

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
14:1-3

**1. Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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 to myself; that where I am, *there ye may be also*.**

1.--[*Let not...troubled.*] We must carefully remember that there is no break between the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th chapters. Our Lord is continuing the discourse He began after the Lord's Supper and the departure of Judas, in the presence of the eleven faithful disciples. A slight pause there certainly seems to be, since He turns from Peter (to whom He had been speaking individually) to the whole body of the Apostles and addresses them collectively. But the place, the time, and the audience are all one.

Our Lord's great object throughout this and the two following chapters seems clear and plain. He desired to comfort, establish, and build up His downcast disciples. He saw their "hearts were troubled" from a variety of causes--partly by seeing their Master "troubled in Spirit" (13:21), partly by hearing that one of them should betray Him, partly by the mysterious departure of Judas, partly by their Master's announcement that He should only be a little time longer with them and that at last they could not come with Him, and partly by the warning addressed to Peter that he would deny His Master three times. For all these reasons this little company of weak believers was disquieted and cast down and anxious. Their gracious Master saw it and proceeded to give them encouragement: "Let not your heart be troubled." It will be noted that He uses the singular number "your heart," not "your hearts." He means "the heart of any one of you."

Hengstenberg gives the following list of the grounds of comfort which the chapter contains, in systematic order, which well deserves attention. (a) The first encouragement is: to the disciples of Christ heaven is sure (v.2,3). (b) The second encouragement is: disciples in Christ have a certain way to heaven (v.4-11). (c) The third encouragement is: disciples need not fear that with the departure of Christ His work will cease (v.12-14). (d) The fourth encouragement is: in the absence of Christ disciples will have the help of the Spirit (v.15-17). (e) The fifth encouragement is: Christ will not leave His people forever, but will come back again (v.18-24). (f) The sixth encouragement is: the Spirit will teach the disciples and supply their lack of understanding when left alone (v.25,26). (g) Finally, the seventh encouragement is: the legacy of peace will be left to cheer them in their Master's absence (v.27). These seven points are well worthy the attention of all believers in every age and are as useful now as when first pressed on the eleven.

Lightfoot thinks one principal cause of the disciples' trouble was their disappointment at seeing their Jewish expectations of a temporal kingdom under a temporal Messiah failing and coming to an end.

[*Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*] The Gospel words rendered "Ye believe" and "believe" in this place admit of being differently translated, and it is impossible to say certainly whether our English version is right. Some, as Luther, think both words should be indicative: "ye believe and ye believe." Some think both should be imperative: "believe and believe." My own opinion is decided that the English version is right. It seems to me to express exactly the state of mind in which the disciples were. They did, as pious Jews, believe in God already. They needed, as young Christians, to be taught to believe more thoroughly in Christ.

Among those who think that both verbs are imperative are Cyril, Augustine, Lampe, Stier, Hengstenberg, and Alford. Among those who adhere to our English version and make the first "believe" indicative and the second imperative, are Erasmus, Beza, Grotius, and Olshausen.

Let us note that faith, and specially more strong and distinct faith in Christ, is the truest remedy for trouble of heart. But we must never forget that true faith admits of growth and degrees. There is a wide gulf between little and great faith.

Ferus remarks that our Lord does not say "Believe my divinity," but "Believe personally in Me."

Toletus observes that our Lord here teaches that Jewish faith was somewhat distinct from Christian faith. The Jew, not seeing clearly the Trinity, dwelt chiefly on the unity of God. The Christian was intended to see three Persons in the Godhead.

Wordsworth remarks that the verb "to believe" followed by a preposition and an accusative, is never applied to any but God in the New Testament.

2.--[*In my Father's house.*] This phrase can bear only one meaning. It is my Father's house in Heaven--an expression accommodated to our weakness. God needs no literal house with walls and roof, as we do. But where He dwells is called His house. (See Deut. 26:15, Ps. 33:14, 2 Chr. 38:27, 2 Cor. 5:1.) There is something very touching and comforting in the thought that the heaven we go to is "our Father's house." It is home.

[*Are many mansions.*] The word rendered "mansions" means literally "abiding-places." It is only used here, and in the 23rd verse of this chapter, "abode." We need not doubt that there is an intentional contrast between the unchanging, unvarying house in heaven and the changing, uncertain dwellings of this world. Here we are ever moving; there we shall no more go out. (See also Heb. 13:14.)

Our Lord's intention seems to be to comfort His disciples by the thought that nothing could cast them out of the heavenly house. They might be left alone by Him on earth; they might be even cast out of the Jewish Church and find no resting place or refuge on earth. But there would be always room enough for them in heaven and a house from which they would never be expelled. "Fear not. There is room enough in heaven."

Chrysostom, Augustine, and several other ancient writers think the "many

mansions" mean the degrees of glory. But the argument in favor of the idea does not appear to me satisfactory. Bishop Bull, Wordsworth, and some few modern writers take the same view. That there are degrees of glory in heaven is undoubtedly true, but I do not think it is the truth of this text.

The modern idea that our Lord meant that heaven was a place for all sorts of creeds and religions seems utterly unwarranted by the text. From the whole context He is evidently speaking for the special comfort of Christians.

Lightfoot's idea, that our Lord meant to teach the passing away of the Jewish economy and the admission of all nations into heaven by faith in Christ, seems fanciful.

[*If it were not so...you.*] This is a gracious way of assuring the disciples that they might have confidence that what their Lord said was true. It is the tender manner of a parent speaking to a child. "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 called the Apostles "little children" only a few minutes before (John 13:33).

[*I go to prepare a place for 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 like the expression in 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 have been known and thought of before we got there.

3.--[*And if I go...receive you to myself.*] These words contain another strong consolation. Our Lord tells the disciples that if He does go away, they must not think it is forever. He means to come again and take them all home and gather them round Him in one united family, to part no more.

Poole remarks: "The particle 'if' in this place denotes no uncertainty of the thing but has the force of 'although' or 'after that.'" (See also Col. 3:1.)

Many think, as Stier, that the "coming again" here spoken of means Christ's

coming to His disciples after His resurrection, or Christ's coming spiritually to His people in comfort and help even now, or Christ's coming to remove them at last by death. I cannot think so. I believe that, as a rule, when Christ speaks of *coming again* both here and elsewhere, He means His own personal second advent at the end of the dispensation. The Greek word rendered "I will come" is in the present tense and the same that is used in Rev. 22:20: "I come quickly." The first and second advents are the two great events to which the minds of all Christians should be directed. This is Cyril's view of the passage and Bishop Hall's.

[*That where I am, there ye may be also.*] Here is one more comfort. The final end of Christ's going away and coming again is that at last His disciples may be once more with Him and enjoy His company forever. "We part; but we shall meet again and part no more."

Let us note that one of the simplest, plainest ideas of heaven is here. It is being "ever with the Lord." Whatever else we see or do not see in heaven, we shall see Christ. Whatever kind of a place, it is a place where Christ is. (Phil. 1:23, 1 Thess. 4:17.)