

# John 13-17: Living Life with an Invisible Savior

January 22nd, 2023

## John 13:31-14:14 Present and Future Comfort

### I. Recap

Five days before Passover, Jesus triumphantly entered into Jerusalem on Sunday and presented himself to the nation as the Messiah and Son of God. Knowing Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, crowds amassed to hail the arrival of their Messiah King.<sup>1</sup> Even though Jesus had clearly foretold his death multiple times<sup>2</sup>, the disciples were still expecting him to establish his kingdom on earth very soon.<sup>3</sup> With heightened anticipation the disciples found themselves vying for and arguing about who would have greater positions of honor in Jesus' kingdom.<sup>4</sup> You can imagine each one reflecting on the various acts of service they have accomplished for Jesus and the special privileges given to them by Jesus.<sup>5</sup> All of this helps us understand why the disciples were so confused as Jesus talked of betrayal and leaving during his last night with the disciples. Who on earth would betray the Messiah, especially on the eve of his kingdom reign?! All of this sets the table for what would be a night of great sorrow and confusion as Jesus sat down for his last meal with the disciples and began to shepherd them through the terrible suffering about to take place.

### II. Introduction

The past few years have given rise to a lot of problems in our country that have raised the temperature of conflict and consternation. A quick glance at the news offers an avalanche of issues from COVID, transgender policy in schools, immigration, to inflation. It's been such a stressful time that the American Psychological Association conducted a survey in the middle of 2022 and found that 76% of people have "experienced health impacts due to stress in the prior month, including headache (38%), fatigue (35%), feeling nervous or anxious (34%), and/or feeling depressed or sad (33%)."<sup>6</sup> It's easy to be worried. God knows our proclivity, our natural tendency, to be anxious. So much so, that Scripture gives us commands to not be anxious.

1. What do people tend to blame anxiety on?
2. What is the central cause of anxiety in the life of a believer?

At times it seems like our anxiety would be alleviated if Jesus would just tell us his plans or that we would be at peace if Jesus was at least physically present with us. That's what the disciples thought. But Jesus makes it clear in John 13-14 that failure to trust in Him is the cause of anxiety. All the disciples were feeling troubled and worried by news of a betrayer. Peter and John were the only ones who knew the betrayer was Judas, and after he received the morsel from Jesus and given the command to "go faster," he immediately departed to initiate the final act of Jesus' ministry on earth. It is at this point that Jesus changes the way he talks as he begins his farewell discourse in John 13:31 where he reveals how to find comfort even when he is no longer present. Jesus did not need to be visibly present for the disciples to receive comfort and strength from him.

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<sup>1</sup> John 12:12-19

<sup>2</sup> Mark 10:32-34, cf. 8:31; 9:31

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 24:3; Luke 19:11;

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-30

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 17:1-2

<sup>6</sup> "Stress in America 2022: Concerned for the future, beset by inflation" APA

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2022/concerned-future-inflation>, Accessed Jan. 21, 2023.

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### III. The Present Comfort of Messianic Community

***“31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”***” (John 13:31–35 ESV)

3. According to verse 31, what has the departure of Judas set into motion?
4. Why did Jesus wait until Judas’ left to speak about this? (v. 33, 35)
5. What does it mean to “glorify” something?<sup>7</sup>

***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”*** (John 1:14, 18 ESV)

“To glorify is to make clear to others what God is like, so as to seek their praise and admiration of him, so that they join us in seeking to show how great he is.”<sup>8</sup>

6. How is the Son of Man glorified through the crucifixion? (cf. John 17:5; Phil. 2:5-11)
7. How is God glorified in Jesus through the crucifixion? (cf. John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 17:4)
8. In verse 32, Jesus says, ***32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.***” How does this bolster Jesus’ claim to be glorified in God the Father?
9. Even though Jesus says He is giving a new command, Leviticus 19:18 already says ***“you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”*** What makes Jesus’ command in verse 34 “new”?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 40:3, 5, 9-10, 16; 86:12; Matt. 5:16

<sup>8</sup> John Piper, “Can We Really Give God More or Less Glory?” Interview, Dec. 13, 2021, [<sup>9</sup> See 1 Corinthians 9:20-21; The law of Christ, though not defined anywhere in the Bible, is summarized in love \(Matt. 7:12; 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14\)](https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/can-we-really-give-god-more-or-less-glory#:~:text=%E2%80%9CTo%20glorify%20is%20to%20make.praise%20and%20admiration%20of%20him.%E2%80%9D, Accessed January 20, 2023.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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“It is not just that the standard is Christ and his love; more, it is a command designed to reflect the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son, designed to bring about amongst the members of the nascent messianic community the kind of unity that characterizes Jesus and his Father.”<sup>10</sup>

**10.** Since Jesus had already told them to follow his example with humble love via the footwashing, why is he giving them another command to love? (v. 33)

**11.** According to the following passages, what two significant and practical ways can we obey this new command?

*“21 Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ 22 Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”* (Matthew 18:21–22 ESV)

*“23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* (Matthew 5:23–24 ESV)

*“31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”* (Ephesians 4:31–32 ESV)

“What causes the sharpest, most bitter disputes in the body of Christ are not doctrinal differences, but the unloving manner in which those differences are handled. Being willing to apologize to those whom we have offended is crucial to preserving the unity of the body of Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

**12.** Why is Christian love for the brethren such a powerful apologetic to the world?<sup>12</sup>

“The more we recognize the depth of our own sin, the more we recognize the love of the Saviour; the more we appreciate the love of the Saviour, the higher his standard appears; the higher his standard appears, the more we recognize in our selfishness, our innate self-centredness, the depth of our own sin. With a standard like this, no thoughtful believer can ever say, this side of the Parousia, ‘I am perfectly keeping the basic stipulation of the new covenant.’”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Carson, 485.

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, 90.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 5:16; Titus 2:5-11; 1 Peter 3:15-16; 4:16

<sup>13</sup> Carson, 484.

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### IV. The Present Comfort of Jesus' Greater Love

*"36 Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.' 37 Peter said to him, 'Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' 38 Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.'"*

(John 13:36–38 ESV)

13. What issue was causing Peter anxiety and question? (v. 33)

14. What issue was Peter glossing over? (v. 36)

15. What is ironic about Peter's claim that *"I will lay down my life for You"* (v. 37; c.f. Matt. 26:31-35)?

16. How does Jesus respond to Peter's second declaration, and how do you suppose such a response humbled him (v. 38)?

17. What comfort is there to be found in Jesus' response to the disciples? (v.36b)

"Let us note the wonderful kindness and condescension of Jesus. He knew perfectly well the weakness and feebleness of his chief disciple, and yet never rejected him, and even raised him again after his fall. Christians should be men of very pitiful and tender feelings toward weak brethren. Their inconsistencies may be very great and provoking, but we must never forget our Lord's dealing with Simon Peter."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> J.C. Ryle, 36.

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### V. The Future Comfort of Heaven (14:1-7)

*“1 ‘Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.’ 5 Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ 6 Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’” (John 14:1–7 ESV)*

18. With the footwashing scene fresh in mind, the betrayal announced, Jesus’ departure announced, and Peter’s denial foretold, what medley of emotions is troubling the disciples right now?

19. What is Jesus’ response to their anxious hearts?<sup>15</sup> What stands out to you about this? (vv. 1-2)

“Christ affirmed His deity, placing Himself on a par with the Father as an appropriate object of faith. In calling them to hope in God, Jesus was calling His disciples to put their hope in Him... The Lord was not calling the disciples to believe savingly in Him; they had already done so ([13:10-11](#)). The present tense form of the verb *pisteuō* (**believe**) refers instead to an ongoing trust in Him. Though they genuinely believed in Jesus, the disciples’ faith was already beginning to waver. Soon, when He was taken from them and they faced the traumatic events of His betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion, it would reach its lowest ebb.”<sup>16</sup>

20. What place would the disciples have been thinking about when they heard Jesus refer to *“my Father’s house”* in 14:2? (cf. John 2:15)<sup>17</sup>

21. How does this clarify the confusion of the disciples about Jesus’ departure? (v.5)

22. What is Jesus referring to in this context and what clues help us understand his meaning? (v.3, 6)

23. According to verses 2-4, why should Jesus’ absence from this world bring comfort to all believers? (cf. Heb. 7:25)

“Home, as we all know, is the place where we are generally loved for our own sakes, and not for our gifts or possessions; the place where we are loved to the end, never forgotten, and always welcome. This is one idea of heaven. Believers are in a strange land and at school in this life. In the life to come they will be at home.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See “you of little faith” in Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8

<sup>16</sup> MacArthur, 98.

<sup>17</sup> See also Lk. 2:49; OT reference “the LORD’s house” 2 Chron. 7:2; Jer. 7:2; 19:14; 36:8

<sup>18</sup> J.C. Ryle, 38.

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24. What comfort does Jesus extend to believers with his exclusive statement<sup>19</sup> ***“4 And you know the way to where I am going...I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***
25. Why is it encouraging to hear an answer like this to a question that came from someone like Thomas who was known for struggling with doubt?<sup>20</sup>

Jesus comforted the believers in their faith, though it was struggling to understand everything. The disciples had already pursuing the way to God in faith and been with God - they just hadn't recognized it. Jesus is the way to be with the Father. Jesus is the truth. He is not false. In Jesus is the life. He is the resurrection and the life so that even if a believer dies, he still lives. Though their faith was weak, it was still put in the right person. D.A. Carson once noted in a sermon that it's not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the object of your faith.

26. In verse 7 it seems like Jesus is just contradicting the encouragement he just gave by saying, ***7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”*** Despite Jesus' teaching, why did the disciples keep missing what he was saying?

Jesus essentially says in verse 7, “If you had been paying attention, you would have known, but from now on you will understand.” The disciples struggled to pay attention because they didn't have a full understanding of the gospel message yet – they didn't understand the need for the Messiah to be a Suffering Servant before a reigning King. The incarnation, Jesus taking on flesh, made it hard for them to understand Jesus was God. After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples would come to finally understand Jesus' mission and the connection that “to look for God is to find Jesus” – that Jesus is the “what can be seen” of “what cannot be seen.” It's easy to look down on the disciples as if they weren't smart enough. But we have to keep in mind that they were living by faith AND sight, but were about to be whiplashed back into living by faith alone. We live by faith and in the hope of living by sight in heaven.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> C.f. Rom. 5:20; Heb. 10:20

<sup>20</sup> John 20:24-29

<sup>21</sup> John 20:29

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### VI. The Present Comfort of Jesus' Identity (14:8-14)

*“8 Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ 9 Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:8–11 ESV)*

27. Based on his question in verse 8, what comfort does Philip envision receiving from Jesus? (cf. Ex. 33:18-23; 35:5-8)

28. What is particularly tragic about Phillip's statement (v. 9)?

29. Why should He know better? (v. 9 cf. John 10:30-33; 12:45)

30. Why was it so important to Jesus that Phillip and others believe in His deity? (v. 10)

“Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>22</sup>

31. In verses 10-11, what two evidences does Jesus appeal to for Phillip to believe? What does this teach us about the nature of faith?

“Sayings like these are full of deep mystery. We have no eyes to see their meaning fully, - no line to fathom it, - no language to express it, - no mind to take it in. We must be content to believe when we cannot explain, and to admire and revere when we cannot interpret. Let it suffice us to know and hold that the Father is God and the Son is God, and yet that they are one in essence though two distinct persons, - ineffably one, and yet ineffably distinct. These are high things, and we cannot attain to a full comprehension of them. Let us however take comfort in the simple truth, that Christ is very God of very God; equal with the Father in all things, and one with him. He who loved us, and shed his blood for us on the cross, and bids us trust him for pardon, is no mere man like ourselves... The relation between the eternal Father and the eternal Son and the eternal Spirit, while three persons, are one God, is precisely one of those which we have no minds to take in, and no language to express. We must often be content to believe and reverence it, without attempting to explain it.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Baker Publishing Group: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 26.

<sup>23</sup> J.C. Ryle, 45-46, 48.

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### VII. The Present Comfort of Jesus' Power (14:12-14)

*12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."* (John 14:12–14 ESV)

32. The connection to from verse 11 to 12 doesn't seem apparent at first. It seems like Jesus is branching off into a new topic. But Jesus is telling the disciples that his departure does not conclude the powerful ministry he has done, but that the result of their faith will be even greater works! Jesus did many works, miraculous ones even, but what was the ultimate mission of his ministry on earth? (c.f. 3:16; 5:19-21; 6:28-29)
33. Since no one can do anything greater than Jesus' atoning work on the cross for sin, what does Jesus mean by calling the disciples work "greater" than his? (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:45-47; Acts 1:8; 2:41 compared to 1 Cor. 15:3)
34. Why do you suppose conversions are greater works than miracles? (John 3:3, 16; 5:24; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3)
35. At first glance, this passage seems man-centered since it talks highly about the work of the Jesus' disciples and that they will receive the things they ask for. But how is this passage actually still God-centered?
36. In the Old Testament the word "name" often referred to reputation or renown. God is often described as acting on account of his name or "for his namesake."<sup>24</sup> In light of this, what does Jesus mean when he promises if we "*ask anything in my name, I will do it*"? (c.f. Matt. 6:9-10)
37. What would our prayers look like if we consistently petition God in the name of Jesus (as His representatives)?

### VIII. Conclusion

How does Jesus want us to overcome anxiety in life? You persevere in belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ. You abide in the comfort of an invisible Savior through the love of the saints in the visible church. You abide in the Christ's strength and not your own. You abide as a sojourner knowing Jesus has prepared an eternal home and that he will come to get you. You abide in the knowledge that Jesus not only shows the way to salvation but is himself the way – not only to heaven but to a relationship with the Father! And though Jesus is not here physically, he still manifests himself through us as our faith produces greater works with an eternal impact as we represent God's glory to the world! This is what comforts the troubled soul and causes the believer to worship!

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<sup>24</sup> Psalm 23:3; 31:3; 109:21; Is. 48:11; Ezek. 20:44