

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS

(John 13:36-14:3)

³⁶ Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. ³⁷ Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. ³⁸ Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. ¹ Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

Jesus has called his disciples around him for one last goodbye. And after he washed their feet and after he instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, he dismissed Judas into the night. And Jesus turned to his disciples and began to give them last instructions.

If I can paraphrase just a little, Jesus essentially said, "I only have a few more minutes to be with you and then I must go away." And he said, "You are going to miss me and you won't be able to come along with me." But he said, "Here is what I want you to do. I want you to love one another. I want you to love one another as I have loved you. And if you love one another, then men everywhere will know that you are my disciples."

Of course, Simon Peter asked the obvious question.

Lord, whither goest thou?

John 13:36

Where are you going? Are you going to Bethany to see Mary and Martha and Lazarus? Are you going into Samaria to visit the woman you met at the well and to teach your converts there? Are you going into Galilee, perhaps to Capernaum, where you like to go frequently to rest and to be refreshed? Are you going into the wilderness to hide from the Jews?

The disciples were not fully grasping that Jesus would be arrested in a couple of hours and that he would be nailed to a cross the next morning and that he would be dead the next afternoon. They weren't fully appreciating the moment. But Jesus fully appreciated the import of this moment in history and Jesus is in the process of gently teaching the disciples about the coming events.

Now if you are a loving father you don't tell your children, "In a few minutes some evil men will come to the Garden of Gethsemane and will arrest me. And they will drag me cruelly down the road and into the city. And they will blindfold me and beat me until my face is bruised and distorted. And then they will take a scourge and rip my flesh from my body and I will suffer excruciating pain all night long. And then in the morning they

will take me up the hill and nail me to a cross and I will hang in agony for several hours and finally I will die.

But if you are a loving father you try to assure your children that all will be okay. And this is exactly what Jesus did.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
John 13:14

Now this is a fundamental of the Christian life. In times of trouble; when things are beyond his control; when circumstances seem hopeless; when he is hemmed in on every side; when there is seemingly no hope; the Christian looks to the heavens and puts his trust in a man named Jesus. Sometimes there is nowhere else to turn. And Jesus simply says, "Believe in me." And so, Jesus told these eleven men, "Believe in me. I know things will look bad later tonight and then tomorrow it will seem very bleak. But just trust me."

What a wonderful thing to have a Savior like Jesus who is an absolute sovereign over all things. Nothing is beyond his control; no circumstances are hopeless for him. And if we belong to him, then we can lay our troubles at his feet and we can trust him. And he tells each and every one of his children, "Believe in me."

This morning we are going to take a look at a place called heaven. It is a very wonderful place. It is the place which Jesus told his disciples about in his last few moments of life. It is the ultimate hope for everyone who believes in Christ. It is the hope that turns our sorrow into joy. It is the hope that turns our suffering into health and happiness. It is the spiritual light at the end of the dark tunnel of our human depravity. It is the long awaited blessing at the end of the curse. It is redemption at the end of the road that should have led to condemnation. It is that place where all of our mistakes are wiped away; where all of our sins are swallowed up in a crimson flow; where all of our regrets are forgotten; and Jesus is going to make it all perfect again.

Whatever it is that you have messed up Jesus is going to make it right. Whatever circumstances have brought misery to your life will be undone. The crooked will be made straight. Tears will be wiped from your eyes and turned to joy. All Jesus asks is that you believe in him. What a Savior we have. He is going to take us there and every hurtful thing in our lives will be completely undone in a place called heaven.

In the message this morning, we will only have time to consider three points found in our text. First of all we will consider how Jesus described heaven to his disciples and how the Scriptures describe it in other places. Then we will consider why Jesus was leaving the disciples and going to heaven. Finally we will rejoice to see that Jesus is coming back to take us there.

Now when the Bible uses the word heaven, sometimes it speaks of our earthly atmosphere where we have clouds and oxygen and birds and other flying creatures.

You might call that the first heaven. And other times when it refers to heaven it speaks of that place where the sun and the stars move about in the universe. We often call that "outer space." And we might refer to that as the second heaven. But in many other places the Scriptures refer to heaven as that place where God the Father resides with his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and all the holy angels. And this is called in the Scriptures the third heaven. And this is the heaven of which Jesus spoke when he told his disciples,

In my Father's house are many mansions.

John 14:2

And so first we consider,

- I. How Jesus described heaven to his disciples and how the Scriptures describe it in other places.

You will notice that Jesus described heaven as "My Father's house." This doesn't tell us a lot about the wonderful details of heaven, but it tells us all we need to know to stir our hearts to want to go there. When Jesus said, "My Father's house," he taught the disciples that heaven is a place where the Father resides. Now I doubt seriously if the Father resides in a house built with bricks and mortar. When Jesus referred to "My Father's house," he was using anthropomorphic language. He was speaking in a language that the disciples could understand. He was attributing to God human characteristics so that they could better understand. The Bible speaks of the eyes of God and the strong arm of God and the hand of God. And in this passage Jesus speaks of the house of God. Whatever we understand of this, it must refer to the place where God is. It is the place where he dwells.

Albert Barnes suggests that the Father's house may actually be the entire universe and beyond because God is infinite and his presence is everywhere. He is omnipresent. And certainly, in that sense, he cannot be confined to any one place. And yet, there seems to be in the Scriptures evidence that God the Father has in some sense located himself in a place. At least, that place is distinct from the earth. Look what Jesus told the disciples.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

John 14:12

Here Jesus indicated that he would leave the earth and go to the Father. Even though the Father had a residence on the earth by virtue of his infinite presence, there seemed to be a place distinct from the earth where Jesus would go to be with the Father.

You might remember that late in John's life while he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos, he was called up in a vision to see things in heaven.

After this I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

Revelation 4:1-2

Now the one sitting on the throne is described in the following verses and was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 4:11

So, John was caught up in the spirit to a place other than the earth. And it was a place where Jesus sat on a throne and reigned in glory. It was a place which John called heaven.

Paul also had a similar experience.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

II Corinthians 12:2-4

So, Paul was caught up to the third heaven. However we conceive of this, it was a distinct place, separate from the earth, seemingly spiritual in nature; a place where it can be said that God resides; a very wonderful place called paradise the nature of which was so wonderful that it was unspeakable in its wonder and glory.

And so, you see that Jesus told his disciples that there was such a thing as "My Father's house." We can only conceive of this as being the most wonderful place where God resides and where glory and wonder abounds in full measure.

Now I want you to see what is in the Father's house.

In my Father's house are many mansions.

John 14:2

We have seen that the Father's house is probably an anthropomorphic reference to heaven. And Jesus said, "In heaven there are many mansions." The word mansions is probably a poor translation. The Greek word that is translated mansions in our text is *mone* which has no reference to size but simply means dwelling places. "In my Father's house (in heaven) are many dwelling places."

The emphasis in this verse is not on the size or quality of the dwelling places. We are simply not told how large they are, nor how beautiful, nor anything else about them. But the emphasis here is on the number. There are many dwelling places in heaven. We don't know how many, but we know there are many. Jesus appears to have been comforting the disciples by revealing to them that in the Father's house there were plenty of dwelling places. There was not a shortage of dwelling places in heaven. There would be enough for each disciple of Christ. There was no room in the Inn for Jesus when it came time for him to be born on the earth. But when the elect of God are called into heaven there will be dwellings for all.

I would like for you to notice that, according to Jesus, the Father's house was built already. He says, "In my Father's house." This indicates that heaven was a functioning place when Jesus spoke these words to his disciples. It did not need building. It did not need preparing. In fact, we know that the place of God's abode existed before the foundation of the world. And then at the incarnation, Jesus came down from heaven to the earth in the form of a man. And at the ascension, Jesus returned to heaven to be with the Father.

But also notice that when Jesus spoke these words to the disciples, there were already many dwelling places in heaven.

I my Father's house are many mansions.

Dwelling places were already there and there were many of them. Jesus did not go back to heaven to build the dwelling places for his disciples. He had long ago built these dwelling places in the Father's house. By his great sovereignty and foreknowledge he built them. And he built them in anticipation of that great day when he would usher in his beloved disciples and all the saints into the Father's house to live forever with him in glory.

Oh my! He has already prepared our eternal dwelling places. That is how sure he is that he will save us. That is how confident he is in his saving work. What he has determined to do he will do it. And who he has determined to save, he will save them. Perhaps there is a name on each dwelling place. And he will lead his elect into their eternal residences on that great day.

I want to take a moment now and show you how the Scriptures otherwise describe heaven. In our text Jesus called it, "My Father house." But heaven is variously described in the Scriptures to give us some comfort and knowledge of the nature of this place.

In the Scriptures this place is called paradise. When Paul was caught up into heaven, he said he was caught up to paradise. (II Corinthians 12:4) This is undoubtedly an allusion to that wonderful place called the Garden of Eden where God first placed man in his innocence. It was a place of great pleasure and delight and in the midst of it was the tree of life. And the tree of life was laden with all manner of delightful fruit for

the great comfort and satisfaction of man. And did you know that the tree of life now resides in heaven!

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:7

We have seen that heaven is called the Father's house and it also called the paradise of God. But we also find that heaven is called a city. Speaking of Abraham, the Scriptures say,

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
Hebrews 11:10

When heaven is cast as a city, it is to teach us first that it is a place of great protection. It is firm and strong. When we live within its gates we are safe. It is a place of order and efficiency. It is a place of strong government. And it is a place of permanence.

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.
Hebrews 13:14

And it is called in the Scriptures a country.

But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.

Hebrews 11:16

There are other phrases by which heaven is named. It is called Abraham's bosom. (Luke 16:22) Heaven is described as a place where we sit down to a feast at a table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 8:11) and this describes the blessed communion that we will have with all the saints in heaven.

Heaven is described as a place where we will be with Jesus Christ.

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

Philippians 1:23

Not only will we be with Jesus Christ, but he will feed us and lead us to living waters in heaven. (Revelation 7:17)

And heaven is a place where we will sit on Christ's throne with him.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 3:21

Now we consider why it is that Jesus left his disciples in this world and went to heaven.

I go to prepare a place for you.
John 14:2

We have seen that the Father's house was already there and many dwelling places were already there. So, what did Jesus mean when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you?"

Let me say that just because there was a heaven and many dwelling places there, does not mean that it was yet a suitable place for sinners. It was necessary that Jesus make preparations so that those dwelling places would be suitable and accessible to such as us. And Jesus began to prepare that heavenly city to receive sinners by leaving the disciples and walking up the road to Calvary. You see, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. And sinners could not approach that heavenly country unless they were washed in the blood of Christ. And so, Jesus told the disciples,

I go to prepare a place for you.
John 14:2

But some may say, "We see how the blood of Christ prepared the sinner; we see how his blood washed and cleansed the sinner and made the sinner suitable. But this verse says that he went to prepare a place. And I suggest to you that not only was the sinner sprinkled with the blood of Christ, but the things in the heavens were also dedicated and set apart for redeemed sinners by the blood of Christ and thus made ready for the sinner.

I want for you to follow closely the following passage in Hebrews and see how that old tabernacle and all the vessels of the tabernacle were sprinkled with the blood of animals. And this dedicated them and set them apart for religious use.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, this is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

Hebrews 9:19-21

Ah, but these old things were nothing but patterns of things in the heavens. And it taught us that even the heavenly things must be sanctified by blood.

It was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the

true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Hebrews 9:23, 24

Let me help you picture it this way. The heavenly city, that heavenly country, that place called paradise, the Father's house, the heavenly tabernacle, was resisting the admittance of sinners. That which was holy and pure was not suitable for sinners and could not accept that which was unholy and impure. And Jesus ascended into the heavens and he brought with him the blood of his own sacrifice. And he offered his own sacrifice to the Father. And symbolically, he sprinkled the blood of his own sacrifice on the doorposts of heaven. And he thereby dedicated the Father's house and all the dwellings therein for the admittance of the redeemed. Heaven itself was set aside for such as you and I by the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb.

Isn't that what our text says?

I go to prepare a place for you.

You might look at it this way. Jesus prepared sinners for heaven and he prepared heaven for sinners by the sprinkling of blood.

We don't understand all these things, do we? We struggle to understand the most basic doctrines of God. His knowledge and wisdom is too great for us. His plan of redemption is complex and we marvel at it. But one thing we know, Jesus went to heaven with blood in hand to prepare a place for us.

I also want you to understand that heaven was sprinkled with the blood of Christ for a very special people.

Jesus told his disciples, "I go and prepare a place for you." He did not go for the unbelieving Jews. Jesus told them, "Where I go you cannot come." But to Peter he said, "Where I go you cannot come now." And what a difference a word makes. The reprobate will never see the beautiful gates made of pearls. They will never see the streets of gold, the walls made of gemstones. They will never see this great city which is lit only by glory of God and in which there is no night, because this place, this place called heaven does not belong to the reprobate.

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 21:27

You see heaven is a very special place for very special people – the people whom Christ loved from the beginning, the people whom Christ loved to the end and the people whom Christ redeemed.

And now finally, let's rejoice to learn from our text that Jesus is coming back one glorious day to get us and to take us to heaven to be with him forever.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:3

This has been the hope of the church since Jesus uttered these words. We live by the hope that he will not leave us here forever, but that he will come back to get us. I find it important that Jesus said, "I will come again." Jesus will not send his angels for us but he will come in person to take us to that place that he has prepared for us. The church is the pearl of great price. She is his most precious possession and he will come personally for his bride.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

I Thessalonians 4:16-18

It says in our text, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

Jesus has been personally removed from us for 2000 years. But he has not left us without comfort. He sent his Holy Spirit and his Spirit has guided us through troubling times during the absence of Jesus. But there is coming a time when Jesus will come again to receive us to himself. And this will be the final dispensation when the Holy Spirit will relinquish us to the eternal and personal care of Jesus Christ.

There is much that we don't know about heaven. It seems that God intended it that way in order that we might live by faith. He has told us much in general but little in particular. But it is safe to say that heaven will be a spectacular place. It is a city built by God especially for our habitation. It is a place prepared for us by the atoning work of Christ. And it is a place where Christ will reside personally with us for all time. Surely there are no words to adequately describe such a place.