

Bite Size Bible Study

Fathers House #125

By Pastor Lee

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

John 14:1-4 KJV

I memorized this verse when I was in Sunday School. I was told that God promised me a mansion where the streets were made of gold. To a little kid or teenager or even an adult this sounds pretty good.

What will it be like when Jesus hands us the keys to our new mansion? One can only imagine! Is this what Jesus was referring to – Just a building? A closer evaluation may reveal an even more exciting theme.

The NIV translation reads: *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

The OJB translation reads: *In the Beis Avi there are many me'onot (dwelling places, permanent residences, homes); if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a makom (place) for you? And if I go and prepare a makom for you, I am coming again and will receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

The misunderstanding of this verse has prompted songs like "I've got a Mansion just over the Hilltop". This great old time classic Gospel Hymn sings to this theme.

I'm satisfied with just a cottage below,
A little silver and a little gold;
But in that city where the ransomed will shine,
I want a gold one that's silver lined.

I've got a mansion just over the hilltop,
In that bright land where we'll never grow old;
And some day yonder we will never more wander
But walk the streets that are purest gold.

Compare the KJV and the NIV versions above. Notice that the underlined words have not changed significantly for over 400 years. This represents that the translators are translating the words according to their theology and not referencing the Hebrew word (or even the Greek) meanings.

When we read this verse within a Hebrew culture we see a very different meaning, and I believe a much more satisfying understanding.

Let's look at the first underlined words. Father's house in the Hebrew is Beis Avi or Beit Avi. While these two words can mean a physical house (Beit), of the Father (Avi), in the culture it is talking about the family that lives within the housing structure, whether it is a tent, cottage, or mansion. The family that is inside the structure is of importance, not the structure itself.

Even in Greek the word **oikia**, (oy-kee'-ah); the word means: properly, residence (abstractly), but usually (concretely) an abode (literally or figuratively); **by implication, a family**: home, house(-hold).

Man builds a house (beit) through his relationship with his wife. Rabbis say a man's house is his bride/wife. The purpose of taking a bride is to build a family. The bride is often given the term of endearment, *bati*, which literally translates as my house. This relationship produces children, which grows the family unit. Death does not break the family relationship. Many Jews feel that they are *Beit David*. Jesus was *Beit David*, from the house (family) of King David.

The word *avi* is the word for father, the one responsible for the whole family (ancestral and living). When it is capitalized, *Avi*, it often means God the Father. So we have God the Father (Avi), who is responsible for all His children, building a family (Beit).

The word rooms comes from the word *me'onot*, meaning dwelling places, permanent residences, homes. Since it is being related to Beit Avi, it probably means a permanent residence (or position) within the God's Family.

Isn't being in the Father's family what we are striving for, rather than a big beautiful mansion?

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