.

John 20:11-18, the verses that speak of the resurrected Christ’s appearing first to Mary Magdalene on the morning of His resurrection (resurrection Sunday), lend some support to the idea that the apostle John did *not* include a record of Jesus’ mentioning that He would appear to His disciples on a very temporary basis *before* ascending to the Father, but only that He would come back to them on a permanent (age-long) basis *after* He had

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<sup>80</sup> Jesus had known for a long time that He would be raised from the dead on the third day with a glorified body (cf., e.g., John 2:19-22); He was the first man (though He was much more than just a man; He was the God-man) to be raised with a glorified body, never to die again. The apostles didn’t really understand that Jesus was to be raised from the dead until after He had been raised (cf. John 20:1-29).

<sup>81</sup> See under John 14:18, 19.

<sup>82</sup> The scriptural basis for that viewpoint (which fits John 14:15-23 very well and fits 16:16-28 well) would be considerably strengthened if the translation of the KJV and the NKJV for John 16:16 represented the original reading. I’ll quote that verse from the NKJV (which is the equivalent of the KJV), “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.” There is, however, widespread agreement that these words at the end of the verse were not part of the original text, but that they were probably borrowed from John 16:17. The United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (fourth revised edition) rejects the words “because I go to the Father” at the end of verse 16 with an A rating, which means, from their point of view, that the shorter reading “is certain.”

returned to the Father. (He would come back to them in a very real *spiritual* sense, by the Spirit; He would remain with the Father in heaven until it is time for Him to come back at the end of this age [cf., e.g., John 14:2, 3].<sup>83</sup>) I'll quote John 20:17 from the NASB and make a few comments. "Jesus said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and Your Father, and My God and your God." ' "

The KJV translates "Touch Me not" (in John 20:17); the NKJV is very close to the NASB, "Do not cling to Me." These words from the KJV have often (wrongly) been understood to teach that the reason Mary Magdalene was not permitted to *touch* Jesus was that He was *untouchable* until after He had ascended to the Father to present His atoning blood to the Father and complete the plan of redemption. However, for one thing, Jesus had already presented His atoning blood before the Father *on the cross*.<sup>84</sup> That view (wrongly) contends that Jesus was at that moment on His way to the Father and that, after He presented His blood in heaven, He would come back and then be *touchable* (cf. Luke 24:39-43; John 20:20-27). Matthew 28:9 confirms that the idea that Jesus was *untouchable* at the time He appeared to Mary Magdalene is wrong.

Jesus' being untouchable wasn't the idea. What Jesus was saying to Mary Magdalene here was something like this: "Mary, stop clinging to Me. I am not here in the *permanent* (age-long) sense that I spoke of, for example, in John 14:18, 19<sup>85</sup> ("I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.") This is not that! I am here now on a very *temporary* basis that will consist of several appearances to various disciples (over a forty-day period). *Then* I will go back to the Father. *After* that I will come to you in a very real spiritual sense (by the Spirit), and I will remain with you in that sense throughout this age. At the end of this age, I will return to the earth to fully save My own (including taking them to heaven [cf. John 14:3]) and to judge the world."

It was very important that the apostles clearly *see* the resurrected Christ. For one thing, His resurrection, of which they were witnesses, was a necessary foundational part of the new-covenant gospel that was to be proclaimed and written by (and through) the apostles (cf., e.g., Acts 1:15-26). His resurrection demonstrated that He had conquered death (and sin and Satan), and it foreshadowed and initiated the spiritual resurrection of Christians (when they are born again/resurrected in a spiritual sense); cf., e.g., Rom. 6:1-11; Eph. 2:1-10; and Col. 3:1-11) and their ultimate bodily resurrection (when they will be glorified; cf., e.g., Rom. 8:11, 17-25; 1 Cor. 15:20-23, 42-53; and Phil. 3:20, 21).] **(17) Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father' [cf. John 13:36; 14:2-6, 12, 28; 16:7, 10, 28]?" (18) So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." (19) Jesus knew that they wished to**

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<sup>83</sup> The Bible speaks of Jesus appearing to people (sometimes it mentions that He appeared in visions) *after* He went back to the Father forty days after His resurrection (cf., e.g., Acts 9:10-19; 18:9; 22:17-21; 23:11). Apparently Jesus did not leave heaven on those occasions, but only appeared in a very real *spiritual* sense.

<sup>84</sup> Jesus certainly did not carry a container of His physical blood with Him when He went to heaven.

<sup>85</sup> Also see John 14:21-23, 28.

question [“ask him about this” NIV; Greek verb *erotaō*] **Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’? (20) Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament [Compare Mark 16:10; Luke 23:27; and John 20:11, 13, 15. Jesus’ disciples will grieve over the blasphemous mistreatment, crucifixion, and death of their Master.], but the world will rejoice [The world, including Satan, rejoices for a while, because they think they have gotten rid of Christ Jesus. Before long Satan (and eventually the world) will realize that rather than get rid of Christ, they have sealed their doom through crucifying Him (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8; Col. 2:10-15; and Heb. 2:14-18).]; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. [As it turned out, the grief of the apostles turned to joy when they realized that Jesus had been raised from the dead (cf., e.g., John 20:20). Another major installment of joy came when they received the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing, anointing Spirit from/through the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost. Christians rejoice in the cross too (not just in the salvation that resulted from the cross), knowing the super-great victory that was accomplished on the cross.] (21) Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. (22) Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again [see under verse 16], and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. [As it turned out, Jesus saw the apostles again for the first time on the evening of the day of His resurrection, and He saw them again a week later (see John 20:19-29; cf. Luke 24:33-49), etc.] (23) In that day you will not question [Greek verb *erotaō*] Me about anything. [I prefer a translation like, “In that day you will not ask Me for anything.”<sup>86</sup> The NIV has, “no longer ask me anything.” “That day” begins when the disciples receive the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which lends support to the idea that the words of Jesus recorded in John 16:16-22 speak of His being seen by His disciples in a very real *spiritual* sense *after* He has gone back to the Father and come again through the coming of the Spirit (on the day of Pentecost).] Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask [Greek verb *aiteō*] the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. [See John 16:24-27; 15:7, 16; and 14:13, 14. Their asking the Father would relate mostly to the fulfilling of their ministries, but it would not be limited to that dimension.] (24) Until now you have asked for [Greek verb *aiteō*] nothing in My name; ask [Greek verb *aiteō*] and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full [cf. John 15:11]. [The “now” of this verse doesn’t really start until Pentecost.] (25) These things I have spoken to you in figurative language [cf. John 10:6; 16:29]; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. [Things will greatly change when Jesus goes back to the Father (having accomplished our redemption and overcome the world and its ruler at the cross)]**

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<sup>86</sup> See F. F. Bruce, *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 323. I should point out that John used two different Greek verbs for *ask* in this verse (*erōtaō* then *aiteō*). The first verb is sometimes used of asking for things in the New Testament (including the last verb in John 16:26), and there is widespread agreement that John sometimes uses two different words with the same meaning. There would be times that the disciples would ask the Father for information, direction, etc., which is the equivalent of asking Him questions.

and the disciples are born again through Jesus sending the Spirit (the new-covenant Spirit).] **(26) In that day you will ask [Greek verb *aiteō*] in My name [ask the Father], and I do not say to you that I will request of [or, “I will ask”; Greek verb *erotaō*] the Father on your behalf [See John 16:23, 24. This doesn’t mean that Jesus, our great high priest, never intercedes on our behalf (cf. Rom. 8:34), but it does mean the we, in union with Him and in His name, have direct access to God the Father.]; (27) for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father [cf. John 14:21, 23]. (28) I came forth from the Father and have come into the world [cf., e.g., John 3:13, 17; 8:42]; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father [cf. John 13:1; 14:2-6, 12, 28; and 16:5, 10].” (29) His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech [See John 16:25.]. (30) Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question [or “ask”; Greek verb *erotaō*] You [See John 16:17-19.]; by this we believe that You came from God.” [Apparently the disciples were prematurely assuming that the time had arrived that Jesus spoke of in verse 25. As I mentioned under verse 25, that day will not arrive until after Christ has been crucified and they have received the Spirit and been born again. The faith of the apostles, though real, wasn’t as solid as they thought, as Jesus points out in verses 31, 32.] (31) Jesus answered them [“responded to them”], “Do you now believe? [They were genuine believers (cf. John 17:6-8), but subsequent events demonstrated that their faith left something to be desired. For one thing, they had not yet received the life-giving, sanctifying, strengthening Spirit.] (32) Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered [cf. Matt. 26:31 with Zech. 13:7; Mark 14:50-52; and John 13:37, 38; 18:8, 9.], each to his own *home* and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me [cf. John 8:29]. (33) These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace [see John 14:27]. In the world you have tribulation [cf. John 15:18-25], but take courage; I have overcome the world.” [Jesus has overcome the world and its ruler through being who He was (God the Son who became the God-man), through His sinless life, His atoning death, His resurrection, and then His ascension and present ministry as our great high priest at the right hand of God the Father. He will complete His work of saving and overcoming the world when He comes back to judge the god of this world and all the persons/beings who remain aligned with the world.]**

## CHAPTER 17

**Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven [cf. John 11:41], He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, (2) even as You gave Him authority over all flesh [cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18; John 3:35], that to all whom You have given Him [cf., e.g., John 6:37, 39; 10:28, 29; and 17:6, 9, 20-24], He may give eternal life. [On Jesus’ being glorified see John 17:5 and see under John 13:31, 32. The Father *glorifies* the Son by raising Him from the dead (He was the first man, though He was much more than just a man, to be raised with a glorified body), by exalting Him to His right hand, by *giving Him authority over all flesh* (all mankind), etc. *Authority over all flesh* includes Christ’s *giving eternal life* to those chosen by God (the elect<sup>87</sup>) and His judging and removing all who persist in rebellion, without repentance (cf., e.g., John 5:21-29). We enter *eternal life* through the new birth by the Spirit (cf. John 3:3-8, 15, 16, 36; 5:24).] (3) This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent [cf., e.g., John 3:17; 17:8, 21, 23, 25]. [God (the triune God) is the only source of life (cf., e.g., John 1:4; Rom. 8:2), very much including spiritual/eternal life, and of everything else that is good. We must be right with God the Father and *know* Him and Jesus Christ through new-covenant salvation (which includes being united with the Son and the Father by the indwelling Spirit) to partake of spiritual/eternal life. To *know* the Father (and the Son) includes *knowing* about Him (who He is, what He is like, what He has done and what He will do, especially His plan of salvation and His judgment of all who persist in rebellion) and having an experiential *knowledge* of Him (person to Person) by the Spirit. Christians partake of spiritual/eternal life in a preliminary sense from the time they are born again by the Spirit of God, but most of the glory of eternal life is reserved for the end of this age, when we will be born into the fullness of eternal life (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:42-57; Col. 1:27; Titus 3:7; and Rev. 12:5).] (4) I glorified You on the earth [cf. John 13:31, 32], having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. [Compare John 4:34; 6:38. The Lord Jesus Christ always perfectly obeyed the Father and perfectly accomplished the work assigned to Him. His greatest work involved His atoning death, which hadn’t been accomplished when He spoke these words, but there is widespread agreement that Jesus spoke here from the point of view that it had been accomplished in that the time had now arrived for His crucifixion and He was fully committed to carry out that one last great work on the earth (cf., e.g., John 1:29, 36; 3:14-18; 10:11-18; 12:20-33; 13:21-33; 18:11; and 19:28-30)—it would be, and it *was* accomplished!] (5) Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself [cf. John 13:31, 32], with the glory which I had with You before the world was. [Compare John 1:1-3, 14; 17:24; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-17; and Heb. 1:1-3. It is very important to see that a whole lot more is taking place here than God the Son’s being restored to the glory He had with the Father before He condescended to become a man, the God-man (cf. Phil. 2:7, 8; John 1:14). Now the Lord Jesus Christ (the God-man),**

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<sup>87</sup> Taken in the fullest sense, God’s elect includes all the people who will have a place in the new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem, very much including all the believers who lived in the days before the new covenant was ratified through the atoning death of the Lamb of God. The names of the elect are written in the Lamb’s book of life (cf. Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; and 21:27).

having overcome sin and God's enemies through His sinless life and atoning death, was to be glorified by the Father. Now He (the God-man) would have the authority and commission to save (with a very full salvation) all believers and to judge and remove all unrepentant rebels. Genesis 3:15 had prophesied that Satan and his followers would be defeated by man.

Those of mankind who are united with the Lord Jesus Christ (the God-man) by faith will ultimately be glorified with Him and reign with Him (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:17, 18, 29; Rev. 3:21; 20:4; 22:5). If He had not become a man (the God-man), we could not have become united with Him and be glorified in union with Him. Christ Jesus exalted mankind far above what Adam had before the fall (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:45-52). We will be glorified with Him and reign with Him forever—what a salvation plan! We will not, of course, become deity/God with Christ. We will be worshipping God (the triune God), serving Him, and enjoying Him and everything else in His kingdom forever.] **(6) I have manifested** [“revealed/made known”] **Your name** [The NIV translates, “I have revealed you.” Compare John 1:18; Psalm 22:22 with Heb. 2:12. For Christ to reveal/make known the name of God the Father was for Him to reveal/make known the Father. God's name (taken in a full sense) includes who He is, what He is like, what He has done, and what He will do, especially dealing with His glorious plan of salvation and His judgment and removal of those who will not repent. God's name includes all that He has revealed about Himself, including His being Creator, Savior, and Judge. In verse 26 Jesus says, “I have made Your name known to them and will make it known....” Also see verses 8, 11, 12, 14.

We could not *know* God (cf., e.g., John 17:3; 1 John 5:20) if He had not revealed/made Himself known to us. Furthermore, we could not *know* Him in the full sense spoken of in John 17:3 without the work of the Holy Spirit. For one thing, the Spirit enables us to know God on an experiential level (person to Person) from the time we are born again by the Spirit. We will, of course, know God on a much deeper level after we are glorified (cf. 1 Cor. 13:9-12; 1 John 3:2; and Rev. 22:3-5).

The last words of this verse are, “and they have kept Your word.” One primary way that Jesus revealed/made known the Father's *name* was by revealing/making known the Father's *word* (cf. John 3:34; 7:16; 12:49, 50; and 14:10, 24). (Note that Jesus goes on in verse 8 to speak of the *words* the Father gave Him, which He had given to the disciples, who had received them, and that He mentions in verse 14 that He had given the Father's *word* to them.) Jesus also revealed/made known the Father through being who He was and doing the things He did.] **to the men whom You gave Me out of the world** [Here “the men” seem to be limited to the apostles (those He was with at the Last Supper), but much that He says here and in the following verses would apply to all those that were faithful disciples at that time. Taken in the fullest sense, the people that the Father has given to the Son include all the elect, all whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, all who will have a place in God's new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem (cf., e.g., John 17:2, 20-24; Rev. 21:27).]; **they were Yours** [For one thing, at least most of the eleven apostles had been true believers (people of God) under the old covenant; some of them had been disciples of John the Baptist (see John 1:35-51<sup>88</sup>).] **and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word** [cf. John 8:51; 17:8]. **(7) Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me**

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<sup>88</sup> These verses are discussed in my paper dated August 2005.

[*Everything You have given Me* includes the word(s) the Father had given Christ Jesus (cf. 17:6, 8). Most of the Jews rejected Christ; they didn't believe that He had been sent by God (the Father).] **is from You** [cf. John 16:13-15; 17:10]; **(8) for the words which You gave Me I have given to them** [cf. John 12:47-50; 15:15; 17:6, 14]; **and they received them** [They received them (in faith), as being the words of God.] **and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me** [cf. John 16:27, 30]. **(9) I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours** [See under "to the men whom You gave Me out of the world" of verse 6. Christians live in the world, but they are not part of the kingdom of the world; they belong to the kingdom of God (cf. John 17:14-16; Phil. 3:20).]; **(10) and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine** [cf. John 16:15]; **and I have been glorified in them.** [The disciples had glorified Jesus by accepting Him and the words that He spoke, as being from God the Father.] **(11) I am no longer in the world** [Jesus was no longer in the world (no longer living in the world) from the time of His crucifixion. As we have discussed, Jesus didn't actually go back to the Father until His ascension, forty days after His resurrection.]; **and yet they themselves are in the world** [cf., e.g., John 15:18-16:4; 17:15], **and I come to You** [cf. John 13:1, 33; 14:2, 3, 28; 16:16, 17, 28; and 17:13, 24.]. **Holy Father** [The word *Holy* is significant here. The holiness (set-apartness) of Christians results from their being set apart by God and for God, who is *holy* (set apart). They are set apart from everything that is unholy/sinful/unclean. The holiness/set-apartness of Christians in Christ Jesus (and of Christ Jesus Himself [cf. John 17:19]) is a dominant theme that permeates John 17:6-26.<sup>89</sup>], **keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me** [The Father gave His name to Jesus to reveal/make known to His disciples, even as He gave His word(s) to Him (cf. John 17:6, 8, 12, and 14).], **that they may be one even as We are.** [In John 17:6 Jesus said that He manifested/revealed/made known the Father's *name* to the men the Father had given Him out of the world, and that they had kept the Father's *word*. See under 17:6-8. For the Father to keep Christians in His name is for Him to keep them set apart for Himself and faithful to Him and to His name/word(s). Christians cannot *be one* with God the Father, with God the Son, or with one another (cf. John 17:21-23; 13:34; 15:12, 17) unless they are faithful to God and His name/word(s), which includes believing His word(s) and living in line with His word(s) by His enabling grace. In verse 12 Jesus goes on to say that He kept them faithful to the Father's name while He was with them. He had kept them faithful, but it is very clear that they very much needed to become recipients of new-covenant salvation, which

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<sup>89</sup> I'll quote a paragraph from what D. A. Carson says here (*Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1991], page 561). "Jesus' petitions for his disciples are prefaced by *Holy Father*. . . . Not only does it preserve a view of God that combines awesome transcendence with familial intimacy . . . but, more importantly, it prepares the way for vv. 17-19 and the 'sanctification' or 'consecration' (the underlying Greek term means 'to make holy' . . .) of Jesus and of his disciples. The thought . . . is that the holiness of the Father establishes what it means for the Son and his followers to 'consecrate' themselves—the Johannine equivalent of 'I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy' (Lev. 11:44; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16; Matt. 5:48; Barrett, p. 507). The root of Jesus' 'holiness' and ours is tied up in our respective relationships with the holy Father." As Leviticus chapter 19, for example, shows, a big part of what it meant for God to say to His (old covenant) people, "You shall be holy [or, better, "Be holy"], for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) was that His people must submit to Him and His word and walk in line with His word, in righteousness and holiness—this was a great privilege, not a burden.

includes the life-giving, *sanctifying*, strengthening, anointing, new-covenant work of the Spirit.

For Christians to *be one* with one another through being one with the Father and the Son by the Spirit (cf., e.g., John 14:21, 23; Gal. 3:28) *even as the Father and Son are one*<sup>90</sup> is for them to be united in the highest possible sense. Jesus goes on to speak of this spectacular, supernatural oneness/unity in verses 20-23, 26. In verses 15-19 He goes on to request the Father to keep His disciples from the evil one and all evil/sin and to sanctify them in the truth/in His word.

I'll quote part of a paragraph that D. A. Carson has under this verse.<sup>91</sup> "...Jesus prays that God will keep his followers in firm fidelity [faithful] to the revelation Jesus himself has mediated to them. The purpose of such faithful allegiance, Jesus avers, is *that they may be one as we are one*. ... They cannot be one as Jesus and the Father are one unless they are kept in God's name, *i.e.* in loyal allegiance to his gracious self-disclosure in the person of his Son. A similar pattern prevails in vv. 17-19: persistence in the truth is a prerequisite to participation in Jesus' sanctification [holiness]. ...." **(12) While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me [See John 17:6, 8, 11.]; and I guarded them and not one of them perished [cf. John 6:39; 18:9] but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. [See John 6:64, 70, 71; 13:10, 11, 18, 19, 21-31. Judas Iscariot was the "son of perdition" spoken of here. I'll quote John 13:18, "I do not speak of all of you. [Jesus was speaking of the twelve apostles, excluding Judas.] I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME' [quoting from Psalm 41:9]."**

Acts 1:15-26 speak of the betrayal of Judas, of the fact that his betrayal was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and of the need to choose a person to replace his ministry as one of the twelve apostles. I'll quote Acts 1:16-20 (the apostle Peter is speaking): "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. (17) For he was counted among us [the twelve apostles] and received his share in this ministry. (18) (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. (19) And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood. [See Matt. 27:3-10 with Zech. 11:12, 13.]) (20) For it is written in the book of Psalms, "LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT" [Psalm 69:25]; and "LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE" [Psalm 109:8]."

The words "son of perdition" are explained by the translation of the NIV, "the one doomed to destruction." The same Greek words are used of Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2:3.] **(13) But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may**

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<sup>90</sup> It is important to see that Jesus was speaking here of a *oneness/unity* He had with God the Father at a time after He had become a man (the God-man). After He became a man (the God-man), we could identify with Him. We become united with Him through new-covenant salvation. We die (we die to sin, the old man, and to Satan) and we are buried with Him (cf. Rom. 6:2-4; Col. 2:12); we are raised with Him when we are born again (cf. Rom. 6:4-8; Eph. 2:5, 6; and Col. 2:12, 13); and we will be glorified with Him (cf. Rom. 8:17, 18, 29, 30). Essentially everything we receive in new-covenant salvation is something that the Lord Jesus Christ shares with us, including His relationship with the Father and holiness/sanctification. See John 17:19 ("For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth"); 1 Cor. 1:30, "... Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification [holiness], and redemption."

<sup>91</sup> *Gospel According to John*, pages 562, 563.

**have My joy made full in themselves.** [“These things” probably include all that Jesus said to His apostles that last evening before His crucifixion. Compare John 15:11 (see under that verse); 16:22, 24. The apostles (and all Christians) will have the same joy that Christ had (through their union with Him by the indwelling Holy Spirit), abiding in the Father’s love, if they, like Him, know the truth and walk in the truth, always living in the center of the will of God, which includes doing the things He calls and enables them to do and appropriating all the grace and blessings He makes available to them.] **(14) I have given them Your word** [The disciples had submitted to God’s word and kept His word (cf. John 17:6, 8, 12, 14).]; **and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world** [cf. John 8:23; 17:16]. **(15) I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.** [The KJV has, “from the evil”; the NASB; NKJV; and NIV have, “from the evil *one*” (the NIV has “from the evil one”). It probably is better to translate “from the evil *one*” (cf. 1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 18, 19<sup>92</sup>), but it is clear that Jesus included the idea that His disciples (all Christians<sup>93</sup>) be kept separate from doing evil/sinning. If Christians are doing evil/sinning, they are yielding to the evil one and cooperating with him.

1 John 5:18, 19 are an important cross-reference. (The apostle John also wrote 1, 2, and 3 John and the book of Revelation.) I’ll quote these verses and make several comments in brackets. “We know that no one who is born of God sins [The NIV has, “... anyone born of God does not continue to sin”; the NKJV has, “... whoever is born of God does not sin.” The Greek here is the equivalent of the Greek in 1 John 3:9, “No one who is born of God practices [doeth] sin...”; the NIV has, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin”; the NKJV has, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin...” This epistle (1 John) is very strong on the fact that born-again Christians can and should walk with the victory over all sin (without sinning)—this is good news! (See the discussion of 1 John 1:5-2:6; 2:28-3:12 on pages 200-216 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) But the apostle John also makes it clear in this epistle that born-again Christians *can* commit acts of sin and remain born-again Christians in that restoration is available, when they repent, through their Advocate, Christ Jesus, on the basis of His atoning death (see 1 John 2:1, 2). In 1 John 5:16, 17 (the verses just before the two verses we are discussing), John spoke of the possibility of born-again Christians committing a sin that does *not* lead to death and of committing a sin that does lead to death (spiritual/eternal death).<sup>94</sup>]; but He who was born of God keeps him [I rather strongly prefer the NKJV

<sup>92</sup> The Greek behind “the evil *one*” here in John 17:15 is ambiguous in that it could be taken as masculine or neuter. If masculine it would be translated “the evil *one*”; if neuter, “the evil.” In 1 John 2:13, 14; 5:18, however, the Greek behind “the evil one” is not ambiguous; it is clearly masculine. 1 John 2:12-14 are discussed at the end of this study of John chapter 17.

<sup>93</sup> Verses 20-26 confirm that these very important words of verses 13-19 (which are words that Jesus prayed) apply to all Christians, not just to the apostles. For one thing, we could not have the oneness/unity (with God [the triune God] and with other Christians) spoken of in verses 20-23 without the holiness/set-apartness prayed for in verses 15-19.

<sup>94</sup> A good example of a sin that leads to death is close at hand. Throughout this epistle (1 John) John warned his readers that they must avoid the heresy of Gnosticism, a heresy that was attacking Christianity at that time. That heresy, for one thing, denied that sin is the problem and that the blood of Jesus Christ is the answer. (See *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for more details.) For born-again Christians to submit to the “gospel” of the Gnostics was for them to deny the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death and to

translation for these words (the KJV is very similar to the NKJV), “but he who has been born of God keeps himself.”<sup>95</sup> It is appropriate and biblical to speak of Christians

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commit a sin that leads to death (spiritual/eternal death). The fact that born-again Christians had committed a sin unto death didn’t mean that there was no possibility for them to repent and be restored.

I would always encourage Christians who have turned their backs on God and gone off into sin (including the sin of accepting heresies) to repent and come back to God, whether they had fully lost their salvation, or not (I’ll leave that detail with God). But it is very dangerous to go off into sin. It is dangerous to leave any room for sin; sin is nothing to play with. For one thing, sin distorts the thinking and sears the conscience and some get to a place where they have lost any openness to repentance.

<sup>95</sup> I wouldn’t have any problem if the apostle John had said something like “God keeps him,” or “God the Son keeps him” (or the equivalent), but I believe it is highly unlikely that John referred to Christ here with the words “He who was born of God.” These words (“he who was born of God”) perfectly fit born-again Christians. John emphasizes throughout this epistle that true Christians are born-again children of God, and he spoke of them as those who have been born of God earlier in this verse. Significantly, the fact that they have been born of God (born again/born from above) enables them to keep themselves set apart from the evil one and evil/sin for God. I’ll quote three sentences from what Stephen S. Smalley says here (*1, 2, 3 John* [Word, Incorporated, 1984], pages 302, 303). “The identity of ‘the one who derives from [is born of] God’ is not immediately clear. Some scholars insist that the reference is to the believer, rather than to Jesus, on the grounds that...[the aorist participle with the article that is translated “He [he] who was born of God” by the NASB] is a unique description of Jesus in the NT, and surprising in this context (why not ‘Son of God,’ as in verse 20?). So Law, *Tests*, 408-409; Schnackenburg, 280, 281....”

The viewpoint reflected in the translation of the NASB, that John was speaking here of Christ’s keeping Christians, is the most common viewpoint. I believe this is another place where the majority is wrong, but I’m not dogmatic regarding this interpretation. For one thing, it’s clearly Biblical to speak of Christ’s (or God the Father’s) keeping Christians from sin and Satan (cf. John 17:11, 12, 15).

Some Greek manuscripts have *auton*, which is translated “him” here; other Greek manuscripts have *eauton*, which is translated “himself.” As I mentioned, I rather strongly prefer the translation *himself*. The editors of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (Fourth Revised Edition, 1983) prefer *auton* with a B rating, which means (from their point of view) that that reading “is almost certain.” In the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (1975) of this *Greek New Testament*, however, the editors preferred *auton* with a C rating, which meant (from their point of view) that “there is a considerable degree of doubt whether...[the reading (*auton* or *eauton*)] is the superior reading.”

The Greek behind “one who is born of God” earlier in this verse [1 John 5:18] has the same five words as the Greek behind “he/He who has been born of God” here except for the fact that John switched from the perfect tense for the participle to the aorist tense. I don’t believe he intended any substantial difference in meaning by switching tenses here. Either tense is fully appropriate for born-again Christians. John probably switched tenses for sake of variety. The *perfect* tense emphasizes that this birth has taken place and that the results abide; with the *aorist* tense the results could abide but that point isn’t emphasized.

These words (“He [he] who was born of God”) don’t fit Christ well. For one thing, we just read in the first part of verse 18 that Christians have been born of God, but God the Son clearly wasn’t *born of God* in the same sense that born-again Christians have been. God the Son always had spiritual life by virtue of who He was. The word “Son,” with a capital “S,” is used twenty-two times in 1 John; John speaks, for example, of “His Son,” “the Son,” and “the Son of God.” God the Son always was the Son of God; He always existed with Him; He didn’t need to be born to become the Son of God.

Surely John was *not* speaking of God the Son’s being *eternally begotten/generated* of God the Father with the words “He [he] who was born of God” here. How could we identify with such a birth; for one thing, we don’t become deity. Most commentators who opt for the viewpoint that these words refer to Christ here (and like I said, that is the majority view) don’t get into the details regarding in what sense He was born of God, but I noticed that a few commentators do take the viewpoint that John was speaking of God the Son’s eternal begetting/generation here. I don’t believe the Bible even teaches an eternal begetting/generation of God the Son: I agree with the widespread viewpoint that John 1:14; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:9; cf. John 1:18 should *not* be translated with the words “only begotten Son.” They should be translated “unique Son,” or the equivalent. (See the discussion under John 1:14 in my paper dated

keeping themselves from sin and the evil one. In 1 John 5:21 the apostle John concludes this epistle with the words, “Little children [John is speaking to all the Christians (cf. 1 John 2:1).], guard yourselves from idols.” “Guard yourselves from idols” is comparable in meaning with “keep yourselves from idols.” *Christians purify themselves* (1 John 3:3); they *do not give the devil a place in them* (Eph. 4:27); they *keep themselves free from sin* (1 Tim. 5:22); they *keep themselves unstained from the world* (James 1:27); they *keep themselves in the love of God* by continuing to believe the truth and to live the truth of the gospel of the new covenant by grace through faith (Jude 1:21); they *submit to God and resist the devil* (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9); they *walk in the light*, which includes walking in the truth and righteousness and holiness of God (1 John 1:7); they *keep God’s commandments* (1 John 2:3-6); they *do righteousness* (1 John 3:7); and there are many more such verses (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:11-18; 1 John 2:13, 14<sup>96</sup>). Of course there is no idea of Christians keeping themselves from the evil one and evil/sin (or doing anything else that is good) by their own righteousness, strength, etc. They are able to keep themselves from sinning/doing evil and from being touched by the evil one by God’s grace/indwelling Spirit through faith *because they have been born of God* (as 1 John 5:18 says) through the saving grace of God in Christ. I quoted the first part of 1 John 3:9 above. I’ll quote the entire verse from the NIV, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.” The apostle John makes it clear that it is the “seed” of God, which undoubtedly refers to the Holy Spirit who indwells Christians from the time of the new birth, that enables them to have the victory over the evil one and evil/sin. 1 John 4:4 and 5:4 are quite relevant here; I’ll quote these verses. “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them [“Them” refers to the false prophets who are motivated by the evil

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November 2004.) The angels are called sons of God, as are born-again Christians, but God the Son is the *unique Son*.

A few commentators express the viewpoint that these words (“He [he] who was born of God”) here in 1 John 5:18 refer to God the Son’s human birth, when He became the God-man. However, I don’t believe John would have spoken of that birth with the words “He who has been born of God.” That concept would not be appropriate here in that His taking on flesh was so different than our being born again; we can’t identify with Him in that unique birth.

The New Testament also speaks of Christ’s being the first born from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5) and of His being the first man (though He was much more than just a man; He was the God-man) to be born into the glory of God’s eternal kingdom (cf. Psalm 2:7 with Acts 13:33; Heb. 5:5; and 1:5; and Rom. 8:29). We can at least identify with Christ in that birth in that we have been born into (and been resurrected into) God’s eternal kingdom in a preliminary, spiritual sense through our union with Him as born-again Christians, and in that we *will* be born into the fullness of the glory of God’s eternal kingdom at the end of this age through our union with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29; Rev. 12:5). None of the commentaries I looked at (about thirty-five commentaries) even mentioned the idea that John was speaking of Jesus’ being born from the dead or of His being born into the glory of God’ eternal kingdom with the words “He who was born of God” here in 1 John 5:18. (One commentator did mention Rom. 8:29 as a cross-reference.)

I’m rather confident that John was not referring to Christ’s being born from the dead or born into the glory of God’s eternal kingdom with the words “He who was born of God” here. It doesn’t fit the context well at all, and it doesn’t fit his underlying theme throughout this epistle that God the Son, who became a man (the God-man) and died for us to save us, always existed with God the Father—He didn’t become the Son by birth (cf. 1 John 1:1-3; 3:8; 4:9, 10, 14; 5:5, 9-13, 20). We, on the other hand, do become sons of God through new-covenant salvation and union with Him by a birth, and John repeatedly emphasizes that point throughout this epistle.

<sup>96</sup> 1 John 2:12-14 are discussed at the end of this study of John chapter 17.

spirits of Satan's kingdom (see 1 John 4:1-6).] because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world [the evil one and his evil spirits]." "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith." ], and the evil one<sup>97</sup> does not touch him. [The idea here is that the evil one cannot touch the Christian who keeps himself faithful to God and the new-covenant (by God's grace/His indwelling Spirit through faith) because Satan has no place in him; he has no authority or ability to work in or through him (cf., e.g., John 14:30; Eph. 4:27). The devil will work in and through born-again Christians if they permit him to. It is relevant that the sins of man can be called "works of the devil" (see the discussion on 1 John 3:5, 8 on pages 210-213 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*); the devil works in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2; 1 John 4:4).<sup>98</sup> (This doesn't mean, of course, that men are not responsible for their sins.) It is also true that the righteous lives and works of born-again Christians can be called the work of God in that He works in and through them (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 12:6; Gal. 2:8; 5:16, 22, 23; Eph. 2:10; 3:20; Phil 1:6; 2:12, 13; Col. 1:29; and 1 Thess. 2:13).] (19) We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." [We are of God in that we have become His born-again, set apart/holy children. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one, but we are not part of the world, and the evil one is not supposed to have any place in us. If we *keep ourselves* by the saving grace of God in Christ, which includes resisting the evil one, he cannot touch us (see under 1 John 5:18).]

The Bible makes it quite clear that we couldn't be righteous and holy (which includes our being kept from doing evil/sinning) and kept from the evil one apart from the sufficient grace of God in Christ; these things come 100 percent by grace, and God (the triune God) must receive all the glory. But the Bible also makes it quite clear that we must do the things God requires of us (by grace through faith), or we won't be righteous and holy and kept from the evil one. We must receive, submit to, understand, and continue in God's word *by faith* (cf., e.g., John 8:31-35); and we must walk in the righteousness and holiness that God makes available through walking in accordance with His word and in/by/after His Spirit on a continuous basis *by faith*; and we must resist Satan and temptation. Our appropriating and cooperating with God's saving grace by faith is far from being automatic.

Jesus' request in verse 11 that the Father keep the disciples in His (the Father's) name included His keeping them from the evil one and from doing evil/sinning. Also, Christians being *sanctified* in the truth (verse 17) includes their being kept from the evil one and from doing evil/sinning. They are set apart *for* God, His truth, His Word, and His righteousness and set apart *from* the evil one and from doing evil/sinning. Being kept from the evil one does not mean, of course, that he cannot tempt Christians or persecute them in various ways, but God limits what he can do (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 10:13).] **(16) They are not of the world** [cf. John 17:6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15], **even as I am not of the world.** [The ruler/god of the evil/sinful world is the devil (cf. John 8:23; 12:31;

<sup>97</sup> Whereas the Greek behind "the evil one" is ambiguous in John 17:15 in that it could be masculine ("the evil one") or neuter ("the evil"), the Greek behind "the evil one" here in 1 John 5:18 (and in 1 John 2:13, 14) is masculine and clearly refers to Satan. The last words of this verse ("does not touch him") further confirm that the evil one is being spoken of here in 1 John 5:18.

<sup>98</sup> On men being children of the devil and doing the works of the devil, see under John 8:39-47 in my paper dated October 2005. That paper covers John chapters 5-8.

14:30; 16:11; 17:14; 2 Cor. 4:4.) **(17) Sanctify them** [make them holy; set them apart] **in the truth; Your word is truth.** [God sets us apart in His word/truth; He sets us apart for Himself. He sanctifies us (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23), but as we discussed under verse 15, we are not sanctified (made holy/set apart), or kept sanctified, apart from our submitting to His word and cooperating with His saving grace on a continuous basis by faith. By His grace through faith we live in line with His word/truth, which includes living in His righteousness and holiness. In Eph. 4:24 the apostle Paul speaks of Christians putting on the new man (by faith), which includes living/walking “in [the] righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

This prayer of Jesus couldn't be answered in any full sense until He had overthrown sin, Satan, and spiritual death through His atoning death and ratified the new covenant in His blood (see verse 19), and until He had given His disciples the promised Spirit, the life-giving, *sanctifying*, strengthening, anointing, gift-dispensing Spirit.] **(18) As You sent Me into the world** [cf. John 3:17; 17:3, 8, 21, 23, 25], **I also have sent them into the world.** [The apostles (and to some extent all Christians) were sent into the world to share the gospel and invite the people of the world to repent and forsake the kingdom of this world and become part of the kingdom of God through faith in Christ (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:21-23; and Acts 1:8).] **(19) For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.** [See under verses 15, 17. Jesus was always set apart/sanctified to God the Father and His word and will. He was fully committed to God's word, which is truth (cf. verse 17). This included His living a perfectly righteous and holy life and His perfectly accomplishing all the work the Father had given Him to do (cf. verse 4). Satan had nothing in Jesus (John 14:30).<sup>99</sup> As we discussed under verse 4, Jesus' greatest work involved His atoning death on the cross. We could not have been sanctified—we could not have partaken of new-covenant salvation, which includes being sanctified/made holy and accomplishing God's will for our lives—if Christ had not sanctified Himself. Many verses demonstrate that our sanctification/holiness (like every other aspect of our full salvation) comes through the atoning death of the Lamb of God (cf., e.g., Isaiah 52:11-53:12; Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-16; Titus 2:14; Heb. 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12; 1 Pet. 2:24; and 1 John 1:7). Furthermore, Jesus could not have shared His holiness with us if He had not been holy.

The Spirit of *truth* (John 14:17; 15:26; and 16:13) sanctifies us in the *truth*. (As I mentioned, Eph. 4:24 speaks of the “righteousness and holiness of the truth.”) He enables us to understand and to live in line with the truth, to be doers of the truth. I'll quote 2 Thess. 2:13, “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification [holiness] by the Spirit and faith in the truth [We must respond to God's new-covenant call to salvation in Christ with (repentance and) faith and cooperate with His saving grace on a continuous basis by faith.]” **(20) I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word** [I'm very thankful to be included in this prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ.]; **(21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in you** [cf. John 10:38; 14:10, 20; and 17:11, 22, 23], **that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me** [cf. John 3:17; 17:3, 8, 18, 23, 25]. [Jesus concluded verse 11 with the words “that they may be

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<sup>99</sup> As I mentioned, Christians are not supposed to leave any room/place for Satan in them either, “do not give the devil a place” (Eph. 4:27; cf., e.g., 1 John 2:13, 14; 5:18).

one even as *We are.*” Here in verses 21-26, as in verse 11, the extremely high level of unity between all true Christians that Jesus prayed for was to flow from the high level of unity that Christians are enabled to have with God (the triune God). Talk about a high level of unity—Jesus prayed (in verse 11 and in verses 21-23) that Christians would have the same unity that exists between the Father and the Son. Jesus shares with each Christian (at least He wants to share with each Christian) the love relationship that He has with God the Father.

The primary factor that enables this extremely high level of unity is the great love the Father has for His unique Son and the Son for the Father. Jesus even makes the remarkable, super-glorious statement (in verse 23) that the Father loves Christians as He loves His unique Son. I’m quite sure that most of us couldn’t believe that these words are true if they were not in the Bible.

What a spectacular high calling and privilege to be called to a relationship with God the Father like the relationship that Jesus Christ has with the Father. God’s salvation plans include Jesus’ sharing the relationship He has with the Father with us. He is not ashamed to call us brethren (Heb. 2:11; cf., e.g., Rom. 8:28-30).

Christians being one with one another is an obvious supernatural work of God that will get the attention of the world and help many people of the world to check out Christianity and the God of the Bible. It is also obvious that most Christians of our generation (and most other generations) have not manifested a high level of unity. To the extent we do not submit to God and walk in His will/truth (His will/truth is expressed in His word), which includes walking in/by/after His Spirit on a continuous basis by faith, we will not adequately manifest God’s love, unity, righteousness, holiness, etc. God’s will isn’t manifested in us to the extent we live in the flesh and are worldly. It’s a serious problem for Christians to live outside the will of God in any area.

I’ll quote few sentences from what R. C. H. Lenski says here.<sup>100</sup> “We are as much one with each other and with God and with Christ as we believe, teach, live, and confess all that is contained in the Word. Every deviation in doctrine, life, and practice from the Word mars and disrupts our oneness and hinders the fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer. Those rend the church who deviate from any part of the Word, also those who demand things other than the Word demands. Those permit Jesus’ prayer to be fulfilled in them who bring every thought and every act of theirs into subjection to the Word. ....”] **(22) The glory which You have given Me** [Apparently Jesus was speaking here of the glory He was about to receive when He would be glorified by the Father (the glorification Jesus spoke of in John 17:1, 5, and 24) after His all-important crucifixion/atoning death.<sup>101</sup> It is necessary to see that Jesus’ glorification builds on the fact that He (God the Son) had lived in a state of glory with the Father (e.g., John 17:5) before He condescended to become a man (the God-man) and that He had always been loved by the Father.] **I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one** [Jesus could not share the fruit of His glorification with His disciples until after He had been glorified. Most aspects of the glory Christ gives us will not be available until we are glorified at the end of this age (e.g., Rom. 8:17, 18; Col. 1:5, 27), until we are with Him in eternal glory (cf. John 17:24). Although the New Testament typically speaks of our glorification as being still future, there can be no doubting the fact that Christians being one with God the Father and with one another

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<sup>100</sup> *Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), pages 1157, 1158.

<sup>101</sup> See under John 13:31, 32.

(by the Spirit) as the Father and Son are one, which we are supposed to manifest now, is a *glorious* thing indeed. So too, things like our being born again by the Spirit and having the fruit and gifts of the Spirit (love is the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal. 5:22, 23), our being enabled to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, and our knowing God's plans for the future and our place in them are quite *glorious* indeed.]; **(23) I in them** [Christ in us and us in Him] **and You in Me** [Compare John 10:38; 14:10, 20; and 17:21. These glorious words make it clear that the unity of Christians flows from the relationship they have with God the Father and God the Son (by the indwelling Spirit), which is modeled after the relationship that God the Son has with God the Father.], **that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me** [See John 17:21; 13:35. The unity of Christians (which includes Christians loving one another in a supernatural way, by the Spirit) is a powerful witness to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is who the Bible says He is and that new-covenant salvation (in union with Christ) is real/truth. We must understand though that there can be no true unity in Christ if we are not united on the foundational doctrines of Christianity (the truth of God's Word) and if we are not living in line with the covenant that we have with God. We are set apart for the word/truth of God (cf., e.g., John 17:6, 8, 11, 14-17). There is no true Christianity apart from faith in God (the triune God) and His Word (especially faith in the gospel of the new covenant), and if we have faith in the gospel, we will live the gospel (by God's enabling grace).], **and loved them, even as You have loved Me.** [Compare John 14:21, 23; 16:27. These words are spectacular! If they weren't in the Bible, we couldn't accept them. I don't believe that many Christians are walking in and experiencing anything close to what Jesus prayed here.] **(24) Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me** [cf. John 17:2], **be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me** [This request will not be answered until Jesus comes back to take us to eternal glory (cf., e.g., John 13:36; 14:2, 3). But we can undoubtedly speak of a partial fulfillment when Christians die and go to be with Christ (and God the Father) in a preliminary sense in the years before the resurrection, rapture, and glorification (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21, 23; and 1 Thess. 4:14).], **for You loved Me before the foundation of the world** [cf. John 1:1-3; 17:5]. **(25) O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me;** **(26) and I have made Your name known to them** [See John 17:6, 8, 11, 12. We couldn't have come to know God (which includes knowing about Him, what He is like, what He has done and what He will do, and it includes knowing Him experientially, person to person) if He had not revealed Himself to us through His Name, Word, Son, and Spirit.], **and will make it known** [Jesus revealed the Father's name in more fullness after His resurrection and after His ascension, by the Spirit (cf., e.g., John 14:25, 26; 16:12-15).], **so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them** [The love of the Father for the Son being *in* Christians speaks of their being loved by the Father as Christ is loved by the Father. Jesus shares this love of the Father for Him with us. The idea is probably also included here (it's clear that the idea is included and emphasized in John 17:11-26) that when Christians are experiencing the Father's love they are enabled (and required) to love God (the triune God) and one another (by the Spirit).

Romans 5:5 is an important cross-reference, “and hope does not disappoint [The Christian’s *hope* of eternal glory will not be disappointed.<sup>102</sup> (The apostle Paul is assuming that the Christians are being faithful to God in accordance with the new covenant, by grace through faith.) God’s word is *true*, and we will, therefore, inherit eternal glory at the end of this age, as He said we will.], because the love of God had been poured out within [“into” NIV] our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” [Paul’s primary point here is that we can know with certainty that God will glorify us (as individuals) and take us to a state of eternal glory at the end of this age (like He said He will) because He demonstrates His love for us, as individuals, by pouring out of His heart into our hearts the abiding *love* gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>103</sup> The emphasis here is on God’s love *for* us as individuals (see Rom. 5:6-8). The indwelling Spirit enables us to know and experience God’s love for us, but it is also true, and quite important, that the indwelling Spirit enables us to love God (the triune God) and to love one another in the body of Christ with the love of God.]], **and I in them.**” [John 14:23 speaks of the Father and Son making their abode with faithful believers (those who love God and keep His word) now, during this present age.]

#### Study of 1 John 2:12-14

These verses are printed as poetry in the NIV and some other translations. I’ll make a few comments in brackets, but most of my discussion of these verses will follow the quotation of these verses.

**I am writing to you, little children** [The Greek noun behind “little children” here is *teknion*.<sup>104</sup> It could be translated “little children” or “children.” The NIV translates “dear children” here and in verse 13. John uses the Greek noun *paidion* for “children” in verse 13,<sup>105</sup> but he probably didn’t intend any substantial difference in meaning.], **because your sins have been forgiven you for His names’ sake.** [These last words “for His names’ sake” point out that we have been forgiven through the saving grace of God in Christ and for God’s glory.] **(13) I am writing to you fathers; because you know Him** [I believe it would be better to translate the Greek verb, which is in the perfect tense here and at the end of verse 13 and in verse 14, “have come to know Him” (all three places), with the *Amplified Bible*, the *Jerusalem Bible*, and others.] **who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you** [After writing “I am writing to you” (or “I write to you”) three times in verses 12, 13 (using the present tense in the Greek), John now writes, “I have written to you” three times (using the aorist tense in the Greek). The NIV translates “I write to you” six times in verses 12-14. It seems that John switched the tenses for variety and style. The aorist should probably be considered an *epistolary* aorist here,

<sup>102</sup> Romans chapter 5 is discussed verse-by-verse on pages 89-96 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

<sup>103</sup> If God says something *it is truth*. But we need to have it confirmed to us, as individuals, that we are included as part of His people; God gives us that confirmation (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:15, 16).

<sup>104</sup> This Greek noun is also used in 1 John 2:1 (where John writes, “my little children”) and in 2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; and 5:21. The Greek noun *teknon* (child), from which *teknion* (little child) was derived, is used in 1 John 3:1, 2, 10 (twice); and 5:2.

<sup>105</sup> John also used *paidion* in 1 John 2:18.

where John writes from the point of view of his readers: From their point of view, after they received his epistle, John wrote these words in the past.<sup>106</sup>], **children because you know** [“have come to know”] **the Father. (14) I have written to you, fathers, because you know** [“have come to know”] **Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.**

These verses are interesting and important, and they include the important information that Christians—*all Christians*—have been forgiven, have come to know God, and have been given the victory over the evil one and evil/sin. One reason I wanted to discuss these verses is that I have found that many Christians are confused about these verses and the interpretations differ widely. There’s only one interpretation that satisfies me: The apostle John (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), speaking from an ideal point of view, addresses his faithful Christian readers—all of them, regardless of how old they are or how long they have been Christians—as *children*, as *young men*, and as *fathers*, using a bold stylistic framework to point out and emphasize several great blessings that accompany new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus.<sup>107</sup> All faithful

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<sup>106</sup> I’ll quote two sentences from what A. T. Robertson says here (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 6 [Broadman Press, 1933], page 213). “Epistolary aorist referring to this Epistle, not to a previous Epistle. ... It is quite in John’s style to repeat himself with slight variations.” I’ll quote a sentence from what Craig S. Keener says here (*Bible Background Commentary—New Testament* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], page 738). “‘I am writing’ is probably not intended to convey a sense different from ‘I wrote’; it is common to vary style to make one’s writing more interesting.” And I’ll quote a few sentences from what I. Howard Marshall says here (*Epistles of John* [Eerdmans, 1978], pages 135, 136). “Most writers explain the use of the verb in these two tenses as a matter of stylistic variation, perhaps to relieve the monotony of ‘I write’ occurring six times over. ... John made use of a stylistic device to enable him to repeat certain things for emphasis. ....”

<sup>107</sup> The most common viewpoint is that the *little children* refer to all Christians, but that the *fathers* and *young men* refer to *two* different groups within the church, referring to their differing spiritual maturity levels, differing ages, etc. Some believe that John was referring to *three* different groups within the church here.

I’ll quote part of what Leon Morris says here (*New Bible Commentary—21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1994], page 1402). “It may be argued that knowledge accords with fathers (those old in the faith), and strength with young men. But as all the qualities ought to be found in all believers it is best to regard the division as a stylistic device, adding emphasis. ‘All Christians are (by grace, not nature) children in innocence and dependence on the heavenly Father, young men in strength, and fathers in experience’ (C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* [Hodder, 1946], pp. 38-39). John’s readers have the forgiveness of sins, the knowledge of God, the word of God abiding in them, and victory over the evil one.”

I’ll quote a few sentences from what David Rensberger says here (*1 John, 2 John, 3 John* [Abingdon Press, 1997], pages 70, 71). “If ‘children’ refers to all the readers, then what about the ‘fathers’ and ‘young people’? They could be different groups within the readership, whether the reference to age is literal or metaphorical. Acquaintance with one who was ‘from the beginning’ seems naturally characteristic of fathers, and conquering strength of young people. However, both the structure of verses 12-14 and usage elsewhere in 1 John (...2:3-5; 4:6, 7; 5:4, 5, 20) suggest that all the traits here are characteristic of *all* believers. ‘Fathers’ and ‘young people,’ then, probably do not represent different segments of the community, but reflect a common biblical rhetorical figure used to refer to an entire group....”

I’ll quote part of what Zane C. Hodges says here (*Bible Knowledge Commentary—New Testament* [SP Publications, 1983], page 890). “...the author addressed his readers as dear children...fathers, and young men. Some have suggested that John here divided his readers by chronological age-groups. Others say he

Christians (and we must all be faithful Christians) are like *children* in some ways, like *young men* in some ways, and like *fathers* in some ways.

*It is very significant that everything John says about the children, young men, and fathers here should be true of every Christian and that John says these things of all Christians in other verses of this epistle.* I'll demonstrate this fact as we continue.

For one thing, John wants to contrast what true Christians have with what the Gnostic heretics do *not* have. John wrote this epistle to combat the Gnostic heresy that was attacking the Christian church at that time. The Gnostics denied the atoning blood of Christ, for one thing; they weren't true Christians, and they didn't have salvation in any of its glorious aspects.

In his first listing (of the six listings in verses 12-14), John calls his readers *little children* and reminds them of the glorious fact that they *have been forgiven*. *All true Christians have been forgiven regardless of their age or how long they have been Christians* (cf. 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:2; 4:10; and 5:6). Forgiveness is an essential part of the gospel. The New Testament puts about *ten percent* of the emphasis on forgiveness and about *ninety percent* on the fact that Jesus died so we could walk with the victory over sin and Satan (cf., e.g., Romans chapter 6; 1 Pet. 2:24; and 1 John 1:6, 7, 9; 2:1, 3-6, 9-11, 13-17, 28, 29; 3:3-24; 4:7-21; and 5:1-5, 16-21<sup>108</sup>). Large numbers of Christians in our day (wrongly) put most of the emphasis on forgiveness and legal, positional righteousness.

In his second listing John likens his readers (all Christians) to *fathers* (*fathers* are known for their knowledge; they have years and years of experience and have been growing for many years) in that they “know Him who has been from the beginning.” Born-again Christians (all born-again Christians) have the extreme privilege of *knowing* God. Talk about important (high-level) *knowledge*! It isn't clear whether John was speaking of knowing God the Father, or God the Son, here. Actually, it doesn't make much difference; both are true. In 1 John 1:1-3 John mentions the Son's being “from the beginning” (cf. John 1:1-3), which means that He always existed, *and he mentions that we, all Christians, have fellowship with (which includes knowing) God the Father and God the Son. Other verses in this epistle also demonstrate that all Christians (and not just the fathers) have the extreme privilege of knowing God* (see 1 John 2:3, 4; 4:7; and 5:20).

Many Christians believe that John was speaking of knowing God the Son here. I prefer God the Father. For one thing, note that John speaks of the *children knowing the Father* in verse 13 and that he speaks of *knowing the Father* in 1 John 5:20. The New Testament teaches (and it is mandatory for Christians to know) that God the Son is fully

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did so by their spiritual maturity. If either explanation is adopted, the sequence—which makes ‘fathers’ the middle term—is somewhat strange. Moreover, elsewhere John addressed *all* his readers as ‘children’ (vv. 1, 28; 3:7, 18; 5:21). It seems best (with C. H. Dodd and I. H. Marshall) to view the terms of address as referring to all the readers in each case. Then each experience ascribed to them is appropriate to the category named.”

And I'll quote part of what I. Howard Marshall says here (*Epistles of John*, page 138). “A third type of solution is favored by Dodd, who thinks that the writer is simply using a rhetorical device to indicate qualities, appropriate to the three stages of life, which ought to be true of all believers. All Christians should have the innocence of childhood, the strength of youth, and the mature knowledge of age.” Marshall goes on to say that “on the whole, the third type of solution...has the most to commend it.”

<sup>108</sup> Many of these verses are discussed in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, and several of these verses are discussed in my papers. See the listing of verses discussed in my writings.

deity with God the Father, but we should also know that it also teaches that God the Son is subordinate (I didn't say inferior) to God the Father in some ways.<sup>109</sup> It is a *great* privilege to know the Son; He came to save us and enable us to know the Father. John wants to emphasize the great privilege that all true born-again Christians have of being able to know God on a level far beyond what was available to believers (very much including most of the leaders) under the old covenant.<sup>110</sup> As born-again Christians we have the *great* privilege of knowing God the Father (and God the Son) person to Person (cf., e.g., John 17:3).

I'll temporarily skip commenting on John's third listing (young men) and comment on his fourth listing, where he calls his readers *children*, in that *they know God the Father*. This listing rather strongly confirms that John is speaking to, and about, all his readers with each of these six listings. It isn't just the fathers who know the Father; his readers are also like children, children who know their father (most children, including the children of presidents and famous men, know their fathers), who know God the Father. The same Greek verb is used for the fathers *knowing* God and the children *knowing* God here in verses 13, 14; this Greek verb is used three times in verses 13, 14. With His fifth listing (in verse 14), John essentially repeats what he said about the fathers the first time (in verse 13), that they know Him who has been from the beginning.

John's third listing and sixth listing are essentially the same, but he includes some extra information with the sixth listing. These listings are addressed to the *young men*, but as with the other listings, John is addressing all true Christians. (When we think of those who fight, we typically think of *young men*; that's why John spoke of young men here.) Significantly, all true Christians are called and enabled to *overcome the evil one* and all evil/sin through appropriating a full supply of the saving grace of God in Christ on a continuous basis by faith. With his sixth listing John includes the added information that the young men *are strong and that the word of God abides in them*. All true Christians must be strong (strong by the grace/Spirit of God) against sin and Satan through taking God's word into their hearts and living in line with His word by grace through faith.

*John makes it very clear throughout this epistle that all Christians, and not just the young men, are called and enabled to walk in victory over the evil one and all evil/sin* (see 1 John 1:6, 7, 9; 2:1, 3-6, 9-11, 15-17, 28, 29; 3:3-24; 4:1-21; 5:1-5, 16-21<sup>111</sup>). Most of the verses just cited clearly demonstrate that *all Christians* are called and enabled (and required) to overcome the evil one and evil/sin. I'll quote 1 John 5:4, 5; those verses use the same Greek verb translated *overcome* in 1 John 2:13, 14. "For whatever is born of God [Every born-again Christian is born of God.] overcomes the world [whose god is the evil one]; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (5) Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God [Every born again Christian believes that Jesus is the Son of God]?" The Gnostics denied that Jesus was the Son of God. Having the victory over the evil

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<sup>109</sup> On the full deity of God the Son and on His subordination to the Father, see under John 1:1-4 and Col. 3:15-19 in my paper dated November 2004.

<sup>110</sup> It's true, of course, that a few leaders (Moses for example) were privileged to know God on a deep personal level, but they weren't born again in that the new birth wasn't available until after the Lord Jesus Christ had conquered sin, Satan, and spiritual death through His atoning death and resurrection.

<sup>111</sup> See footnote 108.

one and all evil/sin includes holding the truth *and* living in line with the truth of God's word.

Throughout this epistle John shows the great contrast between what true Christians have through salvation in Christ Jesus and what the Gnostic heretics do *not* have. In these three verses he shows that true Christians (unlike the Gnostics) are forgiven; they know God as His born-again children, and they have the victory over the devil and sin. The Gnostic heretics didn't receive forgiveness; they didn't become God's born-again children; they didn't know God (cf. 1 John 2:3, 4); and they didn't have the victory over the evil one and evil/sin.