

The Church as Revealed in John 14—16: The Incorporation of the Triune God and the Believers as the Issue of Christ's Glorification

by David Yoon

In his Gospel the apostle John records that on the eve of the Lord's crucifixion, after washing His disciples' feet and dismissing His betrayer, the Lord Jesus engaged in an intimate discussion concerning the significance of what was about to take place now that His hour had come (John 13:31—16:33). Although this was the hour of His humiliation and death, the discourse begins and concludes with references to His imminent glorification (13:31-32; 17:1). By framing the passage thus, John establishes glorification as the intrinsic theme that informs the whole of the Lord's message in these chapters. John juxtaposes the profound and spiritual revelation of the Lord's words with the physical and earthly perspective of the disciples, who seemed to grasp only that He was departing from them and were baffled about where He was going. Sadly, many Christians today suffer the same perplexity in reading the Lord's words. Many commentators likewise display an outward, even physical, understanding of this passage. Rather than paying adequate attention to the Son's glorification as the governing thought of John 14 through 16, many regard the subject of these chapters to be primarily the Lord's comforting of the disciples in light of His imminent death with either promises of distantly future bliss in heaven or assurances of His continuing spiritual presence with them in resurrection. The consequences of holding such a shallow view are dire. Not only does it obscure the deep and mysterious aspects of Christ's glorification; it relegates the believers to mere beneficiaries of objective events (both remote past and future), veiling them from seeing their sublime status from the high peak of the divine revelation: the very reproduction of Christ as the issue of His glorification. Hence, despite a wealth of theological analyses of the so-called farewell discourse, the very kernel of the Lord's message remains largely concealed—namely, the revelation of God's New Testament economy to impart Himself in Christ as the Spirit of reality into the believers for the producing of the church as the issue of Christ's glorification, that is, as the organic increase of Christ produced through His death and resurrection.

The Intrinsic Significance of John 14 through 16

Although to His disciples (and many readers) it seemed that the Lord was bidding them farewell, He was actually unveiling that He and they were on the threshold of a far deeper and more permanent relationship than what they had yet known—that soon He would be not merely *among* them but *in* them (14:17). In order to accomplish this union, the incarnate Son, the eternal Word become flesh (1:14), was about to go through a process of death and resurrection by which He would be sown as a grain of wheat in dishonor through death and then raised in glory (v. 14; 12:23-24; 1 Cor. 15:43); He, as a man in the flesh, would thereby become “the Spirit who gives life,” the Spirit of the glorified Jesus (John 6:63; 7:39; 14:17-18, 20; 1 Cor. 15:45b). Then, as another Comforter, the Spirit of reality, the Lord would come to the disciples, not to abide with them