

Living in Father's House

John 14

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Introduction

John 14 has traditionally been interpreted to refer to heaven, where Jesus was going to go to prepare a place with many mansions for believers. A closer study of the actual words and message of John 14 reveals a very different meaning. The “Father’s house” is not heaven, but the Church, with many believers comprising the Body of Christ.

Jesus’ words in John 14 assure His followers of a present place in Him where they dwell in the Father’s House, not merely a far off, future heaven. Heaven is certainly the final destination for each believer after death, but there is a dynamic presence in the Father to which Jesus provided the Way in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to make this real and current. This is clear in John 14:16-18:

¹⁶“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

Jesus said He would come to his followers in this world, where they would benefit from the Helper while still living here. The whole context of John 14, starting in verse 1, is to “Let not your heart be troubled” in a troubling world, with these words repeated in verse 27. While many think this phrase was present encouragement for their future hope in heaven, the whole chapter and context indicate otherwise

The Point of the Passage

John 14 does not once mention “heaven,” yet Bible commentators and preachers for generations have seen heaven as it’s main theme. The true point of this passage is how Jesus paves the way for Christians to come to and dwell in the Father. In verse 3, Jesus says he will go (death, resurrection, and ascension) and then come again (in the Holy Spirit) and receive believers to “Myself.” He does not say “to heaven.” This is about dwelling in the Father through Jesus. In verse 6, Jesus says He is the Way “to the Father.” While He is certainly our only Way to heaven, that is not His point here. As you will see below, the words, meaning, and context of John 14 are about life on earth.

A Look at John 14

Notice in the chapter (New American Standard Bible) how often “Father” is mentioned (23 times in 31 verses). These are shown in bold. Also, notice how the context throughout the chapter relates to life in this world, here on earth. I explain these points in the following verses-by-verse examination of the text.

John 14 (NASB)

¹“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²“In My **Father’s** house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³“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. ⁴“And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said*

to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said* to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the **Father** but through Me.

⁷"If you had known Me, you would have known My **Father** also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

⁸Philip said* to Him, "Lord, show us the **Father**, and it is enough for us." ⁹Jesus said* to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the **Father**; how can you say, 'Show us the **Father**'? ¹⁰"Do you not believe that I am in the **Father**, and the **Father** is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the **Father** abiding in Me does His works. ¹¹"Believe Me that I am in the **Father** and the **Father** is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. ¹²"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the **Father**. ¹³"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the **Father** may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴"If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

¹⁵"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

¹⁶"I will ask the **Father**, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

¹⁷that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

¹⁸"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹"After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. ²⁰"In that day you will know that I am in My **Father**, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My **Father**, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said* to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" ²³Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My **Father** will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. ²⁴"He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the **Father**'s who sent Me.

²⁵"These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. ²⁶"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the **Father** will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. ²⁷"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. ²⁸"You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the **Father**, for the **Father** is greater than I. ²⁹"Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. ³⁰"I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; ³¹but so that the world may know that I love the **Father**, I do exactly as the **Father** commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

A Look at the Text

Verse 1 - Troubles are here, not in heaven

2-3 - We are the "dwelling places" of the Lord. He again says we are in v. 23, His "abode" (using the same word as in v. 2). Jesus' Body, the Church, has many people in it with places prepared by Jesus where they live with Him. We believers are the Father's house, each with our place (like "living stones", a "spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4-5). We dwell in Him, and He dwells in us.

6 - The Way was to the Father, who dwells with Jesus in us (v. 23).

- 7 - “From now on” shows that these blessings happen in this life; we know the Father and see Him.
- 8 - Philip is asking to see the Father in the present.
- 9-10a - Jesus says they can see the Father in Him - then and there; present tense is used here and often in this chapter.
- 10b - The Father abiding is not a new concept; He abode in Jesus while in the world.
- 11 - “works” are done on earth, not in heaven.
- 12 - There is a clear connection between the Father and Jesus in heaven and works done on earth.
- 13 - God needs to be glorified in the world, where others can see His glory.
- 14 - We “ask” from here and Jesus answers from heaven with results on earth.
- 15 - commandment-keeping is a present challenge.
- 16 - We need the Helper here.
- 17 - Jesus mentions that the world cannot receive the Spirit (so this refers to being in the world), and His “abiding” applies to His presence in our daily lives; He is “in” us, His “abode” dwelling places (v. 23).
- 18 - There are no orphans in heaven.
- 19 - We see Jesus even though the world misses Him; We live in Him.
- 20 - “That day” is after the Holy Spirit comes, given the context of this chapter.
- 21 - Having and keeping commandments is for here and now; in heaven Jesus will not need to “disclose” Himself.
- 22- He discloses Himself for the disciples in the world, but “not to the world.”
- 23 -Loving Jesus and keeping His word are challenges in this life; the Father and Son make their abode (dwelling place) in us while we live here.
- 24-25 - Only here does Jesus need to point out that His words are from the Father who “sent” Him, spoken while “abiding” with them.
- 26 - The roles of the Holy Spirit relate to helping us get through this life.
- 27 - By leaving His peace, Jesus shows that He remains with us where we need peace, in this troubled world.
- 28 - Jesus’ going is clearly intended to affect us before we leave for heaven.
- 29 - What Jesus was talking about then to His disciples was so they would believe after He returned in the Holy Spirit.
- 30 - There would have been no concern about the “ruler of the world” if the place of peace Jesus was preparing was in heaven. He prepares places for God’s people in this world through the Church, where God dwells in us.
- 31 - Jesus’ obedience to the Father is an example for us to follow in our lives.

Word Studies

A) Dwelling Places: It is important to see that the same word (*moné*) used in verse 2, translated “dwelling places” in the NASB, is also used in verse 23. In the first case it mentions the dwelling places which are in the Father’s house. In verse 23 it is translated “abode” and refers to believers being God’s dwelling places. These are the only two uses of this word in the Bible.

Interestingly, the verb form of this word, to abide (*meno*), is used in verse 17 concerning the Holy Spirit “abiding” in us. It also occurs 7 times in John 15:4-7:

⁴“*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*” ⁵“*I am the vine, you are the*

branches; he who **abides** in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶“If anyone does not **abide** in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷“If you **abide** in Me, and My words **abide** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

This wider context of John 14 (the next chapter is 15) demonstrates that two dynamics are sure: 1) God dwells in us, and 2) we dwell in God. With all the talk of bearing fruit in John 15, the context is also clearly about this world.

B) House: In My Father’s “House” in verse 2 uses a common Greek word, *oikia*. It means “home,” “house,” or “household.” The meaning is related to God’s family, which we know to be the Body of the Christ, the Church. This is clear where *oikeios* is used for God’s “household” in Ephesians 2:19-22:

¹⁹“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Indeed, even before we get to heaven we are part of the Father’s house. Jesus calls the temple His Father’s house (*oikos*) in John 2:16, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s **house** a place of business.” Later, He said the temple would be destroyed and then raised up in 3 days. John made clear that this temple was His body in John 2:21, ²¹“But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” The Father’s house of John 14:2 is not heaven, but the Church!

C) Way: When Jesus says He is the Way to the Father in John 14:6, he uses the common word *hodos*, which means way, path, or road. In the 183 verses where this word is used in the NASB New Testament, not one use refers to a way to heaven. Certainly John 14 is talking about a way to the Father which will be enjoyed by believers living before Jesus’ final return or our personal trips to heaven after death! Please pray about this interpretation of God’s Word, and allow the Lord to show you His truth. Live in the Father’s house today! © Stephen P. Cote