

I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life (Pt. 1)

John Chapter 14:6
The Father Featured

From a mountain on the sea of Galilee to a graveside on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, we have followed the Great I AM as He has satisfied the hungry, scolded the hypocrites and soothed the hurting. At each stop, the audiences have been public, if not always large. But now, this article takes us to a private room above the streets of Jerusalem. It's the city's busiest time of year, as Jewish men from every quarter of the known world fulfill their religious duty by attending the Passover. In contrast to the confusion of the bustling streets below, our Lord Jesus calls aside His disciples to enjoy one of the most intimate and important conversations we have recorded in the Scriptures.

Here, He divulges truth that had not been known up to this point and reinforced teaching that they should have known all along. He instructs them in humility and holiness when He takes up a servant's towel to wash their feet. And then, He makes them aware of the resources they will have to guide and empower them after He leaves. It's in the middle of this insightful seminar that the Lord takes time to calm their anxious hearts and assure them of a future reunion after His departure. In this setting, He gives them the powerful message; "I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life." A simple phrase to remember but one full of lofty and layered teaching.

To unpack the fifth statement in our series, we must take a broader look at John's gospel's themes and context. This includes considering chapter one, where the mention of the Father/Son relationship combines with a tabernacle reference to plant seeds that will bear fruit in the upper room. Then, chapter two, as the wedding in Cana, leads into cleansing the temple and provides imagery to help us further appreciate the Lord's farewell consolation.

Perhaps the most essential teaching in the upper room is given as the Lord reminds Philip that the One in the centre of their company was manifesting the Father as they spoke. If ever there was a thesis statement for the fourth gospel, it would be the words "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (Jn 14:9). Moses longed to see the glory of God but was only permitted to see His back parts, as the Lord said, "there shall no man see me, and live." (Ex 33:18-23). But now, these ordinary men were

looking into the very face of Jehovah, and not only did they not die; they were acquiring a full knowledge that Moses had never realized in all of his conversations with the Lord.

This theme is expanded on in the epistles. (Heb 1:3, Col 1:15). However, we need to look no further than the outset of John's account to find a parallel when we read, "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (Jn 1:18). In following Him in His public ministry from Bethabara into Galilee and beyond, we witness the personality of the Father told out in the Son.¹ In a world where tyrannical disciplinarians, aggressive abusers and unfaithful promise-breakers have warped our view of fatherhood, a display of the perfect Heavenly Father is both necessary for our understanding and refreshing to our souls. As the Son performed healing miracles, He highlighted the Father's sensitivity toward the sick. When He rebuked the Pharisees for their empty religion, He revealed God's hatred of hypocrisy and, with grieving families, He proclaimed a paternal sympathy for the sorrowing. Marvellously, each of His movements precisely displayed the Father's righteousness, faithfulness and love as He brimmed with "grace and truth." (Jn 1:14).

But it wasn't just the activities of the Lord Jesus that gave insight into the character of God. His systematic teaching revealed things about Jehovah's relationship with His people that were not emphasized in the Law and the Prophets. While references to the Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament are sparse and sometimes only inferred², the theme is front and centre in the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus. He taught His disciples to pray like no individual was instructed to pray before when they would say, "our Father which art in heaven." (Matt 6:9). At times, He comforted them by ensuring them that the Father knew all their needs and would only give them good things. (Matt 6:32, Matt 7:11). He also assured them of eternal security by insisting that the firm grasp of the Father's hand forever kept them from perishing. (John 10:29-20).

So, despite Philip's confusion in the upper room, these men had known the Father's character through the Son's life and teaching. Because of this, they had a personal interest in the Father and a sincere desire to know His presence. Even before exploring the tabernacle and bridegroom themes, we can appreciate the Lord's

¹ Thomas Newberry, The Englishman's Bible (notes on John 1:18)

² (Ex 4:22, Jer 31:9, Ps 103:13 et. al)

declaration in at least three different aspects. When He said I Am *the* Way, what did He mean?³

1. ***He is the only way to the Father for Salvation:*** Contextually, with the Father's house in view, we are learning that there is no other way to heaven but through Him. (Cf. Acts 4:12)
2. ***He is the only way to the Father in Worship:*** As He taught the Samaritan woman, He carefully pointed out that worship is now connected with the Fatherhood of God. (Jn 4:23). Later, the Son's intermediary role is highlighted in the epistles when we are shown that our offering of praise in worship is made through Him. (Heb 13:15, 1 Pet 2:5)
3. ***He is the only way to the Father in Prayer:*** Only a few verses after this, the Lord Jesus will introduce what some have called the "key to the audience chamber." We have absolute confidence as we enter the presence of the Father in prayer because we do so in His name. (John 14:13-14)

As our next article dives deeper into this paternal theme, we must keep in mind the importance of what we have just learned. Maybe the words of Mary Jane Deck Walker's hymn express it best:

***O Spotless Lamb of God, in Thee
The Father's holiness we see;
And with delight Thy children trace,
In Thee, His wondrous love and grace.***

***For Thou didst leave Thy throne above
To teach us that our God is Love;
And now we see His glory shine
In every word and deed of Thine.***

³ References to T.E. Wilson, *The Farewell Ministry of Christ* (Port Colborne, ON: Gospel Folio Press, 2001) p 44.

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