

# In My Father's House

## John 14:1-3

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John 14:1-3

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 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.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

John fourteen one through three is sometimes quoted as evidence that Jesus taught a pretribulation rapture to His disciples. Other pretribulationists believe the rapture was not revealed by Jesus at all. They believe Paul alone was the conduit for this alleged revelation. Those who claim John fourteen teaches a pretribulation rapture believe this passage implies Jesus will take the raptured believers immediately to heaven.

The idea that this passage teaches Christians will go to heaven after the rapture would be strong support for pretribulationism and equally troublesome for posttribulation, **if it were true**. The posttribulation view does not allow for the Church to go to heaven after the rapture, but directly into Christ's physical Kingdom.

### Presuppositions & Bias

One of the difficulties with the way this passage is interpreted is our own personal bias. If we believe in a pretribulation rapture, we naturally would look at this passage with a bias toward pretribulationism. We might assume that since Jesus was referring to coming *for* His disciples, He had a pretribulation rapture in view. If we already believe that Christians will go to heaven after the rapture we would be inclined to interpret "My Father's House" as heaven. But, if, like the disciples, all we knew was from Old Testament prophecy and what Jesus had said previously, we would understand Jesus as referring to the second coming and His Kingdom. If we are going to understand this passage correctly, we need to look beyond our own presuppositions. Any inferences we draw must be based on the prophetic outlook the disciples would have had. The disciples themselves had certain presuppositions based on their Jewish upbringing and training in the Old Testament Scriptures, and based on Jesus' prior teaching. And Jesus was aware of what they knew and thought, and spoke to them in such a way that they could understand Him. In order to correctly interpret this passage, we must jettison our own presuppositions and understand the presuppositions

the disciples brought to Jesus' teaching. What did they already know about Jesus' coming again for them? The prior understanding of the disciples regarding Jesus' coming for them must be a crucial component of our interpretation if we are going to be fair and unbiased and if we are going to be faithful to grammatical historical method.

Too often Christians ask the wrong question of Scripture, "what does this passage mean to me?" Instead, we should ask, "what did Jesus' words mean to His disciples at the time?" That Jesus limited his teaching to what they could digest is evident from Jesus' own words in this very discourse. **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come.**" (John 16:12-13 NKJV). Notice eschatology was one of the things the Holy Spirit would further develop for them at a later date. It is apparent Jesus was only giving the disciples information they could digest at the time. John 14:1-3 should be interpreted by us only as it WOULD have been understood by the disciples at the time. They would understand Jesus' teaching based on their knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures and Jesus' prior teaching to them.

### **Using a Double Standard**

The difficulty that has yet to be overcome by pretribulationists is how to reconcile this passage with the **Olivet Discourse**. That discourse, spoken by Jesus to them only two days earlier, was a lengthy discussion of the last days and the second coming. There is no pretribulation coming or rapture in the Olivet Discourse. The only coming of Christ mentioned by Jesus will occur "*immediately after the tribulation*" (Matt. 24:29-31). Jesus had given them a series of signs for which to watch. By paying attention to these signs they could know when His coming was "*near, even at the doors*" (Matt. 24:33). Then Jesus told them this:

*Mark 13:32-37*

*32 "But of **that day and hour** no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

*33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

*34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.*

*35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning —*

*36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.*

*37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"*

"That day and hour" refers to Jesus' coming after the tribulation mentioned in the

previous verses. The "man going to a far country" was Jesus. He was about to return to heaven. That He "gave authority to His servants and to each his work" refers to the Great Commission. Obviously, this concerns Christians since the Great Commission was given to Jesus disciples, and was passed down to us through the disciples. Likewise, **the commands to watch** for Jesus' coming "*immediately after the tribulation*" were given to the same disciples, and passed on to us in succeeding generations as well. But, the point I would like to stress is this: The disciples' expectation from the Olivet Discourse was most certainly that Jesus would come back for them after the tribulation, not before. This is the coming for which Jesus commanded them to watch.

Typically, pretribulationists try to disqualify the Olivet Discourse from any discussion of the rapture, claiming it is Jewish and does not concern the "Church" (as they define the term). However, any reasoning they employ to disassociate the Olivet Discourse from the Church must also be applied to the Upper Room Discourse recorded by John. Both discourses were delivered to Jesus' disciples only two days apart, both in the midst of a Jewish setting (here it was the Passover meal). If the disciples "represent" a remnant of Jewish "tribulation saints" in the Olivet Discourse, why not in John fourteen? Just what in John 14 distinguishes the disciples in this discourse from the disciples in the Olivet Discourse? Isn't this a double standard? If we are going to do the Word of God justice, these two passages must be reconciled. They cannot be referring to two separate events or people groups since **they were both delivered to the disciples in view of their looking for Christ's coming for them.** The disciples could not be expecting to be persecuted by the Antichrist, watch for signs, and be gathered together "*immediately after the tribulation,*" as the Olivet Discourse indicates, and still be expecting a pretribulation rapture based on John fourteen. Nor could John fourteen be simply further revelation, adding a pretribulation rapture to the scenario Jesus described on the Mount of Olives. **The two ideas are mutually exclusive** because one cannot watch for signs of a posttribulation coming when one has been already raptured to heaven.

The Olivet Discourse was not merely Jesus' informing them of future events for Israel. It was personal instruction to the disciples regarding watching for the signs so they would know when Jesus was coming back for them. These signs would occur during and immediately after the tribulation. His parables of the fig tree, the thief in the night, the unfaithful servant, the ten virgins, and the man taking a journey (Matt. 24,25 & Mark 13), all illustrated how the disciples were to watch for the coming of Christ "*immediately after the tribulation*" mentioned within the context. The disciples were included in Jesus' "elect" who would be gathered together when Christ comes in glory, (Matt. 24:29-31). **If Jesus was teaching them a pretribulation rapture in John fourteen, He was directly negating everything He had just told them two days earlier!!!** If pretribulationists make the disciples representative of "Israel" in the Olivet Discourse, they must do the same

in John fourteen, or they are using a double (false) standard. If the disciples represent the Church in John fourteen, they must also in the Olivet Discourse. Consistency and integrity in Biblical interpretation demands no less. The idea that Jesus taught His disciples about the second coming, using them as representatives of Israel and the Church indiscriminately without telling them, makes havoc of the Scriptures. This kind of teaching would have been incomprehensible to the disciples. It totally destroys the continuity of Jesus' teaching. **Any legitimate attempt to interpret Jesus' teaching to His disciples must harmonize all of His teaching to them.**

After the resurrection, Jesus gave them the Great Commission. Part of His instruction was to teach all new Gentile converts to "*observe all things that I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:20). Since both the Upper Room Discourse and the Olivet Discourse were direct teaching of Jesus to His disciples, and BOTH included personal instructions and commandments regarding Jesus' coming for them, it is obvious that BOTH discourses were intended for the same people, and both must be passed on as Christian doctrine. Therefore, it is illegitimate to apply one to physical Israel and the other to the Church. This kind of interpretive method is arbitrary and subjective, allowing the interpreter to manipulate the passage to achieve the desired result.

### **Where was Jesus Going?**

The main point of the Upper Room Discourse was Jesus' preparing His disciples for His "*going away*." The disciples still did not fully appreciate two separate advents of Christ. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus discussed the events leading up to His appearing in the clouds in glory. He also indicated that a rather lengthy period would transpire before the physical Kingdom would be set up. He said the gospel must be published among all nations before the end would come. The disciples did not yet understand that **Jesus would not be present with them as they preached the gospel among the nations**. In the upper room Jesus told them He must go away to prepare a place for them. No doubt, the period of His absence includes the ascension and the entire time until His second coming. This is obvious in the discussion of the coming of the Comforter. Yet, His going specifically **to prepare a place for them** referred primarily to the crucifixion. Since this discourse took place the night before the crucifixion, it seems natural that Jesus was preparing the disciples for what would happen the following day. As you read John 14:1-3 within its context, you will immediately see that Jesus was speaking initially of His "*going away*" **to the cross to redeem mankind**. Jesus was preparing the disciples for the events of the following day by foretelling the crucifixion, by which He would "**prepare a place**" in His coming Kingdom for His "*little flock*." In the verses immediately preceding the passage in question, Jesus' "*going away*" meant going to the cross. This is implied in His remark to Peter about his impending denial.

John 13:33-14:3

33 Little children, **I shall be with you a little while longer.** You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, **'Where I am going, you cannot come,'** so now I say to you.

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

36 Simon Peter said to Him, "**Lord, where are You going?**" Jesus answered him, "**Where I am going you cannot follow Me now,** but you shall follow Me afterward."

37 Peter said to Him, "**Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.**"

38 Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 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.**

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

In verse 36, Jesus told Peter that he could not follow Him yet, but that he would follow Him afterwards. This is most likely a reference to Peter's martyrdom Jesus foretold in John 21.

John 21:17-24

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

19 **This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.** And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

Notice Jesus left open the possibility that John might live until the second coming. But, Peter definitely would not. He was to "follow Christ" on a cross. We know from Church history that Peter was crucified by the Romans about 30 years after Jesus. Since Jesus told Peter he could not follow Him now, but would follow Him later, His "going away" most likely had His crucifixion in view. All of this is strong evidence that Jesus was referring to His crucifixion when He first spoke of "going away" in chapter 13 and the beginning of chapter 14. His going to "prepare a place for you" should be understood within this context. Jesus was going to the cross to prepare the way of salvation, and to secure a place for His followers in His coming Kingdom.

Some might object that later in the discourse Jesus said "I go to the Father," and was therefore speaking of His ascension and not His crucifixion. However, the ascension witnessed by the disciples in Acts 1 was only the last trip to the Father, not the first. Jesus ascended to the Father earlier as part of His priestly atonement work immediately after the resurrection. Hebrews 9 indicates that the role Jesus played in the atonement was more than sacrificial, being the "Lamb of God." Jesus was BOTH the sacrifice and the High Priest who performed the atonement, by offering of His own blood in the literal presence of God in heaven.

Heb 9:11-12,23-24

11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, **but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place** once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ...

23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, **but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.**

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, **but into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

That Christ's role was both sacrifice and Priest is critical to understanding John 14's reference to His going to the Father. Immediately after the resurrection and coming out of the tomb, Jesus met Mary. While Mary was overwhelmed with joy, Jesus cautioned her. "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father

*and your Father, and to My God and your God'." (John 20:17 NKJV). Jesus was not referring to His ascension recorded in Acts 1. That took place 40 days later. He was referring to His immediate ascension to the Father to complete His priestly duty, offering His own blood in the most Holy Place in the Temple in heaven. Jesus told Mary not to touch Him BECAUSE (Greek - "gar") He had not yet ascended to the Father. He then told Mary to tell the others that "I am ascending to the Father." Here He used the present tense, which would not make much sense if He was referring to an ascension over five weeks (40 days) in the future.*

Jesus' statement in the Upper Room Discourse, that He was "going to the Father," was connected with the atonement. Jesus appeared several times to the disciples within the 40 days after the resurrection. The "ascension" in Acts 1 is merely the last time Jesus ascended to heaven, allowing His disciples to witness it. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus' going away and also His had to do with His atoning work. It was the atonement that Jesus was referring to when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He was going to make atonement for the sins of His disciples so that they could rule and reign with Him. That Jesus was referring to His impending crucifixion and performance of His High Priestly atonement function when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you," is also evident as the conversation developed further.

*John 16:17-23*

*17 Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, '**because I go to the Father**'?"*

*18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."*

*19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"*

*20 Most assuredly, **I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.***

*21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.*

*22 **Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.***

*23 "And **in that day** you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.*

In this passage, did Jesus refer to His ascension and present absence from the world? Or did He refer to His crucifixion and resurrection? Was their seeing Him

again in reference to the second coming? Or the resurrection? Answer this question and it is obvious what Jesus meant by His "going away." In the above verses, Jesus told them they would have intense sorrow upon His "going away" but would be filled with joy when they saw Him again. This begs the question, **when did the disciples experience great sorrow?** If the common pretribulation assertion is true (that Jesus was referring to His final ascension), **the disciples should have experienced great sorrow when Jesus ascended to heaven.** But according to Luke, just the opposite was the case. He wrote that the disciples returned from watching Jesus' ascension "**with great joy**" (Luke 24:50-53). Were the disciples sorrowful when Jesus was crucified? Absolutely! Jesus' prediction of His disciples **experiencing great sorrow at His going away**, and great joy when they see Him again, only fits the crucifixion and resurrection. It does not fit the ascension and second coming.

Also, notice the promise of their asking the Father directly in Jesus' name in prayer is placed AFTER their sorrow turns to joy, after they see Him again. This promise of asking the Father in prayer in Jesus' name was something reserved for after the resurrection, not after the second coming. (See John 15:16).

This is proof that Jesus' statement about going away to prepare a place for them had absolutely NOTHING to do with returning to heaven to build Christian condominiums. It had everything to do with His making atonement for them by offering Himself as the spotless Lamb of God, and performing His priestly duties by offering His own blood in the presence of the Father in the heavenly Temple. Just as the priest took the carcass of the animal outside the camp (Lev.4:21), so also Jesus suffered outside the camp.

*Heb 13:11-12*

*11 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.*

*12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.*

And just as the priest was not finished after killing the animal, but must offer the blood in the presence of God, so too Jesus was not finished His priestly duties until He offered His own blood in the presence of God in heaven.

*Heb 9:12,23-24*

*12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ...*

*23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*



24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

### **Jesus is not Building Christian Condos**

Jesus did not go to heaven to build Christian condominiums at His final ascension. He went to sit down at the Father's right hand to await His enemies being made His footstool (Heb. 10:12,13). That Jesus was not referring to His going to heaven to construct Christian condominiums is proven by the language He used.

1. Jesus spoke of the dwelling places in the present tense. He said: "*In my Father's house are many dwelling places.*" **This language requires that the abodes Jesus was referring to already existed when Jesus said these words.** Jesus was simply saying He would make room for His disciples among the already existing dwelling places.

2. The word "*prepare*" does not mean to "build," but to get something ready. This is the same word Jesus used when He sent the disciples ahead to make ready (*prepare*) the upper room to accommodate the Passover meal. They did not build a second story on the house, but prepared the upper room to accommodate the Passover celebration. Therefore, Jesus did not go away to build anything.

In what sense would Jesus' ascension to heaven have anything to do with making ready (or preparing) already existing "abodes" in heaven to accommodate His disciples, or making the way for the disciples to occupy these heavenly abodes? Where is such an idea taught in Scripture? The fact is, this idea is completely foreign to Scripture, and is based solely on pretribulation presuppositions.

### **What is "My Father's House?"**

The words "*my Father's house*" do not refer to heaven. We cannot arbitrarily assign a meaning to this phrase without biblical precedent. It must be interpreted in the same manner we interpret any other biblical phrase, by looking at other occurrences of this and similar phrases. There is no precedent in Scripture for supposing "*my Father's house*" means heaven. In the numerous Old Testament passages which mention the "*house of the Lord*," the **earthly** abode of God's presence is always in view. This includes the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 1:24), Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles 2:1, 7:16), and the Millennial Temple and Kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-4, Joel 3:18). The biblical writers **never** referred to heaven as the Lord's house. The "*house of the Lord*" is **always earthly and related to the Temple**, which will be the locus of Christ's Kingdom. Here is one of many examples.

Isa 2:2-4

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of **the LORD's house** shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.

3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, **To the house of the God of Jacob**; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of **Zion** shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from **Jerusalem**.

4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

In the New Testament, occasionally the "Church" is called the Lord's dwelling in a metaphorical sense, Eph. 2:19-22. But, the disciples were not familiar with this metaphorical usage by Paul, and would certainly not understand Jesus' words as a metaphor. They would understand His words in light of their familiarity with the Old Testament usage, and Jesus earlier usage of the phrase "my Father's house."

John 2:15-17

15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of **the temple**, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make **My Father's house** a house of merchandise!"

17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for **Your house** has eaten Me up."

Here Jesus unquestionably referred to the Temple in Jerusalem as "my Father's house." Verse 17 shows the disciples associated Jesus' expression with an Old Testament reference to the "house of the Lord," [Psalm 69:9]. Therefore, it is natural they would understand the same expression in John fourteen in the same way. Some New Testament manuscripts also contain the same expression in Luke 2.

Luke 2:46,49

46 After three days they found him **in the temple courts**, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions....

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in **my Father's house**?"

(NIV)

The disciples expected the Kingdom of God to be centered in Jerusalem, specifically in the Temple, (see: Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 68:29). In the Olivet Discourse, only two days before, Jesus emphasized their waiting and watching for **the coming of His Kingdom**, (Matt. 25:31, Luke 21:31). This was the focus of their hope. The disciples were familiar with the frequent Old Testament usage of the term "house of the Lord" in reference to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were also familiar with Jesus' previous usage of the phrase "my Father's house," also in reference to the Temple. They were not familiar with modern pretribulation eschatology. It is virtually certain they understood Jesus to mean He was going to prepare a place **in His Kingdom** for them, more specifically **in the Temple** from which Jesus would rule. When He returned they would accompany Him to His Kingdom. "And if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

In Luke's parallel account of the Upper Room Discourse, there is more evidence Jesus was speaking of His Kingdom and not heaven in the upper room. While Luke did not record Jesus' statement about His "Father's house," it is clear from his account that the context of the discussion was indeed the coming of Christ's Kingdom to earth.

*Luke 22:15-18,28-30*

*15 Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;*

*16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled **in the kingdom of God.**"*

*17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves;*

*18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine **until the kingdom of God comes.**" ...*

*28 "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials.*

*29 And **I bestow upon you a kingdom**, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,*

*30 **that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**"*

According to Luke's account, Jesus spoke of His Kingdom in the upper room and mentioned nothing about heaven. When Jesus said in John 14, "In my Father's house are many mansions [dwelling places], I go to prepare a place for you," He was speaking of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God in order to prepare a place in His Kingdom for His "little flock." Luke places them ruling beside Christ on twelve thrones, and eating with Him at His own table in the coming Kingdom. This places the disciples in the Kingdom Temple, ruling with Christ.

As the disciples listened to Jesus' words, they had to assimilate His new teaching with what He had previously taught them and their knowledge of the Old Testament. Based on a synthesis of all of this material, the disciples could only conclude that when Jesus returned they would accompany Him to His Kingdom, where they would sit on thrones and reign with Him. This is why, after the resurrection, they asked Jesus; "Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). They apparently believed His death was all there was to His "going away," and mistakenly thought the resurrection would signal His return in power and glory. After all, He told them only days before, "If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself." Of course Jesus had to correct their error by referring them back to the Olivet Discourse. The Gospel must first be preached among all nations, (Acts 1:8). But the important point here is apparent. Even after the resurrection, and in spite of their error, they were looking for Christ's Kingdom, not a trip to heaven. He therefore did not teach them a pretribulation rapture.

### **Many Mansions**

The Disciples were not only familiar with the Temple from Scripture, but had gone to the Temple complex many times. They had been at the Temple with Jesus the very day Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse. They were familiar with the beautiful architecture of the Temple complex (Matt. 24:1) which included many **apartments** (mansions) which lined the Temple structure designed for the Temple priests (1 Kings 6:5-10 & 1 Chron. 9:26,27). Jesus said that the "many dwellings" in "My Father's House" (Temple) would be made ready for them. He told them they would rule with Him on twelve thrones and eat with Him at His table in His Kingdom. Knowing all this, the disciples no doubt imagined themselves as the Royal governing Cabinet, occupying the luxurious apartments at the Temple. The disciples were no doubt also familiar with Ezekiel 40-44, which describes in detail the many "chambers" (apartments) that will be a part of the future Kingdom Temple from which Christ will rule. It would be natural for them to associate the "many mansions" with these chambers, since they clearly associated Jesus' expression, "my Father's house" with the Temple, (John 2:16-19, Psalm 69:9).

Josephus, who was an eyewitness of the Temple of Jesus' day, described the Temple apartments familiar to the disciples.

*"But the inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. In this there was nothing at all. It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies. **Now, about the sides of the lower part of the temple, there were little houses, with passages out of one into another; there were a great many of them, and they were of three stories high; there were also entrances on each side into them from the gate of the***

**temple.** *But the superior part of the temple had no such little houses any further, because the temple was there narrower, and forty cubits higher, and of a smaller body than the lower parts of it. Thus we collect that the whole height, including the sixty cubits from the floor, amounted to a hundred cubits.*" (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Bk. V, ch. v)

Those occupying the "many mansions" at that time were not fit to rule with the Messiah. Jesus told them so in the hearing of His disciples the very day He gave the Olivet Discourse. "Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" (Matt 21:23 NKJV).

Within ear-shot of these "many mansions," and speaking directly to the ones who were occupying them at the time, Jesus responded with the parable of the husbandmen who had custody of God's vineyard. They beat His servants, and killed His Son. The result was they were destroyed by the land owner, and the vineyard was given to others. This parable was meant to convict the chief priests and elders of their rejection of Jesus, and give them their eviction notice. Jesus closed His remarks with the following statement. "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (v. 43). But to His disciples, Jesus said: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

When we compare these verses to Jesus' statements, that the disciples would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in His Kingdom, the picture becomes clear. The disciples were chosen, not only to spread the Gospel, but to replace the unfaithful Jewish priests in the coming Kingdom. This does not mean the "Church" replaces "Israel," usurping her place and promises. The disciples were Jewish, yet also the elders of the Church. The "Church" consists of purified Israel along with the believing remnants of the Gentile nations.

I realize some may object to this view because there are certainly not enough "apartments" in the Kingdom Temple for all believers. But, as Luke's account indicates, Jesus was not speaking to all future Christians here, only His disciples. Certainly He did not mean all Christians would sit on twelve thrones and judge Israel! Both the passage in Luke twenty-two and John fourteen were meant for those disciples who "have continued with Me in My trials" (Luke 22:28). All saints of God will reign with Christ in His Kingdom. But, the disciples earned a special place, ruling from Christ's side in the Temple. Other faithful believers will be given positions of authority over various cities, (Luke 19:11-26, 2 Tim. 2:12).

Some may object that this view merges God's programs for Israel and the Church. However, this objection stems from excessive dispensationalism, not

proper exegesis of the passages concerned. While there will be national distinctions in the Kingdom, there will not be dispensational distinctions. There is only one program for both Jew and Gentile. All those saved before the inauguration of Christ's physical Kingdom will form a single body, regardless of nationality or dispensation in which they lived. This will include Old and New Testament saints. *"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see **Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God**, and yourselves thrust out. **They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God**"* (Luke 13:28-29). And again, *"When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that **many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven**. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 8:10-12 NKJV).

## **Conclusion**

There is no reason to separate Jesus' coming again in John 14 from what He had just told the disciples two days earlier on the Mount of Olives. As we attempt to apply the grammatical-historical method of interpretation to John 14:1-3, we must take into account the following things:

- The context in which Jesus was speaking to going away to be crucified
- The disciples' familiarity with Old Testament references to the "house of the Lord"
- Jesus earlier usage of the phrase "My Father's house"
- Jesus instructions in the Olivet Discourse given only 2 days earlier
- The parallel passage in Luke 22, which shows the context of the discussion was the coming Kingdom

Given the Jewish background of the disciples, their familiarity with the Temple complex, their knowledge of the Old Testament, and their instruction in the Kingdom of God by Jesus, it is natural to conclude that they expected to experience the tribulation Jesus mentioned two days earlier, and be gathered at the coming of Jesus Christ immediately after it. They would then take up residence in the Temple "mansions," ruling with Christ seated on His right hand and on His left. The priests, who were at that time occupying the priestly chambers at the Temple, were destined to be evicted from these "many mansions" (in AD70) and locked out of His coming Kingdom.