

Exegesis

14:1-4 – As chapter divisions were a later addition to Scripture, we must remember that what follows in chapter fourteen is closely connected to what came before it in chapter thirteen. Thus, on the heels of Jesus' prediction of his departure and Peter's denial and knowing this would upset the disciples, the Lord attempts to quiet their fears. He tells them, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Many people throughout the bible have explicitly been told not to fear: Israel (cf. Deut. 1:21, 29; 20:1, 3; Josh. 1:9; 2 Ki. 25:24; Isa. 10:24; 35:4; 41:10, 13), Isaac (Gen. 26:24), Joseph's brothers (Gen. 50:21), Joshua (Josh. 8:1), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:78), Paul (Ac. 27:24), Zechariah (Lu. 1:13), Mary (Lu. 1:30), shepherds (Lu. 2:10), the disciples (cf. Mat. 6:25, 34; 8:23-27; 10:31; Lu. 12:32), the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:6-7), persecuted Christians (1 Pet. 3:14), John (Rev. 1:17), and many others. Followers of God need to be constantly reminded to trust the Lord and not be afraid.¹ What Jesus had told the disciples would come true. There was no avoiding it. So, what would they do knowing such dark times were on the horizon? Trust, believe, have faith, etc. Like so many people in the Scriptures, the apostles were called to walk by faith (cf. Heb. 11). Just as they trusted God's word, they must also trust the word of Jesus. And this principle has not changed for us. Faith is the only thing that will sustain us during troubling times. Though we would instead be rescued from our circumstances, Jesus invites us to walk with him *through* our circumstances, to rely upon his strength to get us from wherever we are to wherever we're going.

But, not willing to leave the disciples without some promise to hang their faith on, the Lord says, "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." The English term "mansions" might give the impression of some ornate building, as if Jesus were saying he was constructing a luxurious property for each disciple.² However, the Greek term translated as "mansion" is **μονή** (mon-ay'), and this word

¹ Carson (1991), p. 486, "However appropriate it may be to cite the words *Do not let your heart be troubled* at Christian funerals, they were first addressed to disciples who under substantial emotional pressure were on the brink of catastrophic failure."

² This understandable yet still mistaken assumption results because language changes over time. When the KJV translators used "mansion," they meant it in the general sense of dwelling or abode, as that is how the word was used in the 17th century. Look up the archaic or obsolete usage of the term "mansion" in any dictionary. Interestingly, this is an example of what Mark Ward calls in his book *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* a "false friend." A false friend refers to terms whose meanings can be unintentionally misleading, whether due to changes over time or some other factor. Other examples of such words in the KJV are corn=grain (Gen. 41:5), prevent=go before (1 Thess. 4:15), conversation=conduct (1 Tim. 4:12), peculiar=private property (1 Pet. 2:9), quick=alive (Heb. 4:12), study=be zealous (2 Tim. 2:15), etc.

refers to nothing more than an abode or dwelling of indeterminate size (cf. 14:23).³ More than conveying the principle of wealth, Jesus was emphasizing their *presence/residence/inhabitation* in God's manor estate.⁴ He assured the disciples that a "place" would be reserved for each of them in his "Father's house."⁵ And, considering that Jesus uses the singular of "house," a term that might better convey this idea for modern readers would be "rooms," as there can be many chambers in a single home.⁶ Thus, Jesus said something akin to the expression, "I'll save a seat for you." It doesn't matter the kind of seat. The point is that there is a *place* for us at God's table (cf. 2 Sam. 9:13; Lu. 14:15-24; Eph. 2:6; Rev. 19:6-9). And having a closet in heaven is far better than a mansion in Beverly Hills.

Jesus goes on to say, "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." Though Jesus would leave them, he would not *abandon* the disciples. He would "come again." This is a reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15-18), a minor theme in John's account but a major one in the rest of the N.T.⁷ The Lord will return to receive his bride—i.e., the Church (cf. Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:1-2)—unto himself, and then, husband and wife will be together forevermore. They will, quite literally, live happily ever after. In fact, what Jesus describes here in verses 2 and 3 recalls the betrothal period experienced by engaged couples during the first century.⁸ Unlike today, where engagements give couples time to plan their wedding, in Jesus' day, the engagement period gave the groom time to prepare an actual *residence* for his bride. When the Lord returns for the Church, she will not be homeless, nor will he bring her to a fixer-upper. Jesus will carry his bride over the threshold of her fully furnished forever home, which had been prepared for her that day on Calvary.⁹

Jesus not only told the disciples that he had reserved a place for them and would (eventually) return, but he reassured them, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Peter, James, John, and the others need not be confused about Jesus' destination; they already know the

³ Carson (1991), p. 489.

⁴ Kruse (2017), p. 344.

⁵ Köstenberger (2008), p. 426, "It was customary for sons to add to their father's house once married, so that the entire estate grew into a large compounded (called *insula*) centered around a communal courtyard." This tradition is alive and well in the Middle East today, as there will be multiple generations in a single dwelling. Parents often add floors to their homes as their children get married.

⁶ Indeed, all modern bible translations convey the sense of *μονή* as "rooms." Even the NKJV provides a helpful footnote indicating the term is literally "dwelling."

⁷ I would point out that while John doesn't pay particular attention to eschatological matters in his gospel account, he all but singles it out in his other N.T. work, the Book of Revelation.

⁸ Köstenberger (2008), p. 427.

⁹ Klink (2016), p. 615, "The good news is not fully manifest at Christmas when God came to us and dwells with us, but at the new creation when we are taken to God and dwell with him.

place that Jesus is heading, and they already know the way to get there. But, as we'll shortly see, the disciples are anything but comforted and still very much confused. They cannot grasp Jesus' meaning until after the resurrection. Only then will they see what their past selves missed: Jesus went to heaven, will return from heaven, and is the only way to heaven.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 45

Text: John 14:1-4

The last time we were in John, it was May. So, a brief refresher is in order. If you remember, after Judas was given leave to betray Jesus, the Lord began the so-called 'The Farewell Discourse' (cf. 13:31-16:33). For the first time since starting his earthly ministry, the Son of God can address only those who were his true followers. And, as such, he has a lot to say to them. But one of the most important topics the Lord wanted to cover was his impending departure. He would soon have to leave the disciples behind. To guide their conduct while he's away, the Lord will talk about everything from his destination to a mysterious "helper" that will take his place, his subsequent return, and so much more.

But in our context this evening, the disciples are troubled. Understandably, they've been shaken by the revelation of Jesus' departure and Peter's denial (cf. 13:33, 38). To assuage their fears, the Lord will give them some profound revelations: his leaving is for the disciples' benefit, and, someday, they will be reunited to live with him in his "Father's house" forevermore.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: