

“THE GREATEST CONVERSATION IN THE BIBLE BEGINS”

John 14.1-4

Dr. John S. Waldrup

Please turn in your Bible to John chapter 14. This places us in the biblical narrative shortly after the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles celebrated the Passover. He has washed the apostles' feet, has revealed that one of them would betray Him, handed the sop to the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, and then sent Judas Iscariot out to complete his plans for betrayal.

It is after these events have taken place that our Lord Jesus Christ initiated a conversation with His remaining eleven apostles that comprises the narrative of John chapters 14, 15, and 16. Chapter 17, of course, records the high priestly intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ to His heavenly Father.

These two narratives, the Lord's conversation with His men and His prayer to the Father, comprise what is, in my opinion, the greatest conversation recorded in God's Word; greater than the exchange God had with Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3, greater than the accounting God had with the patriarch Job, greater than the negotiation God allowed with Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and certainly greater than any conversation recorded in God's Word between mere human beings.

The first portion of this greatest of all conversations is the record of the comments and statements made by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church, primarily, and also their responses to Him as those twelve left the Upper Room, to walk past the steps leading up to Herod's Temple, on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane.¹ The second portion of this greatest of all conversations is John the evangelist's record of that portion of the Lord Jesus Christ's high priestly intercessory prayer that is recorded in John chapter 17, which is the closest any Bible reader will ever come this side of heaven to experiencing a conversation between the Father and the Son in the holy of holies.

I once brought a message from John 14.1-3 that I titled “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled.” You can read it on the Church website or listen to the audio of the message on the Church YouTube page.² One of my purposes with that message was to comfort my audience near the onset of the Wuhan (now possibly the North Carolina) Virus pandemic lockdown. I did not in that message associate for you the connection of those three verses to this greatest conversation ever recorded. But I will do so now.

Through the miracle that is God's Word, the Holy Spirit of God brings us to a place in human history when the interaction of the God-man with His established but embryonic Church, followed by the pleadings to His heavenly Father by the eternal Son of the living God, is recorded for our benefit, for our study, for our enlightenment, and for our admission to sacred places. The eleven remaining apostles in the Upper Room at the beginning of this conversation were disturbed, on the verge of being frightened, and found themselves uncertain about everything. They felt themselves to be at the mercy of circumstances. On that night so long ago, only hours before their Master's arrest and crucifixion, the portion of the conversation found in chapters 14 through 16 was directed *to* them. The portion of the conversation recorded in John chapter 17 was Christ's prayer to God *for* them.

Let us read John 14.1-3, after which I will make brief comments:

¹ The founding of Christ's ἐκκλησία is shown in John S. Waldrup, *The Church of Jesus Christ: 28 Truths Every Christian Ought To Learn*, (Monrovia, CA: Classical Baptist Press, 2019), pages 23-31.

² <https://calvaryroadbaptist.church/media/gdvdfqh/let-not-your-heart-be-troubled>

- ¹ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
- ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
- ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

Notice the irony of our Lord's opening remark in verse 1, in light of Him being hours away from His unjust arrest, illegal trials, brutal tortures, and, finally, prophesied crucifixion for our sins. Despite what He knew was in His immediate future, He took the occasion of those final moments in the Upper Room to comfort His remaining apostles, when by all rights it was they who should have rallied to support and encourage Him.

He initiated the conversation by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled." His own heart was anticipating His passion that would culminate in His identification with His Own by bearing our sins on the cross of Calvary, and also His unique of all divine experiences being the dreaded separation from His heavenly Father because of our sinfulness that would be imputed to Him. He, nevertheless, concerned Himself with those eleven men's troubled hearts, and by extension, my sometimes troubled heart.

If you are a lost soul, does this not provide you the insight you need to catch a glimpse of the Savior's tenderness and mercy? Where else, and with whom else, will you find such compassion, such understanding, and such love? Not your dad. Not your mom. Not any friend you have ever had. He died for me.

Notice, also, that our Lord's words to His men convey to us an understanding of each person's personal responsibility for your own heart. You and I are each responsible for the condition of our hearts, the very centers of our personalities.

Though each of us is responsible for the condition of our own heart, it is also clear, from Scripture and from personal experience, that no one among us can cleanse his heart from sin. No matter our intentions, and regardless of our efforts and resolutions to correct our course and clean up our personal mess, we must admit to repeated failures. Whatever remedy that succeeds must come from outside, from Another, from the Savior, and that by God's grace through faith.

This is why my Lord ended this first statement by saying, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." Be they troubles of the heart that leave you unsettled and agitated, such as here, or sins that cannot otherwise be cleansed but by the shed blood of the Savior, the remedy for heart problems must and can only be faith in Christ. Verse one, then, is His prescription for what ailed them. It is a prescription the Physician of souls has written for what ails you, as well.

Notice how, as an additional help to ease their anxiety, our Lord once more instilled hope into His apostles, in verse 2. He accomplished this by introducing a special place to them:

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

Hope is the confident expectation of future blessing based on the promises of God, or the Savior's promise. The Savior's promise was given in this verse. With His promise, our Lord Jesus Christ gave those men, and us, hope. If verse one is His *prescription*, verse two is His *place*.

Finally, verse 3:

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."

Four phrases comprise verse 3. Allow me to briefly rehearse them to you: *First*, the Lord remarked once more that He was going. *Second*, He commented that He was going to prepare. *Third*, He was going to prepare a place. *Fourth*, the apostles and their Lord would be together once more.

Important is the ending of the first phrase of John 14.3, which is the beginning of a first-class conditional statement, which statements are always presumed to be factual assertions:

“And if I go and prepare a place for you.”

Thus, their futures were assured. Their parting of ways was only temporary. The proper conclusion from what He told them, apart from whatever circumstances they were witnessing and drawing inferences from, was that all was well and that all would be well.

We now come to the final verse of our Lord’s opening remarks of this greatest conversation recorded in God’s Word, John 14.4:

“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”

Those of you who are familiar with John chapter 14 may remember that this statement made by the Lord Jesus Christ was immediately disputed, first by Thomas and then by Philip. Despite their protests to the contrary, what the Lord Jesus Christ said was demonstrably true, and is the concern of this message from God’s Word.

Those of you who have been under my ministry for any length of time are aware of the questions that I repeatedly insist ought to be asked by anyone who is searching for the truth. Those questions are, Who? What? Where? When? How? Why? *Always* ask those six questions. *Always*. You may not always be able to answer those questions, but they must always be asked.

When the Lord stated, “And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,” He was declaring to His eleven remaining apostles, He was saying to His little flock, that they already knew the Where? and the How? They didn’t know what He told them they already knew. Have you ever known something without realizing it? That is what we find here.

Thus, we are provided the two main points in today’s message from God’s Word, with the third main point being implied:

First, LET ME PRESENT WHAT IS IMPLIED, OR, RATHER, WHAT IS ASSUMED TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Do I need to present to you a rigorous proof that the Lord’s eleven men had an established belief system founded on the integrity of God’s Word, or will three reminders prove sufficient? I will assume three reminders are enough to bring to your awareness what I am confident you already know:

First, there are sixty-three verses in the New Testament in which the phrase “it is written” is found.³ I will list them for you when this sermon is uploaded to the Church’s website, www.CalvaryRoadBaptist.Church. You can examine for yourself that in all four Gospels, the Book of Acts, and many of the epistles, references and appeals are made to the Hebrew Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God, using the phrase “It is written.” It is a conviction that most Jews of our Lord’s day wholeheartedly embraced, and indeed a position the remaining apostles held to be true.

³ Mt 2:5; 4:4, 6, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mr 1:2; 7:6; 9:12, 13; 14:21, 27; Lu 2:23; 3:4; 4:4, 8, 10; 7:27; 19:46; 24:46; Joh 6:31, 45; 12:14; Ac 1:20; 7:42; 15:15; 23:5; Ro 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3, 9, 21; 1Co 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:45; 2Co 4:13; 8:15; 9:9; Ga 3:10, 13; 4:22, 27; Heb 10:7; 1Pe 1:16

Then, there is Second Timothy 3.16:

“All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

The phrase “all scripture” is here used by the Apostle Paul to remind and reinforce to young Timothy they are the Hebrew Scriptures that are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

Third, there is Second Peter 1.21, the Apostle Peter declaring the means by which the Spirit of God worked in the lives of the prophets of old to give us the Old Testament:

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Thus, the view of the Hebrew Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ held, that was reflected in the Gospel accounts, and that was embraced by the apostles Peter, John, and Paul, decades later in their writings, could not have been a different view than was held by those eleven remaining apostles (including Peter and John) who were in the Upper Room when the Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words.

The eleven knew what they didn’t realize they knew, that the Hebrew Scriptures were true, authoritative, and precise to answer the questions posed here in verse four. The Where? and the How? were questions already answered in the Hebrew Scriptures. And those men already knew the answers, even if they didn’t realize that they knew the answers.

Next, THE WHERE THAT IS KNOWN

What did the Lord Jesus Christ say to His men?

“And whither I go ye know.”

With these words, the Lord Jesus Christ is said, in essence, “Where I am going, you know.” Thus, He let them know what they didn’t think they knew, but which they certainly knew. You might wonder, “How is this possible?” A glance at John 13.36 reminds us what the Lord Jesus Christ said to these men moments before:

“Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.”

Unless these guys had immediately forgotten what the Savior told them, they had assurance from Him that following a temporary separation from Him, they would be with Him again.

Couple those immediate remarks by the Lord Jesus Christ with what we know from the Hebrew Scriptures, and what those Jewish men certainly must have known from the Hebrew Scriptures. You have heard the phrase, “They didn’t see the forest for the trees.” This is an expression that refers to someone who is so intently looking at individual trees in the forest that he fails to take note of the forest. The reverse can also be true. One can look so intently at the entire forest that one fails to take note of individual trees. We know these eleven apostles were well-versed in the Hebrew Scriptures. They had grown up attending synagogue worship every week, sitting under the instruction of their rabbis. There is no doubt that they had a broad general knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and could recount individual episodes of every individual and place named in the Bible. Additionally, they had been exposed to the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, and they had the inestimable benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ’s personal instruction for 3½ years. No more capable teacher of God’s Word ever lived. In fact, as the Bible is the written Word, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the living Word. Taking a step back from the specific details of Bible truths those men had learned in the synagogue growing up,

and the explanation of overarching principles the eternal Son of God had taught them for the last 3½ years, what is it that they knew without knowing that they knew it?

Having lost sight of the forest for the trees, here are the things those men knew without knowing that they knew: Did they not know that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth? Did they not know that shortly after the beginning, Adam and Eve sinned against God? Did they not know that after Adam and Eve sinned against God, God promised them a Redeemer? Yes, because they knew the Hebrew Scriptures, they knew those things. Did they not also know that their Lord Jesus Christ came from God? Did they not know that He was the virgin-born Messiah? Had He not explained to them that He must die for sins? And were not all of these truths available to them in the Hebrew Scriptures? Yes, they were.

Additionally, was it not revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures that God desired to dwell among His people? Had He not communed with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden before they sinned? Did not God give instructions to Moses for building the Tabernacle so that He might dwell with them, Exodus 25.8? Did He not authorize the construction of the Temple to dwell with them? And did not God dwell in the midst of His people in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, for 33½ years? Could they not have, should they not have, realized that the Son of the living God would *return* to His Father after He completed His essential mission? As well, since He promised them that they would be with Him, should they not have already known that God's overarching plan of redemption would be to graciously restore to Himself what was lost with Adam's fall? Therefore, when the Lord Jesus Christ said to them, "And whither I go ye know," they would have understood Him had they known what they knew to be true. And what they knew to be true was God's Word, where all of these things are set forth. He was returning to His Father by the way of the cross and the resurrection, and in due course they would join Him. And in due course, so shall you join Him, if you trust Him as your Savior.

Finally, THE HOW THAT IS KNOWN

What did the Lord *then* say to His men?

"and the way ye know."

He told them in verse three that He was going to prepare a place for them. He told them in verse four, at the beginning of the sentence, that they knew *where* that was. *Where* that was was with God! In this utterance, the second half of verse four, He tells them *how* to get there. Or rather, He reminded them that they already knew how to get there.

Again, we link this remark by the Lord Jesus Christ with what we know from the Hebrew Scriptures, and what those eleven men certainly must have known from the Hebrew Scriptures. What did those men learn from the Hebrew Scriptures? What does everyone know from reading the Hebrew Scriptures?

I am reminded of a conversation with a Muslim friend when Sarah was a little girl. He was a gas station attendant at the Union 76 station, then located on Foothill Boulevard, just East of Myrtle Avenue. He was a young Syrian man, of very pleasant disposition, who liked my little girl very much. Over time, I persuaded him to obtain and read an Arabic translation of the Bible. One day, I pulled into the gas station to purchase some fuel and had a brief conversation with him. He indicated to me that he had been reading from his Arabic translation of the Bible. When I asked about his impressions, he told me with great surprise that even in their own Bible, the God of the Jews criticized them. I agreed with him and suggested that this was further proof of the Bible's reliability. God's Word is true.

Read through the Bible and you will immediately also see the failure of Adam, the failure of Noah, the failure of Job, the failure of Abraham, the failure of Isaac, the failure of Jacob, the failure of David, the failure

of Solomon, and on it goes. Failure after failure after failure after failure by God's greatest men in the Hebrew Scriptures. What is the lesson to be learned from the Hebrew Scriptures? "Not by works of righteousness which we have done."⁴ The best of individuals are, after all is said and done, still sinners in the sight of God.⁵ That is why the prophet Isaiah records that even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God.⁶ There is no hope of being reconciled to God based on any personal righteousness or good deeds done by any sinner. This the apostles on that night so long ago *had* to know. God's plan had always been, from the very beginning, a righteousness which is by faith. So said the prophet Habakkuk in 2.4:

"the just shall live by his faith."

So demonstrated God with Abram in Genesis 15.6:

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

And so discovered King David after his precipitous fall into adultery and murder, Psalm 32.1-5:

- 1 <<A Psalm of David, Maschil.>> Blessed *is he* whose transgression is forgiven, *whose sin is* covered.
- 2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.
- 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.
- 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
- 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Those eleven remaining apostles in the Upper Room knew of Adam's fall into sin, knew of Noah's drunkenness, knew of Job's self-pity, knew of Abraham's dalliance with Hagar, knew of Isaac's lie, knew of Jacob's deceit of his father and also his two wives and two concubines, knew of David's adultery and murder, and the horrors of Solomon's sins. Thus, a righteousness which comes by works *had* to be an impossibility. What is left, and therefore what *must* be God's plan in the Hebrew Scriptures, is the righteousness which comes by faith.

However, for justification by faith to be possible, there must be a satisfaction for God's righteousness and holiness. Was that not suggested by God in Genesis 3.5, the seed of woman? Was that not pictured by the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah, and the replacement of Isaac as a sacrifice by the ram caught in the thicket?⁷ Was that not also pictured by the Passover lamb, and the various sin and trespass offerings of the Mosaic Law? But who would be the fulfillment of all these types found in the Hebrew Scriptures? Does not Isaiah point directly to the Lord Jesus Christ as God's sacrifice for sin?⁸

All of this was known by those eleven men. They were entirely familiar with all of these things taught in the Hebrew Scriptures, and they knew the fulfillment of all the Old Testament typology was the One seated with them in the Upper Room. Further, they knew from the Hebrew Scriptures that the means by which one must

⁴ Titus 3.5

⁵ Romans 3.23

⁶ Isaiah 64.6

⁷ Genesis 22.1-14

⁸ Isaiah 52.13-53.12

acquire righteousness in the sight of God is faith, and it has to be faith in this One who sat before them. Had not John the Baptist twice identified Him by publicly declaring, “Behold the Lamb of God?”⁹

How is it to be explained that these eleven men, who had been taught so much growing up and sat at the feet of the Master-teacher for 3½ years, were so dull of mind and heart that they did not know what they knew?

Insight is to be gained from a comment made by the Lord Jesus Christ to two men on the road to Emmaus after He had risen from the dead. He said to them in Luke 24.25-26,

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”

Think about it, my friend. If the heart of a *believer* is so profoundly lethargic and slow to respond to what the prophets have spoken, imagine the condition of those who are *dead* in trespasses and sins. The Lord Jesus Christ told those eleven men that everything they needed to know about being reconciled to God and faith as the means by which a person becomes righteous in the sight of God was already contained in the Old Testament.

Here we are 2000 years later. We have the Old Testament that those eleven men had. Additionally, we have the New Testament, which Peter, John, and Paul wrote. Yet the problem of spiritual indifference and the slowness of the heart to believe remains.

All of the necessary information needed for any sinner to be reconciled to God is found in the Old Testament, as those men were told in our text, and is seen even more clearly stated in the New Testament, as any student of the Bible knows.

What you need, my friend, is for God to move in your life. The Spirit of God *must* give you life. You *must* be born again. The Spirit of God *must* give you faith. You *must* trust Jesus Christ as your Savior. God the Father *must* draw you to His Son. All of this will be accomplished, and the Lord Jesus Christ will save your sinful soul, when you turn from your sins and trust Christ for salvation, full and free.

If you are waiting for a clever preacher, an interesting teacher, an impressive Christian, or a fine Church to affect you, you haven’t paid much attention to the men the Lord was dealing with. They were the best of the best, the most highly trained, and the most committed Christians of all time. Yet, to a man, they were pathetic.

Your consideration, therefore, must be of the Savior, not any man. The Savior, and not any Church. The Savior, and not any apostle, preacher, or teacher. I urge you, therefore, to come to Christ.

⁹ John 1.29, 36