

Incredible promises: the bestowing of power...

1. Study John 14: 12-14. What is the context in which Jesus speaks these words? What has happened right up to this moment?

This passage is found in the section that scholars call The Upper Room Discourse. This was the Last Supper where Christ revealed amazing things. In these specific verses, Christ prepared the disciples for His departure: a) He was going away, b) He would die, c) one among them will betray Him, and d) Peter will deny Him 3 times. The disciples were troubled and uncertain at this time.

2. Now study the contents of John 14:12. What does Jesus promise? Besides the promise, what else do you see? What does it mean, "exceed His work?"

Jesus had promised the disciples that: 1) they will do what He had been doing (equivalent to), and 2) they will exceed His work. These promises of power and accomplishment were fantastic! But notice these promises had conditions. The promises were preceded with the condition "he who believes in me" and concluded with the condition "because I go to the Father."

The disciples knew that by faith they could do miracles; they failed when their faith wavered (i.e. Matt 14: 26-31). To "exceed His work" was an incredible promise but mystifying. When the promise of "exceed His work" was made, Christ was not comparing the personal achievements of man to Man. "Because I go to the father" is the key in understanding this passage. Following The Upper Room Discourse, Christ is crucified and resurrected. Just prior to the Ascension (when Jesus is "going to the Father"), He reveals that the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon them (Acts 1:7-8). Only after Christ ascends to heaven does the full power of God, through the Holy Spirit, become available to man. With the condition of faith in Christ, believers can "exceed His work" by the power of the Holy Spirit which was made available after Jesus ascended. And through believers, Christ could achieve more than He did as a man on earth. Christianity grew *after* He died.

3. Study John 14:13-14. What other promise does Jesus make, and what does it mean to "ask whatever" and "in His name"?

The promises get even better! Unbelievable power by simply invoking His name! Just ask "whatever" "in My name!" Or is it? As in the prior promises, this too had a condition "in His name." Here and in other passages in the Bible, "in His name," is not simply saying His name. The distinction lies in the authority to use "His name." That authority is bestowed on the Believer who knows Jesus, His Character, His Priorities, and His Will (John 9:31 and 1 John 5:14-15). Through Believers, praying within the scope of His Character, His Priorities, and His Will, God accomplishes whatever He plans. "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Ever been disappointed by unanswered prayer? Failure is often the result of not observing the conditions of God's promises. Bible study is learning about God, His character, His Priorities, and His Will. In the process, we learn the truth about ourselves, deceptions that make us stumble, and make the painful changes towards holiness. Ever been disappointed by unanswered prayer? It's ok to be; but don't forget to learn from it and try again.

"Scripture is its own interpreter.... This is the true method of interpretation which puts Scripture alongside of Scripture in a right and proper way." Martin Luther (1483-1546)

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