

## **WORKSHOP 400**

### **PATTERNS in I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE - John 14:1-14**

#### **Context informs and gives deeper meaning to I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life**

- John 14-16 is known as the “Farewell Discourse” where the last two “I AM’s” are presented.
- Jesus is now speaking privately at the Last Supper to his disciples after Judas departs.
- He explains the significance of his coming suffering, death, and resurrection in order to prepare them, hoping they will view these events through the eyes of faith.

#### **John 13:31-38:**

##### **References to the future**

- “After receiving the piece of bread, he (Judas) immediately went out. And it was night.” (John 13:30)
- Jesus will not be with them much longer, and hints at coming suffering and death.
- They cannot go where Jesus is going. (John 13:33,36)
- Jesus predicts Peter’s denials of knowing Jesus. (13:38)

#### **John 14:1-3:**

##### **BELIEF that Jesus and God are one is a sign of true faith.**

- John 14:1 - The word “believe” is used twice in John 14:1, and another 5 times in this chapter. (14: 10, 11, 12)

##### **Familiar Jewish tradition.**

- “My Father’s house” in Jewish tradition is God’s heavenly dwelling place now given new, deeper meaning. (John 14:2 – “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.”)
- To “dwell” is a metaphor for having a relationship with God and Jesus on earth as well.

##### **Reference to the future**

- John 14:2 - He is going to prepare a place for them.

#### **John 14:4-7:**

**NOTE:** John shifts the destination of Jesus’ journey from death to a new term, “the way.”

- “And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:4-5)

**Various scholars’ notes on 14:6** – “New Interpreter’s Commentary,” “Interpretation Commentary,” “Westminster Bible Companion”:

- The idea that Jesus is the tangible presence of God in the world is the central theological conviction of the Gospel of John.
- Our encounter with Jesus the Son makes possible a new experience of God as Father.
- In Jesus the early Christians, and we, can see and know God in a way never before possible.

- It has nothing to do with other religions, most of which did not even exist at the time.
- Some scholars describe this I AM statement not as an “exclusionary saying” but as “particularism.”
- John is saying “This is who we are.” We are the people who believe in the God who has been revealed decisively in Jesus Christ.

**Quote from Brian McLaren’s “Is Jesus the Only Way” ebook – p.26 (used with permission)**

<https://brianmclaren.net/is-jesus-the-only-way/>

“The core of this passage is found not in verse 6, but in verse 9: *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*. Here the irony becomes nearly unbearable (to me), as we contrast this statement with the conventional interpretation of verse 6.

“Jesus says in verse 9 that the invisible God has been made visible in his life. ‘If you want to know what God is like,’ Jesus says, ‘look at me, my life, my way, my deeds, my character.’ .....And what has that character been? *How many people has Jesus excluded, rejected, marginalized, condemned, tortured, or killed?*

“The answer: zero. Jesus’ way has been compassion, healing, acceptance, forgiveness, inclusion, friendship and love from beginning to end. But our conventional interpretation of verse 6 seems to say, ‘Forget all that. Forget everything you’ve seen in me....the way I’ve lived and treated people, the way I’ve accepted prostitutes and tax collectors, the way I’ve welcomed a Roman centurion and a Samaritan woman. Forget all that. Believe instead that God will reject everyone except people who share your doctrinal viewpoints about me, because I won’t let anyone get to the Father unless they get by me first.’”

### **John 14:8-14:**

**BELIEF that Jesus and God are one is a sign of true faith.**

- John 14:9-11 - Jesus makes this relationship crystal clear to his disciples regarding belief.

### **Reference to the future**

- John 14:12 - Jesus is going to the Father, and those who believe will be his successors who will do even greater works than Jesus.

**Conflict with Jewish leaders:** There is no mention of them in this passage or Vine passage.

## **PATTERNS in I AM THE TRUE VINE (John 15:1-17)**

### **Isaiah 5:1-7:**

#### **Familiar Old Testament connection**

- Isaiah 5:1-7 and other OT prophets describe Israel as God's vineyard, yet they do not produce good grapes.

### **Context informs and gives added meaning to "I AM the True Vine"**

- The Farewell Discourse continues. His audience is still his disciples.
- Israel is no longer the vine or the vineyard. It is Jesus who is the True Vine, suggesting that he is the True Israel.

### **John 15:1-11:**

#### **Important images presented:**

- Pruning = same Greek root as the word "cleansed" (15:2-3)
- Abiding = Greek the word "meno" means to stay, to remain, to stand fast, to dwell, to stay in place.
- Bearing fruit = doing works of love is the tangible sign of discipleship

#### **BELIEF in God and Jesus as one**

- Proof of this relationship is the image of the vine and branches as they are intertwined, abide (remain), and bear fruit.

### **John 15:12-17:**

#### **References to the future**

- John 15:13 - The greatest sign of love is to lay down one's life for one's friend.
- John 15:16-17 - Jesus' followers are the branches connected to the Vine, and are commanded to love one another and to bear fruit just as he has.
- As the branches, the community of faith is to continue to be intertwined with the abiding presence of God and Jesus.