

## A PLACE FOR YOU

It's Sunday morning at church and the pastor, in part of the invitation for people to get involved in the work of the ministry of the church made the following statement: 'If God is leading you to move your membership to our church, then you can be sure that we have a place for you. It has your name on it and God has prepared it specifically for you. There are many areas where you can find a home by letting Jesus work through you by the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life.' That morning Mr. and Mrs. Smith came forward to move their membership to the church.

Monday morning a moving van pulled up to the church and the driver blew the horn on the truck. The receptionist heard the commotion and went out to investigate. The first words out of the driver's mouth were 'Where do you want me to unload this stuff?' Like a good receptionist, she ran to find the pastor. When the pastor got to the truck, a car pulled into the parking lot behind the van and Mr. and Mrs. Smith got out all full of smiles and 'Good mornings!' They're both talking at the same time telling the pastor how thrilled they are to be moving into their place in the church. 'Just show us where to unload all our stuff in our new home.'

Needless to say, the pastor was totally confused. 'There some mistake here. You can't just move into the church building, this is not a condo complex, it's a church!'

'But preacher, that's what you said before we joined,' was the instant comeback from Mrs. Smith. Mr. Smith joined in, 'Yeah, you said there was a place with our name on it that God had prepared especially for us. We are sure that we have found our new home.'

The pastor spent the next hours explaining to the Smiths that a 'place' is not necessarily a physical location, it could be a position or office of ministry. A 'home' is not necessarily where you eat your meals and sleep but it can be used in reference to a ministry or activity where you have invested your life.

### JOHN 14

{ 14:1 } "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

In Psalm 18:6 David said "In my distress I called to the Lord." Calling to God is basic evidence of our trust in Him. The disciples trusted in God as much as they could understand to do so. Jesus came to provide us a clearer revelation of the character and conduct of God, but before we can receive that revelation, we must trust Him (Jesus), also. Therefore, in our distress (when our hearts are troubled) we listen to His words of assurance that bring comfort to our hearts.

The disciples were troubled because Jesus was going to leave them and they thought they did not know the way to where He would be. In our situation, He has promised us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Do we have such a close relationship with Jesus that if we drift away from Him, then we would be in distress if we were not able to fellowship with Him? Would it trouble us?

<sup>2</sup>"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. <sup>3</sup>"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. <sup>4</sup>"And you know the way where I am going."

We have difficulty understanding the work of Jesus beyond His earthly ministry. He went to prepare a place for us. Most of us take what He said about the house with rooms quite literally and we picture some sort of heavenly palace or mansion that has a space for us to live -- pretty much like a super condo complex. My conviction is that Jesus was really referring to something more spiritual and abstract than the condo idea. The Greek word for 'place' (topos) could literally mean 'the condition or station held by one in any company or assembly' or 'opportunity, power, occasion for acting.' Perhaps He was preparing a place of service or ministry in His body (the church) for us. The word 'house' could also mean household. In Paul's writing to the church at Ephesus, he referred to the church as the 'household of God.' Therefore, in the church there are many 'rooms' (perhaps stations or offices) of ministry or service and Jesus has prepared one of these for each and every believer. These ministries were His very life -- His abiding place -- while He went about His earthly ministry. They are still what He is all about. As we put our lives into the ministry of service to which He has prepared for us, we will be living (abiding, mansioning) where He is abiding or dwelling.

The way to get to where Jesus lives (abides, dwells) is the way of self-sacrificing love. We are to love one another as He has loved us. Later on, Jesus used the same word translated as mansion in the KJV in what seems to be a different context. (This Greek word 'monē' appears only in the 14th Chapter of John in verses 2 and 23.) In verse 23 'Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode (mansion) with him.' We see now another part of the 'way' to where Jesus abides. He said He did only the will of His Father. Therefore, the way Jesus showed us is 'self-sacrificing love that is guided by obedience to the word of God.' Notice Jesus said (verse 23) He would come unto us and live with

us. Does this not refer to the promise of the second half of verse three: "I will come back and receive you unto Myself?"

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Thomas and the rest of the disciple were still thinking in physical rather than in spiritual terms. The things of God are spiritually discerned. The very life of Jesus, the essence of Who He is (the way of self-sacrificing love -- God is Love, His word is truth and Jesus is the Word of God, God is the I AM, the essence of being or life, and we know that "in Jesus was life and that life was the light of the world) is the way to the Father.

<sup>7</sup> "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." <sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" <sup>10A</sup> "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?"

To really (intimately) know Jesus is the only way to know God the Father. By experiencing Jesus we get to know Him beyond a superficial acquaintance of only information about Him. We must move beyond the superficial to the supernatural. As we see Him in the light of His glory, then we see all that can be known of God the Father.

Philip was still thinking of a physical picture of God. How can we have a literal picture of a spirit? Jesus came as God embodied in human flesh and by His character and conduct we can see a picture of God.

Are we living our lives in such a way that others can see Jesus in us? It will not be a literal, physical picture of Jesus; however, our character and conduct should be illuminated by the glory of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. People should be able to observe us and conclude that Jesus lives and He changes lives in a supernatural way.

<sup>10B</sup> "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. <sup>11</sup> "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

The words we speak must align with the words of God. This does not mean we have to go around quoting scripture verses. It does mean that the truth and wisdom of God should be the basis of all we think, say and do. If people are hesitant to believe what we say, then our lives must change to testify to the power of the cross and the Lordship of Jesus. Each of us is a miracle of the grace of God.

#### TEST OF FAITH--HOW CAN YOU KNOW IF YOUR FAITH IS GENUINE?

<sup>12</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. <sup>13</sup> "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

The fact that Jesus will do whatever we ask Him to do is what enables us to do even greater things than He had been doing. In His earthly ministry, He was confined to a particular area of the world. In His ministry through the church, He is working in all the world. The limitation in what He will do is "whatever we ask that aligns with His character." If we do not ask, then why would we expect Jesus to act? If we ask Him to do something that is not in agreement with His character and principles, then why would we expect Jesus to act?

#### TEST OF LOVE--HOW CAN YOU KNOW IF YOUR LOVE IS GENUINE?

<sup>15</sup> "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup> "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup> *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

Jesus had just promised the disciple He would do for them whatever they asked. The next question is "would they do whatever He asked (commanded)?"

In the progressive revelation of God we see that John (the Baptist) came preaching "repent." Jesus began His ministry and preached "repent and believe." The evidence of believing (having faith in Him) is that we do what He had been doing (see verse 12). Now, Jesus adds another dimension and that is "obedience." The path is "repent, believe, and obey" -- this is simply the plan of salvation.

First, we have the ability to make choices of the direction we will go. We may not have the ability or power to implement our choice. However, we can repent. Next, God gives to each person a measure of faith. By His grace (the gift of faith) we can believe. Finally, if we are disposed to do what Jesus has commanded (obey), then He enables us to do that by sending the Holy Spirit.

The disciples could see Jesus, but they (nor the world) would see the Holy Spirit. However, they would know Him. The "oneness" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is alluded to by Jesus in that the Holy Spirit was already "with" them since Jesus was with them. (Later the Holy Spirit would be "in" them since the Father and the Son would come to make their abode (mansion) with the believer and doer of the commands of Jesus -- see verse 23.)

<sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup> "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

An orphan is powerless and without resources since His parents are dead. By contrast those who follow Jesus are children of the King of kings. We have access to the riches of heaven and the power of God. The world would conclude that Jesus had died and was no longer a factor (could not be seen). However, those who put their trust in Him, see His influence and power all around them.

The promise that we shall live finds reality in the resurrection and in the new birth. Being in Christ and Christ being in us becomes reality to us. Since Jesus is at one with the Father, then we have perfect access (can come to the Father) to God.

<sup>21</sup> "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." <sup>24</sup> "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

We can appreciate the fact that Judas was having difficulty figuring out how Jesus was going to make Himself known to those that believe and not to others. Jesus had talked about coming back in several different situations. One was that He would come with power and great glory in the clouds of heaven and that all would see Him. If Judas was thinking that Jesus was going to manifest Himself in such a way, then he wanted to know how that would work. Of course, Jesus was talking about a different situation. His coming to His followers would be different from His coming to set up the millennial reign that we refer to as the Second Coming. What Jesus was talking about in this instance was the indwelling of the believer by the Holy Spirit which Jesus equated with Himself and the Father.

In order to participate in the blessings that the Lord has promised, we must be in position to receive the love He offers. To do that we must stop running away from God. We must abandon the idea of "I'll do it my way" and start thinking, saying and acting, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." From the total evidence of the Scriptures, we can know that God's will is that we become a "new race" that was not of the first Adam, but is to be of the second Adam, even Jesus. As such, we become the temple of God in that God is living in us. The marvelous thing about the love of God is that though He is all powerful and knows what is right for us, He will leave the choice up to us. We must choose whether we want Him in our lives or not. If we love Him, then we will want Him to abide with us and He responds with the follow through of the love that He initiated and directed to us in the beginning. How do we make our choice known? Jesus indicated that the evidence of our love for Him is whether we keep His words. We make our choices of whether we will acknowledge God as God or whether we will ignore Him and do things our own way in the situations that we encounter. Do we keep His sayings or do we do something else?

{25} "All this I have spoken while still with you. {26} But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Jesus still speaks to us and teaches us though we cannot see Him physically. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to teach and to remind us of the things of God.

{27} Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

When we know that God loves us, cares for us, knows what is best for us, and has the power to act on our behalf, then we can have an inner quietness that comes from the confidence this brings. Resting in God frees us from anxiety and fear.

{28} "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

Jesus set aside His glory to take on the humility of humanity and now He would return to the glory in which God the Father dwells. The disciples were sad because of their perceived loss with the pending departure of Jesus. They were not considering the greatness of the joy He would experience.

When we are faced with the loss of a Christian friend or relative, we grieve over our loss and sometimes fail to rejoice regarding the joy they will experience in the presence of God.

{29} I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Only God can truly know the end from the beginning. If we want to know the future, then we must seek the counsel of God.

{30} I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, {31} but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave.

The devil was at work in setting up the events to take the life of Jesus. He worked through the Jewish leaders, the Roman government, and Judas Iscariot. The "hold" the devil has on people is sin in their life. Sin is rebellion against God and obeying the devil. Because of the sinful nature of fallen man, the devil has a hold on every person. However, as the devil would discover, Jesus did not have a sinful nature. He was not born of the seed of Adam. Therefore, the devil had "no hold" on Christ. Neither did Jesus sin in His earthly walk which would have provided a situation where the devil could claim some authority over Jesus.

Billions of people in the world today experience the hold of the prince of this world. Jesus came that we could escape the hold of the devil. Those who have died to self and have been born of the Spirit of God can say with Jesus, "the devil has no hold on me."