

Mansions in Heaven

After Christ celebrated the passover with His disciples, and after Judas left to betray Him, Jesus had a few final moments alone with His followers. During that time He told them a great many things. One of them was this:

John 14:2: “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

A generation ago pretty much all Christians believed that they had a mansion waiting for them in Heaven. Today, though, few people believe it. The idea that we have a building waiting for us in Heaven is now seen as silly and ridiculous. It's just not believed anymore.

I looked up the word “mansion” in Strongs. It means pretty much what you would expect:

#3438 (“Mone”): a mansion, habitation, abode. Also related to monos – alone, only single.

In other words, the verse could also read “In my Father's house are many individual dwelling places”. The word seems to carry with it the idea of a place for one person to live. What Christ was telling His disciples was that in His Father's house there were many dwelling places; Christ was leaving His disciples so He could prepare a place for them, but one day He would come back and bring them to the place He had prepared.

Lately I've seen people claim that this is actually talking about our resurrection body and not an actual house. The idea comes from this passage:

2 Corinthians 5:1: “For we know that if our earthly house (#3614) of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house (#3614) not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

At first this argument looks pretty convincing. I would be inclined to believe it, except for the fact that the word used for “house” in this passage is not the same as the one used for “mansion” in John 14:2. The word used for “house” here is:

3614 (“Oika”): a building, a house, a dwelling.

Both words mean “house”, but they're not the same word. More importantly, in 2 Corinthians 5 Paul makes it very clear that he's speaking metaphorically – but Jesus does *not* do that. Paul goes through a lot of trouble to explain that he is talking about our bodies, and not about our actual physical homes. What Paul is saying is that right now we live in a corruptible, fallen body, but one day the Lord will return and transform our bodies into something that is incorruptible and immortal. There is no

question that 2 Corinthians 5 is referring to our bodies, and not to an actual house.

Jesus, however, offers no further explanation in John 14. All Jesus says is that He is leaving them so that He can prepare a dwelling place for them – *and He offers no hint that He is speaking metaphorically*. Jesus could have said “I’m going to prepare a new body for you so that you will be incorruptible and immortal”, but He didn’t say anything like that. The disciples are given no reason to think that Jesus is *not* talking about an actual house!

This is important because Jesus had touched on this subject before. In the book of Luke we find this instruction from Jesus:

Luke 16:9: “And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations (#4633).”

Here we find yet another Greek word – Skene. It means tent or tabernacle. Once again, it is *not* the same word that Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 5.

What is Jesus saying? Well, in Luke 16:1-8 Jesus gave a parable about a man who was about to get fired from his job. This man was worried about how he would pay his bills once he lost his job, so before he was fired he went around and did favors for people. That way, once he was unemployed, those same people would turn around and help him and he could survive. Jesus commended this person and said that Christians ought to use their worldly possessions to help others so that in the next life these people “may receive [them] into everlasting habitations”.

In this particular passage, interpreting “habitation” to mean “body” results in a very uncomfortable verse! Inviting someone into their physical body is a *very* different thing from inviting someone into their home. Given that the entire context is about someone doing favors so that he will *not be homeless* and would be received into other people’s homes, it seems only logical to conclude that the habitation Christ spoke of refers to an *actual home* and not a body. After all, the only way people in Heaven can invite you into their home is *if they have a home in the first place*.

So when Jesus talked about Heavenly homes a second time in John 14, the disciples would have remembered this earlier parable. There is no way they would have been thinking about a letter to the Corinthians that hadn’t even been written yet. As far as I have been able to determine, Jesus never used the phrase “Heavenly home” to refer to a person’s physical body.

Which brings us back to the question: will we have homes in Heaven? Let me ask the question a bit differently: do you really think that the New Jerusalem will be populated entirely by homeless people? Is that our future?

We need to keep a few things in mind here. First of all, our eternal destiny is not to sit on a cloud somewhere strumming a harp. God has promised us a city:

Hebrews 11:16: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

This city is not a metaphor of some kind. We know this because in Revelation 21 we actually see this city:

Revelation 21:2: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

The Bible spends quite a few verses telling us what this city is like. The New Jerusalem is a real, actual city – a *big* city that’s 1500 miles wide and that covers more than *two million square miles*.

This is the city that God has prepared for us, and it will be our eternal home. One day we will live in this city.

I'm not going to say a great deal about what it's like to live in that city because I've already done that elsewhere. The question I want to address is this: are we *really* going to be wandering around this giant city as homeless vagabonds?

Think about it this way: just what is a home? It is a shelter, yes, but it's more than that. After all, an umbrella can shelter you from the elements but an umbrella is not a home! A home is where you keep your possessions. It is your base of operations. It is the place where you invite friends over so you can spend some time with them. How, exactly, are we going to invite people into our homes if we don't have homes to invite people into?

What people are suggesting is that the great New Jerusalem, with streets of gold and the Lord God as its ruler, is filled with billions of homeless people. Even though these people live in the largest city that the world has ever seen, they don't have a single room or square inch of ground to call their own! Is that really reasonable?

For that matter, have you ever stopped to think about what it would be like to be homeless *forever*? Even though you had an endless life ahead of you, you wouldn't have a single bookshelf or end table to call your own. There would be no places where you could invite people over because you wouldn't own any places. You would just live in a great big area that isn't owned by anybody, where billions of people wander around as they please. For that matter, you wouldn't be able to own *anything*. After all, where would you put it?

People say "Well, you're not going to possess anything in Heaven. It doesn't work that way." But Jesus said we should lay up our treasures in Heaven so that moths can't eat them (Luke 12:33). These treasures *cannot* be spiritual blessings because *moths cannot break into your closet and eat your spiritual blessings*. The only thing that moths can eat are *physical goods*. Christ is saying we ought to lay up our *physical goods* in Heaven so that we will still have them. This interpretation makes people uncomfortable, but it's what Jesus actually says! Jesus does not say "Turn your physical goods into spiritual blessings". No, what He actually says is "move your possessions to a place where moths can't destroy them." If you have possessions then that means you also have to have a place to keep your possessions. You could keep them in the bank, I suppose, but most people keep their possessions at home. It seems highly unlikely that we would have possessions but *not* have a home to keep them in!

Just imagine trying to live in a giant city and not having a home! Even *animals* have homes: as the Bible points out, birds have nests and foxes have holes. But yet I am supposed to believe that the redeemed children of God are doomed to wander the streets for eternity?

I am not concerned about the *size* of the home. What concerns me is this idea that *we will not have a home*. I think that what Jesus said in John 14:2 should be taken in a straightforward manner: Jesus has left to prepare a dwelling place for us, and one day He will return and bring us to the home He has prepared. It's that simple.

One thing I do know about God is that He is amazingly extravagant. During the creation week God decided that the Earth needed light, so He created *125 billion galaxies* in order to provide the Earth with a night-light. That is extravagance on a scale that boggles the imagination!

Jesus has spent two millennia preparing a home for His children. I don't think we're going to get there and discover that we're doomed to wander the streets for all of eternity. I also don't think we're going to discover that our Heavenly home is a dirty one-room hovel. God, after all, has infinite resources; He paves His streets with gold. It's foolish to believe that our earthly home is better than the one God has prepared for us in Heaven. No one is going to get to Heaven and wish that they were back at their home on Earth.

Our problem is that we think far too little of God. When we think of Heaven we tend to think that we will have much *less* than we do now. We may not say this out loud and we may publicly proclaim that life will be better there, but we don't actually believe it. We see Heaven as a place where

we're going to miss out on all the good things of life, so we start assuming that we won't have any possessions, we won't have a home, and we'll just sit on a cloud somewhere bored out of our mind. We start dreading the idea of going to Heaven and we cling to our life as firmly as we can.

That sort of thinking is tremendously unbiblical and does not honor God. Heaven is not a place where we will live as paupers; it is a place where we will be “kings and priests”, as Revelation tells us. It is not a place of poverty but one of unimaginable wealth. It is not a place where we will have less, but where we will have very much more. It is *not* a place of boredom, endless tedium, and nothingness. We need to expand our minds and embrace the full scope of what God has promised us – because the things that He has promised are truly astounding.