

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

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We read in John's gospel Chapter 14:1-3, *“You must not let yourselves be distressed - you must hold to your faith in God and to your faith in me. There are many rooms in my Father's House. If there were not, should I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you? It is true that I am going away to prepare a place for you, but it is just as true that I am coming again to welcome you into my own home, so that you may be where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the road I am going to take”* (PHILLIPS).

Here in this context, Jesus knew that His disciples were very sad because of the short time they would have with Him on the earth. In a few days, Jesus would be crucified, and the disciples would be scattered and on their own because of the persecutions for their faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. At such a time, this is the hope Jesus offered to them. First, *“Have faith in God and faith in Me.”* Second, *“rooms in my Father's house.”* Third, *“coming again to welcome you into my own home.”*

In this article I would like to explain these three phrases given above:

Have Faith In Me And In My Father

Many of the disciples were weak and weary in their spiritual journey with Jesus. Even after three years of discipleship, they could not understand the divinity of Jesus Christ. At one point as recorded in John 14:8, Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father and that would be enough for them. They did not know that the Father was in Him and He was in the Father. He came to represent the Father, taking the very nature of a servant, and being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:7). In Matthew 16:16, *“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”* Peter had a glimpse of the divinity of Christ, yet, Peter was the first one to desert Jesus along with other disciples to go back to fishing (John 21:3). On another occasion, Jesus and the disciples were on a boat to go over to the other side of the lake which is the sea of Galilee. A squall came, the boat was being swamped,

and they were in great danger. Jesus had fallen asleep. The disciples woke him because they were so afraid that they would be drowned. Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waters, and the storm subsided. Jesus asked his disciples *“Where is your faith”* (Luke 8:25)? They doubted Him even though He did so many miracles and wonders. Jesus knew each of His disciples very well. That is why He told them to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear”* (John 16:12, NIV).

The disciples were still steeped in the traditions of Judaic ceremonies, such as sacrifices, circumcision, temple worship, etc. Jesus knew that they needed more strength and encouragement when He was gone from their presence. That is why Jesus told them that they need to place their complete faith in Him and the Father to overcome their fears and doubts. It is very clear that Jesus had more to say to His disciples, but He had to leave it for the Holy Spirit which is His own Spirit to explain further and guide them. *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak of His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the father is mine. That is why I said, the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you”* (John 16:12-15, NIV).

As the promised Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, the disciples and other God-fearing Jews experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the first time in their lives. That event transformed their commitment and ministry. The apostles realized that they had to come out of the Jewish customs and traditions, and separate themselves from them. When people made fun of them saying that they were drunk, Peter stood up among the twelve disciples to declare that *“These men are not drunk,”* but it was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:15-16). The Holy Spirit further empowered them to be bold and strong. *“But Peter and John replied ‘Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard’”* (Acts 4:19-20, NIV). The Holy Spirit gave them the courage and faith to utter those words. At that point, they were not afraid of persecution, death, or imprisonment anymore.

Many Rooms in My Father’s House

There are several schools of thought about this scripture in John 14:1-2, which says, *“In my Father’s house are many rooms”* (NIV). Some think that it is a literal house with brick and mortar that God has prepared for us in

heaven. However, if we think reflectively, it is more than an earthly house. Many rooms are to be understood as the dwelling places in Him. Every earthly mansion, temple, and tabernacle that are built out of earthly materials have perished or will perish or be destroyed in due time. The tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem were to be a dwelling place for God. King David lamented the fact that he lived in a palace of cedars and the ark of God remained in a tent (2 Samuel 7:2). King Solomon, while dedicating the temple prayed, *“But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built”* (2 Chronicles 6:18, NIV)! It is an absolute truth that the habitation of God is not in a man-made building or tabernacle, but it is in the hearts of the people who He has created and who have accepted Him into their hearts.

Revelation Chapter 21:3, *“Then I heard a great voice from the throne crying, ‘See! The home of God is with men, and He will live among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no more, and never again shall there be sorrow or crying or pain. For all those former things are past and gone’”* (PHILLIPS). One can appreciate from the above scriptures that God is no longer interested in inhabiting a literal temple made of earthly materials, but His desire is to tabernacle or dwell with humanity.

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, His desire was to have a continuous and everlasting communion with His creation. The entire Garden of Eden was their home and not a specific place in the garden. Every day God came down from heaven to the Garden of Eden to have fellowship with Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:8-9, *“Then the man and his wife heard the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you’”* (NIV)? God’s home or abiding place was on earth with Adam and Eve. The Garden of Eden became the place of union between man and God. It is a tremendous truth that God’s desire has always been to have an abiding place in the hearts of men since the beginning of creation. Even now He is ready to enter the hearts of all who will receive Him.

Revelation 3:19-20, *“All those whom I love, I correct and discipline. Therefore, shake off your complacency and repent. See, I stand knocking at the door. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will go into his house and dine with him, and he with me”* (PHILLIPS). Therefore, when Jesus said that there were many rooms in His Father’s house, *“He shows that it is a spiritual place of union with the Father and the Son, a union so blessed and intimate that, if the Son whom they thought they knew was really apprehended and really known,*

then they would be in vital union with the Father also” (Warnock, G.H. (1951) *The Feast of Tabernacles*, p.110).

In the Greek language, the word mansion and abode are the same. Jesus has gone to prepare abiding places for us so that we will be abiding in Him. We will be with Him where He is. Consequently, we become the Father’s house where He dwells with us, as we read in Revelation Chapter 21.

Coming Again To Welcome You Into My Home

Jesus made it very clear in John 14:18-19, *“I am not going to leave you alone in the world - I am coming to you. In a very little while, the world will see me no more, but you will see me, because I am really alive, and you will be alive too. When that day comes, you will realize that I am in my Father, that you are in me, and I am in you”* (PHILLIPS). When Jesus said, *“I am coming to you”*, He was referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His abiding presence. Jesus said, *“In my father’s house there are many mansions.”* This place is spiritual and not a physical house of gold or silver. If Jesus has gone to build literal mansions for us, we have misunderstood the message because the real place is incorruptible.

“The real things are the spiritual counterparts of gold and pearls, and sapphires and emeralds and jasper. In our finite and limited understanding, these natural and earthly things are used to describe our heavenly heritage - because that is the only language that we can understand, but in reality, the glorious realm of the Spirit far transcends and outshines any such earthly glory” (Warnock, G.H. (1951) *The Feast of Tabernacles*, p.111). Therefore, when Jesus said, He was going away, He meant His earthly ministry as a man of Galilee in the flesh was completed and He said that He would come back and never leave us orphans which means that He is returning in the fullness of His Spirit. In other words, He is returning to welcome us into his own home. *“Then my Father will love him, and we will come to that man and make our home within him”* (John 14:23, PHILLIPS).

Ephesians 2:22, *“And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit”* (NIV). We read in John’s gospel Chapter 14:28, *“You heard Me say, ‘I am going away, and I am coming back to you’”* (NIV). This is the advent of Christ in us in the fullness of the Spirit. God wants to make His abiding place in us by His Spirit. It is like the Vine remaining in the branch and the branch abiding in the Vine. The abiding place of the branch is the Vine. We remain in Him and He remains in us or He makes His abode in us and we in Him. What a wonderful thought it is of becoming one with the Son of God and the Son with the Father. It was the prayer of Jesus, *“That all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be*

one in us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me” (John 17:21, NIV). What Jesus was intending in this high priestly prayer is not a symbolic unity but a spiritual dwelling together with one another.

1 Corinthians 3:16, *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you”* (NIV). Again, in 2 Corinthians 6:16, *“For we are the temple of the living God. And God has said, ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’”* (NIV). In John 14:23, *“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My father will love him, and we will make our home with him’”* (NIV). John makes it crystal clear that this coming is directly related to the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) whom the Father will send to instruct and remind. Just as the disciples knew Jesus, they will soon come to know of His union with the Father, the same union He will share with them. This is a spiritual truth that we will be completely united in Him with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is Jesus’ Spirit. Judas (not Iscariot) and others were expecting a visible return in majesty accompanied by a fearsome display of celestial fireworks.

In John 14:22, *“Then Judas said, ‘But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?’”* Jesus almost avoided that question and emphasized the fact that it is not a visible appearance that is important. It is the invisible and indwelling spiritual unity where Father and Son make their home in us that is significant.

Jesus lived in the Father and Father lived in Jesus (John 14:10). The Father’s house was revealed in Jesus. The dwelling of the Father was in Christ. Through Christ, we also became the dwelling of the Father. Here we understand that a dwelling place is a place of comfort and peace in God. Abraham lived in tents beholding an eternal city or a place of spiritual union with God. It is said that *“To Abraham, there was given the vision; and, even when his body was wandering in Palestine, his soul was at home with God”* (Barclay, W. (1955) *The Letter To The Hebrews* (New Daily Study Bible), p.172).

Hebrews 13:14, *“For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come”* (NIV). The writer to the Hebrews clarifies that this earthly city is not everlasting. Therefore, we anticipate a glorious city or place of living in the heavenly realms. Man-made civilizations, cities, and empires have all fallen, but the real city or that place of rest is the kingdom of God which is being built in His people. A spiritual building is being built on the foundations designed by God. When Jesus said, *“I am going to prepare a place for you,”* He was referring to a place of rest in the spiritual realm in Him and the Father forever.

The Father is the natural abode of the Son, and the Son is the natural abode of the Father. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit mutually and inseparably indwell one another. This mutual indwelling is intimate, natural, and constant. Jesus prayed *“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”* (John 17:21-23, NIV). In this prayer Jesus desired for unity just like Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit which is an indwelling unity of the triune God.

In John 17:24, we read, *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world”* (NIV). Jesus wants us to be where He is and partake of His glory, not in the natural but in the Spirit. John, the Apostle, describes how he beheld the glory of Jesus as a foretaste in the transfiguration mount along with Peter and James (John 1:14, Matthew 17:1). Jesus once again demonstrated the fellowship or mutual dwelling in the Father through a voice from the cloud which said, *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him”* (Matthew 17:5, NIV)!

Apostle Peter had also seen the same glory of Jesus on the transfiguration mountain and suggested that he may build tabernacles there so that they might continue to dwell there. It was only a foretaste of the coming glory of Jesus in His fullness. *“We were not following a cleverly written-up story when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ - we actually saw his majesty with our own eyes”* (2 Peter 1:16, PHILLIPS). Peter never forgot that glory and for him, it was the real coming and the real power of the kingdom of God. John, who saw this glorious event, had not forgotten the glory, and he hoped for a fullness of His appearing in glory. *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as he is pure”* (1 John 3:2-3, KJV). It is the hope of the church to become like Him. Apostle Paul corresponds to this thought in 1 Corinthians 13:12, *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known”* (NIV). In the J.B Phillips translation, we read, *“But the time will come when I shall know it as fully as God now knows me.”* We do not know in all reality yet how much God has fully or thoroughly known us.

In conclusion, Jesus encouraged his disciples to have faith in Him and the Father. Without a tremendous faith, Jesus knew that they would be ill-equipped to face the consequences of following Him, Christ the Messiah. Jesus comforted them by saying that He was going away to prepare an abiding place for them. It is difficult to know how many really believed in that spiritual place. Jesus promised that He would not leave them as orphans. He would come back to them to be with them. He sent the Holy Spirit, which was His coming in the fulness of the Spirit. What a hope dear brothers and sisters that we will be with Him where He is. Finally, I quote the Apostle Paul from Ephesians 2:6, *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”* (NIV).†

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