

THE GLORIOUS KINGDOM OF GOD (1-4)

Jesus told his disciples some disturbing things in chapter 13. He told them that one of them would betray him. He told them that Peter would disown him. But the most disturbing thing that Jesus said was that he was going away. “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going you cannot come.” (33) He softened this statement in 13:36: “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.” Their hearts were troubled. He was going away. They suspected that he was talking about death. If he left, what would they do and where would they go? Their future suddenly became uncertain. However, their real problem was not the uncertain future; nor was it Jesus’ imminent departure. They had a faith problem. They were overwhelmed by anxiety and fear. Jesus told them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” “Believe in God; believe in me.” Fear and anxiety come from a lack of faith. God loves us. He is sovereign. He has a master plan. He wants us to trust him. Jesus also knows what he is doing. His disciples had trusted him until now. They must continue to trust him. We must trust Jesus even when our world falls apart. We must look away from our selves, away from our problems and anxieties and look at Jesus. We must entrust our lives and our futures to God. Faith is a decision. I must make a decision to trust God. I must not doubt his love. I must make a decision to trust Jesus and obey him.

Jesus told his disciples that his going away had a purpose and had meaning. His going away was for their sakes. He gave them a promise. He was going to his Father’s house to prepare a place for them. He would come back and take them to be with him forever. This is his promise to us as well. Jesus goes through the way of the cross, he rose and ascended to heaven. He prepares a room for each of us in his Father’s house. There is room for everyone. Jesus’ promise to come back and take them (and us) to heaven to be with him is fulfilled in three ways. First, he comes with the Holy Spirit to indwell us and lead us to heaven (14:23).. Second, when we cross the river into eternity, he is with us to bring us to the heavenly kingdom. When Stephan was struck by the stones he looked up and saw Jesus there, ready to welcome him into heaven. And third, Jesus promised to come again in glory with the heavenly angels to bring all his elect people to the Kingdom of Heaven.

JESUS, THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus then said, “You know the way to the place where I am going.” At this, Thomas took exception. He did not know where Jesus was going. He had no sense of spiritual reality. His hope and faith were in the things of this material world, the things he could see. So he said, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Jesus told him where he was going—he was going to the Father. He had told him many times before. “I came from God; I am going to God.” But

the unspiritual disciples did not understand. Jesus did not ask them to understand. He asked them to believe.

Jesus is the way to God. He is the only way. God sent him down from heaven to bring us back to God. He is the Christ. He died on the cross so that our sins might be forgiven. How can sinful people stand before the Holy God? The cross was God's way of solving our sin problem. The way of the cross is the way of forgiveness and the only way to be saved. It is the way to the heavenly kingdom. Later, Peter said, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved." Paul said, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man; the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for us all. Other religions may sound good and reasonable, but the Creator God is the only one who can make a way to himself. And the way that he has made is through Jesus. The rooms in the glorious heavenly kingdom are reserved for those who believe in Jesus and commit their lives and souls to him in obedience.

Jesus is the truth. God is the source and the personification of truth. Truth is always true—it is unchanging. It is true for everyone—it is universal. There is no relativism in truth—it is absolute. The fundamental truth is that God exists and that he created all things by his powerful word. Men who do not want to acknowledge his sovereignty try to suppress the truth by their godlessness and wickedness. The creation makes it plain to all men that there is a Creator. Still, foolish people deny the truth and serve created things rather than the Creator who is praised forever. Jesus promised us that if we continue in his word we are truly his disciples. We will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Jesus said that men love darkness because their deeds are evil. Those who love the truth come to the light so that it may be seen that God is in their lives. Jesus told Pilate that he came to this world to testify to the truth and that all who believe in him are on the side of truth. Because Jesus is the way to the creator God, Jesus is the truth.

Jesus is the life. "In him was life and that life was the light of men." The Creator God is the source of life. God gave Jesus the authority to give life to all whom he will. To know God and to know his Son Jesus is eternal life. To go to God through Jesus the way is to have life. Jesus promised, "whoever hears my words and believes in him who sent me has eternal life. He will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life." Jesus is the source of life. Jesus is the life. When we repent and put our trust in him, our sins are forgiven and his Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts to give us God's life. Eternal life starts now and lasts forever.

So Jesus told his disciples, "If you really knew me you would know my Father as well. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip, like Thomas, had no sense of spiritual reality. He said, "Show us the Father." Even though he had been with Jesus so long he did not know him. Jesus told him plainly, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." This is one of the clearest statements made by Jesus himself regarding his deity. Jesus is God. We cannot grasp spiritual reality, so God sent Jesus born of a woman, in human flesh to show us himself. Jesus is God who entered human history for a short time so that blind and deaf people might see him and believe in him and find through him the way back to the Creator God. The New Testament is the witness of those who saw him and heard his voice and lived with him. The Old

Testament points to him. It points to his one sacrificial life and to his death as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

BELIEVE, PRAY AND DO JESUS' WORK

Jesus then made some astounding promises. He challenges us to believe. His word is enough: "Believe me when I say I am in the Father and the Father is in me." But if more evidence is needed, Jesus invites his disciples and us to look at the works, the miraculous signs. They point clearly to his deity. The evidence is in. But each person must make a decision. Faith is a decision. Jesus promises that if we believe in him we will continue the work he has begun. If we believe in him we will do greater works than he has done. The work that he has done is the work of love and service and healing. It is the work of doing battle with the devil and defeating him.

Jesus promised his disciples that they would do greater works than he did. (If you believe in me) "you will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father, Jesus never left Palestine. But his disciples obeyed him and took his gospel to the ends of the earth. They did a greater work. But there is another reason why Jesus' disciples can do greater works than Jesus. It is because they and we have the gospel. Jesus completed the work of redemption when he died on the cross for the sins of the world, rose to life, ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to those who believed. It is the blood of the cross that cleanses the hearts and consciences of believers. It is the Holy Spirit who changes the inner man. This gospel was put in the hearts and hands of the disciples. Thomas and Philip had not had spiritual eyes. Their inner men were not changed. Nor was Peter changed at this time. But after the cross and resurrection and coming of the Holy Spirit, their inner persons were changed. Their spiritual eyes were opened to see the spiritual world. They could see the Father when they looked at Jesus. They could walk with Jesus the way to the Kingdom of heaven. During his lifetime on earth, Jesus could not change the inner hearts of Philip or Thomas or Peter.. But by going to the Father by the way of the cross, he could do so. This gospel still transforms people, when we believe it and pray. Jesus said, "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.." Jesus tells us to pray, to depend on him and not on ourselves. Belief is expressed in prayer. We do not believe in ourselves or in our own ability. We believe in Jesus. So we must pray. Then, he does it so that all the glory will go to the Father. We must pray in his name. We ask for what Jesus wants, not for things to satisfy our own petty desires. So we who believe in God also believe in Jesus and pray in his name. Jesus alone is the way and the truth and the life. We come to the Father through him.