



"Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled"

I grew up listening to male gospel music quartets. One of my favourite quartets was 'The King's Heralds'. One of their classic songs, that I clearly remember my parents playing in their LP player for Friday's vesper was "The Lord is Coming, Are You Ready?" I don't know how many times I have heard this song. I even sang it when I was in a quartet during my high school days. The first words of this anthem brought so much hope to so many people throughout the years. The power of these words comes from none other than Jesus Christ.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:1-3 NKJV

For sure this is one of the most popular and favourite promises of the Bible. The expectation of the Second Coming, when Jesus will come to take us home, has been the great hope of the ages. Paul wrote, "At the same time we can expect what we hope for – the appearance of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13 GW

I don't doubt that you are familiar with the promise of the Second Coming and with John 14:1-3. However, what you may not be aware of is that when the disciples heard the comfort words from Jesus, they may not have understood it as a promise about the Second Coming, as we do today. Am I saying that this promise does not refer to the Second Coming, not at all. I'm saying that I believe that this promise goes beyond the Second Coming. I'm sure that as we comprehend this promise as the disciples probably did at that day, the words of John 14:1-3 will bring a deeper and a delightful meaning to you and to me!

So let's start our journey to a better understanding of John 14:1-3 considering the context, the time, location and the circumstances that Jesus declared in this promise. As you may know, when the books of the Bible were originally written, they did not contain chapter or verse references. The Bible was divided later into chapters and verses to help us find Scriptures more quickly and easily. For instance, chapter divisions in the New Testament go back at least as far as the 4th-century Codex Vaticanus. However, the system that we use today was developed by Stephen

Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1228.¹ The division of the New Testament into verses occurs for the first time in the edition published by Robert Stephanus in Paris in 1551.²

I really appreciate all the work put in to make the Bible more friendly for reading and studying. But sometimes we can forget that in order to have a proper picture of the Bible text we need to read what comes before and after the Bible verse in question. So let me ask you? What was the circumstance of John 14:1-3? Where were the disciples? What was the conversation about? What comes before and after the promise of John 14:1-3. Take your bible right now and read some Bible verses and try to identify the context of John 14:1-3 with those around you.

3' Countdown - Read John 13:4-5; John 13:21, 30; John 13:33; John 13:36-38; John 14:5, 6; John 14:16, 18; and John 14:31.

John 13:31–17:26 is the Last Discourse of Jesus. It is given privately to his disciples during the last hours of Jesus' life. It starts at mealtime, during what it is known as the last supper. Then it moves out from the place of the supper to the way to Gethsemane. The verses that we read, John 13-14 present what happened during the last supper. The main topic of the conversation is Jesus' betrayal, crucifixion, death and sacrifice. At this point, the conversation it is not about His second coming. Interesting that some scholars point out a lack of mentions about the Second Coming in the Gospel of John when compared to the other three Gospels.

The reason for the words of encouragement of John 14:1-3, was because the disciples were perplexed about what was supposed to happen with Jesus and with them in a few hours. Jesus, their loved master, would leave them to face death. Their whole world had been so wrapped up with Jesus over the last few years that the prospect of His departure must have been devastating. The image that Jesus uses for them is 'orphans'. In a few hours, Jesus would face betrayal from one of them. Even Peter would deny Him, and finally, Jesus would face death. But in His death and resurrection, Jesus would prepare a way to the Father, a connection, a bridge between the loving and merciful God and desperate humankind lost in their sinful situation. Through His sacrifice, the truth would be declared that God is Love, He loves us, and in Christ we have hope. As Jesus surrendered His life, life, eternal life would be offered to us! This godly life or abundant life would start here on this earth, experiencing the abiding presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit among us, until the day we would be united with them for all eternity.

This incredible path, this loving truth and this glorious life presented by Jesus, could be summarized by Jesus' words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6 GW

¹ Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, Foundations of Pentecostal Theology (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 7

² Michael L. Ruffin, "Verse," ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1354.

For this reason, the going of Jesus, the going to prepare a place for us, should not be limited to the idea of this ascension to heaven, as we traditionally understand it. It should also involve His going to the Cross and the Tomb. A place that the disciples could not follow Him. In a work that no human being could follow Him, or accomplish the task of salvation. Only Jesus. Our salvation is a gift conquered by God through Jesus Christ. The way to prepare a place for us, was only through the sacrifice of Jesus. I like how Colin G. Kruse explains this concept.

"When Jesus said, 'I am going to prepare a place for you,' we should not think of Him returning to heaven, and having arrived there, setting about the construction of 'rooms' for his disciples to occupy – a task he has now been occupied with for some two thousand years! Rather, we should recognize that it was by His very going, by His betrayal, crucifixion and exaltation, that He made it possible for us to dwell in the presence of God. The imminent departure of Jesus, which so troubled the hearts of His disciples, was in fact for their benefit."³

At the same time, after going to prepare a place, through His death and resurrection, Jesus promised "I will come again". This understanding of coming back should not be limited to the Second Coming, but should also include His way back from His sacrifice, from His death, from the tomb. As Jesus was going to face death, He would be back from death. 'I'll go, but I'll come back', Jesus said. 'I'll die, but I'll live again.' That was what Jesus revealed to His disciples.

"Listen,' he said, 'we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence Him to die. Then they will hand Him over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day He will be raised from the dead.'" Matthew 20:18-19 NLT

After accomplishing our salvation, paying the debt of sin at the cross, He would return to life and would receive everyone who accepted His sacrifice, and would be with them all the time! "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

If we are expanding the understanding of the promise of John 14:1-3, how do we explain "receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"? Is that a real promise of Jesus being with us all the time after His resurrection, before His coming to take us home? How would that happen? Would Jesus be with us before His Second Coming? Take your Bible and read some Bible verses to answer this question, and don't forget to share your findings with those around you.

3' Countdown - Read Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 13:5, 6; Matthew 18:20 and John 14:16-18

Jesus has promised to be with us always after His ascension. He would take care of and provide for us until He would come to take us home! That is the promise! The main way that He is with us is through the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the coming back and being with us of John 14:3 has at

³ Colin G. Kruse, John: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 292.

least a triple meaning in John: Jesus would come (1) physically after defeating death, resurrected from the dead; Jesus would come (2) spiritually through the ministry of the Spirit (John 14:16-18); and Jesus would come (3) literally, at the Second Coming. According to Dr. D. A. Carson, "...the language used of Jesus' 'coming back' and 'being with' His disciples refers at various places in these chapters to different things: sometimes to Jesus' return to His disciples after His resurrection, sometimes to Jesus' 'coming' to them by the Spirit after He has been exalted to the glory of the Father, and sometimes to His 'coming' at the end of the age."⁴

John 14:1-3 involves not only the promise of Jesus delivering His loved ones from the consequences of sin at His Second Coming, but it also involves Jesus' promise of delivering His loved ones from the penalty, the wages of sin at the cross, and delivering His loved ones from the domain of sin, through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. John 14:1-3 is a promise involving the plan of salvation that God has prepared for you and for me.

I believe there is a gem hidden in this promise of John 14:1-3 that we have not explored yet, the Father's house! We have expanded the comprehension of this wonderful promise of Jesus, what more could we learn about the Father's house? Traditionally, we understand the Father's house as a reference to heaven, and I believe that is the final case, but also, I believe that the Father's house goes beyond the concept of heaven. I believe that this richness of understanding about my Father's house can add to our journey together in this year of Be The Church.

It is interesting to notice that in the gospel of John, and in the other gospels, the expressions "my Father's house" or "My Father's Home" were never used as reference to heaven, as we like to apply them in John 14:2. The disciples never heard Jesus presenting heaven as "My Father's House" or "My Father's Home". Everytime Jesus used the expression "My Father's House" or "My Father's Home", He was referring to something else. What was it? Well, take your Bible right now and read some Bible verses to see what Jesus had in mind when He used the expression "My Father's House" or "My Father's Home", and finally, what is the real meaning of the expression in Jesus' own understanding. Read and discuss the Bible verses with those around you.

3' Countdown - Read: Luke 2:46, 49, John 2:13-16; John 2:19-22

Jesus used the expression "My Father's House" or "My Father's Home" to describe the temple in Jerusalem. A place that should be called and be a "House of Prayer for All Nations" (Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11, Matthew 21:13, and Mark 11:17). However, the temple of Jerusalem had become a place of corruption and segregation. Not everyone was welcome there, including Jesus and the disciples.

From the location believed to be where Jesus and the disciples partook of the last supper, they could easily see the temple of Jerusalem. Maybe, as Jesus was saying the words, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places", the disciples eyes turned to the window, and not far from there

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 488.

they saw the temple and its lights. They knew that there was no place for them there. They were not welcome. They didn't belong there. Not only them, but any ordinary men and women, free or slave, foreigner or Jew that was not involved in the schemes and politics of the temple were not welcomed, and did not belong to the temple. But Jesus said "I go to prepare a place for you". How would Jesus prepare a place for them in the Father's House? How would Jesus turn the temple of Jerusalem into a welcoming place for them and for many others? The reality is that Jesus was not talking about the temple, but its fulfillment, Jesus himself.

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' 'What!' they exclaimed. 'It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?' But when Jesus said 'this temple,' He meant His own body. After He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered He had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said." John 2:19-22 NLT

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus prepared a place for everyone in Himself. The body of Christ is a reality because of Jesus' sacrifice. Everyone is welcome in Jesus. Everyone is invited to be part of Jesus' body. The reality is that by His betrayal, crucifixion and exaltation, Jesus created a place for you and I. As part of the family of God, part of Jesus' body, we can experience the abiding presence of God right here and right now! Jesus has created His Church on Himself through His sacrifice and invites you and I to be part of His community. In Jesus, God has created a home for you! He has a place for you here right now, and He is looking forward to being with you forever in the heavenly mansions. Until that day, don't let your heart be troubled, Jesus has prepared a place for you! Let's be the church - Loving and Serving.