

AN EXEGESIS OF JOHN 14:1-14

A Paper

Submitted to Dr. Norris Grubbs

of the

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Course

New Testament Interpretation of John BSCM 3351-01

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April 13, 2009

INTRODUCTION

In the heart of the farewell discourses, John 13:1 through 17:26¹, there is a passage that captures some of the indescribable empowerment in which believers have full access through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. John 14:1-14 presents a vision of lavish comfort in the midst of uncertainty (John 14:2,3). Jesus' own words provide intense clarity for those who still do not understand that He and the Father are one (John 14:9-11). And the passage promises hope for those who fear battling this life without a Savior who remains tangible in the earthly realm (John 14:12-14).

The setting is just before the Feast of the Passover (John 13:1). The background scene of this passage is one of contrast. Jesus humbled himself by lovingly washing each of the disciple's feet. He pointed out the example in His actions that a true servant puts his own needs aside to care for another. The he foretold his betrayal by Judas Iscariot. It would not be long before the disciples returned their focus to themselves, worrying about what would happen to them after Jesus went away. "You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:33b-35 ESV). The disciples began to realize their Lord's departure was at hand. Jesus would start to answer their fears with promises from the Father.

¹ Thomas D. Lea and David A. Black, *The New Testament: It's Background and Meaning* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 159.

CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

While it is not known to what extent Christ's followers were beginning to grasp the spiritual context of a dwelling place "in my Father's house," (John 14:2 ESV) Jesus is clearly addressing their feelings of loss and uncertainty. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1 ESV). Borchert delves into the aspect of this loneliness in great detail. Departing from many in popular scholarship Borchert carves out 14:1-14 from the Farewell Cycle because the passage deals directly with the emotional turmoil and frailty of the disciples who, after all, are only human. Borchert also correctly subdivides the passage into three distinct subsections: first, preparation for the ultimate reality (14:1-3); second, perplexing questions concerning getting there (14:4-11); and third, the power of believing in Jesus for our life of discipleship now (14:12-14).²

Preparing the disciples for the ultimate reality of his own death, resurrection, and ascension would require them to embrace some spiritual truth, and finally understand difficult concepts of the Father's relationship and unity with the Son. One of the complex elements of this truth is the use of the word *μονη*, transliterated mone, and translated mansion in the King James Version. A more accurate translation would be "a dwelling place."³

² Gerald L. Borchert, ed., *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25b, *John 12-21* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 102.

³ Joseph H. Thayer, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 581.

The use of the term mansion has fed into a western cultural exploitation of the translation promising heavenly and earthly wealth known as the prosperity gospel. Some, including Chuck Smith, have linked this verse to 2 Corinthians 5:1-4⁴. “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” (2 Cor 5:1-4 ESV). These scholars are suggesting that $\mu\omicron\nu\eta$ is referring to the new heavenly body or form we will inhabit in the eternal realm. Most would agree that this dwelling place is one of the great mysteries of the faith. The purpose of the statement from Jesus was to ensure the disciples that he would prepare a place to host a permanent reunion.

Jesus responds to one of the most perplexing questions regarding the Trinitarian relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with an answer found in John 14:6. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.” (John 14:6 ESV). The question was exposed by Jesus himself when he told Thomas, and Phillip, and the others present “And you know the way to where I am going.” (John 14:4 ESV). Phillip’s ignorant response to Jesus’ persistent proclamation; “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14:7 ESV) reveals the cognitive and spiritual gap that had to be overcome among the disciples. Phillip was sure if he could just see the Father he would understand.

⁴ Chuck Smith, ""john 13-14." The Word For Today," *Blue Letter Bible*, June 1, 2005, http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=1&contentID=7162&commInfo=25&topic=John&ar=Jhn_14_2 (accessed April 13, 2009).

This further misunderstanding moved Jesus to a more confrontational approach. “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” (John 14:10,11 ESV) The use of the phrase “I am the way” contributes to the possibility of ambiguity. To the Essenes at Qumran “the way” would have referred to following their righteous teacher. To the covenanters, who viewed themselves as the true community of preparation the statement would take them back to the desert and Isaiah 40:3 “A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Isa 40:3 ESV).⁵ The Law was so oppressive they just couldn’t break through from the heart. Jesus said “Believe me. . .” (John 14:11) The original term πιστευω, translated believe would have conveyed the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul.⁶

The power of believing in Jesus Christ for their life of discipleship was the promised result of their faith. “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” (John 14:12-14).

⁵ Gerald L. Borchert, ed., *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25b, *John 12-21* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 109.

⁶ Joseph H. Thayer, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 849.

In the midst of their dismay Jesus points them to the future. The Greek verb tenses in these verses are primarily future tense.⁷ All this is possible because Jesus is going to the Father. The power comes from the death of the shepherd for his sheep (John 10), the sacrifice of one man for his nation (John 6), the victory of the lamb of God (John 1) and the triumph of the obedient Son, who in consequence bequeaths his life, his peace, his joy, his Spirit (John 14-16).⁸ The disciples were faced with the expectation that they would be doing the works of the Teacher. How could they have understood this? Let alone, works greater than these? Did it mean they would take over Jesus' earthly ministry? One example of what this charge would turn out to look like is found in Acts 9:34. "And Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed. And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord." (Acts 9:34,35 ESV).⁹ Consistently works were done in the name of Jesus Christ and for the glory of the Lord. The calling to communicate what they had seen and heard, along with illuminating what it meant to believe was the last thing they would hear from Jesus. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:19,20 ESV).

⁷ Gerald L. Borchert, ed., *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25b, John 12-21 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 115.

⁸ D.A. Douglas J. Moo Carson and Leon Morris, eds., *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1992), 175.

⁹ Gerald L. Borchert, ed., *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25b, John 12-21 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 116.

CONCLUSION

“We now come to that portion of the evangelical history which we may with propriety call its *Holy of Holies*.”¹⁰ There is a great wealth of God’s promises in this passage. Most, if not all, Christians experience a time when they wonder if Jesus is with them, united in their struggle to fully surrender to His unseen presence with the Father. John 14:1-14 is more than just a pep talk. Jesus is on His way to conquer sin once and for all. “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,” (Heb 10:12 ESV). This offering of Himself would make it possible for us to do the greater work of communicating the Good News. “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Heb 10:14 ESV). Our cure for spiritual loneliness dwells in the miracle of Christ’s place next to the Father as the way, and the truth, and the life.

Just as Jesus did only as the Father would have Him do, we must do everything in the name of Jesus in order to glorify God the Father. The test of all Christian prayer is whether it is in the name of Jesus, offered out of our life in Him, and gives glory to the Father. Can we be as trusted with the name of Jesus as He was with the Father’s name?¹¹ We live out this truth as we live perfected by His sacrifice and not our own.

¹⁰ Robert; A.R. Fausset; Jamieson and David Brown, "Commentary On John 14," *Blue Letter Bible*, 19 Feb, 2000, http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=7&contentID=2918&commInfo=6&topic=John&ar=Jhn_14_2 (accessed April 13, 2009).

¹¹ Roger L. Fredrikson, ed., *The Communicator's Commentary Series*, vol. 4, *John* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1985), 230.

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