

John 14 – Very great and precious promises. (7) Not orphans. (refs for Bible study 3/1/19).

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. v18. This brief promise by Jesus is deceptively rich. Just seven words in the original, but no promise of Jesus should be despised.

What does the promise say? '*I will not leave you orphans.*' An orphan is alone, without mother or father. Jesus promises not to leave them alone, unloved, bereaved, defenceless, deprived or hopeless.

Why are they not orphans? '*I will come to you.*' Jesus is going, but promises he will come to them. Because he is coming to them they won't be orphans.

Who exactly is this promise for? Is this for the apostles, or for all believers? We don't want grasp a promise that belongs to someone else. The answer depends on answer to the next question.

When was / is this promise fulfilled? To what does '*I will come to you*' refer? Several possible answers. In this long discourse (chp 13-16) he often refers to 'going away'. Sometimes he means the cross. But usually he means ascending to the Father, 14v2, 14v28, 16v28. He also refers to coming back, speaking of three distinct comings:

- **(a) coming in his post-resurrection body?** On Easter day and over the next 40 days, 16v19-22. The apostles were like orphans for 3 days, but then Jesus gloriously came to them.
- **(b) coming by his Spirit?** At Pentecost, and then to each believer at conversion, 14v23. The Spirit of Christ comes to us at conversion, as we commune with him, when we meet with God's people, at the Lord's table, etc.
- **(c) coming in power & great glory?** At his second coming, 14v3. Sometimes it's clear to which 'coming' Jesus refers. Sometimes it's difficult to decide. So which is it here?
Some say **(a)** '*you will see me*', v19. Compare 20v19, 20v26. But that would mean that he did leave them as orphans after 40 days. Others say **(b)** due to the close connection with v16-17, also v23. Compare Mt.18v20, Mt.28v20. Still others say **(c)** pointing to v3 '*I will come*'. But if it refers solely to **(c)** that would leave us orphans for 2000 years and counting! Contrast Rm.8v15.
- **(d) why not all three?** Maybe Jesus deliberately leaves it open to all three meanings. To the apostles: 'I won't leave you distressed at my death'. To them and us: 'I won't leave you bereft after my ascension'. And: 'One day I will return and show the world that you're not orphans'.

What does it mean for us? Christ's coming to us ensures we are never orphans. Immense comfort to every child of God.

You are not alone whatever your circumstances, Heb.13v5. **You are not unloved**, 1Pet.5v7, don't let the devil tell you otherwise. **You are not bereaved**, you have a living elder Brother not a dead hero. **You are not defenseless**, he will always keep you, Jude v24. **You are not deprived**, Phil.4v19. **You are not hopeless**, you have a purpose Eph.2v10, and a goal 1Jn.3v2.