

“IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE”

THE UNLEAVENED TRUTH OF JOHN 14

BY RON KANGAS

Claiming that John 14:2-3 describes a specific place in Heaven prepared for the children of God, the book *To Heaven and Back* says, “Since his ascension from the Mount of Olives about two thousand years ago, one of Jesus’ primary concerns has been to prepare a heavenly home for his family. I like the word *mansion* simply because anything Jesus would create would be elegant” (103). Elsewhere the book informs its reader, “I imagine you will...find in your gorgeous home special treasures he has prepared for you. He knows you so well that he created a place, tailor-made for you—and me” (170). This is an illustration of what may be regarded as one of the greatest travesties in the history of biblical interpretation—the leavened teaching that the Father’s house with its many abodes unveiled in John 14 refers to heaven—a gorgeous home with special treasures—as the eternal dwelling place of the believers in Christ. The use of *leavened* here is an application of the Lord’s word in Matthew 13:33: “The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.” The concept of a heavenly mansion, especially when presented in materialistic terms, is the worst kind of leaven hidden within the fine flour of biblical truth. This leaven must be purged out, and the pure truth must be testified. Such is the goal of this article on the Father’s house and the unleavened truth of John 14. After considering what may justly be called “a catalogue of errors” concerning heaven and the Father’s house, we will present a synopsis of the basic truth of John 14 and then set forth a number of reasons for believing that the Father’s house with its abodes is not heaven but a marvelous, spiritual, divine-human organic entity dear to the heart of God and central to the economy of God.

A Catalogue of Errors

That the truth of John 14 has been leavened can be ascertained by consulting the innumerable writings on this

subject. Research discloses a virtually universally accepted view—that the Father’s house is heaven and that the mansions, abodes, in this house refer to prepared places in heaven for the believers. Through the following examples of erroneous teachings concerning the Father’s house in John, we can get an impression of how widespread is the leavened understanding that the Father’s house with its abodes signifies heaven as the eternal dwelling place of the believers, who will supposedly live in one great house but in separate abodes prepared with care for each individual.

The MacArthur Study Bible:

His departure would be for their advantage since He was going away to prepare a heavenly home for them and will return to take them so that they may be with Him. This is one of the passages that refers to the rapture of the saints at the end of the age when Christ returns. (1613)

Here it is alleged that the Father’s house and the prepared place are in heaven, to which believers will be taken to be with God and to dwell in the “heavenly home” which the Lord is allegedly preparing for them and to which He will bring them after His second coming.

The Quest Study Bible: “Jesus described heaven [14:2] as a house with *many rooms*” (1490). This note identifies the Father’s house with heaven.

The Nelson Study Bible: “*Mansions* refers to dwelling places. Everybody has a longing for a permanent, secure place. Such places have already been set aside for all of God’s children” (1792). The emphasis here is on the human longing for a secure place, not on the divine desire for a dwelling place; thus, the concept is man-centered.

New Geneva Study Bible: “Prepare a place for you. Christ

prepares the place in heaven for His own, and the Holy Spirit prepares the redeemed on earth for their place in heaven. See ‘Heaven’ at Rev. 21:1” (1691). The recommended theological note refers to John 14:2 as evidence that heaven is “the place of God’s rest” (2032) and then indicates that we “can form an idea of the perfect life of heaven from what we know imperfectly now,” encouraging Bible readers to construct a concept of heaven understood as the Father’s house replete with prepared dwellings for all believers.

Inside Heaven’s Gates (E. M. Bounds):

Heaven has its boundaries on God’s map. In God’s house, Jesus declares, are many mansions....In God’s many homes, one home was to be theirs, a place prepared for them. This was the comfort to the disciples, saddened as they were. (12)

Here we are told that our comfort consists in having a home in heaven, a place prepared for us.

Manual of Christian Doctrine (L. Berkhof): “The Bible teaches us to think of heaven as a place. It is the house of our Father with many mansions, John 14:2” (361). Here the Father’s house is explicitly equated with heaven.

Foundations of the Christian Faith (James Montgomery Boice): “In speaking of Christ’s present work in heaven, we recall his promise to the disciples that he was going to *prepare a place* for them (Jn. 14:2-3)...We know that in some way he is preparing heaven for us” (363).

Here we are taught about what Christ is presumed to be doing in heaven—working to prepare heaven for us, thereby fulfilling His promise to prepare a place for us. It seems that even after nearly two thousand years, this work has not been completed.

What the Bible Reveals about Heaven (Daniel A. Brown): “The great hope that we have about the place called Heaven comes from one of Jesus’ most famous statements: ‘I go to prepare a place for you’” (91). Clearly, this book teaches that our prepared place is in heaven.

The Gospel of John (James Montgomery Boice): “The second

reason Jesus gives why we should not be troubled is that there is a place prepared for us in heaven....It [14:2] tells us that heaven is not only a place; it is a home” (1060, 1066). Here the emphasis is not on God’s building in His economy but on the human need for a prepared place, a home in heaven. John 14 is explicated in terms of the traditional concept of heaven.

The Gospel of John (F. F. Bruce): “Here, however, ‘my Father’s house’ (*oikia*) is plainly not on earth: it is the heavenly home to which Jesus is going and in which his people are also promised a place” (297). According to this source, the Father’s house in John 14 is heaven, and our promised place is in this heavenly house.

Opening the Gospel of John (Philip W. Comfort and Wendell C. Hawley):

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WITH ITS MANY ABODES UNVEILED
IN JOHN 14 REFERS TO HEAVEN—
A GORGEOUS HOME WITH SPECIAL
TREASURES—AS THE ETERNAL DWELLING
PLACE OF THE BELIEVERS
IN CHRIST.



Heaven is the everlasting abode of those who love God....Jesus says that in his Father’s house there are many dwelling places.... “Many dwelling places” (NRSV) suggests spaciousness. There is no lack of accommodations. Heaven will contain immense throngs, without being crowded. “Many mansions” (NKJV) further suggests great variety, not just one great hall or dormitory building. He knows us, each one. He has planned our dwelling place accordingly. He will keep our place for our arrival.

It will not suit another and will not be given to another. (224)

This book assures us of a custom-made dwelling designed with each individual in mind and reserved for that one and no other. This, we are expected to believe, is the meaning of John 14.

After Life: What the Bible Really Says (Douglas Connelly):

When a believer dies, we say that the person has gone to heaven. The person’s spirit is with Christ in a place prepared for them by the Lord Jesus himself. “I am going,” Jesus said, “to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). That “place” Jesus called “my Father’s house”—a place of glory and rest and blessing. (93)

Here a number of claims are made: (1) that when a believer

dies, that one goes to heaven; (2) that heaven is the place prepared by the Lord Jesus for us; (3) and that this place is the Father's house. Therefore, *After Life* teaches, when a believer dies, that one goes to a prepared place in the Father's house, which is supposed to be heaven.

The book goes on to say, "Jesus has been preparing his Father's house for two thousand years, and it's already teeming with activity" (93). This house, which has been under construction for nearly two thousand years, is full of activity. One wonders why the Lord Jesus must spend such a long time making the Father's house ready. When will the work be done? What is the Lord doing in His supposed efforts to prepare the Father's house?

The Theology of John (W. Robert Cook):

In John 14:2-3 Jesus' promise to come for believers in this age is seen to follow His present activity of preparing many abiding places, which together make up one place called by Jesus "My Father's house."...the plural number shows that individual provision will be made for all the Father's children. It must not be overlooked, however, that they are all together in one place. Thus the picture is of each child having a suite of rooms in the Father's house. (229)

Once again we are informed that the Lord's present activity is to prepare many abiding places. This book further teaches that every believer, each child of God, will have a "suite of rooms," with each suite individually designed and prepared. Perhaps the alleged plan to design and build a suite of rooms for every believer is the reason, according to the logic of this book, that the Lord's "present activity" has been occupying Him for so many centuries. It seems that building the Father's house requires more time and effort than the creation of the entire universe.

Death and the Life After (Billy Graham): The statement, "The Bible assures us that heaven is a definite place," is followed by a quotation of John 14:2-3, and then we are told, "In some ways Christians are homeless. Our true home is waiting for us, prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ" (158). "Heaven is a place," the book continues, "designed by the greatest architect, and it is promised that there we will receive our glorious inheritance" (159). Christians are longing for their true home in heaven, the Father's house, where they will enjoy their inheritance in a structure designed by the greatest architect. Significantly, when the Bible speaks of God as an architect, it is with the New Jerusalem, not heaven, in view (Heb. 11:10).

What the Bible Reveals about Heaven, Foreword (Jack W. Hayford): "No one exegetes Heaven like its Builder, and no one can open our understanding to its promise more

clearly than the One who said, 'I go to prepare a place for you'" (11). Here we are told that heaven is somehow built, and the Builder, in His own exegesis, informs us that He has prepared a place for us in the heaven He has built.

To Heaven and Back, Foreword (Jack W. Hayford):

The book [about those who claim to have visited heaven and then returned to earth] is also truth-filled—because of another Author. He's the One who first came from heaven that He might take back any of us who want to go—back to the Father's heart, in love...back to the Father's home, forever. (12)

The Lord, who is in some sense considered the author of the book in question, is presented as coming from heaven in order to take us back to heaven, which is viewed as the Father's home. According to this claim, the goal of Christ's ministry is to bring back to the Father's house—heaven—all who want to go. What we have here is an extremely serious misrepresentation of the work of Christ for the carrying out of God's economy.

Truths That Transform: Christian Doctrines for Your Life Today (D. James Kennedy): The chapter "Heaven, the Life Hereafter" begins by quoting John 14:2-3, thereby conveying the notion that the Father's house with its "many mansions" is heaven. Then we are told, "Heaven...is also called a house: 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' Furthermore, it is a real locality. Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you'" (154). In this locality, therefore, we will all have our place, our mansion, in the one great house of the Father.

Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective (Andreas J. Köstenberger): Commenting on John 14:1-4, this book states, "In this first piece of instruction, Jesus...elaborates on one of the purposes for his going to the Father: he will prepare a place for his disciples in heaven" (152). This text explains that the Greek word for *rooms* designates a single dwelling unit. "In Jesus' day, many of these dwelling units were combined to form a mansion" (152). In addition, "the image used by Jesus may also have conjured up notions of luxurious Greco-Roman villas, replete with numerous terraces and buildings, situated among shady gardens with an abundance of trees and flowing water" (152). Although the writing appears to be scholarly, the underlying concept is the same commonplace, tradition notion: Jesus has prepared a place for His disciples in heaven. Perhaps some preachers, supplied with new material on heaven, will now expatiate on heaven as a luxurious villa.

One Minute after You Die (Erwin W. Lutzer):

In a sense, to speak of heaven as our home is not a figure

of speech; heaven *is* our home. Jesus, you will recall, spoke of leaving His disciples to build a mansion for them in the world beyond [John 14:2-3]....Christ awaits our arrival in heaven. Heaven is called home, for it is where we belong. (54-55)

Here we have yet another voice in the chorus proclaiming that our home is the Father's house in heaven.

The Glory of Heaven: The Truth about Heaven, Angels and Eternal Life (John F. MacArthur): Commenting on the words *the Father's house*, this book says, "The royal palace is Christ's Father's house, in which 'are many mansions' (Jn. 14:2). There shall the saints dwell forever....Heaven will be a convenient, spacious, and glorious house for those whom the King delights to honor" (207). Central to the discussion of the house here is the strong assertion that the believers' place in the Father's house (heaven) was secured at great cost. "Never was a house purchased at so great a rate as this, being the purchase of the Mediator's blood; and for no less could it be afforded to them" (207-208). This clearly indicates that, from the perspective of this text (in contrast to that of the Bible), Christ has redeemed us so that we might be worthy and qualified to dwell in "a convenient, spacious, and glorious house" in heaven.

The Expositor's Bible, Vol. V, (W. Robertson Nicoll): "The Father's house," we are informed, "was a new figure for heaven" (221). What is particularly intriguing about this exposition of John 14 is the attempt to explain Jesus' inner thoughts on the many mansions: "It is not to secure My own safety or happiness I go. It is not to occupy the sole available room in My Father's house. There are many rooms there, and I go to prepare a place for you. Trust Me" (221). Written with a pastoral tone, such words assure us of our own safe, happy place in the Father's house, which, of course, is alleged to be heaven.

Word Pictures in the New Testament (Archibald Thomas Robertson): "There are many resting-places in the Father's house (*oikia*). Christ's picture of heaven here is the most precious one that we possess. It is our heavenly home with our Father and with Jesus" (248). In this well-known study of word pictures, we are told, on the

basis of John 14:2, that the Father's house, with its places of rest, is our heavenly home.

Expository Thoughts on the Gospels (J. C. Ryle): The book speaks with great assurance: "This phrase [in My Father's house] can bear only one meaning. It is my Father's house in Heaven" (55). We are later informed that Christ's intention was to comfort His disciples "by the thought that nothing could cast them out of the heavenly house," for "there would be always room enough for them in heaven, and a house from which they would never be expelled" (55). Understood, as expected, as the Father's house with room for everyone, heaven is described as "a prepared place for a prepared people," and this, we are reminded "is a very cheering and animating thought" (56).

With the Word (Warren W. Wiersbe): "*Jesus takes us to the Father....* We have a home in heaven when life is over, and we shall meet Jesus and the Father" (699). The text correctly points out that the Lord Jesus brings us to the Father but then errs in speaking of "a home in heaven when life is over." The error consists, first, in saying that our home (obviously referring to the Father's house and our abode in it) is in heaven and, second, in saying that we enjoy this home only "when life is over," not in the present.

IN DISCUSSIONS OF THE FATHER'S HOUSE
THERE OFTEN IS A STRONG ASSERTION
THAT THE BELIEVERS' PLACE IN HEAVEN
WAS SECURED AT GREAT COST.
IN CONTRAST TO THE BIBLE,
THIS IMPLIES THAT CHRIST HAS REDEEMED
US SO THAT WE MIGHT BE WORTHY
AND QUALIFIED TO DWELL IN
"A CONVENIENT, SPACIOUS,
AND GLORIOUS HOUSE" IN HEAVEN.



A Divine Revelation of Heaven (Mary K. Baxter):

You do not need to fear being crowded into a tiny cubicle in heaven that has been labeled a "mansion." When the redeemed of the ages are gathered home to glory, there will be sufficient room for all of them to have one of the many mansions, the many dwelling places, which Jesus said He was preparing for us in His Father's house. (31)

The reader of this book should be comforted to know that there will be no overcrowding in what is called the Father's house; no one will live in a cubicle—everyone will own a mansion.

To Heaven and Back: True Stories of Those Who Have Made the Journey (Rita Bennett): "You talk a while, and he [Jesus] tells you about the home he has prepared for you. Remembering this heavenly Carpenter was in that trade

on earth, you are eager to see his creation” (124). Here we are led to believe that the heavenly Carpenter will first talk about our heavenly home, stirring our desire to see it. Then, continuing in a highly imaginative way, the book says, “Family members and friends will have learned about your arrival and will be there at your new residence to greet you and rejoice....Perhaps even your favorite animal will be there” (124). Can this be taken seriously by any proper student of the Word? Yet we are told that a volume filled with such claims is “truth-filled—because of another Author,” the One who came from heaven to bring us back to heaven as described above (12).

The foregoing is merely a sampling of writings that equate the Father’s house with heaven. This view of John 14 is surely prevailing and predominant among evangelical believers. It seems to be the official, traditional view of John 14, sanctioned through centuries of unquestioned acceptance. Preachers, teachers, expositors, theologians—virtually all of them begin with the assumption that the Father’s house in John 14 is heaven and then proceed to make all manner of claims and suggestions, often with an unbridled imagination, without ever questioning an interpretation that is everywhere assumed but nowhere demonstrated, always taken for granted but never proved. No matter how widespread the acceptance of this teaching may be, it is our conviction that it is altogether contrary to the divine revelation in the Scriptures and therefore utterly false. Because this kind of leavened teaching concerning John 14 misrepresents God, nullifies the economy of God, and damages the children of God, we cannot remain silent concerning it. We must labor to purge out the old leaven that has been added to the fine flour of John 14 and lay before the Christian public the pure, unleavened truth regarding the Father’s house. This we will attempt to do here, in an initial and introductory way (much more will follow), as we now pursue an accurate view of the Father’s house and the many abodes in John 14 considered in the context not only of the Gospel of John but also of the entire Scriptures.

The Basic Truth concerning John 14

In studying John 14, the crucial point to grasp is that the Father’s house in this chapter does not refer to heaven; on the contrary, the Father’s house here signifies a marvelous spiritual organism—the church, the house of the living God and the Body of Christ, as a mutual abode for the Triune God and the redeemed and regenerated believers in Christ. In order to establish the truth of this affirmation and to acquire the proper understanding of the Father’s house in 14:2, we need to see the connection between this verse and 2:16, where the phrase *My Father’s house* is also used.

The Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and “He found in

the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers sitting there” (2:14). Using a whip of cords, He cleansed the temple and said, “Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise” (v. 16). This indicates, in a strong and striking manner, the Lord’s zeal, His heart’s desire, regarding His Father’s house. At that time the Father’s house was the physical temple in Jerusalem, but the Lord used this temple as a sign, first to denote His physical body and then to signify His mystical Body in resurrection. When He was asked for a sign (v. 18), He replied, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). What temple was this? The answer, which is contrary to the natural thought expressed in verse 20, is found in verse 21: “He spoke of the temple of His body.” Here Christ, the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), regarded the temple in Jerusalem as a sign of His physical body. In so doing, the Lord Jesus was indicating that in actuality the temple, the Father’s house, was not a place but a person. God the Father dwelt within Him (John 14:10), in His physical body. Although the temple of the Lord’s physical body would be destroyed through His death on the cross, in His resurrection—that is, “in three days”—He would raise it up and thereby produce His organic, mystical, and corporate Body, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23). Now in Christ’s resurrection the temple of God, the Father’s house, is an organism that includes Christ as the Head and all His believers, regenerated by God through His resurrection, as the members. Having a deep spiritual understanding of this, Paul could tell us that the church is the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15) and that corporately the believers are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16). In and through His resurrection, the Lord’s body—the temple, the Father’s house—was reared up on a much larger scale. This is the Father’s house with its many abodes unveiled in John 14.

If we have this view of the Father’s house in John 2:16, we will realize that it is far from accurate to teach that the Father’s house in chapter fourteen is a heavenly mansion. The body of Jesus as the temple, the Father’s house, has been enlarged through His death and resurrection to become the Father’s house in a corporate sense, a house where there is a place for every believer in Christ, every member of His Body. From this we see that the Lord’s word concerning the Father’s house does not refer to a mansion in the heavens; it refers to Christ’s mystical Body, that is, to a divine organism composed of the Triune God mingled with His chosen people:

Now we can see what the Father’s house is. The Father’s house in the New Testament was first the tabernacle, God in the flesh [John 1:1, 14]. Eventually, this tabernacle was destroyed when Christ was crucified. But in resurrection, the Son of God, who Himself is resurrection [11:25], not only raised up Himself, but also raised up all those who would believe in Him [Eph. 2:5-6]. In resurrection He

became the firstborn Son of God, and all His believers became God's many sons. This means that through and in Christ's resurrection the many sons of God have been produced. Christ is the firstborn Son of God, and we, the many sons of God, are stones for the building up of the Father's house [Matt. 16:18; John 1:42; 1 Pet. 2:5]. This house is the church. Therefore, today's church is the Father's house, the house of the living God. (Lee, *Fulfillment* 359)

Many abodes: In the Father's house—that is, in God's corporate, organic, spiritual dwelling place—there are many abodes (John 14:2). *Abodes* (not *mansions*) is the correct translation here. The same word appears in the singular in verse 23: "Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." An abode is a dwelling place. The many abodes in verse 2 and the abode in verse 23 are dwelling places. Taken together, verses 2 and 23 reveal that the many abodes in the Father's house are the many believers in Christ. In the Father's house, the church as the Body of Christ, there are many abodes, many dwelling places. Each member of the Body of Christ is an abode, a dwelling place of the Triune God, as verse 23 makes clear. The Father's house is the Body of Christ; the Body of Christ is composed of the believers in Christ as the members; and every member of the Body of Christ is an abode of the Father's house.

On the one hand, in Christ we dwell in God—He is our abode; on the other hand, in Christ God dwells in us—we are His abode. This means that the Father's house with its many abodes is actually a mutual abode, a mutual dwelling place, where we dwell in God and God dwells in us. This sheds light on the Lord's word in 15:4—"Abide in Me and I in you"—where *abide*, the verbal form of *abode* is used. The abodes are not houses, villas, or suites of rooms in heaven; the abodes are persons living a life of blessed coinherence. This understanding is in line with the basic thought in John 14—that through Christ as the way to the Father, we are brought into God to dwell in Him, even as He dwells in us.

I go to prepare a place for you: In 14:2-3 the Lord Jesus

said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be." What did the Lord Jesus mean when He said that He would "go to prepare a place" for us so that where He is we also may be? The Lord was about to go to prepare a place for us through His resurrection in God the Father. He is in God the Father (vv. 10-11); He is the way to God the Father (v. 6); and His desire is that we would be in the Father also (17:21) and thus be where He Himself is. By Christ's going through death and resurrection, we have been brought into God the Father and have a standing in Him. This is the reason Paul could speak of the church in Thessalonica as being "in God the Father" (1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1). The Lord Jesus did not come from heaven and then go to heaven in order to bring us back with Him to a mansion in heaven. Rather, the Lord came from God the Father through incarnation and went

back to God the Father through crucifixion and resurrection in order to bring us to the Father. Now that in Christ we have a standing in God, we simultaneously have a standing, a place, in the house of God, the Body of Christ:

The Lord's intention in this chapter was to bring man into God for the building of His dwelling place. But between man and God there were many obstacles, such as sin, sins, death, the world, the flesh, the self, the old man, and

Satan. For the Lord to bring man into God, He had to solve all these problems. Therefore, He had to go to the cross to accomplish redemption that He might open the way and make a standing for man, that man might enter into God. This standing in God, being enlarged, becomes the standing in the Body of Christ. Anyone who does not have a standing, a place, in God does not have a place in the Body of Christ, which is God's dwelling place. Hence, the Lord's going in order to accomplish redemption was to prepare a place in His Body for the disciples. (Recovery Version, John 14:3, note 2)

I am coming again and will receive you to Myself: Contrary to what is supposed by many interpreters, this coming is not the Lord's coming again at the end of this age, as mentioned in Revelation 22:7, 12, and 20. This erroneous concept is found, for example, in *The Final Drama: 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures*: "This promise

THE BODY OF JESUS AS THE TEMPLE,
THE FATHER'S HOUSE, HAS BEEN ENLARGED
THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION
TO BECOME THE FATHER'S HOUSE IN A
CORPORATE SENSE. THE FATHER'S HOUSE
DOES NOT REFER TO A MANSION IN THE
HEAVENS; IT REFERS TO CHRIST'S MYSTICAL
BODY, THAT IS, TO A DIVINE ORGANISM
COMPOSED OF THE TRIUNE GOD MINGLED
WITH HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE.



[John 14:1-3] was the first mention of the Rapture, and because it was not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament, the concept was totally new to the disciples” (109). This volume goes on to say that the Lord’s promise to receive the believers to Himself “was a part of the promise to come to earth a second time” (109). According to this book on prophecy, John 14:2-3 will literally be fulfilled “in the air” (1 Thes. 4:17): “They go to heaven in fulfillment of the prophecy of going to the Father’s house (John 14:2-3)” (111). This view is mistaken.

The Lord’s words “I am coming again” refer to His coming in His resurrection to indwell His disciples. The Lord Jesus had come through incarnation to be among His disciples; however, since He was in the flesh, He could not enter into them and dwell in them. For this, He had to go in the sense of passing through His redemptive death and then come as the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of reality, in His resurrection. In verse 18 He said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.” This promise was fulfilled on the day of His resurrection (20:19-22), when He came to His disciples and imparted Himself into them as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Evidence of this is found in John 14:17-18. Speaking of the Spirit of reality, the Lord said, “You know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you...I am coming to you.” Notice the “He” and the “I” in these verses. The “He” in verse 17 is the Spirit of reality, but this “He” becomes the “I” in verse 18, and this “I” is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In other words, the “He” who is another Comforter, the Spirit of reality in verses 16 and 17, becomes the “I” who is the Lord Himself in verse 18. This indicates that the Christ who was with the disciples in the flesh would pass through death and resurrection in order to become the pneumatic Christ, the Spirit, to dwell in the disciples. Therefore, *I am coming* in verses 18 and 28 is not the Lord’s coming again to bring in the kingdom but His coming in resurrection as the Spirit to enter into and live in the disciples. The One who had been among them became the One living in them (vv. 19-20).

Where I am you also may be: The Lord’s word here does not mean that He is in heaven and that we will be with Him in heaven where He is. The Lord is in the Father, and it is His desire, as the expression of the Father’s desire, that we would be with Him where He is—in the Father. Through His death and resurrection, He has brought the believers into Himself. Since He is in the Father and we are in Him, we also are in the Father by being in Him. Surely, to be in the Father is much better than being in heaven. Through the Lord as the way to the Father, we are now in the Father. His word has been fulfilled: where He is, we also are.

In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in

Me, and I in you: What day is *that day*? It was the day of the Lord’s resurrection, the day on which the disciples were begotten to be His brothers (20:17), the day on which the Lord’s Father became their Father, the day on which He breathed Himself into them as the Spirit to dwell in them forever, the day on which the Lord raised up the temple of His body to become His organic, mystical Body—the enlarged, corporate house of the Father. On that day the disciples knew, and in the reality of that day we also know, the three *ims* mentioned by the Lord in 14:20: “I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” Now we may know that Christ is in the Father, that we are in Christ, and that Christ is in us. Since we know that He is in the Father and that we are in Him, we also know that, by being in Him, we are in the Father. Since we know that He is in us and that the Father is in Him (vv. 10-11), we also know that the Father is in us by being in the Son. Here we have a mutual abode—the Father’s house with its many abodes—produced by Christ in His resurrection. Therefore, John 14 is a revelation not of our dwelling in a mansion in heaven but of our dwelling in the Father’s house, the Body of Christ, the church of the living God. Because we have a standing in Christ in God the Father, we have an abode, a prepared place, in the church of God, which is in the Father. If we are enlightened by the Lord through His word, we should be able to purge out the old leaven—the leavened, traditional teaching concerning the Father’s house as a heavenly mansion—and receive with appreciation and thanksgiving the unleavened truth of John 14, especially the truth regarding the wonderful words, “In My Father’s house are many abodes;...I go to prepare a place for you.”

In support of this understanding of John 14, we need to consider several matters revealed in the Gospel of John: the principle and purpose of eternal life, the building of God in the Scriptures, the uniqueness of God’s building, the old creation and the new creation, the divine and mystical realm, the divine-human incorporation, the context of John 14—17, and the basic thought of the Gospel of John. All of these matters are exceedingly profound; therefore, in an essay of this length they cannot be fully developed.

Life and Building

The New Testament may be regarded as a book concerning Christ and the church, the great mystery (Eph. 5:32). Since Christ is life (John 14:6; 1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4) and the church is God’s building (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16), we may also say that the New Testament is a book of life and building, a formulation that is particularly appropriate with respect to the Gospel of John, as life and building is a central theme in this book. God’s creation is focused on life (Gen. 2:8-9), and God’s goal in His creation is a building constituted of precious

materials (vv. 10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12; Rev. 21:11, 14, 18-21). The Gospel of John reveals that life is in Christ, the Word of God (1:4), that Christ came that we might have life (10:10), that Christ Himself is life (14:6), and that Christ is the bread of life (6:35). Furthermore, Christ has the water of life (4:14), He gives life (5:21), and He lives in us as our life (14:19). This Gospel also unveils the building (1:14; 2:19-22; 14:2, 23; 17:11, 21-23). For the divine building, the believers, who are represented by Peter, are stones (1:42). We have been redeemed and regenerated for God's building, and we are now being transformed for God's building.

The theme of life and building is reflected in the basic structure of chapter two with its two main sections devoted respectively to the changing of death into life (vv. 1-11) and the building of the house of God (vv. 12-22). In this chapter we see life's principle—to change death into life—and life's purpose—to build the house of God. The reason we speak of life's principle at this juncture is that, speaking of the Lord's changing water (death) into wine (life), verse 11 says, "This [was the] beginning of signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee." Because the first mentioning of a matter in the Scriptures sets forth the principle of that matter, the first sign in the Gospel of John (a book of signs, 20:30-31) sets forth the principle of all the following signs, and this principle is to change death into life. Therefore, we may speak of the principle of life. The Gospel of John was written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we may have life in His name (v. 31). This life is the eternal life (3:15), the divine, uncreated life of God. According to John, the principle of such a life is to change death into life.

Life's purpose is to build the house of God. This is the intrinsic significance of the second portion of John 2. Life is for building—the corporate expression of the Triune God—and building is by life. It was for the purpose of presenting such a revelation of life and building that John put together the incidents of the Lord's changing water into wine and His cleansing of the temple. The wine, the life, is for the temple, the building, the Father's house.

That this life is the resurrection life of Christ is signified

by *the third day* (v. 1) and *in three days* (v. 19). The third day is the day of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4). It is only through resurrection life that death is changed into life for the building up of the Father's house. As we have pointed out, it was in and through Christ's resurrection that the temple of His physical body was enlarged to become the temple of His mystical Body, signified by the Father's house.

My Father's house in 14:2 must be understood in light of *My Father's house* in 2:16. In like manner, the revelation in chapter fourteen must be understood in light of the revelation in chapter two. This means that the basis for interpreting the Lord's word in John 14 is set forth in John 2—the principle of life and the purpose of life. God's intention is to build up a mutual abode for Himself and His redeemed and regenerated people through Christ's resurrection and in Christ as the resurrection life. Such an

intention has nothing to do with the heavenly mansion of traditional Christian theology. In fact, the notion of a heavenly house with suites of rooms for all individual believers is utterly incompatible with these matters of life and building. Whatever such a heavenly house is alleged to be, it is not something dependent upon the believers' experience of the changing of death into life for the building up of God's dwelling place. The traditional, religious teaching about a heavenly mansion is incompatible

with the biblical, and specifically Johannine, theme of life and building. The proper understanding of the Father's house, we are pleased to say, is fully in accord with the divine thought in the divine Word regarding life and building. If we are clear concerning life and building as set forth in John 2, we will be clear that the Father's house in John 14 is neither heaven nor a mansion but a building in resurrection as the mutual abode of God and His redeemed and regenerated people.

The Vision of God's Dwelling Place in the Holy Scriptures

One of the great visions in the holy Scriptures is the vision of God's building, the unveiling of the desire of God's heart to have a dwelling place for Himself and His chosen and redeemed people. It would be extremely unwise, therefore, to teach about the Father's house in John 14—

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obviously this house is a building—without being mindful of the divine concept of building in the Bible. Only by knowing God’s building in the Bible can we know the Father’s house in John 14.

What is actually required is a thorough study of the revelation concerning God’s dwelling place from the beginning in Genesis to the consummation in Revelation. This, of course, is impossible here; a brief sketch will have to suffice.

The obvious place to begin is with Jacob’s dream at Bethel recorded in Genesis 28. According to the account in this chapter, Jacob poured oil upon a stone and called it Bethel (*Bethel* means “the house of God”), indicating that God’s building is composed of oil and stone, with oil signifying God as the Spirit reaching His people and stone signifying God’s transformed people (1 Pet. 2:5). This points to the mingling of God with His people for His building. At Bethel we also have the gate of heaven with the ladder set up on earth and reaching heaven (John 1:51). This ladder brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven. It is of great significance that eventually Jacob declared, “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17). As we consider the details in Genesis 28, we can realize that here God reveals for the first time that He intends to build Himself with man into a corporate dwelling place by bringing heaven to earth and joining earth to heaven. God’s desire, therefore, is to have a dwelling place, a building, a Bethel, on earth.

This desire is given fuller expression in Exodus. If we get into the depths of the revelation in Exodus, we will see that God’s building is the desire of His heart (25:8; Eph. 1:5, 9) and the goal of God’s salvation (Exo. 1:11; 40:2-3). The central thought of Exodus is that Christ is the redemption, salvation, and supply of God’s people and the means for them to worship and serve God so that in Him they may be built up with God as a mutual dwelling place.

The tabernacle in Exodus was actually a partial realization of the dream at Bethel, that is, the tabernacle was Bethel, the house of God, God’s dwelling place on earth. With the tabernacle we also have the mingling of divinity with humanity as signified by the acacia wood (humanity) overlaid with gold (divinity). With the tabernacle we also have the offerings signifying Christ as the Lamb of God for our redemption so that we may be qualified to enter into and become part of God’s building—Christ as the way into the Father’s house (John 14:6, 2).

The temple built in the good land of Canaan was the continuation of the tabernacle; the tabernacle, we may say, became the temple, the house of God (1 Kings 6:1).

As God’s house, the temple was the enlargement of the tabernacle (Exo. 26:15-16, 18; 1 Kings 6:2, 20). The temple was founded upon a foundation of stone (vv. 36-37) and was built of stone (transformed humanity), cedar (humanity in resurrection), and fir (humanity through death) overlaid with gold (divinity). Once again we have, in type, the mingling of divinity with humanity for God’s building.

Bethel, the tabernacle, and the temple are all types which have their fulfillment in Christ as revealed in the Gospel of John. John 1:51 is the fulfillment of Bethel; John 1:14 is the fulfillment of the tabernacle; and John 2:19-22 is the fulfillment of the temple. Christ, the Son of Man, is the ladder joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven down to earth for the building of God’s abode. Christ, the Word becoming flesh, is the reality of the tabernacle as God’s building. The principle is the same with the temple. In 1:14 and 2:19-22 Christ Himself, the mingling of God and man in one person, was God’s building. God’s desire, however, is to enlarge this building into a corporate building. For this, Christ, the real tabernacle and the real temple, had to fall into the ground and die as a grain of wheat (12:24) so that, in resurrection, the one grain would be reproduced and multiplied into many grains. These many grains are the many brothers of Christ in chapter twenty and the many abodes in chapter fourteen. The thought here is that Christ, the individual building, passes through death and enters into resurrection in order to produce, even to become, a corporate building. In this way the Father’s house in John 2 becomes the Father’s house in John 14.

It makes no sense, therefore, to teach that the Father’s house in John 14 is heaven or a mansion in heaven with abodes, houses, for believers. If we read John 14 in the light of the divine revelation in the Scriptures concerning God’s dwelling place, we will see that the Father’s house is His corporate dwelling place, the church, the Body of Christ, the house of the living God. This house, this dwelling place of God and man in Christ, is the fulfillment not only of Jacob’s dream but also of the desire of the Father’s heart. The desire of God’s heart cannot be fulfilled by a house in heaven. God’s deep longing can be satisfied only by a house—the Father’s house—built in Christ with the believers in Christ on earth in this age and consummating in the New Jerusalem on the new earth in and for eternity.

Does God Have Two Buildings?

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus uttered the greatest prophecy recorded in the Scriptures: “I will build My church.” As every genuine believer knows, the church that Christ is building is not a physical structure but a spiritual entity. Even the very common definition of the

church as “a body of believers” suggests that the church is composed of persons and thus is a personal building, not a material one.

The concept of the church as a spiritual building pervades the Epistles of Paul. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). “The temple of God is holy, and such are you” (v. 17). Since this building grows, it must be organic: “In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21). This universal building has its local expression: “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit” (v. 22). In view of the abundance of revelation in the New Testament, it cannot reasonably be denied that the church that Christ is building, the church that is the believers in Christ as a holy temple in the Lord, is a personal (composed of persons) and spiritual (in the mingled spirit) entity. This is the divine thought concerning building.

However, the traditional teaching concerning the Father’s house in John 14 speaks of another kind of building, a literal, physical, material building of mansions in the heavens. Some preachers even go so far as to insist that Christ, who was a carpenter, has been building this house up in heaven for centuries and still has not finished this work. If the Father’s house in John 14 refers to a mansion that Christ is building in heaven, then God must have two buildings going on in the universe at the same time—the church on earth and the house in heaven. We know from the Lord’s own word that He is building His church and that this building is taking place with the believers in Christ on the earth. If the house in John 14 is some kind of heavenly mansion that the ascended Christ is building for us, this would mean that in addition to building His church on earth, the house of the living God, He is building another kind of house in heaven. Hence, as some would lead us to believe, Christ is building two houses—one on earth and the other in the heavens. Moreover—and this is ironic—the building of the church on earth is spiritual, whereas the building of the house in heaven is material, for, as is widely supposed, it is built with actual physical materials.

What the advocates of traditional theology are asking us

to believe is that God has both a physical building and a personal building. According to the common view of John 14, the Lord has gone back to heaven to build a physical mansion. This implies that in His heavenly ministry He is building a material house with real gold, pearls, and precious stones and that, in fulfillment of Matthew 16:18, He is also building the church as the house of God on earth. This requires us to believe that God has two buildings. If we are true to the Word of God, we cannot believe such a thing.

The Bible reveals that God has one building, His unique building. In the Old Testament this building was with the children of Israel; in the New Testament this building is with the church as the spiritual continuation of the tabernacle. Today we, the believers in Christ, are God’s building, God’s temple, God’s house. In addition to this building, God does not have another building, a so-called

heavenly mansion. God does not have two buildings. The Father’s house is not an abode in the heavens; it is the very church that Christ is building on earth today.

The Old Creation and the New Creation

If we would have the proper understanding of the Father’s house as the mutual abode built up by Christ in His resurrection life, we need to know the difference, unveiled in the Scriptures, between God’s old creation and His new

creation. The old creation came into being through the speaking of God, the One who “calls the things not being as being” (Rom. 4:17). “By the word of Jehovah the heavens were made, / And all their host, by the breath of His mouth” (Psa. 33:6). “For He spoke, and it was; / He commanded, and it stood” (v. 9). The old creation was not divine, for nothing divine was wrought into it. Although it was created by God, it did not possess the life and nature of God. The new creation is radically different. The new creation is an entity that is saturated and permeated with God’s being for God’s expression. Whereas the old creation does not possess the life and nature of God, the new creation—the church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ—does possess and participate in the divine life and the divine nature.

We need to be impressed with the difference between the producing of the old creation and the producing of the

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new creation. We have pointed out that the old creation, God's original creation, came into being through God's speaking. According to the record of Genesis 1, everything in the old creation was produced by God's speaking. If God wanted any particular thing to spring into existence, He simply had to say the word, and it was so. God's new creation, His second creation, is not brought forth in this way; that is, it does not come into being through God's speaking. The new creation is produced through the death and resurrection of Christ. As part of His work on the cross, the Lord Jesus released the divine life that had been concealed within the shell of His humanity (John 12:24). The divine life released through the Lord's death is the element of the new creation. In and through His resurrection, the Lord Jesus imparted this element into God's chosen and redeemed people, causing them to become God's children, the Lord's brothers, the members of His Body, and the abodes in the Father's house.

Failure to uphold both the distinction between the old creation and the new creation and the distinction between the means of producing the old creation and the new creation results in misunderstanding and confusion with respect to the Father's house in John 14. Sadly, much of the talk about the Father's house in John 14 exhibits either ignorance of or confusion concerning the two creations of God. The traditional view of John 14 is that Christ is in heaven building a house with many abodes and that this building work has been taking place for centuries, since the time of His ascension. This notion is contrary to the principle of God's creation, which is to bring things into being by speaking. As commonly presented in books and sermons, the Father's house as our abode in heaven is part of God's creation. Since the house is part of creation, there would be no need for Christ to build it. If the Lord wanted a so-called heavenly mansion as a dwelling place, He would simply need to speak and this dwelling place would immediately be produced. In other words, if God wanted a heavenly mansion, He would simply create it by speaking, just as He created everything else; there would be no need for His Son to spend centuries building it. Nevertheless, believers are being told again and again that the house in the heavens is still under construction, that Christ is still working to build the various villas, suites, and luxurious homes that we will supposedly inhabit forever. This notion is altogether contrary to the truth. The Lord is not adding to His original creation, and He is not remodeling it. Rather, based on His redemption and in His resurrection, He is continuing His unique work of building up the church as the house of the living God, the Body of Christ, a marvelous divine-human organism that will consummate in a corporate person—the New Jerusalem. Concerning this, the following is worthy of attention:

Do you think that God does not have a complete dwelling

place in the heavens and that it is necessary for the Lord Jesus to finish building Him one there? Do you believe that while the Lord is building the church on earth, He is also building a heavenly mansion for the Father? God's creation was completed long ago. This means that the heavens also were completed and that there is no need for additional building in the heavens. However, it is still necessary for the church, God's chosen people, to be built up. The Lord Jesus died for them and was raised up with them. Now based on His death and resurrection, He is working on them to build them up into one Body, and this Body is the church, the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). Every member of the church is an abode for God to dwell in....Praise the Lord that we all are God's abodes! We all are members of the Body of Christ, and this Body is God's house. (Lee, *Fulfillment* 349)

The Divine and Mystical Realm

The writings of the apostle John are a revelation of divine things. In his Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation John writes of things that are divine and mysterious, of things that are divine and mystical. The thought in John's writings is absolutely divine and also mysterious. *Divine* denotes something that concerns God or that belongs to God. All the things concerning God and all the things belonging to God are divine, and anything divine is mysterious. In order to have a spiritual (vs. natural) understanding of the divine, mysterious, and mystical things in the writings of John, we need to have these things revealed to us in spirit. We need a revelation of such divine things, not a revelation apart from the Word of God but a revelation, an unveiling, of what is revealed in the Word (Eph. 1:17-18). Only through revelation can the divine things in John's writings be made known to us.

We need to keep this in mind whenever we approach the Gospel of John, especially chapter fourteen. If we exercise our natural human mind to interpret this chapter, we will fall into error, reducing divine and mystical things to physical things—the very thing that happens when the Father's house with its abodes is viewed as a heavenly mansion constructed with physical materials.

In its entirety the Gospel of John is divine and mystical and must be read as such (Lee, *Divine* 23-24, 40-44). For example, the record of Christ's incarnation in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke is a physical record telling us that the Lord was born of a virgin and laid in a manger, that the shepherds and the magi visited Him, that He was taken from Israel to Egypt, and that He grew up in Nazareth. The record in John is not physical but mystical: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (1:1, 14). This way of speaking about Christ's incarnation is divine, mysterious, and mystical. The

principle is the same with numerous other points. Life being in the Word and this life being light (v. 4), the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world (v. 29), the believers becoming stones (v. 42), the Son of Man as the ladder (v. 51), regeneration in the human spirit (3:6), the Son of Man as the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent (v. 14), a fountain of water gushing up into eternal life (4:14)—all these matters are mystical.

The Gospel of John is a marvelous revelation not only of mysterious, divine things but also of the divine and mystical realm. The Triune God—the eternal, self-existing, ever-existing, co-existing, and coinhering Father, Son, and Spirit—is Himself a divine and mystical realm, and He desires to bring us, in Christ, into Himself. Therefore, in His economy the Triune God, without jeopardizing His eternal and immutable Godhead, has passed through a process in Christ to become the consummated Spirit and pneumatic Christ into whom we may enter by believing into Christ. In this way we may enter into, live in, and become a part of the divine and mystical realm, being built up with the processed and consummated Triune God into a single organic entity. In John 15 this entity is the true vine; in John 14 it is the Father’s house.

John 14 is an unveiling of divine and mystical things in the divine and mystical realm. To believe into Christ (v. 1) is mystical, for *into* implies a spiritual and organic union with the pneumatic Christ (1 Cor. 6:17). The Father’s house is not a physical structure but the house of God, the corporate Body of Christ in resurrection (John 14:2; 2:16, 21). This is mystical. The many abodes (14:2) are not villas in heaven but the believers in Christ as the members of the Body of Christ. This surely is mystical. The Lord’s word about His going and coming (v. 3) is a mystical way of speaking about His death and resurrection. The Lord said that He would receive us to Himself (v. 3); this is mystical. We will be with the resurrected Christ where He is—in the Father (v. 3); this is mystical. Another mystical matter is the Lord’s relationship with the Father: “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me” (v. 11). The revelation that “He”—the Spirit of reality—is “I”—Christ Himself in resurrection (vv. 17-18) is not only spiritual but also mystical. Verse 20 says, “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in

Me, and I in you.” “This refers to the divine and mystical realm where not only the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are but also where the believers are” (Lee, *Divine* 44).

Since the writings of John are divine and mystical, since the Gospel of John is divine and mystical, and since chapter fourteen of John is divine and mystical, the Father’s house with its many abodes must be a divine and mystical reality. The Father’s house is not heaven or a dwelling place in heaven. The Father’s house is a divine and mystical realm where, in Christ, the believers dwell in God and God dwells in the believers. This mutual abode in the divine and mystical realm is the Father’s house to which we have been brought by Christ as the unique way and in which we are being built up in the resurrected Christ as the unique element.

The Divine-human Incorporation

Being divine and mystical, the Father’s house in John 14 is also an incorporation, a divine-human incorporation. Since *incorporation* may appear to many to be an unusual term to use for interpreting the Word of God, we need to define it and distinguish it from *corporation*. The two words are closely related, but there is nonetheless a significant difference between them. A *corporation* is a group of people combined or associated into one body, usually for the purposes of business or government. An *incorporation* is a matter of union and intimate mingling. To *incorporate* is to unite intimately, to blend, combine, or mingle thoroughly into a whole. *Incorporation* denotes both an act of incorporating and the state of being incorporated.

The issue of Christ being glorified by the Father with the divine glory (Luke 24:26; John 12:23-24; 13:31-32; 17:1; Acts 3:13) is an incorporation (John 14:20, 2). Whereas *union* concerns our oneness in life with the Lord and *mingling* is related to the divine and human natures, *incorporation* is a matter of persons in a relationship of coinherence, that is, of persons dwelling in one another. *Union* and *mingling* refer to our relationship with the Lord not in our person but in life and nature (Lee, *Issue* 40-41). It is not humanly possible for one person to be in another person. However, what is impossible with man in the physical realm is possible with God in

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the divine and mystical realm. In this realm we, the believers, dwell in the Triune God, and the Triune God dwells in us. This is a matter of incorporation, of coinherence, of persons dwelling in one another. The coinherence that makes possible the divine-human incorporation is revealed in John 14:20 and 17. If we see this crucial matter of coinherence, we will realize why we use the word *incorporation*, which implies an intimate union and which, in our usage, conveys the idea of coinherence and the incorporation produced by it.

John 14 is an unveiling both of the divine incorporation and of the divine-human incorporation. Verses 10 and 11 indicate that the Triune God Himself is an incorporation, for the three of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—dwell in one another and work together as one. This indicates that the coexisting and coinhering Triune God is an incorporation, a divine incorporation. However, the incorporation in John 14 is not merely a divine incorporation; it is also a divine-human incorporation that includes not only the Triune God but also all the believers who, in Christ and through Christ, have been brought into God. Let us read verse 20 again in this light: “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in Christ: this is the divine incorporation. In Christ we are in the Father, and in Christ the Father is in us: this is the divine-human incorporation. Through Christ’s incarnation God has been brought into humanity, and through Christ’s death and resurrection humanity has been brought into God. Now we are not only one with God in life and mingled with Him in our nature; we also coinhere with Him in our person. We actually dwell in Him, and He actually dwells in us—this is the divine-human incorporation.

In John 15 this divine-human incorporation is signified by the Son’s vine; in John 14 this divine-human incorporation is signified by the Father’s house. In the Father’s house and as part of the Father’s house, we make our abode in God, and God makes His abode with us (vv. 2, 23). To teach that the Father’s house in John 14 is heaven or a mansion in heaven nullifies the divinely revealed truth concerning the divine-human incorporation. Under the influence of centuries of religious tradition and aberrant teaching, believers may want to dwell in a mansion in heaven physically understood. However, God the Father desires to dwell with us in His house—a mutual abode, a divine-human incorporation of coinhering persons—divinely disclosed and mystically understood.

The Context of John 14—17

This understanding of the Father’s house comports with the context of chapters fourteen through seventeen. In this unit of four chapters, the Lord Jesus first, in chapters

fourteen through sixteen, gave a message to His disciples and then, in chapter seventeen, offered to the Father a prayer related to His glorification and to the oneness of the believers in the Triune God. For our present purpose, we will focus our attention on the connection between the house in chapter fourteen and the vine in chapter fifteen and the oneness in chapter seventeen.

The house in chapter fourteen becomes the vine in chapter fifteen. John 14:2 and 23 speak of abodes in the house, and 15:4, of abiding in the vine, indicating that the vine is the definition and continuation of the house. The Father’s house with its many abodes is the Son’s spreading vine with its many branches. The house has many abodes, many dwelling places, and the vine has many branches. Actually, the branches in the vine are the abodes in the house.

We need to be enlightened to see that when we believed into Christ, receiving Him as the eternal life by which we were regenerated, born of God in our spirit, we became the abodes in the Father’s house and the branches in the Son’s vine. Now we dwell in the house by abiding in the vine. Furthermore, when we experientially abide in Christ as the vine, then He experientially abides in us. This is coinherence—persons dwelling in one another. From this we see that, like the Father’s house, the vine is the divine-human incorporation. Both the house and the vine denote the same thing—the divine-human incorporation as the mutual abode for God and His redeemed and regenerated people.

The house in chapter fourteen is also the oneness in chapter seventeen. In 14:3 the Lord Jesus said, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be.” The Lord’s going through His redemptive death to remove the barriers between us and God and to prepare a place, a standing, for us in God and His coming in resurrection as the Spirit of reality are for a specific purpose—that where He is we also may be. Since He is in the Father, we also, in virtue of being in Christ, will also be in the Father. To be in the Father is to be in the Father’s house, and to be in the Father’s house is to be in the oneness revealed in chapter seventeen. In 17:21 the Lord prayed, “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us.” This oneness is the oneness of coinherence, the oneness in the divine-human incorporation, for it is the enlargement of the oneness of the Triune God. As this verse reveals, the believers are to be one even as the Father and the Son are one, that is, one by living in the divine-human incorporation. In verse 24 the Lord continued His prayer, saying, “Father, concerning that which You have given Me, I desire that they also may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” In chapter

fourteen being where Christ the Son is, is a matter of being in the Father and in the Father's house. In chapter seventeen being where Christ the Son is, is a matter of being in the Father and in the oneness of the Father and the Son, the coinhering oneness of the three of the Divine Trinity. This is a strong connection between chapter fourteen and chapter seventeen and a strong indication that to be in the Father's house is to be in the divine oneness. In fact, just as the house is the vine, the house is also the divine oneness. To be in the Father's house is to be in the Son's vine and in the oneness of the divine-human incorporation.

If we see this, we will realize that the house in John 14 cannot be heaven or an abode in heaven. To bring the thought of a heavenly mansion into John 14 is to bring in a foreign element, an element incompatible with the context of chapters fourteen through seventeen. Actually, to bring in this foreign element is to add leaven to the fine flour of the truth concerning the house, the vine, and the oneness.

The Basic Thought of the Gospel of John

The basic thought of the Gospel of John is that of God in Christ coming into man through incarnation and of man in Christ being brought into God through crucifixion and resurrection for the building up of a mutual abode for the Triune God and His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people. This Gospel shows us how God comes into man and brings man into God. By His coming Christ brought the Triune God into humanity. Then He lived as a man on earth, living the divine life in the human life for the expression of the Father. By His going through death and resurrection, He brought man into God, and in so doing He caused man to be one with God and enabled man to live in God. Therefore, in simple terms, the Gospel of John is concerned with the coming and going of Christ for the building up of God's dwelling place, signified by the Father's house.

This thought is embodied in the very structure of the book. The Gospel of John is divided into two main sections. The first section consists of chapters one through twelve, the second section consists of chapters fourteen through twenty-one, and chapter thirteen is a turning point that divides the Gospel of John into these

two parts. John 13:1 indicates that a great turn was about to take place: "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost." The first section reveals that Christ came from with the Father through incarnation to bring God into man, and the second section reveals that Christ went to the Father through death and resurrection to bring man into God. In the second section chapter fourteen is of special importance, revealing that Christ, who coinheres with the Father, was about to go through death and resurrection to be the way for us to come into God and to be where He is—in the Father.

Significantly, in both sections of John's Gospel there is a clear mention of the Father's house. In chapter two the Father's house was the incarnated Christ, the Word who became flesh and tabernacled among us. In chapter fourteen the Father's house is no longer Christ alone in His incarnation but Christ in His resurrection with all His believers, the members of His mystical Body, as the many abodes. Now in the Father's house every believer in Christ not only has a place but is a place; every believer not only has an abode but is an abode.

THE BASIC THOUGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS THAT OF GOD IN CHRIST COMING INTO MAN THROUGH INCARNATION AND OF MAN IN CHRIST BEING BROUGHT INTO GOD THROUGH CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION FOR THE BUILDING UP OF A MUTUAL ABODE FOR THE TRIUNE GOD AND HIS CHOSEN, REDEEMED, AND REGENERATED PEOPLE.



Contrary to the traditional understanding of John 14, Christ's coming and going are matters not of places but of persons. Of course, Christ came into the world, but His goal was not to come to earth as a place but to come to persons, to human beings, on the earth. He was therefore called Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). In the same principle, Christ's going was not to bring us to a place but to bring us to a person, God the Father. We need to abandon any preoccupation with place and pay attention to the divine emphasis on person. It was not, and is not, the Lord's intention to bring us to another place, a better place, called heaven. Instead, His intention was, and still is, to bring us into a person, the Father. Now we may be with Him where He is—in the Father. Since the Lord is in the Father and we are in Him, spontaneously we also are in the Father, and by being in the Father we are in the Father's house and we even are abodes in this mutual dwelling place of God and man in Christ.

The thought of going to heaven, especially as it is habitually presented in messages and writings on John 14, is inconsistent with the basic thought of the Gospel of John and does not comport with the Gospel of John as a whole. Applying Isaiah 55:8-9, we may say that concerning this chapter in the Gospel of John, the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, for in this matter, as in so many others, as "the heavens are higher than the earth" so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts. In John 14 there is no thought concerning believers going to heaven to live in a mansion after they die. This thought has been injected—as leaven—into the fine meal of this chapter, and now this leaven must be purged away and the pure truth must be presented to the people of God.

It is not the Lord's intention to prepare a place for us in heaven and then one day to bring us there. This may be the thought of the natural man or of the religious man, but it is not the thought of God. God's thought is in Christ to come into us and in Christ to bring us into Himself so that we and the Triune God may have a mutual abode, with God dwelling in us and us dwelling in God. This is the basic thought of the Gospel of John, of the entire New Testament, and of the whole Bible.

May God's redeemed and regenerated people everywhere receive the mercy and grace to be willing to forsake traditional, leavened doctrine and accept the divine revelation concerning the Father's house with its many abodes. This house is not heaven—it is the church as the house of the living God and the Body of Christ. We thank the Lord for going through death and resurrection to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. This marvelous mutual abode, not heaven or a mansion in heaven, is our home, our dwelling place. LFC

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