

What Is the PLACE that Jesus Is Preparing?

Here is a thorough, revealing explanation of a greatly misunderstood text. Did Jesus say Christians go to heaven?

by Herman L. Hoeh

MANY today believe Jesus told His disciples that Christians will spend eternity in "mansions" in heaven. They quote His words in John 14:1-4.

Did Jesus really say that our reward is a mansion in heaven? Let's see.

What Is the Father's House?

In His Father's house, Jesus said plainly, there were many "mansions." If it had not been true, He said, He would have told us. The Greek word translated "mansion" means in more modern English, *room, a place of staying, an abode, a chamber*. So in the Father's house there are a number of *rooms or chambers*.

But what is the Father's house? What does the Bible declare the Father's house to be?

When in the temple, Jesus said to the Jews who were selling doves and cattle therein: "Make not my FATHER'S HOUSE an house of merchandise" (John 2:16).

Here is a simple Bible definition of the Father's house.

The *temple* at Jerusalem was an earthly type (Heb. 8:5) of the Father's house in heaven. Luke 19:46 and Isaiah 56:7 also quote the Lord as saying of the *temple*: "My house is a house of prayer . . ." So the temple at Jerusalem in Christ's day was a type of the Father's house in heaven.

But did the temple have many "mansions" or rooms and chambers in it?

Certainly!

In turning to Jeremiah 35:2, we read this: "Speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, *into one of the chambers*." In the fourth verse of the same chapter, we notice that different chambers were for persons of different rank. Hanan, a man of God, had his chamber or room "by the chamber of the princes . . . which was

above the chamber of . . . the keeper of the door."

The various chambers or "mansions" corresponded to the ranks of the persons residing in them. Each room of the temple—a type of the Father's house—not only designated the *residence* of each official, but also indicated his *position or office*, whether he was a door-keeper or prince.

Even the Bible commentator, Adam Clarke, notes in his commentary: "Our Lord alludes here to the *temple*, which was called the *house of God*, in the precincts of which there were a great number of chambers." See also I Kings 6:5; Ezra 8:29 and Jeremiah 36:10.

It Is NOT Heaven

Nowhere does the Bible call "heaven" the Father's house. The Father's house *is being built* IN heaven, but it is not heaven! Heaven is never said to have "mansions."

The ancient tabernacle built under Moses had two compartments, the inner, called the Holy of Holies, being an exact picture of the throne of God—of heaven, itself. *It had no mansions*. Read Hebrews 8:5 and 9:1-7 to see exactly what the pattern of heaven is like.

No, Jesus was not referring to heaven. He is referring to a place being prepared *in* heaven.

What Is the Place Prepared?

Now consider the remainder of Jesus' conversation with the disciples.

Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you." We learn from other scriptures that Jesus did go to heaven, to the right hand of the Father, where He now acts as our "High Priest" (Heb. 9:11).

Do you grasp the significance of that?

A part of the function of the office of High Priest is the preparation of a place for each of us as Jesus promised the dis-

ciples. But notice this very carefully: the *preparation* of each place is occurring *in* heaven, but Jesus did not say that the places were a *part of* heaven. A wife may *prepare* her meals *in* the kitchen, but the meals are not a *part of* the kitchen.

Since heaven, the place of God's throne, does not have abodes or mansions, just what are the "places" that are being prepared? Does the Bible give any texts telling us *what* is being prepared?

There are *only two texts* in the Bible which tell us what is being PREPARED. The first is in Matthew 25:34. Here Christ said: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, *prepared* for you from the foundation of the world." The other text is in 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 temple of Jerusalem standing in Jesus' day, was a *type* of the Kingdom of God and the city New Jerusalem.

The Bible says the *only* places that are prepared are the Kingdom of God and the New Jerusalem. Since it is the kingdom and the holy city that are finally *prepared* for us *all*, then what Jesus is preparing for *each* of us must be *our own position in the kingdom and in the new city Jerusalem*.

Now it's plain why Christ alluded to the *temple* as an example of the Kingdom of God and of the new Jerusalem. The temple had rooms which served as offices for the various residents holding different ranks. In the same way, each of us will have our own personal place or office in the holy city, in accordance with how well we use the talents God has given us in this life. The more we overcome in this life, the more honorable will be our place in the new Jerusalem

and the greater will be our office of responsibility in the kingdom.

The Father's House Comes to Earth!

Revelation 21:2 plainly proves that the holy city—the Father's house or home, *since He will make it His place of future residence* (Rev. 21:3 and 22:3)—is one of the two things that Jesus is preparing now in heaven. Both God the Father and His Son have been fashioning it, since what ever the Father does, *the Son does likewise* (John 5:19). Since the city comes down *out of heaven* fully prepared, then it must have been prepared *in heaven*, just as Jesus said He would do.

Notice, too, that the city comes out of heaven. *It does not say that we go to heaven.*

Now let's understand what the Bible says about the kingdom which is in preparation *in heaven*, and which will come to earth. Jesus returned to heaven to receive the kingdom (Luke 19:12). He must be preparing it while acting in the office of High Priest. Since the kingdom is prepared for all of us to inherit, then the particular place Christ is preparing for each of us must be our own position or office in that kingdom. *Place* means *position, office, rank*, as well as geographical location. Our place or position in the government of God will depend on the office we hold. Christ has *first place*, as He is King of kings. We shall all have secondary *places*, lesser positions under Him.

The kingdom of God is the government of God, the members of which are to be born of God. Being born of God makes the entire kingdom, then, the *family* of God. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). That is why Jesus used the ancient temple as a physical type of the spiritual *family* or *kingdom of God*.

Now it is becoming obvious why our place or position in God's government has had to be prepared in heaven by Jesus. We could not receive the Holy Spirit, the only means by which we can enter the kingdom, until Christ ascended (John 16:7). Christ prepares our place or position in the kingdom by being our High Priest, interceding for us and by giving us the Spirit of God. The places or positions—the responsibilities of office—are being prepared by training us to fill those offices. Jesus, as our High Priest, has been calling, justifying and perfecting each of us for His kingdom so that when the kingdom of God comes to this earth (Mat. 6:10), each position or place in it will be fully prepared by having one of us fill that particular office. If Christ were not High Priest in heaven, the kingdom would not be prepared. It would have none to fill its offices.

"I Will Come Again"

Although Christ had to go to heaven He said: "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." Here is Jesus' own promise that He is coming again! Notice, it does not say anywhere in these verses that we go to heaven.

It says just the opposite. Jesus will come to earth!

Jesus will return from heaven in clouds. We are going to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:15-17). At that time Jesus will give us our place or position in the kingdom, according to how well we do with what we have been given. Some are going to have a smaller reward or responsibility because they have not grown spiritually as they ought. Study the parable in Luke 19:12-27.

Having received our responsibilities, we shall descend *with Jesus* to the Mount of Olives that same day. It is that same day that Christ comes to earth, not returns to heaven (Zechariah 14:4). He is coming to set up the kingdom on the earth! Since we inherit the kingdom, we, too, will *be* on this earth, not heaven.

So Christians are not going to heaven after all. We are to be with Jesus here on this earth—"that where *I am, there ye may be also.*" We shall be ruling with Christ on earth over the nations (Rev. 20:4). And after that, the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to the new earth. Even the Father Himself will dwell among us here on the new earth where we shall live and reign forever (Rev. 22:3-5).

No wonder Jesus said the meek shall *inherit the earth* (Mat. 5:5).