

# John 14:1-6

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## Limits of the Text

In this text, Jesus comforted his disciples. He explained the reason he was leaving and the way for them to join him.

## Interpretation

This text is a continuation of the last supper that began in chapter 13.

1 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”<sup>1</sup>

While at the last supper with his disciples, Jesus shared some disturbing information with them. One of the Twelve would betray Jesus (13:21), and Peter would deny Jesus three times (13:38). The worst was that he was leaving, and they could not come with him (13:33).<sup>2</sup> No wonder their hearts were troubled! A troubled (ταρασσέσθω) heart is one that disturbed, unsettled, confused, or in a state of turmoil.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus was not immune to this emotion. As the time of his death approached, he said, “My soul has become troubled” (12:27). As he predicted his betrayal, he became troubled in spirit (13:21).<sup>4</sup> Even so, it is Jesus who comforted his disciples by telling them, “Do not let your heart be troubled.”<sup>5</sup> How should they calm their troubled hearts? They should do so by having faith in him.

Translating the second half of the verse is challenging, as the Greek grammar allows for a multitude of possible translations,<sup>6</sup> including:

- You believe in God; you also believe in me.
- Do you believe in God? Believe also in me.
- You believe in God. Do you also believe in me?
- You believe in God; believe also in me.
- Believe in God; believe also in me.

Though all these choices are possible, the last choice is most likely. Good Jewish people, like the disciples, certainly believed in God; that was a given. In the midst of this unsettling evening, Jesus called them to keep their faith in him as well. It’s one

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotes are NASB95 unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> For men who had left everything to follow him, to be told that he was leaving them must have been shattering (Morris, 566).

<sup>3</sup> Arndt, 990-991.

<sup>4</sup> This is the same verb that is in 14:1.

<sup>5</sup> Colloquially: “Don’t allow yourself to be intimidated by the situation” (Borchert, 103).

<sup>6</sup> The verb “believe” (πιστεύετε) can be imperative or indicative. The sentence can be a statement or a question.

thing to have faith in the God who acted in the days of old; it's another to have faith in the Jesus who was about to be betrayed, denied, abandoned, and killed.<sup>7</sup> In every difficult and unsettling situation in life that a Christian faces, the first step is always to affirm faith and trust in Jesus.

2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Jesus had said, "Where I am going, you cannot come" (13:33), so in verses 2 and 3, he gave the reason for his departure: He was going to prepare a place for them to be together forever.

"My father's house" is a reference to heaven. In heaven, there are many places for his disciples to dwell with him. The KJV translates this as mansions, which is very misleading as it implies that they will live in large and luxurious buildings. This word was taken from the Latin Vulgate, where it did not have this idea. The concept of having a mansion may fit nicely with the expectations of Western culture and economics, but it has no biblical warrant. The Greek word (*μοναί*) simply means a place where one stays; it could be translated as a room or an abode. It has a sense of permanency, so perhaps suites or apartments would be the best translation.

Jesus' point has nothing to do with the lavishness of the dwellings but everything to do with the quantity of them. There will be plenty of room for everyone. He didn't say anything about what these dwellings would be like because there was no need. If Jesus would be there with the disciples, then that would be enough!

Jesus' promise to his disciples was an extension of what was typically practiced in their culture. "In Jesus' day, many dwelling units were combined to form an extended household. It was customary for sons to add to their father's house once married, so that the entire estate grew into a large compound...centered around a communal courtyard...In keeping with Jewish patriarchal culture, Jesus, the Son of the Father, establishes his followers 'as members of the Father's household' and 'makes his home accessible to them as a final place of residence'."<sup>8</sup>

The middle of verse 2, beginning with the "if," is a parenthesis in the sentence. In it Jesus simply gave a Jewish oath that validated the truth of what he was saying.<sup>9</sup> Heavenly dwelling places are an absolute certainty.

In order to prepare their dwelling places, Jesus had to go. This is not a reference to his carpentry skills; Jesus was not planning to put on his Bob the Builder outfit and start

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<sup>7</sup> Morris, 567.

<sup>8</sup> Kostenberger, 426-427.

<sup>9</sup> Borchert, 105.

building houses in heaven. Jesus' "going" was his death and resurrection. The "preparation of Jesus for our entrance into that domain was through his 'departure' or death on the cross."<sup>10</sup> The only way that Jesus leads people to be with him always is salvation via the cross and the resurrection.

If Jesus went, he promised that he would come again and take them to be with him. This is a reference to his second coming, specifically to the rapture. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Th 4:16-17). From this point on, they will never be separated again.

4 "And you know the way where I am going."

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

Verse 4 marks a transition to new (though related) subject: How to get where Jesus was going. Jesus asserted that they knew the way to where he was going.

Thomas' reply was honest yet puzzled. They hadn't yet figured out where he was going—see Peter's question in 13:36—so how could they possibly know the way to get there! If they hadn't come to grips with the destination, Jesus' insistence that they knew the way was borderline incoherent.<sup>11</sup> Since it appeared that they were going on a literal journey, they wanted Jesus to provide a roadmap, a way to get from here to there.

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

The key part of Jesus' answer is "the way," because it is the answer to Thomas' question and a clarification of Jesus' previous statement (14:4). The other two parts, truth and life, are supporting part. "Jesus is the way to God, precisely because he is the truth of God...and the life of God."<sup>12</sup>

Jesus is the truth of God. Jesus was truthful, but more than that, he spoke truth (8:45-46). "He embodies the supreme revelation of God...he narrates God...he is God's gracious self-disclosure."<sup>13</sup> He is God's Word, God's Message in the flesh (1:14),<sup>14</sup> and truth came through him (1:17). Jesus revealed God's truth to man.

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<sup>10</sup> Borchert, 104-105.

<sup>11</sup> Carson, 491.

<sup>12</sup> Carson, 491.

<sup>13</sup> Carson, 491.

<sup>14</sup> The writer of Hebrews agrees: "Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son" (He 1:1-2).

Jesus is the life of God. Jesus has life in himself (5:26), and life is found in him (1:4). He is the true God and eternal life (1 Jn 5:20). He has the words of eternal life (6:68). He is the bread that gives life to the world (6:33). Jesus is the resurrection and the life that gives life to those who believe in him (11:25). To believe in Jesus is to have life (3:36). Jesus gave God's eternal life to man.

"Only because he is the truth and the life can Jesus be the way for others to come to God, the way for his disciples to attain the many dwelling-places in the Father's house...and therefore the answer to Thomas' question."<sup>15</sup>

Jesus is the way to God. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). He is the Savior (4:42). To get to God the Father one must follow the right way—early Christianity was called the Way (Ac 9:2, 19:9). Jesus showed people how to get to God and made it possible for them to do so.

No one else reveals the God's truth, and no one else gives eternal life, thus Jesus is the only way for someone to come to God. "Any hint at universalism, syncretistic patterns of salvation, or reaching the Father through any other means than Jesus is here completely eliminated."<sup>16</sup> Peter affirmed this when he said, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Ac 4:12). Likewise Paul wrote to Timothy, "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Ti 2:5).

Of this verse, Thomas a Kempis wrote: "I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way, the infallible truth, the never-ending life."

## Textual Outline

1. Jesus went to prepare a place for his disciples (14:1-3).
2. Jesus is the way to the Father (14:4-6).

## Central Truth of the Text

John wrote John 14:1-6 in order to explain to his Jewish readers that Jesus is way for people to get to the Father's house.

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<sup>15</sup> Carson, 491.

<sup>16</sup> Borchert, 110.

## Teaching Outline

Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. When you talk with people about eternity, sooner or later you must let them know that Jesus is the way to get to heaven. From our text in John 14, we are going to see two reasons why Jesus is the way the heaven.

1. Tell people that Jesus is the way to heaven because he prepared a place for them (14:1-3).
2. Tell people that Jesus is the way to heaven because only he is the truth and the life (14:4-6).

## Works Cited

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