

You Know the Way

(John 14:1-6)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

I. Background for the Farewell Discourse

- a. As we resume in the text, it is the Thursday night, the night before Jesus is to be crucified.
 - i. Jesus has had his Last Supper with the disciples, at which (we know from **Matthew**, **Mark** and **Luke**) He instituted the Lord's Supper with the bread and the cup.
- b. After dinner has ended and Judas has departed, but before Jesus and his disciples cross over to the Garden of Gethsemane (where Jesus will be taken prisoner), Jesus gives a lengthy and very significant talk to the apostles.
 - i. The passages we will cover in this lesson are part of that "Farewell Discourse".
 - ii. Jesus has just said, "Where I am going you cannot come." (**John 13:33**)
 - iii. Peter asks, "Why can't I follow you?" and states he is willing even to lay down his life for Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus replied that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed the next morning. (**John 13:36-38**)

II. You Know Where I am Going, and You Know the Way

- a. Read **John 14:1-6**.
- b. The storyline:
 - i. Jesus has told them He is going somewhere that they cannot go. Clearly the disciples are anxious about that.
 - ii. Jesus tries to encourage them.
 - 1. He tells them He is going to prepare a place for them.
 - 2. He tells them He will return to bring them where He is going.
 - iii. Jesus tells them they know where He is going, and they know the way.
 - 1. Thomas protests that they don't know where He is going, so how can they possibly know the way?

- iv. Jesus answers Thomas with one of the most famous statements He makes in the gospels. Jesus says,

- 1. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**, NKJV)

- c. **Question:** Is there really a *mansion* for each one of us?

- i. Jesus says in **John 14:2**, "In My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you."

- ii. This may remind many of us of the familiar gospel song, *I've Got A Mansion Just Over the Hilltop*.

- 1. Lyrics to that song, by gospel songwriter Ira Stanphill in 1949, are:

- a. I'm satisfied with just a cottage below,

A little silver and a little gold;

But in that city where the ransomed will shine,

I want a gold one that's silver lined.

I've got a mansion just over the hilltop,

In that bright land where we'll never grow old;

And some day yonder we will never more wander,

But walk on streets that are purest gold.

- b. Don't think me poor or deserted or lonely,

I'm not discouraged I'm heaven bound;

I'm but a pilgrim in search of the city,

I want a mansion, a harp (or robe) and a crown.

I've got a mansion just over the hilltop,

In that bright land where we'll never grow old;

And some day yonder we will never more wander,

But walk on streets that are purest gold.

2. Based on the words of the song, obviously based on **John 14:1-3**, the singer is content with a small “cottage” here on earth; but is looking forward to a full-blown *mansion* in the next life! Plus “a gold one that’s silver-lined,” a crown, a fancy robe, streets of pure gold, etc.
 - a. However, the word rendered “mansions” here is the same word used on **John 14:23**, where it is generally translated “home” (NKJV, ESV, RSV) or “abode” (KJV, ASV, NASB, D-R). It seems clear in the context of that verse that this is what the word means: *an abode* or a *residence*.
 - b. In the past, the word “mansion” simply had the meaning of *a dwelling* or *a residence*. (Whereas today we associate the word “mansion” with a *very large, expensive home* that serves as a status-symbol.)
- iii. In other words, Jesus is saying in **John 14:1-3** that He is going to prepare a residence for us, somewhere for us to dwell, where we will be with Him and the Father (not a large estate). He further says that there are dwellings for *many* to reside there. He is going to *prepare these places* for His followers.
- iv. Some today can take this statement about there being “many rooms” in a way that violates other things Jesus said.
 1. Some want to take this “many rooms” statement to imply that there is a wing in this “hotel” for Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and those who follow all sorts of other teachings and leaders.
 2. However, Jesus clearly says here, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (**John 14:6**)
 - a. Jesus also said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (**Mark 16:15-16**, NKJV)
 - b. Peter would later tell the Jewish rulers, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (**Acts 4:12**, NKJV)
- v. Others take this statement of “many rooms” to imagine that it is easy to get in (plenty of room!), or that God planned this “hotel” to have

many wings, one for each group of Christians out there (Catholic, Orthodox, Methodist, Pentecostal, Anabaptist, etc.).

1. However, as we will see later in this Farewell Discourse, Jesus' desire is for all believers to be unified, and the way is indeed narrow.

d. **Question:** Jesus says He is about to go somewhere. *Where* is He going?

- i. He says in **John 14:2-3** that he is going "to prepare a place for them".
- ii. Further, in **John 14:12** and **14:28** He says, "I go to *My Father*".
- iii. In **John 16:10** Jesus says, "I go to *My Father* and you see me no more."
- iv. Finally, Jesus explains where He is going in plain terms:
 1. "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.' His disciples said to Him, 'See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!'" (**John 16:28-29**, NKJV)

v. Jesus is returning to His Father, *who is in heaven*.

1. Jesus referred to His Father, in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the gospels, as being "in heaven".
 - a. "In this manner, therefore, pray: *Our Father in heaven*, hallowed be Your name." (**Matthew 6:9**, NKJV)
 - b. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify *your Father in heaven*." (**Matthew 5:16**, NKJV)
 - c. "Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven." (**Matthew 10:32**, NKJV)
2. It says repeatedly in Scripture that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God (**Luke 22:69**, **Acts 7:55-56**, **Colossians 3:1**, **Hebrews 12:2**), in fulfillment of the prophecy of **Psalm 110:1** (designated **Psalm 109:1** in the LXX).
 - a. "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" (**Psalm 110:1**, NKJV)
3. Of course, immediately after Jesus died, He descended to Hades, after which He was raised to be seated at the right hand of God, as Peter explained in **Acts 2:22-33**.

- a. Peter quotes from **Psalm 16** (designated **Psalm 15** in the LXX) that "You will not leave My soul in Hades". Also, he quotes from **Psalm 110** (designated **Psalm 109** in the LXX) where it says that the Christ would be ascended into the heavens, seated at the right hand of God.
- vi. Jesus is saying in **John 14:2-4** that He is going to the Father, in heaven; and He is preparing a place so that we can join him there.
 1. So, we know the destination Jesus had in mind. *The destination is heaven.*
 2. We know this even though Thomas did not know it when he asked: "We don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (**John 14:5**)
- vii. **Questions:** Now that we know what our destination is, how do we get there? How can we make it to heaven?
 1. Is there any more important question that one can ask in this life? (I don't think so!)
 2. Jesus once asked the rhetorical question, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (**Mark 8:36**, NKJV)
- viii. How do we make it to any destination (for example, if I invited you to my home)? We do this in real life, all the time. How we do it, typically:
 1. Use a map; or
 2. Follow detailed directions (written out instructions step-by-step, Google Maps, Waze, GPS or other).
- ix. Jesus answers the question. "What is the way?" with a puzzling statement, just four words in English (as in Greek): "I am the way". (**John 14:6**)
 1. **Question:** *What does He mean* by that? What kind of directions are those?
 2. Read **John 14:18-24**.
 - a. "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'" (**John 14:23**, NKJV)

- b. Jesus said that if we want to have our dwelling with Him and His Father, to make it to heaven, we must keep His word. We must obey His teaching.
- c. Jesus repeated this message (the way to heaven is to obey his teaching) in the Parable of the Vine.
- d. Read **John 15:1-10**.
 - i. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches.
 - ii. We must abide in Him, keep His commands, follow His teachings.
 - iii. Jesus is the way to heaven, the vine, we must follow His teachings.
- e. To summarize the journey we are on:
 - i. The goal is heaven: to dwell with Jesus and His Father forever.
 - 1. It is *not* to have a nice life here on earth.
 - a. Preachers who try to lure people into becoming Christians with the bait of a better life (marriage, happy family, good friends, vacations, retirement) are like used car salesmen (telling us what we want to hear, to entice us to buy what they are selling).
 - b. Jesus says the opposite! Those who get *tangled up in pursuing the pleasures of this life* are the third soil that Jesus warned about in the Parable of the Sower. They are choked out by life's worries, riches and pleasures (**Luke 8:14**).
 - c. The heroes of faith, righteous men and women who we are called to imitate (**Hebrews 11**), generally were persecuted and had a rough life.
 - 2. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (**Matthew 10:28**, NKJV)
 - a. Jesus' message: we are not here simply to maximize our pleasure in this life.
 - b. The goal is heaven.
 - ii. Our *hope* is in the resurrection, and in heaven.

1. **Personal Question:** What are your greatest hopes in life?
 - a. Marriage, children, retirement, vacation, etc.?
 - b. Really, as a Christian, is your hope in *things like these* ?
2. Read **Romans 8:18-25**
 - a. We hope for what we do not yet see; and persevere.
 - b. We hope for our redemption, for the resurrection and eternal life: *things that we cannot yet see*.
3. Paul speaks of the hope we have, “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel...” (**Colossians 1:5**, NKJV)
4. Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” (**1 Corinthians 15:19**, NKJV)
5. “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.” (**1 Thessalonians 5:8**, NKJV)
 - a. The hope of our salvation is the helmet that protects us!
 - b. To me, this casts what Paul is saying in **Ephesians 6:17** in a new light, regarding “the helmet of salvation”.
- iii. The way to our hope and our goal, heaven, is to follow the commands of Jesus. All of them.
 1. This simple truth is considered *bad news* to most professing Christians! This is extremely unpopular, to teach that the way to heaven is to *obey all the teachings* of Jesus.
 2. Imagine I gave you detailed written directions to go from my house in Boston to the Empire State Building in New York City. However, you found the lengthy directions to be a burden, so you selected the first four steps as the “most important” and threw the remainder of the instructions into the trash.
 - a. Imagine you read the directions only as far as, “Take the Mass Pike (Route I-90) west, and then keep going...” and you thought that was good enough.
 - i. Imagine that you thought following the rest of the directions was *a burden*!

- ii. Where would you end up? Would you reach your destination?
 - b. Result: rather than ending up in New York City, you would end up *in Seattle, Washington*, by the Pacific Ocean. You would miss your goal by about 3,000 miles!
3. This is exactly what most Christians do. They find many of Jesus' teachings to be a burden, so they discard parts of the directions. Yet they expect to reach their desired destination anyway! Examples:
- a. Some groups say all you need to do is follow what it says in **John 3:16**, **Romans 10:9** or **Ephesians 2:8-9**.
 - i. They claim that *belief only* is enough. They claim you *don't* actually need to *do what Jesus says*.
 - b. Other groups say all you need to do is follow **Acts 2:38**, plus a few other teachings of Jesus, for example the commands to avoid gross sexual immorality and to evangelize the world (**Matthew 28:18-20**).
 - i. However, they may ignore unpopular and counter-cultural teachings of Jesus and the apostles on topics such as: materialism, divorce/remarriage, role of men and women, nonresistance, no lawsuits among Christians, separation from the world and worldly entertainment.
 - c. Still other groups may follow teachings on holiness and separation from the world, roles of men and women, nonresistance and putting the wicked out of the church.
 - i. Yet they may neglect other important teachings of Jesus on things like evangelism, conversion, discipleship, gossip, materialism and confessing sin.
 - ii. Furthermore, they may *add to* the teachings of Scripture, binding man-made rules on believers.
 - d. *Almost all groups* ignore Jesus' teachings about striving for the unity of all true Christians (**John 17:22-23**). They show a sectarian spirit, only seeking to be unified with others within their narrow denominational circle.

- e. Those who try to separate out teachings of Jesus into “salvation issues” versus “non-salvation issues” (which they believe they can disregard with impunity).
 - 4. This teaching (that to make it to heaven we need to be serious about following all of Jesus’ teachings) is extremely unpopular in the Christian world today.
- iv. The implications of this teaching (that we must follow the teachings of Jesus if we want to be with Him in heaven forever):
 - 1. See the Christian life as a journey we are on. We have a goal that is not in this life. We need to follow the directions that Jesus gave us, until we reach that goal.
 - 2. We can’t pick-and-choose among the teachings of Jesus. We must follow all the directions. Regardless of what religious leaders tell us.
 - 3. This is how we demonstrate our love for Jesus and the Father. This is how He knows who really loves Him.
 - a. It’s not just about having warm feelings toward God.
 - b. Instead, loving God is demonstrated by *doing the things He says*.
 - 4. Those who teach must teach all the commands of Jesus, “in season and out of season” (**2 Timothy 4:2**).
- v. Paul explained in **1 Corinthians 10:1-13** that the Exodus journey (in **Exodus**, **Numbers** and **Deuteronomy**) is essentially a map that shows us the way. (Also, there are similar references in **Hebrews 3-4** and **Jude v.5**.)
 - 1. The Passover Lamb was sacrificed (**1 Peter 1:18-19**)
 - 2. God’s people had to get rid of all the yeast (representing sin for us; see **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**)
 - 3. Then people passed out of the land of slavery and bondage by going through the water, being “baptized in the cloud and the sea”. Just as we are born again in the water and spirit in baptism. (Compare **John 3:3-5**, **1 Corinthians 10:2** and **Exodus 13:17-14:31**.)
 - 4. However, the people who had just been “baptized” were not yet in the Promised Land (their goal, representing heaven for us).

5. They ate the “spiritual food and drink” in the Wilderness, which sustained them on their journey. (**1 Corinthians 10:3-4**)
 6. The Wilderness was not the goal! The Wilderness was an inhospitable desert *filled with snakes and scorpions*. It represents, for us, our life as Christians *in this world*.
 7. They (the “assembly”, same Greek word in **Deuteronomy 18:16** in the LXX as “church” in the New Testament) were called to be a “royal priesthood and holy nation” (**1 Peter 2:9-10**, pointing back to **Exodus 19:3-6**).
 8. They went through a time of testing. Most fell into sin (immorality, idolatry, testing the Lord, complaining) and did not make it. This was written *as a warning for us!* (**1 Corinthians 10:5-13**)
- vi. It is going to take *perseverance to the end*; even when we see many around us who falter and fall.
1. Jesus said we must *remain* in Him (the vine).
 2. “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (**Matthew 24:12-13**, NKJV)
 - a. According to Jesus, the “lawless” are those who refuse to keep His commands (**Matthew 7:21-23**).
 - b. We must persevere, striving to keep Jesus’ commands to the very end of our lives.

III. Summary and Conclusion

- a. *The goal* is to be with Jesus and His Father, in the place prepared for us in heaven.
- b. *The hope* we have is in our resurrection, and eternity with God. It is not in the things of this life.
- c. *The way* to our hope and goal is Jesus: following all of His commands.