

Bible Study Guide: Week of 5-11-2020

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

John 14:15-21

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Here, Jesus rather straightforwardly instructs his disciples to keep his commandments. Love is an activity, not a feeling. To love is to do the will of God and follow his commandments. This is the same passage in which Jesus commands his disciples to love one another as he has loved them. As we saw on Maundy Thursday, that is a tall task indeed because loving as Jesus loved involves laying down one's life for one's friends.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Here Jesus is describing the Holy Spirit. Interestingly enough, in John's gospel Jesus gives the Holy Spirit when he appears to the disciples in Chapter 20 (when Thomas is absent). Unlike Luke's account, in which the Spirit does not come until Pentecost in the book of Acts, John maintains that Jesus gave the Spirit on Easter evening. There is no reason, of course, that it cannot be a both/and. The Spirit is poured out on God's people regularly, in fact. Further, Jesus refers to the Spirit as "another Advocate;" Jesus is also an Advocate for God's people. And he tells the disciples that this coming Advocate will "be with you forever." Unlike Jesus, whose physical presence was only around on this earth for about 30 years, the Spirit will dwell with the church forever. Just like Jesus, the first Advocate, the world cannot receive, see, or know him. Remember in John 1, John tells us that the Word's "own people did not receive him." The Pharisees likewise, Jesus said in John 9, remain blind in their sin and cannot see Jesus as God's incarnate Word. Jesus promises that the disciples, on the other hand, will know and dwell with and be indwelt by the Spirit.

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Jesus again promises that he will not leave the disciples orphaned. It is not clear if his statement, “I am coming to you” is a reference to the coming Holy Spirit, or if it reflects an expectation of Jesus’ resurrection and/or his second coming. Once again, Jesus mentions “the world” over and against his disciples. “The world” in this passage refers to the part of creation that is hostile or ambivalent toward God. This is not to say that people from the world are not redeemable; rather, it recognizes that apart from the work of God in Jesus and the Spirit, the world is profoundly removed from God’s gracious will and ways. Again, the reference of “that day” is unclear. Is “that day” Easter? Pentecost? The day of Jesus’ second coming? Perhaps all of these, in some way or another.

21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Once again, Jesus refers to those who love him and keep his commandments. Jesus promises relationship with those ones, as well as mutual relationship with the Father.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to you to keep Jesus commandments?
2. Reflect on the coming of the Spirit in John 20 and the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2. Though John 20 is “chronologically” first, we are probably more familiar with Acts 2. In your mind, what do these two accounts of the coming of the Spirit say about God and the gift of the Holy Spirit?
3. Jesus promises that his followers will see him in coming days. Do you think he is speaking literally or figuratively? Where and how do we see Jesus most clearly today?