

“1 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” “4 “And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas *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, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:4-6, NAS95.

I don’t take Christian polling research very seriously or most religious polls.

The more generic religious ones are probably more accurate because most people are religious regardless of their belief system or worldview.

A recent one stated that ninety-two percent of Americans believe in heaven and nearly all of those who believe in heaven are somewhat confident that they will actually end up there.

This is an amazing thing. What is this telling us? This is telling us that most Americans believe that the way to heaven is broad and that almost anyone who is drawing breath and has a heartbeat will eventually get there, no matter what.

But what is the truth? Let me read for you the words of Christ in Matthew 7:13-14. "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. (14) For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."

Obviously Jesus does not teach what the vast majority of Americans believe. How does He describe the gate and the way that leads to heaven? He describes the gate as small and the way as narrow that leads to heaven.

So, in light of the words of Christ, it would seem that it would be important for us to identify this small gate and this narrow way and make sure that we are purposing ourselves to enter by it.

This leads us back to our study of the Gospel of John and Christ’s farewell discourse, which starts in John 13:31 and does not conclude until John 17:26.

In the introduction to this discourse in John 13:31-36 we found Christ preparing His disciples for His death and eventual separation.

Jesus He prepared them by sharing three fundamental factors that would very shortly be instrumental in shaping their immediate future. Those three fundamental factors were a new a glory, a new situation, and a new commandment.

How did the disciples respond to what Christ shared with them? We have Peter's response recorded.

He asked Jesus where He was going. And in short Peter was opposing Christ's purpose, in essence said to Christ, "You will not leave us unless it is over my dead body This statement of Peter's was then challenged in John 13:38.

"Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.'"

This response by Jesus was crushing. All the hopes and dreams of His disciples were fading away. They had believed that Jesus was in fact the Messiah and that He had come to earth to establish His earthly kingdom, but now He was repeatedly telling them that He was about leave them. Their dream of entering into Christ's earthly kingdom and enjoying fellowship with Him in that kingdom was now almost gone.

So, in the midst of their confusion and in the midst of their despair, Jesus sought to comfort them. We see this in John 14:1 when He told His disciples, or better said, when He commanded His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled."

Jesus exhorted them not to have troubled hearts. In this, as he had so often done, he was comforting them whether they realized it or not. Jesus, in seeking to comfort His disciples, wanted them to believe three things (John 14:1-6

First of all, Jesus wanted His disciples to believe that everything was just as it should be and working according to plan (John 14:1). "Let not your heart be troubled; believe

in God, believe also in Me." Jesus is calling His disciples to believe that everything He and His Father had decreed and purposed was on schedule in spite of the fact that very shortly they would no longer be able to see Him.

And how would this, once accomplished, impact them. This is made clear for them in the second thing that He wanted His disciples to believe. Jesus wanted His disciples to believe that one day He was going to return in order to take them to His Father's house (John 14:23).

Jesus, in these words, was not vocalizing to His disciples the hope of the nation of Israel, but rather Jesus was vocalizing to His disciples the hope of the church. And it is this hope that He now wanted His disciples to focus on, so that even as their earthly dream of enjoying fellowship with Him in an earthly kingdom was not going to be the reality, their hearts would not be troubled.

When we are facing earthly disappointments, when our earthly dreams seem to be nothing but dreams and hoped for things, we need to remind ourselves that we, as the disciples of Christ, are simply passing through this world to a better place, or in other word's, to our Fathers' house. And as are we able to this by the grace of God and as we are able to believe this, then our troubled hearts will invariably rest in Christ and his promises..

But this is not all. There is still one more thing that Jesus wanted His disciples to believe as He sought to minister to their troubled hearts.

Jesus wanted His disciples to believe that they knew the way to His Father's house (John 14:4-6). Let us now read John 14:4. "And you know the way where I am going."

Jesus had been speaking to them of a future hope in John 14:2-3, but now in John 14:4 changes His focus from what will be true in the future to what was in fact true in the present.

He wanted them to know that they already knew the way to His Father's house. So, what did Jesus mean by this? Let us begin by considering what He did not mean.

When Jesus told His disciples that they knew "the way" to His Father's house, He was neither speaking of His bodily ascension nor their reception to Himself at some future time. He was also not conveying to them that they knew the specific directions to His Father's house, in other words, when to turn right or when to turn left.

So, if what I have just shared with you is true, what did Jesus mean when He told His disciples they knew the way to His Father's house? He was simply telling them that they knew Him. Why did Jesus tell them this?

The reason why He told them that in knowing Him that they knew the way to His Father's house was because He was the means for them to get there.

And why would He want them to know this? He wanted to them to know this in order that they might be assured that every thing He had said in John 14:2-3 would in fact prove to be true.

The fact of this will become clear to us as we continue to examine our text. So, what will happen next in this unfolding conversation between Christ and His disciples? The next thing that happens in the text is that Thomas responds to Christ's statement.

John 14:5. "Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?'" Obviously Christ's disciples did not have a clue as to what Jesus was trying to communicate to them when He told them that they knew the way to His Father's house in John 14:4. In fact, Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

So, what is Thomas attempting to communicate to Jesus by these words? Is he just simply trying to correct Jesus? No! This is not what is going on here. It is much more than that.

The response of Thomas seems to be an expression of desperation.

Thomas and the other disciples still believed in Jesus as the Messiah. They still believed that He would in fact establish an earthly kingdom just as the Scriptures had

foretold, but how in the world was He going to accomplish this if He in fact was going to be separated from them through death? Their inability to find an adequate answer to that question is what I believe produced the response of Thomas in John 14:5.

It is as if Thomas in John 14:5 was telling Jesus, you think we know, but really it all seems so dark.

So, how will Jesus respond to this expression of despair on the part of Thomas? What did He say? "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'"

Jesus responds to the desperation of Thomas in John 14:5 by explaining to him more clearly what He meant earlier when He told them they knew the way.

He told them that He, Himself, was in fact the way, or in other words, the means to His father's house. Isn't that exactly what He told them? He said, "I am the way."

So, how could Jesus say this? How could Jesus say to His disciples that He was the way? How could he put forth such an exclusive statement? Jesus could tell them that He was the way to His Father's house because He is the truth of God and the life of God.

Let us, first of all, for a moment consider the fact that He is the truth of God. Jesus is the truth of God because He embodies the supreme revelation of God (John 1:18). Let me read for you John

1:18. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." But He is more than simply the truth of God. He is also the life of God.

Jesus is the life of God because He has life in Himself in the same way as His Father has life in Himself (John 5:26). Let me read for you John 5:26. "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself."

And let's not forget the authoritative statements of God, the Father concerning Jesus, ""This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." "Hear Him."

After sharing with His disciples that He in fact was the way, and expanding on this thought by also sharing with them that He was also the truth and the life, Jesus goes on to share something else with them that was extremely important for them to hear, which is just as important for us to hear.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'" John 14:6

Is this statement by Christ confusing? I don't think so. It is explicit and clear. After Jesus tells the disciples that He is the way to His Father's house, He makes sure that they know that He is the only way (John 14:6).

Did the disciples of Christ know the way to His Father's house? Yes! They knew the way to His Father's house. They knew the way to His Father's house because they knew Christ.

How did they come to know Christ? They came to know Christ through faith. They came to know Christ by trusting that He and He alone could bring them into His earthly kingdom. They certainly were not looking to anyone else or to themselves to do this.

This is why they committed themselves to follow Him. They truly believed that if they followed Him, He would bring them where they wanted to be, and they were right. But it would not be to His earthly kingdom, at least not initially, but rather to a far better place.

Until Christ send the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, there is no way that they can understand or put all pieces of the puzzle together, it is then and only then that all the dots can finally be connected.

Yes, they were tiresomely negligent in faith at times, because they were not looking ahead. They were only looking at their present. The same can be said of us. There is a time when it is purposed by God to bring things to our understanding. For them it was Pentecost.

And what was this far better place? It was to His Father's house. It was to heaven.

Could anyone or anything have gotten them there other than Christ? No! He was the only way! He was the only way then and He is still the only way. Do you believe this? Hopefully your answer is yes. And if you do believe this, then what will you do? You will seek to follow Jesus just as His disciples chose to follow Him.

And what will this practically mean for our lives if we truly follow Him? It means that we will live lives characterized by self-denial and personal sacrifice. Really! Absolutely! What did Jesus share with His disciples in Matthew 16:24? This is what He said. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

At this time during the events as John presents them Jesus could have reminded them and said, "don't you remember when I told you this not so long ago",

"23 And Jesus *answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." John 12:23-26, NAS95.

What sustains us in the path of sacrifice and self-denial? Jesus took this path of suffering and death to this destination of glory so that he might become not only our example in dying, but, more importantly, our substitute in dying. Jesus suffered and died to give us both pattern and, more importantly, pardon. And the pardon precedes and enables the pattern. We cannot follow the pattern of Jesus' suffering without being freed from God's wrath and our guilt and fear and selfishness. And we are freed from these not by his pattern, but by his pardon. Not by his being our example, but by his being our substitute.

When Jesus died, he didn't just die before us—to copy—but for us—to trust in. The

Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep—in their place (John 10:11, 15). There must be salvation by Jesus before there can be imitation of Jesus. There must be justification on the basis of Jesus' death, before there can be sanctification by means of Jesus' power.

The disciples at this time were struggling with what all of this meant in view of how they still contextualized and perceived Messiah. All this death and sacrifice language did not make sense to them. Of course, it did a short time later and because it did they had the foundation to preach the Gospel to the world.

They the understanding that their own death may be very near because they proclaim the gospel and they did not shrink from the task, because Christ's words rang in their ears and grasped their hearts as if they were being spoken to by him, face to face, on the road, on the mountain, in the boat, during the Passover celebration and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When all is said and done, this is the sustaining power of us treasuring Christ as a body of believers. Our hope, our strength is this: Jesus died for us and in this fact are contained all the promises of Christ which are yea for His people.

There are not many ways to heaven. That truth offends many people.

It may cost some relationships to believe this exclusive truth. But that is also something Jesus promised.

Believing in Christ is not a ritual. It is not an emotional experience. It is not making a decision to be a better person and to follow the moral example of Christ.

It does not occur by being born into a Christian family and being part of the Covenant Family. It does not occur by walking the aisle in a church or some evangelistic meeting or by touching hands with some false prophet on your TV screen and praying the sinners prayer.

God and man must both do something before a man can be saved.

Man cannot see - until he first be born from above/ again. John 3:3.

Man cannot understand - until he first is given a new nature. I Cor. 2:14.

Man cannot come - until he is effectually called by the Holy Spirit. John 6:44,45

The new birth, or regeneration, is God giving us the spiritual life that enables us to do what we must do (repent and believe), but CANNOT DO because of our bondage to sin. When the Bible says man is dead in sin, it means that man's mind/heart/will are all spiritually dead in sin. When the Bible speaks of our being in bondage to sin, it means that our entire being, is under the bondage and power of sin.

We indeed need Christ to die and pay the penalty of our sin, but we just as desperately need the Holy Spirit to give us a new nature in regeneration. The Son of God frees us legally from the penalty of sin, but only the Holy Spirit can free us from the power and death of our depravity in sin. We need forgiveness in order to be saved, and Christ provides complete forgiveness and righteousness for us in His death. However, we also need spiritual life and ability, and the Holy Spirit provides it for us in regeneration. It is the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration that enables us to receive the atoning work of Christ in true faith.

And if that has not occurred, if one has not received the gifts of faith and repentance from God by hearing the Word that is understood by the convincing and convicting work of the Holy Spirit, then it does not matter what you think you have done, you have not been saved. You may not have understood the whole process at the moment, but it had to occur.

May God give us the grace to understand that those who follow Christ as an expression of their faith in this life will find themselves in heaven in the next life just like Jesus told his disciples by being a comfort for them for all that lay ahead.