

4. Jesus reassured His apostles that His departure would see them endowed with effectual power; because He was going to the Father, they were going to do greater works than He had done and His Father would give them all that they sought in His name. His departure was not going to leave them aimless or powerless; He would grant them all that was needful for fulfilling their role in His purposes for the world. But this provision had a critically important premise: *The effectual power Jesus was promising presupposed their oneness with Him*. For their work was not going to be their own done on His behalf, but His work performed through them, just as His work had been His Father's. And at the center of all of this was Jesus' promise of the Spirit (14:16-20).
- a. This is the context for Jesus' statement in verse 15 and it is the lens through which it must be interpreted. Noting that the statement seems out of place in the flow of the passage, some treat it in isolation as a general principle marking out Jesus' true disciples. Others largely ignore it, regarding it as a later addition to John's original manuscript. But examined within the larger context, this statement is neither foreign to Jesus' argument (cf. 14:21-24) nor merely an ethical sidebar.

The first task is to examine John's language and grammar. He recorded Jesus' words in the form of a third class condition. Conditional statements consist of two clauses: an "if" clause (protasis) and a "then" clause (apodosis), with the latter following as a consequence of the realization of the former. Conditional statements thus take the form, *if this, then this*. Greek has four such conditional structures, the difference being the way the fulfillment of the protasis is viewed. With the third class condition, the protasis is viewed as undetermined, but likely to be fulfilled, with the degree of likelihood determined by the context. Here, Jesus was speaking about the likelihood of His apostles' actual and abiding love for Him and the implication for their obedience: If it was indeed the case that they loved Him, then they would keep His commandments. This points to two further considerations, namely Jesus' meaning in the "then" clause (what He meant by "keeping His commandments") and the relationship between the two clauses (how the love and obedience Jesus was speaking about relate to one another).

Those who regard Jesus' statement as a general ethical maxim tend to treat the idea of "commandments" broadly as encompassing the body of moral, ethical and spiritual duties to which Christians are obligated. Some interpret these obligations in terms of the so-called "moral law" said to be summarized in the Decalogue; others believe Jesus was referring to just those directives He personally issued ("My commandments"). Still others take a somewhat broader view, making Jesus' statement encompass every New Testament commandment and directive (often referred to under the title, "the law of Christ"), whether or not it originated with Jesus Himself (so note 1 Corinthians 7:1-13). Finally, others take a more constrained view, defining "commandments" in this verse in terms of the specific directives Jesus issued during the course of the Upper Room episode. Those commandments focus on the disciples' obligation of love: love for their Lord expressed in their love for one another, thereby testifying of Him to the world (ref. 13:12-17, 34-35, 14:15, 21, 23-24, 15:4, 9-17, 26-27, 17:20-23).

John's terminology is also important in determining Jesus' meaning. The noun he used here rendered *commandment* has a wide semantic range. It can denote a particular command or directive (13:34), but also a general set of precepts or instructions (12:49-50). Here, John seems to have employed it more in keeping with the latter idea. For while Jesus spoke of "commandments" which His apostles were to keep, *in context they all pertained to their overarching obligation to live into and manifest the truth of their new life in Him which He was going to bring about by His departure and return in His Spirit*. He wasn't calling them to obey a set of laws or commandments as a new (or restated) code of Christian conduct, but instructing them concerning what was to come, how it would implicate them and what it would require of them as His disciples and witnesses.

From the time He called them, Jesus had instructed His apostles by disclosing Himself to them and showing them how all of the Scripture testified of Him – how it was that Israel's God was fulfilling all of His promises in and through Him. He'd revealed Himself in truth and they had embraced Him as devoted disciples. They believed they loved Him and were fully committed to Him, but Jesus understood what they didn't: Everything was about to change, sorely testing their devotion and commitment. And even if they stood firm in the trial of the next days and weeks, their lives with Him were going to be very different from this point forward. But if they truly loved Him, they would trust Him and bind themselves to His instruction. His "commandments" – the truths to which He called them – would light their path, steel their resolve and secure their peace and joy as they carried out their calling in His name.

And so there was nothing mysterious, complex or out of place in Jesus' assertion. He was simply affirming a truth which these men had witnessed in Him and should have understood: *Love presupposes a true knowledge – a relational intimacy and bond – that is compelling* (15:9-10). People frequently think and act in ways that are inconsistent with the facts they understand and embrace; informational knowledge doesn't elicit love or the devotion of mind and heart. But true knowledge of the *person* of Jesus, who is the human embodiment of all truth, does bind, animate, reshape and redirect the mind, affections and will. Knowing Him means loving Him and being conformed to Him (Philippians 3).

- b. Authentic love for Jesus compels conformity to the truth as it is in Him. But this conformity transcends intellectual and ethical compliance; it is conformity of *union* and *transformation*. Jesus was affirming to His apostles that loving Him involves becoming like Him – not just behaviorally, but inwardly. But this sort of conformity – this *christiformity* – lies beyond human capacity. Thus Jesus followed His exhortation to "keep His commandments" with the promise of the Spirit: Love for Him and conformity to Him were essential to their mission on His behalf, but *He* would meet their need by the provision of the Spirit (14:16). Here Jesus expressed this in terms of the Father sending the Spirit in answer to His petition (cf. 14:26); later He would say that *He* was sending the Spirit (15:26, 16:7). In this ministration, too, Father and Son are perfectly and entirely one.

The Father and Son were going to send the Spirit, but as the Son's abiding presence and power with His own in the world and for the sake of the world. Jesus identified the Spirit as the *Paraclete* – one called alongside as an advocate and helper, but an advocate and helper of the *same sort* as He had been. And not in the sense of similarity, but sameness: In a profound way, the Paraclete would be Jesus returned to gather His disciples to Himself (14:3) by taking them up in His own life. The Spirit was coming as the *Spirit of Christ*, so that Jesus would remain with His disciples by indwelling, renewing and transforming them into His own likeness (14:18-20). It is important to note that this truth doesn't imply a change in the person of the Spirit or confusion of identities within the Trinity, but simply the fact that the Spirit's role – like every component and aspect of God's purposes for His creation – was to find its destiny in relation to Jesus. Up until that point in the salvation history, the Spirit had functioned in Israel and in the world as the *Spirit of Yahweh*; henceforth, and by virtue of the fulfillment of the divine purposes in the Messiah, the Spirit would forever interact with the creation as the *Spirit of Jesus*. If the Spirit was God's presence and power in His creation and on its behalf, that role was now bound up in Jesus. Like everything else in the divine plan, the Spirit's role was to be forever christified.

- c. The Spirit was soon to be sent into the world as the Spirit of Jesus – here, the *Spirit of truth*, which is to say, the manifest presence and power of the truth as it is in Jesus (cf. 14:26, 15:26-27, 16:13-15). And precisely for this reason He is the Spirit whom the world does not perceive or discern and therefore cannot embrace (14:17). He is Yahweh's Spirit who directed and empowered Jesus' messianic work (cf. Isaiah 42:1-4 and 61:1-11 with Luke 4:1-21; cf. also Matthew 12:9-28; Mark 1:1-15; Luke 10:17-22; Romans 1:1-4; Hebrews 9:13-15), so that men's unbelief and rejection of Jesus is their disbelief and refusal of the Spirit.

In their alienation and blindness men cannot discern or embrace the Spirit, and Jesus' apostles had certainly experienced this over the previous three years. Now the world's refusal of the Spirit of truth was about to reach its climax in the Messiah's crucifixion, and even His most devoted disciples would stumble in the hour of testing. The Spirit had abided with them and manifested His presence and power in the person of their Lord, but their knowledge and experience of Him were about to become *living* and *inward*: The Spirit had been *with* them, but soon He would be *in* them. In that way Jesus Himself would be in them and they in Him (14:18-20). And, because of the inherent union between Him and His Father, Jesus' presence in His disciples would be His Father's presence in them. In the person of the indwelling Spirit, Father and Son were going to make their abode in men, thereby gathering them into the Father's dwelling place (14:23).

- d. Jesus prefaced His introduction of the Spirit by speaking of the obligation of love and obedience and now He returned to that theme (14:21). He wanted His disciples to understand that this obligation must be understood in terms of the Spirit's role and work, even as the Spirit is the premise and power for meeting it. What He was requiring of them (and all men), He'd secure by His Spirit.

But once again, the Lord's meaning was lost on His hearers. Peter, Thomas and Philip had already expressed the disciples' lack of understanding and now it was Judas' turn. (This Judas was also known as Thaddaeus; Mark 3:16-19.) When Jesus spoke of disclosing Himself to those who love Him and hold to His instruction, Judas heard Him to say that He was limiting His self-disclosure to His inner circle of disciples (14:22). Rather than hearing what Jesus was affirming and promising, his ears were tuned to what Jesus seemed to be implying. He had been speaking in terms of what lay ahead for *them*, His chosen apostles, and Judas assumed He was still referring to them when He promised to disclose Himself to those who love Him. The apparent implication, then, was that this intention didn't extend to the world of men. Judas was startled by this, highlighting the fact that the apostles had understood Jesus' mission in global terms. And so they should have, for this was exactly how He presented it (ref. 3:14-17, 4:1-42, 6:24-51, 7:37-38, 8:1-26, 9:1-5, 10:14-16, 12:30-32, etc.).

The Lord responded to Judas' question in a way which seemed to avoid it altogether. Rather than answering him directly, Jesus restated in a modified form the same assertion which had provoked Judas' question (cf. 14:23-24 with 14:21). He substituted His *word* for His *commandments* and reversed the order between loving Him and keeping His instruction. He also added the antithetical proposition, namely that those who don't love Him don't keep His word. The other notable difference is Jesus' modification of His promise: He restated His pledge to *disclose Himself* to those loving Him and keeping His word in terms of *Him and His Father coming and making their abode with them*.

At first glance it appears that Jesus didn't answer Judas' question, but He answered him in a way which addressed the erroneous thinking behind the question and not just the question itself. It was clear that Judas was missing His point and so Jesus brought him back to it; there's no benefit in answering a misguided question without first correcting the misunderstanding that provoked it. The answer to Judas' question was that Jesus wasn't going to limit His self-disclosure to a select group of individuals; His mission was indeed global in scope. For He was Israel's *Messiah* – the seed of Abraham and Davidic Servant appointed to restore and regather all the earth's families. And toward that end, He would soon commission Judas and his counterparts to carry on His work by taking the good news of His triumph and kingdom to the ends of the earth.

And yet, the universality of Jesus' mission was subject to a very real limitation. Judas was wrong in concluding that Jesus was not going to show Himself to the world, but it was true that His self-disclosure would be limited – not in terms of *presentation*, but with respect to *reception*. The response Jesus had encountered in Israel was going to be repeated in the Gentile world; as Israel had treated her Messiah, so the world would treat His witnesses (15:18-27). Thus Jesus answered the question about the extent of His self-disclosure by reasserting its nature: This disclosure concerns *relational* knowledge (vv. 20, 23) expressed in authentic love and conformity to the truth. This is why it pertains to disciples and not the world.