

August 31, 2014

Beginning in John Chapter 13, we have the story of Judas Iscariot being identified by Jesus as the one who would betray him. “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.” (John 13:26). [A “sop” is a piece of solid food, like bread, for dipping into liquid, like gravy.] From there, we get to the text for today from John 13 and 14:

- ³⁰ He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.
- ³¹ Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
- ³² If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.
- ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.
- ³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.
- ³⁵ By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- ³⁶ Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.
- ³⁷ Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.
- ³⁸ Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

14 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

²In 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.

³And 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.

⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

⁷If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

So we have here – among other things -- Christ telling his disciples he is about to leave them. They seemed somewhat surprised and hardly knew what to make of it. “Bashful” Peter spoke right up and asked the Lord where he was going. Jesus answers ultimately that he is going to be with his Father where Peter can’t go just now but Peter will eventually end up there, in due time. Impatiently, Peter wants to know why he can’t follow Christ right then and there.

Christ then proceeds to describe the place where his Father is; a place with many mansions. The sad disciples are comforted in learning that such a place has plenty of room for them. In a word, Jesus is telling his followers there is plenty of space for them in heaven – not to worry!

From this we gather –

I. **Heaven (the universe) is God’s house;** and,

While it’s true that places or facilities on the earth are at times referred to as God’s house, and indeed Solomon’s temple was designated as such, the ultimate house of God is heaven, or what we sometimes refer to as the universe or outer

space. Amos 9:6 tells us that God builds **his stories in the heaven** [“stories” there is like a 10-story building, or different levels of a massive structure] and Psalms 104:3 informs us that God **lays the beams of his chambers in the waters**. In recognition of all this, the aforementioned King Solomon said this: **But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?** (1 Kings 8:27).

As to the other parts of creation, God has appointed them to inferior uses, but the highest heaven is represented in Scripture as the house of God – a place God has reserved to himself for his own abode.

Specifically, the Bible plainly says that heaven is God’s dwelling-place. **Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.** (Psalms 123:1). Heaven is God’s palace. In this house of the Great King of the Universe is the Lord’s throne. **The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven.** (Psalms 11:4).

Moreover, heaven is the place where God dwells with his family. God is represented as having a family, and though some of the family members are presently on the earth yet they are considered in that state as being abroad, but all are ultimately going home! **For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.** (Ephesians 3:14, 15). God Almighty has many, many children – sometimes called saints – and they are all said to be a part of His household. To use modern parlance, they are just one big happy family. **Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.** (Ephesians 3:19).

And featured in this heavenly house is a state-of-the-art kitchen and dining table, where his children are feasted in a royal manner befitting the children of a great King. **And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, . . .** (Luke 22:29-30). Inherent in such feasting is this: Timely (when hungry); nutritional; healthy; beneficial to the eater; variety; reliable; attractive and tasty.

Before leaving this point, I want to share with you some amazing facts about heaven I have dug up that might help supplement your own knowledge of this universe:

- a) According to the best estimates of astronomers, 275 million new stars are born every single day;
- b) Olympus Mons on Mars is about 3 times the height of Mt. Everest;
- c) There are up to 400 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy and up to 50 billion planets;
- d) The universe spans a diameter of over 150 billion light years;
- e) There is no such thing as the universe's center;
- f) Its members are in a hurry to be as far away from each other as possible;
- g) When you look into the night sky, you are looking back in time;
- h) A year on Venus is shorter than its day;
- i) A spoonful of a neutron star weighs about a billion tons;
- j) There could be up to 500 million planets in our galaxy capable of supporting life;
- k) There are probably more than 170 billion galaxies in the observable universe; and,
- l) The human brain is the most complex object in the known universe.

II. In this house there are many mansions.

“Many mansions” in the house of God means many seats or places of abode. As in a king's palace, there are many mansions. Kings' houses are built very large with many stately rooms and living quarters. We can learn at least the following from these words –

First, there is room in our Father's house for great numbers. There is space enough in heaven for a vast multitude. **And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.** (Luke 14:22). We are not dealing here with some handiwork of man that fills up and becomes too small and scanty to meet the needs of those living there. In the context of these verses, the

disciples clearly wanted to go where Christ was going. Christ encourages them by assuring them that where he is going there will be plenty of room for them in all respects.

Second, there are sufficient and well-suited accommodations in our Father's house for all the different sorts of persons that are in the world making up the body of saints. Great and small, high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise, bond and free, persons from all nations, tribes, countries and all conditions and circumstances. The disciples themselves – to whom Jesus was specifically talking on this occasion – were in a far different circumstance than Christ. They were His servants, disciples, followers, soldiers, sheep and children. Yet Christ encourages them that there shall not only be room in heaven for Him, but for them too.

Third, this “place” where Christ went was actually built and prepared for a great multitude. When God made the heavens in the beginning, he intended it to be an everlasting dwelling-place for a vast and innumerable multitude. **Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.** (Matthew 25:34). **After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.** (Revelation 7:9). Heaven was built to accommodate this crowd. Heaven was created to be the palace of the great King that keeps a great court with many attendants.

Fourth, there are seats of various dignity and different degrees and circumstances of honor and happiness. There are “many mansions” in God's house because heaven is intended for various degrees of honor and blessedness. Some are designed to sit in higher places there than others and some are designed to be advanced to higher degrees of honor and glory than others. They are all seats of exceeding honor and blessedness; yet some are more so than others. Such is the case for earthly palaces; some apartments are more stately and costly than others, according to the degree of dignity, such as heirs, attendants, stewards, chamberlains and meaner officers and servants. **And he**

saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. (Matthew 20:23). Think of that; these designated positions in heaven are beyond the purview of Jesus and rest solely with God the Father. And there seems to be a relationship between the sufferings while on this earth and the station in heaven. **And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.** (2 Corinthians 1:7).

Secondary application:

Now, I submit to you what I have said represents the primary application of the text. However, some of the words suggest a secondary application, specifically the Lord's church, which certainly can serve as a shadow or foretaste of heaven.

Last week's sermon described in considerable detail the goodness of the church. One of the verses in that sermon that stood out for me was Numbers 24:5: **How goodly are they tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!** (BTW, unlike Yours Truly and a certain Seinfeld episode, the Bible does not lightly utilize exclamation points!) This passage tells us that God's people, rightly in the church, have the best, most pleasant and most delightful living conditions on this earth, and you know it's so. While it certainly is not heaven, it is prime living.

On the other side of that coin, those not in God's truth-filled church are rather miserable, some more than others, but all dead and dying without hope. And at the apex of that misery are the Jews who rejected Christ. *Exit Berlin* gives us a glimpse into the "tents" and "tabernacles" of the exemplified hundreds of thousands of God-hating Jews that managed to escape Nazi Germany (over and above the millions who died). [*Exit Berlin* excerpts].

I love you!