

# The Teaching of John 14:2-3

John 14:1-4 are repeatedly read at funerals, and, due to the way we were raised to believe in modern-day traditional Christianity, one can see how this passage would be a very comforting one; however, as with the interpretation and application of any section of Scripture, if we wish to have actual conviction about it, we're compelled to challenge it in order to determine for ourselves if what we've been taught is the truth from our own personal study. So let's get to it!

Though the context of the two main verses I want to consider would include at least 30 verses, to introduce this study let's just read **13:33, 36, & 14:1-4** with emphasis on 13:36 & 14:2-3. So...

In 13:36 Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus didn't immediately answer his question, but, if you remember, all of chapters 14–16 belong together, being set up by what all transpired in chapter 13. I mention this because Jesus did get around to answering the question of 13:36 in 14:12 (which He repeated in 16:10, 16, & 28); and in that answer He clearly stated (just as He did to Mary in 20:17 after His resurrection) that He was going into the presence of the Father, and Peter understood that because in Acts 3:21 he said that Jesus had gone into heaven (where Jesus, in His model prayer in Mat. 6:9, said the Father resided); and it was in this place where Peter said that Jesus was obliged to remain until the restoration of all things. So...

When Jesus said to Peter in 13:36 that where He was going they couldn't come yet but they could later, He was referring to how that the disciples, faithful believers though they were, weren't yet welcome into God's presence and wouldn't be until (as indicated in 14:2-3) Jesus had returned for them; then, at that arrival, they could/would be where He was—in the presence of God. So the question is this:

Why could Jesus enter into the Father's presence after His death to law and His resurrection to life, but these believing disciples couldn't? Didn't His death, burial, and resurrection take care of their sins as we've always been taught? But that question of course begs this one: What was it that He yet had to do before His believing followers *could* enter into the presence of God? Well, such questions will be answered as we run through this passage study. ☺ So let's consider...

## **Verse 2a: In the house of My Father are many mansions.**

We don't use the word "house" today (at least not in our western world) the same way it was used in the day/culture of Christ: Back then and over there it was more often than not a reference to the entirety of someone's property, to everything he owned; e.g., when we read in Esther 8:1 that King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, it meant he gave her everything Haman formerly possessed. In fact, if you check out Luke 1:33, you discover that the word "kingdom" is actually equated with "house" when it says of Christ that "He'll reign over the house of Jacob, and of His [or that] kingdom there'll be no end." So here in John 14:2, especially due to the next phrase, by the word "house" Jesus was referring to God's kingdom, a kingdom in which there were/are many "mansions" (acc. to the NKJV anyway).

The original word for "mansions" (*mone*) here is interesting, for it's the word from which we get the prefix "mono" as in monopoly or monogamy, referring to something of a solitary quality, something alone, or of an individual nature; in fact, not only does an online Greek lexicon called *HELPS Word Studies* indicate that this word refers to dwellings for individuals, but the singular form of it is even translated "alone" in the NKJV of Mark 4:10. The only other time this word is found is later in John 14 which we'll touch on at verse 3.

My point here and now is this: It seems clear that Jesus was saying that "Within My Father's kingdom there's plenty of space for every individual," and I say it like this due to what Jesus went on to say in the last part of verse 2, viz., "I am going in order to prepare a place for all of you" ("you" being plural); so, by the phrase "*monai pollai*," I'm convinced He used the plural to emphasize (which, btw, isn't unusual in Greek, cf. Eph. 2:7) that any and everyone who entrusted themselves to Him had a place in His Father's kingdom. However...

There's another interesting point about this word I don't want to fail to mention: According to *HELPS Word Studies* again, the root for *monai* is *mone* which (as its verb form in 14:10 denotes) refers to "an *abiding* dwelling-place, i.e. not transitory" (<http://biblehub.com/greek/3438.htm>); in fact, instead of choosing the word "mansions" in their translations to picture some castle-like edifice, it appears that the real reason most versions read "mansions" is because it originates with the Latin word *manere* which means "to remain." So (just as Paul did in 1 The. 4:17b), Jesus highlighted the *eternality* of their places in God's kingdom, introducing the idea of the gift of immortality which He'd bestow upon them at His return for them (cf. Heb. 11:16 w/ 13:14).

**Verse 2b: If it weren't so, I would've told you. I'm leaving to prepare a place for you.**

As a reminder, after the betrayal incident in chapter 13, Jesus gave His disciples the bad news that He'd have to leave them and that they couldn't go with Him (13:33). Then, due to the concern expressed through Peter, He assured them that they'd be back together again later (13:36) and that where He was going had plenty of space for everyone; they just needed to trust Him like they trust His Father that He would've told them otherwise. The problem was just that, although He was leaving them, there was a reason in it, i.e. even with His death, burial, and resurrection, His work still wouldn't be complete, for He had to prepare the appropriate place for them. See...

Jesus was picturing Himself, as Paul called Him in Hebrews 6:19-20, a "forerunner" who had entered into the presence of God behind the veil for them, reminiscent of Peter and John whom Jesus sent ahead of Him and the other disciples to prepare a place for them to soon observe the Passover (Luke 22:7ff). By the way...

There are at least five reputable versions which translate verse 2b as a rhetorical question to them by the Lord, so it would begin in verse 1 like this: "Don't let your hearts be troubled. You trust God, and you trust Me. In my Father's kingdom is plenty of space for everyone. If that weren't true, would I have told you that I'm going away to prepare a place for you?" I believe this fits very well with what was meant, so I personally recommend it for your consideration.

**Verse 3a: And whenever I go and prepare this place for you, [just remember that] I'm coming again and will receive you to Myself.**

So, again, Jesus was trying to be comforting by indicating to them that they wouldn't ever be able to be in God's presence if He *didn't* leave, for He had to leave them in order to go back to His Father's spiritual area of residence in order to prepare a place for them there (cf. John 16:7). Speaking of the word "place"...

The same word that's rendered "place" here is found in Acts 21:28 where it has reference to the made-with-hands or material temple. And, in contrast, since there are several passages (e.g. Rev. 3:12) which reveal that what Jesus (&/or with His Father) created was a *not-made-with-hands* or spiritual temple, then doesn't it seem reasonable that such is to what He had reference here in John 14:3? By the way, when He was finished with His work in/on that eternal/spiritual temple (i.e. when it was anointed per Dan. 9:24), it would be one the doors to which would forever remain open for everyone (Rev. 21:22ff); in Hebrews 9:28, along with its context of Jesus' high priestly work in/on this temple, specifically its most holy chamber, He'd return from out of it to His people with salvation for them—it would be *their* new and eternal home. BTW...

As Jesus referred to in 13:33, back in John chapter 8 when He was in the material temple just days earlier, He said some of the very words of John 14 to a crowd of Jews, but from a more negative perspective, of course. Listen to verses 21-24: "'I'm going away, and you'll seek Me, but you'll die in your sin. Where I'm going you can't come.' So the Jews said, 'Will He kill Himself since He says, "Where I'm going you can't come"'? So Jesus said to them: 'You're from beneath [which corresponds to "the flesh" of v. 15]; I'm from above. You're of this world [which corresponds to the temple of v. 20]; I'm not of this world. Hence I said to you that you'll die in your sins; for if you don't believe that I'm He [i.e. the promised Messiah, aka the true temple as He spoke about earlier in John 2:19-22], you'll die in your sins.'" I.e., in contradistinction to John 14 and His Jewish disciples who did accept Him as the Christ and who would be allowed into that other world above or temple made without hands, they'd be prohibited from doing so; in fact, in this John 8 context He related "darkness" and "death" (vv. 12 & 21), as opposed to "light" and "life" (v. 12), to their not being permitted into His spiritual/eternal temple. Gettin' back to John 14, something else significant is that...

There are two main words used for the coming of Christ: *erchomai* and *parousia*—the former refers to the actual action of "coming" itself, while the latter refers to the result of that coming, viz. "presence" (as it's so translated in 2 Cor. 10:10 & Php. 2:12); in John 14:3 the Spirit chose the word *erchomai*, referring to Jesus' action of returning, while later in the chapter He referred to the idea of His *parousia* or His and His Father's presence (something we'll get to in a little bit).

The phrase "receive you to Myself" sounds a little odd to us today, so let's take a closer look: according to *HELPS Word Studies* again, the original root word is *lambano* which refers to the idea of laying hold of something with an aggressive initiative, like very happily embracing someone, and the prefix is *para* which refers to the idea of someone being very close to you; in fact, a similar word is *parakimai* which (in Rom. 7:18) is translated as "present" (yes, as in *parousia*). So Jesus told them that, when He returned, it would be for the purpose of joyfully accepting them into His presence. With this in mind, I like the way a couple versions render this phrase: *The Williams New Testament* reads, to "take you to be face to face with Me," and *The International Standard Version* reads, to "welcome you into My presence," which of course coincides perfectly with how Jesus ended...

### **Verse 3b: So that you also may be where I am.**

When Jesus said "where I am," He was referring to where He'd be when He returned for them. The question of course is, "Where would He be at that return?," and the answer is found later in this conversation, most clearly in verse 23: Speaking of His Father and Himself in relation to each one found faithful at His return, He said, "We will come to him and make our abode (*monē*) with him," thus each of them, as a corporate body of believers, would be where Jesus was and of course still is—with the Father. See...

Just as it's always been, as it's been since the first Adam, it's all about relationship, a change of position and status of men toward their Creator; after praying to His Father that His disciples would be in unity during His absence, He stated, "I desire that they ... may be with Me where I am ... [and] may behold My glory which You have given Me" (John 17:24). Now...

As we head toward the end of our little study, let's flesh out all of this just a little bit more.

**This John 14:2-3 conversation was based upon two main & different metaphors, one on which we already touched in relation to the whole *temple motif*; the other on which I wish to spend a tad of time is the *wedding motif*.**

After learning the historical context of the times, I'm personally convinced that what Jesus had in mind in this entire literary context (esp. 14:2-3) was the Hebrew betrothal/wedding model, a model that's depicted to a degree in the parable of Jesus found in Matthew 25:1ff. I won't be taking the time to read through that and discuss everything involved in their custom; I'll only take time to provide a brief overview to wrap up this study. (If you'd like a really good in-depth study of their custom, I recommend this webpage: [www.bible.ca/marriage/ancient-jewish-three-stage-weddings-and-marriage-customs-ceremony-in-the-bible.htm](http://www.bible.ca/marriage/ancient-jewish-three-stage-weddings-and-marriage-customs-ceremony-in-the-bible.htm)). The main things for us are these:

**1. *The Contract Created:*** As dealt with in my study on the Lord's supper after the fulfillment of all things, I'm convinced the ideology behind the marriage contract transpired during and directly following the institution of "The Lord's Supper," an event that happened in the hours leading up to our text. All that's recorded is the Groom's betrothal (via the cup in the supper) to His bride the church (initially comprised only of His apostles, the foundation, Eph. 2:20; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). However...

Immediately following the supper (Luke 22:39ff), the Groom met in protracted prayer with the Father of that betrothed bride of Hebrews (who, ironically, was also the Father of the Groom in this case of metaphorical depiction). We of course have no idea what all was said in that conversation, but (esp. since the "cup" was mentioned again [v. 42]) I believe the exchange included things related to the contract such as some things expected by the Father (for the Groom asked for less severe expectations); but such contracts also included requests by the groom such as the length of the betrothal period so that he'd have plenty of time to build his bride's new home in his father's land. ... There are two other important things:

{1} Grooms and brides were legally married during this time, needing papers of divorce if something went awry during the betrothal period; and {2} this interval was considered her time (usually at least a year) of purification, in this case a corporate bride for Groom Jesus before He returned for her.

**2. *The Consummation Occurred:*** This was the point in time when the Groom hadn't only finished the building of His new home for His betrothed (which, according to several passages, wasn't merely a cottage or house or even a mansion or temple, but a city, a country, yea a kingdom), but it was also the point in time when He had fulfilled all the contracted conditions to her Father (who was also His Father). See, before He could go to His bride, He had to have died, been buried, been raised, ascended, interceded, and finished a new home for her, after which approval was then granted to, as Jesus said, "receive her to Himself," meaning she was no longer merely betrothed. And...

**3. *The Celebration Transpired:*** Those invited to the consummation/celebration (which essentially occurred simultaneously—within days) were those welcome into the homes (aka onto the property) of the two families who had become one. And when did all of this happen for our Lord and His bride, that is, when were they no longer just betrothed? It happened when the last part of the contract was fulfilled, that is, in this case, when the Old Covenant wife was destroyed for her unfaithfulness in the demise of Jerusalem with its temple, priesthood, sacrifices, etc. See, in *The Parable of the Wedding Feast* (Mat. 22), Jesus explicitly stated that armies would destroy the Christ-rejecting Jews and burn up their city (v. 7), while later in Luke 21, when speaking about the fulfillment of this event via the Romans, He said that such would be when all things written would be fulfilled (v. 22). All this then means that the betrothal period lasted forty years, between AD 30 & AD 70, indicating therefore that we today are children of the marriage union that transpired between the Lord and His bride nearly 2000 years ago (cf. Luke 20:36). So...

Though I'd *love* to say so much more about this beautifully fitting betrothal/wedding motif, my time is up, so I hope this is enough to at least get you interested in looking at John 14:2-3 from a different perspective than perhaps you ever have before. [T. E. Denton; March 2018; ASiteForTheLord.com]