

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #56

John 14:12-15

As we saw last time, the disciples needed a “crash course” on a variety of topics because time was running out on the life of Jesus Christ. Judas was out of the room and Jesus was using this final setting in this Upper Room to give them knowledge of things that would sustain them in the coming days, and new information that would help them make sense of this new dispensation known as the Church Age.

We come now to another “truly, truly” section. It is another text of dogmatic certainty. Now in **verse 11**, we may recall that Jesus says to His disciples that they are to believe in Him and specifically believe that He and the Father are one. **The works He did were designed to reveal the intimate connection that He had with God the Father and to clearly establish that He was God.** The big struggle that these disciples seemed to have was getting the connection figured out between Jesus Christ who is God the Son and God the Father. We may recall that in **verse 8**, Philip specifically asks Jesus to show them the Father. These disciples still didn’t realize they had been traveling with God.

JESUS CHRIST INFORMS HIS SPECIFIC DISCIPLES THAT EVEN THOUGH HE IS LEAVING, GOD’S WORK WILL CONTINUE, AND IF THEY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN HIM THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SOME GREAT GOD- GLORIFYING THINGS IN THE DAYS TO COME.

The specifics of these realities are given to the eleven disciples, not us. There are some commentators who take the position that the things here are given to any who believe on Jesus Christ (i.e. Thomas Whitelaw), but we agree with those such as John Calvin who don’t agree with that position. We may make some great applications, but the actual discussion here is given in another time and setting other than the Church Age. This may be easily proved because at the time of this discussion, the Holy Spirit wasn’t the key Person conducting God’s ministry here on earth, Jesus was (14:25-26).

DOGMATIC REALITY #1 – The one who believes in Christ will do the same works He does. **14:12a**

The demonstrative pronoun “he” (κακεινος) (“he do also”) is rare and in my opinion is the key to proper interpretation. It is a pronoun that specifically points to that person named or even not named that is specific to the context (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 137-138). **This specifically has to do with apostolic sign miracles**, which these disciples did end up doing (Mark 16:20). Also contextually the same works were works that revealed the connection between God the Son and God the Father. In other words, all of the miraculous things that Jesus did were designed to reveal the connection He had with God the Father and all of the same kinds of things that these apostles did were designed to show their connection to both the Father and the Son. This is exactly what the writer of Hebrews said when he said that God bore “witness with them (the apostles) both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit” (Hebrews 2:4).

Jesus is telling His Upper Room disciples and apostles that the disciple, who continually believes in Him and His Deity and connection to His Father, will do similar sign kinds of sign things that He did so others will believe the same truth.

In Acts 1:13, we get a list of the eleven who were in the Upper Room and when we track some of these apostles through the book of Acts, it becomes quite clear that they did do similar kinds of miraculous things on occasion (Acts 2:43).

DOGMATIC REALITY #2 – The one who believes in Christ will do greater than He did.
14:12b

Now when one reads this statement of Jesus Christ one is immediately forced to ask the question what in the world does this mean that the disciples will do greater works than Christ did. The works of Jesus Christ proved He was God and He did miracles that you and I will never do. I have yet to see even one of the great servants of God come back out of a tomb three days after being buried. I have yet to see the most faithful people on earth walk on water or turn water to wine. So we must wonder what did Jesus actually mean by this.

I want to point out to you that the second noun “works” is in italics, which means it was not in the older and better manuscripts. It was a word supplied by English translators. What Jesus literally says is that “in view of the fact that I am going to heaven, you will do greater things than even the miraculous works which I did, because I am back with My Father and both members of the Godhead will authorize greater things and the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, will be here on earth carrying out greater things through you.”

Now if the things they would do are classified as “greater” then they must be also different types of things.

This did not mean that the disciples would do more stupendous miracles than Christ did. In fact, even though the apostles did do some amazing miracles, they never topped the miracles of Jesus Christ. **But what they did do that was far beyond was Jesus did when He was here on earth, was have an outreach that brought people from all over the world into a right relationship with God.**

For example, Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children with five loaves of bread and a couple of fish and most of them never did get into a right relationship with God. However, Peter preached one message (Acts 2:41) and 3,000 were saved, something Jesus never did do while here on earth. **The reason this could all happen was because Jesus had gone back to the Father and both the Father and the Son were authorizing millions to come into a relationship with God.** The greater things refers not to greater sign miracles, but as Dr. Leon Morris said, to “mighty works of conversion” (*The Gospel According to John*, p. 646).

One cannot help but think of the fact that in just 300 years after Christ ascended into heaven the entire Roman Empire had been Christianized. Nearly all of the main pagan temples had been closed down because of what is promised in this verse right here.

Again I cannot help but be reminded of the story Dr. Chafer told of a young man who was dying in a hospital and through the faithful witness of a minister, came to faith in Jesus Christ and just before he died he said to the minister your spoken words have done “me more good than all of the Doctors’ medicine” (*Bib. Sac.*, 95:379 (July 1938), p. 348). The word spoken had saved that boy’s sinful soul and that is far greater than any physical miracle.

When you present the gospel to someone and they come to faith in Jesus Christ, you are involved in a far greater work than that of any physical miracle. God has just used you to communicate His living Word and His Holy Spirit has penetrated a dark, sinful, depraved, blinded, satanic heart and brought them to faith in His Son. It is one of the most stupendous things you can ever experience.

DOGMATIC REALITY #3 – The one who believes in Christ can pray in Christ’s name and expect an answer. **14:13**

This is an amazing development in the disciples’ concept of prayer. They had asked Jesus to teach them to pray and Jesus had taught them how to address the Father. **Now He adds the importance of His name**. This is not some magic formula given to us; it was specifically given to them. What Jesus is teaching these apostles is, as John Calvin said, He would be the Author “of all that shall be done by the hands of the Apostles” (John Calvin, *Gospel According to John*, Vol. 18, p. 90). Now someone will say, well I have prayed in Jesus’ name and didn’t get an answer or He did not do what I asked Him to do. But this is where the context becomes so critical.

First, the indefinite pronoun “whatever” “is used to introduce a member of a class without further identification.” But this does not mean it does not have some identification (Daniel Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 154). When this particular pronoun is used, it is used to generalize not particularize (Dana & Mantey, p. 134). **This pronoun does not eliminate the need to define some antecedent, as the very purpose of the pronoun is the take the place of a noun.** Let me illustrate the point. In Luke 22:35, Jesus asks His disciples did they lack “anything.” He uses the indefinite pronoun “anything” here. What did He mean by this? Did He mean they did not lack anything in the world? We know that is not true. They lacked a car, a home, friends, a good job, respect and may luxuries others had. So the pronoun “anything” must be specified and what it specifically meant is they did not lack the provisions necessary to carry out the apostolic assignment. When Jesus says they can pray for anything, He is not saying they could pray that they would be successful in opening a chain of nightclubs or restaurants; He has something which needs to be identified in His mind.

Second, Jesus is specifically addressing the twelve, minus Judas. **He is not addressing us, although we may make application of it.** In fact, we specifically know from **John 16:24**, that to this point these disciples had not prayed anything in the name of Jesus Christ. This was brand-new revelation to these disciples about prayer. Although there are lessons we may learn from the passage, this is a dispensational truth that must not be overlooked. Again, in tracking the apostles’ ministry in the book of Acts, we see that they did do similar works to that of Jesus Christ and they did so by using His name (Acts 3:6). We also see that they did greater works in the sense that many believed on Jesus Christ through them through the use of His name (Acts 3:16; 4:10).

Third, Jesus was very clear to point out that answers will be in the context of conformity with that which glorifies the Father and the Son (**John 14:13**).

Fourth, the context is that of doing greater things than miracles for God, which means praying evangelistically. One of the biggest neglects of the Christian life today is the neglect of “prayer evangelism.” When we start praying for opportunities to witness to people and ask God to lead us every step of the way, we are praying in a way that glorifies God and we will see some amazing things happen.

The Apostle John does make an application of this for us in the Church Age in I John 5:14-15. In that text, we clearly see that **asking in the name of Christ is synonymous with asking in accordance with the will of God. The goal of all answered prayer is to bring glory to God.**

Every thing Jesus did and said had as its goal the glory of God.

DOGMATIC REALITY #4 – The one who asks anything in Jesus’ name will move Christ.
14:14

Now the “if” clause which starts the verse in the protasis (dependent clause), the independent clause (apodosis) is “I will do it,” is a third class conditional clause, which means it is a clause of probability (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 288-290). What this means is that it will probably happen in the future, but not definitely happen (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 125). In fact, the reason an “if” clause is used is to diminish some of the definiteness of the matter (Ibid., p. 288). For example, you could not pray that some drug dealer would show up to your house and leave you millions of dollars worth of drugs and believe God would answer this request.

Obviously a critical part of all of this is to pray in Christ’s name. Now the disciples knew Christ by His most familiar name “Jesus.” Jesus was the name given to Him by the angel at the announcement of His birth (i.e. Luke 1:31) and it is a name that specifically emphasizes His work as Savior. It is to the name Jesus that every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9-10).

It is interesting to observe that **when the apostles did their miracles they always used the name Jesus**. Sometimes they used His name with the proper noun “Lord” and sometimes with the proper noun “Christ,” but **they always with the name “Jesus.”**

What Christ was about to do in just a few hours, die on a cross, was for the purpose of saving sinners. It would stand to reason that from now on the name that means this, “Jesus,” would be the name to be used. There is nowhere in Scripture where it is said that prayer is to be made in the name of Christ. The obvious reason for this is that Christ is the Jewish Messiah and this title will not come into play until the future when He will come to reign at the end of the Tribulation, during the Millennium.

Now this is not presenting a magic formula prayer pattern. The prayer must be made to glorify God the Father and God the Son and specifically this point is designed to show us that we are not worthy to approach God to ask Him for anything. Our only hope of praying to God is due to the name of Jesus Christ. God invites us to come to Him through Jesus Christ.

As Dr. John Walvoord said, the whole “basis of our prayer life ... is our union with Christ” (*Bib. Sac.*, 91:364 (Oct 1934), p. 468). We are carrying out His work in His name.

DOGMATIC REALITY #5 – The one who asks in Christ’s name must ask as one who loves Him and desires to keep His commandments. **14:15**

God is not giving an “in My name” carte blanche prayer system. He is saying if you want to move God in prayer, you must pray in accordance with that which glorifies God the Father and the Son and pray in accordance with obedience to the Word of God.

Dr. McGee said he often had people cite John 14:14 to him and ask what is wrong because they don’t see answers to their prayers. He said, I used to say to them “keep on reading.” Don’t stop at one passage.

The word “love” is agape. The connection between a love for Jesus Christ and moving Him in prayer is in application to the Word of God. If you truly love God and want to pray in a way that moves Him, you will keep His commandments. This love is the highest kind of love one may have because it is prayer that asks God for His highest good pertaining to the matter.

In other words, this love is not so much loving what we want, but what God wants.

In fact, Jesus will go on to say in this very Discourse that “the key to the condition of the believer which corresponds to being ‘in My name’ is found in the ministry of the Holy Spirit and in our abiding in Christ” (*Ibid.*, p. 468).

You go to God and ask Him to lead you to people to witness and ask Him to use you to reach people for Him and you will see God do great things through you and with you. That is what Jesus taught His disciples in the Upper Room.