

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
14:21-26

21. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. 22. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world? 23. Jesus answered and said to him, If a man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. 24. He who does not love me does not keep my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 25. These things have I spoken to you while being present with you. 26. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.

21.--[*He who has...keeps...loves me.*] Our Lord seems to return to the lesson of the 15th verse and to repeat it because of its importance. There, however, He spoke specially to His disciples; here He lays it down as a general principle applicable to all Christians in all time: "He who not only possesses and knows my commandments but also does and practices them, he is the man who really loves Me." Obedience is the true test of real love to Christ, and not knowledge and talk only. Many HAVE, but do not KEEP Christ's will.

Burton observes: "This amounts to a declaration that the sad hearts and weeping eyes of the Apostles would not be accepted by their Lord as any proof of their love. Obedience was the test He chose."

[*He who loves...Father.*] Here follows an encouragement to practical obedience: "He who really loves Me and proves his love by his life, shall be specially loved by my Father. My Father loves those who love Me."

Let us carefully note that there is a special love of God the Father which is peculiarly set on believers, over and above the general love of pity and compassion with which He regards all mankind. In the highest sense God is a "Father" to none but those who love Christ. The modern doctrine of a "Fatherhood" of God which is soul-saving to those who neglect Christ is a mere delusion of man.

[*And I...love...manifest...him.*] Here follows another encouragement to the man who strives to keep Christ's commandments. Christ will specially love that man and will give him special manifestations of His grace and favor, invisibly and spiritually. He shall feel and know in his own heart comforts and joys that wicked men and inconsistent professors know nothing of. That the "manifesting" of Himself here spoken of is a purely unseen and spiritual thing is self-evident. It is one of those things which can only be known by experience, and is only known by holy and consistent Christians.

We should carefully observe here that Christ does more for the comfort of some of His people than He does for others. Those who follow Christ most closely and obediently will always follow Him most comfortably and feel most of His inward presence. It is one thing, as St. John says, to know Christ; it is another to know that we know Him. (1 John 2:3.)

22.--[*Judas (not Iscariot)...*] Jude, the writer of the Epistle and brother of James, was the Apostle who speaks here. He is called elsewhere Lebbeus and Thaddeus. Remembering that James is called in Galatians "the Lord's brother," there must have been some relationship between him and our Lord. Probably he was a cousin. Whether a recollection of this may have been in His mind when asking the question admits of conjecture. This is the only word recorded to have been spoken by Jude in the Gospels.

We should mark the careful manner in which St. John reminds us that it was not the false Apostle who asked.

Let us note that out of each saying of the three Apostles who spoke to our Lord, interrupting Him in His last discourse, a great truth was elicited for the benefit of the Church. Thomas, Philip, and Jude, ignorant and slow as they were, drew out of our Lord's mouth rich and precious sayings.

[*How is it that you will manifest, etc.*] This question is the simple inquiry of one guessing after the truth, and not able to see clearly what our Lord's words meant--whether a visible or an invisible manifestation of Himself. "What is the precise distinction of privilege between ourselves and the world to which you point?"

The Greek for "how is it" would be literally "what has happened." The Greek for "You will" is literally "You are about."

Whitby thinks that Jude, like most Jews of his time, expected Messiah's kingdom to be a visible temporal kingdom over all the earth. He could not therefore understand a manifestation of Christ confined to the disciples.

23.--[*Jesus answered...will love him.*] This sentence is simply a repetition of the truth contained in the 15th and 21st verses: "I tell you again emphatically that the man who really loves Me will keep my words and obey my commandments. And I repeat that such a man will be specially loved and cared for by my heavenly Father."

Let us note that in this verse our Lord does not say, "Keep my commandments," but my "word" generally, in the singular number, including all His whole teaching.

[*And we will come...abode with him.*] These words can only admit of one sense--a spiritual and invisible coming and abiding. The Father and the Son will come spiritually into the heart and soul of a true saint, and will make their continual dwelling with him. This, again, is a purely experimental truth, and one that none can know but he who has felt it.

Let us note the condescension of the Father and the Son, and the high

privileges of a believer. No matter how poor and lowly a man may be, if he has faith and grace he has the best of company and friends. Christ and the Father dwell in his heart, and he is never alone and cannot be poor. He is the temple of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The use of the plural number "we" is very noteworthy in this place.

24.--[*He who does not...sayings.*] Once more the same great principle already taught is laid down again from the negative side. Where there is no obedience to Christ, there is no love. Nothing can be more plain than our Lord's repeated warnings that practical obedience, keeping His commandments and sayings, doing His will, is the only sure test of love to Him. Without this obedience, [however], profession, talk, knowledge, churchmanship, yes even feeling, conviction, weeping and crying, are all worthless things.

[*And the word...not mine...sent me.*] The purpose of this sentence is to remind the disciples of the authority and dignity of our Lord's sayings and commandments. They are not His words only, but His Father's. He who despises them despises the Father, and He who honors them by obedience honors the Father.

25.--[*These things...spoken...present with you.*] Our Lord seems here to begin to wind up the first part of His discourse to a conclusion. Whether "these things" mean only the things He spoke this evening, or all the things He had taught them during His ministry, admits of doubt. I rather incline to the view that the expression must be taken in the widest sense: "These and many other things I have spoken to you while abiding and dwelling among you. Your hearts are troubled, perhaps, by the thought that you cannot remember them and do not understand them. Here there are some grounds of comfort."

26.--[*But the Comforter...send in my name.*] Here comes one more grand consolation: "When I am gone, the Holy Ghost, the promised Advocate whom the Father will send on my account, through my intercession, and to glorify Me, shall supply all your need and provide for all your wants."

Let us note how distinctly the Holy Spirit is spoken of here as a Person and not an influence.

Let us note how the Father sends the Spirit, but also sends Him in Christ's name and with a special reference to Christ's work.

[*He shall teach you all things.*] The first word here rendered "He" is unmistakably applicable to none but a person, being a masculine pronoun. The "teaching" here promised must mean, firstly, that fuller and more complete instruction which the Holy Ghost evidently gave to believers after our Lord's ascension. No one can read the book of Acts without seeing that the eleven were different men after the day of Pentecost, and saw and knew and understood things of which they were very ignorant before. But, secondly, the "teaching" most probably includes all that teaching and enlightening which the Spirit imparts to all true believers in every age. Light is the first thing we need, and He gives it. It is His special office to "open the eyes of our understandings."

The expression "all things" must plainly be limited to all things needful to be known by the soul, and does not include all knowledge of every kind.

[*And bring to your remembrance, etc.*] This is a special consolation for the weak memories of the troubled disciples. Our Lord promises that the Spirit would bring back to their memories the many lessons, both doctrinal and practical, which they had heard from Him but forgotten. This was a very needful promise. How often we find it recorded that the disciples did not understand our Lord's sayings and doings at the time they heard and saw them, it is almost needless to point out. (John 2:22, 12:16.)

Some apply these words especially to the gift of inspiration by which the New Testament Scriptures were written. I cannot see this. The promise was to the whole eleven, of whom only five were allowed to write! This is strongly dwelt on by Alford.

Some apply these words exclusively to the eleven. I cannot see this either. To my eyes they seem a general promise, primarily no doubt applying especially to the eleven, but after them belonging also to all believers in every age. As a matter of experience, I believe that the awakening of the memories of true Christians is one of the peculiar works of the Holy Ghost on their souls. Once converted, they understand things and remember things in a way they did not before.

Does anyone complain of his own ignorance and bad memory? Let him not forget that there is One whose office it is to "teach and to bring to remembrance." Let him pray for the Holy Spirit's help.