

THE “COMING AGAIN” OF JESUS IN JOHN 14

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“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3).

It has been traditional for this passage to be taken as a promise of Christ to come back visibly, bodily, and personally from Heaven to rapture Christians and take them back to Heaven with him. But this is not the meaning of this passage. What it really means, and what Jesus was really talking about, was that after He had gone, He would send the Holy Spirit back into the world to dwell with His disciples.

Some also believe that this refers to the time of death: “Hence in John 14:2f we read of being taken up into the ‘mansions’ of the Father’s house by the returning Son – doubtless a reference to the death of believers.” (New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1, p. 440). This also is not the meaning of this passage.

Jesus said He would come to “receive” His disciples (have a “friendly encounter”). It did not say He would take them to Heaven.

Let us examine this passage and its context to see if this is true or not. There are several reasons we might consider as to why the traditional concept is not correct:

1. The Meaning of the Father’s House

First, there is the meaning of *my Father’s house*. Where and what is the Father’s house? Most Christians reading this passage just simply think of Heaven and let it go at that. Many think in terms of mansions inside a city of gold, etc. They do not give any further study into the matter. But it does not say here that the Father’s house is Heaven.

If we believe that God is *omnipresent*, then we believe that He is everywhere. There is no place in the universe where God is not. David asked, **“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there” (Psalm 139:7-8).**

In Isaiah 66:1, God said, **“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me?”**

The Temple had been the place built by Solomon, and God wanted His people to know that those things had been; but His plans were to dwell directly with His people apart from any Temple. The Temple was symbolical, and sometimes the manifested presence of God was evidenced there. But the Temple was not to be looked on as “THE” dwelling place of God.

And now, since Jesus died, was buried, was raised from the dead, ascended to Heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples, we Christians take the place of the Temple as dwelling places of God. **“In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).**

The Holy Spirit abides in believers ever since He was given to the disciples. **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).** **“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19).** And the writer of the book of Hebrews said, **“But Christ as a son over his own house; WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE...” (Heb. 3:6)**

We are the Father’s house today, with Jesus the Son residing in this house. There is one house, and many mansions. (See 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:9-11, 16-17.)

2. Jesus is Talking About the Holy Spirit in John 14.

From verse 16 (of John 14) on, Jesus is specifically referring to the Holy Spirit by name. Jesus said, **“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).** The word *abide* here is from the Greek word *meno*, which means “to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy) – abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for)...” It is from this word that the word “mansions” (*mone*) is derived.

In verse 17 Jesus says, **“for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”** He was speaking of the soon indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who would come and take the place of Christ who had been dwelling with the disciples. But the language says that it is Jesus Who will come and dwell with them. **“I will not**

leave you comfortless; I WILL COME TO YOU” (vs.. 18). This is the same thing He said to them in verse 3.

Since the Holy Spirit came, Jesus lives within us. **“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God well in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you...” (Rom. 8:9-10).**

And not only would it be Jesus who would come and dwell with the disciples, but it would be the Father as well. **“...my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (vs. 23).**

3. The Word “Mansions” Is the Same Word as the Word “Abode.”

When Jesus said that His Father and He would come to the disciples and dwell with them, He used the word *abode*, which is the **same** word as the word *mansions* in verse 2 (mone). Christians would become the mansions or dwelling places of the Father and Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The word for *mansions* / *mone* means “a **staying, i.e. residence** (the act or the place); -- abode, mansion.” The word itself is derived from the Greek verb *meno*, as mentioned before, which means “to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy.) – abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for).

Webster’s Dictionary says the definition of the English word *mansion* is a *stay, sojourn*. This is **obsolete**, meaning that this **used** to be the meaning of the word. We always have to think in terms of the past meanings rather than just what words mean today.

John 14:2 is the only place in the New Testament where this word is translated *mansions*. In **John 14:23** it is translated *abode*. It is the same word. Jesus said He would make His **abode** with us. We become the mansions of which He spoke in **verse 2**. He is saying that Christians will become the dwelling places of Christ in the Father’s house.

This does not mean, of course, that there is no other coming of Christ than this. Most of the New Testament was written **after** the Holy Spirit had come, but it still continued to predict that Christ was yet to come. There is more than one “coming” of Christ in the New Testament. Most of our writings have centered around that “second appearance” of Christ which took place in A.D. 70. It was called “second” in relation to His “first” personal appearance.

4. Disciples Not To Be Troubled Because the Holy Spirit Would Come

In verse 27 Jesus said, **“Let not your heart be troubled.”** This is the same instruction He had given to them in verse 2, showing that He is still talking about the same thing.

So what we have here is this: Jesus here in John 14 is saying that in the Father’s house (Which was the whole universe) there were many places to abide, or dwell. But the disciples would become His house and He would dwell in them as mansions. He would come to them, in the person of the Holy spirit, in order to accomplish this. His going away to prepare a place for us involved His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. All of this was necessary in order for us to become mansions in the Father’s house.

The modern concept of this passage is that the “mansions” mentioned are some great, beautiful, luxurious palaces in Heaven. This is not the meaning here at all. The word itself does not have that meaning. Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for them. He did. He died, rose again, ascended, then sent the Holy spirit to indwell them.

He said he would come and **“receive”** them. This is the only time in the New Testament that this exact word is used (paralambano). It means **“to receive near, i.e. associate with** one’s self (in any familiar or intimate act or relation.” The meaning is that He would send the Holy Spirit in His stead to receive Christians into an intimate relationship, because the Holy Spirit would then dwell within them.

He did not say He would receive them in Heaven. This meaningful relationship He is talking about would take place on earth. He is not here talking of a second coming of Himself personally, but only in the sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

He continued in verse 16 by saying that the Father would give them another Comforter (See also John 14:26; 15:26, and 16:7). The word **“Comforter”** means “an **intercessor, counselor**: -- advocate, comforter.” In other words, He is the one who helps us to express our needs to the Father, as mentioned in **Romans 8:26**: **“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be**

uttered." (Incidentally, this is not talking about Christians speaking in "tongues" as some think. The Spirit's intercession "**cannot be uttered.**")

Jesus said this Comforter would "**abide with you forever**" (vs. 16). In verse 23 Jesus says, "We will **COME** to him." Not just Jesus, but also the Father, "**and make our abode with him**" (vs. 23). As said before, the word **abode** is the same identical word in the Greek as for **mansions** in verse 2, and it refers to making the residence of the Father and the Son with the Christians.

It is important to see this – that when Jesus spoke of **mansions** (dwelling places) in verse 2, He was speaking of the same thing He was in verse 23 when He said His Father and He would come and make their residence with the disciples. The word is the same.

In verse 26 He said the Father would send the Holy Spirit in His name. This is the way Christ came to the disciples – in the person of the Holy Spirit.. Then, in verse 27, still continuing the same discussion, He says again (as He did in verse 1), "**Let not your heart be troubled.**" Their hearts were not to be troubled, because they would be provided the Comforter to dwell with them. And this was the reason He said the same thing in verse 1, "**Let not your heart be troubled.**"

Then Jesus says that they had heard how He said, "**I go away, and come again unto you (vs. 28).**" He says this here in connection with His discussion of the Holy Spirit coming to them. What He says here in verse 28, in reference to the Holy Spirit, would have the same meaning in verse 3 where He said, "**I will come again, and receive you unto myself... .)**

So this beautiful passage in **John 14:1-3**, which so many of us preachers have used in the past at funeral services to comfort troubled hearts on the basis that Christ is going to come and take His children to "mansions in the sky," does not mean that at all. It means, rather, that Christ promised to come in the person of the Holy Spirit and to indwell His Christians forever.

The Father's house is everywhere. When God said, "**The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool...**" (**Isaiah 66:1**), He was telling us that He dwells everywhere. "**Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee...**" (**1 Kings 8:27**). Whether there are universes beyond ours, we do not know. But if so, God is there, too. One writer said that if one grain of sand on the beach would represent our universe, then all the grains of sand in the whole world would represent all the other universes beyond ours. It staggers our minds to even think of this. And God is everywhere – omnipresent. But the amazing thing is, that God has chosen to make His abode in the hearts and lives of His people on this earth. "**But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?**" (**II Chronicles 8:18**). We are His abiding places, His abodes, His mansions. In the person of the Holy Spirit He comes to receive us to Himself, to associate Himself in a personal relationship with us.

And incidentally, do you know where the throne of God is now? It is in the midst of His people, right now in this life, in the holy city, the New Jerusalem, the church, in the new heavens and new earth: "**...the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it (the holy city, God's people)...**" (**Rev. 22:3**).

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