Fulfilled Prophecies

Was John 14:2-3 A Promise Of A Future Pretribulation Rapture?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† John 14:2-3 is one of the most frequently misunderstood passages in the New Testament. Many Christians have been taught that Jesus was promising to return thousands of years later, remove believers from the earth, and take them to heavenly mansions before a future seven-year tribulation. But is that what Jesus actually said?

† Jesus never mentioned a pretribulation rapture, a seven-year

tribulation, or a future removal of the church in John 14. Those ideas are brought into the passage from a theological system rather than drawn from His words.
† Jesus was speaking directly to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. They were troubled because He had told them He was leaving. His promise was intended to comfort those men by assuring them that His departure would accomplish something wonderful.
† The central question isn't whether Jesus promised His people a place with the Father. He certainly did. The question is what He meant by preparing that place, how He would accomplish it, and when His promise would be fulfilled.
† When we examine John 14 alongside Hebrews, the New Covenant, and the heavenly Jerusalem, we discover that Jesus was describing the restoration of fellowship with the Father through His completed redemptive work, not predicting a pretribulation evacuation of Christians thousands of years later.

John 14:1-3
Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
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.
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 addressed His disciples during their final evening together before His crucifixion. They were troubled because He had announced His departure (John 13:33-36).
† Notice that Jesus said dwelling places, not mansions. The Greek word mone refers to an abode or dwelling place. It doesn't require the interpretation of individual luxury houses being constructed somewhere in heaven (John 14:23).
† Jesus said He was going to prepare a place. He didn't say He was going to build houses. His departure involved His death, resurrection, ascension, and entrance into the Father's presence (Hebrews 9:11-12, 24).
† The preparation was redemptive. Through His sacrifice, Jesus

opened the way into God's presence that had been restricted under the Old Covenant (Hebrews 9:8; 10:19-22).
† His promise to come again and receive them to Himself emphasized restored fellowship and permanent union with Him. Nothing in these verses establishes a seven-year tribulation or a secret removal of believers from the earth (John 14:18, 23).
† Jesus was promising His original disciples that His departure wouldn't mean permanent separation. His completed work would bring them into the fellowship He shared with the Father (John 17:20-24).

John 13:33, 36
Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'
Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, where are You going? Jesus answered, Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.
† These statements establish the immediate context of John 14. Jesus was explaining His departure to the Father, not introducing a detailed schedule of end-time events (John 14:1-3).
† Peter wanted to know where Jesus was going. Jesus explained that Peter couldn't follow Him at that moment, but he would follow later. His words concerned access to where Jesus was going (John 14:4-6).
† Jesus was about to accomplish what His disciples couldn't accomplish for themselves. He would enter the Father's presence through His own sacrificial work (Hebrews 9:12, 24).
† Reading a pretribulation rapture into the next chapter ignores the conversation that produced the promise. Jesus was comforting His disciples concerning His departure and their future fellowship with Him (John 14:1-3).

John 14:6
Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

† This verse explains how the promised dwelling place would become accessible. Jesus Himself was the way to the Father. The issue was access to God, not transportation to heavenly real estate (Hebrews 10:19-22).
† Under the Old Covenant, access to God's presence was represented by the restricted entrance into the Most Holy Place. Jesus removed that barrier through His sacrifice (Hebrews 9:7-8; 10:20).
† The promise of John 14 wasn't that believers would someday escape the planet. It was that Christ would accomplish the reconciliation necessary for His people to dwell in fellowship with the Father (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Hebrews 9:8, 11-12
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,
But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;
and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.
† Hebrews explains what Jesus accomplished by going to the Father. The old tabernacle system represented restricted access to God's presence (Hebrews 9:6-8).
† Jesus entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle through His own blood. His sacrifice obtained eternal redemption and established the foundation for His people's access to the Father (Hebrews 9:12).
† The place Jesus prepared wasn't dependent upon thousands of years of construction. It depended upon His completed sacrifice and priestly ministry (Hebrews 9:24-26).
† The Old Covenant sanctuary system was still standing when Hebrews was written. Its final removal in AD 70 publicly demonstrated the passing of that covenant order (Hebrews

8:13; Matthew 24:1-2).
† From the fulfilled perspective, the covenant transition reached its completion in AD 70. The way into God's presence had been opened through Christ, and the former covenant system had passed away (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Hebrews 10:19-22
Therefore, brethren, 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, His flesh,
and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
let us draw near 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.
† This passage directly explains the preparation Jesus promised. His blood opened a new and living way into God's presence (John 14:2-6).
† Notice that believers were invited to draw near to God. They weren't instructed to wait thousands of years for a secret rapture before fellowship with the Father could become possible (Hebrews 4:16).
† The veil represented the separation associated with the Old Covenant sanctuary. Through His flesh, Jesus inaugurated the new and living way (Hebrews 10:20).
† The Father's house is understood through covenant fellowship and access to His presence. Jesus prepared that access through His sacrifice, not by constructing physical mansions (Ephesians 2:18-22).
† The writer of Hebrews described something already available through Christ's blood. The full covenant transition would be completed with the passing of the Old Covenant order (Hebrews 8:13).

John 14:18, 23
I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.
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.
† These verses are essential because Jesus explained His coming and His dwelling with believers within the same conversation as His promise of many dwelling places (John 14:2-3).
† The word translated abode in verse 23 is the same Greek word translated dwelling places in verse 2. This connection demonstrates that the chapter concerns fellowship and dwelling with God, not necessarily physical houses.
† Jesus promised that He and the Father would come to those who loved Him and make Their abode with them. This is covenant fellowship, not a description of believers being transported into the sky (John 14:23).
† Jesus also promised not to leave His disciples as orphans. His coming to them included His continuing presence through the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18, 26).
† We shouldn't force every reference to Jesus coming in John 14 into one identical event. His resurrection appearances, His presence through the Spirit, and His covenantal coming must be understood within their respective contexts (John 14:18-23; Matthew 24:30-34).
† The chapter provides no evidence for a secret pretribulation rapture. Its repeated emphasis is that Jesus' departure would result in His people enjoying fellowship with Him and the Father (John 14:3, 20, 23).

Hebrews 12:22-24
But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,
to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.
† Notice the words you have come. The writer didn't say believers must wait thousands of years to be raptured before

they could approach the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22).
† The heavenly Jerusalem was already the spiritual destination and covenant identity of God's people through Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:26).
† The church of the firstborn was associated with the heavenly city, the New Covenant, and Jesus as mediator. This was a present spiritual reality for those believers (Hebrews 12:23-24).
† This supports understanding the Father's house as fellowship within God's heavenly household rather than a collection of physical mansions awaiting future occupants (Ephesians 2:19-22).
† The first-century believers were already participating in the heavenly reality that would be fully established with the completion of the covenant transition (Hebrews 12:26-28).

Revelation 21:2-3, 9-10
And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.
And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
† Revelation identifies the New Jerusalem as the bride, the wife of the Lamb. The city represents God's redeemed covenant people, not a literal residential development in heaven (Revelation 21:9-10).
† The central promise is that God's dwelling is among His people. This corresponds directly with Jesus' promise that He and the Father would make Their abode with believers (John 14:23).

† Notice the direction of the vision. The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven. The passage doesn't describe Christians being secretly removed from earth before a future tribulation (Revelation 21:2).
† From the fulfilled perspective, the New Jerusalem represents the fully established New Covenant community following the judgment of Old Covenant Jerusalem in AD 70 (Revelation 11:8; 18:24).
† The many dwelling places promised in John 14 find their covenantal meaning in God's people dwelling with Him through Christ. The emphasis is relationship, access, and permanent fellowship (Revelation 21:3).

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17
For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
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.
† Futurists frequently combine this passage with John 14:2-3 to construct a pretribulation rapture doctrine. However, John 14 doesn't mention a trumpet, resurrection, clouds, or tribulation (John 14:1-3).
† Paul was addressing first-century believers, including those who had lost loved ones. His purpose was to comfort them concerning the resurrection and the coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
† Paul included himself among those who were alive and remained. His language reflects the expectation of that generation, not a promise specifically directed toward Christians living thousands of years later (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).
† The resurrection and gathering belong to the first-century covenantal consummation, understood in the fulfilled

perspective as completed in AD 70 (Daniel 12:1-7; Matthew 24:30-34).
† Neither passage establishes two separate future comings of Christ, one secret and another visible seven years later. That division must be supplied by an outside theological framework (Matthew 24:29-34).
† The promise that believers would always be with the Lord concerns permanent fellowship with Christ. It doesn't require an ongoing expectation of a future removal of the church from earth (2 Corinthians 5:8).

2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8
For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord--we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.
† Paul described an eternal heavenly dwelling that wasn't made with human hands. This connects naturally with Jesus' promise of a prepared place in the Father's presence (John 14:2-3).
† Paul also expressed confidence that being absent from the body meant being at home with the Lord. He didn't teach that believers must await a pretribulation rapture to enjoy Christ's presence after death (Philippians 1:23).
† The fulfilled resurrection hope means believers who die in Christ enter His presence. Their hope rests in His completed redemption, not in escaping a future worldwide tribulation (Revelation 14:13).
† The Father's house is therefore not a promise of earthly luxury transferred into heaven. It is the assurance of eternal fellowship with God through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Historical References
† Josephus, writing in The Jewish War, Books 5-6, documented the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70. His

historical account provides important evidence of the judgment that ended the visible Old Covenant temple order (Matthew 24:1-2).
† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5, recorded the tradition that Christians departed Jerusalem for Pella before its destruction. His account supports the historical setting of Jesus' warnings about Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-22).
† John Chrysostom, in his Homilies on the Gospel of John, interpreted John 14 as Christ comforting His disciples concerning His departure and their future union with Him. His interpretation wasn't a modern pretribulation rapture system (John 14:1-3).
† John Nelson Darby, in the nineteenth century, became a leading advocate of the dispensational framework associated with a pretribulation rapture. His writings helped popularize the distinction between Christ's coming for the church and His later coming in judgment. That framework isn't stated in John 14:2-3.
† These historical references help distinguish the first-century setting of Jesus' promise from later interpretations that developed into modern dispensational theology.

How It Applies To Us Today
† We don't need to wait for Jesus to prepare a place. His sacrificial work is finished, and the way to the Father has been opened through Him (Hebrews 10:19-22).
† We don't need to fear a future seven-year tribulation or prepare for a secret evacuation of the church. Jesus' promise in John 14 never established such an event (John 14:1-3).
† We belong to God's household now. Through Christ, believers have access to the Father and are members of His spiritual dwelling place (Ephesians 2:18-22).
† We have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem through our relationship with Jesus Christ. The New Covenant kingdom isn't something we're waiting to enter through a future rapture (Hebrews 12:22-28).
† When believers die, they have the assurance of being at home with the Lord. Our hope rests in Christ's completed work,

not in an unfinished prophetic timetable (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23).
† The comfort Jesus gave His disciples remains meaningful today. He didn't abandon His people, and His promise of fellowship with the Father has been accomplished (John 14:18, 23).
† We should read Scripture according to its original audience, historical setting, and covenant context rather than importing modern prophetic systems into passages that never taught them (Matthew 24:34).
† The good news isn't that Jesus might someday return to take us to a mansion. The good news is that Jesus has already opened the way to the Father, and everyone who belongs to Him can enjoy fellowship with God now and forever (John 14:6, 23).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Was Jesus promising physical mansions in heaven?
A: The Greek word mone means a dwelling place or abode. John 14:23 uses the same word to describe the Father and Son making Their abode with believers. The emphasis is fellowship with God, not luxurious buildings (John 14:2, 23).
Q: What did Jesus mean when He said He was going to prepare a place?
A: He was going to accomplish redemption through His death, resurrection, and entrance into the Father's presence. His sacrifice opened the new and living way to God (Hebrews 9:12, 24; 10:19-22).
Q: Doesn't Jesus saying He would come again prove a future rapture?
A: No. Jesus didn't mention a rapture or tribulation in John 14. His promise must be understood through His first-century audience, His continuing presence with believers, and the completion of His covenantal work (John 14:3, 18, 23).
Q: What is the Father's house?
A: In this interpretation, it represents God's dwelling and household, where His people enjoy fellowship with Him through

Jesus Christ. Believers are members of that household (Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 12:22-24).
Q: Why does John 14:23 matter so much?
A: Because Jesus used the same Greek word for abode that He used for dwelling places in John 14:2. He explained that the Father and Son would make Their dwelling with believers (John 14:2, 23).
Q: Does John 14 teach a seven-year tribulation?
A: No. There is no mention of seven years, a tribulation period, or a secret removal of Christians anywhere in John 14 (John 14:1-3).
Q: How does Hebrews explain the preparation of the place?
A: Hebrews explains that Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary through His own blood and opened the way into God's presence. The preparation was accomplished through redemption (Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:19-22).
Q: What does the New Jerusalem have to do with the Father's house?
A: The New Jerusalem represents the bride of Christ and the dwelling of God among His people. It reveals the covenant fellowship accomplished through Jesus (Revelation 21:2-3, 9-10).
Q: Was this promise fulfilled by AD 70?
A: From the fulfilled perspective, Christ opened access to the Father through His sacrifice, and the covenant transition reached its completion with the passing of the Old Covenant order in AD 70 (Hebrews 8:13; 9:8; 10:19-22).
Q: What happens to believers when they die today?
A: They are immediately at home with the Lord. They don't have to wait for a future rapture or resurrection of biological bodies to enter His presence (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23).
Q: What is the greatest misunderstanding about John 14:2-3?
A: Turning Jesus' promise of access to the Father and permanent fellowship with Him into a prediction of a secret pretribulation rapture. The passage emphasizes Christ's completed work and His people's relationship with God (John

14:2-6, 23; Hebrews 10:19-22).

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

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Source Index

† John 14:1-3; John 13:33, 36; John 14:6; Hebrews 9:8, 11-12; Hebrews 10:19-22; John 14:18, 23; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:2-3, 9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8.

† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5; John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John; John Nelson Darby, writings on dispensational prophecy and the rapture.

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