

# “BELIEVE IN ME” (JOHN 14:1-11)

## TEXT

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to where I am going.” <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” <sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

## COMMENTARY

This section (14:1-11) is bracketed by the command to believe in Jesus – his words, his works (14:11), and especially in his person (14:1). In light of his impending sufferings and death on the cross, he knew how difficult this would be to his disciples’ faith. That is why he wants to strengthen their faith in him. He gave three reasons why they are to continue believing or trusting in him: (1) In Jesus, there is hope of eternity with God in heaven (14:2-3); (2) There is really no other way to get there except Jesus (14:4-6); and (3) Nothing or no one else satisfies like Jesus (14:7-10).

### COMMAND: “BELIEVE IN ME” (14:1)

**1** The disciples’ **hearts** are **troubled**, and it will be more **troubled** in the coming days. Why? Because Jesus told them that he was leaving them. They don’t understand why. Jesus repeated this in 14:27. “Jesus is looking ahead to the events of the evening and the next day, his arrest, trials, crucifixion, and death, which will cause his disciples extreme emotional distress” (NET

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

Bible notes). To be troubled is not wrong or sinful. Jesus, aware of his coming death, was also "troubled in his spirit" (13:21; cf. 12:27). The point is, don't let some uncertain or sorrowful events continually disturb you. There is reason for hope. That reason can be found in God and in Jesus. **Believe in God; believe also in me.**

Both occurrences of **believe**<sup>2</sup> (*pisteuete*) is in the present tense, active voice. It can either be translated as an imperative ("believe") or as an indicative ("you believe"). The point of John's Gospel is to call people to believe in Jesus (20:30-31). Jews thought they already believed in one God. They don't need to be told that. In light of the coming rejection of the Messiah, there may be doubts on his lordship. Jesus wants to convince them otherwise. So, the best translation would be that of NET, "You believe in God; believe also in me."

The phrase **in me** (*eis eme*) is emphatic in Greek. He did not say, "Believe me," but "**Believe in me.**" Although faith is believing truths about Jesus' words and deeds, it is more than that. It is putting one's trust in Jesus, resting on his promise of salvation. Jesus equates believing in him as coming to him as one who can be trusted to satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts (6:35). The command is in the active voice; it must be a personal decision of the human will. No one does the believing for us; it is an individual decision. We must personally "receive" him (1:12).

Jesus was emphasizing that faith must have him as object, not just God. True faith in God includes faith in Jesus. Without faith in Jesus, faith in God is not true saving faith. See 3:16, 36. Jews were monotheists. They may find it hard to have rooms for two objects of faith, unless of course that Jesus was also God, and he is.

The command, "**Believe in me,**" is in the present tense. It is true that the initial act of faith puts us in a right standing with God, but in John it often signifies a continuous activity of resting upon Christ (3:16; 20:30-31). Faith is not just a one time act, but a continuous response to God's revelation in Christ. "Continue believing and trusting Jesus; don't ever stop." Why should the disciples continue trusting in Jesus? Because Jesus is committed to bringing them to the end of their salvation, as the next section indicates.

## HOPE OF ETERNITY WITH GOD (14:2-3)

**2-3** The sequence of events: (1) Jesus' going to prepare place for us in the Father's house; (2) Jesus' coming again to take us to himself. **My Father's house.** "A Jewish betrothal meant that a man and woman were legally bound in marriage. Before the actual presentation of the bride to the bridegroom, the bridegroom would busy himself preparing a place in his father's house for the bride."<sup>3</sup> The **Father's house** (*oikia*) refers to heaven, the dwelling place of God's presence. There are **many rooms** (NASB and NET "dwelling places") there, signifying that the Father's love is wide to accept as many people as who will believe in Jesus (3:16). **Rooms** is from *monai*, a rare word occurring only here and in 14:23. According to Carson, "Rooms' in such a

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the Gospel of John, only the verb ("to believe") is used and not the noun ("faith" or "belief"), unlike in the Synoptics.

<sup>3</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ: A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 436.

house signifies nothing less than the sheer delight of forever dwelling in the unshielded radiance of the glory of God.”<sup>4</sup> “The point is not the lavishness of each apartment, but the fact that such ample provision has been made that there is more than enough space for every one of Jesus’ disciples to join him in his Father’s home.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus’ **going** refers to his leaving his disciples when he suffered and died on the cross, and again when he ascended to heaven after his resurrection from the dead. It refers to both Jesus’ once-for-all atoning work on the cross and his continuous intercessory work in heaven. His **going** is for the purpose (indicated by the infinitive) of preparing a **place** for believers. He himself will secure that place for us. All who will believe will surely get there.

**I will come again.** In a way this points toward his resurrection for in his resurrection Christ secured his disciples’ salvation. But this probably refers to his second coming because of the purpose of that coming again: **will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.** We will enjoy eternal fellowship with Jesus and with the Father. Jesus is enjoying continuous fellowship with the Father. Jesus wants us to enjoy the same. “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (17:3). Jesus uses the metaphor of **house** and **rooms** to signify that his intention in salvation is the enjoyment of our eternal fellowship with God. All who believe in Christ are promised a place in heaven, a place where they can be with Christ and enjoy eternal pleasures at the right hand of the Father.

How do we get there? Answer, there is really no other way except through Jesus, as the next section indicates.

#### NO OTHER WAY (14:4-6)

**4-5** The disciples **know the way**, according to Jesus in v. 4. This is a statement of fact. They already knew (the tense is perfect) before and they still know the way. The day they first met Christ they already knew for he is the way. But obviously, the disciples were not quite sure what Jesus was talking about. In v. 5, Thomas expressed his confusion, saying that they don’t even know where he is going, so how can they know the way to get there.

**6** In v. 6, Jesus clarified that he is **the way** to the Father. **I am** (*ego eimi*) here is emphatic, inviting them to look to him alone and to no one else. **The way.** He is the door where the sheep enters to find their resting place (10:7). **The truth.** He is the light of the world, revealing God to a world filled with darkness and sin (1:4-5, 9, 14, 17-18). **The life.** He is the source of life, the living water, the bread of life, the hope of our future resurrection, without him there is only death (1:4; 4:14; 6:35; 11:25-26). The definiteness of his description of himself - **the way, the truth, the life** - points toward his exclusive claim. “I am the only way to the Father, the only truth that reveals the Father, the only giver of life to those who will trust in him.” This is more evident in the statement: **No one comes to the Father except through me.** There is no other way. If you

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<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14-17* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 22.

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, D. A. Carson, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 1991), 489.

want to come to the Father, enjoy his presence, you must come through Jesus. Believing in Jesus is the bridge that connects us once again to the Father. We are so separated from him because of our sin. There is no other alternative to salvation. Salvation is impossible apart from faith in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). Why is Jesus the only way? Because of his unique relationship with the Father as the Son of God, as the next section indicates.

#### NO ONE ELSE SATISFIES LIKE JESUS (14:7-10)

**7 If you had known me...** Jesus told them that there is a one-to-one correspondence in knowing and seeing Jesus and knowing and seeing the Father. Jesus does not merely reveal God. In him, God himself is revealed. To see him is to see God. To know him is to know God. The opposite is true also. Not to see him is not to see God. Not to know him is not to know God. “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known” (1:18; cf. 1:14). This is true because Jesus is God himself, the Son of God.

**8 Show us the Father.** Philip expressed the disciples’ desire and longing for a vision of God. With that vision they will be satisfied. This is reminiscent of Moses’ request to God, “Please show me your glory.” Even Moses was allowed to see only part of that glory, unlike the disciples seeing the glory of God in Jesus, though they still don’t recognize it. As good as their desire might have been (there can be no greater desire, indeed!), they still fail to understand Jesus’ point. They were still on process in their faith journey with Jesus. They need to know Jesus more.

**9-10** Because of this misguided request, Philip received a mild rebuke from Jesus. They have been with Jesus for three years now, they should know him from what he had said and the countless miracles and divine acts he performed. **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** This repeats what he said in v. 7. It is a clear claim to deity, like what he said to the Pharisees in 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” In v. 10, Jesus again asserted his unity with the Father, **I am in the Father and the Father is in me...the Father...dwells in me.** Whatever Jesus said bears the authority of God himself. Whatever he does is a work of God. Jesus’ question to Philip, **Do you not believe?**, seems a way of urging him to assess his faith in Jesus and know him for who he really is.

Believing in Jesus means looking at him as God himself (6:40). We are not called to put our trust in a mere man for our salvation. We entrust our lives to God our Savior. Only then can we have true salvation. The disciples saw Jesus in the flesh. However, it was not necessary for us to see him in the flesh for us to have salvation. By faith, we look to him as he is revealed in the gospel, then we see the glory of Christ as God opened our eyes (2 Cor 4:4-6).

#### COMMAND: “BELIEVE ME” (14:11)

**11** Believing in Jesus involves both believing truths about him or spoken by him, and truths revealed through his miraculous works. **Believe** here is in the imperative (*pisteuete*). That belief has contents (indicated by *hoti*), and not an irrational, leap-in-the-dark kind of faith. One must **believe** truths about him revealed by his words. NIV added "when I say that..." clarifying that

Jesus was calling them to believe in his words. What do they need to believe about him. He said, “**I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.**” He already asked in v. 10 if they believe that, meaning, the Father dwelling in him. Jesus testified about a unique relationship he has with the Father, a relationship unequaled with a mere human being's relationship with God. “The Father and I are one” (10:30).

One must also **believe** truths about him revealed by his **works**. **Works** (*erga*) here refer to Jesus' “miraculous deeds” (NET). Jesus was calling them to look at those works and see that they were signs pointing to the reality that is Jesus. Faith is not in the miracles, but in the person behind those miracles.

*Derick Parfan (August 9, 2010)*