

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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ANOTHER LOOK AT JOHN 14

The usual interpretation of John 14:1-3 affirms that these verses refer to heaven as the Father's house, Jesus is there now preparing a place for us which will consist of "many mansions" and He will someday come again and take us home to heaven. This passage is by and large one of the most popular text of the Bible for funeral sermons. It has been the basis of both song and sermon to give comfort in the times of bereavement. As for songs how can we explain gospel singers who sing "I've Got a Mansion Just Over The Hilltop" then follow it with "Lord Build Me A Cabin In the Corner Of Glory Land"? As to giving comfort to the grieving and questioning disciples, how could a promise taking place thousands of years in the future be of any help to their troubled hearts?

Using Scripture to interpret Scripture let's take another look at this passage. To begin, no where in Scripture is it stated that heaven is the Father's house, yet the Father's house is clearly identified. In the Old Testament the temple is referred to as "the house of God" and Jesus refers to the temple as being "My Father's house" however no physical place is referred to as "the house of God" in the New Testament. Hebrews 3:6: "Christ was faithful over His (God's) house, whose house we are." Hebrews 10:21: "...and we have a great priest over the house of God." Jesus is the high priest of the church. I Cor. 3:16: "do you not know that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Ephesians 2:19, 22: "you are of God's household...you are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." I Timothy 3:15: "I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The Father's house is the church. In His house are many "dwelling places" (KJV "mansions"). In verse 23 where Jesus says of those who love Him and keep His word, He and the Father will "come to him and make our abode with him." The word "abode" in this passage is the same as "mansion" or "dwelling place" in verse 2. At one time the Father had only one dwelling place on earth, His Son, now He has "many dwelling places", His church. Revelation 21:3: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.'"

"I go to prepare a place for you" (ver. 2). The place He prepared is not a place for us to live after we die, but a place for us to live now. Hebrews 9:12: "and not through ("taking" RSV) the blood of goats and calves, but through ("taking" RSV) His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all having obtained eternal redemption." We now have a place prepared for us in the holy place (heaven itself Heb. 9:24) so now we can "have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us" (Heb. 10). He has prepared a place for us in the very presence of God. We are now "sitting with Christ in the heavenlies" (Eph. 2:7). We have now access to all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) in Christ. "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that

where I am you may be there also" (ver. 3). He did not say He would receive us in heaven, but "receive us unto Himself." Did He come again? What did He say in verse 23 concerning the believer? "We (the Father and I) will come to him and make Our abode with him." Did They come to us? This happened on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It is by the Holy Spirit that He comes to us. This passage is not speaking of the second coming in the last day but His coming in spirit to dwell in His body. This would have been no comfort to His grieving disciples were He speaking of an event thousands of years removed from them.

That which causes misunderstanding of this chapter is that interpreters do not read the whole chapter. Notice verses 28 and 29: "You heard that I said to you 'I go away and I will come to you.'" He told them this in verse 3. Now He says in verse 29: "And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass you may believe." Notice "*when it comes to pass you may believe*". How could they believe if it were to come to pass thousands of years beyond their lifetime?

These men had watched Jesus under all circumstances for three years, and His constant awareness of the Father had been His most outstanding characteristic. The Jews had associated the presence of God with the temple. Now in Jesus they had seen the ultimate of consciously dwelling in the presence of the Father. What He said in the beginning of this chapter meant that they too would have a dwelling in the Father's house, even as they now beheld in Him. He was leaving that night to prepare the place for them to dwell within the Father's presence. Christians need to realize that we do not have to die to be in the presence of the Lord. We are in His presence now because we are the Father's house.

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WHOSE IN CHARGE HERE ?

In a time of uncertainty and doubt in the area of finance, politics, wars, disease, and all the other modern problems modern man has brought upon himself it is good to know that when God raised Christ from the dead He "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23). This is an illustration of what Jesus meant when He said "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Peter states it this way: He "is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him" (I Peter 3:22).

In a very thought provoking book entitled *When Nations Die* Dr. Jim Nelson Black discusses the rise and fall of civilizations and the fate of the world's great empires. The book is basically an analogy between the death of ancient civilizations and the death of our own culture. However, one of Dr. Black's premises is in direct opposition to the teaching of Scripture. He states: "for Christians the question is not whether Jesus Christ is the Savior,

but when He will come to rule and reign.” He seems to be saying what many modern prophesy preachers are saying: that there is not much hope that the gospel will influence and change society until the return of Christ at which time He will begin to rule the nations.” Evidently they have missed the message of the New Testament’s most quoted passage from the Old Testament, Psalm 110:1,2: “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit at My right hand until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet. The Lord will stretch forth your strong scepter from Zion, saying, ‘Rule in the midst of your enemies’.” God speaks to Jesus and informs Him that He will sit at His right hand until His enemies are conquered (the last one to be conquered is death: I Cor. 15:26). God’s throne is in heaven. This is where Jesus will remain until He comes again in final judgment. He is now reigning from God’s right hand and His kingdom rule is being extended through His people, Zion. Note: He is ruling “in the midst of His enemies.” The world is not aware of His rule, and neither are many church people, yet that is the most important event taking place on the world scene today.

That the Kingdom is a present reality and not a future event is definitely the teaching of Scripture (Eph. 1:20,21; Dan. 7:13,14; I Cor. 15:28; Ps. 110:1-7). The first demonstration of the reign of Christ was to send the Spirit (Acts 2:33-36) and the first message of the Spirit was twofold: (1) the restricted, national exclusive right of God (which the Jews claimed) was over, and (2) the physical structures of all that the old system stood for and stood upon was to be completely destroyed. Verse 17 and 18 of the quotation from Joel 2 which Peter uses to explain Pentecost is generally understood to describe the coming of the Holy spirit on that day, but verses 19-21 are not so generally understood. “Wonders in the sky, signs on the earth, blood, fire and vapor of smoke, the sun being darkened and the moon turning into blood” are the same terms used in the Old Testament to describe the judgments of God both upon the heathen nations and the nation of Israel (Isa. 19:1; 34:4,5,10; Jer. 4:23-28; Psalm 18:7-10). To understand the significance of these verses we need to note the original prophesy in Joel 2. Peter quotes it verbatim, but does not quote the last part of verse 32 which states: “For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.” Jesus warned the people of His day that when they saw certain things beginning to happen to flee and escape out of Jerusalem (Luke 21:21-23; Matt. 24:15-22). Therefore verse 17 and 18 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the destruction of Jerusalem (Israel as a national people) is intimately connected as being parts of the same event. The power and significance of the material, fleshly, earthly kingdom of Israel based upon a covenant of Law is over. Now it is spiritual and God has a new temple, a new city and a new covenant people. But who would believe this as long as the old system was hanging around? So God “takes away the first in order to establish the second” (Heb. 10:9). This was done spiritually in the death and resurrection events, but physically in 70 AD. The destruction upon Israel was the sign that Jesus is enthroned in heaven at the father’s right hand, ruling over the nations and bringing vengeance upon his enemies (Matt. 26:64). The promised destruction of the

Jewish system (city, temple, people) is considered by the prophets to be an aspect of the work of Christ intimately connected to His work of redemption. The outpouring of the Spirit and destruction of Jerusalem are all parts of His one work in bringing in His kingdom and creating a new temple and a new people (Dan. 9:24-27).

The Scriptures teach that Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (I Cor. 15:26). But how does He reign? A very convenient way of answering this is to accept Hal Lindsey’s, Jack Van Impe’s and the Scofield Reference Bible’s teaching His reign will not begin until He returns. I rather accept the Psalmist’s words when he states that upon His ascension the Lord would “rule in the midst of thine enemies” (Psalm 110:1-3). If the church is His body, then it follows that the church shares in His reign here and now. Paul asked the Corinthians “Do you not know (inferring they should know) that the saints will judge the world?...Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” (I Cor. 6:2,3). It was important that they know this because it affected the way they settled problems among themselves. To judge is to rule (the book of Judges is the story of Judges ruling over Israel). Of course such topics are of little interest to today’s average church attender. We must hear sermons on such burning issues as co-dependency, chemical abuse, spiritual healing, self help techniques, how Jesus and the church can meet my felt needs and assure a generation of baby boomers that God is not really as demanding as some preachers say He is.

If our “entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings being made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority”...can enable the kings and authorities to so rule “in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (I Tim. 2:1,2), are we not sharing in His reign? Proverbs 16:7 states: “If a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him”. (What an answer to church fights). This verse shows how it is that the church governs the world; how she controls the governments of the nations. When the church is faithful God changes men. This is further illustrated in Acts 5:11-14.

The church is always in charge of culture. We don’t have to take over the government, the religious right notwithstanding, we already have it. We just have to start using it aright. When Joseph was faithful, Pharaoh was converted. When Daniel was faithful, Nebuchadnezzar was converted. It was because Judah was wicked that Nebuchadnezzar conquered her. It was the faithfulness of the church that toppled the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:44). This is how we rule. We do not rule first and foremost through activism and we do not rule first and foremost through evangelism, important as these may be. We rule first and foremost through our obedience to God, by pleasing Him through faithful lives. In the Bible, when people began to take God seriously, the first thing that happened was persecution, but afterwards there is significant cultural change. It took about a decade in the cases of Joseph and Daniel, so it might take a while for the church to see any change when it finally becomes serious with God. But this is the answer to the corruption we complain about in government today. Christ is ruling and we are on the winning side.

