

**JOHN 13-15 MANY MANSIONS; WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS**



We are going over Jesus' pivotal last Passover night. He had instituted the footwashing ceremony and while they ate, He told Judas to go and fulfill what he was destined to do--betray Him. Once he left, Jesus could then reveal His final instructions.

As they ate, they were lying on their sides, on pillows, since people then did not eat sitting in chairs. Barclay notes, "The Jews did not sit at table; they reclined. The table was a low solid block, with couches round it. It was shaped like a 'U' and the place of the host was in the center. They reclined on their left side, resting on the left elbow, thus leaving the right hand free to deal with the food. Sitting in such a way, a man's head was literally in the breast of the person reclining on his left. Jesus would be sitting in the place of the host, at the center of the single side of the low table. The disciple whom Jesus loved must have been sitting on his right, for as he lent on his elbow at the table, his head was in Jesus' breast" (notes on Jn. 13:23).

Jesus says, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:31-35).

He was introducing another new concept, just as He had with the footwashing ceremony. Now He emphasized how they had to show a much deeper love for one another as brethren than ever before, and this would only be possible when the Holy Spirit finally entered them at Pentecost.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* mentions, "The command is new in that it is a special love for other believers based on the sacrificial love of Jesus: 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another.' Christians' love and support for one another enable them to survive in a hostile world."

Here, the word for love is *agape* and it means a sacrificial love, not based on sentimentality, but on true affection and actions originating from keeping God's commandments. Decades later, John would

remind them of it, "And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it" (2 John 1:5-6). So love was to be based on obedience to God's laws as Christ taught from the beginning of His ministry.

As *Nelson's Bible Commentary* notes, "Love is not sentimental emotionalism; it is obedience to the commandments of God" (notes on Jn. 13:31).

Peter then rashly asserts he already had that type of love and was even willing to give his life for Christ. Yet Jesus revealed to him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times" (John 13:38).

Jesus' focus was now on greatly encouraging and uplifting them, for He knew He would soon die and they would feel like orphans. But He also knew they would soon be connected with the Holy Spirit which was God's power and influence in them. So He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also...I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:1-4, 18).

First, "mansions" is an old English term that means a dwelling place (Gk. *mone*), and just as the Father's House (the Temple) had many rooms for priests, Christ would give them places in God's temple when He came back. Christ repeatedly told them He would be very active once in heaven to work with them and prepare them for *positions* in His coming kingdom. As He had recently told them, "In the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also *sit* on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28). Where? In God's Temple from where Christ will govern the earth.

Yet, the real training would begin once God's spirit dwelt in them, as He said: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We

will come to him and make Our home (dwelling) [Gk. *mone*] with him" (John 14:23).

Paul refers to this preliminary preparation, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love...raised us up together, and made us *sit* together *in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace...in whom you also are being built together for a *dwelling place* of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:4-7, 22). Christ's is doing this today!

*The New International Bible Commentary* interestingly says: "Robert Gundry stresses the connection with *meno* [derived from *mone*], and sees a reference to 'spiritual positions in Christ,' much as in Pauline theology" (1971, p. 638).

A source further adds, "Robert Gundry, a conservative evangelical scholar, cautions against assuming that Jesus' 'many dwellings' or 'many mansions' are rooms up in heaven. For Gundry, the crucial clue is that Jesus never promises that, upon His return, Jesus will take the disciples *away* to the 'dwellings' or 'mansions' in the Father's house...Rather, what Jesus promised His disciples is that 'Where I am, you will be also'" (*The Rapture Exposed*, Barbara Rossing, 2004, pp. 184-185).

So how could Jesus speak so boldly? Because He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth,

whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:6-18).

Notice this is a very anti-Trinitarian section since Jesus says that He is in the Father and the Father in Him—so two Persons are in this divine relationship and not three. Also, when He says the Father will send them the Holy Spirit, Jesus then said, "I will come to you"--not some other Person.

What about the personal pronouns used here for the Helper which Trinitarians allege shows personhood? The key is to understand Greek grammar has masculine, feminine and neuter genders for all the nouns, just as in Spanish. We say, "la mesa" for a table, using a feminine article, but that doesn't make the table something feminine. "Helper" or *paraclete* in Greek has a masculine article, but it doesn't mean it's a person whereas spirit (*pneuma*) is neuter in gender.

A study of the phrases in John where the *paraclete* (Helper) and the Holy Spirit are used shows the correct gender depends on *which noun* (technically called the antecedent noun) *is being substituted by a pronoun*. For instance, in John 14:16, 26, the *Holy Spirit* is the antecedent noun being described and is correctly substituted in the Greek original with pronouns in the *neuter* gender.

Now, what about Jesus' commandments? Are they different from God the Father's laws? No, since they are based on the same principles, but Christ did magnify and added another spiritual dimension to these commandments such as the footwashing ceremony and taking only of the bread and the wine symbols at Passover.

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains, "Thus following Christ is keeping the commandments as a way of life. Since keeping the law of God is the way to eternal life, and keeping the law of Christ is the way to eternal life, *the law of God and the law of Christ are identical*. Indeed, there is a kind of advancement on the law of God in one sense: following Christ is more personal than merely following the law of Christ...The law of Christ does not dispense with the old law or render the Decalogue obsolete but in a sense *adds* to that law by keeping the followers in constant submission to the continuing disclosure of the will of God in Christ" (1986, Vol. 3, p. 86).

He then uses an analogy describing that loving relationship with His disciples--as grape branches that need the vine. He said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:1-16).

God the Father and Jesus Christ provide us with the Holy Spirit, and without that, we can't produce anything truly spiritual. The fruit of God's spirit is mentioned in Galatians 5:21-22 as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Barclay adds, "When Jesus drew his picture of the vine, He knew what He was talking about. The vine was grown all over [Israel] as it still is. It is a plant which needs a great deal of attention if the best fruit is to be got out of it" (notes on 15:1).

Christ continues, "These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you

know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He [the Helper] will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning" (John 15:17-27).

Again, Jesus reiterates the need for the brotherly love we should have--as He has loved us. He warns we will be misunderstood and persecuted as He was. Yet, Christ will be in us through the Holy Spirit to strengthen us.

So Christ used the term *parakletos* (Helper) as a vivid metaphor to describe His new presence in the disciples since it would mark a different relationship they would have with Him. Up to that time, He was physically present and comforted them by promising His *spiritual* presence would be *in* them when God's Spirit would come and enter into them at Pentecost. There certainly isn't any mention of a third person here, just a graphic metaphor used by Christ to picture how He could be *in heaven*, and at the same time, could be *in* them. He personified His presence in them by using the idea of a *paraclete*, as a loving mediator.

As Barclay mentions, "Life is always calling us into battle...to cope with life and to conquer life is the *parakletos*, the Holy Spirit, who is none other than *the presence of and power of the risen Christ*" (*New Testament Words*, 1964, page 222).