

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 14:1-3: A Wonderful Description of Heaven & The Promise of the Lord's Return

"Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Background Notes

Why did the Lord say to the disciples, *"Let not your heart be troubled..."*(v1)? It's because the disciples, at this point, were bewildered and discouraged. In chapter 12 the Lord told the disciples that He was going to be crucified. John 12:32-33: *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."* ³³ *This He said, signifying by what death He would die.* Then in chapter 13 He revealed to them that one of them would be a traitor. John 13:21: *"When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."* And then moving on, He told them that He was going to leave them. John 13:33: *"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you."* Then, at the end of the chapter, He told Peter that he would deny Him three times. John 13:38: *"Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times."* So I think that we can understand why the disciples were discouraged and bewildered, and I think we would feel the same way. It is in this context, then, that the Lord said to them in John 14:1, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."*

In verses 2-3 the Lord told the disciples that He was not going to leave them permanently. He was going to prepare a place for them, and He promised that He would come again for them, so that they would be with Him again. This, by the way, is not a reference to the death of the believer. No, it is a reference to the return of the Lord. So here in these three verses of John 14, we not only have a description of heaven, but we also have the promise of the Lord's return.

Now let's ask a theological question – this "return" to which the Lord referred here, is it the rapture of the church, or is it the return of the Lord to the earth to set up His kingdom? We believe it's the rapture of the church that is in view here. What is the difference between the rapture of the church and the return of the Lord to set up his kingdom?

First let's discuss the return of the Lord to this earth to set up His kingdom. In the Olivet Discourse, in which our Lord taught about the future, the Lord spoke of His return in power, glory, and judgment to this earth. He was speaking about His return to the earth to set up His kingdom. The Olivet Discourse in which our Lord spoke about the future is found in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Let's read two verses from Matthew 24:29-30: *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in*

heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” This passage describes the return of the Lord to this earth to set up His kingdom. Furthermore, all the Old Testament passages dealing with the coming of the Messiah to set up His kingdom here on earth appear to refer to this same return – the one of which our Lord spoke in the Olivet Discourse.

However, when we come to the Epistles, letters that are specifically written to the church, we find a “return of the Lord” which appears to be different. In the return of the Lord mentioned in the Epistles, He does not return to this earth in power, glory, and judgment. No cosmic signs are associated with this return. All the earth does not see Him. This return does not occur after the special time of tribulation on the earth mentioned in the Olive Discourse. No, the “coming” mentioned in the Epistles appears to be before the end-time tribulation mentioned in the Olivet Discourse. The coming or return that is mentioned in the Epistles is particularly for the **church**. This coming is not to the earth but to the air, where Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord. That’s why this “coming” is sometimes called the “rapture” (a word with the root meaning, “caught up”). There are two specific passages in the Epistles that deal with this return – 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Let’s read two verses from 1 Thessalonians 4, that speak of the event that we call the “rapture of the church.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

So there is a difference, then, between the return of the Lord to this earth to set up His kingdom, and the return of the Lord for His church, or the “rapture” of the church. There are the two great passages in the epistles, 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, that deal with the rapture of the church. All of the other passages that refer to the return of the Lord in the Gospels and in the Old Testament look ahead to the return of the Lord to this earth to set up His kingdom -- with the exception of one! There is one passage in the Gospels that appears to refer to the rapture, and it is this passage right here – John 14:2-3. Notice verse 3 once again, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* We believe this verse refers to the rapture of the church.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

Heaven is a place where “it doesn’t get any better than this!”

“It doesn’t get any better than this!” I’m sure you have heard that expression used before, right? We use it all the time! Imagine sitting on the beach in the Caribbean during the winter season, warm sunshine, turquoise-blue water, sipping iced tea – “It doesn’t get any better than this!”

Well, it **does** get better than this!! **Heaven** is the place where “it doesn’t get any better than this!” Let’s briefly look at three reasons from verses 2-3 that tell us why heaven is the place where “it doesn’t get any better than this!”

First of all, heaven is a place called **home**. *“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”(v2).*

The "Father's house," or heaven, is a place called home. That's really the idea there of "in My Father's house are many mansions..." From this verse we might get the idea that when we get to heaven, we'll each have our own private, big mansion. No, that is **not** the idea! The thought is that there are many rooms in the Father's house. There's room for everyone, and we will all be together as one big happy family -- God's family.

Heaven is home! Maybe the best way we could capture the idea here is to think of the expression, "home for the holidays." Now if that expression gives you a warm happy feeling because you're thinking of the whole family together for Thanksgiving or Christmas, sitting together around the fireplace, sharing family secrets, jokes and memories -- then you're getting close to the concept expressed here. Heaven is home! And the great thing is, it doesn't end after the holidays -- it's eternal!

A second reason why heaven is a place where "it doesn't get any better than this" is that heaven is a place that is **prepared for us**. "I go to prepare a place for you"(v2). Heaven is a place especially prepared for us. The Lord knows all about us -- after all, He created us. Certainly He knows what's going to be the best for us. Now I know that some of you might be hoping that there's golf in heaven, or skiing in heaven, or great entertainment in heaven, or maybe even great-tasting fat-free food that you don't have to worry about! Well, all joking aside, heaven will be the **greatest**, because the Lord has prepared it for us! If you're believer, you will be there! It's our eternal home and it's specifically prepared for us.

A third reason why heaven is a place where "it doesn't get any better than this" is that heaven is a place where **the Lord Jesus** is, and He wants **us** to be there, too! Notice verse 3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." The Lord wants us to be with Him forever! It's going to be great! Did you ever make a special trip somewhere, expecting to see someone special, but when you got there, that special person wasn't there? Not a very pleasant experience! Well you don't have to worry about anything like that happening in heaven, because our Lord Jesus will be there, for sure -- in fact, we see here that the Lord Jesus Himself is coming to get us! He says He'll "receive us unto Himself." He wants us to be with Him, and we'll be with Him forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." Heaven is a place where "it doesn't get any better than this!"

Practical Application

Think about heaven when you are discouraged!

Look again at verse 1: "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*" In other words, in these verses the Lord was saying to the disciples, "You disciples are discouraged. But you believe in God, even though you can't see Him. Now believe in Me the same way, even though I am going away and you won't see Me physically here on this earth. Cheer up! Don't let your heart be troubled! You can be sure that even though you can't see Me, I am thinking of you, and I'll be preparing a special place for you. And I'll be coming back for you to take you to be with Me forever!"

The Lord told them about heaven to cheer them up. In the same way, when we as disciples are discouraged, let's think about heaven. When you're discouraged with your job, or your circumstances, or even your ministry, remember: it is not a permanent situation -- it's temporary! Let's think about heaven when we're discouraged.

I think we're all vulnerable to discouragement. I get discouraged when things that are new get damaged for the first time -- that really bothers me. For example, my car: a little more than a year ago it was brand new, but within a month there were two "dings" on the trunk! They were little dings, nothing really big, but I thought, "Why did that happen? It's so discouraging!" Well, how did I cheer up? I thought about heaven! "A hundred years from now, what difference will those two little dings on the trunk make? No big deal!"

Think about heaven! This is very practical. No matter what area or what circumstance makes you vulnerable to discouragement, think about heaven. Think about heaven when you are discouraged!