

JOHN 13–17

JESUS' LAST SUPPER

WASHING OF FEET THROUGH INTERCESSORY PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

John chapters 13–17, takes place during Jesus' last night of mortality. It begins with a private gathering in a room upstairs or in the upper part of Jerusalem and then ends on the Mount of Olives. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John does not include the Passover at the Lord's Last Supper, nor the sacrament (which we will look at next week). John included the sacrament symbols in Jesus' "Bread of Life Sermon," but does not repeat them here.

Traditionally, Jews from around the Roman Empire came to Jerusalem for one of the three major pilgrimage feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles). At each feast, the city swelled from ten to a hundred times its size. The permanent residence of ancient Jerusalem is estimated between 20,000 and 35,000 people, but Josephus' claims at Passover the city held two million (most assume Josephus' numbers are exaggerated).¹ The Passover is

followed by a week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread. It recalls the Children of Israel's exodus from Egypt (Leviticus 23, Exodus 12, and Numbers 28:16–25). The ritualized meal, or Seder, includes many symbolic details that looked backward to their miraculous redemption from slavery, and forward to their redeeming promised Messiah. Even the manner of seating was symbolic. Each person reclined on pillows or sofas, positioned on their left sides, with their head propped on an elbow, facing the table, and their feet stretching out. Unlike Leonardo DaVinci's painting of chairs around a table, this feast celebrated the Israelites freedom to recline, no longer obligated to stand as a slave.

John's account only mentions Jesus and the Twelve in attendance at the Last Supper. However, every meal would have required several other people present to help in with the meal. Kent Brown posits that the seven-plus women who had been traveling with Jesus to Jerusalem (Mary the mother of Jesus, her unnamed sister, Joanna, Susanna, Mary of Magdala, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and the "other women") were probably in the room as contributors to the meal (Luke 24:10).² As further evidence, they also knew exactly where to find the apostles, and "all the rest," on Sunday morning (Luke 8:1–3; 23:49; 24:9). If the female disciples were in the same room, it also explains why the apostles would go outside in the dark to find a place to sleep under the stars rather than stay in their rented room.

LAST SUPPER

John 13:1 "before the feast of the Passover" The Passover is the climax of the scene (John 11:51 and 12:1). John explains that Jesus knew "that his hour was come that he should depart." The symbols and timing here align beautifully with the sign of His sacrifice for the sins of the world as the "Passover lamb" (1 Corinthians 5:7; NIV). (I will discuss these symbols next week as the meal and suffering are elaborated in the Synoptic Gospels.) The miracle of God's timing is perfectly precise.

The timing of events in John's Gospel is also different than tradition. The Gospel of John places Jesus' Last Supper on Wednesday beginning in the late afternoon or evening (John 13:30).³ The Jewish calendar included three special days as part of the Passover celebrations. The first three days at the beginning of this of celebration were holy days: Nisan 14th (the Passover), the 15th (which is the first of seven days of unleavened bread), and the 16th (when they offered the first fruits). Each is mentioned in the New Testament. The Passover, as well as the last day of Unleavened bread, were treated as additional "sabbaths" (Leviticus 23:7–8). The Old Testament also defines a day to select the Passover lambs. The table below includes the scripture and calendar.

“. . . He loved them unto the end.” In his commentary in this verse preceding the Last Supper, John introduces one of the themes that Jesus will expound in the next three chapters: Jesus' perfect example of love.

SATURDAY

Nisan 10th, 11th,
12th

Select Lambs

John 12:12–13
John 21

Exodus 12:3

Triumphal Entry

Nisan 13th

Preparation

John 13:1,29;
19:14

Numbers 9:3,
5, 11

Last Supper–
Cross

Nisan 14th

Passover

John 18:28, 39

Leviticus 23:5;
33:3

Burial

Nisan 15th

1st Day
Unleavened

Mark 14:1; Luke
22:7

Exodus 12:15–
17; Leviticus 23:6

Tomb

Nisan 16th

Sabbath + First fruit Offering⁴

1 Corinthians
5:20, 23

Leviticus 2:1–3;
23:7–15

Tomb

SUNDAY

Nisan 17th

John 21

Leviticus 23:11

Resurrection

John 13:2 “The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas . . . to betray Jesus” (NIV). Unlike the KJV, the underlying Greek says that Judas had already started his plan, and was just now going to complete it. “Betray” in Greek means “to give into the hands of” or “hand him over.” Some theologians have debated the possibility that Jesus directed Judas to deny Him. This false idea comes from a gnostic attempt to honor Judas for putting in motion the Savior’s salvation. John describes Judas as greedy, a thief, a devil, and as the son of perdition (John 6:70–71; 12:6; 17:12). This idea of Judas and the other apostle’s infallibility is a false doctrine. It can be traced from Augustine and Calvin trickling down through nineteenth and twentieth-century theologians.⁵ Elder James Talmage penned, “Before Judas sold Christ to the Jews, he had sold himself to the devil; he had become Satan’s serf, and did his master’s bidding.”⁶

John 13:3 “He was come from God and went to God” This verse synthesizes the cycle of Jesus’ life. It echoes the message in John’s Gospel introduction in John 1:1–4.

Jesus Washes the Apostle’s Feet

John 13:4–5 “took a towel and girded himself . . . He began to wash the disciples’ feet” In the middle of the meal, Jesus stands and did something quite appalling. He laid aside His outer cloak (probably similar to a wrap like a toga) and tied a towel around His waist, like the apron of a servant. He also would have gathered a water container and some sort of clothe as He performed a slave’s task of washing the men’s feet. Over the past three years, He regularly shocked His followers with the things He said and did (i.e. talking to women, healing on the Sabbath, walking through Samaria, telling them to eat his flesh, etc.). Jesus had already taught them: “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” and “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be... servant of all” (Mark 10:45; 9:45). Yet, they were still stunned when He took on the role of a slave or child and began to wash their feet.

The Jewish tradition of washing hands and feet was not new. The Law of Moses included the need for personal cleanliness (Leviticus 15:11; Deuteronomy 23:12–14). Priests also washed their bodies before temple service, and then hands and feet periodically during the service (Exodus 30:18–21; 40:31). Even after the return from Babylon in the Second Temple period, rabbis added many elaborate ritual washings to their daily life: they washed before meals, worship, and other events. Each different occasion had detailed instructions on how to wash, from simple hand washings to complete immersions in a mikveh.⁷ It was a child or servant’s job to help the head of the house with their washing, dressing, and eating.

Washing one’s begrimed feet before entering a home was needed after traveling in sandals on dusty roads and thorny pathways. The task of washing someone else’s feet was so revolting that even male Jewish slaves did not have to do it (Leviticus 25:39).⁸ The repugnant job usually fell to a non-Jewish slave, a woman, child, or oneself. If a hospitable host invited guests to his home, he would either assign a slave to help his guests wash their feet, or at least provide water for them to wash their own feet (Luke 7:44).

BACKGROUND: SERVITUDE

To understand what it meant for Jesus to take on this role as the slave child, it helps to understand the culture of indentured servants at the time. In the Judeo-Greco-Roman world, social hierarchy delineated every aspect of life. The lowest social class was made up of “slaves, women and children.”⁹ In AD 47, a census across the Roman Empire documented that one-third of the population was enslaved or worked as servants. That number rose significantly in cities like Jerusalem where half of the population was indentured servants.¹⁰ A normal middle-class citizen owned eight slaves,¹¹ though that number was less in poorer villages scattered across the Palestine countryside.¹² Because many impoverished families did not have enough servants to keep up with the work, they recruited their wives and children to take over the same workload. Even in cities, the head of Pharisaic homes considered women and children servants. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish contemporary of Jesus recorded that women lived “in the rank of a servant.”¹³ Consistent with this protocol, in Jewish homes that followed rabbinic oral laws, children and wives called their fathers and husbands, “master.”¹⁴

Servitude took on a unique twist in an educational setting. In the student-teacher relationship (often referred to as disciple-master-teacher), if a student wanted to spend more time with his master teacher, he could volunteer to take over the servant’s job and feed, wash, or dress his master teacher.¹⁵ One rabbinical axiom interestingly includes one exclusion: “A disciple might offer any service to his teacher which a slave did for his master, *except that of unfastening his shoes*, which was counted as a menial’s duty.”¹⁶ Other historical writings claim that loved ones could wash their master’s feet out of respect.¹⁷ In either case, Jesus actions are startling to His disciples. He turned their social structure upside down.

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet by William Hole, 1905.



John 13:7 “**You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will**” (NIV). When Jesus attempts to wash the disciples’ feet, they do not realize that He is introducing an ordinance. It is not until December 27/28, 1832 when the Prophet Joseph Smith received D&C 88:138–141 that he learned the “washing of feet” cleansed one from the blood and sins of their generation. A few weeks later, on January 23, 1833, in Kirtland Ohio, the Prophet Joseph restored the ordinance at a conference:

“We again assembled in conference, when, after much speaking, singing, praying, and praising God, all in tongues, we proceeded to the washing of feet (according to the practice recorded in the 13th chapter of John’s Gospel), as commanded of the Lord. Each Elder washed his own feet first, after which I girded myself with a towel and washed the feet of all of them, wiping them with the towel with which I was girded. . . . At the close of the scene, Brother Frederick G. Williams, being moved upon by the Holy Ghost, washed my feet in token of his fixed determination to be with me in suffering, or in journeying, in life or in death, and to be continually on my right hand; in which I accepted him in the name of the Lord.”¹⁸

We also have a record of the ordinance in the original hymn sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The original fourth verse to “The Spirit of God,” reads:

“We’ll wash, and be wash’d, and with oil be anointed
Withal not omitting the washing of feet;
For he that receiveth his Penny appointed,
Must surely be clean at the harvest of wheat.”

John 13:8 “**Thou shalt never wash my feet!**” Understanding that foot washing in this culture is for the lowest of the low, Peter adamantly refuses to have the Lord serve him as a slave. I can almost hear Peter raising his voice emphatically, “Never! Never! Will you wash my feet!” Peter’s spontaneous nature shows the goodness of his heart. He wants to serve the Lord, not the other way around. But I assume he would have been on the verge of tears as the Lord corrected him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” (ESV). In the preceding verse, Jesus had already warned Peter that he would not understand it until “hereafter” (John 13:7).

John 13:9 “**not my feet only but my hands and my head**” Peter changes his heart and mind immediately to align his will with Jesus. Peter’s confusion crumbled into humility. This may not be a saving ordinance like baptism, but the washing of feet is administered by modern prophets in temples. The Prophet Joseph administered it to 300 “official members” in conjunction with the sacrament.¹⁹

John 13:10–11 “he that is washed . . . is clean every whit . . . but not all” Jesus’ reference to “washing” speaks of inner cleanliness through repentance. Jesus symbolically washes their feet, but as He mentions it does not spiritually clean one if they have not repented. I wonder how Judas felt when Jesus washed his feet. The Lord already knew Judas had arranged to betray Him, and yet Jesus choose to minister to him. I’ve puzzled over why the Lord introduced the washing of feet while Judas was still there. After Judas left Jesus introduced the new commandment as well as the sacrament. Perhaps this sealed Judas’ fate “over unto the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.”²⁰ After the washing, Jesus refers to Judas as the son of prediction (John 17:12).



Jesus Washing Peter’s Feet by Ford Madox Brown, ca. 1852. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 13:12–15 “ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example” Jesus teaches masters how to serve, but this runs counter to the natural man, as well as society’s view of hierarchy. Internalizing His example requires a huge paradigm shift. If we really understood this, we would jump at every opportunity to serve, work in the nursery, clean the bathroom, and take out the garbage.

John 13:16 “he that is sent is greater than he that sent him” This takes on even more meaning in Greek when the word “sent” is, “*apostolos*” the same word for apostle: “Neither he that is *apostolos* / sent greater than He that *pempo* / sent him.” An apostle is one sent by God to witness of Him. The Catholic scholar, John Perry, defined an apostle, as “one who has seen the resurrected Lord and been sent by Him to witness.”²¹

John 12:17 “If you know . . . do them” Doing what we know to be true requires discipline. Yet even though it is harder than expected, living up to what we believe does engender more happiness. There are always undulations in life and we need not beat ourselves emotionally into discouragement when we fall short. But Jesus’ precept affects not only our spirituality, but also plays a role in our psychology, psychiatry, and physiology. When we do what God asks of us, He rewards us with a gift of the Spirit to feel “happy” (KJV) or “blessed” (ASV, ESV, NIV, etc.). He send a peace of consciousness. The opposite is also true when we choose to act against what we know.

John 13:18 “. . . eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me” Here Jesus fulfills Psalms 41:9. Mark also quotes this verse in his Passion narrative. It is the first of only four verses they have in common. (John

cites nine Old Testament scriptures that are fulfilled in Jesus' passion, while Mark cites seventeen.) This verse describes an ancient insult: "To show the bottom of one's foot to someone in the Near East is a mark of contempt. Such an action was especially grave on the part of a friend who had shared one's table."²²

The "lifting up the heel" also evokes the curse given to the serpent in the Garden of Eden: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Judas takes on Satan's role to bruise the Lord's heel, as Jesus is the only one born of the "seed of woman." He will crush Satan's head through His atonement, life, and death.

John 13:19 "I tell you before, that . . . ye may believe" Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled that very night. Jesus explained that He wants us to recognize the fulfillment when it comes. We too can see prophecies fulfilled as we look for them in our scripture, which will in turn strengthen our faith.

John 13:20 "whoever receives the one I send, receives Me, and . . . the One who sent Me" This verse ties back to verse 16 thematically, "one sent." The reciprocal message is synergistic, and receives a second witness in D&C 1:38, "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants the prophets it is the same."

Betrayer Announced

John 13:21–22 "He was troubled in spirit . . . one of you shall betray me" Jesus' announcement shocked this close group of friends. I'm sure they could sense, to some degree at least, the affect it had on Jesus too. The KJV use of "*troubled*" meant: "to strike one's spirit with fear and dread; to render anxious or distressed." Jesus not only losing a friend, but He probably knows the consequences that lay before Judas.

John 13:23 "leaning on Jesus' bosom one . . . whom Jesus loved" This verse becomes important in identifying the authorship of this Gospel. John the Beloved did not mention his name in the text of his Gospel (similar to his not referencing the name of Jesus' mother, Mary, either). Instead, he refers to himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" at least six times. At the very end of his Gospel, in John 21:20, he identifies himself as the one who leaned on the bosom of Jesus. John's Gospel begins with Jesus being in the bosom of the Father (1:18). Now John represents himself similarly, tying these two together. In this scene, John the Beloved appears as the antithesis of Judas Iscariot, who has just been announced as the betrayer.

John 13:24–25 "Peter . . . beckoned to him . . . who is it?" Peter nodded or somehow signaled to get John's attention. Peter must have been sitting further away from Jesus and didn't want to interrupt. Especially after his misunderstanding of the washing of feet, he may have been reticent to question the Lord again. Those who study ancient Jewish table arrangements see the text as describing three couches placed in a squared horse shoe figure, probably arranged around a central table. John sat in the place of honor to Jesus' right with Judas not too far away

(perhaps on his left). Did Judas feel the treasurer required a place of importance?

John 13:26 “Sop” means morsel. Jews felt it a great honor for two friends to dip from the same dish, and an even greater show of respect to dip for one’s friend and present it to him as Jesus did for Judas. By offering the sop, Jesus extended friendship and love to Judas, knowing full well what will happen. Judas feigned his false loyalty by receiving the shared sop—and yet he later rejected Jesus to follow Satan’s leadership. (*Do we ever do the same?*) John alone shares this detail, so I wonder if he alone heard it.

John 13:27 “my peace I give to you” Jesus reads our hearts and minds both in heaven and on earth. Multiple times during his mortal ministry, he read people’s thoughts. He also controlled His own destiny, not Judas. Literally in Greek, Jesus said, “What you do” do quickly.

John 13:29 “Judas had the bag” The “bag” was the money bag/box that Judas held as treasurer for the Apostles. John includes that the Apostles did not realize what was happening, because they briefly thought that Jesus’ instructed Judas to go shopping for the Passover feast or for needed supplies for the long weekend. Also, Jews customarily gave something to the poor on Passover night.²³ We do not know what the apostles thought.

John 13:30 “He . . . went immediately out: and it was night” The main meal was normally eaten in the afternoon, but this meal appears to be at night (as the Passover Seder would be the following night). John intentionally added the time of day as he often juxtaposed light and dark (John 1, 2, and 3). The night symbolizes the darkness or the hour of Satan. His darkness is about to close in on the light through Judas, but only with Jesus’ permission.²⁴

With Judas dismissed, Jesus could move on and teach more freely. In most meetings, classrooms, or group discussions, everyone present has an impact on the spirit of the room, what is taught, what is felt, and how much inspiration is received. Notice that John no longer records anything about Jesus feeling “troubled,” but is only filled with the Spirit, wisdom, and love.

The New Commandment

To Love as Jesus Loves

Jesus begins His last discourse. It is the most masterful discourse recorded in the Bible. “The last Discourse is best understood when it is the subject of prayerful meditation. . . . It is the greatest composition in religious literature. The one who speaks here speaks as no man has spoken.”²⁵

John 13:31–32 “Now is the Son of man glorified” Jesus continued to rise in glory as He prepared the way to glorify God and all mankind. I interpret these two verses through the perspective of Moses 1:39, “This is my work

and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” This means that through Jesus’ work (the atonement), God is glorified. God’s glory is revealed through Jesus. Everyone can obtain more Glory, through Jesus’ great and last sacrifice.

John 13:33 “Little children, yet a little while I am with you” Jesus’ phrase, “little children” becomes a favorite for John as we find it seven times in his first epistle. Jesus refers to the eleven apostles (and probably the women in the room) as meek and mild little children. They were also, in a sense, ignorant as children about what was about to take place. Jesus referred to His sacrifice and death, but they had no idea where He was going. Jesus spoke of His great sacrifice right before He introduced the concept of Christ-like love. By putting these two ideas in close proximity He taught that the purest expression of love is sacrifice.



The Last Supper by Juan de Juanes, ca. 1562. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give unto you” Jesus’ farewell gift to His Disciples was the new commandment. As His disciples can’t follow Him, Jesus gave them a means whereby they could feel His Spirit in His absence. In John’s record of Jesus’ last discourse, he included seven references to “commandments” (his favorite number!). Throughout his Gospel and epistles, he discusses “commandments” 29 times. By using the word “new” Jesus pointed out that this law was different than the lower law given to Moses to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). For our Lord, the new commandment of *love* and *obedience* go together.

“Love one another; as I have loved you” Jesus asks His disciples to now love others more than we love ourselves—or at least how we loved ourselves in the past—because now we must also learn to love ourselves as Christ loves us. We must try to love as He loves. Jesus’ love is unconditional. Unconditional human love reflects Divine Love as the moon reflects the sun. Jesus’ life and sacrifice became “the pure prism through which the Father” reflected His love.²⁶ As all have the potential to change our hearts and permit the Spirit of God to magnify our capacities, we can grow toward receiving Christ-like love.

Christ-like love becomes a gift of the Spirit that is taught in all four Standard Works (1 Corinthians 12; Moroni 10; D&C 46; Article of Faith 7). It is a gift that we must work for. Whenever John refers to Christ-like love, he uses the Greek word, *agapao*, just as Jesus does here. Elsewhere in the KJV Bible, it is called, charity. Disciples can develop charity by asking God to help us see people as He does, by treating others as we would treat Jesus. Jesus wants us feel His love so that we too can love unconditionally.

John 13:35 “... men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love” The greatest *evidence* of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world is not its logic, but the inspired love that church members have. How can we express that? Perhaps this is one reason why we have recently been asked to invite our neighbors to “serve” with us. How can we better communicate that love to the world? 1 John 4:12 reads: “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” If we fill our lives with perfect love, we are filled with God (1 John 4:12). One way Christ loves us unconditionally is by knowing us well. Ministering to our fellow men allows us to get to know them better.

Prophecy that Peter Will Deny Jesus

John 13:36–37 “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?” Peter does not understand the Lord’s future (v. 33) and was frustrated at the prospects of not being with Him. Peter expressed his earnest desires by volunteering to the extent of laying down his life for the Lord. One certainly can’t fault Peter for enthusiasm!

John 13:38 “the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice” Jesus reigned in Peter’s eagerness with a healthy dose of reality. It appears that Jesus knew the future of his next few hours in great detail. His foreknowledge did not change Peter’s agency though. In John’s Gospel, Peter was *not* directed by Jesus to deny him, nor did he understand Jesus’ warning.²⁷

All four Gospels include Jesus’ warning to Peter and Peter’s denial a few hours later, each with a slight variation. There are very few items that all four Gospels share, and each is very significant to the history of Christianity.²⁸ I ask myself, “Why did the Apostolic Church carefully record this?” We can see a mighty change in Peter between this night and in the Book of Acts. Also, Peter’s example reminds all disciples, no matter how committed, that we must be aware and not fall into a time denial. Better still, this may be the strongest example in the New Testa-

ment on repentance and forgiveness. It illustrates the atonement beautifully, and the irony of its timing makes it even more significant. It offers great hope for those times, both unintentionally and intentionally, when disciples deny the Lord. It also begs the reader to ask, “In what ways do I deny our Lord?”

Jesus Answers the Questions Raised by His Announcement of Departure during Last Supper

John 14:1-3

John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be distressed” (NET) Jesus comforted His disciples by giving them something to think about in times of trouble. Just a few verses earlier Jesus “was troubled in spirit” by thinking about His betrayer (John 13:21). He also felt “troubled” with the mourners at the death of Lazarus: “Jesus therefore saw her weeping . . . and was troubled” (John 11:33). Yet now, He announced a solution for the disciples during times of turmoil: “believe in God, believe also in me.” This is a powerful principle to help us overcome doubt, fear, and anxiousness.

The Bible links the heart with the intellect, not with emotion. We read of the “heart” as the seat of decision making, inner life, and the motivator for all that one did or thought:

- “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7),
- “. . . the thoughts of his heart” (Psalms 33:11),
- “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God,’” (Psalms 53:1),
- “. . . the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding” (Psalms 49:3), and
- “. . . thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The KJV Bible uses “bowels,” or “belly” for emotion. “bowels of compassion” (1 John 3:17; also see Philip 2:1, Colossians 3:12; Genesis 43:30; etc.).

John 14:2 “In my father’s house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you” The early Christian Fathers quoted this first passage in the plural, “*with my Fathers.*” The word “*mansions*” is from Tyndale’s Old English; the Greek word meant: “*a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode.*” In AD 202, the early theologian Irenaeus used “*dwelling place.*” Another early Church Father from the third century, Origen, understood it as *stations* on the road to God. Origen sounds as though he is describing Eternal Progression, especially as he spoke of a pre-mortal life. Other early Christians discussed it as “places (or situations) where the disciples can dwell in peace” with the Father.²⁹ It had no connotation of a stopping place. Moving forward to the restoration, in an extemporaneous sermon in Nauvoo, the prophet Joseph purported that “*mansions*” should be translated as “kingdoms.”

“My text is on the resurrection of the dead, which you will find in the 14th chapter of John: “In my

Father's house are many mansions." It should be: "In my Father's kingdom are many kingdoms," in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with me. I do not believe the Methodist doctrine of sending honest men and noble-minded men to hell, along with the murderer and the adulterer. . . . I have an order of things to save the poor fellows at any rate, and get them saved; for I will send men to preach to them in prison and save them if I can."³⁰

Similar doctrine is found in D&C 76:20 and 84:37–38. We also find further insights in Joseph F. Smith's revelation recorded in D&C 138:18, 29–31.

John 14:3 “*And when I go, I will prepare a place for you, and come again...*” (JST) Jesus’ promise to come again will be fulfilled both in the millennium and was to be fulfilled during His visitations to the apostles and disciples during their forty-day ministry and to the present time. Jesus’ prophecy to come again, “and receive you unto myself” extended to disciples beyond the Twelve. Paul numerated, “He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And . . . was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.” (1 Corinthians 15:4–6; also see Acts 1:1–10).

The emphasis here is on the *future* labor that Jesus will do. Everything the apostles saw Jesus do so far in His ministry paled in comparison to the work that lay ahead of Him. The preparations for the righteous and wicked all awaited the Lord's death and resurrection. We have a description of Jesus' ministry to some of the lost tribes in 3 Nephi 11–26 nearly a year after His resurrection.³¹ We also believe that Christ instructed His disciples in the vicarious ordinances that allow more to enter into kingdoms of glory. We also believe He regularly taught the Prophet Joseph Smith as He unfolded His restoration of the fullness of times. We have records of the Savior visiting Joseph Smith in ten separate experiences.³²

Even in heaven the Lord (and His servants) have much work “to prepare a place for you.” During one of his glimpses into the spirit world, Wilford Woodruff was surprised to find the Prophet Joseph Smith in a hurry. It really bothered Elder Woodruff that in heaven one would still feel rushed, “I expected my hurry would be over when I got [to the Spirit world].” So, Wilford asked Joseph why he hurried and the Prophet explained: “We are the last dispensation and so much work has to be done [to prepare to go to earth with the Savior], and we need to be in a hurry in order to accomplish it.”³³

Jesus Is the Way

John 14:4–11

John 14:4 “**the way ye know**” There are many levels of interpreting *the way*, I will share four. During Jesus’ mortal ministry, He imparted His gospel plan for disciples to navigate the way to follow Him in the gospel path to the Father’s presence and exaltation. *The way* also refers to Jesus Himself. He alone is *the way* to the Father. I

appreciate Hugh Nibley's elaboration on both of these uses of *the way* in Jesus' conversation with His disciples,

"I shall return again, and I shall guide you through the processes that will lead you to myself, so that where I am you can be also. But where I am going you couldn't go by yourselves . . . You cannot possibly get back to the Father except you do it through me. I'll help you get there. I'll get you back there where I am. I want you to be where I am, but I'm the only one who can guide you there—nobody else can. I know the way, and I'll teach you what you must do."³⁴

John the Baptist's mission was to "Prepare the way for the Lord" (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 1:76, 3:4; John 1:23).

Third, "the Way" became a title for the earliest church before it was called Christianity. Saul/Paul referred to Jesus' disciples in Acts 9:2, ". . . if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them" (NIV; also see Acts 18:26; 2 Peter 2:2, 21).

Fourth, *the way* is also mentioned in the biblical account of the Garden of Eden: "the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). In this regard, Jesus is *the way* back to the tree of life. The way to the tree of life is the way back to the Father's presence. That way is outlined in the high priest's path through the Mosaic tabernacle. The way begins as he is washed, anointed, clothed, and cleansed by the vicarious sacrifices at the altar. Then he passes through the Sanctuary to the Holy Place, which was a large room with two small tables: 1) symbolizing continual prayers with incense, and 2) symbolizing covenant Israel with 12 loaves of bread and wine. As the high priest then proceeded to the veil at the end of the room, he passed by the menorah, a representation of "the tree of life" in a tree of light. "The way of the tree of life" refers to returning back to God's presence, *without* sin (Leviticus 16).

The tree illuminated the holy veil that led to the Holy of Holies. Only on the Day of Atonement, the one reigning high priest, after his ritual purification, passed by the tree of light, communed with God at the veil, and at last entered into the throne room that symbolized His Presence. The Throne was the ark and the covenant and its lid was known as the mercy seat. *The way*, as outlined in this Mosaic rite, speaks of the path Jesus trod. Jesus represents the altar, the sacrifice, the veil, and He is *the way* back to the tree of life (Hebrews 10:20; 9:8–11). Only Jesus could open *that way* again, as the veil will be rent at his death, allowing humanity to follow Him. Jesus' atonement is *the way* it all works.

John 14:5 "how can we know the way?" Thomas (meaning twin) has a hard time taking a leap of faith. Without knowing where Jesus is going, he wants some proof to know *the way*. The path of *the way* is often described as "strait" and narrow, meaning a difficult channel to navigate, like the Straits of Gibraltar (Matthew 7:13–14). In modern revelation we further learn about the difficult nature of this way: "For strait is the gate, and narrow the

way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me” (D&C 132:22).

John 14:6 “**I am the way, the truth, and the life . . .**” Jesus’ uses the sacred name of God again, paralleling His’ identifying Himself to Moses on the mountain. This is the sixth of seven, “I am the . . .” statements found in the Gospel of John.³⁵ Jesus is the only way back to our Heavenly Father: the path and the door. The only way to reach our goal of being with the Father is through the at-one-ment of Jesus Christ. His example and teachings are the complete path that all must follow. The early Christian Latin Fathers “understood that the way leads to both the truth and the life;” if believers live the truth, they “belong to the truth.”³⁶ When anyone comes to Jesus to learn more truth, they are not really learning truth unless they live it; John describes acting in the truth, or truth in the sphere of action.

The early Christians also regularly referred to a doctrine of the “**two ways.**” It is simply Christ’s way or every other way. Hugh Nibley, described it:

The Two Ways, depict life as a time of probation, a constant confrontation with good and evil and the obligation to choose between them. This is conceived as part of a plan laid down ‘in the presence of the first angels’ at the creation of the world, according to which through Adam’s fall the human race would



The Last Supper by Giacomo Raffaelli. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

be placed in the position, envied by the angels, of being perfectly free to choose good or evil and thereby fully merit whatever rewards would follow. Satan rebelled against the plan, refused obeisance to Adam, and was cast down upon the earth with his cohorts, to fulfill divine purpose by providing, as ‘the serpent,’ the temptation necessary for an effectual testing of human beings.³⁷

John 14:7 “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” As the Son of the Father, Jesus is the living representative of the Father. The verse also correlates knowing and seeing. Jesus is the living revelation of His Father, as He reveals the Father. This unity has been mentioned already in John 5:19 and 8:28). “One of the tasks that Jesus was to accomplish during his mortal ministry was to reveal the power, attributes, and character of God . . . Men beheld God through Christ. But it was a mediated vision, coming via the Lord through faith.”³⁸

John 14:8–11 “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” In the Lectures on Faith (which Joseph Smith did not write, but approved), we learn the Father and the Son are identical physically.³⁹ This section of verses can be interpreted as either describing Jesus’ unity with the Father in purpose and glory, or Jesus as physically the same being as the Father in a trinity, three in one. Looking at this section in its entirety, especially verse 20 (and the rest of the New Testament at large), there is more continuity with the first interpretation. When we look at the teachings in the restoration from Joseph Smith’s First Vision through D&C 130, our understanding of the Godhead is even clearer. Here, Jesus explains that His words and works are not His, but His Father’s.

The Power of Belief in Jesus

John 14:12–14

John 14:12 “whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these” (NIV) This is an amazing promise! Does this mean that Jesus’ work in heaven will enable mortals to do more? Or perhaps that the influence through the Spirit will give us greater witness or power? In any case, the Spirit guides believers in an energetic manner. This idea acts as a transition of Jesus’ message from the *belief* in God’s word, to *receiving God’s help*. This powerfully unifies humans with God.

John 14:13–14 “ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” In Greek “ask/*aiteo*” is also translated into: to beg, call for, crave, desire, require. This type of sincere seeking or asking is mentioned throughout scripture, but rarely with such a great promise. The promise is repeated during the Last Supper (John 15:7, 26; 26:23, 24), “I will do it.” Although His promise is specifically to the disciples gathered in the upper room, I believe that whatever a humble disciple seeks, what is right or best in God’s perspective, will be granted at some time according to the Lord’s repeated promise. Elsewhere the promise includes two important qualifications—it has to be right or good, and with faith: “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you” (Moroni 7:26).

The Other Comforter

John 14:15–25

John 14:15 “If you love me, keep my commands” Our motivation to obey the Lord’s commandments should come from our love for Him. This is the second time we find this theme of “commandments” during the Last Supper discourse. And as we saw in Jesus’ new commandment, obedience to the commandments and love go together.

John 14:16–17 “he shall give you another Comforter . . . the Spirit of truth” Unlike the “first comforter” (or the Holy Spirit), which can simultaneously be enjoyed by every qualified person, the Second Comforter can only be experienced at a given place, at a given time, by a given person. Just before the Prophet Joseph Smith’s death, he elaborated on what the “first comforter” was in an extemporaneous sermon in Nauvoo: “the Holy Ghost, the same as given on the day of Pentecost, and that all Saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism. This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence.”⁴⁰ Next Joseph moved onto explain the role of the “other” or second comforter.

The **other Comforter** spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the **other Comforter**, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses. . . Now what is this **other Comforter**? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the First Born.⁴¹

Some of the ideas included in Joseph’s sermon on the “other Comforter” as a personal appearance of the Savior to those faithful saints after they have made their calling and election is also found in 2 Peter 1 and a dozen other scriptures.⁴² The Lord restored and clarified this doctrine in D&C 88:3, “I now send upon you *another*



Image of Jesus Christ via Pixabay.

Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John” (also see D&C 132:19–20).

John 14:18–19 “I will not leave you comfortless” This can include the coming Gift of the Holy Ghost, Jesus’ post resurrection visits, and the promise of the Second Comforter just discussed. It is another fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, “Immanuel” or “God with us” coming in the flesh and staying with humanity.

John 14:20–21 “at that day” Often in scripture this phrase describes the time of God’s final intervention with the world—either the restoration, the judgment, or the Second Coming. Whenever that day occurs, the close relationship between the Father and Son will be shared by those worthy of their presence, “ye in me, and I in you.” This verse acts like a prelude to the ideas shared in the intercessory prayer in John 17. It sounds as though the indwelling of the Lord (and in verse 23, the Father), is different than the presence of the Spirit.

John 14:22 “Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot . . .” This Apostle is also referred to as Jude in Luke. We also have another Jude, the brother of the Lord, who is the traditionally held author of the epistle of Jude.

John 14:23–24 “we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” Judas’ question opens the door for Jesus to teach the reason why the world cannot receive God. Simply stated, they do not love and obey the Father. Those who refuse Jesus will not see the Father. (Note, the verse says, “we” will come.) I see this as one of the steps involved in couples receiving their callings and elections made sure (D&C 132:18–19, 26).

The Spirit or First Comforter

John 14:26–31

John 14:26 “the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name . . .” Coming in the Lord’s name implies great unity between the Spirit and Jesus. The Spirit will take on a stronger role when the Savior dies. The Spirit becomes Jesus’ successor. The Apostles are not Jesus’ successors. “There is only one successor to the Lord mentioned in the Bible and that is the Holy Ghost... A successor is one who comes after and takes the place of another . . . one must hold his identical office . . . the scriptures never call the apostles Christ’s successors.”⁴³

Jesus' gift of the Spirit harkens back to John the Baptist's prophecy of the Messiah. When John the Baptist described the Messiah's mission he described Him as, "he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33). Jesus was about to fulfill that prophecy.

"the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance" The apostles were able to write the Lord's words, "everything I have said to you," through the inspiration of the Spirit. The same promise can apply to others who seek to testify and remember their promptings. The Prophet Joseph taught, "No man can receive the Holy Ghost without revelation."⁴⁴ If you feel the Spirit now, you are on the right road!

John 14:27 "my peace I give unto you" The Lord bequeathed peace/*shalom* in mortality not just in heaven. When we are freed from sin and united with God, we have the most important freedom. When we can receive Jesus' peace through the Spirit, we are not "afraid" or "troubled" (which ties back to Jesus' beginning thoughts in John 14:1). To receive His gift, we must want it more than the cares of the world that overpower us and cause us to sin.

John 14:28 "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father" The apostles' understanding of love at this point was more possessive than generous, more selfish than selfless. If they really understood God's plan, we would be rejoicing. The glorification of Jesus results in the same for mankind. (This verse clarifies the separate nature of the Godhead from John 13:8–11).

John 14:29 "I have told you before . . . that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" Knowing the Lord's prophecies will allow us increase our belief when we see their fulfillment. Before we see the Lord's hand though, we as disciples must walk by faith.

Apostles Leave the Upper Room

John 14:30 " . . . for the prince of darkness, who is of this world cometh, but hath no power over me, but he hath power over you. And I tell you these things, that ye may know that I love the Father. . ." (JST) The next several hours of Jesus' life involved combat with Satan. As we read in John 4:34, Jesus' only desire is to do the will of His Father. John's Gospel continues to return to the theme of light and darkness.

John 14:31 "Arise, let us go hence" This stopping point is not the conclusion of Jesus' discourse; there are three more chapters separating the passion. Textual scholars see this as evidence of an editor's drafts. I wonder though, if the group, or at least the men who would sleep outside, actually "arose" and went outside. The following text sounds as if Jesus were looking at things on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, staring with vines.

Jesus Breaks Bread and Gives the Cup by William Hole, 1905.



Intimate Relationship between Jesus and His Followers

John 15:1-17

John 15:1 “I am the true vine” This is Jesus’ last “I am . . .” example that John included in his Gospel. Jesus referred to His Father as the gardener and Himself as the vine, with the disciples as the branches. References to “the vine”/ *ampelos* (Greek) / *gephen* (Hebrew), are found in 65 verses throughout scripture. Jesus used the same symbolism here that we find in many OT stories, including Psalms 80:8-6; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; and Ezekiel 15-19:10.

The “vine” is also mentioned in the father’s blessing that Jacob gave his son Judah. Jacob prophesied that a righteous ruler would come through Judah’s lineage: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass’s colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grape” (Genesis 49:10-11).

In the Book of Mormon, the best analogy of the vine is in the agricultural masterpiece, Jacob 5, Zenos’ Allegory of the Olive Tree.⁴⁵ The phrase, “true vine” is only found twice elsewhere, both in the Book of Mormon, and both refer to the Lord.

1 NEPHI 15:15

And then at that day will they not rejoice and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation? Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the **true vine**? Yea, will they not come unto the true fold of God?

ALMA 16:17

That they might not be hardened against the word, that they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction, but that they might receive the word with joy, and as a branch be grafted into the **true vine**, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God.

John 15:2 “every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes to make it even more fruitful” (BSB) The purpose of the vine is to bear fruit. If the branch is correctly nourished and pruned, it can give more fruit. Symbolically, God’s pruning gives evidence His knowledge of the branches’ potential. When we feel God’s pruning, we can hope to grow more of His fruit.

John 15:3 “Ye are clean through the word” We become cleansed through the WORD / *logos*—which, as we read in John 1:1, refers to the Lord—invoking the Savior’s atonement. Words from a text, are not what make



Jesus is the true vine. Image via Pixabay.

us clean. But Jesus' words become a vehicle moving our thoughts and lives to God's Word, Jesus Christ.

John 15:4–6 “Abide in me” Jesus' charge can be each disciple's goal. It is not enough just to be tied to the vine; we actually must become part of it. We can do nothing on our own, only in and through the power of Jesus. Jesus emphasizes the link between the vine, the branches, and the fruit. To “abide” with someone refers to living with them—submitting to house rules, helping with house work, etc. Additionally, nourishment only comes from the vine, so disciples must not let go. If we are not part of the true vine, our spirits die and we are cast off as dead firewood.

John 15:7 “If ye abide in me . . . ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done” Jesus mentioned this earlier (John 14:14), but He explains it in more detail here. We won't ask amiss if we are in tune with the Spirit or if we are abiding in Him. This conditional makes all the difference in our prayers. Before we ask, we need to determine if we are in tune with the Spirit and if our request is the Lord's will.

John 15:8 “. . . my Father [is] glorified, [if] ye bear much fruit” God's glory comes when His children are fruitful. This verse is as close as the Bible gets to teachings Moses 1:39, “This is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” When one bears fruit, they demonstrate their discipleship. “Becoming or being a disciple is the same of being or remaining in Jesus.”⁴⁶

John 15:9 “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” This same theme is picked up in John's first epistle: “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). This teaches that disciples can feel God's love more often by loving others unconditionally. John's uses the Greek word *agape* here—the same word Paul uses for charity (1 Corinthians 13). Here, it is used in the present tense or “continuous character,” *agapan*, which gives “the connotation of love made manifest.”⁴⁷

John 15:10 “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” If we love God, obedience and service follow as an expression of that love. The second half of this verse changes Jesus' earlier statement in the present tense (describing how Jesus enjoys His Father's companionship, “I do always those things that please him,” see John 8:29), to now being in the past tense, at the end of His mission: “I have kept my Father's commandments.”

John 15:11 “my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” Living these principles creates a synergistic relationship—with both the Lord’s joy and the disciples’ joy being full as a result.

John 15:12–13 “. . . Greater love . . . a man lay down his life for his friends” Jesus repeats the “new commandment” and then offers His death as a sign of His love (John 13:34). Jesus “juxtapos[es] the principles of sacrifice and love.”⁴⁸ This powerful foreshadow of Jesus’ death was repeated by John in his first epistle (1 John 4:10). The word for “friends” / *philos* is also to describe Lazarus’ relation to the Lord in 11:11.

John 15:14–15 “my friends . . . do whatsoever I command” Now the disciples are following the Lord’s directions, and Jesus elevates them to *philos*, friends and confidants. The Lord called Abraham His friend, He called Joseph His friend, and here we learn *all those who obey* are His friends. President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “He is my friend, my Savior, my Lord, my God . . . You will come to know your Redeemer is your greatest friend in time or eternity.”⁴⁹

John 15:16 “I have . . . ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit” The Lord gave His apostles (and possibly all saints who chose to obey the Lord) the blessings or “ordinations” in His kingdom if they / we will work to bring forth good fruit. In the Greek Septuagint, the word “ordained / *tithemi* / to set, fix establish” is often associated with the laying on of hands. For example, Moses commissioned Joshua by the laying on of hands (Numbers 27:18, LXX). The Twelve have a uniquely special commission. Jesus again commands His disciples to ask in His name and promises that Heavenly Father will provide.

John 15:17 “I command you, that ye love . . .” This is the seventh time in this sermon (chapters 13–17) where the disciples are *commanded to love*, and the eleventh time “love” is mentioned at the Last Supper. We learn to *really* love by the Lord’s example and direction. Jesus commands His disciples to follow, or to do the things He commands, so that they learn to love one another.

The World Hates Jesus’ Followers

John 15:18–27

John 15:18 “the world . . . hated me before it hated you” The call to serve the Lord also opens the doorway for persecution: “the mission of the disciples . . . arouses the hatred of the world.”⁵⁰ That hatred is not a passing thing, but comes from worldliness, just as love comes from Godliness. As special witnesses of God, the Apostles stand in opposition to all wickedness.

John 15:19 “If ye were of the world, the world would love . . . you” This a great message to internalize and remember when you feel persecuted. The “world” personifies Satan and his false teachings, in the “well-known maxim, ‘you can buy anything in the world for money.’”⁵¹ The devil always counterfeits the Lord. He asks us to

disobey God, worry about ourselves more than others, hide, and deceive. To serve and love God more, we avoid things of the world and value the things of God.

John 15:20 “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” Those who are persecuted for the Lord’s sake are walking in the same footsteps He trod. Going against the world’s standards of immodesty, immorality, irreverence, and dishonesty takes courage and loving the Lord more than social acceptance.

John 15:21–24 “now they have no cloak for their sin” Jesus turns to the world’s guilt and sin. Those who have seen God’s hand and heard His teachings will be held accountable for that opportunity and knowledge. Jesus assures His followers that those who fight against them also fight against Him and His Father. Denying truth is denying God.

John 15:25 “They hated me without a cause” Jesus quotes Psalms 35:19. Besides the Torah (first five books of Moses), scrolls of the Psalms were the next most available scripture to Jews across the Roman Empire. The very books that the Jewish leaders studied and held as their favorites convicted them of hating (and soon killing) their Messiah. Their rejection of Jesus also fulfilled several other prophecies. Interestingly, a century or more before Jesus’ birth, the Jews carefully combed through their sacred texts to find verses that prophesied of their coming Messiah and included them in a text known as “The Psalms of Solomon.” In their collection, however, there are no verses taken from Isaiah’s “suffering servant passages” (i.e. Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). They were not looking for a persecuted Messiah.

John 15:26 “the Spirit of truth . . . shall testify of me” Jesus returns to the promised Comforter, who will provide comfort to those who are persecuted by testifying of truth. This is a significant boost: even with persecution, disciples will be able to withstand through the witness of the Spirit. Jesus promises the Spirit to those who believe on Him (D&C 5:16). When believers are persecuted, they can give voice to the Spirit’s witness of Jesus. It is also through the indwelling of the Spirit that apostles can speak and represent the Lord.

John 15:27 “You also must testify” (NIV) With the witness of the Spirit comes the responsibility to testify as well. Acts 1:8 explains, “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.” The verse speaks to the apostles who have a more acute charge to witness of Jesus as special witnesses.

The verse also has a broad application, as Jesus calls all witnesses to testify.

CHAPTER 16

In chapter 16, Jesus continued to prepare the disciples for the persecution that awaited them. In chapter 15, He contrasted the difference between His love for them and the world's hatred. He now developed His thoughts on the Spirit's protection against persecution and sorrow.

John 16:1 “I have told you so that you will not fall away” (NIV), “stumble” (WEB), “be offended” (KJV). Jesus explained that the *reason* why He has warned them ahead of time is so that their faith will not falter when they are persecuted. Otherwise, persecution can turn to fear, and fear is of the devil. The same applies to our generation when persecutions arise, when we feel offended by the Lord's church, or fear the disasters of the Last Days. Jesus' warnings encourage us to patiently seek the Spirit for protection—spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Jesus warned followers to look beyond the short-term calamity and rely on the Spirit's gift of faith to “be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16; Psalm 46:10).

John 16:2–4 “whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” Jesus prophesied the apostles—like their master—would be hated, persecuted, and killed. Persecutions come because the enemies of righteousness don't know God. It is misplaced zeal. The apostles and early Jewish Christians were excommunicated and within two decades were forced out of their homes in Jerusalem. (This became a blessing as they were all gone before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans from AD 68–70.) We saw similar persecution in the early history of the restoration. History records the evangelists' and apostles' martyrdoms as follows:

1. **Peter** was crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die in the same way that his Master died;
2. **James** of Zebedee, was beheaded at Jerusalem—the first of the 12 martyred;
3. **Andrew** was whipped severely by seven soldiers in Patras Greece and then tied to an “X” shaped cross with cords to prolong his agony. Supposedly, Andrew continued to preach to his tormentors for two days: “I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it.”
4. **Bartholomew/Nathanael**, was flayed to death by a whip in Armenia;
5. **Thomas** was stabbed with a spear in India;
6. **Matthew / Levi** was martyred by a sword wound in Ethiopia;
7. **Phillip** died by crucifixion;
8. **Simon the Zealot** was killed in Persia;
9. **Judas Thaddaeus** was killed in ancient Syria (though modern Beirut) with club or ax;
10. **Matthias** (the apostle chosen to replace Judas Iscariot), was stoned and then beheaded;
11. **Barnabas** was stoned to death at Salonica;

12. **James** the brother of Jesus, was thrown from the 100' pinnacle on the southeast side of the Temple and then beaten with a fuller's club;
13. **Jude** the brother of Jesus, was killed with arrows;
14. **Paul** was tortured and beheaded in Rome;
15. **Mark** was dragged by horses through the streets of in Alexandria, Egypt until he was dead;
16. **Luke** was hanged after preaching in Greece.

John 16:5–6 “I go my way to him that sent me” Jesus explains again, as a third witness, that He is going to die and return to His Father. In the next breath, even before the disciples verbalize it, He acknowledged their sorrow, and immediately encouraged them with a cause of happiness: the forthcoming promise of the Holy Spirit. Repeatedly, He referred to sorrow followed by the future joy (i.e. John 16:20–22).



Dove of the Holy Spirit, stained glass ca. 1660 by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Photo by Dnlor 01. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

The Holy Ghost as a Shield and Guide in the World

John 16:7 “It is expedient . . . if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you” Apparently, the ministry of Christ had to end before the Comforter could come. Before Jesus was on earth the Spirit functioned on earth, but it appears that at some level at least, the Comforter did not function during Jesus’ ministry. (Was this referring to the lack of the *gift of the Holy Ghost*, or Second Comforter?) I wonder exactly to which aspect of the Spirit the Lord was referring.

The Spirit of truth and the Light of Christ were active (John 4:23; 1 John 5:6; Moroni 7:18–19). Many of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit were in full force (patience, kindness, visions, healings, etc.). Even the Holy Spirit of Promise worked to ratify John the Baptist’s baptisms and other ordinances.⁵² Yet, these evidences of the Holy Spirit are not what Jesus was talking about. Interestingly, when Peter testified of Jesus’ Divinity, the Lord responded, “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my *Father* which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). He gave no credit to the Spirit, but rather to Heavenly Father. When Martha bore an even stronger testimony before Lazarus’ raising, neither the Father nor the Spirit was acknowledged (John 11:27).

The word “Comforter” comes from the Greek, “*paraclete*” (used four times, and once as advocate). Literally, this word means: “an advocate or intercessor summoned to aid.” Jesus cannot become our advocate, nor can the

Spirit become our cleansing agent without His at-one-ment. Perhaps the Spirit could not function at the fullest power without the Lord's death and resurrection. Likewise, after His departure, the "other Comforter," or the glorified presence of Jesus and His indwelling, could not come (see earlier notes on John 14:16–17).

John 16:8–11 “. . . he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” The Comforter's role is outlined in three points and then explained in the next three verses. The Spirit will:

1. Reprove (also means “*convict*” as our conscious) the world of sin for not accepting Jesus;
2. Witness of the righteousness of Jesus, and validity of His death and resurrection;
3. Judge wicked influences as evil, and teach disciples how to judge between good and evil.

By fulfilling these three functions—the Spirit brings women and men to repentance.

John 16:12 “**I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear**” (NIV). This verse is the promise of future revelation. It is also a good reminder that sometimes we do not receive more revelation (both personal and church wide), because we are not prepared. Jesus' earthly mission may have been nearing completion (John 15:15), but He had more to teach after His death when His followers were ready. Disciples are only taught as we have the spiritual aptitude to bear it—just as our challenges are not greater than we can bear.

When Jesus visited the Nephites at their temple in Bountiful, He also told them that they were not ready to hear more. Yet, in that setting, they yearned for more, and He gave them more by extending His visit significantly (see 3 Nephi 17:2–6).

John 16:13 “**He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak**” The Spirit speaks what he hears from God. Jesus wanted to share more with His disciples, but they will be revealed by the Spirit (also taught in John 14:26). The most important questions we can ask the Father deal with whether He exists, whether He is our Savior, and what our place is in His plan here and in the future.

“**He will shew you things to come**” This phrase is interesting in light of John's account of the Samaritan woman at the well as she claims: “when [the Messiah] is come, he will tell us all things” (John 4:25). Now that role was going to be transferred from Christ's charge to the Holy Spirit.

John 16:14 “**He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine**” The Spirit will take over giving directions to the apostles. He glorifies the Son by testifying of Him. In addition, with respect to relaying messages for the Lord, the

Spirit will also receive charge over those who are His disciples, or those who have covenanted to serve Him. Jesus glorified the Father by revealing the Father to humans (John 17:4). In the near future, the Spirit will glorify the Son by witnessing of the Son to humanity. Both the Son and the Spirit work to bring humanity back to the Father.

John 16:15 “All things that the Father hath are mine” The Son understands that He is the heir of the Father (whatever that means in the eternities is yet to be revealed). Restored scripture reconfirms this doctrine that Jesus will inherit all that His Father has. (D&C 93:5–17 describes all power, wisdom, goodness; the fullness of truth and knowledge, and all good attributes.)

Jesus’ Farewell and Promise of a Joyful Reunion

John 16:16–33

Verses 16–33 form a typical Johannine chiastic structure⁵³ (although not a tight chiasmus’ like Alma 36 or Philimon).

- A **16:16** Jesus began and ended by predicting the disciples’ trials and eventual comfort come: “ye shall not see me . . . ye shall see me”
- B **16:17–19** The disciples’ intervening remarks: “said some of His disciples among themselves . . . What is this . . . Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him”
 - C **16:20–23a** Disciples promised blessings: “. . . your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”
 - D **16:23b** Ask the Father in my name: “Ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”
 - D’ **16:24** Ask in prayer, in my name: “Ask and ye shall receive”
 - C’ **16:24b–28** Disciples promised blessings: “that your joy may be full.”
- B’ **16:29–30** The disciples’ intervening remarks: “His disciples said . . . thou knowest all things and needest not that any man should ask thee. . .”
- A’ **16:31–33** Jesus predicts the disciples’ trials and eventual comfort: “ye shall be scattered. . . leave me alone . . . in me ye might have peace.”

John 16:16 “a little while and ye shall see me” The timing turned out to be three days and nights. Elsewhere in scripture “a little while” can mean hundreds of years. The Lord’s timing may seem puzzling, but we can trust that it is an integral part of His miracles.

John 16:20–22 “your sorrow shall be turned into joy” Jesus prophesied the full spectrum of reaction that will accompany His death. To help the disciples understand their extreme emotions in the next few hours, Jesus used the metaphor of childbirth to explain what is going to happen (also used in Isaiah 26:17). Just as the birthing process has water, blood, great pain—even nigh unto death—followed by new life and exquisite joy, so too with Jesus.

John 16:23 “ye shall ask me nothing *but it shall be done unto you*” (JST) The JST adds substantial clarification. For the fourth time this evening, Jesus directed His disciples to use prayer as the vehicle to ask the Father for help.

“ask the Father in my name” This is the central message of this small chiasmus, which means the message on praying in the name of Jesus was the most important message in this section.

John 16:24 “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name” This sounds as if the disciples had not prayed in Jesus’ name before. (We noticed earlier that the Lord’s Prayer did not conclude in the name of Christ.) Elder Bruce R. McConkie observes that, “Perhaps, also, there was a matter of propriety which would keep prayers from being said in Jesus’ name as long as he was present and going ‘from grace to grace’ (D&C 93:13) in working out his own salvation. In any event, prayers in his name were to commence ‘at that day’ (v. 26), meaning after his resurrection.”⁵⁴

John 16:25–28 “I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father” Jesus promised that when the time would be right, things will become clearer, and He will take His disciples to reunite with Heavenly Father. He can do this because of the circle His life. The Son came into the world to redeem it, and to reveal our Father unto us.

John 16:29–32 “ye shall be scattered, . . . and shall leave me alone” As the apostles defended their faith in Jesus’ divinity, Jesus cautioned them, knowing the challenges of their next few days. Again, I do not see Jesus’ prophecy of what lays ahead to be instructions for them to leave Him alone. That type of reasoning denies the human nature of the apostles and the prophetic nature of Jesus’ words. The verse ends by repeating that wonderful relationship between Jesus and His Father—The Lord had never been left alone because He had never done anything to offend His Father.

John 16:33 “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” Every time the scriptures mention the Lord’s command to “be of good cheer,” it comes at a time of great trial. It gives an interesting perspective to the commandment. If we apply Jesus’ counsel during these difficult times, and remember that He has overcome sin and death, then our trials fall into perspective and we can be of good cheer. By Jesus overcoming all problems and satanic influences, Jesus opened the doorway for us to do the same. Ironically, “No one else has understood sin as did the sinless Son of God”⁵⁵

Part of our mortal probation is the need to pass through afflictions; “after much tribulations come the blessings” (D&C 58:3–4). This was reiterated to the elders in this dispensation in D&C 64:2, and 3 Nephi 1:13. When the trials of the world feel overwhelming, we can find peace in knowing that everything is going to turn out for the

best—in fact, better than we can imagine. Victor Ludlow contrasted peace from the Lord’s overcoming the world with peace in the world: “There is a great difference between the kind of peace that Jesus spoke of and the world around us. We live in a wicked world, a world gone crazy with wanton indulgence and crime. Each day the news bears tragic record of wars, natural disasters, terror, and the frustrated efforts of mankind to avert or respond intelligently to the disasters. In spite of all this, Jesus has promised his followers that they may have peace in this world.”⁵⁶

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

How the Spirit Guides Disciples in all Truth

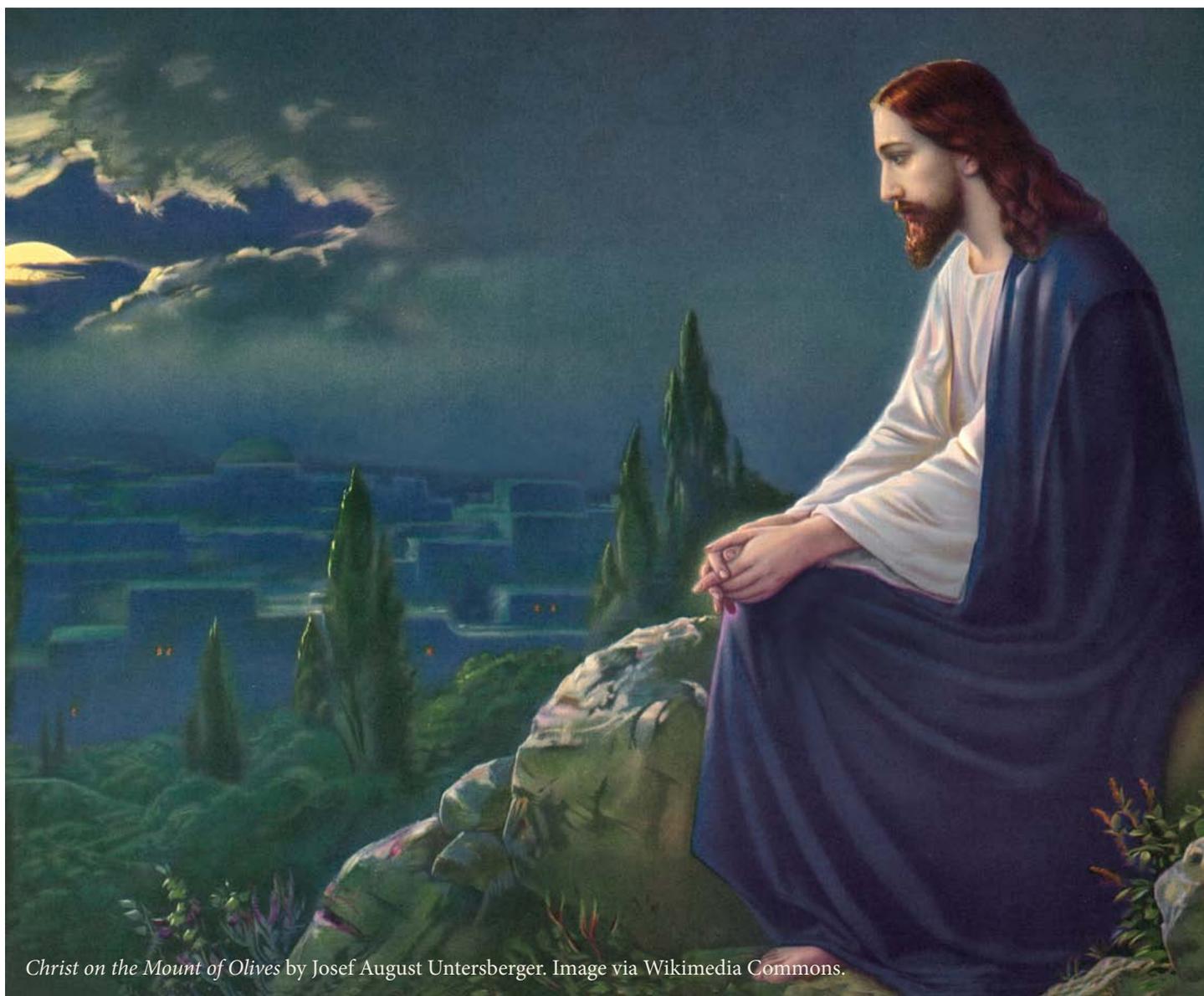
John 17 is the climax of the Lord’s final discourse. It is both a prayer and a farewell. (In content and form, it fits into the farewell genre.) President David O. McKay said it was the greatest prayer ever given. As early as the 5th century, Cyril of Alexandria referred to the prayer as a “high priestly prayer.”⁵⁷ The High Priest prayer dates back to the Law of Moses, where once each year, on the Day of Atonement, the presiding High Priest in ancient Israel entered the Holy of Holies. He performed the ordinance of sacrifice in behalf of the sins of all Israel. The High Priest acted as a mediator to intercede with the Lord on behalf of his people. As he communed with God at the veil, he uttered the name of God ten times (Leviticus 16). The author of Hebrews encouraged us to look for parallels between the Lord’s and the High Priest’s sacrifice (Hebrews 9:12–14; 2:10–11). I would add to look for parallels between the High Priest’s communion and the intercessory prayer.

This chapter unfolds the Godhead and our relationship to them. It also clarifies the separateness of the Father and Son. Interestingly, at the end of Moses’ farewell sermon he addresses God, and then in Deuteronomy 33, Moses blesses the tribes for the future—foreshadowing Jesus’ pattern. Hugh Nibley and J Ruben Clark have thought perhaps this prayer (and John 15–16) were given on the Mount of Olives, after Jesus said, “arise let us go hence” (John 14:31). I even go one step further and wonder, as John mentions nothing about Jesus’ suffering in Gethsemane, could this prayer on becoming “*one*” be the theology underlining the need for the sacrifice? Could it be part of Jesus’ great prayer in Gethsemane? John does not include the Savior suffering in Gethsemane, but instead includes a prayer pleading for the Father’s love and union to be shed on the disciples. It emphasizes the very roots of the *at-one-ment*. Even if this prayer were not part of Jesus’ Gethsemane experience, I see it as the answer to *why Jesus needed to suffer*. It also describes the doctrinal *prelude* of how Christ could become at-one with His disciples and all who come unto Him.

Jesus Prays for Disciples

John 17:1 “Father the hour is come” Jesus turned to His Father in prayer by lifting his eyes to heaven. We see the same in John 11:41, “Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”⁵⁸ The

verbal prayer lasts the whole chapter. Jesus called his “Father” six times in the prayer (vss. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25) and then referred to “thy name” four times (vss. 6, 11, 12, 26). Could this use of ten names parallel the High Priestly prayer mentioned above? Also, the prayer includes “I am” five times (a mini-Pentateuch).⁵⁹ Here Jesus’ desire was to finish the Father’s work. He asked that the Father might glorify Him. Glory for the Son is also glory for His Father and His disciples by bringing to pass the immortality and Eternal Life of man.



Christ on the Mount of Olives by Josef August Unterschberger. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

There is an interesting interrelationship here—each needs the other. The Father is glorified through the Son and the Son is glorified through the Father. We see this same dependency in the First Vision. “The Father needed the Son to accomplish his purposes, and the Son needs and looks to the Father for direction, power, and exaltation. By their acts of mutual service, each fulfilled, and was fulfilled, in the other.”⁶⁰ Likewise, our salvation is God’s joy

and His glory. In the same sense, the success of all children is the joy of their loving parents (Moses 1:39; D&C 88:60). “In like manner worthy Saints will be glorified through their children and their children through their parents.”⁶¹ God’s plan has a lot to do with relationships.



Jesus in Prayer by Alexander Bida, 1874. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 17:2 “power over all flesh that He should give eternal life” The Father appointed Jesus as the mediator over “*all flesh*.” (In Greek, flesh can mean humanity and/or beast.) Jesus acts as judge and will give the reward of Eternal Life to all those whom the Father “*hast given him*.” In this sense, the disciples became Christ’s children; He has spiritually saved them. Jesus gives the formula for exaltation: it is to love and obey God. As we obey Him, we see the wisdom of His plan, which draws us to seek for more light and truth. The journey to know our God begins with obedience: “to obey Him is to know Him. To know Him is to be one with Him and to possess eternal life.”⁶²

John 17:3 “this is life eternal, that they might know thee” Jesus defined Eternal Life as God’s Life, or having an intimate knowledge with the Father and Son. The Greek word, “**know** / *ginosko*” means close relation and is a Jewish idiom used for *conception* or intimate relations. Jews also used *know*, as “true knowledge,” which carried over from one’s thought to one’s conduct. One did not “*know*” something until it was practiced in one’s life. It is also translated as to perceive or understand. The early Gnostics interpreted knowing something or knowledge as intellectual learning, or secret cultic activities. Yet, Jesus explained that knowing God is becoming like Him. Our knowledge must be *of* God, not merely *about* God. We can *know* God only when we live His commandments and become like Him. Knowledge of God is gained as we are sanctified by Him and partake of His divine nature to become spiritually one with Him.

We find similar ideas in the Doctrine & Covenants. The Lord taught the Prophet Joseph that it is through our relationship with Him that we begin the path to live with God the Father in Life Eternal (D&C 78:7; 76:92–96). Joseph repeated this in at least two sermons: 1) “If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses.”⁶³ 2) “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another.”⁶⁴

John 17:4 “I have finished the work thou gavest . . .” Jesus glorified the Father by doing what was asked of Him. Up to this point, He had done everything the Father had asked of Him. Four times John uses the verb “finished/*teleioun*/perfect, consecrated, fulfill.” All four are in conjunction with the work of His Father. One feels as though Jesus had already crossed the threshold from time to eternity and was on the way to His Father. This prayer underlies “why” Jesus offered Himself as the great and last sacrifice. It was all part of the work of the at-one-ment.

John 17:5 “with the glory which I had with thee before the world” Through Jesus’ premortal obedience, He gained so much glory that He became more intelligent (i.e. light and truth, D&C 93:36), than all other of Heavenly Father’s spirits. In God’s kingdom “glory” comes from blessing others, not self-serving motives (Moses 1:39). God shared His glory with Jehovah (who became Jesus on earth). We learn in other books scripture that Jehovah / Jesus became a leader in heaven too (Abraham 3:19, 24; Hebrews 1:9; Mosiah 3:5), including being given the authority and power to create this earth and all things therein (D&C 38:1–3; Hebrews 1:2). Jesus will need that extra premortal endowment of strength to overcome His last mortal assignment.

John 17:6 “I have manifested thy name” Jesus glorified the Father by manifesting His plan and motives to His disciples (John 14:9–11). The name of God was sacred and important to His audience. The scriptures of His day read: “The Lord shall be for a name for an everlasting sign,” and “You shall be called by a new name which the Lord shall give.” The apostles received other ordinances described in Revelation 2:17 that included receiving a “new name.” John the Revelator also wrote of God’s name, “him that overcometh . . . will I write upon him the name of my God” (Revelation 3:12).⁶⁵

“thine they were, and thou gavest them me” In the second half of this verse, we are taught how Jesus becomes our father. In a sense, we are given to Jesus by the Father and then become Jesus Christ’s children as we take on us Christ’s name in this redemptive relationship.

John 17:7–8 “they did believe that thou didst send me” The apostles understood that Jesus’ power came from His Father in Heaven. In the prayer, at the end of His mission, Jesus reported back to His Father. He gave an accounting or stewardship report. Jesus explained that He revealed to the disciples everything God had asked Him to do. Jesus then reports that they have learned what they were supposed to learn.

John 17:9–10 “I pray for them . . . for they are thine” Jesus prayed for His disciples. It is as if He were recommending them to God the Father, reporting that they were ready to receive more or to possibly enter into His presence. Earlier Jesus commanded His disciples to pray for their enemies; but in this prayer it was for “His own” righteous ones. Those who come unto Christ with full intent are received by the Father.

“I pray not for the world” Jesus did not pray for those who rejected him, “the world” at large, but asked God to receive those who were prepared to return to Him. We are asked to come out of the world. John describes the world with the metaphor of Babylon in Revelation 18. Nibley describes it in twentieth century vocabulary: “all the good things that are for sale, the fast transportation, the chariots, the silks and satins and precious things, and the souls of men. You can buy anything. You can have anything in this world for money.”⁶⁶ This describes the world. Some think we can have both. Jesus has already taught you cannot serve two masters.

John 17:11 “Keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me” As Jesus neared the end of His mortality, He asked the Father to take care of His disciples, that they might be “one” or completely unified with Him. Nibley explains this verse with a slightly different twist than the KJV translation, “Test them on the name with which you endowed me that they may be even as we are one. This takes us back to the *kapporeth* [‘seat of atonement,’ the place where atonement and expiation was made] for only the High Priest knew [or was allowed to say] the name that he whispered for admission through the temple veil on the Day of Atonement.”⁶⁷ With this perspective, we see Jesus asking the Father to test His disciples to see if they were ready to have their exaltation sealed so that they “may be one, as we are,” Later in the prayer, Jesus returned to this theme of oneness in verses 21 and 23.

John 17:12 “none of them is lost, but the son of perdition” Jesus referred to Judas Iscariot as a son of perdition. This is how we know the Lord was not instructing him to deny him. This is also why I think that Jesus included him in the circle of those whose feet he washed. Judas denied the Lord after that sacred ordinance. In 3 Nephi 27:32, Jesus again referred to Judas. The betrayal had been prophesied in ancient scripture. Two of the scriptures that it might have been are: Zechariah 11:12, “they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver;” and

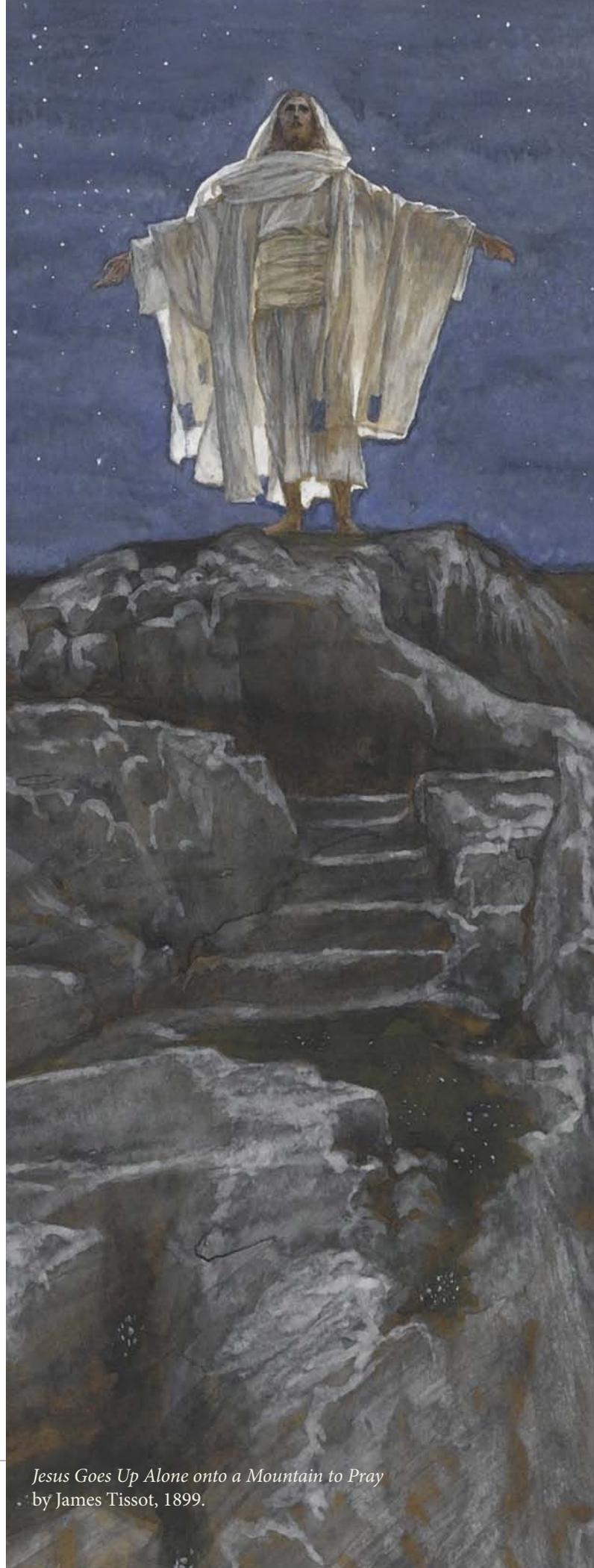
Psalm 41:9, “mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”

John 17:13 “I speak . . . that they might have my joy fulfilled” Jesus asked His Father if the disciples might enjoy real joy—by which I believe He meant the assurance of Eternal Life.

The Disciples and the World

John 17:14 “not of the world” Jesus again contrasted God’s kingdom and the world. Over the past three years, Jesus prepared His apostles (or those “sent”) to go out and preach to the world. But “the world” rejected and hated them *and* their message. Those “of the world” are under Satan’s influence or control. Satan, or the “prince of this world” (John 16:11), hates the Lord and His disciples because they refuse to follow his counterfeits. Disciples motivations and goals are different. They reject short term pleasures, in hopes of a better, holier sphere with the Father.

Two modern prophets, advised disciples on how to identify and stay away from the world: “All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil.” It is more essential now than ever to separate evil from our lives with the growing interference of constant internet noise. Disciples “must do as Abraham did when he pitched his tent and built ‘an altar unto the Lord’ and not do as Lot did when he ‘pitched his tent toward Sodom’ (Genesis 13:12, 8).⁶⁸



Jesus Goes Up Alone onto a Mountain to Pray
by James Tissot, 1899.

John 17:15–16 “I pray . . . that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” The Lord desires to keep His disciples from temptation. Overcoming temptation and worldliness is part of the test of discipleship. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught disciples to ask in prayer, “lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:14). *As a parent, I try to add this to every morning prayer with my children.* Our earth life requires struggling with the devil. Prayer, obedience, covenants, the Spirit, and worthily taking on (or honoring) the name of the Lord can protect us from evil (D&C 20:77; Proverbs 18:20; John 18:5–7).

Jesus’ Sanctification

John 17:17 “sanctified them through thy truth.” Sanctify is to make holy. Earlier in the prayer, Jesus addressed His Father as “*holy*” (John 17:11). Now He asked His Father to make the disciples “*holy / hagios*.” The process of “Sanctification / *hagiasmos* / purification or holiness,” is how the Spirit and the Grace of Christ work in conjunction to cleanse us. This is also consistent with John’s emphasis on Jesus as the truth (John 15:3; 17:6, 14). Reading the list of these word in the topical guide gives a better feel for these words in scripture.

In the OT, God sanctified His people through his commandments or word.⁶⁹ In Exodus 38:41, Moses was told to consecrate and sanctify priests. Through sanctification, we draw closer to God. Helaman 3:35 explains, “. . . they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts. Sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”

John 17:19 “for their sakes I sanctified myself” Jesus prayed on behalf of His apostles as he explained their assignment. It is for us, His disciples that Jesus went through what He did. Jesus will complete His suffering and sanctification in order to bless His disciples. Sanctification comes through consecration. In the OT holy people and holy animals were consecrated for special tasks (Jeremiah 1:5). Jesus is about to complete his sanctification through consecrating His life as the sacrificial victim. (Deuteronomy 15:19; Hebrew 2:10; 9:12–14; 10:10; Alma 34:10–14). After He vicariously covered the sins of the world, then the disciples could be sanctified through Him.

The Oneness of Those Who Believe in Jesus

John 17:20–23

John 17:20–21 “Neither pray I for these alone” Jesus first prayed for the oneness of the Father and the Apostles (17:11). Now he expanded that sphere by asking the Lord to also accept “as one” those whom the apostles will teach. The universality of Jesus’ gift allows future generations of disciples to receive the gospel and the Savior’s sanctification. Through the work of the Spirit and vicarious ordinances, disciples throughout the history of the world may receive the same blessings as Jesus’ apostles (D&C 124, 127, 128; 138). “For just as we come unto the Father through the Son, so do we come unto the Son through the Holy Ghost.”⁷⁰

“they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” In addition to this generous offer of unity, this verse clarifies the earlier confusion about a separate Godhead. When humanity is added to the “oneness,” we realize it refers to unity in heart, blessings, and purpose. We become like Jesus and Heavenly Father when our thoughts and actions return to seek unity with them through repentance and forgiveness.

John 17:23 “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” The ability for us to become “one” only works because our God and His Son are perfect. Like anything we multiply with infinity becomes infinity, so anything joined with a perfect being becomes perfect. There is one more step required with disciples and that is the addition of the Spirit to cleanse one and provide the sanctification required to join God. A literal translation of these verses shows a tighter parallelism:

- A 17:21 That all may be one
- B 17:21 Just as you, Father, in me and I in you
- C 17:21 That they also may be one in us
- D 17:21 Thus the world may believe that you sent me
- E 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me
- E’ 17:22 I have given them
- C’ 17:22 That they may be one
- B’ 17:22–23 Just as we are one, I in them and you in me
- A’ 17:23 That they may be brought to completion as one
- D’ 17:23 Thus the world may come to know that you sent me

Jesus’ Plan for Finding Unity with Believers

John 17:24 “that they may behold my glory, . . . [from] before the foundation of the world” Jesus’ final wish (or will/*thelo*) was that His followers join Him in heaven. Not only does this verse repeat the premortal stature of Christ, it also describes Jesus’ intense desire to build and bless the apostles. Jesus “surrendered His very soul for friend and enemy alike. The one perfectly obedient, perfectly sinless man voluntarily subjected himself to the fullness of the wrath of God. He did this so that the Father might be glorified through the salvation of his children. Little wonder that the Father loved his beloved and chosen Son from all eternity!”⁷¹

John 17:25 “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee” Now “righteous” is added to the title of Father. Even though this title is not found elsewhere in scriptural, “righteous God” is found in Psalms 7:9, “let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.” This is a magnificent closure to this prayer.

John 17:26 “I have declared unto them thy name” This is the fourth time Jesus used “name” in this chapter (and the 15th in the gospel of John with this meaning). Jesus showed great reverence when referring to the “name of the Father.” The use of “*name*” has significance as it parallels the Lord’s petition and the High Priest’s prayer (Hebrews 9:12–14; 2:10–11). The High Priest typified Jesus’ roll as He was about to offer himself as a sacrifice.

“the love you have for me may be in them” (NIV) The greatest feeling of love is to experience Heavenly Father’s love. Jesus wants that for his loyal disciples. He wants them to enjoy everything He will receive from the Father, including the ability to feel the Father’s love. The author, John, elaborates on this theme of love in his epistles. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “Love is the polar star of the gospel.”

Interestingly, the Gospel of John does not include the scene where Jesus suffers in Gethsemane, but instead, includes this pleading intercessory prayer of submission, and where the Lord pleads in behalf of His apostles for union.

Header Image: The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci, ca. 1498. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Below: Olive trees in the traditional garden of Gethsemane. Photo by Ian Scott via Wikimedia Commons.



ENDNOTES

1. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 38. Historians looking at the whole country estimate the population of all Palestine between 500,000 and 600,000. Although Josephus' numbers sound very exaggerated, he claimed that over two million pilgrims celebrated a Passover. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVII.217; *Jewish Wars*, 2.12
2. Kent Brown, *BYU New Testament Commentary: The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 982. The list of women came from combing their names across the Gospels at the cross and tomb.
3. John carefully outlines his calendar starting with, "six days before the Passover," as discussed in John 12:1.
4. During the time of Herod's temple, at sundown after Nisan 15, priests harvested the first barley crop just outside of Jerusalem (which had been designated early by the Sanhedrin). The next day, or "on the day after the Sabbath" a priest took the bundle or sheaf of barley and waved it over the altar (Leviticus 23:11). But which sabbath do they mean? The Passover and first day of Unleavened Bread were both sabbaths as well as the seventh day of each week. Nisan 16th is the usual day, but with the extra Sabbath, perhaps it was the 17th just as the women came to the tomb when the sabbath ended. This offering of fruistfruits began the countdown of days before Pentecost.
5. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology in three volumes* (NYC, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1871.), 1.152, 160. Alexander Campbell, *The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate Between Robert Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland and Alexander Campbell* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishers, 1929), 91–92.
6. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (SLC, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006), 592.
7. Adele, Berlin, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (NYC, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), "cleanliness." The Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud are filled with them including in the "Code of Jewish Law" or *Shulhan Arukh* (*Orach Chaim*, 4:2; 4:18; 92:4–5; 158:1; 181:1; 233:2; etc.). They took their washings very seriously, to the degree that if the handwashing is not done before a meal, excommunication is threatened. A mikvaot immersion bath had seven steps down into a pool of running water (not stagnant water). Wealthy Jews had a mikvah in their homes, others used them in conjunction with their worship at a synagogue and temple. The Essenes used them daily, most only periodically as needed (i.e. after childbirth, contamination, etc.).
8. Raymond Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 564. A commentary on Exodus 21:2, *Midrash Mekilta*, gives the ruling that a master could not require a Jewish slave to wash his feet. I presume this was for male slaves, as a concubine could.
9. Jacob Neusner, *The Economics of the Mishnah* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 27. "One should train for the job all those who are employed on the estate, whether slaves or children or women." Josephus, *Against Apion*. 2.25. Philo, *A Volume of Questions and Solutions to Questions which arise in Genesis*, I.29.
10. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Bartchy, "Servant" 4.420. Tim G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins, 2003), 183. Across the Roman Empire, at different

times, estimates range between six and sixty million people were slaves. Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABD-CLI, 1997), 7.548.

11. Heshey Zelcher, *A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud* (Universal Publishers, 2002), 92. “The middle class citizens often owned eight slaves, the rich from five hundred to a thousand, and an emperor as many as twenty thousand.”
12. Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament* (NYC, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 15–16. Ninety percent of Jews living in Palestine at the time of the New Testament had a vocation that supported farming or fishing villages. We do not have their records though, only from the literate aristocracy. Also see Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ’s Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: GP, 2015), chapter 7–8.
13. Philo of Alexandria, *A Volume of Questions and Solutions to Questions which arise in Genesis*, I.29; “. . . the woman, being in the rank of a servant, is praised for assenting to a life of communion.” David Sedley, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, XXV (Oxford, England: Oxford University, winter 2003), 213.
14. Robert H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2.134. “The Lord said: . . . thy wife shall tremble when she looketh upon thee.” This account comes from the Jewish Pseudepigrapha, written by professional Jewish scribes sometime between 200 BC and 100 AD. Also see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 367–369.
15. Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (NYC, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 313. “The intentional community of the Rabbis was centered on the master-disciple relationship; through this link between teacher and student, the full import of life according to the Torah of Moses could be appreciated and acquired. . . . Students would apprentice with a master, often for many years, learning direct teachings and observing how a rabbinic Jew was to behave. These explicit and inferred rules governed all aspects of human life, from ritual matters and legal rulings to ethical maxims and daily behaviors.”
16. John Bernard, *The International Critical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, part I* (Edinburgh, Great Britain: T and T Clark, 1953, reprint), 41, emphasis added. I think it is significant that is exactly what John the Baptist said he was not worthy to do for Jesus in John 1:27
17. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 564. We have an example of a loved one washing feet as a sign of devotion dating from 100 BC to AD 100. It is an OT apocryphal about Joseph of Egypt’s betrothed wife, Asenath, who offers to wash Joseph’s feet. Joseph protests that a servant girl could do it; but Asenath exclaims devotedly: “Your feet are my feet . . . another shall not wash your feet.”
18. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, reprint 1976, 1949), 1:323–24; also see 2:308–9, 426–31, 374, 475. Joseph performed the ordinance at the school of the prophets and to the priesthood quorums.
19. *Ibid.*, HC, 1:323–24
20. *Ibid.*, 1:323–24.
21. John Parry, in a New Testament class discussion at Cardinal Stritch University in 2002.
22. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 554.
23. *Ibid.*, 576.
24. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Bene-

- dict, 1988), 74.
25. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 582
 26. Kent Jackson, Robert Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures: The Gospels* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 419.
 27. This has been a debated topic by biblical readers since the early Gnostics as mentioned above. Some interpret this conversation as Jesus directing Peter to deny Him (at least by a possible reading of the Greek in the Synoptics). The defense stems from those who think apostles are infallible and can be traced to many factions of Christianity. Even in our faith, some approach Pres. Kimball's talk, "Peter my brother," with this perspective. I disagree. By defending Peter as a sincere trying human, Pres. Kimball's never suggests this Augustinian doctrine. The argument is inconsistent with God, agency, and prophecy.
 28. The Four Gospels rarely include the same accounts. Between Jesus' baptism and Last Supper, there are only four events that all four include (1. The cleansing of the temple 2. Healing the official's son; 3. Feeding 5,000; 4. Triumphal entry).
 29. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 618.
 30. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:365.
 31. A close reading of 3 Nephi 8:5, and 10:18, gives the time between the "first month" and "end of the year."
 32. Alexander L, Baugh, "Parting the Veil: The Visions of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 38.1 (1999): 23–71.
 33. Wilford Woodruff, *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (SLC, UT: Bookcraft, 1969), 288–289.
 34. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4 (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1993), 4.117.
 35. 35 Jesus identifies Himself with seven metaphors using the sacred name: 1) John 6:35, "I am the bread of life;" 2) John 8:12 "I am the light of the world;" 3) John 10:9 "I am the gate;" 4) John 10:11 "I am the Good Shepherd;" 5) John 11:25–26 "I am the resurrection and the life;" 6) John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" 7) John 15:5, "I am the vine." The Gospel of John quotes the Lord using "I am" to identify Himself over twenty times.
 36. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 621, 631.
 37. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks, ed., *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 16–17.
 38. Jackson and Millet, *Studies in Scripture: Gospels*, 5: 413.
 39. *Lectures on Faith*, 5:2; "He is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father."
 40. Andrew Ehat and Lindon Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 4. The quote continues with an idea on those of Abraham that seems to apply to spiritual reactions during the Second Great Awakening. "It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body; for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence."
 41. Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:379–81; Ehat and Cook, *Words*, 13–15.

42. 2 Nephi 1:15; 2:3; 10:2–3; 25:13; 3 Nephi 19:14–36; Mormon 1:15; 8:26; Ether 3:6–16; 9:22; 12:39; D&C 67:10; 76:5–10, 22–25, 114–19; 84:18–27; 88:3–5, 67–69, 75; 93:1; 97:16; 101:23, 38; 103:20; 107:18–20, 49, 53–57; 109:5, 12; 110:1–10; 130:3; also see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., 1:55.
43. Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 273.
44. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:58.
45. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* (SLC, UT: Deseret, 1994), 477–555.
46. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 663.
47. *Ibid.*, 663, 661.
48. Jackson and Millet, *Studies in Scripture: Gospels*, 5:419–420.
49. Gordon B. Hinckley, *General Conference*, “The Essence of True Religion,” October, 1978.
50. Brown, *A Concise Commentary*, 83.
51. Hugh Nibley, *BYU Speeches*, “Leaders and Managers,” August 19, 1993.
52. We also know that Jesus’ apostles baptized, John 4:2, and that Jesus introduced the ordinance of the washing of feet (John 13).
53. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*.
54. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (SLC, UT: Bookcraft, 1975), 1:758.
55. Jackson and Millet, *Studies in Scripture: Gospels*, 5:214.
56. Victor Ludlow, *Companion*, 428.
57. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 747.
58. Also 1 Nephi 8:6, “Lift up your eyes to the heavens;” Moses 1:24, “Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven, being filled with the Holy Ghost;” Psalms 123:1 “Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens”
59. When we count the number of times that Jesus includes the name of “God” and “Father,” we find seven, or a “perfect” set of references (John 16:1, 3, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25).
60. Rodney Turner, “The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten,” in H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr., *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 93.
61. Kent Jackson, and Robert Millet, *Studies in Scripture: The Doctrine and Covenants* (Sandy, UT: Randall, 1984), 1:103.
62. Jackson and Millet, *Studies in Scripture: Gospels*, 5:421.
63. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:5881
64. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:305; also D&C 132:22–24.
65. In addition to God’s sacred name, the John the Revelator, also wrote of a new name that all who overcome will receive (Revelation 2:17), A Catholic interpretation of that verse reads: “the Christian alone knows a new name and has the name of God written on him” (Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 754).
66. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*,
67. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 606.
68. Gordon B. Hinckley, *General Conference*, October 2001; and Elder Quinton L. Cook, “Lessons from the Old Testament:

In the World but Not of the World,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2006, 53–55.

69. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 765.

70. Jackson and Millet, *Studies in Scripture: Gospels*, 5:418.

71. *Ibid.*, 5:419.