

# God Came Down

(The Fourth Gospel)

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## **TEACHING THE TWELVE (13:1-17:26)**

As stated earlier, this Gospel breaks, compositionally, into five major sections: (1) a prologue introducing the composition (1:1-18), (2) the Messiah was/is here [his public ministry] (1:19-12:50), (3) the Messiah and his disciples [the farewell discourses to the twelve] (13:1-17:26), (4) the passion material (18:1-19:42), and (5) the resurrection material (20:1-21:25).

Thus far in our studies, we have developed the material up through the public ministry (chapters 1-12). We now move to the last evening in the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth and center on the events and discussions that occur within the intimate circle of the Messiah and his disciples as they eat their last meal together. This material runs from chapter 13-17. The scene begins in the upper room as Jesus and the twelve eat the Passover meal together (13:1-14:31). The scene changes with the words of Jesus, "Rise, let us go hence" (14:31). The material of chapters 15-17 appears to take place on the way the Garden of Gethsemane in the Kidron valley. The words of 18:1 seem to indicate that Jesus and the twelve had been in route to the Kidron valley, where the Garden of Gethsemane was located.

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAREWELL DISCOURSES MATERIAL**

Scholars break the material of chapters 13-17 down in a variety of ways. Some see only one farewell discourse, running throughout chapters 13-17. Most scholars, however, see at least three different discourses: the first discourse, which occurs in the upper room (13:31-14:31), the second discourse, which occurs in route to the Garden (15:1-16:33), and the prayer for

the twelve, which occurs just before they cross over into the Kidron valley (17:1-26). Although the material contained in these chapters consists, for the most part, of monologues from the lips of Jesus, it is all, in the discipline of compositional analysis, identified as "discourse material." This material (John 13-17) may be structured as follows.

### **In the Upper Room (13:1-14:31)**

#### **Scene One (13:1-30): Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet**

- (1) Jesus washes the disciples' feet (13:1-11).
- (2) Jesus interprets what he has done (13:12-20).
- (3) Predicts his betrayal and reaction of the twelve (13:21-30).

#### **Scene Two (13:31-14:31): First Farewell Discourse**

- (1) Monologue: The hour of the Son of Man has come (13:31-35).
- (2) Dialogue: "Where are you going?" (13:36-38).
- (3) Monologue: "I am the way" (14:1-7).
- (4) Dialogue: "Show us the Father" (14:8-14).
- (5) Monologue: The Promise of the Spirit (14:15-31).

### **On the Way to the Garden (15:1-17:26)**

#### **Scene One (15:1-16:33): Second Farewell Discourse**

- (1) Monologue: "I am the vine" (15:1-8).
- (2) Monologue: "Love - the mark of the disciple of Jesus" (15:9-17).
- (3) Monologue: "The world will hate you" (15:18-25).
- (4) Monologue: "When the counselor comes" (15:26-16:15).
- (5) Monologue: "Soon you will see me no more" (16:16-28)
- (6) Dialogue: The reaction of the twelve (16:29-33)

#### **Scene Two (17:1-26): Third Farewell Discourse [Jesus' Prayer]**

- (1) Monologue: "Father, the hour has come" (17:1-5)
- (2) Monologue: "I am praying for them [the twelve]" (17:6-19)
- (3) Monologue: "I pray for all those who believe through them (17:20-26)

## MAJOR THEMES OF THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE MATERIAL

The themes within this material are rich and varied. Certain themes/motifs, however, come through very dynamically and give interpretation to the whole block of material.

### Death, Departure, and Ascent Motif

The most dominant theme running through this block of material is the mysterious "death/departure/ascent" motif. Jesus is preparing the twelve for the impending crisis of his death. His death, however, is not to be interpreted as his defeat; rather, it is his means of ascent to the Father. Throughout this Gospel, the "descent/ascent" theme has been present: 1:51; 3:13; 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58; 62; see also 20:17.

Connected with this "descent/ascent" theme is an "above/below" theme: he is from above (an otherworldly realm), has descended into this world below (a thisworldly realm) and will ascend again to the Father (to the otherworldly realm); cf. 3:13, 31; 6:38; 8:23; 13:3; 16:28.

This theme of ascending to the Father by means of his death is very heavily concentrated here in the farewell discourses. As Jesus assembles with his disciples to eat the Passover, John tells us that, "... Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father [departure/ascent motif] (13:1). In v 3 we are told that Jesus, "... had come from God and was going to God" [descent/ascent motif]. In v 31, after Judas had gone out, Jesus says to his disciples, "Now is the Son of Man glorified" [conquest motif]. Then, in v 33-36, he tells them that where he is going they cannot follow him now [departure/ascent motif], but they will follow him afterward. Then, in 14:2, he informs them that he is going to prepare a place for them [departure/ascent motif], that were he is, there they will be also. In v 12, he again tells them that he is going to the Father [ascent motif], a claim that he repeats in 14:28.

In the second farewell discourse (15:1-16:33), the same themes/motifs appear. He is going to the one having sent him [descent/ascent motif] (16:5), he is returning to the Father [descent/ascent motif] (16:10, 17). Similarly, in 16:28 he claims, "I came from the Father and have come into the world; again,

I am leaving the world and going to the Father" [descent/ascent motif]. All of this appears to be interpreted by his words, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome/conquered the world" [conquest motif] (16:33).

Then, in chapter 17 (the third farewell discourse [the prayer]), he lifts his eyes to heaven and prays: "Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" [conquest motif] (17:1), and in v 5, he continues, "Father, now glorify me, with the glory of your presence, which I had with you before the world was made." Here his claims are nothing less than claims of deity - he possessed the glory of God prior to the creation of the world.

### **The Arrival of Satan for the Conflict**

In addition to the theme of "death/departure" (and related motifs), several other very powerful themes are present in this farewell discourse material. One of the most important themes, which colors the mood in which this material is set, is the collection references to the presence of Satan and the impending conflict which is about to occur in the death of Jesus. This motif begins to appear at 11:33, 38 with the emotions Jesus experiences in the presence of the death of Lazarus. It appears again at 12:27, 31, where Jesus speaks of the time having arrived for the casting out of "the ruler of this world." In 13:2, we are told of the devil (Satan) putting into the heart of Judas the desire to betray Jesus; then in v 27, we are told that during supper (the Passover meal), "Satan entered into him." Jesus tells Judas, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Judas leaves the room and John says, "it was night." In 14:30, at the conclusion of the supper, Jesus again appears to perceive the ominous presence of Satan and says, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming." And then he adds, "And in me he is having no power."

The theme of conflict between the powers of darkness and the power of light has been present throughout this composition (see especially the references to darkness in this Gospel: 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46; and, in this context, 14:30). One scholar sees a thematic climax building here in this farewell discourse material, which will result in a "cosmic exorcism" of Satan by Jesus by means of his death and resurrection from death. He writes:

The conflict of Jesus' last hour is a conflict with Satan the *archon tou kosmou* [Lit. "ruler of the world," mwl] (14:30). Satan's demonic possession of Judas on the one side of the conflict is to be contrasted with the cosmic

"exorcism" of Satan by Jesus on the other side. The moment of glorification, of exaltation, is the moment of judgment. "Now is the judgment [*krisis* - MWL] of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out" (*ekblesthestai exo*, 12:31). An excellent study on this material is D.B. Woll, *Johannine Christianity in Conflict*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 60, Scholars Press, p. 82.

### **Jesus' Christological Claims**

Another very powerful theme within this farewell discourse material centers in the Christological claims of Jesus. In each farewell discourse, Jesus calls for faith from his disciples. The content of that faith is "him" (= who/what he is - the Christology of the Gospel of John). At the heart of the first discourse (14:1), Jesus says to his disciples, "Believe in God, believe also in me." In the second discourse, he speaks more of what they have come to believe, "... you . . . have believed that I have come from the Father" (16:27; cf. v 30). In the third discourse (the prayer), he prays, not only for the immediate apostolic group, but also for, "... those who believe in me through their word" (17:20).

What is at issue here, then, is, in a word, "belief" but belief in what? Belief in the claims of Jesus of Nazareth as to who he is and what he is. And these claims appear to cluster here in this block of material called the farewell discourses: In 13:3 he claims to have come from God. In 13:13-14, the claims to be, not only their teacher, but their Lord. In 13:31 he speaks of himself as the Son of Man, who is soon to be glorified. In 14:6 he claims to be the only means of access to the Father: "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by (through) me."

His most astonishing (and wondrous) claim is found in vv 7-10, where he says to his disciples: "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also, henceforth you know him and have seen him." When asked by one of his disciples to show them the Father, he asks, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me?" He then plainly tells them, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." This is, perhaps, the most meaningful and significant statement to be found in the whole of the NT writings. He reinforces this claim with claims that he is in the Father and the Father dwells within him (14:10), that he and the Father are one (17:11, 21, 23), that he possessed glory with God from before the creation of the world (17:5, 22, 24), and that he has been sent from the Father into the world: 16:5, 27, 28, 30; 17:3,

18, 21.

### The "Belief/Disbelief" Theme

At the heart of all of these astounding claims, throughout this whole collection of material, we see Jesus' saying, again and again, to his disciples, "Believe!" "Believe what I am telling you!" "Believe in me!" The "belief/disbelief" theme never leaves the reader of this Gospel alone. Belief vs disbelief is clearly the major theme of this Gospel composition, and the Christology is just as clearly the content of that belief, as John himself tells us in 20:31. Following are the occurrences of the verb *pisteuo* in chapters 13-21 of the Gospel of John. The noun *pistis* does not appear in this Gospel; it is always the verb implying action.

*"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will **believe** that I am He," (John 13:19).*

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me, (John 14:1).*

*Don't you **believe** that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work, (John 14:10).*

***Believe** me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least **believe** on the evidence of the miracles themselves, (John 14:11).*

*I tell you the truth, anyone who has **faith** (believes) in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father, (John 14:12).*

*I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will **believe**, (John 14:29).*

*. . . in regard to sin, because men do not **believe** in me, (John 16:9).*

*No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have **believed** that I came from God, (John 16:27).*

*Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us **believe** that you came from God, (John 16:30).*

*For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they **believed** that you sent me, (John 17:8).*

*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will **believe** in me through their message, (John 17:20).*

*. . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may **believe** that you have sent me, (John 17:21).*

*The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may **believe**, (John 19:35).*

*Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and **believed**, (John 20:8).*

*So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not **believe** it, (John 20:25).*

*Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and **believe**, (John 20:27).*

*Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have **believed**; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have **believed**, (John 20:29).*

*But these are written that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name, (John 20:31).*

MWLIII