



“I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

John 13-17

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Adult Religion Class

New Testament, Lesson 19

5 February 2018

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Introduction

After finishing his public ministry in chapter 12, John shifted to his account of the Last Supper, which is lengthier than the other three gospels—and the subject of this entire lesson. Jesus performed the ordinance of washing the feet of his disciples, gave a discourse on the Spirit and the Comforter and how to achieve unity with him and the Father, then offered the great high priestly or intercessory prayer in behalf of his disciples in that day and all who would follow—including us today. With these words and prayer, Jesus concluded his private ministry, having done all he could to prepare the leaders of the church for what was surely the unthinkable for them—his arrest, trial, crucifixion, death, and burial. But he also tried to prepare them for what was after that—resurrection and beyond.

Outline of John

An overall outline for the book of John is as follows, with the section(s) covered in this lesson, in whole or in part, in bold:

- Prologue (1:1-18)
- The Book of Signs—Public Ministry (1:19 – 12:50)
 - Early Disciples (1:19-51)
 - First through Third Signs: Wedding, Nicodemus, Samaria, and Healing (2:1 – 4:54)
 - Fourth through Sixth Signs: At the Feasts (5:1 – 10:42)
 - Seventh Sign: Lazarus and Public Ministry Climax (11:1 – 12:50)
- **The Last Supper—Private Ministry (13:1 – 17:26)**
 - **Washing Feet (13:1-30)**
 - **Farewell Discourse (13:31 – 16:33)**
 - **The Great Intercessory Prayer (17:1-26)**
- Death and Resurrection (18:1 – 21:25)
 - Arrest and Trial (18:1 – 19:16a)
 - Crucifixion and Burial (19:16b-42)
 - Resurrection Appearances (20:1 – 21:25)

Note: In each lesson on the gospels, where there are overlapping or parallel texts, those will be noted in the heading. References in bold are the preferred reading(s) and will be the principal section of analysis, though some unique points in the current gospel will be noted, as well as helpful JST changes.¹

The Last Supper—Private Ministry (John 13:1 – 17:26)

John gave significantly more details about the supper than the other evangelists, though interestingly he does not mention the sacrament. Instead, he focuses on Jesus’ teachings and actions in preparing the Twelve for his departure, providing dramatically more teaching content at this meal than the Synoptics.

¹ Not all JST changes are noted, only those of textual or doctrinal interest. Interested readers are encouraged to see Wayment, *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* or the manuscripts themselves on the Joseph Smith Papers website (josephsmithpapers.org).

Washing Feet (John 13:1-30)

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples – John 13:1-20

13:1 **before the feast of the Passover.** There is an important chronological difference between John's account and the other gospels: In the Synoptics, the Last Supper is the Passover meal on Friday night (our Thursday night), while in John, that meal is held Saturday night (our Friday night) after Jesus' death; the Last Supper in John is just a meal. The difference seems to lie in the importance of the symbolism they each choose to emphasize. In the Synoptics, the Passover meal became the Sacrament, so the symbolism of that meal reflects on Christ's mission and all the events of that night. In John's gospel, the Sacrament is not explicitly mentioned in the meal, and the symbol of the lambs being sacrificed as Jesus is dying is central to his message, with Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:29, 36).

The divergence is historically interesting but doesn't impact the key messages of all four books. As one commentator put, "The discrepancy regarding the type of meal Jesus celebrated with his disciples does not overshadow the emphasis that the gospels place on describing a private and intimate meal on the eve of Jesus' death, where Jesus predicted his betrayal and where he taught his disciples."²

13:1 **having loved his own.** Following a consistent theme in John, Jesus' "own" were the righteous given him by the Father. In this case, he is referring to the Twelve and the other close disciples with him this evening. In their case, Jesus "loved them unto the end."

13:2 **supper being ended.** The Greek *deipnon* here can mean a dinner taken at evening, or something started earlier in the afternoon. Perhaps the disciples came in the afternoon to the house and had something to eat while the larger meal was being prepared. Thus, Jesus washed the disciples' feet at the beginning of the larger meal.

13:2 **the devil having now put into the heart of Judas.** The devil did not possess Judas' heart, in a physical sense, but this phrase expresses that this was the moment when Judas began to move to betray his master.

13:3 **Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things.** With a perfect knowledge that he had already triumphed because of his relationship with God, Jesus moved ahead with this final teaching experience to prepare them for his departure from mortality.

13:4 **laid aside his garments.** Jesus removed his coat and tunic, leaving himself dressed in probably just a loincloth or other underclothing, as a slave would do.

13:4 **took a towel, and girded himself.** The word here, *lention*, occurs only here in the NT. It comes from the Latin word *linteum*, which refers to a long towel that slaves would attach to their shoulders then wrap about their bodies, forming an apron of sorts, leaving enough on the end to dry off the feet of those they were serving. Jesus is completely playing the part of a slave—in fact, a Gentile slave, since many Jews considered the washing of feet too demeaning for even Jewish slaves.

13:5 **poureth water in a basin.** The custom was to fill one container with water and pour it over the feet or hands into another container, then dry them with the towel.

13:5 **wash the disciples' feet.** Dining customs were that people reclined on their left arms, facing the low table at an angle, their feet pointing away. This made it easy for servants to go along the outside of the group and wash everyone's feet.

13:6 **Then cometh he to Simon Peter.** A later incident in this chapter indicates that Peter was not sitting near Jesus (vv. 23-25). If Jesus started with those nearest him, he had likely done several people before getting to Peter.

13:8 **If I wash thee not, thou hast not part with me.** This term translated "part" (Greek *meros*) refers to an inheritance. By comparison, the prodigal son asked his father for his *meros* (translated "portion" in Luke 15:12).

² Thomas Wayment, private correspondence.

Jesus told Peter that if he didn't let him wash his feet, Peter would have no inheritance in Jesus' kingdom, hence Peter's strong reaction in the next verse.

13:9 **not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.** Peter did not want to be excluded from Jesus' inheritance, so he exuberantly requested that Jesus wash everything.

13:10 **He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.** Speaking not just to Peter now, but to the whole room, two things are worth noting. First, it was customary among Romans to bathe before dinner, then when they arrived at dinner to only have their feet washed, since that was really all that got dirty on the way to dinner. Jesus may be alluding to that practice. However, the second custom was that Jews in Jesus' day also used the same word for wash, *louō*, for the ceremonial cleansing they did by immersing themselves in the *miqva'ot* or ritual bath. Such ritual immersion was similar to the ordinance of baptism practiced by Christians later. Therefore a potential translation could be, 'He that is baptized only needs to wash his feet, because he is already clean.' In other words, 'You have already had the ordinance of baptism which cleanses you from sin; now you can receive this ordinance which symbolizes putting off the things of the world.' With their feet washed and the world laid aside, the disciples were ready to be taught the greater truths Jesus reveals in John 14-17.

13:10 **and ye are clean, but not all.** This comment referred, of course, to Judas, whose feet Jesus had also washed. Jesus taught that his followers should love their enemies (Matthew 5:44). Here he gave a living example of that. Judas was offered the same potential blessings as the other faithful apostles but rejected them. Jesus already knew of Judas' coming betrayal (v. 11) but offered the blessings to him just the same.

13:12 **taken his garments, and was set down again.** Having played the part of their slave, Jesus now took back the role of teacher by putting back on his normal clothing and sitting down (or in this case, reclining) to instruct.

13:13 **Ye call me Master and Lord.** As is typical, "Master" in the KJV is better translated teacher.

13:14 **ye also ought to wash one another's feet.** He is probably not being literal, though as the washing of feet became an ordinance, that would be true. But in this moment, the more likely teaching was that he was advocating humility one towards the other; they should act as though they were each other's slaves.

13:16 **the servant is not greater than his lord.** Or, "slave is not greater than his master" (NASB).

13:16 **neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.** This could also be translated, 'Neither is an apostle greater than he that sends him out.' This is a play on words in Greek, since *apostolos* means 'sent one.' They were Jesus' apostles, and Jesus was the Father's apostle, all sent by someone greater.

13:17 **happy are ye if ye do them.** "Happy" is *makarios*, the same word used in Matthew 5:3-11 in the Beatitudes, translated there "Blessed." It means both of those things, plus fortunate or privileged.

13:18 **that the scripture may be fulfilled.** The scripture Jesus quoted here is Psalm 41:9, which was taken to be David's words about Ahithophel's conspiracy against him. Ironically, and foreshadowing Judas' eventual end, Ahithophel hung himself when his counsel was not followed among his fellow conspirators (see 2 Samuel 15-17).

13:19 **ye may believe that I am he.** Notice that "he" is in italics in the KJV; it's not in the Greek. Once again, Jesus said, "That you may have faith that I AM." He is Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, the Messiah come to earth to save mankind. He is telling them all these things that when he accomplishes his atonement, they will know that. And indeed, the JST makes this clear, making the identification perfect: "ye may believe that I am **the Christ**" (or, 'I AM, the Christ').

13:20 **receiveth him that sent me.** Jesus drew a line from those who embraced the message he gave to the disciples straight back to the Father, who had sent Jesus.

[One will betray – John 13:21-30](#)

13:21 **one of you shall betray me.** The previous more veiled references to Judas' act is now plainly announced, which triggers a wave of discussion about the identity of the traitor (v. 22).

13:23 **leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples.** As they ate together, leaning on their left arms with their feet away from the table, John would have been on Jesus' right hand with his back to Jesus. To speak to him, John would have leaned back towards Jesus' chest, and then could have spoken confidentially and quietly to him with Peter's question (v. 24).

13:24 **Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him.** As the guest of honor, Jesus would probably have been in the center of the U-shaped table at which they reclined. John was immediately to his right. Interestingly, Peter was placed (or had placed himself) apparently at the far end of the table, requiring him to get John's attention to ask Jesus who the betrayer was.

13:26 **I shall give a sop.** A fragment or morsel of bread.

13:26 **he gave it to Judas Iscariot.** John was on Jesus' right. The fact that Jesus could so easily give the piece of bread to Judas shows that Judas was likely next to him on the other side, seated in a position of honor. Why was he there? Bruce McConkie says the following:

"It is interesting, based on the scriptural allusions and inferences, to place Jesus and at least three of the Twelve in the positions they may have occupied at the table. As the Twelve began to take selected positions at the table, a contention arose, evidently over precedence of seating (Luke 22:24). By instinct we feel Judas – who was out of harmony with his brethren – was at the root of the trouble. Among the Pharisees this matter of rank and precedence, of what place each person occupied at the table, was a matter of great concern; and Judas – influenced by the prince of this world, who is Lucifer – was more of a Pharisee than a Christian. He, by training and inclination, would follow the Pharisaic custom and seek for himself the seat of honor.

"With whom would he contend? Obviously with Peter, who was in fact the chief apostle and who knew his place was at the Lord's side in the position of honor and precedence. When Jesus rebuked the contention, a very natural thing would happen: impetuous Peter would go and take the lowest seat, while spiritually hardened Judas, immune to feelings of conscience and decency, would maintain his claim and take the seat of honor at the side of Jesus. This suggests the position of two of the Twelve.

"As to the Beloved John, he leaned on the Master's bosom, which could only be done if he were on Jesus' right side. It was the custom for the chief personage at a feast to have someone on either side. Thus, starting on one side of the table, we would have John, then Jesus, and then Judas; the others would place themselves where they chose, but Peter would go across from John at the foot of the table. Thus when Christ told John the sign by which the traitor would be known, none of the others would hear him. Thus Jesus, as part of the Paschal ceremony, could give the sop first to Judas, who sat in the seat of honor at his left hand. Thus when Judas asked if his treachery was known, and received an affirmative answer, none of the others knew what was involved. And thus Peter, having placed himself at the foot, would have to beckon to John to ask who it was who should betray the Lord (John 13:23-27)" (*The Mortal Messiah*, 4:31-32).

13:27 **after the sop, Satan entered into him.** Reflecting back on Satan entering Judas' heart (v. 2), now the narrator recorded that Judas was fully consumed by Satan's evil designs against Jesus.

13:29 **Judas had the bag.** The others didn't know why Judas left (v. 28). Even if they heard Jesus' words, which perhaps not all of them did, Judas' leaving didn't surprise them. Perhaps they thought that as the keeper of their funds he was either going to get something for the meal or make a donation to the poor, a common activity at Passover time.

13:30 **it was night.** A familiar theme in John. Evil—including Judas here—works in the dark. Jesus, by contrast, is the light. Now that evil has left, light will pour forth from Jesus to his disciples in the form of marvelous teachings.

Farewell Discourse (John 13:31-16:33)

Jesus gave a speech over the next three chapters full of phrases which are beloved and with which most Christians are quite familiar. But to see it as only a one-way sermon is to miss some key points. Much of what he said was by way of dialogue between him and his disciples. In one case, the disciples didn't even vocalize their question, but

Jesus knew their thoughts and responded to them anyway. His major emphasis was to lead the disciples to the Father and make them all one in purpose and direction.

The questions and comments from the disciples are summarized below, along with the response:

Simon Peter: “Lord, whither goest thou? . . . Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?” (13:36-37)

“The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice” (13:38)

Thomas: “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (14:5)

“I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6)

Philip: “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (14:8)

“he shall give you another Comforter” (14:16)

Judas Thaddeaus Labbeaus: “Lord, how is it that though wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (14:22)

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (14:27)

Some disciples: “What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?” (16:17-19)

“Ask, and ye shall receive” (16:24)

Some disciples: “Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb” (16:29)

“Do ye now believe?” (16:31)

[Jesus’ new commandment – John 13:31-35](#)

13:31 **When he was gone out.** Though the location doesn’t figure prominently in the story, the text notes that Jesus and group left the room of the meal and were on their way to Gethsemane (18:1). This means that they were walking through a crowded Jerusalem, passing homes and finally the temple before heading down the slope and across the valley to the Mount of Olives. See also 14:31.

13:31 **Now is the Son of man glorified.** Feeling the approbation of the Father, Jesus declared that he was “glorified” (Greek *doxazō*), which also has the meaning of praised, celebrated, honored, or clothed in splendor.

13:33 **Whither I go ye cannot come.** As he had told the Jews (8:21-22), now he told his disciples the same: he was about to go somewhere that they could not go, even if they sought for him.

13:34 **A new commandment I give unto you.** After somewhat obliquely reminding them of his coming death, Jesus gave them “a new commandment.” What made it new? Perhaps they thought of Leviticus 19:18, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” but the way Jesus’ worded it is not found in their scriptures. The difference is that Jesus commands them to love each other as *he* loves them. It also goes with the new covenant of the sacrament he had just given them, which represented the love he had for them and all mankind. He loved them by giving up everything for them, by sacrificing his very life for them—and for us. It is only by our willingness and commitment to have this love that people will know that we are Jesus’ disciples.

13:34 **love one another.** It is not enough to love those that love you. Jesus’ sacrifice is available equally to those who believe and love him and those who hate and persecute him. If we only spend our time serving those of our own religion, are we being willing disciples of Jesus? If we are not reaching out beyond our congregations, our wards and stakes, to a broader community in desperate need of moral standards and a firm stand on right and wrong, are we keeping his new commandment?

[Peter’s denial foretold – John 13:36-38 \(Matt 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31; Luke 22:31-34\)](#)

See Matthew, with a note below on John.

13:37 **why cannot I follow thee now?** In John, Peter was reacting to Jesus’ declaration that they could not follow him, declaring that he would even lay his life down (showing that he understood at some level that Jesus’ use of that phrase alluded to his death). Jesus challenged Peter’s assertion by prophesying that he would deny him that very night.

I am the way – John 14:1-14

14:1 **Let not your heart be troubled.** To be “troubled” is to feel agitation, inner commotion, anxiousness, or restlessness. Jesus offers the opposite of that in this discourse: peace from the Spirit.

14:2 **In my Father’s house are many mansions.** “Mansions” is *monē* in Greek, and is only used in this verse and verse 23 (where it’s translated “abode”) in the entire New Testament. *Monē* is better translated ‘rooms’ in Greek, but the sense of this passage is more like ‘In my Father’s housing compound are many family homes.’ Even within cities, families tended to build their homes clustered and walled together, sharing a courtyard and a common working and cooking area. Jesus is saying that the church is all one family, supporting each other and working together, protected by the Father who builds a wall around them to keep them safe from the world. The metaphor works for both the future (he is going to prepare a place) and the present (he is leaving them but not alone).

The other sense of *monē* is ‘waystation’ or ‘stopping place,’ implying a place to stay while traveling on a long trip. Salvation is a journey with many stops along the way. This works in nicely with the next verses, ending with Jesus declaring himself “the way.”

In a talk he gave, Joseph Smith paraphrased this verse: “In my Father’s kingdom are many kingdoms,” referring to the state of the righteous after the resurrection.³ Whether destination or journey, John is clearly teaching us not only how to be *with* Jesus, but how to be *like* him. Only then can we enter the Father’s house. Compare D&C 98:18.

14:3 **where I am, there ye may be also.** Returning to the earlier point of him going somewhere they cannot go (13:33), now Jesus taught because he was going to prepare a place for them in home of his Father, after he returns again to them, they’ll be able to go with him.

14:4 **the way ye know.** He had taught them for three years that salvation was through him, but as he declared it symbolically now, they didn’t seem to understand.

14:5 **we know not whither thou goest.** Thomas asked how they could go with Jesus since they didn’t know where it was. In response, Jesus gave one of the most famous statements in John in the next verse.

14:6 **the way, the truth, and the life.** “Way” is literally a road to be traveled, but metaphorically a manner of thinking and feeling. Later in Acts the Church will have the nickname “The Way” from this statement. This is the first time Jesus used this name for himself; truth and life he has used before (John 8:32, 36; 11:25).

14:7 **ye should have known my Father.** Jesus stated that if they knew him, they would also know the Father. Philip suggested a vision of the Father would be sufficient (v. 8).

14:9 **Have I been so long with you.** Jesus taught that having seen Jesus’ works (v. 11) and heard his words (v. 10), the disciples had also seen the Father because Jesus only did the works of the Father.

14:10 **Believest thou not.** Jesus had condemned the Jewish leaders for not believing his works (10:38). Here he speaks strongly against his own disciples for a similar reason.

14:12 **greater works than these shall he do.** The disciples were surely amazed when Jesus told them they would not only do works equal to his own but greater works than they had seen him do. But truly no one can do greater miracles than Jesus. So what was the greater work referred to? Surely the number of believers that they would reach were the “greater works” to which Jesus referred, which quickly grew into the thousands across much of the Roman Empire, something Jesus did not do in the short time he was with them. That task was left for them, and they brought people to Jesus in great numbers.

The *Lectures on Faith* comment that the “greater works” applied to the works the disciples would do in eternity, long after this life is over (Lecture Seventh, v. 12).

³ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 366.

14:13 **ask in my name.** To ask in the name of Jesus is as if the Son asked it of the Father himself. We pray in Jesus' name so that he, our Advocate with the Father, will represent and support our request before the throne of God.

14:14 **ask any thing in my name.** The Greek reads 'If you ask me in my name.' This doesn't mean we should pray to Jesus, but because he does the will of the Father, asking him is the same as asking the Father and asking in his name allows Jesus to act in our behalf (v. 13).

The Comforter – John 14:15-31

14:15 **If ye love me.** Verses 15-16 form one thought, though because of the verse division we break them up. 'If you love me, keep my commandments and I will pray to the Father that he will give you another Comforter...' We get the Holy Ghost because we love Jesus and keep his commandments.

14:15 **keep my commandments.** "Keep my commandments" and "love one another" are two strong themes in these chapters. Sometimes the wording varies slightly, but Jesus came back to these concepts multiple times.

14:16 **another Comforter.** Greek *paracletos*, meaning helper, advocate, intercessor, aide, assistant. Many Christians use this term and talk about the "Paraclete," meaning the Holy Ghost; the term is only found in John. In other scriptures (and in other verses in John), the third person of the Godhead is called *pneumatos hagiou* (Holy Spirit) or versions of that phrase. Jesus refers to him here as "another *paracletos*," meaning they have one already, which can only refer to himself. He is their advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1, which uses *paracletos*, applied to Jesus; D&C 29:5; 45:3; 88:3; and 110:4), and always will be, but he is going to leave the disciples' presence, so in his place he will send another helper, advocate, and strengthener—the Holy Spirit.

Starting in these verses and spanning chapters 14-16, Jesus outlined five roles of the Spirit (more detail below):

The Spirit's role	John reference
1. Helper/advocate	14:15-17
2. Teacher/interpreter	14:26
3. Testifier/witness	15:26-27
4. Reprover/prosecutor	16:7-8
5. Guide/revealer	16:13-15

14:17 **the Spirit of truth.** It's unclear whether this phrase further defines the Comforter or if it was just an admonition to see truth.

14:18 **I will not leave your comfortless.** Or, "I will not leave you as orphans" (NASB, NIV, ESV). Given the context of the previous verses, Tyndale translated *orphanos* as "comfortlesse" in his early NT. But the word means a child without a parent. Jesus message was that though he was leaving them, he would not abandon them like orphans.

14:19 **because I live, ye shall live also.** No one was resurrected before Jesus; after him everyone has that blessing.

14:20 **At that day ye shall know.** In the day of the Jesus' resurrection, they would have a certain knowledge of the things he was teaching them this night.

14:21 **I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.** Jesus promised that those who love him will one day see him. See v. 23.

14:22 **Judas . . . not Iscariot.** There were two apostles named Judas, the Greek version of Judah, which means 'Jehovah leads.' This Judas is also called "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus" (Matthew 10:3). Jerome nicknamed him *Trinomious* because he was the man with three names. This is the only encounter we have with this Judas in the New Testament, other than his name in a list, which is true of several characters in John.

14:23 **If a man love me, he will keep my words.** A constant theme in John, the Savior taught that obedience is critical in showing our love to him. John did not believe in 'saved by grace' with no other responsibility on the part

of the disciple (nor do the other gospel writers or Paul, for that matter). It is a full commitment, requiring our complete love and submission to God, such that we strive to emulate Jesus who perfectly emulates the Father.

14:23 **make our abode with him.** “Abode” is the same word translated “mansions” in verse 2. Joseph Smith taught that this is a reference to the Second Comforter, the personal presence of Jesus and even the Father from time to time, “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.”⁴ Compare D&C 130:3.

14:26 **bring all things to your remembrance.** *The second role of the Spirit—teacher/interpreter.* Two things are interesting here. First, many times we see in the gospels that the disciples did not understand Jesus’ words while he was still alive. Now they were told that the Spirit would help them remember and understand these words. Secondly, many scholars question the accuracy of gospel statements of what Jesus said and did. How could something written many years later be an actual quote or an accurate recording of an event?

This verse speaks directly to that attitude: they wrote by the power of the Holy Ghost, so they could remember “all things” as perfectly as God desired. Joseph Smith knew this experience of writing by the power of the Holy Ghost on many occasions also and battled the same kind of secular challenges to revelation. Those who would relegate Jesus to an interesting historical figure certainly don’t work by the power of the Holy Ghost themselves, for they do not allow the Spirit to “teach [them] all things.”

14:27 **Peace I leave with you, my peace.** *Shalom* was a standard greeting and farewell in Jesus’ day, but Jesus’ peace was different. The peace of the world is a lack of war. Jesus’ peace replaces agitation with calmness; it dissolves fear and timidity; it comes to those who keep his words and experience his love. Paul said that the first three fruits of the Spirit are “love, joy, and peace” (Galatians 5:22). Jesus called those same things out here (peace), in 15:10 (love), and in 15:11 (joy).

14:27 **Let not your heart be troubled.** An *inclusio* (link) to 14:1. It is because of Jesus’ peace that we do not have to be troubled.

14:28 **If ye loved me, ye would rejoice.** The disciples had been sorrowing over his words; he was teaching them of his death and his departure from them. Now he said that if they loved him and fully understood his heart, they would rejoice with him because what was going to happen was wonderful and the will of the Father. It was the Atonement, which would bring about God’s victory and the defeat of Satan.

14:28 **my Father is greater than I.** Several times, Jesus said he and the Father were one, but here he made it clear that he was not equal to the Father. Jesus did the will of the Father, was subservient to Him—another consistent theme in John. Taken as a whole, John’s gospel is a marvelous proof-text for the separateness of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and agrees marvelously with D&C 130:22, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”

14:29 **I have told you before it come to pass.** By being clear with them about what was about to happen, Jesus knew that when it happened, they would have their faith augmented.

14:30 **the prince of this world.** This was Satan (compare John 12:31; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4). The JST changes this to “the prince of *darkness*,” enhancing John’s use of contrasting light and darkness.

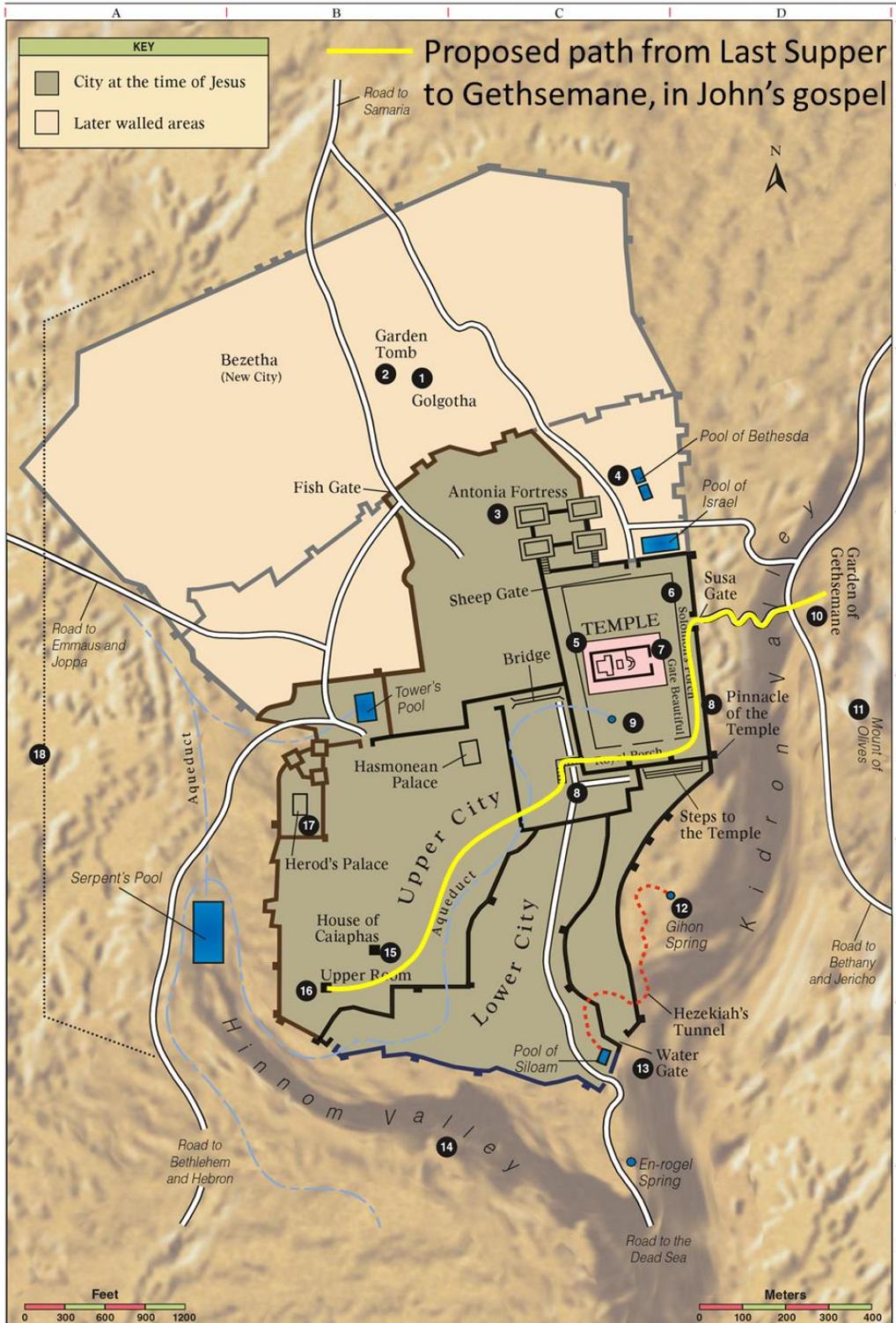
14:30 **hath nothing in me.** This phrase means Satan had no power, influence, or authority over Jesus. What was about to happen was not Satan’s victory (as it may have appeared in the short term) but God’s commandment (v. 31). In the JST, Jesus’ statement also became a warning to the disciples remaining behind: “for the prince of **darkness, who is** of this world, cometh, **but hath no power over me, but he hath power over you.**”

14:31 **Arise, let us go hence.** He said this, yet he will talk and pray for three more chapters before crossing the Kidron valley and arriving in the garden (see John 18:1). Some believe this phrase is simply in the wrong place and

⁴ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 150-151.

belongs at the end of chapter 17. But perhaps these last three chapters were given while walking through the city and up the valley. In fact, I believe they stopped along the way in the temple courtyard and that's where Jesus gave the great prayer in chapter 17. Regardless of the location, the next three chapters shift in emphasis, moving from a warning about Jesus' coming sufferings to a spiritual preparation for the disciples.

12. Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus



Love one another – John 15:1-17

15:1 **true vine**. In the scriptures, Israel is often the vine (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:7; Jeremiah 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; Hosea 10:1; 2 Nephi 15:7; Jacob 5:3, to name a few). Here Jesus was the “true vine,” with the Father acting as the gardener. He who began his ministry by turning water into wine and who just declared wine as the symbol of his triumph over death and sin now uses the vine as a symbol for himself.

15:2 **he taketh away . . . he purgeth it**. There is a play on words in the Greek in vv. 2-3. In verse 2, “taketh away” is *airo*, which also means lift up, remove, set aside. “Purgeth” is *kathairo*, which means to prune but also to make clean. In verse 3, he said they were “clean” which is *katharos*, the adjective form of the verb *kathairo*, making its meaning ‘purged clean.’ The disciples who bear fruit (all but Judas?) are declared clean by the Father through the word of the Son. Compare John 13:10.

15:4 **Abide in me, and I in you**. “Abide” is to stay or tarry, with the sense of permanence. Jesus invited the disciples to be with him forever, so that they can eternally bear fruit.

15:5 **without me ye can do nothing**. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit or even survive away from the vine, so the disciples could not enjoy the fruits of the Spirit or even keep the commandments if they were not united with Jesus. Without him they could do nothing; with him, they can flourish and prosper.

15:6 **men gather them, and cast them into the fire**. Grape vines are not good for much if they’re not growing grapes. Once they’re pruned, most of the time they are burned. So those branches/disciples who do not bear the fruit of the gospel are good for nothing but to be cast into the fire at the second coming.

15:7 **ask what ye will, and it shall be done**. Jesus promised that if we are thoroughly united with him and have his words permanently in us, we can ask what we will, and it will be given. See Moroni 7:26.

15:8 **Herein is my Father glorified**. It is hard not to think of the well-known scripture in the Pearl of Great Price with this verse: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The Father is glorified as his children are righteous, bring forth good fruit, and follow the example of His Son.

15:9 **continue ye in my love**. The word “continue” is the same as that translated “abide” in v. 4. We are invited to rest eternally in Jesus’ love, which is the same as the Father’s love.

15:10 **If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love**. The way to “abide” is obedience, and obedience bring a fullness of joy (v. 11). Though Jesus has potentially given many commandments through his ministry, he sums them up and offers the most important one in verse 12.

15:12 **love one another**. Here we have one thought spread across four verses, 12-15 (paraphrased): ‘*Love each other as I have loved you. The greatest love is to lay down your life for a friend, and you are my friends if you do what I command; then I call you not slaves, but friends, for masters don’t share with their slaves the details I’m now sharing with you.*’ The atonement applies only to the obedient, those who love as God loves, who then become not the slaves of sin but the friends of God. Compare 1 John 3:16: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

15:15 **I call you not servants**. Previously, he had called them slaves and told them to become as slaves to each other (13:13-16). Now he declared them “friends” and promised them a greater status and reward.

15:16 **Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you**. Typically, disciples choose the master they wanted to learn from, but Jesus reversed that and choose them to follow him, calling them to leave the world behind. This state of being chosen is what puts disciples in a position to ask and receive what they will. Compare Ephesians 1:4, where Paul taught that being chosen in this way makes us holy and justified by God’s love.

15:17 **love one another**. Jesus ended the thought the same way he began it in verse 12, reiterating his most important commandment.

The word hates Jesus – John 15:18-27

15:18 **it hated me before it hated you.** Switching gears, Jesus contrasted the love he gave to the disciples to the hate they would get from the world in the rest of the verses in this chapter.

15:19 **therefore the world hateth you.** In John’s writings, the “world” was those outside of the circle of discipleship. Many people dislike and fear what they cannot understand. The commitment required of a disciple of Christ means setting aside many things the world esteems, an attitude and perspective that some in the world find perplexing. Likewise, Satan stirs up the world to persecute the righteous, often through misunderstandings or falsehoods. For example, the first historical reference to Christians outside of the Bible slanders them, saying they carry a “hatred of the human race,” completely contrary to their true beliefs.⁵

15:20 **The servant is not greater than his lord.** Jesus quoted what he just said in 13:16.

15:21 **all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake.** Because they were Jesus’ disciples and had taken upon them his name, they will be treated by the world as he was. But it works both ways. When Paul was putting Christians in prison, the Lord said to him, “Why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). Jesus bears the burdens of his disciples’ sins, sicknesses, and troubles; their suffering is his (Alma 7:11-12).

15:22 **now they have no cloak for their sin.** Because Jesus had come and openly taught truth, those who rejected him could not use the excuse of ignorance. They had heard the message and were now accountable for their denial of it. Also v. 24.

15:23 **He that hateth me hateth my Father also.** To hate and persecute Jesus was the same as hating and persecuting the Father, just as persecuting the disciples was the same as persecuting Jesus himself (v. 21).

15:25 **They hated me without a cause.** From either Psalm 35:19 or 69:4.

15:26-27 **he shall testify of me . . . ye also shall bear witness.** *The third role of the Spirit—testifier/witness.* The disciples received their testimony and knowledge of the truth from the Spirit. Then they were empowered to take the message out to the world and bear their personal witness and testimony, including everything they’ve seen Jesus say and do from the beginning.

The Comforter comes – John 16:1-11

16:1 **ye should not be offended.** Greek *skandalizō* (see Matthew 26:33); Jesus told them about the coming persecutions in the previous verses, so they wouldn’t falter when the challenges came. When John was writing his gospel, Christians were being greatly persecuted, kicked out of Jewish synagogues, losing their business, homes, and freedoms, and sometimes their lives. John reassured the saints of that day that this was all foreseen, expected, and because they were holding firm in their testimonies.

16:2 **whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.** This describes Saul’s mission perfectly, because his vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-2).

16:3 **because they have not known the Father, nor me.** The people in darkness, rejecting Jesus and his Father, will be the ones behind these great persecutions. Much of the early Christian persecution came from Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah, but other oppressions were from Gentiles who didn’t understand Jesus at all.

16:4 **remember that I told you of them.** Though this had not come up earlier in his ministry, Jesus told the disciples about the coming persecutions at this time, so they would remember later, in the heat of their troubles, that he had forewarned them and prepared them for these events.

16:5 **none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?** They had asked why they couldn’t go with him, but none had overtly asked where he was saying he was going. Perhaps they were reluctant, not wanting to know the answer.

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.5.

16:6 **sorrow hath filled you heart.** Jesus divinely sensed their emotions, which were dominated by sorrow at the words he was teaching about what he was going to do next. Other than confusion, John did not portray many emotions, but this one is powerful and timely in the delivery of these words.

16:7 **if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.** See 14:16.

16:8 **reprove the world.** *The fourth role of the Spirit—reprover/prosecuter.* A better translation of verse 8 might be: ‘And when he is come, he will show [expose/convince] the world about sin, and about righteousness, and about judgment,’ which is enlarged in the next three verses.

16:9 **Of sin.** The Holy Ghost reproves of the sin of the world “because they believe not on [Jesus]” and sin in their rejection of him.

16:10 **Of righteousness.** The righteousness or justness of Jesus is represented by him going to his Father, which only the righteous can do.

16:11 **Of judgment.** Jesus has the power to judge give him by God, so “the prince of this world is judged.” Satan (the ruler of this world; John 3:19-20; 12:31) is already defeated in Christ’s atonement.

The Spirit of truth – John 16:12-15

16:12 **many things to say unto you.** Though these words are long, Jesus promised that he had many more, but it would have to wait until after his resurrection.

16:13 **guide you into all truth.** *The fifth role of the Spirit—guide/revealer.* The Holy Ghost, like Jesus, is perfectly obedient to the Father, and only reveals what the Father desires. He will teach them truth, things to come, and the nature of the eternal reward that Jesus has received, and they can receive through him. See also 14:17; 15:26.

Summing up the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives, Parley P. Pratt said:

“The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.”⁶

16:14 **He shall glorify me.** The Spirit of truth praises and gives glory to God and Christ.

16:15 **All things that the Father hath are mine.** Jesus is the full inheritor of all that the Father has, but this could also be an allusion to the Father giving Jesus those that will be saved through the Atonement (6:39; 13:3).

Joy in following Christ – John 16:16-24

16:16 **ye shall see me.** Jesus emphasized the closeness of his resurrection; it was not something decades in the future but just “a little while.”

16:17 **What is this that he saith.** The disciples questioned among themselves Jesus’ words about them not seeing him, then seeing him (v. 16; “we cannot tell what he saith,” v. 18). Jesus perceived their thoughts and clarified that they would weep, and the world would rejoice in the short term, but that their “sorrow shall be turned into joy” at his triumph over death (v. 20).

16:21 **A woman when she is in travail.** The pain they will feel was aptly compared to childbirth where the labor brings sorrow but then turns to joy as the child is born.

⁶ Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, p. 101.

16:22 ***your joy no man taketh from you.*** They would feel great joy when they saw him alive again. But unlike earthly happiness or pleasure, this was a divine joy that could not be taken from them, even by their own deaths.

16:24 ***ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*** This alludes to why all requests from those united with Christ are answered—they will not seek anything that would not bring them true, eternal joy.

Jesus speaks clearly – John 16:25-33

16:25 ***have I spoken unto you in proverbs.*** Though Jesus used words up to this point that might be difficult to understand, shortly he will fully reveal the Father to them in plainness. This is the final response to Philip's request in 14:8 to show them the Father and sets up the prayer in chapter 17.

16:26 ***I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.*** Jesus had continued to tell them to pray and their desires would be granted. Now he clarified that it would not be because he would be praying to the Father in their behalf.

16:27 ***For the Father himself loveth you.*** Because they prayed to the Father in Jesus' name, and because they had love Jesus and believed in him, the Father would hear their prayers directly, without Jesus' intervention.

16:28 ***I came forth from the Father.*** Turning back to the first chapter of John, Jesus declared his pre-mortal origins with the Father and that he came into the world from his presence. Now he was coming full circle, returning to his former place and position.

16:29 ***now speakest thou plainly.*** The disciples happily reported that they thought he was speaking plainly at this point, and that they understood and believed. They declared their certainty that Jesus knew all things and came from God (v. 30).

16:31 ***Do ye now believe?*** But Jesus questioned their understanding and perhaps their faith and commitment, stating that shortly they would be scattered and would abandon him (v. 32).

16:33 ***be of good cheer.*** He told them all this to prepare them to have peace (14:27). Though the world will persecute them and give them "tribulation" (meaning, to be pressed together under great stress), they should "be of good cheer" (meaning, take courage) because Jesus had "overcome the world." It was already done, not because the atonement was complete chronologically, but because Jesus was fully committed to the will of the Father and there could be no other outcome.

The Great Intercessory Prayer (17:1-26)

Jesus had dismissed the evil influence from among them (Judas), washed his disciples clean, instructed them concerning the future and the great plan of God, and assured them of the final outcome of his life and mission. He started low and took them higher and higher to the ultimate optimism. Now he has prepared them for prayer. The prayer recorded is the longest one in the New Testament.

The prayer was in three parts: Jesus' relationship with the Father (1-5); prayer for the disciples (6-19); prayer for those who will heed the testimony of the disciples (20-26). In this prayer, he was acting like the high priest in the temple, praying in behalf of the people before God. This was even more remarkable considering that Jesus was about to face arrest, trial, scourging, crucifixion, and other great suffering. He prayed little for himself (only a few words at the beginning), but mostly for those he was about to leave behind—and for all of us, for whom he was about to atone.

Jesus' relationship with the Father – John 17:1-5

17:1 ***lifted up his eyes to heaven.*** We typically bow our heads and close our eyes when we pray today. Jesus prayed according to the custom of his day, looking up to the sky and probably also lifting up his arms to implore the Father.

17:2 ***power over all flesh.*** Jesus is the Savior of all people, not just the Jews or any other subset.

17:2 **as many as thou hast given him.** “As many as” might be better translated ‘all creatures’ since it is the neuter form, *pan*. He is the Savior of all creation.

17:3 **And this is life eternal.** Eternal life is the kind of life God lives, not just the duration (see for example, 1 Nephi 14:7; 2 Nephi 9:39; D&C 19:7-12; 81:6; 88:4; Moses 6:59). John used this phrase more than any other writer in the New Testament.

17:3 **that they might know thee.** To “know” (*ginōskō*) is knowledge gained by experience and inspiration, not through the senses or through reasoning. It is in the subjunctive present tense here, indicating an on-going learning, not a one-time experience.

17:3 **Jesus Christ.** Only twice in the entire book is this full name and title given together: here and in 1:17. That introduction and this verse form a bracketing *inclusio* that draws together the imagery of that poetic opening and this great prayer that concludes all of Jesus’ teaching.

17:4 **I have glorified thee.** Jesus’ role was not to glorify himself, but the Father, even as he promised from the beginning. This was the work the Father had given to him (Moses 4:1-4; Abraham 3:22-28).

17:4 **I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.** Technically, he had not achieved this yet. But his commitment was so perfect that it was, in fact, done before he even began. One could argue that it was done eons before he was even born.

17:5 **the glory which I had with thee before the world was.** Another echo of John 1:1-14, declaring Jesus’ pre-mortal existence and stature with God.

Prayer for the disciples – John 17:6-19

17:6 **I have manifested thy name.** To make known a name was to make known the person, which was why Jesus came into the world (see John 1:18).

17:6 **thine they were, and thou gavest them me.** The disciples, who were children of God, now belonged to Jesus, given to him by the Father, and were thus no longer of the world. Jesus prayed that they would be kept from evil and sanctified—meaning consecrated, set apart, purified—through the truth.

17:8 **I have given unto them the words.** Jesus spoke the words of the Father, as his ‘sent one.’

17:8 **and they have believed.** The disciples are those who have embraced Jesus’ words from the Father and have believed in his status as God’s son, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

17:9 **I pray for them: I pray not for the world.** The prayer didn’t exclude anyone who might be blessed by the gospel message, as evidenced by verses 20-26. Rather, Jesus was not praying for those mounting opposition against him; the world is typically darkness and evil in John and do not merit Jesus’ blessing.

17:10 **I am glorified in them.** Just as Jesus spoke of his overcoming the world in the past tense and that bringing glory to the Father, so he anticipated what the disciples would do in his name after his departure, which future success brings glory to him.

17:11 **but these are in the world.** The disciples were left behind for a time, so Jesus prayed for them to be able to endure their trials while still in this world.

17:11 **that they may be one, as we are.** The logic of this verse argues for a rational way of looking at “oneness” with Jesus and the Father. If he prayed that the disciples could be one with him and the Father in the same way that they were one with each other, it must be speaking of one in purpose in unity.

17:12 **I kept them in thy name.** While he was with them, he protected them. Now he asked the Father to watch over them as he leaves.

17:12 **none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.** “Lost” and “perdition” in this verse are actually the same root word (in verb and noun form) and mean something closer to ‘destruction’: ‘not one of them was destroyed, except the son of destruction.’ In the foreknowledge of God, Judas’ act was part of the plan, but he, of course, retained his agency. He was free to choose and will therefore suffer the consequences of his choice.

17:12 **that the scripture might be fulfilled.** The scripture is not quoted but could be Psalm 41:9: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.”

17:13 **that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.** Or, “so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them” (NIV).

17:14 **I have given them thy word.** Jesus is the Word of God (see John 1:1f), who teaches God’s message to the disciples. Because they have received Jesus’ teachings, “the world hath hated them,” just like they hated Jesus.

17:15 **keep them from the evil.** Because they were needed in the world to carry the message of Jesus’ teachings, mission, and salvation to all, he did not pray for them to be removed. Rather, he prayed that the father would protect them from the evil things of the world in which they lived.

17:16 **They are not of the world.** Not only was Jesus not of the world, but the disciples, who embraced his teachings, united with him, strove to live his commandments, and relied on his grace, became like him, “not of the world.”

17:17 **Sanctify them through thy truth.** To sanctify is to make holy and pure, to consecrate, to set something apart for a divine use. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6), purifying and making holy those who believe and follow him.

17:18 **I also sent them into the world.** To be “sent” is to be an apostle; they have Jesus’ authority. He sent them out into the world to bear witness of the truth of the plan of God. This transitions the prayer to the rest of humanity.

17:19 **for their sakes I sanctify myself.** We might better express this, ‘for them have I consecrated myself.’ Jesus made and lived sacred covenants—in his case, eternal covenants made first in the grand council in the pre-earth life—that set him apart and committed him to the path he was about to pursue. His goal in doing so was that we might also “be sanctified through the truth.”

[Prayer for those who will heed the testimony of the disciples – John 17:20-26](#)

17:20 **for them also which shall believe on me through their word.** Jesus prayed for every person who heard the gospel taught by a duly ordained representative, by a person with a testimony of the truth. In other words, Jesus prayed for all of us who heard his word through his chosen and called disciples.

17:21 **That they all may be one.** Unity with Christ and the Father and love for and from them is the ultimate goal—and the major theme of John’s entire gospel. That we are to be one with Christ as he is one with the Father is another indication of their unity of purpose but not their physical nature (also v. 22). The simplicity of the explanation that we are in their image and sent here to become like them excels the complexity of the creeds of men developed long after Jesus and his inspired leaders were gone, and the world was deep in apostasy. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 35:2.

17:22 **the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.** In some way that we cannot understand, Jesus can transfer his glory—the brightness and splendor, the honor and praise, the majesty of God—to us, even as he received it from the Father. This is the message of justification, salvation, and exaltation that is the Atonement of Christ, and which we are blessed to obtain through our faith in him, though we be completely undeserving. He received the Father’s glory through his own perfect obedience over an eternity, but he freely shares it with us, first making us worthy of the blessing by his sacrifice, then glorifying us by the same. We can never, worlds without end, achieve that on our own; that is the very definition of “grace.”

17:23 **that they may be made perfect in one.** “Perfect” (Greek *teleioō*) is ‘whole, complete’; we are not complete unless we are one with God’s purpose, living his will in all we do. Anything less and we are stubbornly kicking against the pricks, contending against the very thing that will bring the greatest happiness.

17:24 **be with me where I am.** This is a stunning request when considered at face value. Through his perfect life, Jesus has earned—the only one of our Father’s children ever to do so—the right to be at the right hand of the Father and receive all that the Father has. But rather than just accepting that, he instead gave up everything we might hold dear in this life—all things this world has to offer—in order to ask the Father to give us the same thing, though we could not possibly deserve or merit it.

17:25 **I have known thee.** When did Jesus the child begin to know the Father? When did he understand who he was and what his mission was? We cannot answer these questions, though fascinating they may be to ponder. But we do know that as he began his ministry, Jesus fully knew the Father and his own relationship to him with a sure and certain knowledge.

17:26 **the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them.** God is love, and Jesus is the Father’s manifestation of his love for us. That that spirit of that love might be fully in us and be the driving force in our lives was Jesus’ final words of his intercessory prayer. With that fervent request on behalf of us all, he concluded his prayer and walked into Gethsemane as a lamb to the slaughter, personally demonstrating the love for God and each other that he had been so ardently teaching.

Bibliography

Abbreviations:

- AT – Author’s translation
- BYU – BYU New Rendition
- CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
- ESV – English Standard Version
- JST – Joseph Smith Translation
- KJV – King James Version
- LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
- NASB – New American Standard Bible
- NIV – New International Version
- NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
- NLT – New Living Translation
- NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
- TNT – William Tyndale 1534 New Testament

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