

Do You Have A Mansion In Heaven Just Waiting For You?

An angel was giving a tour of Heaven to three ministers and a lawyer. They drove down the streets of gold beside the river of life and right up to the throne of God. Next, the angel took them around to see their mansions (in a celestial golf cart, of course). Each of the ministers were astounded and elated as they drove by each of their mansions. Then, they went over to the lawyer's heavenly real estate. It was the grandest of all mansions. It was so large and ornate that the preacher's mansions were like outhouses in comparison. All three of the ministers started to protest this great injustice. "We have served the Lord faithfully for many years making great sacrifices in time and money. And now look at the great mansion the lawyer gets compared to our reward." The angel explained, "I know. But you have to understand, preachers showing up in Heaven is a daily event around here. However, this is the first time we ever got a lawyer up here."

Countless jokes have been made about mansions in Heaven. There are also a few songs about it as well. Many a congregation has sung Eugene Bartlett's hymn "Victory in Jesus":

I heard about a mansion He has built for me in glory,
And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea.
About the angels singing and the old redemption story,
And some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory.

There is a Biblical rationality for singing, joking and hoping about mansions in Heaven. In the King James translation of John 14:2, it says: "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."

Now, to be honest with ourselves, when you were growing up you may have envisioned in heaven a palatial house with crystal chandeliers, grand staircases, lots of ornate columns outlining a stately porch and inside more rooms than you knew what to do with. Well, that is what I saw in my mind's eye until I went off to college and was informed that a better concept was that of rooms or dwelling places instead of mansions. At first, my materialistic notions were a bit dissatisfied.

Just think about it, how do you get many mansions inside of a house? The use of "mansions" gives an impression of a grand, spacious house of our own inside of the Father's House. I have seen mansions by themselves on a lot, but cannot conceive of how you put a mansion inside of a house as is rendered in the King James Version: "In my Father's house are many mansions:..." (John 14:2). Do you see the point? John is not talking about large stately manors built inside of a house or even in lots along the streets of gold.

The Greek word *mone* translated "mansions" actually means:

- "Mone (mon-ay); Word Origin: Greek, Noun Feminine, Strong#: 3438 1) a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode 2) to make an (one's) abode." (Strong's Greek/Hebrew Lexicon)
- "mone: a staying, abiding, dwelling, above: Jn. xiv.2," (Thayer, p. 417).
- The Greek term was used to refer to soldiers using temporary tents as they traveled. The English term "was first a place that held soldiers overnight, on their marches" (Joseph T. Shipley, Dictionary of Word Origins, 300).

Many of the newer translations do not use “many mansions,” but “many rooms” or “many dwelling places”

- “In my Father’s house are many rooms...” (English Standard Version)
- “many rooms;” (New International Version)
- “many rooms” (Revised Standard Version)
- “many dwelling places.” (New American Bible)
- “ many resting_places.” (Weymouth’s N.T.)
- “ many rooms” (International Standard Version)
- “rooms enough” (BBE: Bible in Basic English)
- “many rooms” (Montgomery Translation)
- “many rooms” (Goodspeed Translation)
- “many rooms” (Contemporary English Version)
- “many dwelling places” (New American Standard Version)
- "many dwelling places" (New American Standard Version)

Furthermore, many New Testament scholars explain the meaning of the Greek term *mone* in this context:

- “The noun *mone* (allied to *meno*, ‘stay’, ‘remain’) occurs twice in the NT - here and in verse 23. It means ‘a place to stay’, and when it is said that there are many such places in a house, ‘rooms’ is the most natural rendering” (F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, p. 297).
- “...It is commonly understood as affirming that in heaven there is ample room to receive all who will come;...” (Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes, The Gospels*, p. 325).
- “Jesus is preparing rooms in heaven (V. 2) and someday will return to transport his followers there (v. 3).” (Baker Commentary on the Bible, p. 868).
- “The rooms represent abiding-places, symbolic of the ample spiritual provision which God makes for his children.” (New Bible Commentary: Revised, p. 958).
- “‘Mansions’ in the Gk. is actually ‘abiding places,’ speaking of the permanency of our heavenly home.” (Wiersbe’s *Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, Warren W. Weirsbe, p. 249).
- “That picture likens heaven to a vast palace in which there are many rooms, with each assigned a room such as his life has merited.” (William Barclay, *The Gospel of John Vol. 2*, p. 153).
- “The imagery of a dwelling place (“rooms”) is taken from the oriental house in which the sons and daughters have apartments under the same roof as their parents. The purpose of His departure was to make ready the place where he could welcome them permanently.”

Well, then, why is it that the earlier translations of the Greek Bible into English used the term “mansion”? Did they have a misunderstanding or materialistic view of Heaven? Did they not know the proper way to translated *mone*? Or were they just trying to confuse everyone with a mistranslation? Absolutely not! At the time of these various translations the use of “mansions” was most appropriate.

The fact is, words change their meanings over time! They can also have several meanings at the same time. The English word for “mansion” has been used to mean: 1) a large house

or dwelling place; 2) the main abode of a lord, a manor house, such as a governor's mansion; 3) "Any structure or building serving as a place in which to live or lodge, as a house, a tent, etc."(Oxford English Dictionary); 4) a residence provided for a clergyman; 5) a large residential building divided into apartments; 6) a stopping location on a trek ("Herod.in three days time marched seven mansions"Josephus Jewish Antiq. XVI. ix. §2); 7) in astrology a mansion was used of the 28 stages of the moon; 8) the action of abiding or staying in a place; 9) an abode in Hell; 10) a permanent position or state (as in J. Denham's 1667 poem On Cowley: These Poets neer our Princes sleep, And in one Grave their Mansion keep); and 11) in the plural it can refer to apartments in a large house or other building, such as, the numerous chambers in Noah's Ark.

In Webster's the word mansion is commonly used to mean "Mansion, n. [l. Mansio (-onis); a staying, abiding, an abode, from manere, to remain.] ...a large, imposing house, a stately residence....[Archaic.] (a) a dwelling place; (b) [usually pl.] [Chiefly Brit.] an apartment house" (Webster's New 20th Century Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, p. 1097). You see it can mean "an apartment house." It has been used in more recent times in England to refer to "a block of mansion flats."

"'Mansion,' the older translation, has led to very unfortunate misunderstandings. At the time of William Tyndale and the King James Version 'mansion' also, like mone, meant a dwelling place or stopping place. It could also be used of the physical dwelling place or of the manor house of a lord, but these seem to be secondary to the earlier uses as in the Greek. Now, however, we understand a mansion as being limited to a physical dwelling and having specific socioeconomic implications" (The IVP New Testament Commentary: John).

So, "mansion" as used in the King James Version does not mean a large, stately house as we use it today, but it meant a dwelling place. In Britain, about 1607, when the translation was made the term "mansions" (plural) could mean "an apartment house." Thus, again in the Father's house (oikos) are many dwelling places or rooms or apartments.

Note that John also uses mone 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 with him." Perhaps, this is the real spiritual meaning behind the use of the term. God is always wishing to provide a means for His children to be near or close to Him. This is why He had the Israelites build the Tabernacle. "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). This is why we are the Church of Christ. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). And in this verse we are the mone or "dwelling place" of the Father and the Son while on earth, but one day we will be in God's house with many dwelling places for all of God's family. In Heaven, the Father just doesn't want you to live down the street. He wants you to live across the hall.

– Daniel R. Vess