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John 14:2-3: Was Jesus Promising a Future Rapture or the New Covenant Dwelling of God With His People?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† John 14:2-3 has become one of the most frequently quoted passages to support a future rapture. Yet nothing in the context mentions a rapture, an escape from the earth, or believers disappearing into heaven. Jesus was comforting His disciples on the night before His crucifixion by assuring them that His departure would accomplish something they desperately

needed, the establishment of the New Covenant and God's permanent dwelling with His people.

† The key to understanding this passage is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Jesus repeatedly explained that He was going away so the Holy Spirit could come, so the Father and Son could make Their dwelling with believers, and so the promised kingdom could be established. The fulfillment belonged to His own generation, exactly as He promised.

John 14:2-3

In My Father's house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be.

† Jesus wasn't speaking about building heavenly mansions over thousands of years. His death, resurrection, ascension, and priestly work would prepare God's true dwelling place under the New Covenant. (Hebrews 9:11-12; Hebrews 10:19-22)

† The Father's house had always referred to God's dwelling among His covenant people. Under the New Covenant, that dwelling would no longer be a physical temple but the people of God themselves. (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5)

† Jesus promised to come again to receive His disciples into this covenant relationship. That promise was fulfilled in His first-century coming when the Old Covenant passed away and God's permanent dwelling with His people was established. (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34)

John 16:7

But I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I am leaving; for if I do not leave, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

† Jesus explained why He had to leave. His departure wasn't to build heavenly mansions but to send the Holy Spirit to His people. (Acts 2:33)

† This verse explains John 14:2-3. Christ's departure prepared the way for God's permanent dwelling with His people through the New Covenant. (John 14:23; Ephesians 2:22)

† The focus is on Christ coming to His disciples through the promised Spirit, not removing His disciples from the earth. (John 14:18; John 14:23)

John 14:18

I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

† Jesus immediately explained that His coming wasn't intended to leave His disciples waiting thousands of years. He promised to come to them.

† This promise began to be fulfilled through His resurrection appearances and reached its covenant fulfillment through the coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the New Covenant. (John 16:7; Acts 2:1-4)

† The context never changes from comforting the disciples who were sitting before Him that very night.

John 14:23

Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come

to him and make Our dwelling with him.

† Jesus explained exactly what He meant by coming to His people. The Father and the Son would make Their dwelling with believers.

† This is covenant language, not evacuation language. God's promise was His presence with His redeemed people.

† The place Jesus prepared wasn't somewhere believers would travel to, it was the relationship into which believers would enter through His finished work. (2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 21:3)

Hebrews 9:8-9

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,

† While the Old Covenant temple still stood, the full access into God's presence had not yet been revealed.

† Jesus' work would open that way completely, replacing the earthly temple with the greater reality found in Himself.

† This explains why He had to "prepare a place." He was opening access to the Father through His own sacrifice, not constructing heavenly buildings. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the

house of God, let's approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

† Here is the place Christ prepared. Through His sacrifice believers now have direct access into God's presence. (Hebrews 9:11-12)

† The new and living way replaced the Old Covenant system and fulfilled what Jesus promised His disciples. (Hebrews 8:13)

† Nothing in this passage suggests believers are waiting for future access. The way has already been opened through Christ's finished work. (John 19:30; Ephesians 2:18)

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† When Jesus spoke in John 14, the Old Covenant was still standing but nearing its end. (Hebrews 9:8-9)

† Christ's work prepared the New Covenant dwelling of God that would replace the old temple system. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

† This explains why Jesus spoke of preparing a place before the full transition into the New Covenant was complete. (John 14:2-3)

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom

the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

† Paul identified God's true house as His people, not a structure in heaven.

† Believers were being built into God's holy temple through Christ.

† This perfectly matches Jesus' promise that He would prepare a place where His people would dwell with God forever.

Ephesians 2:18

for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

† Christ prepared access to the Father for all who are in Him. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

† The place Jesus prepared is access into God's presence through the Spirit, not relocation to another place. (John 16:7)

† Jew and Gentile now stand together before God because Christ fulfilled His promise. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Revelation 21:2-3

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† Notice that the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. Believers aren't taken away to live somewhere else.

† The climax of redemption is God dwelling with His people.

† This is the fulfillment of John 14. Jesus prepared the place, and God came to dwell with His covenant people forever.

Matthew 24:34

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus consistently placed the fulfillment of His covenant promises within the lifetime of His own generation. (Matthew 16:27-28)

† John 14 should be read with the same audience relevance. The disciples hearing these promises were the ones who would experience their fulfillment. (John 14:18; John 14:23)

† This eliminates the need to postpone Christ's promise for thousands of years into the future. (Hebrews 8:13)

Historical References

† Josephus records that the temple was completely destroyed in AD 70, marking the end of the Old Covenant temple system exactly as Jesus foretold. (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6)

† Eusebius records that the Christians remembered Jesus' warnings and fled Jerusalem before its destruction, demonstrating their confidence that His promises to that generation would be fulfilled. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3)

† The destruction of the temple confirmed that God's dwelling was no longer centered in a physical building but in Christ and His people. (Hebrews 8:13; Ephesians 2:19-22)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't wait for Jesus to prepare another place because His work is finished. (John 19:30)

† We live in the blessings of the New Covenant where God dwells with His people through Christ. (Ephesians 2:22)

† Our confidence rests in Christ's fulfilled promises, not in expectations of promises that Scripture says were near for the first-century disciples. (John 14:18; Matthew 24:34)

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does John 14:2-3 teach a future rapture?

A: No. The context is Jesus preparing the way for believers to enter God's New Covenant dwelling through His death, resurrection, and ascension. The chapter explains that the Father and Son would come and make Their dwelling with believers, not remove believers from the earth. (John 14:18, 23; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:2-3)

Q: What was the place Jesus prepared?

A: The place was access to the Father through His finished work and the establishment of God's permanent dwelling with His covenant people. (Hebrews 9:8-12; Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:19-22)

Q: When was this fulfilled?

A: It was fulfilled through Christ's completed work, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the full establishment of the New Covenant, culminating with the passing of the Old Covenant order in the first century. (John 14:23; Acts 2:1-4; Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24:34)

Q: If Jesus was talking about heaven, why did He later say, "We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him"?

A: Jesus explained His own promise later in the same chapter. Instead of saying believers would go to Him, He said that the Father and the Son would come and make Their dwelling with believers. The emphasis is God living with His covenant people through the New Covenant, not believers leaving the earth. (John 14:23; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:3)

Q: What did Jesus mean by "My Father's house"?

A: Jesus wasn't speaking about individual homes in heaven. Under the New Covenant, God's house is His people, His holy temple, built together in Christ. Jesus prepared that dwelling through His death, resurrection, and ascension. (Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5)

Q: What was the place Jesus prepared?

A: The place was access into the Father's presence through the New Covenant. Before Christ's sacrifice, the way into God's presence had not yet been opened. Through His blood, Jesus established the new and living way for everyone who belongs to Him. (Hebrews 9:8-12; Hebrews 10:19-22; Ephesians 2:18)

Q: If John 14 teaches a future rapture, why did Jesus say, "I am coming to you" before His ascension?

A: Jesus repeatedly promised that He would come to His disciples through His resurrection, the sending of the Holy

Spirit, and the establishment of the New Covenant. The entire conversation was directed to the disciples sitting before Him that night, not to people thousands of years later. (John 14:18; John 16:7; Acts 2:33)

Q: Why did Jesus have to go away before they could receive the promise?

A: Jesus had to complete His sacrificial work, enter the Father's presence as our High Priest, and pour out the promised Holy Spirit. His departure made it possible for God to permanently dwell with His people under the New Covenant. (John 16:7; Hebrews 9:11-12; Acts 2:33)

Q: Does Revelation 21 support the popular rapture interpretation of John 14?

A: No. Revelation does not describe believers being taken away to heaven. It describes the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven and God dwelling with His people. This fulfills Jesus' promise to prepare a place where God would permanently dwell with His covenant people. (Revelation 21:2-3; John 14:2-3, 23)

Q: When did Jesus receive His disciples to Himself?

A: Jesus received His disciples into the blessings of the New Covenant through His finished work, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of God's kingdom. That promise was fulfilled within the generation to whom He spoke, and everyone who is united with Christ today shares in those same New Covenant blessings. We don't wait for the promise to be fulfilled, we live in its fulfilled reality. (Acts 2:33; Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24:34; Ephesians 2:19-22)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† John 14:2-3; John 14:18; John 14:23; Hebrews 9:8-9;
Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:2-3

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical
History, Book 3

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