

Crucial Points

of Truth in John 14

by Ron Kangas

John 14 may be the most misunderstood, misconstrued, misrepresented, and misapplied chapter in the New Testament. It is common, virtually universal, for preachers, commentators, expositors, and theologians to make egregious blunders in their reading of this chapter, falling into errors such as supposing that the Father's house is heaven or neglecting truths such as the divine and mystical realm, the divine-human incorporation, the mutual abode, and the first Comforter becoming through death and resurrection "another Comforter." Thus, to a very great extent, this portion of the Word is closed, and millions of believers are ignorant of its central concepts and profound revelations.

There are at least four primary factors that have given rise to this deplorable situation. The first is exposed through Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3:14 and 15:

Their thoughts were hardened; for until the present day the same veil remains at the reading of the old covenant, it not being unveiled to them that the veil is being done away with in Christ. Indeed unto this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

When the ancient religionists read the Scriptures, something within them—a cognitive, cultural, or psychological veil upon their heart—hindered them from understanding the divine revelation. In principle, there are many kinds of veils covering the hearts of believers today: the veil of tradition, the veil of orthodox yet incomplete teachings, the veil of personal or national philosophy, the veil of natural concepts, the veil of subjectivity. Only when the heart turns to the Lord, who is the Spirit in the believers' regenerated spirit, can the veil be taken away (vv. 16-18). The second factor—the blinding activities of Satan, God's enemy—is closely related to the first. "The god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them" (4:4). To be sure,

Paul is referring explicitly to the condition of those who are perishing; however, in reality and practicality, the thoughts of believers may be blinded as they are reading, studying, and searching the Scriptures, especially those portions of the Word that reveal the economy of God for the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God. Along with the factor of thoughts blinded by the enemy, we may have the factor of a closed mind, a natural mind that, in and of itself, cannot be open without prejudice to God's thoughts expressed in His Word. Evidence of this is found in Luke 24:44 and 45:

He said to them, These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled. Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures.¹

This indicates that to understand the Scriptures, especially a deep chapter like John 14, it is not sufficient to have a sharp or educated mind, for our mind must be opened by the Lord Spirit through His enlightening.² Finally, there is the failure to pray, as the apostle Paul did, for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. In Ephesians 1:17-18 Paul prayed that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened." Here we have three elements: revelation (the removal of the veil covering the heart), light, and sight, all of which are indispensable in knowing the Bible in general and John 14 in particular.

Veils upon the heart, the blinding work of the god of this age, a mind closed to divine truth, and the lack of a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of the Triune God—these are factors that keep the people of God from rightly understanding the Word of God. As we attempt to identify crucial truths in John 14—the object

of this preliminary study of the matter—we desperately need to turn our heart to the Lord, seek to be delivered from blinded thoughts, ask the resurrected Christ to open our mind to understand the Scriptures, and pray that our regenerated human spirit, now mingled with the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; 15:45), will become, through the Father of glory, a spirit of wisdom and revelation. If our inner being is adjusted and uplifted in this way by God’s grace and if we are willing to humble ourselves before the Lord and His Word, we may be ready, in Him, to reconsider John 14, reading it as if for the first time and seeking to know the crucial divine truths revealed there.

It is no exaggeration to say that a thorough examination of John 14 will require years of earnest and careful study combined with prayer and seeking of the Lord. My aim in this essay is therefore modest—to set forth briefly some of the crucial truths in John 14 that call for reconsideration before the Lord, hoping that, here and there, at least some serious believers will embark upon such a study for their own spiritual development and, much more, for the carrying out of the divine economy unto the glory of God.³

Believing into God and into the Son of God

In verse 1 the Lord Jesus said, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe into God, believe also into Me.” The preposition *into* is of great importance. We should not only believe *that* certain matters are true or believe the Lord and believe *in* Him—we should also believe *into* God and believe *into* the Son of God. We certainly need to believe that certain statements or propositions are true, and John wrote his Gospel specifically for this purpose. “These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name” (20:31). If we would have eternal life, the uncreated life of God, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the One appointed and anointed by God to fulfill His purpose, and we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the embodiment and expression of God the Father.

The Christ is the title of the Lord according to His office, His mission. *The Son of God* is His title according to His person. His person is a matter of God’s life, and His mission is a matter of God’s work. He is the Son of God to be the Christ of God. (Recovery Version, John 20:31, note 1)

Other instances of believing can readily be found in the Gospel of John: “We have believed...that You are the Holy One of God” (6:69); “Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins” (8:24); “I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God” (11:27); “That they may believe that You have sent Me” (v. 42); “From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe that I am” (13:19); “Do you not believe that

I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?” (14:10); “You have...believed that I came forth from God” (16:27); “By this we believe that You came forth from God” (v. 30); “They have believed that You sent Me” (17:8); “That the world may believe that You have sent Me” (v. 21). In addition to believing that various things are true, we need to believe the Lord Jesus and believe in Him and in His name: “Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him” (8:31); “You do not believe Me” (v. 45); “Since I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” (v. 46); “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me” (10:37); “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me” (14:11); “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23).

Although these modes of believing are necessary, John places particular emphasis on what he calls believing *into*. His word regarding this in 14:1 is not the first occurrence of this expression. The children of God are those who have believed into the Lord’s name (1:12). Everyone who believes into Him, not merely believes Him or believes in Him, has eternal life (3:15-16); “He who believes

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into Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God” (v. 18); “He who believes into the Son has eternal life” (v. 36); and those who believe “into” Him receive the Spirit (7:39). Since the Son of God is the light (1:4; 8:12), He commands us to believe into the light: “While you have the light, believe into the light, so that you may become sons of light” (12:36). The Lord goes on to speak of the intrinsic relationship between believing into Him and into the Father who sent Him: “Jesus cried out and said, He who believes into Me does not believe into Me, but into Him who sent Me” (v. 44). As the Lord was preparing the disciples for His going through death and His coming to them in resurrection, He charged them to believe into God and to believe also into Him, and surely this believing into is of great significance.

It cannot reasonably be disputed that believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and believing Him and in Him are absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, believing into God and into the Son of God are of particularly crucial

importance. As the preposition *into* suggests, to believe into God the Father and also into the Son is to enter into a spiritual and organic union with God in Christ. It is not simply to believe objectively that something is true or to believe objectively in a person; it is to believe both objectively and subjectively with the result that we are actually in union with the Triune God.⁴ As every reader of the Gospel of John knows, we have eternal life by believing into the Son of God. “Everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life” (3:15). Obviously, the text says “into Him” rather than “in Him.”

Believing into the Lord is not the same as believing Him (6:30). To believe Him is to believe that He is true and real, but to believe into Him is to receive Him and be united with Him as one. The former is to acknowledge a fact objectively; the latter is to receive a life subjectively. (Recovery Version, 3:16, note 2)

According to the context of chapter 14, believing into God and into the Son of God is essential to our being in our place in the Father’s house (vv. 2-3), the church, and to the reality of the believers being in the Son, who is in the Father (v. 20).

The truth and experience of believing into Christ subjectively in addition to believing Him objectively is strengthened and enriched by Paul’s word in Philippians 1:29: “To you it has been graciously granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe into Him but also to suffer on His behalf.” Because Paul had believed into Christ and had become a man in Christ, he was dynamically empowered in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; 12:2; Phil. 4:13). Believing into Christ “implies that the believer has an organic union with Christ through believing into Him. To believe into Christ is to have our being merged into His that we two may be one organically” (Recovery Version, Phil. 1:29, note 1). Certain objective theologians might protest that such an understanding of believing into Christ is mystical. Yes, it is mystical in the proper sense of the divine revelation in the writings of John and the Epistles of Paul. Others might remark that this emphasis on oneness with Christ through believing into Him is experiential. Yes, it is experiential, in keeping with God’s revelation in the Word regarding His desire, in Christ, to make Himself one with the believers and to make the believers one with Him. Not everything needs to remain objective, for there is a divine reality—the Triune God embodied in Christ the Son of God—for us, through believing, to enter into and experience and enjoy subjectively. Believing into God and also into the Son of God affects our heart, our inner being, in such a way that we are not troubled but instead are filled with peace, joy, and love.

The Divine and Mystical Realm

When we believe into God by believing into the Son of

God (John 3:15-16), we enter into another realm—the divine and mystical realm—which is transcendent and profoundly different from the physical realm in which we outwardly live our human life day by day.⁵ The realm about which I am speaking is divine because it is of God, related to God, and actually is God, and it is mystical because it is invisible, mysterious, and universal. John 14 unveils the fact that the divine and mystical realm is the realm of the Triune God.⁶ The Triune God, who is essentially and eternally triune in His Godhead, is Himself a divine and mystical realm (vv. 10-11). The three of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are self-existing, ever-existing, co-existing, and coinhering and as such are a divine and mystical realm. The Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is the Father’s embodiment and expression, forming a divine and mystical realm.

It is the desire of God’s heart to bring His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people into the divine and mystical realm, and there to live with them a life of mutual abiding as the New Jerusalem for eternity (John 14:4-5; Rev. 21:2, 9-10). The Lord Jesus prayed for this prior to His crucifixion: “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us” (John 17:21). The Lord went on to pray, “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, which You have given Me” (v. 24). The Triune God is Himself a divine and mystical realm, and He desires to bring us, in Christ, into Himself as such a realm. However, it is not possible for redeemed and regenerated human beings, not even glorified believers, to enter into the Godhead and dwell there, for God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). How then can we be where the Son is (in the Father, John 14:20)? This is possible only in God’s economy, which involves the death and resurrection of the Son, who is the way into God and who prepares a place for us in God (vv. 2-3). In the divine economy the Triune God, without jeopardizing His eternal and immutable Godhead, has passed through a process in Christ to become the pneumatic Christ, the consummated Spirit, into whom we may enter by believing into Christ. In this way we may, according to God’s economy, enter into, live in, and actually become a part not of the divine and mystical realm that God is in His Godhead but of the divine and mystical realm of the processed and consummated Triune God in His economy. The entire matter is economical and thus does not threaten or compromise the unchanging nature of God.

The divine and mystical realm into which we may enter by believing into God and into the Son of God is not the divine and mystical realm of the eternal Godhead; rather, it is the divine and mystical realm of the resurrected, pneumatic Christ as the consummated, compound Spirit (vv. 16-20). This involves the Son’s going through death and

then coming to us as the Spirit of reality so that He may be in us and we may be where He is. This is the fulfillment of His word: “So that where I am you also may be” (v. 3). Because we are in Christ the Son, who is in the Father, we are also in the Father through our being in the Son. To be here is to be in the divine and mystical realm of the crucified and resurrected Christ as the life-giving, compound Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45).

The expression *compound Spirit* denotes the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19) as the all-inclusive Spirit, referred to in the Gospel of John simply as *the Spirit* (7:39). The compound Spirit is typified by the compound ointment with its various elements described in Exodus 30:22-33. With the Triune God Himself as a divine and mystical realm, there is a single element—divinity—but in the divine and mystical realm of the compound Spirit there are several elements, all of which are blessings to us. In this divine and mystical realm, we have not only divinity but also the humanity of Christ, the death of Christ with its effectiveness, and the resurrection of Christ with its power. We have God, signified by the olive oil (v. 24; 1 Tim. 1:17). We have the Triune God in His economy, signified by the three complete units of measure of the four spices (Exo. 30:23-24). We have the humanity of Jesus, signified by the four spices of the plant life (vv. 23-24; 1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 16:7). We have the mingling of divinity with humanity, typified by the blending of the olive oil with the four spices (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). We have the precious death of Christ, signified by the flowing myrrh (Exo. 30:23). We have the sweetness and effectiveness of the death of Christ, signified by the fragrant cinnamon (v. 23). We have the precious resurrection, signified by the fragrant calamus (v. 23). We have the repelling power of Christ’s resurrection, signified by the cassia (v. 24). This is a picture, in typology, of the Spirit of Jesus Christ with its bountiful supply. Now, as believers, this Spirit is in us (1 John 2:27), and we are in this Spirit as a realm in which we may live and move and have our being (Col. 2:6; Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16). As John 14 reveals, Christ the Son is the way into the divine and mystical realm, and now in Him as the Spirit of reality we are in this realm.

In the divine and mystical realm of the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Christ, the riches are inexhaustible and the supply is bountiful (Eph. 3:8). As we live in this realm, we receive the Spirit as the unique, all-inclusive blessing (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14), and we receive the transmission of the ascended Christ with the supply of His heavenly ministry (Eph. 1:22; Heb. 8:2). Here we experience God’s organic salvation—His salvation in life with sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification. Here we live in the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine species (John 3:3, 5), we live a spontaneous and

effortless Christian life according to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that is, the automatic function of the law of the divine life (Rom. 8:2), and we live a life of truthfulness as the expression of the revealed divine reality—the Spirit (1 John 5:6). And here we are mingled with the processed and consummated Triune God for the keeping of the unique oneness, the oneness among the Divine Trinity (John 17:21, 23; Eph. 4:3).

Beginning with the divine revelation of the divine and mystical realm in John 14, we may trace the development of this revelation throughout the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of Paul and John, until we arrive at the consummation with the New Jerusalem, where, in and as a corporate person united, mingled, and incorporated with the processed and consummated Triune God, we will dwell eternally. John 14, therefore, points us to Revelation 21.

The Father’s House with the Many Abodes

In My Father’s house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

In the divine economy the Triune God, without jeopardizing His eternal and immutable Godhead, has passed through a process in Christ to become the pneumatic Christ, the consummated Spirit, into whom we may enter by believing into Christ.

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. (John 14:2-3)

These verses are, perhaps, the most misunderstood verses in the Scriptures. The common view is that the Father’s house is heaven and that the abodes (or “mansions”) are private dwelling places in heaven, designed by the Lord to fulfill the desire of each believer. It is alleged that, after His ascension, “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” (Bennett 103).⁷ A note in The MacArthur Study Bible says, “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...refers to the rapture of the saints at the end of the age when Christ returns” (1613). These quotations are representative samples of the erroneous teachings associated with these two verses. The Father’s house is not heaven, the many abodes are not dwelling places in heaven, and the Lord’s coming does not refer to the rapture.⁸

My Father's house. The notion of going to heaven and spending eternity there in a custom-built, celestial “mansion” is inconsistent with the basic thought of the Gospel of John and with the central concept of John 14. The Gospel of John speaks of the coming and going of Christ for the accomplishment of God’s purpose to have a dwelling place in and with His redeemed people. Thus, this Gospel reveals Christ’s coming to humankind in His incarnation and His going to God the Father through death and resurrection in order to bring God into His chosen and redeemed believers and to bring them into God for the producing of a mutual dwelling place—the church as the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem—for the Triune God and the believers in Christ. Therefore, the basic thought of the Gospel of John is that of God in Christ coming into man through incarnation and of redeemed man in Christ being brought into God through Christ’s death and in His resurrection for the producing and building up of the Father’s house, a mutual dwelling place, or abode, for the Triune God and His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people. In this mutual abode, as the Lord Jesus says in John 15, we abide in Him, and He abides in us. From this we see that the Gospel of John is concerned with the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ for the building up of a mutual dwelling place, signified by the Father’s house in John 14.

No matter what the popular interpretation of John 14 may be, in this chapter there is no thought of the believers going to heaven in order to live in a heavenly abode which is supposed to be currently under construction. This concept, which is often injected into the text by preachers and expositors, has no basis in truth. The intention of the Lord Jesus in John 14 was not to prepare a place for us in heaven and then eventually take us there. This may be a notion generated by the natural, religious mind, but it is not the divine concept.

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 in verse 2 signifies a spiritual organism—the church, which is the house of the living God and the Body of Christ, as a mutual abode for the Triune God and the believers in Christ. God’s eternal intention, according to the desire of His heart, is, in Christ and based on His redemption and the processes in the divine economy, to come into us, making Himself one with us, and, in Christ, to bring us into Himself, making us one with Him, so that He and we may have a mutual dwelling place, a mutual abode with the Triune God dwelling in us and with us dwelling in the Triune God. This is the central and controlling divine concept in John 14.

Many abodes. In the Father’s house—that is, in the church as the house of the living God—there are many abodes, or dwelling places. To use the word *mansions* rather than

abodes in translating John 14:2 is misleading, to say the least. The same Greek word appears in singular number in verse 23, where the Lord Jesus tells us that the Father and the Son will come to the one who loves the Lord and keeps His word and make an abode with that one. This reveals that the result of the gracious visitation of the Father and the Son with the believer is the producing of an abode, a dwelling place. The many abodes in verse 2 and the abode in verse 23 are spiritual, organic dwelling places, not, as is commonly supposed, literal physical houses or apartments in heaven. If we consider these verses together in relation to the Father’s house as a corporate, organic, spiritual dwelling place, we will see that the many abodes in the Father’s house are not places but persons, the believers in Christ. In the Father’s house, the church as the Body of Christ, each believer, every member, is an abode.

We need to be impressed with the fact that the Father’s house with its many abodes is a mutual dwelling place. On the one hand, in Christ we dwell in God as our abode; on the other hand, in Christ God dwells in us as His abode. The abodes in the house, therefore, are dwelling places where we abide in God and God abides in us. This should help us to appreciate and understand the Lord’s word in 15:4: “Abide in Me and I in you.” Here *abide* is the verbal form of *abode*. Because Christ is our abode, we abide in Him, and because we are His abode, He abides in us. Hence, the thought in John 14 is not that we will be taken to a material heaven and dwell there in physical houses; the thought is that, through Christ as the unique way to the Father, we are brought into God the Father so that, in Christ, we may dwell in Him, even as the Father, in Christ, dwells in us. Sadly, however, under the influence of traditional theology, countless believers cherish the thought of dwelling in a heavenly mansion instead of living in a mutual abode with the Triune God in Christ.

I go to prepare a place for you. In verses 2 and 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.” The Lord’s going here refers to His dying to redeem us to God and to remove all the barriers between us and God so that in the Son we may be in the Father. When the Lord Jesus said that He would go and prepare a place for us, He was speaking not of a place in heaven but of a place in God. By going away through death and then entering into His resurrection, the Lord prepared a place in God the Father. As He Himself stated explicitly, He is in God the Father (vv. 10-11) and is also the way to God the Father (v. 6). His desire is that we too would be in the Father and thus be where He Himself is (17:21). This means that by Christ’s going through death and resurrection, we have been brought, in the Son, into God the Father and have a standing in Him. This is why Paul could speak of a local church, the church of the Thessalonians, as being in God the Father (1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1).

The Lord's commission as the Christ was not to come down from heaven and then return to heaven and build a place for us there in order to take us to our home in heaven. This common religious understanding is drastically at variance with the divinely revealed truth in the Gospel of John. The truth is that the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, came from God the Father through incarnation and went back to the Father through death and resurrection in order to bring us to the Father and even into the Father and thus into the Father's house. The Lord is not laboring in heaven as a carpenter (as some suggest) to construct a physical house or apartment for us. Through His death and in His resurrection He has already prepared a place for us in the Father's house, the church. His desire concerning us is that our spiritual eyes would now be opened and enlightened to see what He has done, where He is, and where and what we are in Him.

I am coming again and will receive you to Myself. The Lord uttered these words in John 14:3. In verse 28 He said, "You have heard that I said to you, I am going away and I am coming to you." Contrary to what is taught by some, this coming is not the Lord's coming again at the end of the age, as mentioned in Revelation 22:7, 12, and 20. In the opinion of John MacArthur, the Lord's departure would be for the believers' 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" (1613).⁹ The words *I am coming again* do not in any way refer to the rapture; these words refer to Christ's coming in His resurrection to indwell His disciples (John 14:17, 20).

The Lord Jesus had come through incarnation to be among His disciples, but since He was in the flesh, He was not able to enter into them and dwell in them. In order for this to be possible, He had to go away in the sense of passing through His redemptive, reconciling, barrier-removing death and then come to His disciples in His resurrection as the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit. In verse 18 the Lord said, "I am coming to you." This promise was fulfilled on the day of His resurrection (20:19-22), when He came to the disciples and breathed, imparted, Himself into them as the Spirit. The Christ who was with the disciples in His incarnation passed through death and entered into resurrection so that He could become the pneumatic Christ, the Spirit of reality, to dwell not merely with the disciples but in them. Therefore, in John 14 *I am coming again* in verse 3 and *I am coming* in verses 18 and 28 do not speak of the Lord's coming again to rapture the saints or to bring in the kingdom but of His coming in resurrection as the Spirit of reality to enter into the disciples and then live in them.

At this juncture I wish to point out that contrary to the traditional understanding of John 14, Christ's coming and

going are matters not of places but of persons. To be sure, through incarnation the Lord Jesus came into the world, but His purpose was not simply to come to earth as a physical place but to come to persons, His chosen ones on earth. In the same principle, His going through death and resurrection was not to bring His believers to a place but to bring them to a person, God the Father. Therefore, in faithfulness to the written divine revelation in John 14, we should abandon the preference for and preoccupation with place (heaven) and the superstitious notion of literal compartments in the Father's house regarded as heaven, and concentrate on the most wonderful person—God Himself. Is God not immeasurably more important than a physical place designed and built for our comfort and delight? It is certainly not the intention of the Lord Jesus to bring us to a better place called heaven. Much to the contrary, His intention in John 14 was (and still is) to bring us to and into a person, God the Father, in whom we will dwell eternally.

Where I am you also may be. The Lord's word in verse 3 concerning this does not mean that He is in heaven and

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that we will be with Him in heaven where He is. The Son is in the Father, and it is the Son's desire, as an expression of the Father's will and good pleasure, that we would be with Him where He Himself is—in the Father. Through His death and resurrection, Christ has brought His believers into Himself. Since He is in the Father and we are in Him, we also are in the Father by being in Him. Now, because we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we may be with Him where He is, and He is in the Father.

We need to be deeply impressed with the fact that because the Lord is in the Father and because we are in Christ the Lord, we are in the Father, a person, not a place. Through the Son as the way, we are now in the Father (v. 6). Thus, where He is, we also are. Moreover, through being in the Father by being in the Son, who is in the Father, we are in the Father's house, in His living, organic, spiritual dwelling place, and we have even become abodes in this mutual dwelling place of the Triune God and the redeemed and regenerated tripartite man in Christ. This is the Father's house with the many abodes, and this is where the Son is and where we are also.

The Divine-human Incorporation

The Lord's word in John 14 speaks, first, of the divine incorporation (vv. 10-11) and then of the divine-human incorporation (v. 20), which, in God's economy, is the enlargement of the divine incorporation, because it includes humanity as well as divinity.

Since *incorporation* is a rather unusual word to use with respect to John 14, it is important to define it and distinguish it from *corporation*. Although these two words are closely related, there is a significant difference between them. A *corporation* is a group of people combined or associated together in 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 the act of incorporating and the state of being incorporated. Whereas *union* concerns our oneness with the Lord in life, and *mingling* is related to the oneness of 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. It is not humanly possible for one person to be in another person. However, what is not possible with humankind in the physical realm is possible, even actual, with God in 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 coinherence, of persons dwelling in one another. If we see this crucial truth of coinherence, we will realize the importance of the term *incorporation*, which implies a most intimate union and which conveys the idea of coinherence and the incorporation produced by it.

The three of the Divine Trinity are an incorporation from eternity both in what they are and in what they do. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are incorporated by coinhering mutually: "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (vv. 10-11). The three of the Divine Trinity are an incorporation also by working together as one: "The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works...Believe because of the works themselves" (vv. 10-11). From this we see that the Triune God Himself is an incorporation, for the Father, the Son, and the Spirit dwell in one another and work together as one. This reveals that the coexisting and coinhering Triune God is an incorporation of coinhering persons, a divine incorporation.

Acts 2:23 indicates that the universal, divine incorporation, the three of the Divine Trinity, held a council in eternity and agreed to send the second of the Divine Trinity, the Son, into time to become a man for the accomplishing of redemption and for the carrying out of the

divine economy. Through incarnation the Son brought this divine incorporation into humanity. In eternity past the three of the coinhering Triune God were already incorporated to be the divine incorporation. Then the Son, through His incarnation, brought this incorporation into time in order that all the chosen and redeemed people of God might be incorporated, economically, into the divine incorporation to produce the universal, divine-human incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with the regenerated believers.

The incorporation in John 14 is not merely a divine incorporation but 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. This is the astounding revelation in John 14:20: "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." *In that day* denotes the day of the Son's resurrection. *You will know that I am in My Father* reveals that the Son and the Father have been incorporated into one. The words *you in Me* unveil the fact that the regenerated believers have been incorporated into the Son and into the Father in the Son, who is in the Father. The Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son; this is the divine incorporation. In the Son we are in the Father, and in the Son the Father is in us; this is the divine-human incorporation.

Through Christ's incarnation God was 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 nature; we also coinhere with Him in person. In the Son we dwell in God the Father, and in the Son the Father dwells in us—this is the divine-human incorporation revealed in John 14.¹⁰

The divine-human incorporation is the church of God as the house of the Father, which is for His rest, satisfaction, and manifestation (v. 2). We have pointed out that all the believers in Christ are abodes in the Father's house, mutual dwelling places in which we co-dwell, coinhere, with the Father and the Son. In our actual spiritual experiences, the Father's house is built up by the constant visitation to the believers of the Father and the Son with the Spirit. Regarding this, verse 21 says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." Verse 23 goes on to say, "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." The abode here "will be a mutual abode, in which the Triune God abides in the believers and the believers abide in Him" (Recovery Version, v. 23, note 1). In the Father's house and as part of the Father's house, we make our abode in God, and God

makes His abode in us. This is coinherence—this is incorporation.

To teach that the Father's house in John 14 is heaven or a so-called mansion in heaven nullifies the divinely revealed truth concerning the divine-human incorporation. Under the influence of this aberrant teaching and of religious tradition, believers may long to dwell in "a mansion just over the hilltop," in a heavenly home physically understood. However, God the Father desires, in the Son, to dwell with us in His house—a mutual abode, a divine-human incorporation of coinhering persons—divinely disclosed and mystically understood.

The divine-human incorporation is also the Son's vine for God's enlargement, spreading, and glorification (15:1-8, 16). The true vine signifies the all-inclusive Christ as the organism of the processed and consummated Triune God in His economy. The branches of the vine, all of which have been grafted into the vine, are the believers in Christ, who have been regenerated with the divine life, brought into an organic union with the crucified and resurrected Christ, and incorporated into the divine-human incorporation.

We need to be enlightened and educated concerning the truth that, as such an incorporation, the true vine with its branches—Christ the Son with the believers in the Son—is the organism of the Triune God in the divine economy to grow with His riches and express His life. God the Father as the husbandman is the source and the founder; God the Son as the vine is the center, the embodiment, and the manifestation; God the Spirit is the reality and realization; and the branches are the Body, the corporate expression (vv. 1, 4-5, 26). In keeping with the revelation in John 14, we should point out that all that the Father is and has is embodied in Christ the Son and realized in the Spirit as the reality. All that the Spirit has is then wrought into the believers, the branches, to be expressed and testified through them. In this way the processed and consummated Triune God is expressed, manifested, and glorified in the church (Eph. 3:16-21). This vine is the organism of the Triune God united, mingled, and incorporated with His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people (John 14:20). In this organism, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coinhere with the believers mutually, because the Triune God and the believers are united, mingled, and incorporated. Here we see God's goal in His economy—to produce and maintain eternally the enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with the regenerated believers.

As branches of the vine—that is, as parts of the divine-human incorporation revealed in John 14:20—we need to abide in the vine (15:4-5). To be in Christ as the vine is a

matter of union, whereas to abide in Him as the vine is a matter of fellowship. If we would abide in Christ, the true vine, we need to see that we are already branches in the vine; then, having seen this vision, we need to maintain the fellowship between us and the Lord. This is the genuine Christian life, a life of abiding, of experientially remaining in, the vine as the divine-human incorporation. In practice, to abide in Christ as the vine is to be one spirit with Him, for He is the life-giving Spirit mingled with our regenerated spirit as one spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). In our actual daily living with and experience of the resurrected Christ, our abiding in Him is the condition of His abiding in us (John 15:4-5). As we abide in the vine, we gradually come to know that the vine is everything to the branches and that apart from the vine, we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing (v. 5).

The more we abide in Christ as the true vine, the more we have the genuine church life revealed in the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 30; 6:17; 12:27). The outstanding feature of such a church life is oneness: The branches are one with the vine and with one another (John 17:11, 21-23). The

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more we abide in Christ, the more we participate in the wonderful fellowship among the branches, and in this fellowship we discover that the inner life of all the branches is one ("Christ our life," Col. 3:4) and that this life should continually circulate through all the branches (John 15:4-5; 1 John 1:7). This leads to the realization that the church life, the Body life, is a life of the members loving one another (John 15:12, 17). The Body life is a life of love and in love (Eph. 4:15-16; 5:2). In the life of Christ, not in our natural, human life, we need to love another in the love of Christ. This glorious church life in the divine-human incorporation is possible only when we live in the mingled spirit—in Christ as the life-giving Spirit mingled with our spirit—which is the reality of the divine-human incorporation.

Regarding the divine-human incorporation unveiled in John 14 and portrayed in John 15, the Gospel of John presents three vital and indispensable spiritual matters—love, eating, and shepherding.

When the apostle John speaks of the divine-human incorporation, he often speaks of love (14:15, 21, 23, 28, 31).

In fact, to abide in the vine is to abide in love. “As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (15:9-10). We are incorporated in and with the Triune God to become His dwelling place by loving the Lord with the first and best love (Rev. 2:4). Because God is love, when we abide in love, we abide in God and God abides in us (1 John 4:16); this is love in the divine-human incorporation, love in the reality of coinherence. We do not generate this kind of love by self-effort, for such love has God Himself as the unique source. We may say that our love for the Lord is a “because love,” a love that is a response to His love for us and to His love in us. “We love because He first loved us” (v. 19). “God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers” (Recovery Version, v. 19, note 1). It is the love in God, the love which God is in His essence, that gives Him the yearning to unite, mingle, and incorporate with us, and it is the same love in us that gives us the yearning to unite, mingle, and incorporate with Him. In the mutual experience of this love we become God’s dwelling place in reality, actuality, and practicality.

Our living in the divine-human incorporation is sustained and maintained by eating the Lord. In John 6 we see that Christ is the bread of life (vv. 35, 48), the living bread (v. 51), the true bread out of heaven (v. 32), and the bread of God (v. 33). The Lord Jesus tells us emphatically that we must eat Him as the bread of life, the bread of God. “This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever” (vv. 50-51). Immediately, the Lord goes on speak of eating His flesh (vv. 51-58). Unless we “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood,” we do not have life within ourselves (v. 53), but if we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we have eternal life, for His flesh is true food, and His blood is true drink (vv. 54-55). This brings us to a word that connects eating with incorporation: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him” (v. 56). When He unveiled the true vine with its branches, the Lord charged us to abide in Him so that, experientially, He would abide in us, resulting in a life of coinherence. Now we see that such a mutual abiding depends upon our eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

To eat is to contact things outside of us and to receive them into us, with the result that they become constituents of our organic being.¹¹ As shocking as it may be to the religious mind, this is exactly what God desires; He wants His people to eat Him, digest Him, and assimilate Him. This is according to God’s eternal plan to dispense Himself into us so that He becomes the fiber of our being. God wants to

be digested and assimilated by us with the result that, in His economy and by His dispensing, He becomes our spiritual constituent. This produces the oneness for which the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17, a oneness of coinherence, a oneness of and in the divine-human incorporation.

Finally, we need to realize that, according to the full revelation in the Gospel of John, Christ’s shepherding is for the Father’s house. Just as the stages of shepherding in Psalm 23 culminate in our dwelling in the house of the Lord, so the shepherding of the Lord Jesus leads us to and then builds us into the Father’s house as the divine-human incorporation.

Christ is the good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep so that, in the divine life, there would be one flock and one Shepherd (John 10:10-11, 14-17). As the good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus came that we might have the divine life and have it abundantly. He laid down His human life to accomplish redemption for His sheep so that they, the believers, may share His divine life. Now as the good Shepherd, the Lord shepherds us by feeding us with Himself and in Himself as the pasture (v. 9). Moreover, as the good Shepherd the Lord is leading, guiding, and directing us in the divine life, for He, the indwelling pneumatic Christ as the life-giving Spirit, shepherds us in His life from within our regenerated spirit. Eventually, under the shepherding of Christ as the good Shepherd, “there shall be one flock, one Shepherd” (v. 16). This one flock, formed of both the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers, is the one church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:14-16; 3:6).

Ultimately, the Lord Jesus is shepherding us in life for the Father’s house, for the divine-human incorporation (John 14:2-3). The Lord is the divine life (v. 6), He gives us the divine life (10:10), and He shepherds us in the divine life for the divine building, which, according to John 14, is the Father’s house. These two central matters—life and building—are the basic revelation of the Bible, which shows us that life is for building and that the building is of life.

This basic revelation permeates the Gospel of John (11:25; 14:2), and it is crucial that earnest students of the Word see life and building as unveiled in the Gospel of John. This Gospel reveals that the Triune God is dispensing Himself as life into His believers (3:15) and that the believers, as the result of this dispensing, become the building of God, His corporate expression (10:10; 14:2-3, 6). In His resurrection the Lord Jesus rebuilt God’s temple (which was His body) in a larger way, making it a corporate dwelling place, the mystical Body of Christ (2:19-22). The body of Jesus, the temple that was destroyed on the cross, was small and weak, but the Body of Christ in resurrection is vast and powerful (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 1:22-23). Since the day of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus has been enlarging His Body in His resurrection life through the preaching

of the gospel and through His shepherding in life. Even now, He is working for the building of His Body (which is the Father's house) under the process of resurrection.

As the divine-human incorporation, the Father's house is a matter of the Triune God, through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, working Himself in Christ as the Spirit into the believers in order to be united, mingled, and incorporated with them for the building up of a mutual dwelling place—the house in John 14—for His expression and manifestation. The Lord's coming brought God into man, and His going through death and resurrection brought man into God. By this coming and going He builds God into the believers and builds the believers into God for the house of God. This is the house of God, the divine-human incorporation, produced by the union, mingling, and incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people (vv. 7-24). This is the marvelous and mysterious divine revelation in John 14. **AFC**

Notes

¹It should be noted that in chapter 24 of the Gospel of Luke there are three kinds of opening: the opening of the eyes (v. 31), the opening of the Scriptures (v. 32), and the opening of the mind (v. 45). Apart from such a threefold opening, we can know neither the Lord nor His Word.

²Regrettably, this need is denied and repudiated by professors of theology today. Some go so far as to claim that believers need neither the illumination of the Spirit nor the guidance of the Spirit of reality in understanding the Word of God. An illustration of this opinion is found in Douglas Kennard's essay, where he claims that in understanding biblical texts, believers and unbelievers are essentially the same, and that, in fact "a skilled non-Christian" may fare better than a genuine Christian indwelt by the Spirit of God; "the ministry does not do any better than an unbeliever who has finely honed skills and is sensitive to the text and...in some instances the Christian may actually fare worse than a skilled non-Christian in interpreting the biblical text" (805). Apparently, for Kennard we need not be concerned about veils, thoughts blinded by the enemy of God, or a natural, unopened mind, and we need not pray that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened by the Father of glory. For Kennard, what is needed is not unveiling, opening, and enlightening but sensitivity and finely honed skills, a view strikingly at variance with that of the Lord Jesus and the apostles.

³Since the subject of the Divine Trinity as presented in John 14 will be addressed in a separate article in this issue ("The Divine Trinity in John 14"), it will not be considered directly here.

⁴To believe into the Lord's name is to receive Him into us as life and light (John 1:4, 12-13); to believe into Him is to enter into Him as a realm of life and light (3:15; 12:36). On the

one hand, we believe into the Son of God and thereby enter into Him; on the other hand, we believe into His name, and He enters into us. The result of these two *intos* is union, mingling, and coinherence. We are one with the Lord in life, we are mingled with Him in nature, and we coinhere with Him as persons mutually indwelling each other. What a miracle!

⁵The writings of the apostle John are a revelation of divine and mysterious things. The thought in the Gospel of John, in particular, is absolutely divine and mysterious. *Divine* refers to things that concern God or that belong to God and to His operation to carry out His eternal purpose. All things concerning God and belonging to God are divine and thus are mysterious. We need to keep this in mind as we read chapter 14 of the Gospel of John, for this chapter in particular and the Gospel in its entirety are divine and mystical. Otherwise, we will not see or even acknowledge that revelation regarding the divine and mystical realm afforded us in John 14.

⁶See Lee, *The Divine and Mystical Realm*, pp. 23-32, 36-44.

⁷For a catalogue of similar exegetical travesties, see my article "In My Father's House."

The Father's house is a matter of the Triune God, through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, working Himself in Christ as the Spirit into the believers in order to be united, mingled, and incorporated with them for the building up of a mutual dwelling place for His expression and manifestation.

⁸Several years ago I read a religious message printed on the back of a shirt worn by a preacher. On a note affixed to the drawing of a cross were the following words: "Gone to see Dad. We're fixing a place for you. Be back soon to pick you up." According to this specimen of popular theology, in John 14 the Lord Jesus and the Father are now preparing a home for us in heaven, and soon Jesus will come again to pick us up and take us to our heavenly home. This is an illustration of how widespread is the erroneous understanding of John 14 among believers today.

⁹The rest of the note in the MacArthur Study Bible continues:

This is one of the passages that refers to the rapture of the saints at the end of the age when Christ returns. The features in this description do not describe Christ coming to earth with His saints to establish His kingdom (Rev. 19:11-15), but taking believers from earth to live in heaven. Since no judgment on the unsaved is described here, this is not the event of His return in glory and power to destroy the wicked (cf. Matt. 13:36-43; 47-50). Rather, this describes His coming to gather His own who are alive and raise the bodies of those who

have died to take them all to heaven. This rapture event is also described in 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18. After being raptured, the church will celebrate the marriage supper (Rev. 19:7-10), be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10), and later return to earth with Christ when He comes again to set up His kingdom (Rev. 19:11—20:6). (1613)

Here MacArthur builds error upon error. First, he claims that the mansions in John 14:2 are “rooms, or even apartments” (1613), in the large Father’s house, thus misinterpreting the meaning of both *house* and *abodes*. Then he asserts that the Lord went away to prepare a “heavenly home” for us. Next, he claims that the Lord, in His coming, will rapture the saints to their heavenly home to live with Him. However, in MacArthur’s view, the saints will not stay long in the room or apartment in heaven, because they will return to earth with Christ when He comes again to set up His kingdom. Thus, the heavenly home is not an eternal dwelling place but more like a motel room for transients. This is truly not only an incoherent eschatology but one that misconstrues John 14 and misrepresents the Lord in His ministry in ascension, for it presents Him as preparing a temporary dwelling place in the Father’s house understood as heaven.

¹⁰We have a rich development and application of the divine-human incorporation in 1 Corinthians. Paul emphasizes five matters. First, we are incorporated with the Triune God to enjoy the fellowship of God’s Son (1:9). The word *fellowship* denotes joint, or common, participation, and *the fellowship of His Son* means the partaking of, the participation in, God’s Son. To be called into the fellowship of God’s Son is to be called into a mutuality in which we are one with Christ, and He is one with us. In this oneness and mutuality, we enjoy Christ and all that He is, and He enjoys us and all that we are in Him. Furthermore, the fellowship of God’s Son involves the oneness between us and the Triune God and also the oneness among all the believers. Second, we are incorporated with the Triune God for God and the believers to speak together as one (7:10, 12, 25, 40) according to the principle of incarnation—the principle of God and man, man and God, becoming one. In the New Testament the Lord becomes one with His apostles, and they become one with Him. Because the apostles have been incorporated with the Triune God, the Lord’s word becomes their word, and what they utter is His word; thus, God speaks in the apostles’ speaking. Third, we are incorporated with the Triune God to become His temple (3:16-17). In the Gospel of John the first aspect of the incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with the regenerated believers is the house of God, the Father’s house, typified by the temple in the Old Testament (14:2; 2:16-21). According to Paul’s word in 1 Corinthians 3, the life-giving Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God dwells in us and regards us as His temple. Fourth, we are incorporated with the Triune God to be one bread (10:17). This one bread signifies the one Body of Christ. We all are one Body, one bread, because we all partake of the one bread and thereby are identified with it and become one

with it. Our partaking of Christ as the one bread makes us His one Body. Finally, we are incorporated with the Triune God to become the corporate Christ—“the Christ” in 12:12. In this verse *the Christ* refers to the corporate Christ, composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as the members. Through our union, mingling, and incorporation with the Triune God in His economy, we have become the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the ultimate incorporation of divinity and humanity, the eternal, universal, divine-human incorporation.

¹¹In a very real sense, the Bible is a book of eating (Gen. 2:16-17; Rev. 2:7; 22:14). The record regarding spiritual eating in the Bible is a strong indication that God intends to dispense Himself into us by the way of eating. God’s placing man in front of the tree of life indicates that God wanted man to receive Him as life by eating Him organically and assimilating Him metabolically, causing God to become the constituent of man’s being (Gen. 2:9). The passover reveals that God delivers us by feeding us, that He saves us by giving us something to eat (Exo. 12:1-11). Whereas the Lamb energizes us to leave the world typified by Egypt, the manna nourishes us and constitutes us with a heavenly element (16:14-15). The eating of manna by the children of Israel shows that God’s intention in His salvation is to work Himself into us and to change our constitution by changing our diet and feeding us with Christ as heavenly food (John 6:27, 32, 35). Deuteronomy 8:7-10 reveals that God wanted His people to eat the produce of the good land, a type of the riches of the all-inclusive Christ (Eph. 3:8).

In general, Christians have neglected the eating of the Lord and have lost sight of the fact that the believers have the right, through redemption, to eat Him (Rev. 22:14). Thus, the Lord intends to recover our eating of Him (2:7, 17; 3:20). This means that He wants to recover the church back to the beginning—to the eating of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9, 16-17; Rev. 2:7). He desires to recover our eating of the food ordained by God and typified by the tree of life, the manna, and the produce of the good land, all of which are types of Christ as food to us.

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