

Going and Coming

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The way the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John has been translated in most popular Bible versions, and, consequently, the way most preachers treat it, leaves the person in the pew with a seriously flawed understanding of what our Lord was conveying to His disciples in that discourse.

Rather than being encouraged to realize---as we shall see---that Jesus COMING WAS CONCURRENT WITH HIS GOING, the average Christian, while taking very seriously the going away of Jesus, seems to take His now-presence with a grain of salt. It's a doctrinal posture that says, "Well, of course, I know He's with us now, but I'm faithfully waiting for Him to REALLY be with us when He comes back again."

And so, when the religiously brain-washed read the 14th chapter of John, they miss out on being drawn by the Spirit of Truth into one of the most tender, sublime and profound truths our Lord left with those early disciples during the last hours before His death. They miss what Jesus was really saying and promising as beautifully condensed in His words recorded in the third verse.

I quote first from the Concordant Literal New Testament: "And if I should be going and making ready a place for you, I AM coming again and I will be taking you along to Myself, that where I am, you also may be."

(Emphasis mine). Did you get the drift of that? "If I should be going.....I am coming....." By going, He was coming. As He went, He came in a new and profoundly wonderful way to those He had been with for over three years.

He had to go as they had formerly known Him, in order for them to know Him as those, joined to Him, and thus one spirit with Him. The process did not involve any travel through space. It did not involve moving from one earthly spot to another one, nor did it involve moving from a distant cosmic point to earth.

I add also the translation of Jonathan Mitchell for the most serious

study: "And if I should journey on and prepare a place in you (for you,) I am repeatedly (habitually) coming again and will take you folks in My arms and receive you to Myself (directing you toward Myself), to the end that where I, Myself, AM you men also can be (may continuously exist)."

The reader can access Jonathan's translation on GEI's web site.

Please note from these two translations that great care was taken to translate the verse without bias, especially in that there is no hedging in regard to the important present tense where other translations bend the Greek to encourage a conclusion that, by some definition, we should expect to be lacking the presence of Christ until a much later time.

As an aside, let me say that, if that were so, there is a serious discrepancy between what Jesus was saying, and what Paul wrote, since Paul was so very emphatic regarding our Lord's presence with us, and that, in no mere poetic sense, but in the most profound sense, as our very life, and we as His very habitation.

Over and over, he directs the church's attention to Christ's real presence in and among us. Picking up on the declaration of the prophet that "...the Lord is in His temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him," (Hab. 2:20), Paul dares to declare that we are that temple:

"...For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell in them and walk among them;...." (2Cor. 6:16 NAS). In what sense are we to think of God being more present than He is in His temple?

How dare we hedge concerning the immediate, full, unqualified presence of the Lord in the face of such a connection by translating and interpreting Jesus' words in a way that encourages the saints of God to become addicted to a hope that centers on some future event, rather than in His coming---not from some distant heaven, but as One who comes to us while/though already present with us. Not only, according to Paul, is He present with us, but He is present in such a way that He is fully identified with us corporately.

How can I say that He is present and yet coming? Well because I understand that, as the Head of His body, He can't be separated from us, the members of that body, and that "coming" takes on a unique meaning in that context. He comes, in that context, by appearing to us, by revealing Himself to us. Come on now, fellow saint!

Think! We don't know Christ after the flesh anymore. When He was known in the flesh, He moved---on most occasions---from one place to another in the conventional way, by putting one foot ahead of the other, but now, as the Life-giving Spirit, He doesn't move in that mode any longer.

Are you still hung up on Jesus traveling through space to get from heaven to earth? Really? If so, maybe it's time for you to start the transition to growing up. Maybe it's time to become skeptical at the adolescent concepts you're being fed. When God sent His Son into the world, how did He do it? I assure you that He did not come as the ultimate superman, flying through space with his cape flying behind him.

Did He have to come from afar to enter Mary's womb, or was He present in her humanness awaiting His birth by her as His coming into the world? He "came" by being conceived and birthed in and by a woman. His conception was a stage of His coming, and His birth was a later stage of the same.

Following Adam's sin, and the entrance of death into the world, as death was passed on to all men, the Seed of God was being passed on also, all the way from Adam to Mary.

That's why Jesus said to His disciples, "Lo, I AM with you always," NOT, "Lo, I will be with you always." Big difference. He is the ever-present I AM. He has never left us or forsaken us. If you have the concept that when sin arrived on the scene, God said, "I'm outa' here," you're badly mistaken.

Recently, in dialogue with Jonathan Mitchell of the above mentioned translation, and our mutual friend, Ed Browne, I used a word that I'd coined years ago when I began rethinking "the coming of the Lord." Ed, a student of Greek, like Jonathan, and also of Hebrew, did a fresh study on the Greek word, "parousia," usually translated as "coming,"

to see if the idea of "presencing" (my coined word) was appropriate to understanding the nature of Christ's "coming."

As it turned out, he found it to be so, for "parousia,"---as he dug out its essential meaning, and then shared his finding with us---turned out to not convey the idea of movement from one place to another, but instead, of something, or someone being "at hand," or "near," even "present." That presence, though, does us no good, unless the One present, "presences," that is, makes Himself known. We have all had the experience of the Lord "presencing." We're going about our day, or gathered with other believers, or in prayer or meditation, and the One who dwells in us "presences."

Before closing out this article, I want to whet your appetite just a little more for this marvelous chapter 14 of John's Gospel. What was Jesus referring to when He spoke to them of His Father's house? Was He talking about some, yet to be revealed, special place way out in space somewhere where God lived? Many Christians still have, to some degree, and in varying versions, concepts not too far removed from that scenario. That's what heaven means to them. A "place" in that sense.

I remember so very vividly once asking the Lord about the nature of the heaven which was His abode. I was thinking of the Lord teaching His disciples about what should constitute true prayer, and that He'd begun with "Our Father Who art in heaven." I asked Him how I was to understand that simple statement.

I don't always get the kind of immediate response that I did that day. With only a few seconds passing, I heard in my spirit, these distinct words: "I dwell in the transcendence of my own glory." Wow! The out-shining of God's glory, becomes God's dwelling place.

That's where Jesus went. Having come from there, He was returning, but now as a Man. He went---including His Humanness---to, and into the transcendent glory His Father. And He went there, not only as the Son of God, but also, as a the Son of Man, the One Manhood that is the totality and essence of all humanity, representing us, carrying us in Himself into that glory until the glory glorified His Humanness, and

ours, in Him, so that we, with Him, could be the glorious abode of our Father.

The One in whom the Father uniquely was at home in, had underwent a process whereby the whole of His Humanity, yes, including His flesh body became one with the glory of His Father, and the Father then lived in glorified Humanness.

You see, God lives in His Son, but the Son includes us. Though God is omnipresent, His particular abode is His only begotten, only generated Son. He is the entirety of the Father's house, and we are the many abodes or rooms within the house. When He went into the glory and His Humanity was glorified, we were glorified with Him, so that where He is, we are also.

We are, in Christ, the transcendent glory in which the Father dwells. In the words of Jonathan's translation of verse three, the "journey" that Jesus took which was a journey AWAY from the disciples, yet at the same time TO them, was a journey, as He said, "to the end that where I, Myself, AM you men also can be (may continuously exist)."

I fellowshiped with some brethren years ago who understood the relationship of the Father and Son to be one of a "mutual abode." In order for the Son provide an abode for the Father, He, the Son, must abide in the Father, for it is in the Father that the Son shares the quality of glory that enables Him to be the Father's abode. The Father is the source of everything the Son is, even to being the Father's house. Isn't that marvelous!

To repeat: The Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son. The Son's home is the Father, and the Father's home is the Son. Being in the Father is what gives the Son the glory content that makes Him the glorious home of the Father. Now isn't that---our participation in this glory--- much better than just "going to heaven some day." I certainly think so.

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