

Reading: John 14v1-14

Theme: All centred on Jesus.

Have you ever been on a mystery tour? If so, was it somewhere interesting or exciting? For years we lived in Barton upon Humber, which had fabulous views of the Humber Bridge, especially as it was being built - opened in 1981. The story is told of a couple from the town went on holidays to Skegness in the late 1970s and went on a mystery tour; one of the main stops was in Barton itself to view the bridge being built and have a meal in the town! They went home and had lunch with family! Mystery tours are fine unless you want to know you are going - which is where satnavs, maps and knowing the route well come in handy! I know some people have no sense of direction and easily get lost, take scenic routes when driving or in shopping centres!

The Lord Jesus had spoken of the secure home Christians have in heaven (v2-3) and in v4-11 shows that in Him there is a sure and certain way to heaven. In this section I want to look at 3 main things, but we will just see the first 2 of those today from v4-6 as we learn of this sure way to heaven.

1. Known, But Unknown! (v4 & 5)

Apologies if that sounds confusing - known but unknown! Remember that Peter in 13:36 asked Jesus where Jesus was going and in 14:2-3 Jesus spoke of Father's house and His going there to prepare a place for them, with the express purpose of a joyful and glorious reunion. As wonderful as that sounded, I think maybe the disciples had doubts and fears - as we might have had. They could have wondered "*How on earth will we get there?*" Jesus, aware of such fears and doubts says v4. Here is Jesus' assessment of these disciples

“You know...” Then Thomas, probably speaking for them all, says *“we don’t know...”* The way was known, but unknown!

Personally, I find this a comfort, as often I feel ignorant, useless, a waste of space. Yet the Lord knows better than you and me. He speaks and thinks much better of believers than we do of ourselves. Here the Lord Jesus spoke the opposite of what the disciples felt! They heard Him speak of great things - of Father’s house, of mansions, rooms, dwelling places there, of a joyful reunion and yet probably felt they did not have a clue how to get there, how to achieve heaven. They have questions, doubts, fears and even unbelief.

If we are honest, we see such in our lives at times, feel our weaknesses and seem to see things through a cloudy, confused, mixed-up understanding. It is not out-and-out unbelief, the cold doubt of a non-Christian, but is a painful mixture of belief, doubt and the crippling guilt feeling that we should be more believing! Thankfully, Jesus knows us through and through just like He did here with Thomas and He will take time to instruct us and build us up.

The disciples knew the way, but did not realise, recognise or understand such. The disciples and we are so slow to apply that which we know! These disciples knew more than the majority of the Jewish nation and its leaders. Yet the disciples did not value or understand fully what they knew of the Lord Jesus - His life, teaching or work. They did not apply their knowledge aright - they looked for glory, an earthly kingdom and could not grasp Jesus’ true work and so they did not have a clue of the place He was going to or the way there! Thomas also felt clueless as to where Jesus was going or the way there.

Yet Jesus had shown where He was going and they should have recognised the way. So, it is an appropriate heading “*known, but unknown*” for v4-5!

We can be in similar and confusing situations, when we think one thing, but feel confused, perplexed and useless, but often we know what is right. We are like so many believers and we so easily undervalue God’s work in our lives, the Holy Spirit’s work in our souls and in our church. This may be heightened by our own temperaments, emotions or bodily condition - ill or healthy, fit or out of condition, refreshed or tired, relaxed or stressed.

If we are a Christian, then we have had a great work of God occur in our lives and by, through God’s Holy Spirit, that work is still going on in a variety of ways as we are becoming more Christ-like. Yet often we forget this, fail to realise it and we also know, but don’t know also! We are to learn from the Lord’s and Thomas’s words here and take time out to consider and recollect God’s work and goodness to us as individuals and as a fellowship. As we do so, we are to be encouraged to go on to serve the Lord. Now see:

2. Exclusively Centred on Jesus. (v6)

In response to Peter’s question as to where Jesus was going in 13:36, Jesus dealt with the place to which He was going. In response to Thomas’ question, Jesus deals with the way, but substitutes “*Father’s house*” with “*the Father*”. We do not start on the way to heaven and then find God. There is no way to heaven without finding God in the first place. Many people have an interest in religion, philosophy, charity, good works

and morality. Yet these are not the way to heaven! To go to heaven, you need to go to God only through the Lord Jesus.

The way to God, and so the way to heaven, is not through some process or ritual, but the way is found only in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here in v6 we have one of the great “I am” sayings in John’s gospel. These “I am” sayings of Jesus teach us so much about Him and who He is - this saying on its own tells us so much we need to know.

Thomas had questioned the way and knowing it. Now Jesus quite clearly tells him and us all, the way – Jesus says that He Himself is **the** way and **the** truth and **the** life. Each part has the definite article, so it is not strictly correct to say in a paraphrase “*Jesus is the true and living way*” - He is, but it is not what this verse says. Some leave it as that and say this is why Jesus is special.

Yes, He is special, but He is more than special - He is, in His own being and Person, the exclusive way to God - this is emphasised in the last part of v6. Apart from Jesus, no one can go to the Father. In the gospel we have made known to us the exclusive way to God. Outside of Christ there is no hope. All religions are not the same, are not ascending the same mountain to God at its pinnacle. According to this verse they’re not on the same mountain, the same range, the same continent and they are as good as deep-sea diving!

Exclude the Lord Jesus in trying to get to God and you cannot get to Him - for no one goes to the Father except through Him. That is why it is so important that we who are Christians share the good news of Jesus in our localities, our land and the

world. The exclusive way to God is a sure and certain way and we are to long to tell and share it with others. Do we see the need to tell it to others and to do so? Yet, first and foremost, we are to believe it ourselves and trust in the amazing Saviour we learn of.

Jesus gives these glorious titles to Himself and one commentator, JC Ryle, says *“The fullness of these precious words can probably never be taken in by man. He that attempts to unfold them does little more than scratch the surface of a rich soil.”* The Greek used here is very emphatic and a literal translation would be *“I myself am...”* I want to just to scratch the surface and look briefly at these titles, names and designations which the Lord Jesus gives to Himself.

“the way”: the OT way to God was through rituals, sacrifices, ordinances, slavish obedience to the 10 Commandments = do and be saved, but no one could do enough. These often pointed the way to God, but were inadequate as they had to be constantly repeated as people failed. Jesus is **the** way to God. He is the way where once and for all, our needs are met and we can have constant access to God. The sacrifice He would make would be the all sufficient way. In a sense He is the new way, in another sense He is the old way – He was the Lamb who had been slain since before the foundation of the world. The OT sacrifices had the effect of bringing people to God, but not because they in and of themselves were special, but because they pointed on to and in a sense drew credit down from Christ’s once and for all sacrifice for sin.

Jesus is also the safe way and if we go to Him, we will never perish - John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him **shall not perish** but have eternal life.”* Or John 10:28 *“I give them eternal life, and they shall **never perish**; no-one can snatch them out of my hand.”* Jesus is the way - to peace with God and so is the way to heaven. He is not only the Guide and Teacher, but the way - its beginning, its middle and its end. The person and the work of the Lord Jesus are inseparable and we cannot go to God or to heaven except through Him.

Are you trusting Him alone or are you trusting in another way, in anything that is Jesus plus...? The Bible says it is salvation through faith alone in the Lord Jesus - only He is the way to heaven. Jesus also goes on to say He is:

“the truth”: Truth is opposed and opposite to all that is false. To many nowadays, truth can alter according to your perspective, your point of view. Jesus is “the truth” - He is the ultimate truth, the unalterable and unchanging truth from age to age. He is ever the truth, the embodiment of eternal truth and especially so when it comes to the way of God. How can we be certain that He will lead us in the right way? He is the truth! How can we be sure He will bring us to and receive us at Father’s house? He is the truth!

He is the truth of God and reveals that truth to us. Jesus goes on to say that if the disciples had seen Him, then they have seen the Father as He perfectly, completely and truthfully reveals the Father and the way to Him. Until He came to earth, even the privileged Jews saw through a glass darkly, dimly, saw shadows and representations of the true, but in Jesus they

had the truth revealed and made known clearly and that is why we are to listen to and consider His claims, especially the claim of being the only way to God - a true, if exclusive, statement. We all need to have the Lord Jesus our Saviour or we will not go to heaven, will not experience the truth of Jesus' next self-designation that He is:

“the life”: Jesus is the life; life in contrast to death. Jesus is the very life of God which can be given to us in all its glorious fullness. If we go to God through the Lord Jesus, this truth of eternal life is ours. We can claim such from God and receive this life, for He and His Son said so if we go to God through the Lord Jesus. Recognise it is true that by going by the way of the Lord Jesus, we will have eternal life.

We need to consider this new and eternal life well. It is ours now as a present reality if we are a Christian and it is to be delighted in, enjoyed and rejoiced over. Very often Christians know, but do not really know what they have and live this life out in such a half-hearted way, with little joy or rejoicing and the Christian life becomes as appetising and attractive to the world around us as a cold dish of cabbage with congealed mouldy gravy on it.

As believers we need to wake up and realise what we have in Christ – blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, adopted as His children, we have redemption in His blood, forgiveness of sins, sealed with the Holy Spirit, partakers of the divine nature, children of God, fellow citizens with the saints, God's people - need I go on! These things are true of us **now**. We have all this and heaven

too - where this life will be known in all its glorious fullness and completeness.

Jesus is the life - the guarantee of the resurrection life, of spiritual life, of eternal life in all its wonderful completeness and many joys. There are so many things to say about this excellent person through whom all these blessings come. Again, I have to ask the question, do you have this one as your Saviour? Without Him you do not have the life, but are lost (*which is a solemn thought*). With Him as our Saviour, then the certain and sure way to heaven is ours and we are to follow Him with enthusiasm all our days.

Thomas à Kempis wrote down his meditation, thoughts on this passage saying *“Follow thou Me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life of which thou must hope. I am the inviolable (never to be broken) way, the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; the life true, life blessed, life uncreated.”*

I pray that we would realise that and delight in Him more.