



Jasmin Gimenez Rapleye, The Father and the Son.

# JOHN 14–17

## LAST SUPPER SERMON AND INTERCESSORY PRAYER

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John 14–17 takes place during Jesus’s last night of mortality. The section begins with a private gathering in a room either upstairs or in the upper part of Jerusalem and then ends on the Mount of Olives.

### **Farewell Discourse**

*Jesus answers questions about His announced departure at the Last Supper—Jn 14:1–3*  
**Jn 14:1 (NET).** “**Do not let your hearts be distressed . . . believe in God; believe also in me.**” 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 (Jn 13:21). He also felt troubled at the death of Lazarus: “Jesus therefore saw her weeping . . . and was troubled” (Jn 11:33). Yet now, He announced a way for the disciples to believe in Him during times of turmoil. This is a powerful principle to help us overcome doubt, fear, and anxiety.

Frequently throughout the Bible, the heart is linked with the intellect, not with emotion. We read of the heart as the seat of decision-making, inner life, and motivation for all that one did or thought:

- “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov 23:7)
- “The thoughts of his heart” (Ps 33:11)
- “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps 53:1)
- “The meditation of my heart shall be of understanding” (Ps 49:3)
- “Thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12)

The KJV Bible uses *bowels* or *belly* for emotion.<sup>1</sup>

***Jn 14:2. “In my Father’s house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you.”***

The word “mansions” here is from Tyndale’s Early Modern English; the underlying Greek word means “a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode.” In AD 202, the early theologian Irenaeus used “dwelling place” in connection with this verse. Another early church father from the third century, Origen, understood the mansions as stations on the road to God, which sounds like a description of eternal progression, especially since Origen spoke of a premortal life. Other early Christians discussed the mansions as “places (or situations) where the disciples can dwell in peace” with the Father, with no connotation of stopping places.<sup>2</sup>

In Restoration times, the Prophet Joseph Smith purported that “mansions” should be translated as “kingdoms” in an extemporaneous sermon given in Nauvoo:

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.<sup>3</sup>

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

***Jn 14:3 (JST). “And when I go, I will prepare a place for you, and come again.”*** Jesus’s promise to come again was fulfilled during His visitations to the Apostles and disciples after His Resurrection, continuing through to the present time. Additionally, it will apply to the Millennium. The prophecy that Jesus would “receive you unto myself” after He came again extended to disciples beyond the Twelve. Paul wrote, “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 Cor 15:4–6; also Act 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. His preparations for the righteous and wicked all would come after the Lord’s death and Resurrection. We have a description of Jesus’s ministry

to some of the lost tribes of Israel nearly a year after His Resurrection in 3 Ne 11–26.<sup>4</sup> We also believe that Christ instructed His disciples in the vicarious ordinances that allow more to enter into kingdoms of glory and that 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 on ten separate occasions.<sup>5</sup>

We learn in the Restoration that even in heaven the Lord and His servants have much work “to prepare a place.” During one of his glimpses into the spirit world, Wilford Woodruff was surprised and bothered to find the Prophet Joseph Smith in a hurry: “I expected my hurry would be over when I got [to the Spirit world].” 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.”<sup>6</sup>

### *Jesus is the way—Jn 14:4–11*

**Jn 14:4. “the way ye know.”** Many interpretations of the Way have been given. I will share five: First, the Way refers to Jesus Himself—He alone is the way to the Father. Hugh Nibley elaborated on this meaning in a fictitious conversation between Jesus and 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.<sup>7</sup>

Second, during His mortal ministry, Jesus imparted His gospel plan to help disciples navigate the way and follow Him back to the Father's presence (that is, exaltation). Third, John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

Fourth, the Way became a title for the early Church before it was called Christianity. Paul used the term to refer to Jesus's disciples in Act 9:2: “If he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them.”<sup>9</sup>

Fifth, the Way is also mentioned in the biblical account of the Garden of Eden when the way to the tree of life is protected (Gen 3:24). In this regard, Jesus is the way back to the tree of life, or the way back to the Father's presence. That way is outlined in the high priest's path through the Mosaic tabernacle, which 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 symbolizing continual prayer (with the incense) and covenant Israel (with the twelve loaves of bread and the 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.

The menorah illuminated the veil that led to the Holy of Holies. Only on the Day of Atonement could the one reigning high priest, after his ritual purification, pass by the tree of light, commune with God at the

veil, and at last enter into the throne room that symbolized God's presence (Lev 16). The throne was the ark of the covenant, whose lid was known as the mercy seat. "The way of the tree of life" refers to returning to God's presence without sin.

The Way, as outlined in this Mosaic temple rite, symbolizes the path Jesus trod. The altar, the sacrifice, and the veil all represent Jesus, the way back to the tree of life (Heb 9:8–11; 10:20). Only Jesus could open that way again—the veil will be rent at His death, allowing humanity to follow Him into God's presence. Jesus's Atonement is the way it all works.

**Jn 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 it is a difficult channel to navigate (like the Straits of Gibraltar). The Lord revealed, "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; Mt 7:13–14).

**Jn 14:6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life."** Jesus uses the sacred name of God again, paralleling His identification of Himself to Moses on the mountain (Ex 3:14). This is the sixth of seven "I am the . . ." statements found in the Gospel of John.<sup>10</sup> Jesus is the only way back to our Heavenly Father; He is the path and the door. The only way to reach our goal of being with the Father is through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. His example and teachings are the complete path that all must follow. The early Christian fathers "understood that the way leads to both the truth and the life" and that if believers live the truth, they "belong to the truth."<sup>11</sup> When anyone comes to Jesus, they are not really learning truth unless they live it. This verse 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. 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 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.<sup>12</sup>

**Jn 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 and thus reveals Him. This unity has been mentioned already in Jn 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."<sup>13</sup> This verse also correlates knowing and seeing.

**Jn 14:9.** *“he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* This section of verses can be interpreted as either describing Jesus’s unity with the Father in purpose and glory or describing 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), we find more continuity with the first interpretation. When we look at Restoration teachings from Joseph Smith’s First Vision through D&C 130, our understanding of the Godhead is even clearer. In the *Lectures on Faith* (which Joseph Smith did not write but did approve), we learn the Father and the Son are identical physically.<sup>14</sup> Here, Jesus explains that His words and works are not His but His Father’s.

#### *The power of believing in Jesus—Jn 14:12–14*

**Jn 14:12 (NIV).** *“whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these.”* This is an amazing promise. Does this mean that Jesus’s work in heaven will enable mortals to do more? Or perhaps that the influence of 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 in Jesus’s message from believing in God’s word to receiving God’s help, powerfully unifying humans with God.

**Jn 14:14.** *“ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* The Greek behind “ask” here (*aiteo*) is also translated as “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. Jesus repeats this promise twice more during the Last Supper (Jn 15:7; 16:23–24). Although it is specifically given to the disciples gathered in the upper room, I believe that the promise applies to all disciples and that if a humble disciple asks, what is right or best in God’s perspective will be granted them at some time. Elsewhere the promise includes two important qualifications—the thing has to be right or good and asked for 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” (Moro 7:26).

#### *The other Comforter—Jn 14:15–25*

**Jn 14:15.** *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* 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’s new commandment, obedience to the commandments and love go together.

**Jn 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 be experienced only at a given place, at a given time, by a given person. Just before his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith elaborated on what the first Comforter is in an extemporaneous sermon in Nauvoo: “[It] is 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.” Next Joseph moved on to explain the role of the other or second Comforter.

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.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the ideas included in Joseph’s sermon on the other Comforter are also found in 2 Pet 1 and a dozen other scriptures.<sup>16</sup> The Lord restored and clarified this doctrine in D&C 88:3: “I now send upon you *another 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” (emphasis added; see also D&C 132:19–20).

**Jn 14:18.** “*I will not leave you comfortless.*” This comfort can include the coming gift of the Holy Ghost, Jesus’s post-Resurrection visits, and the promise of the second Comforter just discussed. It is another fulfillment of Isa 7:14, which prophesies of Immanuel, or “God with us,” who would come in the flesh and stay with humanity.

**Jn 14:20.** “*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. This verse acts as a prelude to the ideas shared in the Intercessory Prayer in Jn 17 and implies that the indwelling of the Lord (and, in verse 23, of the Father) is different from the presence of the Spirit.

**Jn 14:22.** “*Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot.*” This Apostle is also called Jude in Luke. (We also have another Jude, the brother of the Lord, who is the traditionally held author of the Epistle of Jude.)

**Jn 14:23.** “*we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*” Judas’s question opens the door for Jesus to teach 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 that Jesus uses “we”). This is also described in part as the permanent sealing of the Holy Spirit of Promise (D&C 132:18–19, 26).

### *The Spirit, or first Comforter—Jn 14:26–31*

**Jn 14:26.** “*the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.*” That the Holy Ghost comes 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. Thus the Spirit, not the Apostles, becomes Jesus's successor. "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."<sup>17</sup>

Jesus's gift of the Spirit harks back to John the Baptist's prophecy of the Messiah. When John the Baptist described the Messiah's mission, he described Him as the One who will baptize with the Holy Ghost (Jn 1:33). Jesus was about to fulfill that prophecy.

**Jn 14:26. "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 of and remember their promptings. The Prophet Joseph taught, "No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations."<sup>18</sup> If you feel the Spirit now, you are on the way to receiving revelation.

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

**Jn 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 we really understood God's plan, we would be rejoicing. The glorification of Jesus results in the same for all humankind. (This verse clarifies the separate nature of the Godhead mentioned in Jn 14:8–11).

**Jn 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 to increase our belief when we see their fulfillment. Before we see the Lord's hand, though, we as disciples must walk by faith.

**Jn 14:30–31 (JST). "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."** The next several hours of Jesus's life involved combat with Satan. As we read in Jn 4:34, Jesus's only desire is to do the will of His Father. John continues to emphasize the theme of light and darkness.

*Jesus and the Apostles leave the upper room—Jn 14:31*

**Jn 14:31. "Arise, let us go hence."** This stopping point is not the conclusion of Jesus's discourse; three more chapters come before the Passion. Textual scholars see this as evidence of an editor's drafts. I wonder, though, if the Apostles actually arose and went outside at this point and Jesus's conversation continued all the way to the Mount of Olives. The next verses can give the impression that Jesus was actually looking at plants or vines on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

## *Intimate relationship between Jesus and His followers—Jn 15:1–17*

**Jn 15:1. “I am the true vine.”** This is Jesus’s last “I am” statement that John recorded in his Gospel. Jesus referred to His Father as the gardener and to Himself as the vine, with the disciples as the branches. References to the vine (Greek *ampelos*, Hebrew *gaphen*) are found in sixty-five verses throughout scripture. Jesus used the same symbolism here that we find in many Old Testament stories, including Ps 80:8–6; Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21; and Eze 15:1–19:10.

The vine is also mentioned in the blessing that Jacob gave his son Judah. Jacob prophesied that a righteous ruler would come through Judah’s lineage: “The sceptre 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 grapes” (Gen 49:10–11).

In the Book of Mormon, the best analogy of the vine is in the agricultural masterpiece Jac 5, Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree.<sup>19</sup> The phrase “true vine” is found only twice elsewhere. Both instances occur in the Book of Mormon, and both refer to the Lord:

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? (1 Ne 15:15)

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. (Alma 16:17)

**Jn 15:2 (BSB).** “*every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes to make it even more fruitful.*” The purpose of the vine is to bear fruit. If the branch is correctly nourished and pruned, it can give more fruit than if it isn’t nourished. Symbolically, God’s pruning gives evidence that He knows the branch’s potential. When we feel God’s pruning, we can hope to grow more of His fruit.

**Jn 15:3. “ye are clean through the word.”** We become cleansed through the Word, or *Logos*—which, as we read in Jn 1:1, refers to the Lord—thus this verse invokes the Savior’s Atonement. Words from a text are not what make us clean. But Jesus’s words become a vehicle that move our thoughts and lives to God’s Word, Jesus Christ.

**Jn 15:4. “Abide in me.”** Jesus’s 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 and need the power of Jesus. Jesus emphasizes the link between the vine, the branches, and the fruit. To abide with someone is to live with them—to submit to abiding by house rules, to helping with housework, and so on. Additionally, nourishment only comes from the vine, so disciples must not let go of it. If we are not part of the true vine, our spirits die and we are cast off as dead firewood.



**Jn 15:7.** “*If ye abide in me . . . ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done.*” Jesus mentioned this earlier (see Jn 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 whether we are in tune with the Spirit and whether our request is the Lord’s will.

**Jn 15:8 (NASB).** “*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit.*” God’s glory is magnified when His children are fruitful. This verse is as close as the Bible gets to the teachings in Mose 1:39 (“This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”). When we bear fruit, we demonstrate our discipleship. “Becoming or being a disciple is the same of being or remaining in Jesus.”<sup>20</sup>

**Jn 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 Jn 4:12). This teaches that disciples can feel God’s love more often by loving others unconditionally. John uses the Greek word *agape* here—the same word Paul uses in talking about charity (1 Cor 13). Here, it is used in the present tense or continuous character *agapan*, which gives “the connotation of love made manifest.”<sup>21</sup>

**Jn 15:10.** “*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.*” Obedience and service follow as an expression of our love for God. The second half of this verse changes Jesus’s earlier statement that was in the present tense<sup>22</sup> to the past tense, appropriate for the end of His mission: “I have kept my Father’s commandments.”

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

**Jn 15:13.** “*Greater love . . . a man lay down his life for his friends.*” Jesus repeats the new commandment and then explains His death as a sign of His love (Jn 13:34). Jesus “juxtapos[es] the principles of sacrifice and love.”<sup>23</sup> This powerful foreshadowing of Jesus’s death was repeated by John in his first epistle (1 Jn 4:10). The Greek word translated here as “friends,” *philos*, is also used to describe Lazarus’s relation to the Lord in Jn 11:11.

**Jn 15:14.** “*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 that *all those who obey Him* 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.”<sup>24</sup>

**Jn 15:16.** “*I have . . . ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.*” The Lord gave His Apostles (and possibly all Saints) the blessings or ordinations of His kingdom if they will work to bring forth good fruit. In the Greek Septuagint, the word translated as “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 (Num 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.

**Jn 15:17. “I command you, that ye love.”** This is the seventh time in this sermon (Jn 13–17) that the disciples are commanded to love and the eleventh time that 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’s followers—Jn 15:18–27*

**Jn 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.”<sup>25</sup> 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.

**Jn 15:19. “If ye were of the world, the world would love [you].”** This a message to remember when you feel persecuted. The “world” is self-centered and materialistically based.<sup>26</sup> The devil asks us to disobey God, worry about ourselves more than others, hide, and deceive. He also tries to counterfeit the Lord. When we avoid things of the world and value the things of God, we will serve Him more.

**Jn 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 a focus on loving the Lord more than social acceptance.

**Jn 15:22. “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 His Father. Denying truth is denying God.

**Jn 15:25. “They hated me without a cause.”** Jesus quotes Ps 35:19. Besides scrolls of the Torah (the 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’s birth, the Jews carefully combed through their sacred texts to find verses that prophesied of the coming Messiah and compiled them in a text known as the *Psalms of Solomon*. In their collection, however, no verses are taken from Isaiah’s Suffering Servant passages.<sup>27</sup> They were not looking for a persecuted Messiah.

**Jn 15:26. “the Spirit of truth . . . shall testify of me.”** Jesus returns to the promised Comforter, who will provide comfort to those persecuted for 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.

**Jn 15:27 (NIV).** *“you also must testify.”* With the witness of the Spirit comes the responsibility to testify as well. Act 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. The verse also has broader application because Jesus calls all witnesses to testify.

### *The Spirit's fortification and protection—Jn 16:1–6*

In chapter 16, Jesus continues to prepare the disciples for the persecution that awaits them. He develops His thoughts on His love for them and the world's hatred by elaborating on the Spirit's protection against persecution and sorrow.

**Jn 16:1 (NIV).** *“I have told you so that you will not fall away.”* The WEB renders “fall away” as “stumble,” and the KJV has “be offended.” Jesus explained that He has warned the disciples ahead of time so that their faith will not falter when they are persecuted. Otherwise, persecution can turn to fear, and fear becomes a tool 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's warnings encourage us to patiently seek the Spirit for protection—spiritual, emotional, and physical. 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; Ps 46:10).

**Jn 16:2.** *“whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”* Jesus prophesied that the Apostles, like their Master, would be hated, persecuted, and killed. Persecution comes because the enemies of righteousness don't know God—it is misplaced zeal. The Apostles and early Christian converts were excommunicated from the synagogues and within two decades were forced out of their homes in Jerusalem. This became a blessing because they were all gone before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 68–70. (We saw similar persecution in the early part of the Restoration.) History records the Evangelists' and Apostles' martyrdoms as follows:

- Peter was crucified (upside down because he felt unworthy to die in the same way that his Master died).
- James son of Zebedee was beheaded at Jerusalem and was the first of the Twelve martyred.
- 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.”<sup>28</sup>
- Bartholomew/Nathanael was flayed to death by whip in Armenia.
- Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India.
- Matthew/Levi died by a sword wound in Ethiopia.

- Phillip was crucified.
- Simon the Zealot was killed in Persia.
- Judas Thaddaeus was killed in ancient Syria (modern Beirut) with a club or ax.
- Matthias (the Apostle chosen to replace Judas Iscariot) was stoned and then beheaded.
- Barnabas was stoned to death at Salonica.
- James the brother of Jesus was thrown from a one-hundred-foot pinnacle on the south-east side of the temple and then beaten with a fuller's club.
- Jude the brother of Jesus was killed with arrows.
- Paul was tortured and beheaded in Rome.
- Mark was dragged by horses through the streets of Alexandria, Egypt, until he died.
- Luke was hanged after preaching in Greece.

**Jn 16:5. “I go my way to him that sent me.”** Jesus explained again as a third witness that He was 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 the forthcoming promise of the Holy Spirit. Repeatedly, He referred to sorrow followed by future joy (see Jn 16:20–22).

### *The Holy Spirit as a shield and guide in the world—Jn 16:7–15*

**Jn 16:7. “It is expedient . . . ; for 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 here, but it appears that on some level at least, the Comforter did not function during Jesus's ministry. (Was this referring to the lack of the gift of the Holy Ghost, or second Comforter?) I wonder which aspect of the Spirit the Lord was referring to exactly. The Spirit of Truth and the Light of Christ were active.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit were in full force (patience, kindness, visions, healings). Even the Holy Spirit of Promise worked to ratify John the Baptist's baptisms and other ordinances.<sup>30</sup> Yet, these evidences of the Holy Spirit are not what Jesus was talking about. Interestingly, when Peter testified of Jesus's divinity, the Lord responded, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mt 16:17). He gave credit not to the Spirit but rather to Heavenly Father. When Martha bore an even stronger testimony of Jesus's divinity prior to Lazarus's raising, neither the Father nor the Spirit was acknowledged (Jn 11:27).

The word *comforter* comes from the Greek *paraclete* (used four times and once rendered 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 Jesus's

departure, the other Comforter, or the glorified presence of Jesus and His indwelling, could not come (as discussed in Jn 14:16–17).

**Jn 16:8.** *“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:

- reprove (also means “convict”) the world of sin for not accepting Jesus;
- witness of the righteousness of Jesus and of the validity of His death and Resurrection; and
- judge wicked influences as evil and teach disciples how to judge between good and evil.

By fulfilling these three functions, the Spirit brings us to repentance.

**Jn 16:12 (NIV).** *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.”* 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 Churchwide revelation) because we are not prepared for it. Jesus’s earthly mission was nearing completion (Jn 15:15), but He had more to teach after His death when His followers were ready. We disciples are taught only as we have the spiritual aptitude to bear it. Likewise, 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, which He gave them by extending His visit significantly (see 3 Ne 17:2–6).

**Jn 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 those things would be revealed by the Spirit (compare Jn 14:26). The most important questions we can ask the Father deal with whether He exists, whether Jesus is our Savior, and what our place is in His plan here and in the future.

**Jn 16:13.** *“he will shew you things to come.”* This phrase is interesting in light of John’s account of the Samaritan woman at the well since she claims, “When [the Messiah] is come, he will tell us all things” (Jn 4:25). Now that role was going to be transferred from Christ to the Holy Spirit.

**Jn 16:14.** *“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine.”* The Spirit, who glorifies the Son by testifying of Him, will take over giving directions to the Apostles. In addition, with respect to relaying messages for the Lord, the Spirit will receive charge over those who are the Lord’s disciples, or those who have covenanted to serve Him. Jesus glorified the Father by revealing the Father to humans (Jn 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 humankind back to the Father.

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

## *Jesus's farewell and promise of a joyful reunion—Jn 16:16–33*

Jn 16:16–33 forms a typical Johannine chiasmic structure (although it is not a tight chiasmus' like Alm 36 or Philemon).<sup>31</sup>

- A Predictions of the disciples' trials and eventual comfort: "Ye shall not see me . . . ye shall see me" (16:16)
- B Disciples' intervening remarks: "Said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this . . . ? Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him" (16:17–19)
- C Disciples are promised blessings: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (16:20–23a)
- D Asking: "Ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (16:23b)
- D' Asking in prayer: "Ask, and ye shall receive" (16:24)
- C' Disciples are promised blessings: "Your joy may be full" (16:24b–28)
- B' Disciples' intervening remarks: "His disciples said . . . thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee" (16:29–30)
- A' Predictions of the disciples' trials and eventual comfort: "Ye shall be scattered . . . and shall leave me alone . . . in me ye might have peace" (16:31–33)

**Jn 16:16.** *"a little while, and ye shall see me."* The "little while" 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.

**Jn 16:20.** *"your sorrow shall be turned into joy."* Jesus prophesied the full spectrum of reactions that would 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 (this metaphor is also used in Isa 26:17). The birthing process involves water, blood, and great pain followed by new life and exquisite joy—elements also found in the events of Jesus's Atonement and Resurrection.

**Jn 16:23 (JST).** *"ye shall ask me nothing but it shall be done unto you."* 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.

**Jn 16:23.** *"ask the Father in my name."* This is the central message of the chiasmus, which means that the message on praying in the name of Jesus was the most important message in this section.

**Jn 16:24.** *"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name."* This seemingly implies that the disciples had not prayed in Jesus's name before. (We noticed earlier that the Lord's Prayer did not conclude in the name of Christ.) Elder Bruce R. McConkie observes, "Perhaps, also, there was a matter of propriety

which would keep prayers from being said in Jesus's 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."<sup>32</sup>

***Jn 16:25. "I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father."*** Jesus promised that when the time was right, things would become clearer and He would take His disciples to reunite with Heavenly Father. The Son came into the world to redeem it and to reveal the Father's will.

***Jn 16:32. "ye shall be scattered, . . . and shall leave me alone."*** As the Apostles defended their faith in Jesus's divinity, Jesus cautioned them, knowing the challenges they would face in the next few days. Again, I do not see Jesus's prophecy of what lay ahead to be instructions for the disciples to leave Him alone. That type of reasoning denies the human nature of the Apostles and the prophetic nature of Jesus's words. The verse ends by again explaining 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.

***Jn 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, which gives an interesting perspective to the commandment. If we apply Jesus's counsel during difficult times and remember that He has overcome sin and death, our trials fall into perspective and we can be of good cheer. By overcoming all problems and worldly influences, Jesus opened the way for us to do the same. Ironically, "no one else has understood sin as did the sinless Son of God."<sup>33</sup>

Part of our mortal probation is passing through afflictions, for "after much tribulation come the blessings" (D&C 58:3–4). This was reiterated to the elders in this dispensation in D&C 64:2 and is also taught in 3 Ne 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, it will be better than we can imagine. Daniel 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."<sup>34</sup>

## **Intercessory Prayer: How the Spirit Guides Disciples in All Truth**

Jn 17 is the climax of the Lord's final discourse. It is both a prayer and a farewell, and President David O. McKay said it was the greatest prayer ever given. As early as the fifth century, Cyril of Alexandria referred to the prayer as a high priestly prayer.<sup>35</sup> The high priest prayer originates with the law of Moses, which prescribed that once each year, on the Day of Atonement, the presiding high priest in Israel enter the Holy of Holies. There 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 (Lev 16). The author of Hebrews encouraged us to look for parallels between the Lord's Atonement and the high priest's sacrifice.<sup>36</sup> I would add that we can look for parallels between the high priest's communion and the Intercessory Prayer.

This chapter unfolds the Godhead and our relationship to it. It also clarifies the separateness of the Father and Son. Interestingly, Moses addresses God at the end of his farewell sermon and then later blesses the tribes for the future (see Deu 33). We see the same pattern here. As John mentions nothing about Jesus's suffering in Gethsemane, I wonder if this prayer instead teaches the theology underlining the need for the sacrifice. It explains why Jesus needed to suffer as a vicarious sacrifice for the world in Gethsemane. Wherever the prayer occurred, John includes Jesus's prayer pleading that the Father's love and union may be shed on His disciples, emphasizing the very roots of the At-one-ment. It also describes the doctrinal prelude of how Christ could become one with His disciples and all who come unto Him.

### *Jesus prays for disciples—J n 17:1–13*

**Jn 17:1.** “*Jesus . . . lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father the hour is come.*” Jesus does not bow His head but lifts His eyes to heaven in prayer. We see the same in Jn 11:41: “Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”<sup>37</sup> Jesus's verbal prayer lasts the whole chapter. Jesus said “Father” six times in the prayer and “thy name” four times.<sup>38</sup> Could this use of ten names parallel the high priestly prayer mentioned above? Also, the prayer includes “I am” five times (a mini-Pentateuch).<sup>39</sup> Here Jesus's desire was to finish the Father's work, and Jesus asked that the Father might glorify Him. Glory for the Son is also glory for His Father and His disciples in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of humankind.

An interesting interrelationship between the Father and Son is evident 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.”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, our salvation is God's joy and His glory. In the same sense, the success of children is the joy of loving parents (Mos 1:39; D&C 88:60). “In like manner worthy Saints will be glorified through their children and their children through their parents.”<sup>41</sup> God's plan has a lot to do with relationships.

**Jn 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 refer to humanity and beasts). Jesus acts as judge and will give the reward of eternal life to all those whom the Father has given Him. In this sense, the disciples have become Christ's children; He has spiritually saved them. Jesus gives the formula for exaltation, which is to love and obey God. As we obey Him, we see the wisdom of His plan, and that draws us to seek



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.”<sup>42</sup>

Jesus defined eternal life as God’s life, or having an intimate knowledge of the Father and Son. The Greek word here behind “know,” *ginosko*, means “close relation” and is a Jewish idiom used to refer to conception or intimate relations. Jews also used the word 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. The word 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 develop aspects of His divine nature to become spiritually one with Him.

We find similar ideas in the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord taught the Prophet Joseph that it is through our relationship with Christ that we begin down the path to live with God the Father in life eternal (D&C 76:92–96; 78:7). 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”; (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.”<sup>43</sup>

**Jn 17:4. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me.”** Jesus glorified the Father by doing what was asked of Him. Up to this point, He had done everything the Father had asked. Four times John uses the verb “finished,” *teleioun* (“perfect, consecrated, fulfill”). All four occurrences are used in conjunction with the work of the 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.

**Jn 17:5. “with the glory which I had with thee before the world.”** Through Jesus’s premortal obedience, He gained so much glory that He became more intelligent (that is, He had more light and truth; D&C 93:36) than all Heavenly Father’s other spirits. In God’s kingdom glory comes from blessing others, not from self-serving motives (Mose 1:39). God shared His glory with Jehovah (who became Jesus on earth). We learn in other books of scripture that Jehovah became a leader in heaven, too, and was given the authority and power to create this earth and all things therein.<sup>44</sup> Jesus will need that extra premortal endowment of strength to overcome His last mortal assignment.

**Jn 17:6. “I have manifested thy name.”** Jesus glorified the Father by manifesting His plan and motives to the disciples (Jn 14:9–11). The name of God was sacred and important to Jesus’s audience as the scriptures of His day taught, “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” (Isa 55:13; 62:2 LXX). The Apostles received ordinances described in Rev 2:17 that included receiving a new name. John the Revelator also wrote, “Him that overcometh . . . I will write upon him the name of my God.”<sup>45</sup>

**Jn 17:6. “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 and then become His children as we take on ourselves Christ’s name in this redemptive relationship.

**Jn 17:8. “they have believed that thou didst send me.”** The Apostles understood that Jesus’s power came from His Father in Heaven. Here, at the end of His mission, Jesus reported back to His Father and gave an account or stewardship report. Jesus explained that He revealed to the disciples everything God had asked Him to. Jesus then reported that the disciples had learned what they were supposed to learn.

**Jn 17:9. “I pray for them . . . for they are thine.”** Jesus prayed for His disciples 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 this prayer was for His own righteous ones. Those who come unto Christ with full intent are received by the Father.

**Jn 17:9. “I pray not for the world.”** Jesus did not pray for those who rejected Him but asked God to receive those who were prepared to return to Him or will be in the future. We are asked to come out of the world. John describes the world with the metaphor of Babylon in Rev 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.”<sup>46</sup> Sometimes we think we can have both the things of the world and God’s presence. Jesus has already taught we cannot serve two masters.

**Jn 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 angle than the KJV translation uses: “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.”<sup>47</sup> 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.

**Jn 17:12. “none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.”** Jesus referred to Judas Iscariot. This is how we know the Lord was not instructing him to deny Him, and this is also why I think that Jesus included Judas in the circle of those whose feet He washed. Judas denied the Lord after that sacred ordinance. In 3 Ne 27:32, Jesus again referred to Judas. The betrayal had been prophesied in ancient scripture. Two of the scriptures that might have foretold that event are Zech 11:12, “They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver,” and Ps 41:9, “Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”

**Jn 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—Jn 7:14–16*

**Jn 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. Satan, or the “prince of this world” (Jn 16:11), hates the Lord and His disciples because they refuse to follow his counterfeits and reject short-term pleasures in hopes of inheriting a better, holier sphere with the Father.

Two modern prophets advised disciples 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.”<sup>48</sup> 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’ (Gen. 13:18) and not do as Lot did when he ‘pitched his tent toward Sodom’ (Gen. 13:12).”<sup>49</sup>

**Jn 17:15. “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 pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (Mt 6:13; Lk 11:4). As a parent, I try to add this to every morning prayer with my children. Our earth life requires struggling with the devil, but prayer, obedience, covenants, the Spirit, and worthily taking on (or honoring) the name of the Lord can protect us from evil.<sup>50</sup>

### *Jesus’s sanctification—Jn 17:17–19*

**Jn 17:17. “Sanctify them through thy truth.”** To sanctify is to make holy. Earlier in the prayer, Jesus described His Father as “holy” (Jn 17:11). Now He asked His Father to make the disciples holy. The process of sanctification (*hagiasmos*, “purification or holiness”) is how the Spirit and the grace of Christ work together to cleanse us. This is consistent with John’s emphasis on Jesus as the Truth (Jn 15:3; 17:6, 14).

In the Old Testament, God sanctified His people through His commandments, or His word, and through consecration.<sup>51</sup> In Ex 38:41, Moses was told to consecrate and sanctify priests. At the time, holy people and holy animals were consecrated for special tasks (Jer 1:5). Through sanctification, we draw closer to God. Hel 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, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”

**Jn 17:19. “for their sakes I sanctify 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 is about to complete His sanctification through consecrating His life as the sacrificial victim in order to bless His disciples.<sup>52</sup> After He vicariously covered the sins of the world, the disciples could be sanctified through Him.

*The oneness of those who believe in Jesus—Jn 17:20–23*

**Jn 17:20.** “**Neither pray I for these alone.**” Jesus first prayed for the oneness of the Father and the Apostles (Jn 17:11). Now He expanded that sphere by asking the Lord to also accept “as one” those whom the Apostles would teach. The universality of Jesus’s 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’s Apostles.<sup>53</sup> “For just as we come unto the Father through the Son, so do we come unto the Son through the Holy Ghost.”<sup>54</sup>

**Jn 17:21.** “**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 describing this generous offer of unity, this verse clarifies the earlier confusion about a separate Godhead. When humanity is added to the oneness, we realize that 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.

**Jn 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. Just as anything we multiply with infinity becomes infinity, so too does anything joined with a perfect being become perfect. One more step is required for disciples, and that is the addition of the Spirit to cleanse and provide the sanctification needed to join God. A literal translation of these verses shows a tighter parallelism:

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

*Jesus’s plan for finding unity with believers—Jn 17:24*

**Jn 17:24.** “**that they may behold my glory, which . . . [was from] before the foundation of the world.**” Jesus’s final wish (or “will,” *thelo*) was that His followers join Him in heaven. Not only

does this verse illustrate the premortal stature of Christ, but it also describes Jesus’s intense desire to build up 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!”<sup>55</sup>

**Jn 17:25. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.”** Now “righteous” is added to the title of the Father. Even though this title is not found elsewhere in scripture, “righteous God” is found in Ps 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.” What a magnificent closure to this prayer.

**Jn 17:26. “I have declared unto them thy name.”** This is the fourth time Jesus used “name” in this chapter (and the fifteenth time with this meaning in the Gospel of John). Jesus showed great reverence when referring to the Father. The use of “name” here has significance as it parallels the Lord’s petition and the high priest’s prayer. The high priest typified Jesus, who was about to offer Himself as a sacrifice.

**Jn 17:26 (NIV). “the love you have for me may be in them.”** The greatest feeling of love is experienced in 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. John elaborates on the theme of love in His epistles. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “Love is like the Polar Star. . . . It is the very essence of the gospel.”<sup>56</sup>

We will have to turn to the Synoptic Gospels to find Jesus’s suffering in Gethsemane. Yet, John’s record of Jesus’s pleading Intercessory Prayer of submission to His Father speaks of the union that His suffering can provide.

## Notes

- 1 For example, “bowels of compassion” in 1 Jn 3:17; see also Phil 2:1; Col 3:12; Gen 43:30.
- 2 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 618.
- 3 “History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844],” p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/25>.
- 4 A close reading of 3 Ne 8:5 and 10:18 gives the time between the “first month” and “end of the year.”
- 5 Alexander L. Baugh, “Parting the Veil: The Visions of Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1999): 23–71.
- 6 *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969), 288–289.
- 7 Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 4:117.

8 See Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 1:76, 3:4; Jn 1:23.

9 Act 9:2 NIV; see also Act 18:26; 2 Pet 2:2, 21.

10 Jesus identifies Himself using the sacred name with seven metaphors in John: (1) I am the bread of life” (6:35); (2) “I am the light of the world” (8:12); (3) “I am the gate” (10:9); (4) “I am the good shepherd” (10:11); (5) “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25–26); (6) “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6); (7) “I am the vine” (15:5). The Gospel of John quotes the Lord using “I am” to identify Himself over twenty times.

11 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 621, 631.

12 Hugh W. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 16–17.

13 Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 5 of 8, *The Gospels* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 413.

14 *Lectures on Faith* 5:2: “He is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father.”

15 “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842] [addenda],” pp. 8–9 [addenda], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/543>; with spelling and punctuation modernized. The citation begins: “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.”

16 2 Ne 1:15; 2:3; 10:2–3; 25:13; 3 Ne 19:14–36; Morm 1:15; 8:26; Eth 3:6–16; 9:22; 12:39; D&C 67:10; 76:5–10, 22–25, 114–119; 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 ; and Eph 1:13. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1954–1956), 1:55.

17 Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 273.

18 “History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844],” p. 1755, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/127>.

19 Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 477–555.

20 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 663.

21 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 663, 661.

22 The earlier statement describes how Jesus enjoys His Father’s companionship—“I do always those things that please him.” Jn 8:29.

23 Jackson and Millet, *The Gospels*, 419–420.

24 Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Essence of True Religion,” October 1978 general conference, available online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).

- 25 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 83.
- 26 Hugh Nibley, “Leaders and Managers” (Brigham Young University commencement speech, August 19, 1993), speeches.byu.edu. In a “well-known maxim, ‘you can buy anything in the world for money.’”
- 27 The Suffering Servant passages are found in Isa 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12.
- 28 This quote is cited for hundreds of years across Christianity, but I was unable to find its original source. One early reference is William Cave, *Antiquitates Apostolicae, or the History of the Lives, Acts, and Martyrdoms of the Holy Apostles* (London, England: R. Norton, 1676), 136.
- 29 Jn 4:23; 1 Jn 5:6; Moro 7:18–19.
- 30 We also know that Jesus’s Apostles baptized (Jn 4:2) and that Jesus introduced the ordinance of the washing of feet (Jn 13).
- 31 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 618.
- 32 Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1975), 1:758.
- 33 Jackson and Millet, *The Gospels*, 214.
- 34 Daniel Ludlow, *A Companion to your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1976), 428.
- 35 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 747.
- 36 Heb 2:10–11; 9:12–14; 10:20.
- 37 Compare 2 Ne 8:6, “Lift up your eyes to the heavens”; Mose 1:24, “Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven, being filled with the Holy Ghost”; Ps 123:1 “Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.”
- 38 For the six instances of “Father” in the prayer, see Jn 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25; for the four instances of “thy name,” see Jn 17:6, 11, 12, 26.
- 39 We find seven instances of Jesus saying “God” and “Father,” making a “perfect” set of references (Jn 16:1, 3, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25).
- 40 Rodney Turner, “The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten,” in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 93.
- 41 Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 1 of 8, *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1984), 103.
- 42 Jackson and Millet, *The Gospels*, 421.
- 43 “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 Addenda,” p. 62, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-addenda/62>; “History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844],” p. 1970, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/342>. See also D&C 132:22–24.

44 Heb 1:2, 9; Mosi 3:5; D&C 38:1–3; Abr 3:19, 24.

45 Rev 3:12. In addition to God’s sacred name, John the Revelator also wrote of a new name that all who overcome the world will receive (Rev 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.

46 Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 209.

47 Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 606.

48 Gordon B. Hinckley, “Living in the Fulness of Times,” October 2001 general conference, available online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).

49 Quinton L. Cook, “Lessons from the Old Testament: In the World but Not of the World,” *Ensign*, February 2006, 53–55.

50 Pro 18:20; Jn 18:5–7; D&C 20:77.

51 Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 765.

52 Deu 15:19; Heb 2:10; 9:12–14; 10:10; Alm 34:10–14.

53 See D&C 124; 127; 128; 138.

54 Jackson and Millet, *The Gospels*, 418.

55 Jackson and Millet, *The Gospels*, 419.

56 Gordon B. Hinckley, “Let Love Be the Lodestar of Your Life,” April 1989 general conference, available online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).