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John 14:1 - 14:6



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg challenges the common assumptions about the opening verses of John 14, arguing that Jesus' statement about preparing mansions in his father's house is not necessarily a reference to heaven. Instead, Gregg suggests that the word "monet" used in John 14:2 may refer to individual dwelling places in God's temple, which is comprised of his people. Gregg also emphasizes that Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit serves as a comfort for his disciples in his physical absence, and that the church is meant to serve as an organic part of Christ's body. Overall, Gregg reinterprets John 14 in light of the broader scriptural context.

Transcript

Now we come to John 14. The Upper Room Discourse, as this is called, began in chapter 13. Jesus met with his disciples in the Upper Room.

He had the Last Supper with them. Though John's Gospel does not record that ceremony of the initial communion, where he solemnized the bread and the wine with his reference to them being his body and his blood, that particular important aspect of what took place in the Upper Room is not recorded in John, though it's recorded in all the other Gospels. But he has washed their feet in the beginning of chapter 13 and given them lessons about servanthood there.

And then he went on to talk to them especially about the need to love. Now in the midst of that he predicted that there would be one who would betray him. There was a lot of questioning among themselves as to who that might be.

John, in particular, who was apparently physically nearest to Jesus, was able to ask him, apparently quietly, who is it, Lord? And Jesus identified Judas to John, but apparently not loudly enough that anyone else could hear. And so when Judas got up and left the table, nobody knew what he was going for, except John, of course, who said nothing. But in the midst of that chapter we have Jesus giving his new commandment, which he says is to love one another as I have loved you.

And he said that will be the identifying mark of a true disciple. He did not say that

understanding theology would be the true mark of a disciple, but love for one another would be the true mark of a disciple. Nonetheless, there is some theology that he brings up next in chapter 14, deep theology.

It's fortunate that it is not necessary to have an absolutely keen understanding of this in order to be a disciple. But of course a disciple wants to understand as best he can. I think the balanced approach is to say we want to know and understand the truth as much as we can.

But we fortunately do not have our hopes of salvation resting upon our grasp of these mysteries. Because the issue of the deity of Christ, the issue of the Trinity, things like that come up in this passage we're about to look at at the beginning of chapter 14. But even before that there's an even more challenging passage.

Most people don't find it challenging because it has been understood a certain way by most of us without any question. And it seems rather simplistic. But I want to suggest that the understanding we have been given of the opening verses of John 14 should be at least re-examined.

Because we have made some assumptions about the words, the vocabulary that Jesus used, which assumptions don't seem to be justified from examination of the rest of scripture. So we'll be looking at these issues realizing that some of them it's not necessary for us to fully understand but they are interesting indeed. And there will probably be something along the lines that you may hear that you have not heard before.

In John 14 Jesus said, And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again to receive you to myself. That where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.

Now we're going to go further but we'll stop there for a moment. First of all I want to suggest to you how audacious the statement in verse 1 is if Jesus is not God. He said, Now if any human being would simply say, Well you believe in God, therefore you ought to believe in me as well.

Making that comparison would be blasphemous. I mean I could say you believe in God. And I might even say on another occasion, please trust me, you'll believe me.

But I'm not going to say you believe in God, therefore you should believe in me. Because that's kind of the same thing as believing in God. Because obviously a human being does not have the credibility that God has.

And is not to be trusted as God is to be trusted. Paul said in Romans chapter 3, And every man a liar. And the Bible does say, So obviously to suggest that since you believe in God, you ought also to believe in me.

And that is the impact of that statement. Is to suggest that it's as appropriate to believe in me as it is to believe in God. And so Jesus is making a very bold declaration of his equality with God.

Now he's going to say more along those lines a little later in the verses that immediately follow. But first, he makes this comment about where he's going and what he's going to be doing. And in my opinion, this has been much misrepresented in preaching and in teaching.

And in our reading, perhaps because we've used the King James Version partly. The King James Version, which is followed closely in this case by the New King James. Has been a little misleading.

Because he says, Anyone who's been in the church long enough to remember the wording of the King James or now the New King James. Knows the verse in these words. In my father's house are many mansions.

And as a result of this, we have often been taught. In fact, our hymns often reflect this idea. That up in heaven, which we've taken to be God's house.

Are many mansions, which we take to be the places we're going to live. That we're going to go to heaven and live in mansions in the sky. I've got a mansion just over the hilltop.

I've got a home in glory land that outshines the sun. Way beyond the blue. Jesus said he's going away to prepare a place.

And so the assumption that we've made is. Okay, heaven is God's house. It's a big neighborhood.

It has a lot of mansions there. It's like a wealthy neighborhood. All these houses, they're all mansions.

And Jesus has gone to prepare those places for us. He's gone away to prepare our mansions. After all, he was a carpenter, right? So, that's what he's doing.

He's gone away to prepare our mansions. Some people actually say, you know, it only took God six days. To create the whole universe as it is now.

But Jesus said, I'm going to go away and prepare a place for you. Then I'm going to come back and take you to it. And it's been taken 2,000 years to prepare that.

Just imagine, if God can create such a universe in six days. What kind of a place he can lay out in 2,000 years of construction. And so many people have this picture that Jesus went away to build mansions for us.

Now the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says he went away and sat down at the right

hand of God. He's not going to get up again until he comes back.

He offered one sacrifice of himself once and for all. And then he sat down and rested. He's not working up there.

One of the things that's misleading is the very strange choice of words. That the King James and the New King James have chosen for this word that's called mansions. In many translations, it translates this word as rooms or dwellings.

This Greek word is not really a common word in the Bible. It's only used twice. It is the word mone.

We would spell it in English characters m-o-n-e. Of course it's in Greek characters. But we would spell it if you're taking notes, m-o-n-e, mone.

This word, as I say, is found only twice in the Bible. And it does not mean mansions. It doesn't even necessarily mean houses.

It is the noun form of a verb that is used frequently in the Gospel of John. When Jesus talks about, abide in me. Abide, abide, abide.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, I am the vine of the branches. Every branch that abides in me. This word abide means to remain or to continue.

Or to dwell. It's a verb. Now the noun form of that verb is mone.

And it's used here. And it obviously has the meaning of an abiding place. A place to abide.

A place to dwell. And therefore, when picturing God's house in the sky. And having many abiding places.

A house doesn't usually have mansions in it. A house usually has rooms in it. So I think, I'm not sure, the NIV might be among those that translates it many rooms.

I know that some modern translations render it that way. In my father's house are many rooms. Or in the margin of the New King James there's literally dwellings.

That is places to dwell. So here's what Jesus said. In my father's house are many places to dwell.

But we still may make the mistake of thinking that he's talking about places for us to dwell. I'm going away to heaven. I'm going to prepare a place for you.

In my father's house there's a lot of places to dwell. I'll come and take you to myself. And we have this picture that Jesus went away to prepare places in heaven for us to dwell in his father's house.

And he's going to come back and take us to heaven to dwell in those places. So that we typically think of the mansions or the rooms or the dwelling places as our habitations. However, this is not the correct way to look at it apparently.

Because this word monay is found in one other place in the Bible besides in John 14.2. And that happens to be in the same chapter. And when a word only occurs twice, both in the same chapter, there's a good chance it's used the same way both times. And that other place where it's found is in verse 23.

John 14.23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My father will love him, and we will come and make our home with him. Home is monay.

Make our dwelling place with him. Now what is this saying? He's saying you as an individual have an obligation and an opportunity and a privilege to love him and show that love by keeping his commandments. He says the person who has my commandment, if he loves me, he'll keep my word.

Now if you are a person who loves him and keeps his word, then the father will love you. And Jesus and the father will come to you and make their monay with you. In other words, they will come and dwell in you.

The monay is not where you dwell, it's where God dwells. And no surprise, my father's house has many dwelling places. Well, who lives in his house? He does.

The father's house is comprised of many individual dwelling places. He dwells in each one. And what are they? Christians.

That's what Jesus said. That's what someone who loves him and keeps his word is, is a Christian. If anyone loves me and keeps my word, me and the father will come and dwell in him.

Or dwell with him, make our dwelling with him. Now that's an explanation he's giving in verse 2. In my father's house there are many dwellings. What are these dwellings? Individual Christians.

Well, what is the father's house then? Well, it's the same thing it is in all the other passages in the Bible. Not heaven. I do not believe you can find a passage in the Bible where heaven is called God's house.

Now the Bible does talk about God dwelling in heaven. It talks about God enthroned in heaven. It talks about God filling the heavens.

And I'm not saying that the Bible denies that God lives in heaven. Of course, there are many affirmations that God is the God of the heavens. But he's also in the earth.

He fills all things. The question is what is called his house? We're not asking where does

God live because he lives everywhere. The real question is, is there any place in the Bible that speaks of God having a house somewhere? And there is.

You find it in the Old Testament frequently. The tabernacle that Moses built was God's house. It was later replaced with the temple that Solomon built.

It was called God's house. When Jesus said, my father's house is to be called a house of prayer. Do not make it a den of thieves.

What house was he talking about? He said, my father's house. He's talking about the temple. The temple is the father's house.

Always. Never any exception. Throughout scripture, the father's house is either the tabernacle before the temple was built, or the temple after the tabernacle was replaced.

That is to say, while it is true that God lives in heaven and earth and everywhere else, lives on every other planet too, he's everywhere. He's omnipresent. That doesn't mean that those places are called his house.

There is an accepted established usage of the term, my father's house, or the house of God, or God's house, or the Lord's house, the house of the Lord. The word house is the common denominator here. Whenever it is said that God has a house, it's always a reference to a house on earth, which was first a tabernacle, then a temple.

What is it now? It's the church. The church is the temple. The church is the habitation of God.

The house of God in the New Testament is still a house on earth. It's just made up of living stones rather than minerals, rather than gold and chunks of rock. Let me show you a few things just so you'll know that I'm not making this up.

In Ephesians chapter 2, in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 19 through 22, Paul said, Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built, that is we have been built, on the foundation. Now it looks like we're a building apparently, because it's buildings that are built on foundations. That we have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Well those are people. So the foundation is made up of stones that are actual people. And apparently so are the other stones in the building, us.

We have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. That is, the church made up of people is a growing building. As more people are converted, there's more stones added.

As the church grows, the building grows. And we are, the whole building being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. You are people, but you are being built like building materials are built, like stones are built in a wall.

You're being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. Look what Peter says about this in 1 Peter 2, 5. 1 Peter 2, verse 5. Peter says, You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. The metaphors shift from being a house to being a priesthood, but the point is, you are like living stones, you are being assembled into a house.

What kind of a house? Well, obviously, what Paul said, a holy temple in the Lord, the house of God. If you look over at 1 Timothy 3, 1 Timothy 3, verse 15, Paul said, But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. What is the church? It's the people of God, collectively, the body of Christ, all the people who are Christians in the world are the church.

It's not talking about an institution or organization, it's talking about the body of Christ, which is the church of the living God. It says, the house of God is the church of the living God. So what is God's house in the New Testament? Same thing as in the Old Testament, it's the temple on earth, but the temple is made of living stones.

Now, he doesn't have a temple built with hands, but he does have a temple, nonetheless. If you look at Hebrews 3, verse 6, Hebrews 3, verse 6, the writer says, But Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope from to the end. We, collectively, the church, we are the house.

In 1 Corinthians 3, 1 Corinthians 3, verse 16, Paul said, Do you not know that you, plural in the Greek, are the temple, singular. The collective church, together, is the singular temple. The body of Christ, seen corporately, is the temple of God.

And that the Spirit of God dwells in you. So, the church is the temple, the church is the house of the living God. In 1 Corinthians 6, verse 19, Paul says, Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? Now, here again, that you is plural, but body is singular.

The Christian church is the body. Your body, that is the body that you belong to, is the temple of the living God. You are not your own.

So, is there any clue in scripture as to what the house of God is? Of course. It is consistent. There are no exceptions.

The house of God is frequently spoken of in Old and New Testaments, always the same.

It is always on earth. It is always the place where God dwells among men.

He lives elsewhere, too. But He dwells in a house on this planet among people. And that house was the tabernacle, then the temple, then the body of Christ, us, collectively.

Now, when Jesus... And by the way, my father's house is a term that Jesus had used earlier in the Gospel of John. So, we are not just drawing from terminology from Paul and Peter and the writer of Hebrews and others. The very terminology of John, the writer of this Gospel, or for that matter, of Jesus, in John chapter 2, verse 16.

And he said to those who sold doves, Take these things away, do not make my father's house a house of merchandise. So, clearly a reference to the temple in that case. But, near the end of Jesus' life, we don't have it in John, but we have it in Matthew and in Luke.

Near the end of Jesus' life, prior to this discourse that we are now studying, Jesus walked out of the temple and he said to the Jews, Your house is left unto you desolate. You will not see me anymore until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That's the closing words of Matthew 23 and parallels in the Synoptics.

Now, the point here is, the temple, when Jesus was conducting his early ministry, was the house of God. Not anymore. At the end, when the Jews rejected Christ, they said, OK, that's your house now.

Your house is left to you desolate. Not my father's house. My father's moved out.

He's not here anymore. This isn't his home anymore. He's got a new house.

Well, what's his new house? Us, the church. There's no other really biblical way to understand this. We can have traditional ways of understanding it, but there's no biblical way to understand this, except to say, in my father's house, which is the church, are many dwelling places, which are the Christians.

God dwells in the church collectively and in the Christians individually. His house has many individual dwelling places. He dwells in each person who loves him, keeps his commandments.

The Father loves him and comes and makes his dwelling place with that person. So, Jesus is apparently not talking about eschatology. He's not talking about heaven.

He is talking about the church. Now, what throws us off is that he says, I'm going away to prepare a place for you. Now, clearly, where he was going away was to heaven.

There's no question about that. He was later seen to ascend into heaven. His disciples saw it, and the Bible, in many places, speaks of Jesus now having gone into heaven, sitting down at the right hand of God in heaven, and all that.

So, when Jesus said, I go, he does mean he's going to heaven. But that doesn't mean that that's where the Father's house is or where the dwelling places are. He does not connect those two things.

He says, in my Father's house there are many dwelling places. Now, let me give you some information about how this comes about. I'm going to go to heaven, and I'm going to make this happen.

How? He's going to send his Spirit. That becomes one of the main themes of the Upper Room Discourse. I'm sending you another Comforter.

He's going to dwell with you forever. I will return to you in that form. He says it very clearly later in this same chapter.

If you look at John 14, verses 15 through 17. He says, if you love me, keep my commandments. Now, we know that those are the two qualifications that later in verse 23 say, that will cause you to become a dwelling place of God.

Because he that loves me keeps my commandments, and my Father comes and makes his dwelling with that person. So, he says here, if you love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father. And he will give you another Helper.

He means, of course, the Holy Spirit. That he may abide with you forever. You're going to be his abiding place.

The word abide is the verb form. The word that is elsewhere translated as dwelling or whatever. So, the Holy Spirit will dwell in you forever.

Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, and he dwells with you, and will be in you. Notice, I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you. I will come to you? I thought you said the Holy Spirit would come to us.

He is saying that I will come to you in another way. I will come to you as the Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit of Christ who has come to us.

When we talk about Jesus living in our hearts, we really mean the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is in our hearts. Jesus himself is at the right hand of God up in the sky.

He's going to come back someday. At the end of the world, he'll come back from there, but he's going to stay there until then. He's not in your heart.

The man Jesus with the holes in his hands and feet is not in your heart. He's at the right hand of God. His Spirit is in your heart, but that's all the same as if he was.

Because he came to us through his Spirit. He went away, and through the intercessory

ministry of Christ, the Holy Spirit has been given to us. He says, I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter.

I will not leave you orphans. I'm not going to leave you alone. I'm going to come back to you.

But in the person of the Holy Spirit. Now, is this what the New Testament teaches? It is. Look at Romans chapter 8, verses 9 and 10.

Paul says, but you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now, the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Helper. He said, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Next line. Now, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. Now, suddenly the Spirit of God becomes the Spirit of Christ, in Paul's language.

If you are a true Christian, the Spirit of God dwells in you. That is the Spirit of Christ. You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.

And if you do not have the Spirit of, now, Christ. Same synonyms. Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ.

Then you are none of his. Look at verse 10. And if Christ is in you, and you see how his language has progressed? The Holy Spirit is in you.

You have the Spirit of Christ. Christ, therefore, is in you. How so? Through the Spirit of Christ, who is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.

Paul sees the idea of Christ in me is really the concept of the Holy Spirit is in me, the Spirit of Christ is in me. That is what it means to say Christ is in me. Jesus did not turn, when he was walking the earth, maybe he was 5'8", 5'10".

He did not suddenly shrink down into a little man who could fit inside your heart. His Spirit has come to you, and in that sense, Christ is in you. He dwells in you.

The Father dwells in you that way too. The Father and Christ have come and made their dwelling place with us. That is what Jesus promised to his disciples in the upper room.

He is saying, I am leaving, but you will not be alone. You will not even lack me, because I will come to you through this other paracletos, paraclete, helper, that I will send to you, the Father will send to you. So, Jesus in this discourse is telling his disciples that they will be losing his physical presence, but they will be gaining his permanent presence, interior, in their lives.

He is going to live inside of them now. He has lived alongside of them, but now he is going to live inside of them. And so, he is saying, I need to go away to my Father to

make this happen.

Why? Well, because Jesus later is going to say, it is good for you that I go away, because if I don't go away, the Helper will not come to you. You see, Jesus, earlier in the Gospel of John, speaking about himself, it says the Father does not give him the Spirit by measure. All of the Holy Spirit was in Jesus.

There was not any left to share. He was the embodiment of the Spirit of God in a man. He was the Word who was made flesh and tabernacled among us, it says in John 1.14. He was the body of Christ.

He was the temple of the Holy Spirit. He was the tabernacle. He was the house of God.

Which is why he said, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. Now, the Holy Spirit dwelt in Jesus and in Jesus alone while he was on the earth. He had to go back to heaven to relinquish that monopoly and to share that the Holy Spirit could be brought down on his followers as had never happened previously.

And he had to go to heaven to make that happen. And that happening is what made us have a place in his body and in his temple. He went away to prepare a place for us and that's where is that place for us, in the church.

Everyone has a place in the body of Christ that is prepared by God, prepared by Christ and determined and brought about by the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12, this is actually the chapter where Paul probably first expounds on the concept of the body of Christ. The idea of the church being the body of Christ is Paul's unique subject matter.

I mean, we don't have the discussion of the body of Christ in the other writers in the New Testament. It's really Paul's revelation he got. Remember he said it was a mystery that was hidden from generations past but was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets through the Spirit.

What? That the Jew and the Gentile would be one body in Christ. This was one of Paul's favorite themes. And it's in 1 Corinthians 12 that he really expounds this for the first time chronologically in the epistles.

And he starts out by talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because the gifts of the Holy Spirit are those that identify what place and what position each person has in the body. The ability to see makes an object an eye.

The ability to manipulate makes it a hand. The ability to pump blood makes it a heart. The ability to breathe makes it a lung.

Every part of the body has an ability, a function, different than other body parts. And so the gifts of the Spirit, different as they are from one another, define basically what body

part each person is. And so Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, the first 11 verses goes through and he lists nine different gifts.

There are more. He's not trying to give a comprehensive list. He's trying to give a sampling so we know what kind of things he's talking about.

But after he does give a listing, he says in verse 11, But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills. The Holy Spirit gives to each person whatever gift he wills, and that positions him in the body of Christ or in the temple of God. Because, and then he develops this, verse 12, For as the body, he means in this case the human body to which he's using to make an analogy.

He means generically a body, a human body. As the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the church, right? No, he says so also is Christ. Christ is what? He's a body made up of many members.

Christ is seen here as corporate. This is something that we need to understand because we, I don't know, somehow this is surprising to us sometimes to find that the church is called Christ. Why? We are his hands and his feet.

We are his flesh and his bones. We are his body. We are his feet and members on the earth.

Jesus is a body that has a head in heaven. His name is Jesus, he's the head. But his body is partly in heaven and partly on earth.

Some have died and gone to heaven already. Some are still here. But it's one continuous body that's been living and growing and operating in the world since 30 AD.

For 2,000 years this body has been expanding like the cells in your body have been. In fact, the body of Christ is very much like a human body in that respect because your body probably has maybe a similar number of cells as it had 30 years ago, but they're all different ones because the ones you had 30 years ago have all died and been replaced. There's never a time when all your cells die off at once and you get a whole new set.

The body is continuously losing some and gaining some. But it's one body that has a continuous existence, a continuous identity all the time. So the body of Christ is.

The body of Christ has some of its members die every day and new members come in every day. There's new and there's old cells. And so a considerable number of those who have once been members of the body of Christ are now gone to heaven and they're with the head up there.

But a very considerable number are still on the planet. The body of Christ transcends

heaven and earth, but is one organism. We are one organism with the apostles and prophets.

We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets and the building continues to grow upon that foundation. And using the metaphor of the body, Paul says in verse 13, 1 Corinthians 12, 13, for by one spirit we were all baptized into one body. And you could shift his metaphor into one temple, because he uses the term temple, the Holy Spirit, and body of Christ as interchangeable metaphors.

By the spirit we are baptized in one body, whether we're Jews or Greeks, whether we're slaves or free, we've all been made to drink into one spirit. For in fact, the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as he pleased.

What's he saying? There's a position, there's a place for you in the body, or to shift the metaphor, in the wall of the building. You are a stone that fits somewhere. The blueprint calls for your presence in this place.

How is this worked out? Through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts. The Holy Spirit chooses the place for each person.

It's by sending the Spirit from heaven to us that Jesus has arranged for us to have a place in this house of God. I'm going away to make it possible for you to have a place in my Father's house. He had to go to heaven for that so he could send the Spirit back who would thus position us.

And so in John 14, it's a strange concept I've just given you compared to what we normally are told about this. And I don't expect people to just jump on board and say, yeah, that makes sense. Why not? That's why I have to give so many scriptures to show that this is indeed what the Scripture teaches.

Because we read it, he says, in my Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you. We think he means he's going to go to his Father's house, which we think is up in the sky, and he's going to prepare one of those dwelling places for us to live in.

And we're not thinking of these terms the way the Bible presents them. Or that Jesus himself or the apostles presented them. Sure, Jesus had to go away that the body of Christ could become corporate instead of just one man.

If he didn't, the Holy Spirit could not come to us, he said. And therefore, we couldn't have him dwelling in us. We couldn't become the dwelling places of God and corporately

the house of God.

We need God to dwell in us in order for us to be a dwelling place of God. And who dwells in us but the Holy Spirit? That's why we're called the temple of the Holy Spirit as well as the temple of God. And that's why Jesus, throughout this discourse, keeps making reference to when the Spirit comes, when the Helper comes.

This is what's going to happen to you when the Helper comes. And basically, his idea that he's trying to get across is, you're going to be really sorry when I leave. Of course, you're used to me being here.

And I'm not going to be here in the same sense. But I will be here. And I'll be here closer to you than I am now because my Spirit, who is now with you, will be in you, he said in verse 17.

That's good for you. It's good for you that I go away. Why? Why is that good? I'd rather have him here, wouldn't you? Well, he is here.

But now he's in more places at one time. His Spirit can be everywhere. He, the man Jesus, in his incarnate state, could only be one place at a time.

He couldn't be everywhere at once. And he was not. He confined himself to one place when he was in the human body.

But then he went away. And now his Spirit is given universally to all who are his followers. And he is wherever they are.

He is everywhere. The disciples, of course, they had much access to Jesus when he was on earth. But not every moment of every day.

Sometimes he got up early and went out to pray and they had to look for him and couldn't find him. He wasn't always right there. But he will be when he leaves and the Holy Spirit comes.

He says he will dwell with you forever, he said in verse 16. So, this is where Jesus is going with this discourse. He's not really talking about eschatology.

Although he does mention it, maybe. It depends on if he's mentioning it. Because throughout the discourse, Jesus talks about going away and coming back.

And there are some verses that we've been accustomed to thinking about him coming back in the second coming. Other verses he's clearly talking about coming back through the Holy Spirit coming to us. There's even some cases where it would appear that he's talking about coming back from the grave, like he was going away for a few days, they're going to lose him in the grave and he's going to come back like three days later.

His coming to them in different contexts in this discourse, it's not always clear that he's talking about the same issue. But it is possible that he is always talking about the same issue. In the verses that seem like he's talking about his second coming, in the verses that seem like he's talking about being only in the grave a few days and coming back, being I'll be gone a little while, a little while you will not see me, then a little while you shall see me.

We usually think that's the three days he's in the grave. It could well be that all of those references, when he talks about coming to them again, is a reference to the Holy Spirit coming because that is the theme woven through the discourse all the way from chapters 14 through chapter 16. And it really is what he introduced in chapter 13, verse 14, when he said, this is a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.

And then in verse 35, this is how all men will know you're my disciples, if you have love for one another. Why? Because love is a fruit of the Spirit. It's what Jesus does.

He has to live inside of you for you to do it. It's supernatural. People who don't have Jesus can love other people, but they can't love other people like Jesus does.

The love of God is supernatural, superhuman. And you can't do that unless you have the Holy Spirit producing that as the fruit of the Spirit in your life, as Paul points out. So, that's how a true disciple is known, because he has the Holy Spirit and that fruit is seen in loving the way Jesus loved.

And, therefore, Jesus, from the very beginning of the upper room discourse, is preparing the disciples for a new mode of existence with Jesus. Instead of having him next to them as a companion in flesh and blood, he's going to be in them through his Spirit. They are going to become him on earth.

They're going to be his body. They're going to be his presence. So that the apostles, when they would do something, they'd say, like Peter said to Aeneas, the lame man in Acts chapter 9, Jesus Christ heals you.

As if he was Jesus Christ standing there. Well, he knew that he was not the head of the body, but he is a member of Christ. He could act in the name of Christ because my body always operates in the name of my head.

My head is who I am. My identity is determined by my head. If I walked in the room with a bag over my head and there were maybe a larger number of people than there are here, you might not be sure whether it's me or not because my body might look like any number of people's bodies.

My head is fairly distinctive and yours is too. Anyone could recognize you by your head. That's what gives you a specific identity.

Your head also contains your personality, your thoughts, your opinions. That's what makes you different than someone else. Your body might be almost identical in function and everything else and even the way it looks to any number of other people's bodies because your body is just the machine.

Your body is just the vehicle that carries your head and your head is who you are. But your body is you too. No one said when they looked up here as I walked in the room, oh here comes Steve and his head or here comes Steve and his body.

If you thought there's Steve, you meant the head and the body because I am a head and a body. My identity is determined by everything above the neck. Everything below is just the machinery.

The pumps and the wiring and all the machinery that keeps the head going and does the work of the head as an extension of the head. Paul said that about us in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 22 and 23. It says that God has put all things under Christ's feet and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The church is what? The church is His body and the church is what? The church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. The church is organically one with Him. We are in Him.

We are in His body. Like my organs are in me, so I am in Christ. And there is a shared identity between the body and the head.

That's why the persons who are members of the body can say, in the name of Jesus, come out of Him. In the name of Jesus, this. To act in the name of Jesus means we're acting in the person of Jesus.

We're acting in the name of our head. Just like every member of your body does every day when your hand picks up food to put it in your mouth it's because your head wants that to happen. If something happens, if you get a spinal injury or something and your body doesn't respond to your head anymore, that's not the way things are supposed to be.

The whole purpose of your body is to hold your head and to serve your head. So the whole purpose of the church is to serve Christ and uphold Him. But they are an organic part of Him.

We are. This is why it's good for the church that Jesus went away. Now I'm not sure how that's all going to change when He comes back.

Apparently there will be some kind of arrangement where He and we all are the habitation of God. The mode of existence we'll have when it changes again at His second coming is not clearly explained to us. But Jesus is here trying to explain to His disciples

the mode of existence that will change for them when He would leave the first time.

That they will not see Him with them but He will be with them. And so He says in my Father's house which is the body of Christ, the church are many dwelling places which are the Christians in the church. If it were not so I would have told you I am going that is to heaven to prepare a place for you that is in His body in the body of Christ in the temple.

And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again ok, coming again this could be His second coming this is how we've almost always understood it especially because of the words that follow. Although it's clear in verses 15-17 He talks about I will come to you means I will come when the Holy Spirit comes. And He may mean that here too I mean there is no reason why He couldn't be consistent and use the term the same way.

But we usually think I will come means the second coming. Now just so you won't wonder of course I believe in the second coming. I believe Jesus will come back physically, invisibly.

I'm not questioning that. I'm questioning whether that's what He's talking about in this passage or whether He's talking about something else. Jesus is coming back but that's not the only thing He ever talked about.

And it's possible for us to read that event into some other thing He's talking about if we don't understand His language. But He says I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am you may be also. The reason this is a bit ambiguous is because the Bible talks about Jesus being with us now.

Ever since the Spirit has been given He's with us now. He's with us all the time. Yet seen apparently a little differently Paul says that we know that as long as we're in this body we're absent from the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 5 He says as long as we're in this body we're absent from the Lord and we are willing yea eager to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. So there's a sense in which Jesus is with us all the time. There's another sense in which He'll be with us differently when we're with Him again when we're no longer separated from Him.

In one sense we are separate from Him in another sense He's with us and so whichever sense He means it here is not clear. He says that where I am you will be also. Well that could be true right now.

Where He is is in His body. Where He is is in His temple. Where He is is in His people.

That being so He could be talking about the coming of the Spirit where He says I'm going to prepare a place for you I will come again. Now He may mean at the end of the world

but He might mean I will come again in the sense I've been talking about. Here in this chapter I'll come through the Holy Spirit and then you will always be with me.

You think I'm going to be gone. You think you're going to be losing me. You're not going to lose me.

You're going to always be with me because I'm going to come back. I'm going to go up I'm going to come back. And it could be that He's talking about going up in the ascension and coming back at Pentecost.

And then you'll be with me all the time. Which is true. At least in one sense.

Now I realize that because this whole series of phrases that we've just looked at have usually been just applied to a totally different paradigm. That Jesus is talking about going away to heaven making a place for us in heaven and coming again at the second coming to take us up to heaven. All of that is an entirely different paradigm of these verses.

And it's the one that probably 99.9% of Christians have heard and believe. I actually do believe that scenario is somewhat correct. That of course Jesus is going to come back.

But I don't believe He's going to take us away into outer space. The Bible says He's coming here. Because meek shall inherit the earth Jesus said.

And it's not that He's going to take us away up into someplace far away in the sky. He's gone there. He's going to come back here.

We will meet Him in the air. But that's only to accompany Him the rest of the way down. As the language of scripture suggests.

It's not that He's going to come here take us out of the world and take us off into outer space to some far away heaven. Some mansions or something out there. That's not what this verse says.

It's not what any verse says in the Bible. The Bible indicates that when Jesus comes back He's going to rule here. And we're going to rule with Him here.

And the meek will inherit the earth. We live in the New Jerusalem which in scripture is seen as coming down from heaven to the new earth. And the eternal abode of the saints is apparently the new earth.

If Revelation is taken literally. Of course it can't be taken literally all the time. So it's hard to know to what degree you should or should not.

But the description of the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22 clearly has us dwelling with Jesus on the new earth in the new Jerusalem. Not forever in the heavens. So heaven is the temporary place that we would

go when we die to be with Jesus.

But when He comes back it says in 1 Thessalonians 4 He will bring with Him those who have died in Christ. He's going to bring them back. Not take us there.

So this idea that we're going to go to heaven and live forever in heaven and that that's the Father's house and that we're going to have mansions up there is none of that is actually taught in scripture anywhere. A lot of it is based on the mistranslation of the King James translating Monest as mansions. Which strikes me as extremely bizarre that someone would choose such a word.

I mean even if they chose the word rooms or dwellings they'd be considerably more literal. Mansions. It's very strange to translate Monest that way.

So we've got a couple of choices. I believe that as we study the rest of the discourse we will see that he's not talking to them about the end of the world and their eternal abode somewhere else. I believe he's talking to them about what's going to happen shortly after he leaves and what he's going to do to accommodate their need for him in his physical absence and what comfort they will find in his presence after he's gone.

His presence within them through the Holy Spirit. That seems to be his message to them in this chapter. And in not only this chapter you'll find continual repetition of the theme in chapters 15 and 16.

And he says in verse 4, and where I go you know. And the way you know. Thomas said to him, Lord we do not know where you are going.

And how can we know the way? And Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Where is he going? Well he's going to heaven.

But he's not going to be just in heaven, he's also going to be in us. He's going to be everywhere. He's going to be in heaven at the right hand of God.

He's going to be in us through his spirit. He's going away. His physical body is going to ascend into the sky and disappear from view.

That will happen in Acts chapter 1. There's a way there for us. Now to where? To the Father. Now we don't have to go up in the sky to be where the Father is.

In fact Jesus specifically said in verse 23 if you love me and keep my commandments my Father will come to you. You don't have to go away to heaven to be with the Father. You just have to be with him here all the time.

He will come to you. Now where Jesus is going is to his Father in heaven. That is to the throne of God, at the right hand of God in heaven.

But the Father isn't confined to heaven. He's in all places and particularly he will make his home in you here if you love him and keep his commandments said Jesus. Now he says where I'm going you know and the way you know.

But obviously they didn't know and I don't blame Thomas for asking the question. You know Lord you're kind of over our heads here. You know I mean you sure you got the right men? This seems a little above our pay grade.

You know what are you talking about? And they actually ask questions like that all the way through the discourse. Lord we don't know what you're talking about. Or they stopped asking him and started asking each other.

What does he mean by that? These were one group of confused fishermen and not theologians. And yet Jesus is talking about them about really mysterious theological stuff. Stuff that they really had trouble with and I don't blame them.

I have trouble with it. This very word we all know the verse I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.

Well what in the world does it mean? I'm the way. Now they said we don't know the way. How are we supposed to know the way? He says I'm the way.

You know me. That's all you need to know to get to the Father. You need to be in a relation with me.

I'm the whole way there. You step into me and you've made the journey all the way. You're at the Father.

I'm going into the sky to be with the Father. You don't have to go so far. You just come into me and you'll be I'm the way there.

You'll be there. If you love me and keep my commandments the Father will come to you. All you need to know is me.

I'm the way there. I'm the connection. I'm the link.

In John chapter 1 when Jesus first met Nathanael and said behold an Israelite indeed and who is no guile. Nathanael said I don't know who you are. How do you know me? And he said before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree I saw you.

And Nathanael said Lord you are the Messiah. You are the Son of God. And Jesus said because I said I saw you under the fig tree you say I'm the Son of God? You're going to see a lot better things than that.

You will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Now did Nathanael actually have a vision to that effect? Maybe. We don't

know.

It's not recorded. We don't have any record of Nathanael having such a vision. Nor is it absolutely necessary that we take that literally.

It's obviously a reference to Genesis where Jacob had his dream and he saw a ladder with its top in heaven and its foot on the earth and it says the angels of God were ascending and descending on this ladder. It's the only other place in the Bible that has that expression the angels of God ascending and descending. Jacob's ladder the connection between heaven and earth between God and man that ladder was the access between heaven and earth.

That's why the angels were seen in the dream going up and down on it. Jesus says you're going to see the angels of God ascending and descending on me. Which may be only a way of saying the time will come Nathanael when you know me much better than you do now and you will recognize that I am Jacob's ladder.

I am the access between God and man. I am the way that people go to get to God. The angels too.

The angels come and go on me which just means I'm that ladder that Jacob saw in his dream. No one comes to the Father but through me. But coming to the Father doesn't mean dying and going to heaven.

Now I do believe that in other parts of the Bible, the Bible does say that when we die we go to heaven. That when we're absent from the body we are present with the Lord. So I hope you don't think that I'm denying any of these cherished doctrines.

I believe them and I believe they're established from other places in scripture. But in this place I don't think he says anything about going to heaven. He says no one comes to the Father except through me.

We come to the Father. We come into union with the Father through our relationship with Jesus Christ. That's now.

That's why he says my Father and I will come to you and make our home with you. What Jesus came to do was not to take people to heaven. Actually he came to rule the world.

And he's going to do that. Heaven is kind of like the place we go until he comes back and does that. When we die we have to go somewhere.

So we go, fortunately, into the presence of God in heaven which is Jesus' temporary place until he comes back here. And we come back with him. Jesus didn't come to take a bunch of people to heaven.

He came to bring people to the Father. He came to bring the lost sheep back to the

shepherd. He came to reconcile people to God.

And he's given to us that ministry of reconciliation so we stand, as it were, in Christ's place, Paul says, saying be reconciled to God. To be brought back into relationship with God. That's what salvation is.

Salvation isn't primarily where you go when you die. Where you go when you die is simply a continuation of that salvation. Salvation begins here and now and the salvation is not heaven.

Salvation is God. Having a restored relationship with God. Being in a proper connection with God.

That's what salvation is. We're being saved for God. He came to redeem for himself a people, zealous for good works.

Not to save for us something, it's for him. Jesus said, because I love the Father, I'm going to the cross. Because my Father wants me to bring his children back to him.

We're like prodigal children, Jesus said, who've run away from our Father. And it's his purpose to change that. To restore that.

And no one can come to the Father except through me, he said. He's not necessarily talking about going to heaven. Of course, if you come to the Father now and he dwells in you, then there's not much else that can happen after you die.

Then you go to heaven. Of course you're going to go to heaven. You enter into a permanent relationship connected to God and that connection does not end at death.

But it doesn't await death to begin either. Jesus does not make any reference to us going to heaven in this discourse. It's not the subject matter of the discourse.

He says, I am the way to the Father. I'm going to the Father and you're going to go to the Father too and you know the way there. They say, we don't think we do.

I don't think I do know the way. I'm not even sure where it is. He says, well, don't you know, I'm the way.

If you know me, then you know the way. And people come to the Father by this way and no other way. God, by coming into Christ, by being in relationship with Christ, one has come to the Father.

That's why Jesus gets into the next part, which we'll have to save for the next time, where they say, well, why don't you just show us the Father and that's enough. He says, don't you know that if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Coming to me is coming to the Father.

I, my very presence on earth, is God's way of bringing you to himself. And you come to me and you thus receive truth, you receive life and you have found the way. That's what I am, is the way.

This is how Jesus develops the message of comfort that he has for his disciples about his departure. The later revelation we have through Paul and Peter and the other apostles, that after the Spirit came and led them into all truth, as Jesus in the upper room said would happen. He said, when the Comforter comes, he'll lead you into all truth.

In chapter 16, which is still in this discourse, he says, I have many things to say, but you can't receive them yet. So when the Holy Spirit comes, he'll lead you into the truths that I can't give you right now. So the Holy Spirit came and he led the apostles into those truths that Jesus was, they weren't ready for yet when Jesus was here.

The Holy Spirit made them ready and taught them in due time these things and they wrote them and we have them. So we actually have the advantage that they in the upper room did not have. They didn't know what the Holy Spirit was going to further clarify about this.

We do because we have the record of what he clarified and what they saw and understood later. So no wonder they're confused about this. What is a wonder is that Christians are confused about it.

Given all the witness of scripture on these subjects, why are Christians confused about this? Why do Christians when they hear my father's house think of the heaven? There's not one scripture to justify that association. Why do Christians have these different views when the New Testament writers gave us all the clarification of them that was necessary? That is peculiar to me. But of course I think the answer is because we are very much bound to tradition and we tend to believe what we're told and also sometimes we just take the simplest way that the wording strikes us and it seems right at the time and why not? Everyone says it's right.

But if you actually search the scriptures you find different reasons to take this in a different way. And so that's why that's why I've come to take it the way I have and I think while it's not necessary for others to take it the way I do, I don't see how anyone would reach a different conclusion if they actually do look at the scriptures on the relevant subjects because this is clearly what the New Testament teaches throughout.