



Pastor of the  
International  
Baptist Church  
in Cologne Ger-  
many.

**Sermon Brief**  
**Text: John 14:1-6**  
**Title: Our Eternal Home**  
Lorin L. Cranford

Seeking to faith-  
fully proclaim  
the whole coun-  
cil of God in  
scripture!



**INTRODUCTION**

Last Sunday we spoke about the place of eternal damnation called Hell. Today I want to speak of the other eternal place that is called Heaven. In the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, these are the only two possibilities in eternity for all humanity. Every person will wind up in one or the other destinations.

What is Heaven? Just as with the biblical teaching on Hell no single scripture passage covers more than just one or two aspects of the picture. Within the limits of a single sermon not all of the picture can be painted, especially in great detail. But today I do want to sketch out the broad strokes of the biblical picture of Heaven.

A good starting point is Jesus' words to his disciples on Thursday evening before his arrest and crucifixion the next day during the Jewish Passover celebration. Turn with me in your Bibles to John 14:1-6 and hear the words of Christ to the Twelve and ultimately to us today:

1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."<sup>1</sup>

In the fourth gospel account, Jesus had begun that evening speaking about his impending departure from them:

13.1 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

13.33 Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come."

Needless to say, this had become troubling to the disciples who had left home and everything in order to follow the Lord. Simon Peter speaks up asking the questions that all of the disciples had on their minds:

13.36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

Thus our text in 14:1-6 comes as Jesus' response to these questions from the disciples. Jesus sought to reassure them that although he was leaving them for the moment he would return to take them home with him. Out of this text comes deep insight into the 'home' that Jesus was going to prepare for his disciples.

Many years later the Apostle John at the end of the first Christian century will paint another picture of this 'home' under the inspiration of God. This picture is of the heavenly Jerusalem flowing out of the presence of Almighty God. Revelation 21:10-22:6 paints this picture in beautiful detail:

21.10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18

<sup>1</sup>GNT: 14.1 Μη ταρασσεσθω υμων η καρδια· πιστευετε εις τον θεον και εις εμε πιστευετε. 14.2 εν τη οικια του πατρος μου μοναι πολλαι εισιν· ει δε μη, ειπον αν υμιν οτι πορευομαι ετοιμασαι τον οδον υμιν; 14.3 και εαν πορευθω και ετοιμασω τον οδον υμιν, παλιν ερχομαι και παραλημψομαι υμας προς εμαυτον, ινα οπου ειμι εγω και υμεις ητε. 14.4 και οπου εγω υπαγω οιδατε την οδον. 14.5 Λεγει αυτω Θωμας, Κυριε, ουκ οιδαμεν που υπαγεις· πως δυναμεθα την οδον ειδεναι; 14.6 λεγει αυτω ο Ιησους, Εγω ειμι η οδος και η αληθεια και η ζωη· ουδεις ερχεται προς τον πατερα ει μη δι' εμου.

The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. 22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22.1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; 4 they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. 6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

Against the backdrop of ancient Jewish expectation of the eternal order the apostle paints the symbolical picture of the dwelling place of the saints of God with the Lord in Heaven. Out of this picture we also can gain many insights into the place called Heaven. These will supplement the words of Jesus on that eventful Thursday evening before Good Friday.

From John 14:1-6 I want to make two essential points about the place called Heaven.

## BODY

### I. Heaven is the place prepared for the people of God known as disciples of Jesus, vv. 1-3.

1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

14.1 Μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία· πιστεύετε εἰς τὸν θεόν καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ πιστεύετε. 14.2 ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἰσιν· εἰ δὲ μὴ, εἶπον ἂν ὑμῖν ὅτι πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν; 14.3 καὶ ἐὰν πορευθῶ καὶ ἐτοιμάσω τόπον ὑμῖν, πάλιν ἔρχομαι καὶ παραλήμφομαι ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν, ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ᾗτε.

With Jesus' words here came reassurance to the disciples that **he was not abandoning them**. With the events of the Passion Week came increasing anxiety by the disciples that something bad was going to happen. Jesus already for several weeks since they left Galilee had been talking about dying in Jerusalem. The tensions between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had increased dramatically since the formal entry of Jesus into the city on Sunday. Now Jesus tells them plainly on Thursday evening that he is going to leave them, and that they can't yet go with him. In their minds and hearts the future was looking very bleak and uncertain.

Thus the Lord encouraged them to not be troubled deep down within. The issue before them was **a matter of trusting both God and him**. The events taking place were indeed under God's control and would be used to fulfill His plan not only for Christ but for them as well. They needed to reach out to God with new confidence in Him and in what He was doing. It wasn't as though they didn't believe in God or in Jesus prior to this point. This they did deeply, and on the basis of their faith in both the Heavenly Father and Jesus they had left their homes nearly three years earlier to follow Christ as His disciples. But now in this moment of apprehension about the future and especially in the face of Jesus' announcement of his impending departure, they needed to reach deep down within themselves to find new levels of trust and confidence in order to move forward in the face of what would happen during the next few days. They would witness the arrest of Jesus, his brutalization at the hands of the Romans, and his painful death on the cross. Their faith in God would be put to the most severe test ever.

A part of Jesus' reassurance of the disciples was **the pledge he made to them**. Where God dwells is a place with massive space for all the redeemed of God to also live. That place Jesus called "my father's house" (τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου). Heaven is a real home owned by God and is where God Himself lives. It is not a 'state of being', not an utopian phantasy, nor some imagined existence somewhere in space. The

key point made by Jesus is its spaciousness. The “many dwelling places” (μοναὶ πολλαί) means simply that sufficient space is there for absolutely all the redeemed of God. No one will live in a crowded ‘back room’ in second class status! Everyone will have plenty of space to live there with the Father and to worship Him.

From this we learn that Heaven is the dwelling place of God and will become the dwelling place of the saints of God in eternity. One caution needs to be offered here. Sometimes folks focus so much on what they expect to receive as their ‘reward’ that Heaven turns into their own private home, and the central role of God’s presence fades into the background. Nothing of the sort is true.

Heaven is where God is and His continual presence is critical to this place being Heaven. Why? Other images and assertions about Heaven provide insight here.

**A place of rest**, Heb. 4:9-11 (NRSV): “9 So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; 10 for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.”

The people of God in following Christ as Savior and Lord undergo much tribulation and difficulties in this life. Heaven becomes a beautiful place of rest and quietness from all that difficulty. In large part this ‘rest’ comes out of being once and forever set free from the presence of Satan and all the evil of this sinful world.

**A place of safety**, Mt. 6:19-20 (NRSV): “19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus admonishes us to focus on Heaven because of its safety. We who live in a world of crime and danger can look forward to a day when we will be completely free of all danger. No one there will harm us; no political ruler can threaten us; no criminal can rob us; no gangster can try to kill us. A wonderful place of safety is the place called Heaven.

John made this even plainer in Rev. 21:8 (NRSV): “8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” And again in Rev. 22:3-4 (NRSV): “3 Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; 4 they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” The image of Heaven as a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, underscores the safety aspect. In the ancient world cities were where one could find safety. The Heavenly Jerusalem is completely safe for the people of God. Absolutely nothing sinful and corrupt will be present. Heaven is a place of perfect safety for the people of God.

**A better place than here**, Heb. 11:13-16 (NRSV): “13 All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.”

A few people may have a wonderful life on earth, and get to live in spacious homes with a comfortable living. But life on planet earth for God’s people is not really home. We are foreigners and aliens in this world. Our true home is Heaven, and is far better than anything we can experience in this world. This provides important insight into where our priorities should be. They must not be focused on ‘things on the earth’ but on the things of Heaven. This we learned Wednesday evening in our study of Col. 3:1-4:

1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

**A place where God takes care of His people**, Rev 21:3-4 (NRSV): “3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

We will experience the complete presence of Almighty God as His people. John declares that sorrow will not be allowed there. God Himself will wipe away all our tears. Death, mourning, crying and pain will not be allowed.

**A place where we worship God continually**, Rev. 22:3-4 (NRSV): “3 Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; 4 they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” When I contemplate of God in Heaven I am reminded of what many of you have shared with me about worship back home in Africa. The worship services run on for several hours at a time. We Europeans and Americans sometimes have trouble with worship services extending beyond a single hour. Quite interesting is John’s statement in Rev. 4:8b (NRSV): “Day and night

without ceasing they sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.'" The four heavenly creatures continually worshiped God around His throne. And John mentions that the twenty-four elders representing the redeemed of God will do the same (Rev. 4:9-11).

**A place where we will be with Christ forever**, Phil. 1:21-24 (NRSV): "21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. 23 I am hard pressed between the two: **my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better**; 24 but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you." For the apostle **Paul** everything connected to Heaven revolved around being with Christ in full, unhindered relationship. This is what made Heaven Heaven. This was a major emphasis also for the apostle **John** in 1 John 3:2 (NRSV): "2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3 And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."

Nothing should detract us from this desire to be with our Lord throughout the unceasing ages of eternity! The reunion with loved ones and friends in Heaven will be fine. But first and foremost we will get to be with Jesus, and experience Him in all His fullness and glory. And this will never stop.

## II. Heaven can be gained only through Jesus Christ, vv. 4-6.

4 "And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

14.4 καὶ ὅπου ἔγὼ ὑπάγω οἴδατε τὴν ὁδόν. 14.5 Λέγει αὐτῷ Θωμᾶς, Κύριε, οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ὑπάγεις· πῶς δυνάμεθα τὴν ὁδὸν εἰδέναι; 14.6 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ· οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ.

Jesus declared to the disciples that they should know the road that led to where he was going. But in their anxiety they didn't get what Jesus was talking about. So Thomas spoke up to say they didn't know how to get to where Christ was going, in large part because they didn't know where he was headed. Jesus' response in verse six is the key: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." When the goal is to reach Heaven, there's only one way to get there -- through Jesus! Mohammed offers a delusion about how to get to Heaven. It's a shortcut to eternal damnation. Keeping the Torah of God absolutely will banish one to eternal damnation and make Heaven an impossibility. Living a supposedly 'good life' on earth is worthless. Just joining a church won't get the job done. Nor will being sprinkled as a baby have any value in getting you to Heaven.

Jesus is clear, and the path to Heaven is exclusively through faith commitment to Him.

## CONCLUSION

Heaven! All of us seek this as our eternal home. I can't imagine a single person with a functioning brain who would reject the opportunity to gain Heaven as his eternal home. But millions upon millions of people are not willing to hear God's plan on how to make Heaven their home. Countless numbers of people have walked away from this demand of Jesus to come through Him alone if you want to reach Heaven. But this doesn't change the reality. Jesus is indeed "the way, the truth, and the life." If you expect to see God in eternity, rather than the fires of Hell, then come to Jesus today. He is the only way to God!