

3. Jesus Prepares His Disciples.

Jesus' Final Days on Earth

In our previous study, we looked closely at Jesus modeling servant-leadership as He washed His disciples' feet as they reclined around the table at the Passover meal. In today's study, we return to the same scene. It was the evening before the crucifixion of Christ. Later that very night, Jesus would be arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. In chapter thirteen of his Gospel, verse thirty-one, John the Apostle opens with Judas, the traitor, having just left the gathering in the upper room to tell Christ's enemies, the priests, and leaders where they could arrest Jesus. With Judas gone, the Lord was very open and transparent about the things that were soon to happen, knowing that He needed to prepare them for what was to be a dark and confusing series of events.

³¹When he [Judas] was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. ³³"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." ³⁶Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." ³⁷Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!" (John 13:31-38).

The Son Glorifies the Father

Holman Hunt, known for his famous paintings of Jesus, once painted the interior of a carpenter's shop with Joseph and Jesus working. As Jesus paused in His work and stopped to yawn and stretch Himself, the sun made the shadow of a cross on the wall. The picture is fanciful in form, but the underlying idea is assuredly accurate. If we read the Gospels just as they stand, it is clear that the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ were expected from the outset of His earthly appearance.¹

Now that Judas Iscariot had departed, Jesus began teaching His disciples, unfolding important truths that stretch across five chapters of the Book of John, starting in chapter thirteen and finishing at the end of chapter seventeen. Again and again, Jesus spoke of an hour when He would glorify the Father (John 2:4, 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 12:27-28), and then He revealed to His disciples that the hour was upon Him. The shadow of the cross was ever before Him, the instrument that God the Father would use to glorify Himself and His Son.

Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once (John 13:31-32).

Let's consider how this works. Jesus glorified God through the cross, and God, the Father, glorified the Son. Verse 32 states that God will glorify Him *at once*. I want us to consider these two words:

¹ Charles R. Swindoll. *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1,501 Other Stories*. Published by Word Publishing, Nashville. Page 126.

"At once." What happened "at once?" First, Christ could have been referring to what occurred on the third day after His crucifixion, i.e., the words *at once* referring to His resurrection. Secondly, He could have been referring to the moment of His death when His Spirit was released from His physical body on the cross. Jesus said His Spirit would descend into the Underworld, known as *Sheol* in the Old Testament or *Hades* in the New Testament. He said, "**The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**" (Matthew 12:40).

The words, *at once*, could be referring to the glory of Christ being unveiled, similar to what took place on the Mount of Transfiguration. His glory was revealed to the three disciples that Jesus took with Him. When Christ gave up His Spirit on the cross, He descended and seized the keys of death and Hell from Satan (Revelation 1:18). I imagine it was a shock for those confined in Hell to see the glorified Jesus in the Underworld. The picture on earth showed one reality, but the actual reality of Who Christ is was revealed in a totally different light.

What does the word *glorify* mean? The word *glorify* comes from the Greek word *doxazō*, which means to suppose or to have an opinion of something. It is used in the New Testament to describe the dignity and worth of God to become manifest and acknowledged, to have the opinion that God is illustrious or that He is clothed with splendor. This was Jesus' chief mission in the world—to glorify God the Father—to cause the dignity and worth of God to become manifest and acknowledged by all His creation. We usually think of Jesus' chief mission exclusively in terms of the cross, that is, to pay the penalty for sin and so redeem (buy back to God with Jesus' blood) all who place their trust in Christ's payment for their sins, to bring them to God. Here's what Peter the Apostle wrote about Christ's purpose in coming:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

To show forth God's glory through His death was the mission of Christ, but we must not forget that His first and primary mission was to glorify God on the earth. That is why Jesus prayed, "**I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do**" (John 17:4). To glorify God is also our mission, each of us that are part of the Church, the called-out ones of God. While He lived on earth, the Lord Jesus modeled how we are also to live, i.e., to glorify the Father. We each are responsible for modeling or representing how Jesus lived His life to others. You and I have the same mission given to Jesus: to glorify God. Jesus then went on to tell His disciples about how they, too, are to glorify the Lord. They glorify the Lord by their *agapé* love for one another.

Jesus Gives a New Commandment

³⁴A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:34-35).

In what way is this commandment different from the one with which they would have been familiar? This command to love is the first of two times that Jesus talked to them about loving one another (John 13:34, 15:12), but only in this instance does He call it a "new" command. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were instructed to love their neighbor as themselves, but now Jesus goes even further in this definition of love. "*As I have loved you, so you must love....*" The measure of

their love for one another was exemplified and modeled to them in the way Jesus had loved them. How did Jesus love them? He laid down His life for them. “**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us**” (Romans 5:8). Love must be demonstrated, and Jesus showed us how to love others. God's kind of love is a love that transcends all other loves, a self-sacrificial love, an “*agapē*” love, i.e., a love that seeks the highest for the one loved. It was a “new” kind of love because it demanded that they love one another in the way Christ had loved them. Through this kind of love, they would show the world they belong to Him.

For the eleven disciples, their world was about to be totally changed. In preparing them for the dark hours ahead, Jesus revealed that He must leave and that, unless He went, the Holy Spirit, the One who would come to comfort and counsel them, would not come (John 16:7). From now onward, they were to lean on His Spirit and one another with the kind of love He had demonstrated to them. This self-sacrificial kind of love shown would prove that they were His disciples. If your discipleship is not working at home by the level of service you give to your family and others around you; then it is not working. Those around you, at work and home, will glorify God when they see the change of character in your life. Paul, the Apostle, wrote of the kind of love that the early disciples had, not only for one another but also for those beyond their community of faith:

³We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. ⁴Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; ⁵in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; ⁶in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and **in sincere love**; ⁷in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; ⁸through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; ⁹known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; ¹⁰sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything (2 Corinthians 6:3-10).

People have become increasingly isolated from one another, with the spirit of this world encouraging us to be self-sufficient. We drift further and further from each other, even though technology has made it more accessible and easier to connect. The spirit of the age wants to isolate us and make many people lonely. When we live as the family of God, we will attract others to experience His love. The kind of love Paul talks about in the above verses breaks down barriers to those outside the Christian community. To have sincere love and be always rejoicing and to be poor and yet make others rich are things that stand out to those who have not experienced Christ's love and power.

Where I am Going, You Cannot Come.

Peter focused on the alarming words that Jesus was leaving them, “**Where I am going, you cannot come**” (John 13:33). He responded, saying, “**Lord, where are you going?**” Jesus replied, “**Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later**” (v. 36). The Lord was saying that He was leaving to accomplish something that only He could do, i.e., to give Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. After finishing the work the Father had given Him, He would ascend back to the Father's side. Later, as the disciples would all accomplish their work of preaching the Gospel, each would follow Him through the gates of death to be with Him. However,

for the time being, they each had work in front of them. Peter seems to have understood that Jesus was talking about His death, for he said, “**Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you**” (v. 37).

Simon Peter was sincere when he said those words, but Jesus knew what would happen that night and the next day. Soon, the eleven would be with Him at the Garden of Gethsemane, and Peter would not be able to keep awake to pray. The Lord had to face His most difficult hours alone, sweating blood as He prayed with his closest friends asleep nearby. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to Peter, “**The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak**” (Matthew 26:41). Like Peter, we are sincere in our desire to follow Christ. We may worry that we do not have what it takes to stand for Him or suffer for Him. Thank God that we have the Holy Spirit to help us and that we do not need to rely on our own strength.

None of us know what lies ahead and what may be asked of us as believers in Christ. For some, it may be to lay down our lives for your brothers and sisters in Christ. A great weight of glory awaits those who are so called. Paul wrote that to die for Christ is gain (Philippians 1:21). Peter thought he was strong enough to go all the way with Christ and lay down his life, but there was still a lesson he needed to learn before he could be the strong leader the Lord was making him be. John does not mention Satan’s request to sift Peter and the disciples like wheat. To see the test he had to undergo, we have to turn to Luke’s account of the same conversation in the upper room. Jesus said to Simon Peter:

³¹“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” ³³But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” ³⁴Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me” (Luke 22:31-34).

1). Why do you think God allowed this test of Peter’s character and commitment?

Twice for emphasis, the Lord called him by the name he had when he met Jesus—Simon. It was as if the Lord reminded him of his old nature before he became Jesus’ follower. Simon, the impetuous one, was quick to rely on his own physical resources and whose actions were rash and impulsive. These were his weaknesses, and often when we are under stress, our weaknesses are revealed. Peter must learn to rely on God for what lies ahead of him.

As we mature as believers, we learn dependence on the Holy Spirit working in us and through us. Whenever we are tempted to rely on our resources, we should remember this lesson Peter had to experience. If you are a believer in Christ, it is essential to know that, as in the case of Job, the Lord’s servant (Job 1:10), Satan has to ask permission from God before he can do anything against you.

Jesus used a farming metaphor to describe what Satan wanted to do in Simon Peter’s life, referring to the test he would experience as a sifting process. Satan wanted to shake up the disciple’s life as wheat would be separated from the chaff. He sought to sift Peter and desired to destroy his life and testimony, but God was with him in the test of his faith. It is the same with us. The enemy has

plans to tempt us and turn us from the faith, but thanks be to God; Jesus has also interceded for us.

As believers in Christ, there are times in our lives when God allows the enemy to shake us in our faith when we ask, "Why is this happening to me?" It is common for us to want to go around difficult situations or the "mountain" that is in our way, but God wants us to trust Him and go through the trial. God allowed this trial for Peter, knowing that he would be spiritually stronger when he came through it. Jesus told Peter that, before the night was out, he would three times deny that he ever knew his Lord.

None of the disciples would have predicted Peter's downfall. The great apostle failed precisely at the point of his greatest strength. Peter must have had terrible guilt and anguish of soul during those next three days before the resurrection. Simon, the natural man with all his self-assured presumption, was about to die to himself. Peter was beginning to know himself, along with all his weaknesses. He was defeated and disconsolate after warming his hands around the fire in the high priest's courtyard, but God was not through with him! With every darkness a believer goes through, a morning of joy follows.

2). [Have you ever felt like you were being sifted and shaken? If so, what were the results of the testing?](#)

A Place for Each of God's People

Jesus said something really hard for them, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer" (John 13:33). Sadness and concern filled the room as they listened to His words. He spoke again:

¹Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going. ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:1-6).

We have the benefit of hindsight to read about all that occurred that night, but they must have wondered what kind of pressure they would soon be facing, especially after the Lord prophesied that Peter would three times deny knowing Jesus. They must have been concerned that each of them would be able to stand up to what was ahead. What worried them most was His words that they could not come with Him, but they would follow later (John 13:36). Only One could pay the price for the sin of the world to bring men to God, and that was Christ, God in the flesh. He would go before them and make a way for them to follow.

⁷No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—⁸the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—⁹so that they should live on forever and not see decay (Psalm 49:7-9).

No ordinary man could pay the debt of sin owed by each of us. There had to be a Redeemer, a sacrificial payment by God Himself to make the way for us to follow Christ to the Father's house. The Old Testament sacrifices of various animals were just a picture that looked ahead to what was taking place the next day, the once-and-for-all-time sacrifice of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The Lord comforted His disciples by reminding them that they already knew the way to the Father's house. The disciple Thomas spoke for them when he said they did not know where He was going, so how could they know the way? (v. 5).

Even though the Lord had told them repeatedly that He would be put to death, they refused to believe it. However, the truth began to sink in at this point: He had to go alone to pay the price for them to follow. Their hearts were troubled by this fear of the future and His departure. Here we see the gentleness of Jesus, for even when He knew He would soon be going through immense suffering and the inevitability of death, He was thinking of how to prepare His disciples for what was to come. He wanted to ease their sorrow by giving them hope.

As Christ looked around the table at His disciples, His heart went out to them. He could see they were troubled by His words. When our hearts are troubled, stressed, fearful, and uncertain or when it seems as if our world is caving in, we are to remember what Jesus said in this passage: **“My Father's house has many rooms”** (John 14:2). No matter what is going on in our minds and heart, Peter, no matter how broken we are, no matter what we are experiencing, there is a place for us in the Father's house. He's saying it to Peter and the disciples, but He's also saying it to us. Deep down within the soul of each of us, planted within our inner being, is a yearning for a better place:

**He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart;
yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).**

3). Can you remember a time in your life when thoughts of eternity began to come to you? Was there a situation, a near-death, or the passing away of a relative that made you wonder what would happen to you after death?

The enemy of our souls, Satan, the father of lies, seeks to focus our minds only on the things of this world in the hope that we will live just for the present moment. He has used people down through the ages to construct all kinds of false religions, philosophies, and ideologies that try to blot out any thoughts of eternity in the minds of humankind. One famous agnostic, Professor T. H. Huxley (who invented the term "agnostic" and applied it to himself), reversed his views before his death and came to believe in God and an afterlife. As he lay dying (so his nurse reported), he raised himself on his elbows and gazed into the distance as if surveying some invisible scene, then dropped back on his pillow and murmured: "So it was true! So it was true!"²

Yes, it is true. In the Father's house are many rooms. Perhaps, you have read the King James Version, which translates the Greek word *monai* as mansions, but the term means dwelling places or rooms. We will live with God in His house, and His home has many rooms for us to abide with Him. For those who have lived with the insecurity of moving from place to place and in unfortunate circumstances, take hope! We are talking about having an eternal house in the heavens where we will forever be at home with God! (2 Corinthians 5:1).

² Selwyn Hughes. "Every Day with Jesus." *Crusade for World Revival*. May-June 1996 edition.

When Jesus said, “**I am going to prepare a place for you**” (14:2), we should not think in terms of Jesus, the carpenter building each of us a natural home. The Greek word translated as "prepare" is *hetoimazō*, which is used for an Eastern custom of sending a person before kings on their journeys to level the roads and make them passable. The word was also used to describe the disciples' preparing the Upper Room for the Passover feast (Luke 22:9, 12). The sad departure of Christ was necessary for the way to be prepared for all God's people to follow Him to the Father's house. He went ahead of us to make "passable" the way to God.

The Scriptures tell us of a time when a heavenly city will come down from heaven to earth—a city prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Notice with whom we will be living:

¹Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was **no longer any sea**. ²I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride** beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now **the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them**. They will be his people, and **God himself will be with them** and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:1-4).

In another place, Paul the Apostle tells us the following:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In our wildest dreams and imaginations of heaven, we cannot imagine the wonders that God has prepared for His people. If your heart is troubled by what you are experiencing, let your mind and spirit be encouraged. He has gone to prepare a place for you! This thought must have comforted Peter after he denied Christ, that Jesus had prepared a room, even for him who denied Christ.

Knowing where we are going when we die is the perfect antidote to fear, worry, and a troubled heart. The Lord promised that He would come back and take us to be with Him (John 14:3). If there were any doubt about it, He wouldn't have told us. We can trust His Word on this. He said to them, “**Trust in God, trust also in me**” (John 14:1). If Jesus were not God, this statement of His would be highly blasphemous. He said you could also trust Him for your eternal home just as you trust God.

Jesus, the Way to the Father

When He said to them, “**You know the way to the place where I am going**” (John 14:4), the disciple Thomas said to him, “**Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?**” (John 14:5). I love people like Thomas, i.e., a man never afraid to be authentic. He was one who genuinely wanted to understand everything. I can identify with him in that respect. Thomas wanted clarification as to what Christ was saying, so he asked, "Where is this place you are going?" If he could not follow at that time, he had to know how to find Jesus.

¶Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ¶If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:6-7).

I don't think Thomas got the answer for which he was looking. Instead of a series of directions or things to do, the answer given was a person, Christ Himself: “**I am the way.**” This is the sixth of the great *I Am* statements (10:11; 10:14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1; 15:5). Here again, Jesus was claiming to be the great *I Am* that Moses was told was the name of the God of Israel, and the Creator of all things (Exodus 3:14). The words that Jesus is the Truth and the Life are supporting statements to His saying that He is the Way. If we are looking for direction as to how to be right with God, we are to look at the person of Christ. Notice that He does not say, “I will show you the way,” Instead, He states, “**I AM** the way.”

Embodied in Jesus are all Truth and the Life of God that we need. If there was any other way to get to the Father's house, don't you think He would have told us? Jesus said, “**No one comes to the Father except through Me**” (John 14:6). As human beings, we tend to prefer a set of rules, directions, laws, or rituals that we can perform, i.e., something we can do to earn a reward. It gives us a sense of self-accomplishment and the thought that we are in control. We want to do something to gain eternal life, but Jesus gave us no other way than Himself. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Albert Einstein, the great theoretical physicist, was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to the famous physicist, Einstein reached into his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached into his trousers pockets. It wasn't there either. He looked in his briefcase but couldn't see it in there. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't locate it. The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist on his hands and knees, looking under his seat for his ticket. The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry. I know who you are, no problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.' Einstein looked at him and said, “Young man, I, too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going.”

As believers in Christ, we can be thankful that we know who we are in Christ and where we are going—our ultimate destination. When a person comes to Christ, He comes to the source of all Truth and Life (John 1:3).

We Need a Life Transfusion

To get to this heavenly place, i.e., the Father's house, we need to receive the life of God. The physical life we received from Adam is not enough; we need an impartation, i.e., an infusion of new life to our spirit from God:

²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

A mere man could die a martyr's death, but only Christ could accomplish the resurrection of the dead. That takes a Savior!

To See Jesus is to See the Father

To those who believe Christ was only a prophet or a great teacher, hear what Jesus said about Himself and His relationship with the Father:

⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." ⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves (John 14:7-11).

4). Does this statement of Jesus in verse 9 change your image of God the Father? How?

After the cross and resurrection, the disciples came to know God in a new and intimate way. Christ said, "From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (v. 7). In different parts of the world, there are many so-called gods, but there is none like the Lord. At the cross, Jesus showed us what the true God is like. To see Christ crucified is to look at the heart of God toward us all. God loves us so much that He would die a terrible death in our place for us and as us.

There is no room for ambiguity here. If anyone doubts who Jesus says He is, this statement should put those doubts to rest. Phillip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us" (John 14:8). The Lord seemed disappointed at what Phillip said. He replied, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

The disciples were slow to grasp Who Christ was and is. Yes, they had come to believe that He was the Messiah, but the thought that God would walk the earth and tabernacle among them staggered their minds. To look at Jesus is to see the Father. The words and works that Jesus did were because the Father was living in Him and doing His work through Him. May the Spirit of God give us all enlightenment on this beautiful truth!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for providing a Way for us to be with You in Your house forever. Whatever we go through in this life, we are encouraged that a place is prepared for us beyond death. We praise You for your unfailing love. Let your love shine through us. Amen.

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