

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 17]

John 14:12-14 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

The greater things that Jesus is referring to is the spreading of the Gospel Message beyond the borders of Palestine to the whole world.

When Jesus says that we can ask Him for anything, He added three very important words *“in my name.”*

Jesus meant our answered request must be within the character and will of the Creator God.

We can never use the name of Jesus as a magical formula to seek to fulfil our selfish desires, that would be praying *“in our name.”*

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

There is only one test of loving God, that is to be obedient to His will. True love is **not** sentiment or emotion but a willingness to sacrifice our own desires for the welfare of those we love.

Such love is **not** easy for any human being, so God has made available to all of us the Holy Spirit.

Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as *“another Counsellor,”* indicating that He up to that time had been their Counsellor.

The key to the disciples being able to do greater things, than Jesus the Son of Man, is the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of the disciples.

The Greek word translated *“counsellor”* is *“paraklétos”* literally meaning one who is called to our side to aid us.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

One of the fruits of our relationship with the Holy Spirit is love. Godly love that cannot be generated by a human under their own strength.

Jesus adds that the coming into our lives of the Holy Spirit will be His return to this earth, for both the Holy Spirit and Jesus are truth.

For an extensive study of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit please download and study the many articles on the website under heading *“Holy Spirit.”*]

How is it that the vast majority of humans today do **not** know of or have the Holy Spirit in their lives?

What we see or experience depends on what we bring to the sight and to the experience.

Any person who has eliminated God from their lives will never see or experience the Holy Spirit who is God.

The simple fact is that the vast majority of humans are too busy to give the Holy Spirit a chance to enter into their lives, nor wish Him to start directing their lives.

The Holy Spirit will never gatecrash into the life of a person, we have to ask for Him to come into our lives. [Luke 11:13]

The Holy Spirit, Who is God, will only come into our lives on His terms. [Acts 5:32]

Notice the two different phases of the receiving of the Holy Spirit, “with you” and “in you.”

John 16:8 [NIV] *“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”*

This is the “with you” experience of the Holy Spirit, only after this has happened in our lives will we be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to come into our lives and direct them.

John 14:25-31 [NIV] *“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. ‘Come now; let us leave.’”*

There is never any time in life when a Christian can say that they know the whole truth.

A true Christian will never shut their minds to additional revelation of the truth.

This promise of the Holy Spirit bringing to remembrance all that Jesus said ensures the validity of the New Testament.

The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life and teaching and the Holy Spirit brought all this back into the minds of the disciples as they wrote their record of these events and words.

The end result of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a deep and lasting peace.

Worldly peace is usually defined as the absence of conflict.

The peace that comes with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is confident assurance in any circumstances, no need to fear the present or the future. [Philippians 4:6-7]

Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt and other forces are at work in the minds of every human being.

Entry of the Peace of God, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, restrains these hostile forces, offering comfort in place of conflict.

Job is a good example of the peace of mind that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit brings. [Job 13:15; Job 19:25-27; Job 14:12-17]

Such contentment in life is something that we have to learn by experience. [Philippians 4:11-12]

Although Satan is the prince of this world [2 Corinthians 4:4; Matthew 4:8-9], his powers exist only because God allows him to act. [Job 1:15; Job 2:6]

John 15:1-10 [NIV] *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”*

In the Old Testament Israel was often depicted as a vine or vineyard. [**Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-2; Psalms 80:8**]

The vine was the very symbol of the nation of Israel.

Jesus calls Himself the true vine, the Greek word translated “true” is “*alēthinos*” meaning real, ideal or genuine.

When the vine was used as a symbol for Israel in the Old Testament it was always linked to degeneration, this is how the prophets saw Israel.

For a vine to be fruitful it has to be pruned vigorously.

A young vine was **not** allowed to fruit for the first three years but cut back drastically so it would develop and conserve its life and energy. When mature it was pruned twice a year and any non-fruit-bearing branches were drastically and mercilessly pruned back so they did **not** drain away the strength of the plant.

The wood of the vine has no useful value and in Israel it could not even be used for altar fires.

So all the non-fruitful branches were burnt up and destroyed.

Jesus Christ is the central vine of Christianity and all His followers are the branches nourished from the central vine.

The fruitful branches are true Christians who are living their lives in union with Jesus Christ.

But followers of Jesus Christ who become unproductive, only having a superficial commitment to Jesus Christ, will be separated from the vine, cut off and cast aside.

Jesus makes a distinction between these two kinds of pruning.

a) Separating – These are the unfruitful branches that are cut off completely so as to no longer infect the rest of the vine, and will be cut off from Christ’s life-giving power.

b) Cutting back – Fruitful branches are pruned in order to promote growth and hence produce more fruit as they remain in constant contact with Christ, the true vine.

This is the discipline that the writer of Hebrews mentions we must accept. [**Hebrews 12:4-11**]

What does remaining in Christ mean?

a) Believing that He is God’s Son. [**1 John 4:15**]

b) Accepting Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. [**Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9-11**]

- c) Obeying the commands Jesus gave to His disciples. [1 John 3:24; Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 28:18-20]
- d) Continue to believe the Gospel Message. [1 John 2:24]
- e) Loving the brethren, other true Christians. [John 15:12-13, 17; John 13:34-35]
- f) Take up and die on our own cross. [Luke 14:27; Romans 6:1-7]

This is what true Christians believe and do as fruit-bearing branches constantly joined in spirit with Jesus Christ.

John 15:11-17 [NIV] *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”*

Happiness is linked to things, places and situations, all of which are short-lived.

Joy is one of the fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ living in us, and is eternal, not linked with anything physical. [Galatians 5:22-23]

True love is always a sacrificial love, where we give up part of our lives, time or substance, to love another person.

Because Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master, He should look on us as slaves, but His great love for each of us makes us His personal friends, Greek word “*philōs*” meaning dearly loved associate.

As our Saviour, Lord and Master we owe Jesus Christ our unqualified obedience, but most of all Jesus asks us to obey Him because we love Him.

Jesus made the first choice, to love and die for us and then we can live with Him for ever.

We make personally the next choice, to accept or reject Christ’s offer.

But always remember without Christ’s choice we would have no choice at all to make.

The only fruit that will last are eternal fruits, that is the fruits of the eternal Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

All of the fruits that are listed here are found in the character of Jesus Christ.

These are the **only** things that we can take through and beyond physical death, as they are centred in our human spirit which will return to God at the point of our physical death. [Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 3:21; Ecclesiastes 12:7]

Notice the link between producing lasting, eternal, fruits and answered prayer.

The New Testament lays down certain well-defined laws about prayer that will be answered by God.

a) **Must be a prayer of faith** – [James 5:15] When prayer is a formality, merely the routine and conventional repetition of a form of words, it **cannot** be answered. To pray with power a person must have an invincible belief in the all-sufficient love of God. [Matthew 6:7-8]

b) **Prayer must be in the name of Christ** – We cannot pray for things that we know are contrary to the character of Jesus Christ. We cannot pray for things that Jesus would disapprove.

We **cannot** pray for any thing or situation that would hurt any other person, for Jesus Christ died because He loves them just as much as He loves us.

Any prayer that is aimed to fulfil our personal ambitions or satisfy our own desires is **not** real prayer at all.

c) **All prayer must be based on God's Will being done** – When we pray we must first realise that we never know better than God.

The essence of any prayer to be fulfilled is **not** “*Your will be changed*” but “*Your will be done.*” [Matthew 6:10]

d) **Prayer must never be selfish** – For example, as a holidaymaker we may be praying for hot sunshine, but a farmer may be praying in desperation for rain so that his crops will not die.

The greatest temptation in any prayer is to pray as if nobody but ourselves mattered to our Creator God.

e) **Our prayers must be aimed to bring glory to God** –

Matthew 6:9-10 [NIV] “*This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’*”

If our prayer is **not** based on these two statements then they have **not** taken the first step towards being fulfilled.

John 15:18-21 [NIV] “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.*”

The mind of Jesus again reverts to the impending clash with the forces of this world and considers the future position of His disciples.

Hatred is the antithesis of love and involves hostility.

Hate was inevitable for Christians are **not** part of this Satan-driven society. [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9]

The persecution of the master will be also experienced by the servants of that master. The Greek word translated servant is “*dōulōs*” meaning slave or bond slave. That was considered a part of the master’s property. Thus slaves would receive the same hatred and persecution as the master.

The reason for this persecution and hatred is ignorance of the true mission of Jesus Christ.

Jesus then quotes Old Testament scriptures. [Psalms 35:19; Psalms 69:4]

One thing is certain, no Christian who is persecuted could not say that they had not been warned.

Jesus then uses two names for the Holy Spirit –

Counsellor – Conveying the helping, encouraging and strengthening work of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit of truth – That points towards the teaching, illuminating and reminding work of the Holy Spirit.

Where did this hatred stem from?

It came from the crowd because of certain slanders that were said about Christians, to some extent responsibility for these could be placed on the Jewish leadership.

a) Christians were said to be insurrectionaries – because they would **not** accept Caesar as Lord, thus they were branded as dangerous and disloyal people.

b) Christians were said to be cannibals – This charge came from certain words of Jesus Christ that were easily misunderstood by people. [**John 6:48-56; Luke 22:19-20**]

This private meal of Christians they believed was based on cannibalism.

c) Christians were promiscuous immoral – The habit of greeting each other with the kiss of peace, and the weekly fellowship meals that were called love feasts. [**Jude 12**] It was easy to twist this title into a charge of indiscriminate immorality.

d) Christians were fire-raisers – The image that Jesus attached to His second coming foretold flaming disintegration and destruction of the world. [**Matthew 24:3-31; 2 Peter 3:10**]

e) Christians charged with breaking up families – Often children became Christians while parents did **not**, so homes were split and family divided. [**Matthew 10:34-37; Matthew 10:21**] Sometimes a wife would become a Christian and a husband did not.

Human society that is organised without God is bound to hate Christians who base their lives on the way God lives, the way of love.

The world suspects people who are different – Such people are regarded as eccentric and a danger to others' comfortable way of life.

The world acutely dislikes people whose lives are a condemnation of their own – Today a person can even be persecuted for working too hard or too long.

The basic demand of a Christian is to have the courage to be different to the society in which they live.

No person is a true Christian unless they are willing to accept the risk of persecution.

There always will be a difference between a Christian and non-Christian.

John 15:22-27 [NIV] *“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no-one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfil what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’ When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”*

Until Jesus came people had never had the opportunity to really know God or see fully demonstrated what kind of life God wanted us to live.

In a limited way people could **not** have been blamed for the way they lived.

You cannot expect a young child to react in the same way as an adult person with experience of how to live.

The more knowledge a person has the greater is the responsibility laid on them, [**James 3:1**].

Jesus came to provide a permanent remedy for sin **not** just an atonement or covering of sin.

Jesus also enlarged on the spiritual aspect of sin instead of the pure physical element of sin.

For example, you can commit adultery by just looking on a woman in a lustful way. [**Matthew 5:27-28**]

Anger vented against a person is committing murder in our heart and mind. [**Matthew 5:21-22**]

The major thing that Jesus brought with Him was the fulfilment of the promise made in **Joel 2:28-29**.

The availability of the power of the Holy Spirit to all humanity, **not** just a few who God was using to fulfil His plans for one selected nation, Israel. [**Acts 2:16-18**]

Without this indwelling power of the Holy Spirit **no** human being could keep the spiritual intent of the law, because it was based on love, an attribute that is **only** available from God who is love. [**1 John 4:8, 16**]

This offer of the Holy Spirit is as yet limited to all who obey God. [**Acts 5:32**]

With this gift of the Holy Spirit comes added responsibility for all who are matured by His indwelling power.

The responsibility to testify to what God has done for all humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The true reason for human life shown to us by the Spirit of Truth.