

Love and Obedience

John 14

Notes of Bible Reading with J. A. T.

(from "An Outline of Sound Words" No. 2, p. 18)

John 14: 1-3. We can estimate but imperfectly what it was to have the Father's house presented to the disciples for the first time — for nowhere else is "it spoken of. Jewish hopes looked for the manifestation of Christ on earth, but now, instead of that, it is the full revelation of the Father's house to which the Lord directs their hearts. They had believed in God without a manifestation of God; now they were to have Him as the direct object of their faith. Then He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." Redemption having settled every question of our sins — and thus prepared us for the place — His presence there prepares the place for us. He is coming again to receive us to Himself, but, between His going and His coming, He has sent the Holy Ghost that in heart and spirit we may know the Father's house before we get there. The coming is dropped in the rest of the chapter which is the unfolding, all through, of the power of the Spirit.

John 14: 4-7. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." It is as if He had said, "Ye know the Father's house." Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus immediately says, "I am the way " — the way to the Father's house, and the way to the Father. We have come to the Father, and thus to all the deepest blessedness of the Father's house. It is the Father's presence that makes the Father's house. Christ is the revealer of the Father: to receive Jesus as the Sent One of God is to have the Father revealed in the fullest sense. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee (the Father) the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17: 3).

Is the Father's house for others besides the Church?

What John presents is only for this dispensation. The Father's house will not be revealed to saints in the Millennium. But we have entrance, by the Spirit, to where He is gone. Hence while it is no question of corporate blessing, only those who compose the Church know this blessedness now. Not that Abraham, and such, will not know the Father in the future, but they never knew it on earth.

John 14: 8-11. Philip seizes the thought of the Father, and so he says, "Shew us the Father," proving how little he had grasped the glory of the Person of the Lord. In reply, the Lord says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" His "words" and "works" were a full manifestation of the Father, in whose bosom He dwelt — that life of communion, that life of relationship, into which He was then introducing us. Thus we have the path of Jesus in His words and works; then the work of redemption to set us there, and then His coming again to bring us there actually.

John 14: 12-14. The works that He had done, they would do also, and more wonderful works, from the greater nearness to the Father as Man which He was to take. A poor sinner who receives His words now is brought into greater nearness than could be while He was on earth. "If ye shall ask anything in my Name, I will do it." That is the new blessing into which we are introduced.

John 14: 15-24. Now comes the path by which we can enjoy it unhinderedly. Love leads into the path, and then there need be no check to the enjoyment of all the Lord leads us into. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is. that loveth Me." Then the power of it — the Comforter, the Spirit of truth shall abide with you for ever, whom the world cannot receive. The Spirit is here because

the Lord is not here." "I will come to you," is a present thing, come for you is a future thing. The revelation of the Father was here, but the enjoyment of that revelation could only be in His going away. In touching words He almost reproaches them for not having discerned Him.

What are the commandments?

The commandments and words are very like each other. They differ essentially from the law. All that manifested His life here is given to us to form that life in us. The commandment is the direction of the Lord in certain things; but His words are connected with a higher spiritual intelligence that leads to the obedience to the word, when an actual command might not be found. What I see true of Him is now given me. The commandments have to do with certain details, but the word expresses the whole life, all that is seen true of Him is seen now as a commandment for me.

Does it need more communion to keep His word? "If a man love Me, he will keep my word." One walking in nearness to the Lord will not wait for a command, but seeing the life of the Lord — what is in Christ — the Holy Ghost produces it in me. As the Apostle could say, "By the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10: 1. I am formed by that life, in occupation with it. "I will come to you" is the result of the Spirit's presence — the opened eye to see Him Who has withdrawn from the world. "Because I live ye shall live also," is not merely security, but it takes in all His present service for us, that we may hang upon Him moment by moment.

"That day" is the Holy Ghost's day. Then "Ye shall know." This leads to the development of the words "I in you." The having the commandments is the proof of love. A careless child forgets the commandments, but an obedient, intelligent, child is glad to get his Father's words and treasures them in his heart.

John 14: 25, 26. What a comfort to them that the Lord speaks of the One He would send from the Father, bringing back to their remembrance all that He had said to them, and would teach them, so lighting up the path of the Lord Jesus as to bring them into the intelligence of it, and this He does for us too.

John 14: 27, 28. "Peace I leave with you." What a legacy! The peace in which He had ever walked down here, bringing us into association with Himself — not giving away. He was leading them into an unknown path. "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father." He had taken the subordinate place on earth as Man, but was now going back as Man to the place of nearness.

John 14: 29-31. The chapter does not close until the perfection of the path He had trodden is brought out — love and obedience. The love, the spring of obedience — doing His will instead of our own. This would lighten up the loneliest path of each one, that every act may be in obedience to that blessed One.