

The Way, the Truth, the Life
John 14:1–7

Paper presented to:
All Things New Conference
21–24 August 2023

Meeting at:
LeTourneau Christian Center
Rushville, New York

Conference Theme:
The Upper Room Discourse
(John 13–17)

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.

⁴ And whither I go ye know,
and the way ye know.

⁵ Thomas saith unto him,
Lord, we know not whither thou goest;
and how can we know the way?

⁶ Jesus saith unto him,
I am the way,
the truth,
and the life:
no man cometh unto the Father,
but by me.

⁷ If ye had known me,
ye should have known my Father also:
and from henceforth ye know him,
and have seen him.

Introduction

1. The Gospel of John: Its Important Features that may Aid in Understanding Chapters 13–17

1) Feasts

What feasts besides Passover are mentioned and/or emphasized in John's Gospel?

How much of the Upper Room Discourse may be connected to this last Passover as the institution of the New Covenant supper?

How much of the Upper Room Discourse involves the expounding of Christ as our Passover?

2) Discourses

What other discourses are there in John's Gospel besides chapters 13–17?

3) Geographical Movements

Galilee

Wilderness

Judea

Samaria

4) Chronological/Temporal Focus — Zoom from Macro to Micro

It should go without saying that the significance of the Upper Room Discourse in this Gospel is to be measured by the fact that five of John's twenty-one chapters are dedicated to what went on there in a matter of hours.

2. The Upper Room Discourse in John 13–17: Its Extent and Structure

1) The Extent of the Upper Room Discourse

What is the extent of the "Upper Room Discourse" proper in these five chapters?

Is it:

1) all of John 13–17;

2) only John 14–17; or

3) possibly only John 14–16?

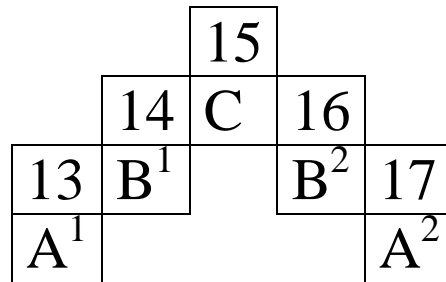
2) The Internal Relationships of the Chapters in the Upper Room Discourse

How may we relate these chapters to one another while understanding that the chapter divisions are not inspired?

In other words, is there a structure, a movement in what takes place in these chapters?

Is there a possible chiasmic structure involved in these chapters with Ch. 15 as the apex?

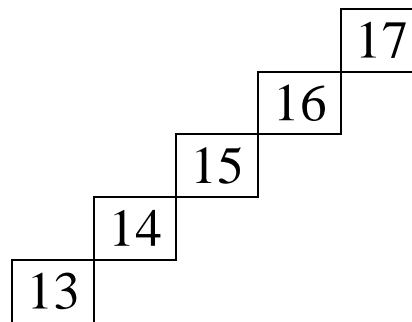
Is there an observable relationship between chapters 13 and 17, and also between chapters 14 and 16?



See, for example, the eleven part chiasmic arrangement that Hamilton includes in a footnote with “15:1–17, Abide in Jesus.” at the peak as central.

James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), pg. 415n137.

Or, if that is not plausible, is what we are to observe in these five chapters an ascent, an upward progression, moving from the scene with Jesus humbling Himself as the literal footwashing Servant of servants to the spiritual reality of the Great High Priest interceding to the Father for the eternal cleansing of His Bride?



If so, is there a point in this progression where something may be observed that ties it all together perhaps by way of introduction?

3. The First Epistle of John: How are John’s Epistles and especially 1 John related to the Upper Room Discourse?

Is it profitable to consider John’s purpose in writing 1 John as applying it to his non-apostolic spiritual children, i.e., to those who these words were not directly spoken to?

In other words, between the first century A.D. historical event in the Upper Room and us today are there Scriptures that will enable us to understand what parts of the content Jesus taught directly to His Apostles that may be directly applied to us, and what may only be indirectly applied to us? A case in point might be what is referred to as the preauthentication of the New Testament in 16:12–15 (see also 14:26; 15:26–27).¹

See Select Bibliography, III. Resources on 1 John and the Upper Room Discourse²

Suggestions:

John	1 John	Comparable Emphases
13	1	footwashing / cleansing
14	2	Comforter / anointing
15	3	purgeth / purifieth Abide in me / abideth in Him love one another
16	4	He will reprove the world....I have overcome the world / greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world....as he is, so are we in the world
17	5	I pray / we have the petitions

Notes:

These observable emphases are woven throughout each of the chapters involved, so the connections are not restricted within specific chapter divisions which are uninspired anyway.

What is of interest in these connected emphases lies in at least two areas:

¹ “We have here a kind of preauthentication of the New Testament in our Lord’s statement, I have many things to say to you, but you’re not able to bear them now, he said.” S. Lewis Johnson, “The Spirit Indwelling and Teaching the Saints” (John 16:12–15), on the *SLJ Institute* at <https://sljinstitute.net/johannine-theology/the-spirit-indwelling-and-teaching-the-saints/> [accessed 17 AUG 2023].

² The original introduction to this connection was suggested by Dr. John Reis Master in a class he taught circa 1978–1980 at Baptist Bible School of Theology (at that time meeting in Heritage Baptist Church, Clarks Summit, PA; now Baptist Bible Seminary at Clarks Summit University). In correspondence with Master in April, 2011 he affirmed his belief in this connection without being able to pinpoint where he himself first encountered it.

1. How John applies indirectly in his epistle that which applied directly only to the Apostles in his Gospel account

2. How John teaches about the fulfillments in his epistle of those prophesied realities taught by Jesus in his Gospel.

Outline

I. *I go to prepare a place for you* (14:1–2)

II. *I will come again, and receive you unto myself* (14:3–4)

III. *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (14:5–7)

Transition

That the words of these seven verses are discourse none may deny. That more than discourse fittingly describes these words should be considered also.

“According to Frank E. Gaebelein, five kinds of poetical passages may be identified in the New Testament: (1) quotations from ancient poets.... (2) quotations from unidentified poetry that may have been first-century Christian hymns.... (3) passages which are in the mold of Old Testament poetry.... (4) passages which lack rhyme or meter but are in a grand and exalted style filled with intense expression (the Beatitudes or, for that matter, the whole of the Sermon on the Mount; Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem in Luke 13:34–35; and parts of the Upper Room Discourse, e.g., John 14:1–7); and (5) apocalyptic imagery...”

— Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward An Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), pp. 228–229; citing Frank E. Gaebelein, “Poetry, New Testament,” in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia*, ed. Tenney (), 4:813–814.

I. I go to prepare a place for you (14:1–2)

1. Jesus is Worthy of Our Faith (14:1)
2. Jesus is the Preparer of Our Place (14:2)

1. Jesus is Worthy of Our Faith (14:1)

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

1) “Let not your heart be troubled”

What is the source or cause of their troubled hearts?

“In John 14.1 (where the imperative rendering is to be preferred) the implication seems to be that the disciples, who through the tragic experience of the passion might be in danger of losing their faith in Christ, should, as it were, recover it through vigorously asserted faith in the Father.”
— Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1975), pp. **390–391**.

2) “ye believe in God”

If their faith in God is not sufficient to prevent this disturbance, why not?

3) “believe also in me”

How does the combined faith in God and Jesus Christ provide a solution to their internal turmoil?

What does this tell us about Jesus Christ?

What does this tell us about the necessity for faith in Jesus Christ?

2. Jesus is the Preparer of Our Place (14:2)

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.

1) Many Mansions³

What does this mean? Where does this imagery come from?

What should we comprehend about the singular “Father’s house” containing the plural “many mansions”?

What is the “Father’s house”?

Of interest on these questions are Beale’s footnotes:

G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17, series ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), pp. 110n63, 146n46, 200n64.

2) A Prepared Place

What does this mean? What is involved in Jesus’ “preparation” of places for us?

In other words, if our destination is Heaven, why would it have to be prepared?

How do you prepare Heaven?

³ The same word occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Jn. 14:23 where it is translated “abode” by the KJV. W. E. Vine, “There is nothing in the word to indicate separate compartments in heaven; neither does it suggest temporary resting-places on the road.” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. See TDNT 4:579,581.

II. *I will come again, and receive you unto myself (14:3–4)*

1. Jesus' Assurance of Our Future Reunion (14:3)

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.

On the issue of whether this coming again of Jesus is a reference to His reception of believers when they die or the Second Advent see, for example, J. Barton Payne for the former, and D. A. Carson for the latter.

“Yet our Lord’s wonderful promise, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3), is not so much a prophecy as an assurance that He hereby grants to each believer as he faces his own individual participation in the general process of death.”

— J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pg. 36, see also note 42, “The immediate context therefore suggests nothing about His visible second advent but rather uses ‘I come’ in a different sense....cf. Payne, *Imminent Appearing*, pg. 74. Marcus Dods has observed, ‘The promise is fulfilled in the death of the Christian, and it has changed the aspect of death. the personal second coming of Christ is not a frequent theme in this Gospel.’ *ExGkT*, I:822.”

“The details of the text argue that these two verses refer to the second advent of Jesus, when he comes to take his followers to be with him forever.”

— D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity; Eerdmans, 1991), pg. 488.

What does not seem to be factored into this debate as often as they ought to be are the following realities. When taken together they leave us with no option but to understand Jesus as referring to His Second Advent.

1) The Middle Eastern Marriage Customs

Is the ancient Middle Eastern marriage custom involved with this imagery?

Is Jesus speaking as the Groom returning from the engagement visit to the Bride’s dwelling to His Father’s house to prepare a dwelling place for His Bride there, following which He promises to return to bring her there?

2) The Fulfillment of the Promise and Prophecy in the New Jerusalem’s descent to the New Earth as the Holy City

If so, how does this imagery play out in yet unfulfilled prophecy in the future?

Is the New Jerusalem the Father’s house?

Or, is the New Heavens and New Earth the Father's house, and the New Jerusalem the "prepared place" it?

Does the New Jerusalem contain the dwelling places prepared by Jesus?

"For God's people the transition from life on earth means not only cessation from toil, sorrow, pain and sin (Rev. 14:3) but also much more, specially joy in the eternal company of Jesus (John 14:1-3)."

— Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976-1983), 6:512.

2. Jesus' Assurance of Our Two-Fold Knowledge (14:4)

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

This statement sets up Thomas' question in verse 5.

- 1) You know where I am going
- 2) You know the way

- 1) You know where I am going

whither I go ye know

- 2) You know the way

the way ye know

III. *I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:5–7)*

1. The Question of Thomas (14:5)
2. The Answer of Jesus — Part One (14:6)
3. The Answer of Jesus — Part Two (14:7)

1. The Question of Thomas (14:5)

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

Note the other seven of the eight interruptions by various disciples in John 13–16 marking this a true discourse.

- 13:25 (18–30) — Disciple lying on Jesus breast
- 13:36 — Simon Peter
- 13:37 — Simon Peter
- 14:5 — Thomas
- 14:8 — Philip
- 14:22 — Judas (not Iscariot)
- 16:17–18 — some of his disciples among themselves
- 16:29–30 — His disciples

These words of Thomas to Jesus may rightly be thought of as a denial followed by a question. Despite the fact that they are closely, and indeed necessarily related, the first constitutes a denial of what Christ had just said. The question involves the means of acquiring the denied knowledge, and even perhaps the possibility of doing so.

- 1) We don't know!
- 2) How can we know?

1) We don't know!

2) How can we know?

2. The Answer of Jesus — Part One (14:6)

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

- 1) Jesus is The Way
- 2) Jesus is The Truth
- 3) Jesus is The Life
- 4) Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life
- 5) Jesus is the Exclusive Way, the Exclusive Truth, and the Exclusive Life

The Emphatic “I am” statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John⁴

Reference	Text	OT Allusion	Notes
4:26	I that speak unto thee am <i>he</i>		absolute
6:20	<i>It is I</i>		absolute
6:35 ⁵	I am the bread of life	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
6:41	I am the bread with came down from heaven	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
6:48	I am that bread of life	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
6:51	I am the living bread which came down from heaven	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
8:12	I am the light of the world	Ex. 13:21–22; Is. 60:19–20	predicate
8:18	I am one that bear witness of myself		predicate
8:23	I am from above....I am not of this world		predicate
8:24	If ye believe not that I am <i>he</i>		absolute
8:28	then shall ye know that I am <i>he</i>		absolute
8:58	Before Abraham was, I am	Ex. 3:14	absolute
9:5	I am the light of the world	Ex. 13:21–22; Is. 60:19–20	predicate
9:9	I am <i>he</i>		absolute
10:7, 9	I am the door of the sheep....I am the door		predicate
10:11, 14	I am the good shepherd	Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 28:9; 78:52; 80:1; Is. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:11–16; Zech. 13:7	predicate
10:36	I am the Son of God		predicate
11:25	I am the resurrection, and the life		predicate
13:19	I am <i>he</i>		absolute
14:6	I am the way, the truth, and the life		predicate
15:1, 5	I am the true vine	Ps. 80:8–16; Jer. 2:21	predicate
18:5–6	I am <i>he</i> ⁶I am <i>he</i>	Ex. 3:14	absolute
18:8	I am <i>he</i>		absolute

⁴ Italicized words were supplied in the English translation, but are not present in the Greek texts.

⁵ The *New Geneva Study Bible* note with this verse points out that this is “the first of seven such ‘I am’ sayings in this Gospel,” and then lists the other six as 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1, 5. *New Geneva Study Bible*, eds. Luder Whitlock, Jr., R. C. Sproul, Bruce Waltke, Moisés Silva, *et al.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), pg. 1672, note on Jn. 6:35.

⁶ Among the textual variants in this verse is a reading with Ἰησοῦς (“Jesus”) without the article and following the verb in what appears to be a predicate nominative position that would yield a translation of, “I, I am Jesus.” This is documented in B, (it^a Ego sum. Iesus autem), and Ambrose. Sources: *Novum Testamentum Graece*, eds. Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, 27th ed., eds. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1898, 1993), pg. 306; and *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed., eds. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren (Stuttgart, FRG: United Bible Societies and Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993, 1994), pg. 392.

When we consider the uniqueness of John's account of this Upper Room event when compared to the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 26:17–35; Mk. 14:12–31; Lk. 22:7–38) part of what stands out by way of silence due to either not being mentioned at all, or minimized, is the details about the Passover meal, and especially His speaking of the cup as the New Covenant in His blood.

What is emphasized is what He is in His Person, and this must be seen as an appropriate emphasis for John's Gospel. Christ as the Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), and Christ as the New Covenant in His Person (Is. 42:6; 49:8), takes the place in John's Gospel of the meal description and specific words found in the Synoptics.

We should have a ready answer if one were to ask about John's Upper Room account:

“What about the Passover, the meal? What about the bread that is His Body, and the cup of the New Covenant in His blood? What happened to them in this Gospel?”

Our answer:

“The Passover is there! The New Covenant is there! And it is being emphasized and described there in a very special and unique way. Read it again! Keep looking, and see if both are not fully there!”

With that in mind let us consider the three predicate nominatives in Jesus' statement: the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

1) Jesus is The Way

How is Jesus the way?

The way to what?

How does the context(s) help us to understand the significance of this?

There is no other way....

Jesus is the only way....

The Way of the Passover is Jesus

The Way of the New Covenant is Jesus

“While false workers of signs lead humans astray and into idolatry (Rev. 13:13–15) Jesus Christ leads into the presence of the Father (John 14:6).”

— Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976-1983), 2:29.

“By his obedience within adamic flesh and adamic existence he bursts through the continuity of adamic existence and opens up a new continuity in a new Adam, the new man, and so is the firstborn of a new creation, the pathfinder to God, ‘I am the way, no man comes to the Father, but by me.’”

— Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2008), pg. 73.

“God’s purpose for the commissioned church is to enable otherwise doomed and hopeless sinners to participate in the redemption that is in his Son who leads to the Father (John 14:6) who, in turn, fills us with his Spirit.”

— Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976-1983), 6:401.

“For the Christian there is only one road. Jesus said, ‘I am the way [road] and the truth and the life’ (John 14:6). Or, as Augustine put it, Christ is ‘both our native country and himself also the road to that country.’”

— Timothy George, in Timothy George and John Woodbridge, *The Mark of Jesus: Loving in a Way the World Can See* (Chicago: Moody, 2005), pp. 82–83; cited by John Woodbridge, “Evangelical Self-Identity and the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century; Essays in Honor of D. A. Carson on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, eds. Andreas J. Kostenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), pg. 106.⁷

2) Jesus is The Truth

How is Jesus the truth?

In what sense(s) is this true?

How does the context(s) help us to understand the significance of this?

Jesus as the Logos — John 1:1–18

Jesus as the fullness of the Godhead — Col. 2:9

The Truth of the Passover is Jesus — 1 Cor. 5:7

The Truth of the New Covenant is Jesus — Heb. 8–10

“That Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation and climax of the Old Testament disclosure is everywhere declared in the New Testament (Rom. 16:26; 1 Cor. 10:11; 15:45; Gal. 1:8–9; Col. 1:25–27; 2:3; 6:19 [sic]; Titus 1:2–3; Heb. 6:5; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 4:1–3, 6).”

— Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976-1983), 4:431.

⁷ Woodbridge’s chapter is a revised and expanded version of the Amerding Lecture he “delivered at Wheaton College on October 26, 2009....entitled ‘Wheaton College at 150: Faithful to the Church Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy.’” Woodgridge, op. cit., pg. 104, note 1.

“Again in 14.6: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life’, truth has the same sense of heavenly reality. The question was as to the way to heaven. Jesus answers Thomas by saying that He Himself is the way. The two following concepts, ‘the truth’ and ‘the life’ explain the first; Jesus is the way to heaven, because in Him the heavenly substance is present, and more specifically, because the heavenly life is present. Therefore, in the contact with Him lies the solution of the problem raised by Thomas: ‘No one comes unto the Father, but by me.’

Outside of the Fourth Gospel this peculiar connotation of ‘the true substances’ occurs mainly in the typological system of the Epistle to the Hebrews; compare 8.2, ‘a minister of the true tabernacle’. In the Gospels, the only occurrence of it outside of John is in Luke 16.11, ‘who will commit to your trust the true (riches)?’”

— Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1975), pg. 357 (cp. pp. 355–357).

“When Jesus is called “the truth,” it would be a rash judgment to assert that this can mean nothing else than that His words are the supreme, incarnate veracity. The noun can just as well mean, and undoubtedly, in view of the usage of the adjective, sometimes does mean, that the supreme reality of the things that compose His character is incarnate in Him. The fulness of “truth,” which, side by side with “grace,” resides in the Only Begotten, must mean far more than the reliability pertaining to His words; similarly the “grace and truth” which, in contrast to the law of Moses, “came [or became] through Jesus Christ,” must have a wider and deeper reference, if justice is to be done to the context.”

— Geerhardus Vos, “‘True’ and ‘Truth’ in the Johannine Writings,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), pg. 345, s.v. Ch. XV; on *Reformed Perspectives Magazine* 9:16 (15–21 APR 2007) at http://reformedperspectives.org/newfiles/gee_vos/gee_vos.trueandtruth.html [accessed 20 AUG 2023]; reprint of original in *The Biblical Review* 12 (1927), pp. 507–520.

“When we ask what, if anything, is meant by speaking of him in the concreteness of his human existence as the Truth, we face not only paradoxical innovation in the use of the notion of truth: we face the question of the sense in which a concrete individual may not simply teach or reveal what is true. . . but *be* the Truth.”

— Donald MacKinnon, *Borderlands of Theology and Other Essays*, eds. G. W. Roberts and D. E. Smucker (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1969), pp. 27f.; cited by Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976-1983), 5:46.

“‘I am the truth’, Jesus said and that applies not only to his bringing the truth of God to mankind but to his whole human life as truth done into the flesh, as truth enacted in the midst of our untruth, as truth fulfilled from within man and from the side of man, truth issuing out of human life in obedient response to the truth of God.”

— Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2008), pg. 64.

“...there is an amazing difference. Jesus does not call us to take the yoke of wisdom, but to take *His* yoke. He speaks not just as a teacher of wisdom, but as the Lord of wisdom. He calls us to learn, not of wisdom in the abstract but of Him in Person. As Lord, He steps into the rold of wisdom and calls us to Himself.”

“True wisdom is not the achievement of man’s effort; it is the gift of God’s grace. Neither scientific research nor muttered mantras will disclose the truth that gives meaning to our lives. Truth at last is personal: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14:6).”

“Wisdom is not just an attribute of God that may be pictured poetically as serving God in His work of creation. Wisdom is personal in the being of the Son of God.”

— Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1988, 2013), pg. 179–180.

“So he testifieth of himself, “I am the truth:” John xiv. 6. He is so *essentially*—as he is one with the Father, the God of truth, Deuteronomy xxxii. 4. He is so *efficiently*—as by him alone it is fully and effectually declared; for “no man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him:” John i. 18. He is so *substantially*—in opposition unto the types and shadows of the Old Testament; for in him dwelt “the fulness of the Godhead bodily:” Col. ii. 9. “The body is of Christ:” verse 17. He is so *subjectively*—for all divine truth relating to the saving knowledge of God, is treasured up in him. “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:” verse 3.”
— John Owen, “A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ—God and Man,” in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols., ed. William H. Goold (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, n.d.; 1976 reprint of 1850-1853 Johnstone & Hunter ed.), 1:80.

3) Jesus is The Life

How is Jesus the life?

Why is this true?

How does the context(s) help us to understand the significance of this?

Life, as such, is not possible apart from Christ. The be in Christ is to experience eternal life. There is only death, eternal existence in the state of death, for those not in union with Christ.

The Life of the Passover is Jesus

The Life of the New Covenant is Jesus

“...originally and absolutely, Christ is “the Author of life” (Acts 3:15, RSV), or, in magnificent brevity, “the life” (John 14:6; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:4; 1 John 1:2).”

— Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco: Word, 1976-1983), 5:67.

“The actual resurrection of Jesus from the tomb was recognised to be in accordance with his nature and person – but that was the stupendous thing about it. This was not just a miracle, not some wonderful event or portent, but something which in all its wonderfulness was not a whit different from the essential nature of the risen one himself. And what is more, it corresponded to the claim of Jesus, as given in the Johannine literature, ‘*I am the resurrection and the life*’. *I am the truth*’. He is in himself the reality of the resurrection and the new life that breaks through and out of death. He is the creator-God among mankind, at work even in the midst of death and corruption and perdition and nothingness.”

— Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2009), pg. 236.

4) Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life

Is there a reason for the sequence in which these truths about Jesus are stated?
Would it make a difference if they were rearranged?

“When Jesus, in 14:6, makes the triple identification between the “way,” the “truth,” and the “life,” and Himself, the very point of the statement is missed when, as is so frequently done, the three concepts are simply coordinated, and the content of each unfolded separately. The context shows that what was in question was the “way” to the place whither Jesus was going. This place consisted in the house of the Father with the many mansions; He is the way to this because He Himself is bound for this. The identification with Him furnishes absolute certainty of the disciples’ arriving there. This is then further made clear by the two following explicative concepts: He is specifically the truth, the veritable essence of that region to which He is going; and within that essence again He is the life characteristically belonging to it.”

— Geerhardus Vos, “‘True’ and ‘Truth’ in the Johannine Writings,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), pg. 345, s.v. Ch. XV; on *Reformed Perspectives Magazine* 9:16 (15–21 APR 2007) at http://reformedperspectives.org/newfiles/gee_vos/gee_vos.trueandtruth.html [accessed 20 AUG 2023]; reprint of original in *The Biblical Review* 12 (1927), pp. 507–520.

Carson would register a slight disagreement with Vos’ insistence, which is shared by others.

“The second half of this verse shows that the entire verse must be taken as the answer to Thomas’ question. This means that *way* gains a little emphasis over *truth* and *life*. This is not to say that v. 6a should be interpreted as a semitism, the first noun governing the other two (‘I am the way of truth and life’, and hence ‘I am the true and living way’); the three terms are syntactically co-ordinate, and Greek has other ways of expressing subordination. Still, if Thomas’ question and v. 6a demonstrate that *way* is the principal theme, it follows that *truth* and *life* enjoy a supporting role: Jesus is the way to God, precisely because he is the truth of God (*cf.* notes on 1:14) and the life of God (*cf.* notes on 1:4; 3:15; 11:25). Jesus is the truth, because he embodies the supreme revelation of God—he himself ‘narrates’ God (1:18), says and does exclusively what the Father gives him to say and do (5:19ff; 8:29), indeed he is properly called ‘God’ (1:1, 18; 20:28). He is God’s gracious self-disclosure, his ‘Word’, made flesh (1:14). Jesus is the life (1:4), the one who has ‘life in himself’ (5:26), ‘the resurrection and the life’ (11:25),

‘the true God and eternal life’ (1 Jn. 5:20). Only because he is the truth and the life can Jesus be the way for others to come to God, the way for his disciples to attain the many dwelling-places in the Father’s house (vv. 2–3), and therefore the answer to Thomas’ question (v. 5). In this context Jesus does not simply blaze a trail, commanding others to take the way that he himself takes; rather, he *is* the way. Nor is it adequate to say that Jesus ‘is the Way in the sense that he is the whole background against which action must be performed, the atmosphere in which life must be lived’ (Sidebottom, p. 146): that assigns Jesus far too passive a role. He is himself the Saviour (4:42), the Lamb of God (1:29, 34), the one who so speaks that those who are in the graves hear his voice and come forth (5:28–29). He so mediates God’s truth and God’s life that he is the very way to God (*cf.* de la Potterie, p. 938), the one who alone can say, *No-one comes to the Father except through me.*”

— D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity; Eerdmans, 1991), pg. 492.

In all of the Bible there is no clearer assertion of the exclusive claims of Christ.

These words of Jesus stand forever as prohibiting any ecumenical heresies, and all inclusive theologies.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures the exclusivity of Jesus as The Way, The Truth, and The Life is stated as follows.

Acts 4:12 — Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

1 Tim. 2:5 — For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

“This mystery is *revelation* that is identical with Christ himself and here one thinks of the Johannine record of the majestic word of Jesus, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’”

— Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2008), pg. 166.

“The meditation of Thomas à Kempis is often quoted:

Follow thou me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated.”

— D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity; Eerdmans, 1991), pg. 492; citing *The Imitation of Christ* 56.1.

5) Jesus is the Exclusive Way, the Exclusive Truth, and the Exclusive Life

no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

“Let us ask experience: the whole world, human reason, yes, ‘free-will’, are forced to confess that they had not known nor heard of Christ before the gospel entered the world. And if they did not know Him, much less did they, or could they, seek Him, or make endeavours after Him. But Christ is the way, the truth, the life, and salvation (ch. John 14.6). ‘Free-will’ is therefore confessing, willy-nilly, that by its own strength it neither knew or could seek those things that belong to the way, the truth and salvation.”

“Moreover, since Christ is said to be ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14.6), and that categorically, so that whatever is not Christ is not the way, but error, not truth, but untruth, not life, but death, it follows of necessity that ‘free-will’, inasmuch as it neither is Christ, nor is in Christ, is fast bound in error, and untruth, and death.”

— Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1957; 2012 reprint ed.), pg. 306–307; s.v. VII:xiii, xiv.

“Jesus was the Mediator of the older testament, as well as the newer (Heb. 9:15); and, since it is true that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6) and yet, since the saints of the older dispensation did indeed come to the father (Ps. 73:24), they must have been made perfect *in Him* (Heb. 11:40).”

— J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1962), pg. 241 (cp. pp. 72–74); cited by John S. Feinberg, “Salvation in the Old Testament,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, eds. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981), pg. 41.

“If John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 mean anything at all, they must mean that the one being confronted with the gospel cannot ‘believe in Jesus’ in any saving sense and at the same time entertain the notion that there is another way of salvation.

Other faiths may be inclusive in regard to multiple means of salvation without great harm to their integrity, but Jesus has not left that option open to his followers. John 14:6 states the exclusive nature of his salvation positively, in the words of Jesus himself: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ And Acts 4:12 states the same truth negatively: ‘Salvation is found in *no one else*, for there is *no other name* under heaven given to men by which we must be saved’ (emphasis added).”

— Michael P. Andrus, “Turning to God: Conversion beyond Mere Religious Preference,” in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), pg. 158.

3. The Answer of Jesus — Part Two (14:7)

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

- 1) The Knowledge of Christ and the Father in the Past
- 2) The Knowledge of the Father in the Present and the Future

1) The Knowledge of Christ and the Father in the Past

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also

This makes it sound like they were all unbelievers up to this point.

Is that plausible?

If it is plausible, in what sense?

Would this indicate that they were unregenerate, or simply responding to the Incarnation as confused Old Testament saints?

2) The Knowledge of the Father in the Present and the Future

and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him

“God the Father is absolutely, completely, and totally to us what he reveals himself to be in Christ. Understand this and sense the light it brings to the mind and affections, and faith strengthens while assurance is nourished.”

— Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance — Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), pg. 200. Ferguson’s footnote 7 on the first sentence is: “See John 14:7, 9b.”

Conclusion

“And so to the point of totality, *we offer Jesus.*” (John 15:5)

“To the point of norm, *we offer Jesus.*” (Matthew 5:17)

“To the point of deliverance, *we offer Jesus.*” (John 14:6)

“To the point of destiny, *we offer Jesus.*” (John 10:11)

“Finally, to the point of the higher power, *we offer Jesus.*” (John 8:12)

“*We offer Jesus.*”

— Daniel Strange, “Missions: The Magnetic Person of Jesus Christ,” in *Theology for Ministry: How Doctrine Affects Pastoral Life and Practice*, eds. William R. Edwards, John C. A. Ferguson, and Chad Van Dixhoorn (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2022), pp. 482–485.

“To the point of deliverance, *we offer Jesus.* He says: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14:6). The enmity within ourselves, between ourselves and with the spiritual and natural realms that we long to be rescued from, has to be understood to be symptom rather than cause or as fruit rather than root. It is our enmity with God, his righteous wrath, and an eternity in hell that we need deliverance from and that can be dealt with only through a work outside ourselves, through one Mediator, the God-man Jesus Christ *and him alone (solus Christus)*. Outside this, there is no hope.”

— Strange, *op. cit.*, pp. 483–484.

Study Guide

Title: The Way, the Truth, the Life

Text: John 14:1–7

Presenter: John T. “Jack” Jeffery, Pastor, Wayside Gospel Chapel, Greentown, PA

Occasion: All Things New Conference (21–24 August 2023)

Venue: LeTourneau Christian Center, Rushville, New York

Conference Theme: The Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17)

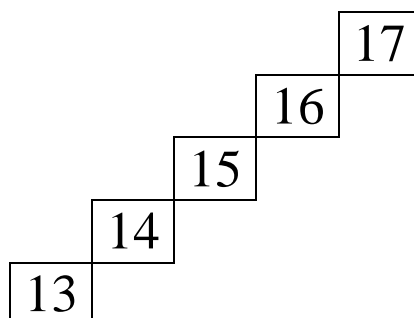
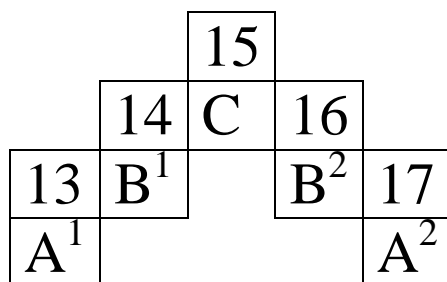
Introduction

1. The Gospel of John: Its Important Features that may Aid in Understanding Chapters 13–17

- 1) Feasts
- 2) Discourses
- 3) Geographical Movements
- 4) Chronological/Temporal Focus — Zoom from Macro to Micro

2. The Upper Room Discourse in John 13–17: Its Extent and Structure

- 1) The Extent of the Upper Room Discourse
- 2) The Internal Relationships of the Chapters in the Upper Room Discourse



3. The First Epistle of John: How are John’s Epistles and especially 1 John related to the Upper Room Discourse?

John	1 John	Comparable Emphases
13	1	footwashing / cleansing
14	2	Comforter / anointing
15	3	purgeth / purifieth Abide in me / abideth in Him love one another
16	4	He will reprove the world...I have overcome the world / greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world...as he is, so are we in the world
17	5	I pray / we have the petitions

Outline

- I. *I go to prepare a place for you* (14:1–2)
- II. *I will come again, and receive you unto myself* (14:3–4)
- III. *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (14:5–7)

I. *I go to prepare a place for you* (14:1–2)

1. Jesus is Worthy of Our Faith (14:1)

- 1) “Let not your heart be troubled”
- 2) “ye believe in God”
- 3) “believe also in me”

2. Jesus is the Preparer of Our Place (14:2)

- 1) Many Mansions
- 2) A Prepared Place

II. *I will come again, and receive you unto myself* (14:3–4)

1. Jesus' Assurance of Our Future Reunion (14:3)

- 1) The Middle Eastern Marriage Customs
- 2) The Fulfillment of the Promise and Prophecy in the New Jerusalem's descent to the New Earth as the Holy City

2. Jesus' Assurance of Our Two-Fold Knowledge (14:4)

- 1) You know where I am going
- 2) You know the way

III. *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (14:5–7)

1. The Question of Thomas (14:5)

- 1) We don't know!
- 2) How can we know?

2. The Answer of Jesus — Part One (14:6)

- 1) Jesus is The Way
- 2) Jesus is The Truth
- 3) Jesus is The Life
- 4) Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life
- 5) Jesus is the Exclusive Way, the Exclusive Truth, and the Exclusive Life

3. The Answer of Jesus — Part Two (14:7)

- 1) The Knowledge of Christ and the Father in the Past
- 2) The Knowledge of the Father in the Present and the Future

The Emphatic “I am” statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John⁸

Reference	Text	OT Allusion	Notes
4:26	I that speak unto thee am <i>he</i>		absolute
6:20	<i>It is I</i>		absolute
6:35 ⁹	I am the bread of life	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
6:41	I am the bread with came down from heaven	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
6:48	I am that bread of life	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
6:51	I am the living bread which came down from heaven	Ex. 16; Num. 11	predicate
8:12	I am the light of the world	Ex. 13:21–22; Is. 60:19–20	predicate
8:18	I am one that bear witness of myself		predicate
8:23	I am from above....I am not of this world		predicate
8:24	If ye believe not that I am <i>he</i>		absolute
8:28	then shall ye know that I am <i>he</i>		absolute
8:58	Before Abraham was, I am	Ex. 3:14	absolute
9:5	I am the light of the world	Ex. 13:21–22; Is. 60:19–20	predicate
9:9	I am <i>he</i>		absolute
10:7, 9	I am the door of the sheep....I am the door		predicate
10:11, 14	I am the good shepherd	Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 28:9; 78:52; 80:1; Is. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:11–16; Zech. 13:7	predicate
10:36	I am the Son of God		predicate
11:25	I am the resurrection, and the life		predicate
13:19	I am <i>he</i>		absolute
14:6	I am the way, the truth, and the life		predicate
15:1, 5	I am the true vine	Ps. 80:8–16; Jer. 2:21	predicate
18:5–6	I am <i>he</i> ¹⁰I am <i>he</i>	Ex. 3:14	absolute
18:8	I am <i>he</i>		absolute

⁸ Italicized words were supplied in the English translation, but are not present in the Greek texts.

⁹ The *New Geneva Study Bible* note with this verse points out that this is “the first of seven such ‘I am’ sayings in this Gospel,” and then lists the other six as 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1, 5. *New Geneva Study Bible*, eds. Luder Whitlock, Jr., R. C. Sproul, Bruce Waltke, Moisés Silva, *et al.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), pg. 1672, note on Jn. 6:35.

¹⁰ Among the textual variants in this verse is a reading with Ἰησοῦς (“Jesus”) without the article and following the verb in what appears to be a predicate nominative position that would yield a translation of, “I, I am Jesus.” This is documented in B, (it^a Ego sum. Iesus autem), and Ambrose. Sources: *Novum Testamentum Graece*, eds. Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, 27th ed., eds. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1898, 1993), pg. 306; and *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed., eds. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren (Stuttgart, FRG: United Bible Societies and Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993, 1994), pg. 392.

Select Bibliography of Resources on the *Gospel of John* and the “Upper Room Discourse” (John 13–17) in general, and John 14:1–7 specifically¹¹

I. Study Bibles

II. Miscellaneous Resources

III. Commentaries

IV. Resources on the Greek Text, Textual Criticism, Grammar, and Syntax

V. Resources on 1 John and the Upper Room Discourse in the Gospel of John

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¹¹ Page numbers in bold font are those cited in the paper.

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See below.

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¹² The original introduction to this connection was suggested in a class by Dr. John Reis Master in a class he taught circa 1978–1980 at Baptist Bible School of Theology (at that time meeting in Heritage Baptist Church, Clarks Summit, PA; now Baptist Bible Seminary at Clarks Summit University). In correspondence with Master years later he was unable to recall documentation for where he was personally introduced to this subject (Raymond Brown? Class at Dallas Theological Seminary?).

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18 MAY 2023

Revised:

24 JUL 2023

14 AUG 2023

29 SEP 2023

Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria