

JESUS PREPARES A PLACE FOR US

John 14v1-3

The setting is the upper room & Jesus' last meal with His disciples on the eve of His death on the cross. Jesus Himself is troubled, but typically He spends His time comforting the troubled disciples. **Do not let your hearts be troubled.** They don't know exactly what is about to happen but they are aware of danger. He has talked of one of them betraying Him, and now Jesus has predicted Peter's denial

Trust in God; trust also in me. Once again Jesus places Himself alongside God. We have seen this throughout John's Gospel, often in terms of Father / Son language e.g. John 5v19, 20. The disciples can trust what Jesus does and believe what Jesus says, because they are the works and words of God Himself. The higher our view of Jesus, the less likely we are to be troubled, because He is God.

Perhaps more to the point in this context Jesus is saying "Keep on trusting in me" - even when I am taken from you, scourged, crucified; even when I am laid in a tomb, and everything seems to have gone wrong.

Then He starts reassuring them further by talking about what awaits Him and them beyond death. The word "heaven" is not mentioned but that is clearly what He is referring to. In fact some have said that this passage is the nearest we come to a definition of heaven in Scripture.

In the Bible heaven is the dwelling place of God. The Israelites prayed: "Look down from heaven, from your holy dwelling place." (Deuteronomy 26v15) Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father in heaven". (Matthew 6v9: also 5v45; 7v21). God is worshipped by "the host of heaven" (Nehemiah 9v6) and "the angels of heaven" (Mark 13v32). Heaven is God's home.

In my Father's house are many rooms; **if it were not so, I would have told you.** Over the years I have glided past these words of Jesus without feeling the force of them. What is Jesus saying here? He is saying that if there was bleak nothingness beyond this life and this world He would have said so. If there were no heaven for believers to look forward to after death Jesus would have come clean about it. He never enticed people with false promises. Quite the opposite: He talked about us taking up our cross, about persecutions, about people showing hatred to us – sometimes our own family. But here He makes a point of saying that He would not say these things about our future hope if they were not true.

So what does Jesus tell us? Whatever He says we can rely on. He tells us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

In my Father's house are many rooms.

1. JESUS HAS A FAMILY HOME WITH MANY ROOMS

Jesus talks of heaven as an eternal home. A family home – **my Father's house**. This is a warm image. We all long for a home. And yet in this world we are so often frustrated. Even when we find somewhere just right something can come along to spoil things, or else it is all too short.

Why is this? As usual Genesis 1-3 has the answer. Humanity lost their home in Eden when they sinned. Ever since then men and women have been searching for a home, yet at the same time they have been turning their backs on their Heavenly Father.

But for believers this is no longer the case. We now know where our true home is. "Our citizenship is in heaven." (Philippians 3v20) Heaven is in our hearts. Richard Baxter, a sixteenth century pastor, evangelist & theologian wrote '*Christ brings the heart to heaven first and then the person.*' ('The Saints Everlasting Rest')

What do you think he meant by Christ bringing "the heart to heaven"? Are there clear signs that heaven is in your heart and mine already? Are others able to see any evidence of it in the way we live our lives, and we invest our money in God's Kingdom, and give ourselves to prayer & mission? Is it evident in the way we worship, or things that we yearn for and rejoice over, and of course in our attitude to death?

In this house **are many rooms**. Jesus is painting a picture of the Father's great house with many apartments. I have an image of Buckingham Palace as I read this; or, Pemberley, because I've just seen the film 'Pride & Prejudice.' There is more than enough room for all who know and love Jesus.

Elsewhere Jesus speaks of going straight to a Garden when we die. "*Today you will be with me in Paradise.*" (Luke 23v43) This is the Persian word for a "walled garden." It is not our eternal home – that still awaits the final consummation of the ages - but it is a first taste of being back in the home that was lost; back to the garden.

What else does Jesus say?

I am going there to prepare a place for you.

2. JESUS HAS PREPARED A PLACE FOR YOU

This great heavenly home is more than an idea. It is **a place**. Jesus left earth to go to this actual place. It exists now, in a specific location outside our space-time universe. **I am going there to prepare a place for you**. At this point we might have images of Jesus decorating a room or puffing up the pillows on our bed! Instead, there are two great truths contained here;

- It is Christ's sacrifice for our sins which prepares a place for us. Jesus was talking about His coming death on the cross. Without it there could be no place for anyone. All of us would still be separated from God. But Jesus has opened the way. He has paid our penalty and gone ahead of us to present Himself to the Father on our behalf. He has prepared a place for us by His death, His resurrection and His ascension.
- Jesus is giving His assurance that there is a place set aside for each of us who love Him. It is reserved and ready for us. It is secure. It is certain. We need have no fear or doubt about this. Our name is already written in the reservation book, "the Lamb's book of Life." (Revelation 21v27) Jesus told His disciples to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. (Luke 10v20)

And your apartments will not be empty. The Bible says that you have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you". (1 Peter 1v4) Jesus indicated that you could store up treasure for yourselves in heaven. (Matthew 6v20) He was talking about spiritual treasure. You cannot take your earthly comforts and possessions with you – but everything in your life that has been for God's pleasure and glory, everything that has the stamp of eternity upon it will be waiting for you.

Which brings us to the final words in our text

v3: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

3. JESUS WILL RETURN TO TAKE YOU HOME

Jesus will take us there: **I will come back and take you to be with me.** There is sometimes debate about what Jesus meant, but most commentators agree that this is a reference to Jesus coming again at the end of the age. This is one of the great truths of the Bible; there are over 300 references to it in the New Testament. Three key words are used of this event.

- Parousia: a royal arrival or "coming"
- Epiphaneia: an appearance – in splendour
- Apokalupsis: to unveil or reveal glory

Jesus will return. There are many things we are not clear about concerning this great event, but we are clear about this:

1. It will be a personal return. Jesus *Himself* is coming back.
2. It will be a glorious return. Jesus says "*You will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*" (Luke 21v27)
3. It will be a visible return: "every eye will see Him". (Revelation 1v7)
4. It will be a final return. He is coming to wrap up human history.
5. It will be an awesome return. He is coming with judgement: "*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before*

him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25v 31-32)

6. It will be a joyful return. Christ's return will also be to gather those who love Him to Himself. *"Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."* (Phil 3v20)

Jesus will return! This is the great emphasis here. Jesus does not give any detailed timetable of His Glorious Return in our text. He is comforting the disciples with the truth that He will come back and take them to be with Him. Later in the New Testament Paul is given further revelation and detail of Christ's return to take all believers in every generation to be with Him for ever. (e.g 1 Thessalonians 4v13-18.)

I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where

I am. "The most important fact about heaven is that it is where Jesus is; "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23v43); "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5v8); "and so we will be with the Lord for ever." (1 Thessalonians 4v17) "I desire to depart and be with Christ which is better by far" (Philippians 1v23) This is more important than lots of detail about heaven. All we really need to know is that we will always be where He is. And we also know that this is what Jesus wants too. He prayed: "Father, I want those you have given to be with me where I am, and to see my glory." (John 17v24)

Finally:

These words are read regularly at funerals because they are words of comfort. But they are only of comfort to those who know and love Jesus.

John Wilthew. September 2005

Questions for Discussion

1. What indications are there that men and women are lost and looking for "home"?
2. What did the 17th century Pastor Richard Baxter mean when he said "Christ brings the heart to heaven first and then the person"? What might be the signs that heaven is in your heart already? What evidence might others see in our lives to prove that heaven is in our hearts?
3. We know we cannot take our possessions with us when we die, but Jesus talked of storing up treasure in heaven. So, what does this mean and how can we do it?
4. What difference might the fact of Jesus' coming again make to believers in the "here and now"?