

## Week #4



What is the setting of this Speech & Prayer (a.k.a. High Priestly Prayer)?

A. John 13:1-5

B. John 13:27-30

## Theme 1.) Jesus is going away so he can send the “Spirit”

*For each theme, we will find a section that displays the theme, reflect on its meaning (including meaning for us today), and then also discuss how it connects with other parts of Holy Week.*



- A. Read 14:15-17,25-31
- B. What is the meaning of these verses?  
What do they mean for us today?
- C. How does this theme connect with other parts of Holy Week?

## Theme 2.) The One God consists of the loving relationship between Father, Son & Spirit.



- A. Read 14:1-16
- B. What is the meaning of these verses?  
What do they mean for us today?
- C. How does this theme connect with other parts of Holy Week?

**Theme 3.) Jesus' Disciples are those who "abide" in God's love.**

**A. Read 15:1-11**

**B. What is the meaning of these verses?  
What do they mean for us today?**

**C. How does this theme connect with other parts of Holy Week?**



**Theme 4.) The Spirit will empower Jesus' followers to carry on His mission:**

- acts of loving service, and
- bear witness to the truth.

**A. Read 15:1-11**

**B. What is the meaning of these verses?  
What do they mean for us today?**

**C. How does this theme connect with other parts of Holy Week?**



**Theme 5.) Jesus predicts opposition  
& declares that He has “gained victory over the world”**

- A. Read 15:18-25, 16:1-4a
- B. What is the meaning of these verses?  
What do they mean for us today?
- C. How does this theme connect with  
other parts of Holy Week?
- D. Read 16:25-33
- E. What is the meaning of these verses?  
What do they mean for us today?
- F. How does this theme connect with other parts of Holy Week?





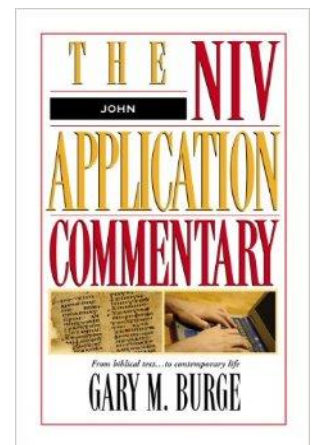
## Original Meaning

JOHN 14 IS a continuation of the Farewell Discourse that began in 13:31 after Judas's departure from the Upper Room. In the previous chapter we saw how Jesus is adapting a "farewell formula" well known in Judaism. He comforts his disciples in light of his impending departure by explaining what will come, how the Spirit will arrive, and how they will flourish as his followers. Throughout these verses (beginning in ch. 13) we can feel how distraught the disciples must have been. They have entered Jerusalem for the last time and Jesus is speaking clearly about his death. They are facing profound shame, disillusionment, and fear. Peter was the first to express their worry (13:36). Jesus now begins to provide answers to their many spoken (and unspoken) questions.

A great deal of scholarly energy has been spent on deciphering the literary structure and theological purposes of John 14. Scholars prone to locate sources behind this Gospel and to reconstruct the compositional history of the chapter claim to find complex cycles of thought here that really tell us more about John's thinking than about Jesus. But much of this work seems dubious at best.<sup>1</sup> The primary theme of the chapter is the departure and return of Jesus. This discussion is advanced through the questions of various disciples: Peter (13:36), Thomas (14:5), Philip (14:8), and Judas (14:22). Jesus likely taught for a long time during this supper and what we have here are summaries of his words. These disciples' questions are thus literary devices that push the subject along, raising important themes and advancing the chapter to its climax.

We can discern a shift in subject at 14:18. From 14:1–14 Jesus is addressing the disciples' despair over his leaving. This is followed by his first promise of the Spirit (14:15–18). Jesus then turns to the subject of his return in 14:18, which is followed by yet another promise of the Spirit (14:25–31).

But the themes of "departure and return" are more complex than we might imagine. Jesus' departure refers to his glorification (that mix of subjects that begins with the arrest and concludes with his ascension). His return is likewise complex: In 14:18–19 Jesus' return seems to describe his "Easter return," when his disciples will see him. But in 14:21 we learn that another "coming" of Jesus to his disciples will result in his indwelling them spiritually (14:23). In each case—Jesus leaving, Jesus returning—the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in comforting, empowering, and reassuring the followers of Christ. The entire chapter ends in a blessing of "peace" (14:27–31) that Jesus bestows on his followers.



In our introduction to the Farewell Discourse (see comments on ch. 14) we concluded that these chapters in John fit a defined literary form in Judaism. Dying or departing leaders, prophets, and rabbis commonly provided "final words" of instruction for their disciples who remained behind. This tradition also made use of a "departing prayer," which closes the farewell speech. Earlier we compared the farewell of Moses in Deuteronomy, and now we can return to it. That farewell (Deut. 32–33) has a form of prayer similar to that found in John 17. As Israel listens, Moses begins by praising God: "I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!" (32:3). Following this lengthy prayer, Moses then turns to the Israelites and prays a blessing on them for their future (ch. 33).

This is the pattern of John 17. Jesus turns from his own concerns with God (17:1–8) to those of the church and its future (17:9–26). The same pattern is displayed in Leviticus when Aaron the priest learns how to sacrifice and pray. First he prays and worships on his own behalf (Lev. 16:11–14), then he offers a sin offering and prayer for the people (16:15–19).

Technically, while Jesus' prayer presents us with these two divisions, the second division of the prayer should be divided into two parts. Following his personal prayer, Jesus prays for his personal disciples (17:9–19) and then prays for those who will be *their* disciples (17:20–26). This then organizes the prayer into three separate sections: Jesus prays for himself, for his followers, and for the later church. This organization is so finely built that Brown has shown how each of the three parts even displays parallel themes:<sup>4</sup>

- Each part begins with what Jesus is asking or praying for (vv. 1, 9, 20)
- Each has the theme of glory (vv. 1–5, 10, 22)
- Each has an address to the Father partway through (vv. 5, 11, 21)
- Each mentions the followers given to Jesus by the Father (vv. 2, 9, 24)
- Each has the theme of Jesus' revelation of the Father to his followers (v. 6, "your name"; v. 14, "your word"; v. 26, "your name")

Many have called this chapter Jesus' "high priestly prayer," in which he prays for himself and intercedes for his followers. Such a view fits the work of Christ described in Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 (though this work is reserved generally for his service following his ascension). John knows this theme and in 1 John 2:1–2 can describe Jesus in his intercessory work. For others, this is Jesus' "prayer of consecration," in which he prepares himself for his death and glorification, readying himself to be a sacrifice for his followers. In John 17:19, for instance, Jesus seems to be heading to the sacrificial altar ("For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified"). Westcott tied in this idea with Jesus' departure from the Upper Room in 14:31 and concluded that since Jesus has not yet left the Kidron Valley (18:1), he may be praying in the temple, the com-

mon place of sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> Other scholars object that the chapter contains no notion of sacrifice, that the prayer is not "priestly," and that Jesus aims to simply reveal his unity with the Father.<sup>9</sup>

No doubt prayers of personal consecration and priestly intercession are central to the meaning of Jesus' words in this chapter. All is being said in the shadow of the cross, and Jesus is not only preparing himself for this momentous event, but thinking about his followers. But we also have to see the prayer as an opportunity for further revelation. We should not assume that Jesus' prayer was something said privately; rather, in the Jewish tradition it was said aloud and so was available for his followers to hear (cf. 11:41–42; 12:27–30; also Matt. 11:25–30; Luke 10:21–22). The disciples are invited (as are readers) to catch a glimpse of Jesus' intimate relation between himself and his Father and to learn of his origins and his future, his mission and its successes, his concerns and his hopes. As the last chapter before Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, this is the Gospel's final opportunity to sweep up the many ideas about Jesus given in every other chapter. John 17 is in this sense a summary of Jesus' ministry. As the prologue anticipated the major ideas of the gospel (1:1–18), this prayer reviews and consolidates them.

Three themes thread their way through many of the prayer's paragraphs. (1) Jesus prays about glorification, that his obedience in this hour will truly bring glory to God. (2) He also prays for his followers' survival. Will they survive the enmity of the world? Will they remain united despite their differences? Do they truly possess the tools he has given them: knowing God's love as well as his Word, obeying his commands? (3) Finally, he prays about holiness. Will his followers emulate the holiness he has shown them? Will their lives so reflect the life of the Son living in them that they become living testimonies to the world?