

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>Scripture Memory</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>121</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>John 14:1-6</b>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>October 29, 2023 (a.m.)</b>		

### THE CURE FOR TROUBLED HEARTS (Part IV)

The gospel of John puts a great emphasis on the deity of Christ, both explicitly and implicitly. Note the following declarations:

- The Son of God existed in fullness as Son of God before creation (John 1:1-2). Nowhere in the Synoptics is this heightened concept of the person of Jesus to be found.
- John points out the self-identity of Jesus as the “I Am,” the selfsame person as the voice speaking from the bush, the eternal, unchangeable One. In the “I am” sayings of John, Jesus identifies himself as the Bread of Life (John 6:35f), the Light of the World (8:12), the Door of the sheep (10:7), and Good Shepherd (10:11), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), the true Vine (15:1). In two passages, Jesus goes even further by identifying himself as the equivalent of the old covenant “I Am.” He is simply “I Am!” Before Abraham was, “I am” (8:58). You are seeking Jesus of Nazareth? “I am” (18:5-6, 8). In the first instance, the response was a further determination to kill Jesus, since by identifying himself in this way he was claiming to be God (8:59). In the second case, the armed soldiers along with Judas “fell backwards” (18:5-6). Something in the pronouncement by Jesus of his self-identity startled them to the point that instead of seizing him, they stumbled backward. Though not nearly as extensively or as unequivocally, the Synoptic Gospels confirm this dramatic self-identity of Jesus as the one and only “I Am.” When his walking on water frightens his disciples, Jesus responds: “Take heart. I Am! Do not fear” (Mark 6:50; Matt. 14:27). In response to the direct question of the high priest about whether Jesus was the Christ, Mark reports Jesus’ unequivocal answer: “I am” (Mark 14:62). Yet nothing in the three Synoptic Gospels quite rises to the level of John’s repeated, solemn self-identity of Jesus as the eternal, unchangeable “I Am.”
- Approximately forty times John reports Jesus as saying that he was “sent” by the Father, and would return to the Father from whom he had been “sent.” This “sent-ness” and returning underscore the preexistence of the Son. Before anything in this present universe existed, the Son of God existed forever in the presence of the Father. While the synoptic accounts occasionally refer to Jesus’ being “sent” by the Father (Mark 12:6; 9:37 par.; Matt. 15:24; 21:37 par.; Luke 9:48; 4:18, 43; 10:16), nothing compares to the repeated assertion in John that implies the Son’s eternal preexistence, confirmed by his returning to the Father.
- The Synoptic Gospels report many miraculous works of Jesus that reveal various aspects of his person. John’s Gospel records distinctive “signs” that unfold rich truths concerning the nature of Jesus. These “wondrous workings” include Jesus’ turning water to wine at the wedding of Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11); healing of the government official’s son at a distance (4:43-54); healing of the lame man at the pool in Jerusalem (5:1-15); multiplying five loaves to feed five thousand (6:1-15); walking on water (6:16-21); creating sight for the man born blind (9:1-4); and raising Lazarus from the dead (11:17-44). Five of these miraculous works are not mentioned anywhere in the Synoptic Gospels. These miracles in John function as “signs” that communicate far more redemptive truth than simply

the wondrous works themselves. Jesus is the true source of genuine celebration that embraces the whole of human life, including marriage. Jesus lords it over space and time. Jesus imparts sight-giving qualities to bare dirt, just as the first creative act brought humanity into existence from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). Jesus in his flesh is the Bread of Life that alone satisfies. Jesus possesses the power of the Creator that enables him to supersede the natural order inherent in creation; Jesus may delay in failing to rescue fallen humanity from death's curse, as he did initially in the case of Lazarus, but in the end his infusion of life to the dead gives greater glory to God. These penetrating insights into the ongoing relation of Christ as Creator to his fallen cosmos are distinctive to John.

- Jesus' extended words to his disciples on the night of his betrayal in the upper room provide insight into the relation among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (John 13-17). His words also display the vital relation of the believer in Jesus to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These momentous truths find no equal counterpart in the Synoptic Gospels, though they may be present in a more veiled form.<sup>1</sup>

I. **THE FATHER'S HOUSE: OUR HEAVENLY HOME.** The Greek word *monai*, has been translated as "mansions," with good reason. It suggests the imagery of a vast palace with plenty of room for the sons and daughters of the royal family.<sup>2</sup>

- A. **Its Reality.** Note the words "If it were not so, I would have told you so." Here is an example of how the deity of Christ is implicitly stated. This rendering, which retains the conjunction *for* (in "for I go"), yields an excellent meaning: "If in my Father's house there were not plenty room for all God's children, I certainly would have known all about it and would have told you so, *for*, by means of my humiliation and exaltation, I prepare a place for you. This is my mission. Without my death there would be no place for you; without my ascension and the sending forth of the Spirit, you would not be made ready for the place."<sup>3</sup>
- B. **Its Locality.** It is where the Father is and where the Son has come from and to which He will ascend. It is also the place where a vast number of Angels serve the One who sits upon the throne.
- C. **Its Blissfulness.** Christ's words, "Let not your hearts be troubled," is in the Greek text a present tense imperative which implies that the disciples need to stop permitting themselves to be troubled. One of the old commentators captured the essence of this by stating, "That the palace of the Great King should be incomparably splendid, and the habitation of the blessed God (1 Tim. I:11) a scene of unmixed happiness, is what the mind naturally judges. That heaven shall prove an abode of pure joy, a realm of sincere delight for its inmates is what Christ's language implies. There the Father's children will obtain everything that goes to constitute home. 1. *Rest.* After the journeyings, labours, conflicts of life, they shall find repose. In the fullest and sweetest sense of the word they shall rest – from the charges of the law on account of sin (Rom. 8:1, 33), these being forever cancelled and silenced (Col. 2:14), -- from struggles against indwelling corruption, since they will then be blameless and unreprouvable (1 Cor. 1:8), without spot of wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:27), and into the holy city nothing shall ever enter that defileth (Rev. 21:27), -- from conflicts with the world and with Satan, the Father's house being a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13), -- from labours and sufferings in behalf of Christ and His kingdom on earth (Rev. 14:13). 2. *Love.* Without this heaven might be a vast assemblage, a resplendent city, a glittering palace, but it could not be a home. But the Father's house is a home,

*Where hate is not, -- where envy cannot soar,  
And nought save unimaginable love,  
And tenderest peace (a white and winged dove)  
And beauty and perennial bloom are seen. – Cornwall*

A home is not created by mere contiguity in space, unless along with this go interchange of thought and feeling as between them that know, love, and trust each other. Hence in the very idea of heaven it is involved that departed saints shall recognize and communicate with one another and with Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

II. **THE SON'S PROMISE.** When he shall have prepared a place for them, he will “come again;” – that is, when he shall have finished all the arrangements which are necessary for the final “redemption of the purchased possession,” he shall return to our world; and, having collected into one body the whole of his redeemed ones – having raised the dead, and changed the living, so that not only are they conformed to him in spirit, but their “vile bodies are fashioned like unto his glorious body,” – he shall conduct them all to those regions of perfect rest and holy enjoyment which he has prepared for them. “They which are alive and remain” till his coming “shall not prevent,” or get the advantage of, “them which have been asleep” in the state of the dead. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then they which are alive and remain,” having been “changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” so that their bodies, like those of their raised brethren, shall have become spiritual, incorruptible, immortal, glorious, -- “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet their Lord in the air: and so shall they ever be with the Lord.” Thus shall they be received to their Lord, -- cordially welcomed home to the house of many mansions, where they shall forever be with him where he is. Having made his house ready, he will then admit them into it as his ransomed bride, now fitly adorned for her husband. As the beloved disciple did to the honoured mother of his Lord, when from the cross He had set the seal on his filial love and friendship by commending his mother to the care of his friend, he will “take them to his own home.”<sup>5</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** John Peter Lange, in addition to editing the highly-acclaimed, twelve-volume commentary on The Holy Scripture, also wrote a large four-volume work on the Life of Christ. In handling our passage in John 14, he wrote, “This word of Jesus is plain. With the fullest conviction, He declares before His disciples – before His Church – before the future of humanity – that He knows what He is saying when He affirms, I go to prepare a place for you. Thus, were there no future existence, no hereafter, no inheritance above for His people, then He expressly declares that He could not give His disciples a promise of this kind. He has therein most solemnly guarded against the assertions of those who pretend that in this place, as in similar ones, He has only veiled more general religious ideas already existing in the conceptions of the people, or that He has uttered promises in unconscious religiousness of the same kind. We are sure of it, His consciousness on this subject is thoroughly awake and thoroughly defined. He stakes His own credibility on this promise; or rather, He gives His promise as a pledge that there is such an inheritance for them. It is as if He had spoken thus definitely with a distinct foresight of the most remote times. But even His disciples needed this assurance. Therefore He assures them, *I go to prepare a place for you.* And then he adds, *And 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.* They are to regard His departure from them in this light. There is a pure paradisaical sphere in the house of the Father, which is appointed as a habitation for them. He will make this place their home; by His presence He will fill it with Christlike life – Christianize it. Thus He will thereabove labour only for them. And as He prepares the place for them, He will also prepare them for the place. He will constantly come back to them by His Spirit, and fill them with the life of heaven – come again to individuals in the hour of death – come again to the collective Church at the end of the world, when at His appearing the great barrier between time and eternity shall fall down. What they must now grasp and maintain in faith is, that He will wholly live for them when He is parted from them – that He will live to them as if they could see Him. For this is just the Christian mode of viewing the world. Christ lives for His people in heaven, as the security and founder of an everlasting inheritance in the new world. But He knows full well, that in the hearts of His disciples, as in the dispositions of sinful humanity everywhere, many objections arise against this bold way of regarding things by Christian faith.”<sup>6</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> cf. the extended analysis in O. Palmer Robertson's excellent book, *Christ of The Consummation: A New Testament Biblical Theology. The Testimony of The Four Gospels*, I (P&R, 2022), pp. 254-256.

<sup>2</sup> G. A. Turner & J. R. Mantley, *The Evangelical Commentary: The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1970), p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hendriksen, *The New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John* (Baker, 1962), p. 265.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Whitelaw, *Commentary On John* (rpt. Kregel, 1993), p. 314.

<sup>5</sup> John Brown, *Discourses And Sayings of Our Lord*, III (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1990), p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> J. P. Lange, *The Life of The Lord Jesus Christ* III (rpt. Zondervan, 1958), p. 146.