

**IS HEAVEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION?
EXPLORING THE MEANING OF JOHN 14:1-3**

A Research Paper

Presented to

Dr. Andreas J. Kostenberger

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

B 1460 The Gospels (Greek)

By

Ted D. Manby
SEBTS Box #14043

Wake Forest, North Carolina

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

NOVEMBER 2001

Introduction to the Study

There are many opinions on the meaning of the teaching of the first seven verses of the fourteenth chapter of John and how these doctrines affect the doctrine of heaven and its current state. Could heaven have been prepared before the foundation of the world—including the rooms and furnishings? Or, is it as one commentator teaches—that “Jesus Christ is now preparing places for all true believers, and each place will be beautiful. When he was here on earth, Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3). Now that He has returned to glory, He is building a church on earth and a home for that church in heaven.”¹ Realizing that there may be a problem with concluding that the heavenly buildings are under a 2,000-plus-year construction project, others conclude that the current work of the Savior-King is the furnishing of these rooms rather than the construction of them. But, when the text is closely considered and parallel passages are consulted, is this answer satisfactory?

Actually, this is only one of many areas that is debated in these verses. There are debates over each of the following issues in this text:

- the aspect of the verb *παρασέσθω*.
- the mood of the two uses of *πιστεύετε* (imperatives, indicatives, or a combination).
- the meaning of the Father’s house (the universe, the family of God, or heaven).
- the meaning of *μοναί* (separate mansions, rooms, sections in the house, temporary places, the household of the faith in heaven and on earth, or permanent living places).

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 1* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 350.

- Is there a question or a parenthetical statement in verse two?
- Should the textual variants ὅτι and καί be omitted or retained?
- What does “going” and “coming” mean in the Farewell Discourse?
- Is this section talking about each believer at death or at the second coming?
- How does the coming and presence of the Holy Spirit in the larger section (John 13:33-14:7) apply to the words of John 14:1-3?
- Why does Jesus say that He is taking the ones for whom He is coming to Himself rather than to the Father’s house or to the μὲναι in that house?
- How does Jesus prepare a place for His people?
- Are there several double meanings in this section?
- Is the term “way” used in two distinct manners in this pericope?

Of course these listed issues do not exhaust this text for possible debates and/or misunderstandings; but each one will be considered as this author exegetes this text and tries to formulate an opinion on the implications for the current readiness of heaven for the believer. The popular interpretation of contemporary and southern gospel songs turns the present tense verb in the phrase, “there are many rooms” (already existing), to a future tense, “there will be many rooms” (after I am done with construction). The constative aorist infinitive, “to prepare,” is also interpreted by them as if it were a progressive present infinitive, “to be preparing.” However, the synthesis of the following work seems to indicate that heaven has been ready for indwelling by the elect of God since before the foundation of the earth. The necessary preparation was the purchase of their place there—which did not occur until the cross-work of the Suffering Servant was completed. Now that the Messiah’s work of redemption is complete, one can say that in every sense, heaven is truly a prepared place for a prepared people.

The Historical Analysis

The author of this Gospel was most likely John, the son of Zebedee and one of the twelve apostles of Christ. There are many internal and external reasons for taking this position. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved and he consistently recorded details that only an eye witness would know.² There are three date theories held by evangelicals: 1) A.D. 60-65, (pre-A.D. 70); 2) A.D. 70-75 (post-A.D. 70); and 3) A.D. 90-96 (pre-A.D. 100). It is not the purpose of this work to evaluate the date, nor will any date in the A.D. 60-96 range affect the interpretation of the Farewell Discourse.

This leads on to the *purpose* of the fourth Gospel. The evangelist himself has stated it in the intended conclusion, namely 20:30,31: “Now there were many other signs that Jesus did in the presence of his disciples that are not recorded in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” It is possible to interpret these words in two ways: the Gospel was written that people who have not come to faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God may do so, and thereby gain the life of the kingdom of God; or, the Gospel was written that those who believe in Jesus may have their faith deepened and grasp more fully its truth and its implications. Thereby they should experience in fuller measure the life of the kingdom now and be assured of possessing its fullness in the coming age.³

When two sides are presented by Bible scholars in the study of the fourth Gospel as options to consider, sometimes the answer is that both are correct rather than one or the other. When one considers the tremendous depth of this Gospel and John’s use of double meaning, it comes as no surprise that John may have had a major and a minor purpose in writing this work

² See Andreas Kostenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 178.

³ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Themes: John* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), 7.

that would embrace first the unbelievers and then the believers.

Contextual Analysis

The Farewell Discourse begins at John 13:33 and continues on until 16:33. It is followed by Christ's High Priestly prayer in chapter seventeen.

In the context of the Farewell Discourse, however, Jesus' encouragement to the disciples is designed to meet a specific situation. Not only have the painful incidents of the Last Supper—the footwashing, the departure of Judas, the prediction of Peter's cowardice—caused malaise in these men; worse, Jesus has specifically told them he is about to go away and leave them, “My children,” he said, “I will be with you only a little longer. Where I am going you cannot come” (13:33). Unable to grasp that Jesus' departure from them is his return to the glory rightly his, by way of the cross and the tomb, the disciples wallow in their misery, fearing they are about to be abandoned. We, too, may sometimes slither around in the slough of despond and feel abandoned; but the situation in John 13 and 14 is unique. The sense of abandonment experienced by the disciples was prompted by an unrepeatable event in the history of redemption: the physical departure of Jesus by way of the cross.⁴

This significant section deals with the events of redemptive history that were taking place before the bewildered eyes of the confused apostles. Interpretations of this section must include the understanding that much of the content applies uniquely to the Twelve in their hour of need. “The approaching physical absence of Jesus is the substratum of the farewell discourse.”⁵ Some authors have ignored the dark setting and grief the disciples were displaying and focused on “the first appearing of the teaching on the secret rapture.”⁶ Others have turned

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14-17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 19.

⁵ Robert H. Gundry, “In My Father's House are many *Movoi* (John 14:2),” *Zeitschrift die für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 58 (1967): 68-69.

⁶ See John F. Walvoord, “Present Work of Christ Part VII: Present Work of Christ in Heaven (Part 5),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122 (1965): 195.

this into a funeral text without first understanding and explaining it in its original context before moving to an application. Jesus was about to return to the Father by way of the cross and the tomb and physically leave the men with whom He had spent three years in personal training. After His ascension and session, He was going to send the Holy Spirit and fully institute the New Covenant Administration that replaces the Mosaic Administration of the covenant of grace. The new covenant in its fullness is grander and more glorious than the old covenant that these eleven weary men were under as they contemplated the permanent departure of their Rabbi.

Lexical Analysis

The Greek word for “rooms,” *μοναί*, is a dwelling place, room, or an abode.⁷ The uses of this term in other Greek literature seems to convey the idea of permanence⁸ and being long-lasting as many commentators have also noted.⁹ The idea of a separate mansion on a hill is totally alien to this term. The Greek and Jewish first century concept was more of a section of a house built onto the father’s house by the son. It would appear to be broader than just a small room—maybe more like an apartment. Jesus assures the disciples that there is ample room in heaven for each of them, and their place there is permanent. These abiding-places are in the Father’s house and metaphorically refer to our spiritual position in Christ.¹⁰

Another significant word in this context is *οἰκία*. This term can mean a house, a

⁷ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 527.

⁸ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts in John*, vol. 3 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 57.

⁹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abridged in 1 vol. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 581.

¹⁰ Gundry, “Father’s House,” 69-70.

dwelling, a household, a family, a lineage, a people, or a nation. One interpretation of this text focuses on its use as a household—the family of God or God’s elect—rather than a place. Gundry writes, “. . . Could it be clearer from context that the first thing we are to think of when reading, ‘In My Father’s house there are many *μοναί*,’ is not mansions in the sky, but spiritual positions in Christ, much as in Pauline theology? Indeed, the larger context of Johannine literature abundantly confirm this understanding. See John 6:56; 1 John 2:6, 10, 14, 24, 27, 28; 3:6, 9, 17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16, in all of which passages *μενω*, denotes present spiritual relationships. . . . This interpretation necessitates revising our understanding of other elements in John 14:1-3. The father’s house is no longer heaven, but God’s household or family.”¹¹ However, Gundry admits that his position above does not exhaust the meaning of this text.

John 14:1-3 contains another instance of intended double meaning in the fourth gospel. But this case is more extended than most. Also, the two meanings illustrate the proleptic theology of John, the tension and the correspondence between the already and the not yet. According to the first meaning Jesus speaks of his going to the cross, his preparing by his death spiritual abodes in the Father’s household or family, his return to the disciples immediately after his resurrection, and the sending of the Spirit to minister his continuing presence until he comes to receive those who are already in him to that they may be with him eternally. And all that anticipates the second meaning according to which Jesus speaks of his going to the house of heaven, his preparing there abodes for believers, his return, and his taking believers to be with him in heaven forever since they have already come to be in him by faith. In the last point the two meanings merge.¹²

Another commentator, Heinrich Meyer, expresses his conviction that Jesus began this section by stating that these dwelling places already exist. There are many abiding places. He sets forth his case as follows:

¹¹ Ibid, 70.

¹² Ibid, 72.

. . . for many the house of God is *destined and established*, and that already ἀποκαταβολῆς κοσμου, Matt. 25:34 [– ὅτι πορεύομαι, κ.τ.λ.] for I go, etc., assigns the reason of the assurance: ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ . . . πολλάι εἰσίν, so that εἰ δὲ μή εἶπον ἂν ὑμῖν is to be regarded as logically inserted. The πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι, κ.τ.λ., however, is an actual proof of the existence of the μοναί πολλάι in the heavenly house of God . . ., because otherwise Jesus could not go away with the design of getting prepared for them in those μοναί a place on which they are thereafter to enter, a place for them. This ἐτοιμάζειν τόπον presupposes μονας πολλας, in which the dwelling-place to be provided must exist. The idea is further (comp. the idea of the πρόδρομος, Heb. 6:20), that He having attained by His death to the fellowship of the divine δόξα, purposes to prepare the way for their future συνδοξασθῆναι with God (comp. 17:24): but “therefore He speaks with them in the simplest possible, as it were, child-like fashion, according to their thoughts, as is necessary to attract and allure simple people,” Luther. – Ver. 3. [Καὶ ἔαν . . . τοπον] Emphatic repetition of the consolatory words, with which is united the still more consolatory promise: *I will come again, and will (then) receive you to myself*.¹³

The term, ἐτοιμάζω, means to put or keep in readiness, to make ready, or to prepare either people or things. It is used only one time in the present tense in the New Testament in Philemon 22 in reference to preparing a dwelling place for Paul. The analogical analysis will site some of the verses it is used in and their connection to the text of study.

“Prepare” (ἐτοιμάζω) often refers to a spiritual work.⁸ Here it refers to Jesus’ accomplishing redemption through His death (the occasion for His imminent going away), a redemption by which believers are brought into God’s household.⁹

⁸ Mt. 3:3; 25:24; Mk. 1:3; Lk. 1:17, 76; 2:31; 3:4; 12:47; 1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Tim. 2:21.

⁹ Approaches toward the above interpretation are made by C. K. BARRET in his commentary on John, R. H. STRACHAN, *The Fourth Gospel*, London 1951, p. 280; and E. C. ENSLEY, in *Interpretation*, 19 (1965), pp. 295ff., but without thorough investigation or development. Dodd comes to a partially similar interpretation only by deleting a futuristic reference to the second advent (op.cit., pp. 395, 403-405).¹⁴

¹³ Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Publishers, 1884), 408.

¹⁴ Gundry, “Father’s House,” 71.

Analogical Analysis

The first Scripture that is both a parallel passage and one that clearly contradicts the popular view that heaven is still under construction is Matthew 25:34. It reads, “then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared (perfect middle participle of ἐτοιμάζω) for you since the creation of the world.’”¹⁵ If the kingdom of heaven was prepared before creation, then it does not make sense that it is at the same time being built for more than 2,000 years. Jesus also said in Mark 10:40, “but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” This verse also gives the impression that heaven is not going through massive changes or even continual redecoration.

The Bible informs us that John the Baptist was challenged with getting people ready for the coming of the Lord. Luke 1:17 states, “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Thus, once the place has been prepared and the people have been prepared, what keeps them from moving into a house? First, the house must be purchased. If someone’s elder brother purchases a place for him, after the deal is closed, he can move into the house. However, this house may have been built fifty years beforehand. Jesus indeed purchased a place in heaven for us by His cross-work.

Another text that speaks directly about heaven is 1 Cor. 2:9. Paul writes, “However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared (3rd singular aorist active indicative of ἐτοιμάζω) for those who love him.’” Furthermore, Heb. 11:16

¹⁵ All English Scripture quotes will be from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

declares, “Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared (3rd singular aorist active indicative of ἐτοιμάζω) a city for them.” The city has already been prepared for God’s people. But on the night of Jesus’ arrest, the purchase price had not yet been paid for them to enter into the Celestial City. He must go to the Father via the cross and the tomb so that He could send the Spirit, pray for His elect, and upon their death, welcome them into His presence to be with Him forever. Likewise, He will come again to take His people to Himself in mass.

Peter speaks about the Christian’s eternal destiny by stating, “and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,” in 1 Pet. 1:4. These terms are normally used for something currently in existence rather than something waiting to be created. Furthermore, John writes in Rev. 12:6 that “the woman fled into the desert to a place prepared (perfect middle participle of ἐτοιμάζω) for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.” Obviously, this is a figurative text, yet it uses this same Greek word to refer to a place that had already been prepared, and the results of that continue until the time of the writing.

Therefore, when one considers the other texts on both heaven and where ἐτοιμάζω is used, it appears that in each case it is referring to a place already prepared for the people of God. The redemptive history time-line, then, should be considered when evaluating the uses in John 14 to determine what type of preparation needs to yet take place on that dark night for these disciples.

In another way Jesus is preparing a place for his people. Heb. 9:24 tells us that Jesus “entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.” Jesus is appearing now before God, for us. The meaning of this beautiful picture in Hebrews may be that he is applying his blood to the holy place, before the presence of God

himself, so that one day we can be there, with him, before the Father. It would be most dangerous to come before the presence of the Father, unless Jesus were there first. We would be consumed by the blinding light, the burning fire, the full zeal for purity and righteousness. But Jesus is there now, applying the work of the cross, making it possible for us to follow with him into the presence of the Father.¹⁶

Meaning Analysis

John 14:1 – “Stop letting your heart be perplexed, believe in God, believe also in Me.”

This section is dealing with the terrible night of the arrest of Jesus. The disciples had the Passover meal and Judas left to betray the Master. Jesus told them He is going away and that Peter will deny Him. He Himself was heavy in spirit and the conversation was difficult. Then, He instructed His disciples to stop allowing their hearts to be perplexed.¹⁷ He followed this command with two additional ones. “Believe in God. Believe in Me.” “Reading ‘πιστεύετε’ both times as imperatively agrees best with the preceding imperative, and with the fresh, direct, hortatory character of the address.”¹⁸ Jesus, as He had done before in this Gospel, verbally made Himself equal with God, and He was. The disciples may have been too depressed to catch the implications of this startling statement from a Jewish Rabbi. Trust in God and trust in God’s Son is the answer for the turmoil in the minds of these eleven men. They needed to do this to survive that night, so their Master commanded them to place their trust in God and in God’s Son, the

¹⁶ Theodore A. Turnau, III, “The Life of Jesus, After the Ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11),” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 399.

¹⁷ “The particle μή is the negative used for hypothetical or hesitant denial . . . With the present imperative it either means ‘stop what you are doing’ or ‘make it your habit *not* to do.’ If the action is clearly in progress, the former meaning is in view.” In David Alan Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 134.

¹⁸ Meyer, *Handbook*, 426.

One still before them.

John 14:2 – “In My Father’s house there are many abiding places, if it were not so, I would have told you. ‘I am going away to prepare a place for you, ’”

The “Father” here is God the Father. Some want to interpret “house” as the universe.¹⁹ That is ignoring the context of this dark night. These eleven men would never have doubted that there was space for them in the universe. R. H. Gundry, as cited above, takes this as the “household of God,” but he admits it has a dual usage in this passage to also mean “heaven.” Many commentators agree that the primary usage here is “heaven” where God’s throne and special presence reside. Meyer gets very specific in his conjecture of what “house” means in this context. He writes, “. . . the οἶκος τοῦ πατρὸς is not *heaven generally*, but the peculiar *dwelling-place* of the divine δόξα *in* heaven, the place of His glorious throne, viewed, after the analogy of the temple in Jerusalem, this earthly οἶκος τοῦ πατρὸς (2:16), as a heavenly sanctuary (Isa.57:15).²⁰ Thus, it seems best to conclude that heaven is in view here, but there may be a secondary meaning that would include the family of God.

The abiding places are most likely spacious sections in the Father’s house. According to Jesus, they are in existence at the time of His speaking. He informed these troubled men that they would have a permanent place in heaven to go to which would in all reality be home for them. Jesus will be with them again in a physical sense. The world was about to reject and treat them as outcasts and aliens. But ultimately, they were not homeless at all. Note that Jesus did not say He

¹⁹ Albert Barnes, *Luke and John: Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), 325.

²⁰ Meyer, *Handbook*, 407.

is going to the Father to construct these $\mu\omicron\nu\alpha\acute{\iota}$. They are already there in the Father's house.

Some versions and commentaries take the next phrase as a question. It may be best, though, in light of the syntax and the second class conditional phrase, to take it as the statement, "If it were not so, I would have told you." Thus, because Jesus did not tell them heaven was full and there was no room; they were not to believe that view for a minute. Heaven was reserved for them. There were just a few things lacking to keep them from being on their "way" to heaven. J. C. Ryle points out that "this is a gracious way of assuring the disciples that they might have confidence that what their Lord said was true. 'Do not be afraid because I am leaving you. There is plenty of room for you in heaven. You will get there safe at last. If there was the least uncertainty about it, I would tell you.' We may remember that our Lord had called the Apostles 'little children' only a few minutes before (John 13:33)."²¹

How do scholars interpret these events? One view can be seen from a Bible scholar who wrote a monogram on the Farewell Discourse:

That very evening, after Judas Iscariot had left the upstairs room, Jesus told his disciples, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going you cannot come" (13:33). But now he assures them of something more: his departure is for the purpose of establishing for them permanent dwelling places in the very presence of God. . . . But what is Jesus actually preparing, and why is it taking him so long? The first few verses of this Gospel have already insisted that the preincarnate Word was God's agent in creation. If he could speak and worlds burst into being, why has it taken so long to prepare a few rooms?

The answer becomes obvious when we closely examine Jesus' words as John reports them: "I *am going* to prepare a place for you." In this Gospel, the description of Jesus' departure—also called his going, his returning to his Father, his

²¹Ryle, *Thoughts*, 62.

glorification, his being lifted up—all refer to one event: his return to his Father by way of the cross and resurrection, with all the redemptive significance embraced by this return. In 14:2, therefore, Jesus is **not** saying, in effect, “I am returning to my Father’s house so that, after I get there, I’ll be able to get the place ready for you;” but rather, “I am returning to my Father’s house in order that **this very return, this redemptive journey, may be the means of preparing the place.**”²² [emphasis added]

From John 13:33 to 14:31, the primary meaning of the terms translated “go” is to go to the cross. “By His going is meant his death and ascent to heaven. The figure here is taken from one who is on a journey, who goes before his companions to provide a place to lodge in, and to make the necessary preparations for their entertainment.”²³ “The coming” after “the going” in many of these texts refers to the resurrection. Some scholars, such as C. H. Dodd, believed that is all that they mean. “Ch. xiv is clamped together by the repeated use of the expression μη παρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία in verses 1 and 27. Ch. xiv linked with what precedes by the recurrence of the theme of Christ’s departure (xiii. 33, xiv. 2, 4, etc.). The whole dialogue, indeed, is dominated by the ideas of going and coming. Verbs expressing these ideas (ὑπάγειν, πορεύεσθαι, ἔρχεσθαι) occur at least fourteen times, with Christ as the subject; and the longest passage without direct reference to going and coming is no more than five verses. This dialogue in fact is occupied with the interpretation of the death and resurrection of Christ.”²⁴ Other scholars point to the fact that “the going” is to heaven and “the coming again” is the second coming of Christ. D. A. Carson wisely puts the two views together. Jesus is going to the Father’s

²² Carson, *Farewell Discourse*, 21, 23-24.

²³ Barnes, *Notes*, 326.

²⁴C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 403.

house by means of the cross and the tomb. Carson writes:

The Farewell Discourse must not be treated simplistically, as nothing more than Christian comfort designed to console defeated saints. Rather, it is first and foremost an exposition of the significance of Jesus' "going way" to his Father via the cross. It is elemental theology; *and only as such does it offer encouragement and consolation*. . . . By now, from all that I have told you, you surely know that the way to my Father's house is, for me, both the way of shame and crucifixion, and the way of glory and resurrection. I have repeated spoken of being "lifted up," of being betrayed, of dying: so you must come to grips with the fact that although I now speak of going to my Father, I am going via the cross. That is the way to where I am going. This you know.²⁵

This is how Jesus prepared (constative aorist, not present continuous action) a place for His elect—by going to the Father by the way of the cross. Now, because of the preparation He has made, we go to the Father by Him. The cross was His "way" to return to His former glory in heaven. He is our way to the abiding places in the Father's house. These are the two distinct ways to heaven cited in this passage.

John 14:3 – "and if I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also."

Once the preparation is made by Jesus' going away (to the cross), He promised to come again. Several grammars list this verse as an example of the futuristic use of the present. The futuristic present indicative is used when a future event is certainly going to occur so as to convey that sense of reality along with the timing of the future.²⁶ Many scholars rightly believe that this text is a reference to the second coming of Christ. Others are convinced that the return in

²⁵ Carson, *Farewell Discourse*, 19, 26.

²⁶ Black, *It's Still Greek*, 107.

view is exclusively Jesus' return from the cross and the tomb. One scholar wrote, "In this context, John probably means not the Second Coming but Christ's return after the resurrection to bestow the Spirit (14:16-18). In Jewish teaching, both the resurrection of the dead (which Jesus inaugurated) and bestowal of the Spirit indicate the arrival of the new age of the kingdom. Jesus explains where he is going and how they will come to be there in 14:6-7."²⁷

Gundry objects to this position. He writes, "Surely the author could not have satisfied himself or supposed his readers would be satisfied that the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Paraclete fulfilled the demands of the clause, ' . . . that where I am [He speaks of going away from them, out of the world, to the Father! — see verses 5, 6, 28] you may be also.' There is, of course, a parallel between the reuniting of Jesus and the disciples through his resurrection and the sending of his Spirit on the one hand and the second coming on the other hand. The former augur the latter, but do not absorb it, not even in Johannine thought."²⁸

Others believe that the text is exclusively talking about Jesus receiving believers upon their death. The death of the believer is not in the context. Even Peter's death is predicted to not be along with that of the Messiah as he will not be going with Jesus. Before the God-Man can go away, He must die. The cross is between Him and the glories of heaven.

Others see Jesus making a number of "comings." They might include the sending of the Spirit, the coming with the Father to indwell the believer by means of the Holy Spirit, Paul's meeting of Christ, and the judgment of the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Regardless of what

²⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 299.

²⁸ Gundry, "Father's House," 69.

one's view on these issues is, all should admit that the context of John 14-16 is referring to Jesus going to the Father by way of the cross, being resurrected from the now empty tomb, and coming back for His people at the appointed hour as well.

Therefore, the answer here may be a double meaning once the context is observed. "Going" is consistently being used for going to the cross or going to the Father by means of the cross and tomb. The coming of the Holy Spirit is also repeatedly mentioned in the broader context of this Farewell Discourse. Thus, the primary "going" is to heaven and the primary "coming" is the second coming. But, in order to go to heaven, the way for Jesus was the way of the cross. He rose from the dead and was reunited with His eleven apostles. But this "coming" and the "coming" of the Spirit do not exhaust the meaning of the text. In the future, Jesus will come for His people as a group and they will be in His special presence from that moment on through eternity. Along these lines, Bishop Ryle makes the following helpful comments:

[I go...prepare...place...you.] This sentence is meant to be another ground of comfort. One of the reasons why our Lord went away, He says, was to get ready a dwelling-place for His disciples. It is the same idea which is contained in the expression in the Hebrews, "the forerunner" (Heb. 6:20; see also Num. 10:33).

The manner in which Christ "prepares a place" for His people is mysterious, and yet not inexplicable. He enters heaven as their High Priest, presenting the merit of His sacrifice for their sins. He removes all barriers that sin made between them and God. He appears as their proxy and representative, and claims a right of entry for all His believing members. He intercedes continually for them at God's right hand; and makes them always acceptable in Himself, though unworthy in themselves. He bears their names mystically, as the High Priest, on His breast; and introduces them to the court of heaven before they get there.

That heaven is a “prepared place for a prepared people” is a very cheering and animating thought. When we arrive there we shall not be in a strange land. We shall find we were known and thought of before we appeared.²⁹

Grammatical Analysis

Translation	Greek Word	Declensions or Conjugations	Lexical Form	Possible Translations
not	μή	particle - negation	< same	no, not
let be perplexed	ταρασσέσθω	3 sg pres pas impr (descriptive) (impr of prohibition)	< ταρασσω	agitate (w/ fear or doubt), perplex, trouble, unsettle
your	ὑμῶν	gen 2 pl (possession)	< ὑμεῖς	you (pl), y'all
--	ἡ	nom fem sg	< same	the
heart	καρδία	nom fem sg (subj)	< same	heart
believe	πιστεύετε	2 pl pres act impr (progressive) (impr of command)	< πιστεύω	believe, entrust, commit to the charge, give credit
in	εἰς	prep w/ acc (position)	< same	into, unto, in, to, for
--	τὸν	acc mas sg	< ὁ	the
God	θεόν,	acc mas sg (dir obj)	< θεός	God
also	καὶ	conj. used - adv	< same	and, even, also
in	εἰς	prep w/ acc (position)	< same	into, unto, in, to, for
<u>Me</u>	ἐμε	1 sg acc (dir obj)	< ἐγώ	me
believe	πιστεύετε.	2 pl pres act impr (progressive) (impr of command)	< πιστεύω	believe, entrust, commit to the charge, give credit

²⁹ Ryle, *Thoughts*, 62-63.

in	ἐν	prep w/ dative, (position)	< same	in, at, for, on, among, within
the	τῇ	dat fem sg (loc of place)	< ἡ	the
house	οἰκίᾳ	dat fem sg (locative of place)	< οἶκος	house, dwelling, household, family, lineage, a people, nation
of	τοῦ	gen mas sg (possession)	< ὁ	the
Father	πατρός	gen mas sg (possession)	< πατήρ	father, ancestor
my	μου	gen 1 st sg (possession)	< ἔγω	my, mine
abiding places	μοναὶ	nom fem pl (pred nom)	< μονή	abiding place, dwelling place
many	πολλαὶ	nom fem pl (adj)	< πολὺς	many, much, great, large
there are	εἰσιν.	3 pl pres ac id (descriptive)	< εἰμί	is (form of be)
if	εἰ	part 2 nd class cond	< same	if (and I did not tell you heaven had no room)
but	δὲ	postposit sub conj	< same	but, and
not	μή,	part of negation	< same	not, no
I told	εἶπον	1 sg aor ac id (culminative)	< λεγῶ	say, tell
would	ᾧν	particle	< same	add “ever”, sometimes untranslatable
you (pl)	ὑμῖν,	dat 2 nd pl (dir obj)	< ὑμεῖς	you (pl), y’all
“ ”	[ὅτι]	sub conj (cause)	< same	since, that, because, “ ”

I am going away	πορεύομαι	1 sg pres dep id (descriptive)	< πορεύομαι	convey, transport, go away, depart, die, travel
to prepare	έτοιμάσαι	aor act infin (purpose) (constative)	< έτοιμαζω	make ready, prepare
a place	τόπον	acc mas sg (dir obj)	< τοπος	place
for you,	ύμῖν;	dat 2 nd pl (ind obj)	< ύμεις	you (pl), y'all
and	καὶ	cord conj	< same	and, even, also
if	ἐάν	3 rd class cond (more probable fut)	< same	if
I go away	πορευθῶ	1 sg aor pas subj (constative)	< πορεύομαι	convey, transport, go away, depart, die, travel
and	[καὶ]	cord conj	< same	and, even, also
I prepare	έτοιμάσω	1 sg aor act subj (constative)	< έτοιμαζω	make ready, prepare
a place,	τόπον,	acc mas sg (dir obj)	< τοπος	place
for you,	ύμῖν,	dat 2 nd pl (ind obj)	< ύμεις	you (pl), y'all
again	πάλιν	adv	< same	again
I am coming	ἔρχομαι	1 sg pres dep id (futuristic)	< same	come, go, pass, enter
and	καὶ	cord conj	< same	and, even, also
I will receive	παραλήψομαι	1 st sg fut mid id (predictive fut) (reciprocal middle)	< παραλαμβάνω	take to one's side, to receive to oneself, to receive a possession or charge
you (pl)	ύμῶς	acc 2 nd pl (dir obj)	< ύμεις	you (pl), y'all
to	πρὸς	prep w/ acc (direction)	< same	to, towards, at, on, beside, against, with
myself	ἐμαυτόν,	1 st sg mas acc (refl prn)	< ἐμαυτοῦ	myself

so that	ἵνα	sub conj (purpose)	< same	in order that, so that, since, because
where	ὅπου	adv	< same	where, in which place, in what place
<u>I</u> am	εἰμι	1 st sg pres act id (progressive)	< same	I am
--	ἐγὼ,	pronoun	< same	I
also	καὶ	conj. used - adv	< same	and, even, also
you (pl)	ὑμεῖς	nom 2 nd pl (pred nom)	< same	you (pl), y'all
may be	ἦτε.	2 nd pl pres subj (futuristic) (purpose)	< εἰμι	is, are

Stop letting your heart be perplexed; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house, there are many abiding places; if it were not so, I would have told you. "I am going away to prepare a place for you; and if I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will receive you to Myself; so that where I am you may be also."

Textual Analysis

There are two textual variants in this text that are insignificant. One is the spelling of παραλήμψομαι which deals with the inclusion or admission of the letter "μ." The other one is the word order of "a place for you" or "for you a place." Neither of these is significant nor give any reason to vary from the text as given in the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament*.³⁰

There are some variants in the Byzantine text family that have ἐτοιμάσαι instead of ἐτοιμάσω in verse three. The copyist may have used the spelling from verse two accidentally or harmonized them on purpose. The other text families, the *Textus Receptus*, and a number of

³⁰ All Greek Scripture are from Kurt Aland, ed. *The Greek New Testament, 3rd ed, cor.* (West Germany: United Bible Society, 1983), unless otherwise noted.

Byzantine manuscripts all have ἐτοιμόσω which is obviously the correct reading. Furthermore, there are two other variants that are slightly more significant to the meaning of the text. The information on these variants is included in the charts below.

Textual Criticism

Preliminary Issues

Alternative Readings	Kind of Variation	Translation
1) ὅτι	addition	since
omitted	omission	--
2) καί	addition	and
omitted	omission	—

External Evidence

Readings	Byzantine Mss.	Alexandrian	Western Mss.	Caesarean
1) ὅτι	K, L, W, X, Π, 1546, 892, 1079	P66 ^c , Ⲭ, A, B, C, Ψ, 33, Cyril, Nonus, Theodoret	D	565, 1071
omitted	Δ, Θ, 1009, 1010, 1195, 1216, 1230, 1242, 1344, 1365, 1646, 2148, 2174, Byz, lect, goth, eth, Chrysostom	P66*, C ² , 1241, it ^e , it ^f , it ^g , Origen	it ^a	28, 700
2) καί	L, N, U, Π, Byz	Ⲭ, B, C, 33	it	
omitted	Δ, Θ, Γ, K, M	A	D	

Internal Evidence

Copyist Pitfalls

Readings	Possible Error in Transcription
1) ὅτι	Added to signify an important quote
omitted	Removed the word signifying a quote because Jesus had been speaking prior to this section, or because a quote sign in this text would be insignificant.
2) καί	Added for transition
omitted	The many <i>kai</i> 's in this section would make it easy for a copyist to leave one out, especially if he had any vision problems.

Author's Issues

Reading	Author's Style	Vocabulary	Theology
1) ὅτι	Yes	Yes	N/A
omitted	Yes		N/A
2) καί	Yes	Yes	N/A
omitted	Yes		N/A

Textual Criticism Conclusions

In the study of these variants, this author concludes that the inclusion of ὅτι and καί has the best external support. Both readings are included in the oldest and best manuscripts and have the widest distribution among text families. The reading καί is also included in the majority of

all available manuscripts. However, the internal evidence for inclusion or omission of these two words is equal. The omissions are the shortest readings, but the inclusion of ὄτι is the most difficult reading for the first variant. The omission of the “and” is the most difficult reading on the second charted variant. Nevertheless, in light of all the evidence, it is this author’s opinion that the inclusion of both variants is most likely closest to the original reading.

Many believe the literary genre of this section to be similar to that of Moses’ farewell in Deuteronomy 31-34.

For the literary character of this discourse, scholars have correctly referred to the genre of the farewell discourse or testament, which was very popular in antiquity, both in the Greco-Roman and in the Jewish world (e.g., in the Old Testament, Gn. 27:1-40; 47:29-50:14; 50:22-26; Deuteronomy 31-34; in the New Testament, Acts 20:18ff.; 2 Timothy 4; and of course the Synoptic farewell discourse, Mark 13 par.). Three elements are dominant in this genre—in keeping with the nature of testamentary farewell discourse: review of the past, giving of instructions, and a look forward to the future, usually combined with words of consolation and admonition.³¹

Conclusion

Therefore, it is this author’s view that heaven has already been prepared. It is a kingdom and a city already constructed. Heaven has been ready for indwelling by the elect of God since before the foundation of the earth. As a matter of fact, many elect are presently there right now.³² The necessary preparation that Jesus was referring to cannot be divorced from His words about the way He must go and the Way we must go to get to the Father. We could not enter heaven

³¹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 481.

³² Rev. 6:9-11 (NIV) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. {10} They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” {11} Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

with glorified bodies if the work of redemption was not accomplished.

There is a divine order to things and Christ is the first-fruits of that order. It was the purchase of our place there which did not occur until the cross-work of the Messiah/Servant was completed. This was the necessary preparation that Jesus was “going away” from His band of eleven to do. Now that the Messiah’s work of redemption is complete, we can say that in every sense, heaven is truly a prepared place for a prepared people.

The question is are we prepared for heaven because we have embraced the One Who is Himself the only Way to the Father’s house? His going away was to a cruel cross. His way was the way of the cross which led to a tomb which led to a throne. His coming again is a sure thing. He now prepares a place for us by His continual intercession for His people. His sinless life and vicarious death made the preparation that was necessary for sinners to enter heaven. He offered His blood to God the Father on our behalf. Now the way to heaven, for sinners, is by Jesus’ death, and not their own. He alone is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Him.

One cheering word is this,—“I go to prepare a place for you.” Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people: a place which we shall find Christ Himself has made ready for true Christians. He has prepared it by procuring a right for every sinner who believes to enter in. None can stop us, and say we have no business there.—He has prepared it by going before us as our Head and Representative, and taking possession of it for all the members of His mystical body. As our Forerunner He has marched in, leading captivity captive, and has planted His banner in the land of glory.—He has prepared it by carrying our names with Him as our High Priest into the holy of holies, and making angels ready to receive us. They that enter heaven will find they are neither unknown nor unexpected.³³

³³ Ryle, *Thoughts*, 58-59.

John MacArthur writes:

The Father's house. The royal palace is Christ's Father's house, in which "are many mansions" (Jn. 14:2). There shall the saints dwell forever. This is the house prepared for all the heirs of glory, even those of them who dwell in the meanest cottage now, or have not where to lay their heads. As the Lord calls His saints to a kingdom, He will provide them a house suitable to the dignity He puts upon them. Heaven will be a convenient, spacious, and glorious house for those whom the King delights to honor.

Never was a house purchased at so great a rate as this, being the purchase of the Mediator's blood; and for no less could it be afforded to them.

Never was there so much to do to fit the inhabitants for a house. The saints were, by nature, utterly unfit for this house, and human art and industry could not make them meet for it. But the Father gives the designed inhabitants to the Son, to be by Him redeemed. The Son pays the price of their redemption, even His own precious blood. Justice gives them access to the house. And the Holy Spirit sanctifies them by His grace; that they may be meet to come in thither, where no unclean thing can enter.³⁴

³⁴ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Glory of Heaven: The Truth about Heaven, Angels and Eternal Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 207-8.

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2 Heaven is a Real Place! Heaven is a genuine place that does exist. Some have trouble visualizing this because of how the Bible describes it. Some have trouble believing it is real because of science and man's knowledge. The Bible says it is a material, spatial place. If it is not real, then the risen Christ could not have ascended to it. Without Heaven, the resurrection is futile. 1 Corinthians 15:17. Heaven is For Real John 14:1-6. 3 1 Corinthians 15:17 (NASB) 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Ostsee literally means East sea in German (or lake, not certain of the translation). And yes the German empire / Prussia extended across most of North Europe before WW1. Which, depending on your preference, could be heaven or hell. KA1N3R 8 points9 points10 points 2 years ago (3 children). in John 14:1-3, the Lord assures us that He is building mansions for us. Many years ago, the Lord took me in a vision to a place in a city beyond compare in beauty. I saw a house under construction which was massive and had many rooms. The laborers were busy working at it. Yes of course there are mansions in Heaven designed by Architects more Superb and whose Intelligence is beyond the comprehension of Man and erected by Builders whose expertise is outa this world !!! Oh yes, I'm gonna get mansions/ "HeavenScrappers"(Beyond earth skyscraper ooo) in Heaven where I am spending my eternal life in Infinite Blessings,infinately ,amen !!! 1 Like. In John 20:23, Jesus tells His disciples, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." The very core of the gospel message is the truth that the way someone has their sins forgiven is by having faith in Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. In Acts 10:43-44, when Peter was sharing the gospel, he said, "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Colossians 2:13-14 says Jesus forgave all our sins. All these passages confirm that Jesus is the one who forgives sin, and He forgives all of our sins. The key to understanding the meaning of John 20:23 lies in the previous two verses: "Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."