

**HEAVEN:**  
**The Place of Everlasting Paradise!**

Message 6

Scripture: John 14:1-3

INTRO: Our subject is, what do Christians do in heaven after they arrive there but before the resurrection of their bodies? I said that maybe I should have asked first what is done to them, for we saw from Luke 16, that Lazarus was comforted. Then I suggested that from Revelation 6:9-11, that those who had died for their faith during the tribulation first went to the altar of sacrifice and we suggested that possibly here, all that was not right was cleaned up and that it may well be that here, Jesus Christ, the heavenly High Priest and advocate steps in on their behalf. Following this, they were given white robes and invited to rest for a little while, until the rest of their fellow Christians who would be killed were also killed.

From this I suggested possibly all believers who enter heaven enter by going to this altar of sacrifice first and then on into heaven. Now in reading through the book, *Martyr's Mirror*, this altar under which John saw these souls who had been martyred is mentioned numerous times. And the picture generally given is that they are resting under the altar. I do not think that is the picture this passage gives. I propose that they come to this altar. Here a cleansing takes place. After this they are given white robes, and told that they should rest a little while. Then, I believe, they have the freedom to explore and enjoy Paradise.

So, in our subject of what Christians do in Paradise from the time they enter heaven until they are resurrected, we ask, what do OT believers do who have died? To date, I have not found much information on this. In Luke 16, we saw that Abraham, an old Testament believer, comforted Lazarus who had just arrived there. Later we will see a little of what people who die during the tribulation will do. But this morning we want to look at what Church age believers do after they go to heaven. You see, for almost 2000 years Christians of the Church age have been dying, and so it is even today. We have not yet arrived at the tribulation.

And I am going to suggest that we may learn a little of what Church age believers do in heaven by finding out exactly where in this city they go. And that information we

do have. For this we go to John 14, the first 4 verses. Now I want to take this whole message to explain this passage.

h. What do Church age believers do cont'd?

-The indications of John 14:2-3

I want to suggest to you this morning that we might get some indication as to what Church age believers will do in heaven, before they are resurrected from John 14. There is very little prophecy related to the return of Christ in John, but this is an information loaded passage. In John 13, Jesus has had the Last Supper with His disciples. It was from here He left to go to Gethsemane. And while they are going there, Jesus converses with His disciples and instructs them and tells them that He is leaving but He promises them that He will send the Holy Spirit to them. The words recorded in John 14, 15, 16 and 17 take place during this walk. So in 13:31-33, we have the introduction to all of this (read).

Now the disciples are distressed that Jesus will be leaving them and in 14:1-3, Jesus comforts them regarding this (read 14:1-3). Now this is one incredible passage! And before we look at it, let me remind us that what Jesus has told the disciples here is VERY different from what the Jews expected. The Jews expected the Messiah to come and set up His kingdom on earth. Jesus is saying, "I am going to heaven to prepare a place for you and when it is all ready, I'm coming to take you to be with Me there!"

Since Jesus spoke those words, we no longer look for Him to come to earth to set up His kingdom here. We are looking to die and go to heaven, or to be caught up to heaven by Him, just as He promised here. So I ask you, who is right, we or those Jews that are looking for Him to come set up His kingdom on earth? Answer? As I see it, we are both right. You see, when Israel rejected the Lord Jesus 2000 years ago and killed Him, 69 of the 70 weeks

prophesied in Daniel 9 had been fulfilled. The 70th week was about to begin. But because Israel rejected the Lord, that 70th week was postponed and a brand new era began. It began 50 days after Jesus was resurrected on Pentecost in Acts 2. That age is the Church age. And when this Church age is done, that 70th week will begin and it will finish what the Jews expected. And at the end of that 70th week, the Messiah will come to earth and set up His kingdom and rule here on earth for 1000 years. That is the kingdom the Jews expected and should have happened if they had not rejected their King.

So Jesus said in 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me." Well, they will have to do this, for the time before them will be very different from what they have expected or known. A brand new age never prophesied in the OT is about to begin and they will be part of that new entity that we now call the Church.

Then Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions..." So, let us begin with the words, 'My Father's House.' What did Jesus mean by, 'My Father's House'? What is His Father's house? Well, you might say, "It is heaven." Or, "It is that city we read about in Revelation." Go to Matthew 21:13 (read). Here is a reference to God's house, or Jesus' Father's house here on earth. It is none other than the temple. In the OT, after they built the tabernacle, among other things it was called 'the house of the LORD' (Ex. 23:19). After the temple was built it was referred to as the 'house of the Lord.' So this sanctuary that was God's house is called 21 times 'the Lord's house' and 219 times 'the house of the Lord' and numerous times God refers to it as 'My house'. So August Van Ryan says, "The 'Father's House' was a familiar thought to the disciples. The OT made frequent references to it, and our Lord Himself called the Temple His 'Father's house'" (Meditations in John, 165).

Now, why is it called God's house? Because he lived in it. It is His house. And in an earlier message we saw that the true tabernacle, or the true temple never was on earth. The one on earth was only a copy. The real one IS in heaven, in the New Jerusalem. Jesus' Father's house is in the New Jerusalem in heaven! In our last message we talked about the altar in heaven. It stands just before the Father's house. God dwells within this house. So when Jesus said, "In My Father's house" He is referring to the temple in heaven.

Now, let us look at the next words of Jesus in John 14, "In My Father's house are many mansions..." This morning I may demolish something very precious to you, but I trust I can replace it with a more accurate picture, and I trust it the more accurate picture you ultimately want. If you will find this hard to believe, I invite you to study it carefully before you reject it. So here it is: The original word translated 'mansions' does not mean mansions as we understand it. So, why would it be translated 'mansions'? Because when the English translators translated it 'mansions' the word 'mansions' did not mean what it means today. Now I know that is disappointing but those are the facts as best I can find.

Listen to the Dictionary of New Testament Theology, "Origen (he wrote about 1800 years ago) took the NT references to refer to stations on the road to God..., and this may lie behind the Vulgate (a Latin translation of the NT) mansio and English mansion which meant a dwelling place rather than a sumptuous large house" (III:229).

The original word in our text is 'monee'. It comes from the Greek verb, 'meno' which means to remain or stay or abide. So 'monee' means a place to stay or remain or abide and so on. There are numerous meanings, but the Dictionary of NT Theology says, "But perhaps the meanings which come closest to the 2

instances in the NT are a place of halt on a journey, an inn..." (III:229). Albert Barnes says, "It is applied by the Greek writers to the *tents* or temporary habitations which soldiers pitch in their marches. It denotes a dwelling of less *permanency* than the word *house*." I must add, however, that there are those who say that in secular Greek it had a variety of meanings such as abiding, tarrying, persistence, continuance and permanence (III:229).

Now, what troubles us the most about the real meaning of this word is the possibility that if this word is not really 'mansions' then it sounds as though this place may not be as magnificent as we had anticipated, and these dwelling places might not be as permanent as we have always taken them to mean.

And so, now that I may have ruined your view of where Christians go, I have the task of rebuilding it. So, first, let me say this about Jesus' Father's house. When you consider a city 1500 miles cubed with gates of pearl and streets of gold, what do you think the parliament buildings will look like? Well, that is what we have here. Only it is not Canada or the United States of America that is run from this house, but the entire universe!

The Jews who had seen the temple that Herod built said, "Whoever has not seen the Holy Temple built by King Herod, has never seen a beautiful building his entire life." I propose to you that whoever has seen Herod's temple, still has but only a little idea of what Jesus' Father's house is like. You see, Jesus said He was going to back to heaven to prepare these dwelling places for us. He has been at it for 2000 years. What do you suppose they are like?

Let me now make another observation from our text. Jesus did not go back to build a place for them. The places were already there. He said, "In My Father's house are many dwelling

places." They were already there, and all they needed was to be prepared. When guests come to our place we do not build a place for them. We prepare a place for them.

Now that leads me to this question: Why did He have to go and 'prepare' a place for them? Was there not a place ready for them? Had not thousands upon thousands died and gone there already in OT times? Was there no place ready for them? When people died and went to heaven, did God always have to prepare a place for them?

Let me make another point. When Jesus returns to earth to set up the earthly kingdom, all things have already been prepared for. Listen now to Matthew 25:34 which speaks to them at this time: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Here is the Lord's return to earth to set up the kingdom the Jews had expected all along, and it was prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Furthermore, God prepared a place for Satan and his demons and all his followers long before they went there. Listen to Matthew 25:41 speaking of the devil and demons: "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" The word 'prepared' is the same in these passages as in John 14:3.

And our question is, why did Jesus need to go prepare a place for these disciples in John 14? I want to give you what I believe the answer is to that. This promise by Jesus, of returning and taking them to heaven was a totally foreign concept to these disciples. We mentioned this earlier. They expected the Messiah to come and set up His kingdom on earth, and they were not wrong. But Jesus promises something very, very different here.

The Ecclectic commentary on the Online Bible Program says this, "A greater break with Jewish feeling could not be than such a hope, a shock assuredly as wholly changing all they had expected..."

Now let me tell you why this is so. When Jesus gives the words of John 14, they are making their way from the last supper through the valley of the Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane. This night He will be arrested and He will get no sleep until He dies the next day later in the afternoon. And because Israel has rejected Him as the Messiah, He will not rule at this time, but will return to heaven in just over 40 days. And just over 50 days later, a new entity will begin which was never prophesied in the OT. It was of this new entity, that the followers of Christ at this time would become the charter members.

You see, in Matthew 16, just before the time of John 14 Jesus said, "I will build my Church" (Matt. 16). There it was future. Then in Acts 2:47 it says the Lord added to the Church daily, those who were being saved. So the Church, by this time had started. Now, no more than 2 months separated those two references. Now I want to take you to the Scriptures that give us that historical event of the birth of the Church (read Acts 2:1-4).

So, now we have an entirely new entity in existence called the Church. It is not part of Israel. It never was part of Israel. And though Israel and the Church will dwell in heaven together, they will have different functions. That is clear from the fact that Israel is viewed as the wife of God, and the Church as the bride of Christ. So the Church was a brand new thing!

By the way, in 1994 I began to preach on this doctrine on the day of Pentecost. So there are five completed messages already. This next Pentecost day, Lord willing I will speak on the Sabbath verses Sunday. The doctrine of the

Church is very important for it has spanned a time of 2000 years already. All of that to say this, that the promise of John 14 is to the Church, not to Israel. There is no question about that for me.

So I want to take a little time to introduce us to a few things regarding the Church. For this we will go to Ephesians 2 (read 2:11-13). Here we see the Gentiles, non Jews, and the uncircumcision, described as those far from God, and those who had no hope and were without God in the world. But now they are made near by the blood of Christ. Now let us read 14-18 (read). In verse 14 we are told that He has broken down the middle wall of partition. Now this middle wall of partition was a partition that separated Jews from Gentiles. A Gentile could not go past this wall and if he did he was subject to death. Only Jewish people could go past here. But, in the Church, this wall is broken down. Now note in verse 18, that through Christ both, that is Jew and Gentile, now have access to God. So, let us read 19-22 (read).

As I interpret chapter 3, Paul begins a thought in verse 1, and then inserts all of 2-13 in between to explain and carries on with his original thought in verse 14. And in verses 2-14 he explains how the dispensation of the grace of God was made known to Paul by revelation. And he calls this a mystery.

Let me quote from my teaching notes on the doctrine of the Church, "The word mystery comes from the word *Muw*, which means to shut the mouth. A *Musterion*, or *mystery* is certain information to which the mouth is shut. There are a few important reference points to a *musterion*. There is first the secret information. It is information known only to certain people. Second, there is one who knows the information. He is the *mustes*. And third, there is the one or the ones to whom the data remains hidden because the one who knows it has shut the mouth about it. To this person it



is a *mysterion*. The fourth reference point is the one to whom the *mysterion* is revealed. The word is *muew*. It means to initiate someone into the secret data or information. In this fourth reference point the word *mysterion* is made into a verb and it refers to the communication of this secret information to the initiated. The word *muew* then means to initiate someone into the knowledge of certain information which is hidden from others."

So in Ephesians Paul says he has had this mystery revealed to him. And what is the mystery? Well, let us read verses 4-6 (read). The mystery is that in this dispensation, Jews and Gentiles become one body known as the Church. And in verse 5 we find that this mystery has not been made known in previous ages! Note this again in verses 8-9 (read). And this 'one body' he speaks of is the Church of which Jesus Christ is the head (read 1:15-23).

Now look at 5:22-27 (read). Here we are given the picture of Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as His bride. That is precisely the picture of John 14:2-3. So let me say a word about Jewish marriages in light of this. The first step in marriage was the betrothal. Here an agreement was made between the would be husband or his dad and the dad of the daughter whose hand he was seeking. A price was agreed on. When the betrothal, the agreement, had been made, the son would go back to his father's house and prepare a place for his bride. Jesus paid a price for His bride. It was His precious blood.

After the son had his place ready for the bride, when all was ready he and his attendants would make their way to the house of the bride. She did not know when he would arrive and was to be ready at all times. When they were within ear shot a shout would be made to alert her that he was coming. So, as soon as he arrived, she stood ready to go back with him to his father's house.

Well, Jesus too went back to His Father's house. And any day the Church, the bride who is to always be ready, will hear a shout, and then she will return with Jesus to His Father's house, so that where He is she may be also. And there, back at the father's house the marriage would be consummated, and so it will be after the rapture with Christ and the Church.

Now let us go back to John 14 and read verses 1-3 once more (read).

CONCL: And so we want to conclude for this morning. I gave all of this message to give evidence for what I said at the outset, and that is this: I believe the Church is taken by Christ back to His Father's house, the temple in the New Jerusalem. And from that fact, we want to see in the next message if we can determine some of what Church age believers who die and go to heaven are doing.

You see, where we are going may well give us some information as to what we will be doing. Let us say Jesus had said He would take the church to His farmland. What do you expect we would be doing when we got there? Let us say He was going to take us to His vineyard. What would you expect we would be doing? Let us say He had said He would take us to His carpentry shop. What do you suppose we would be doing? But He said He was taking us to His Father's house. That is the temple in heaven, the real temple of which Herod's temple was only a copy. So, what do you think Church age believers do there? Well, that is the topic of our next message. You might study that for your own interest.