

Mansions in Heaven

After Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples and Judas left to betray Him, He 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 14:2-3: “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 unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

A generation ago Christians commonly believed that they had a mansion waiting for them in Heaven. Today, though, it seems that far fewer people believe that. In fact, the idea that we have a building waiting for us in Heaven is now viewed as silly.

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 mean a place for a single person to live. Jesus was telling His disciples that in His Father's house were many dwelling places. He was leaving so He could prepare a place for them, and one day He would return and bring them to the place He had prepared.

Some people claim that this is actually talking about our resurrection body and not an actual house. That idea comes from this passage:

2 Corinthians 5:1-4: “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. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 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 isn't 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 clear that he's speaking metaphorically – but Jesus did *not* do that. Paul explained that he was talking about our bodies and not actual physical homes. He was teaching that right now we live in a corruptible body, but one day the Lord will return and transform our bodies into something that's incorruptible and immortal. There's no question that 2 Corinthians 5 is referring to our bodies and not to an actual house.

Jesus, however, offered no further explanation in John 14. All Jesus said was that He was leaving His disciples so He could prepare a dwelling place for them – *and He offered no hint that He was 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 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's *not* the same word that Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 5.

What is Jesus saying? Well, in Luke 16:1-8 He taught 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. He was hoping that once he was unemployed, those same people would help him in return. Jesus commended this person and said that Christians should use their worldly possessions to help others so that in the next life 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 *very* different from inviting someone into their home. Given that the entire context is about doing favors so that a person *won't be homeless*, it's 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*.

When Jesus talked about Heavenly homes a second time in John 14, the disciples would have remembered this earlier parable. There's no way they would have been thinking about Paul's letter to the Corinthians because that hadn't been written yet! As far as I've 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 believe 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 isn't 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 isn't a metaphor of some kind. We know this because in Revelation 21 we're given a glimpse of 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 which 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 people?

Think about it this way. What is a home? It's a shelter, yes, but it's more than that. An umbrella can shelter you from the elements but an umbrella isn't a home! A home is where you keep your possessions. It's your base of operations. It's the place where you invite friends over so you can spend time with them. How,

exactly, are we going to invite people into our homes if we don't have homes?

Does it make sense that the great New Jerusalem, with streets of gold and the Lord God as its ruler, is filled with billions of homeless people? Are we to believe that 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?

For that matter, have you 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 table or chair 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 city that wasn't owned by anybody, where billions of people wandered around. It would be impossible for you to own *anything* because you'd have no place to put it.

Some people teach that we aren't going to own things in Heaven. Yet 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 moths can eat are *physical goods*. Christ is saying we ought to lay up our *physical goods* in Heaven so that we'll still have them in the life to come. This interpretation makes some people uncomfortable, but it's what Jesus said! He didn't say "Turn your physical goods into spiritual blessings". No, what He actually said is "move your possessions to a place where moths can't destroy them." If you have possessions then that means you must also have a place where you keep your possessions. It's highly unlikely that we will 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 (Matthew 8:20). Am I supposed to believe that the redeemed children of God are doomed to wander the streets for eternity, with no place to call their own?

I'm not terribly concerned about the *size* of the home.

What concerns me is the idea that *we won't have a home at all*. I think what Jesus said in John 14:2 should be taken in a straightforward manner: He has left to prepare a dwelling place for us, and one day He will return and bring us to the home that He prepared.

One thing I do know about God is that He's extremely generous. During the creation week God decided that the Earth needed light (Genesis 1:14-15), so He created *125 billion galaxies* to provide the Earth with a night-light. That's extravagance on a scale which 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 find out that we're doomed to be homeless 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. I suspect that no one is going to get to Heaven and wish that they were back at their home on Earth.

It's easy to think far too little of God and start thinking that when we reach Heaven we'll be bored. Some people believe that all the good things in life are on Earth, and Heaven will be endless boredom for all of eternity – with nothing to do but sit on a cloud forever.

This sort of thinking is unbiblical and doesn't honor God. Heaven isn't a place where we will have nothing to do and nowhere to live! Instead it's a place where we will be “kings and priests”, as Revelation tells us. It's not a place of poverty but one of unimaginable wealth. It's not a place where we will have less, but where we will have very much more. It's not a place of endless boredom and emptiness. 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.