



I Will Come Again

Jesus is building a people that will honor God for eternity.

JOHN 13:31-14:6

Whether it is a military deployment, business trip, or trip to the store, goodbyes can cause anxiety. We want to know when the person will be coming back. Somehow, knowing the exact projected time eases the anxiety and we can look forward to being reunited. Assurance of a return produces confidence to endure. We also should have confidence as we anticipate Jesus's return.

How does knowing the time of a person's return from a trip, deployment, or errand ease anxiety?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOHN 13:1-14:6

The day before Jesus's crucifixion had arrived. He had told His disciples He would be put to death in Jerusalem. But as they gathered for their last Passover together, they argued over who would be greatest in Christ's kingdom (Luke 22:24-27). Jesus used a powerful object lesson to teach them humility and service.

Because travel took place on dusty roads, hosts typically offered water so guests could wash their feet. Sometimes servants performed this menial task, but in the upper room no one volunteered to assume that role. Jesus set aside His robe, took a towel, and washed the disciples' feet. At first, Peter resisted but yielded when Jesus said it was necessary. Jesus urged the Twelve to follow His example and serve others.

During the meal, Jesus referred to the presence of one who would betray Him. Quoting Psalm 41:9, He said someone who shared His food would lift his heel against Him. He identified the traitor by dipping bread in the sauce and giving it to Judas.

As Jesus prepared the remaining disciples for His death, He commanded them to love one another as He loved them. This section begins what some scholars call the Farewell Discourse. Responding to their confusion over His remarks, Jesus told them they could not go with Him yet. Peter declared his willingness to go with Jesus anywhere and even to die for Him. Jesus knew Peter's heart but predicted he would deny his Master before daybreak. Naturally, the disciples were troubled at His sayings. Jesus encouraged them to believe in Him. He promised to return and gather them to Himself. Thomas questioned where Jesus was going and how they could get there. Jesus pointed to Himself as the only way to the Father.

As you read through John 13:31-14:6, look for examples of the disciples not understanding what Jesus was saying. How do you think their understanding changed when they looked back on these events months and even years later?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

HONOR THROUGH LOVE (JOHN 13:31-35)

³¹ When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴ I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

VERSES 31-32

At the time of Judas’s departure, John—speaking both literally and figuratively—ominously declared, “And it was night” (13:30).

Once Judas left, Jesus addressed the Eleven—those who would remain faithful to Him. He returned to a theme He introduced earlier, His being *glorified* (12:23). The time had arrived; it was *now*. Shockingly, glorification would come through crucifixion.

Crucifixion in the first century was the most demeaning and shameful form of capital punishment. Yet Jesus saw the cross as the means for revealing God’s glory. His crucifixion would destroy the power of Satan and his hold on sinners (Rom. 6:6; 1 John 3:8). Rather than it be a moment of shame, the crucifixion would *glorify* the Father and reveal the *Son of Man* in His glory. Through Jesus’s pending crucifixion, *God* would be *glorified in him*. The crucifixion would be the ultimate display of God’s merciful love for sinners.

VERSES 33-35

When Jesus had been at the Feast of Tabernacles some six months earlier, religious leaders tried to have Him arrested. What He said to them then He repeated almost word-for-word to the disciples in the upper room. Both groups would *look for* Him but not find Him (John 7:34; 13:33). The difference was the religious leaders would look for Jesus because they wanted to kill Him—the disciples would look for Him because they would miss Him and long for the intimate friendship they had shared.

The farewell address of Jesus included *a new command*: His followers are to *love one another . . . as* he had *loved* them. This begs the question: How had Jesus loved them? John 13:1 says Jesus “loved them to the end.” The word “end” means that Jesus loved His disciples to the fullest measure or to the uttermost. He had demonstrated that kind of love in the most unexpected manner by washing the disciples’ feet—something only a servant would do. Jesus was demonstrating selfless love, the kind His followers were (and are) to put into action.

What a contrast this selfless love would be in a world filled with self-focused people who operate out of self-serving and self-aggrandizing motives. To practice this selfless kind of love would give evidence that a person was indeed one of His disciples.

How does love for others define a follower of Jesus?

BIBLE SKILL: Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.

Consider how many times the terms *glorify* or *glorified* occur in John 13:31-32. Use a Bible dictionary or similar resource to determine the difference between *glory* and *glorify*. How does glory reflect God’s essential character? List some ways Christ’s death, resurrection, and second coming glorify Jesus and God the Father.

HONOR THROUGH LOYALTY (JOHN 13:36-38)

³⁶ “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.” ³⁷ “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you

now? I will lay down my life for you.”³⁸ Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.”

VERSES 36-38

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had said He was going to leave. He announced at the Festival of Tabernacles, “I am only with you for a short time. Then I’m going to the one who sent me” (John 7:33). Ignoring what Jesus had said about the disciples loving one another, Peter returned to the topic of Jesus leaving. He asked Jesus two questions. His first, ***where are you going?*** showed either that the disciples still did not understand what Jesus was facing or that Peter was unwilling to accept that Jesus was going away. Either way, Peter could not reconcile the thought of Jesus leaving with His recently being declared by the crowds to be “the King of Israel” (12:13).

Jesus explained that Peter would not be going there now but would follow Him there later. This prediction of waiting was similar to what Jesus said when Simon Peter protested at the thought of Jesus washing his feet. He said, “What I’m doing you don’t realize now, but afterward you will understand” (13:7).

Peter’s second question, ***why can’t I follow you now?*** indicated he truly wanted to be with Jesus, regardless of the personal cost. How intensely Peter desired to be with Jesus is revealed in his rash yet sincere declaration: ***I will lay down my life for you.***

All four Gospels tell of Peter’s declaration of loyalty. Matthew recorded it as, “Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away” (Matt. 26:33). Luke stated, “Lord,’ he [Peter] told him, ‘I’m ready to go with you both to prison and to death’” (Luke 22:33). Mark said the other disciples felt the same way: “But he [Peter] kept insisting, ‘If I have to die with you, I will never deny you.’ And they all said the same thing” (Mark 14:31).

Unswayed by Peter’s declaration, Jesus asked, ***Will you lay down your life for me?*** This question indicated Peter did not yet grasp who was laying down whose life for whom. It would be Jesus who would willingly lay down His life for others (John 10:11,17-18).

The Lord’s saying, ***Truly I tell you,*** emphasizes the gravity and reliability of what He was about to say. Jesus declared Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed.

Peter must have been shocked by what Jesus said. Simon Peter, the rash disciple who was normally full of zeal and passion, evidently did not utter another word the entire time the disciples were in the upper room. Reading John's Gospel, we do not see anything else concerning Peter until Gethsemane when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (18:10).

How might a person's good intentions get derailed? How can believers honor Jesus through their loyalty?

HONOR THROUGH BELIEVING (JOHN 14:1-6)

¹ "Don't let your heart 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 am going to prepare a place for you? ³ If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. ⁴ You know the way to where I am going." ⁵ "Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

VERSES 1-3

Jesus turned His attention to the disciples as a group. He knew they were **troubled**. The Greek word translated *troubled* carries the idea of being stirred or agitated. It is the same word John used earlier to describe the waters at the pool of Bethesda. There, the lame man said to Jesus, "I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is *stirred up*" (5:7, emphasis added). Jesus knew what it was to have a troubled heart. He had felt troubled when He approached Lazarus's tomb. Additionally, His heart had been troubled when He spoke of His pending death and when He had told the disciples that one of them would betray Him (11:33; 12:27; 13:21).

Interestingly, Jesus used terms that disagreed in number. **Your** is plural and **heart** is singular. This was not a mistake. At this point the disciples were operating in complete unity. They all had been confused

and uncertain about what Jesus had been telling them—and by what Jesus had just said to Peter. If he would deny Jesus, what hope did they have of remaining faithful?

For the disciples, the remedy for this troubled heart was trust. Even though their world had seemingly turned upside down, Jesus instructed them to trust in the Creator and His Son. While the word **believe** is identical in both phrases, the first instance should be read as a statement, while the second is clearly a command.

Jesus taught and demonstrated His oneness with the Father. He was absolutely in harmony with the One who sent Him. If the disciples trusted the Father in other areas of life, they should trust Jesus in the matter of His messianic mission. Nothing would happen that He and the Father did not allow. Jesus had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again (10:18).

Jesus began to explain that the disciples' separation from Him would be temporary. The **Father's house** referred to heaven. The practice of first-century Jewish families called for a son to add onto his father's house a place where he and his bride would live permanently after the wedding (see John 8:35). Over time, the house might contain **many** separate housing units around a courtyard that the extended family shared.

For the ultra-wealthy, these shared family units were palatial dwellings with multiple levels, terraces, fountains, and gardens. Herod built these type houses for himself in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Tiberias, and Jericho. Knowing His disciples had seen these royal villas, Jesus was saying the place He would prepare for them would exceed anything that even the wealthiest of their day enjoyed.

Jesus previously stated He was going away. Now He promised He would **come again**—to take His disciples home with Him. What a promise! It is the picture of the bridegroom, having made all the necessary arrangements at his father's house, going to collect his bride so he might take her home to live permanently with him.

How does the promise of a place in heaven motivate a person to remain loyal to Christ?

VERSES 4-6

Thomas, reacting to what Jesus said, stated: **Lord, . . . we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?** His use of the plural *we* indicated the other disciples had the same unanswered questions.

Jesus responded by declaring He alone is ***the way, the truth, and the life***. Jesus is not merely one *way* among many ways to God. He stated plainly, ***No one comes to the Father except through me***. If it were possible to have peace with God in any other way, Jesus would not have to die. He had to go away—die—to prepare a path and a place.

Jesus is also *the truth*. We should not be tricked by humanistic pluralism that contends we must accept all religions, thoughts, and philosophies as equally valid to be inclusive of all people. The path to the Father exclusively goes through Jesus.

Finally, Jesus is *the life*. He is not merely the way to life; Jesus is the life. Paul reminded believers that Christ is our life (Col. 3:3-4). To have Christ is to have life. He possesses the power to grant eternal life to everyone who believes in Him (John 5:26; 17:2). Jesus's purpose in going away by way of the cross made it possible for believers to receive eternal life through Him.

Through the centuries, followers of Christ have found assurance in His declaration. In fact, this claim of exclusivity was so embraced by early believers that people referred to Christianity as “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 24:14). We rejoice because He is the way to the Father.

How does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life define why a person must believe in Jesus alone for salvation?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Last Things*

According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Hebrews 9:27-28.)

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers honor God by loving each other.
- Believers honor Christ by remaining loyal to Him.
- Believers honor Christ by believing in Him as they await His return.

List things the group does that honors God. How are the items listed connected to actions noted in today's passage? What actions does the group need to take to bring honor more fully to God?

Review your life. Is there a time when you placed your faith in Christ and His work? How have you done in fulfilling that decision? What changes might you need to make in order to live up to that decision?

PRAYER NEEDS
