

May 5, 2013
Easter 6

"I See the Heavenly Jerusalem"

REVELATION 21:10-14, 22, 23

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

"And he showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." John was privileged to receive special visions from the Lord that allowed him to see the Holy Christian Church in all her glory as she comes down from God to live forever in the place Jesus has prepared for us.

In the Revelation we agonize with John as he sees the church on this earth suffering from painful persecutions and even more painful false teaching that arises from within the church. We also glory with John every time he receives a vision of the church as she triumphs in glory when Jesus returns.

You are currently living in the church militant, but someday you will be in the church triumphant. It is not easy to be a Christian in these last days. Satan is sure active and well. Our daily battle is not against an enemy with flesh and blood. According to Ephesians 6 we fight against "rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces in the heavenly realms." Who know what dangerous improvised explosive devices Satan has placed in your roadway this coming week? Jesus told us that we have to live on this earth carrying a cross for him. Some days that cross becomes heavy, so very heavy.

Then we pause for rest. We read God's Word. We call on the Lord for strength with simple four word prayers such as "Lord give me strength." And then the Holy Spirit comes to us and lifts our eyes to the future glory that is waiting for us. We know that in the end when Jesus returns everything will be OK. We will transition from the church militant to the church triumphant. I need to see what John saw in his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem and I know you need to see this as well.

I see a beautiful city with high walls

"He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem coming down from heaven from God." Some of the best moments of your

life on this earth are those moments when the Lord carries you away and lifts your eyes to see the amazing place he has planned for you.

John saw the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God. There is an earthly Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem. You can travel to Israel and walk through the streets of Jerusalem. You can see the walls of the ancient city. You can tour the temple mount. You can imagine yourself walking through a city where Jesus once walked. When the Bible speaks to us about a heavenly Jerusalem, it speaks of the Holy Christian Church in all her glory. These are the people who believe in Jesus when he return. It also includes those are raised to life again on the last day. They are caught up to be with the Lord. Then they come down to live forever in the place Jesus has prepared for them, the new heaven and new earth the home of righteousness.

Notice the beauty of this heavenly Jerusalem. "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." The Shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem saw the glory of the Lord shine around them as the angel of the Lord announced the birth of Jesus. Jesus' disciples, Peter, James and John saw Jesus shine with glory of God on the mountain of transfiguration. Someday, dear Christian, you will be in the heavenly Jerusalem and you will shine with God's glory. "The brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." No beauty in this life can compare to the beauty of being in the presence of the Lord and seeing his glory.

John sees the heavenly Jerusalem as a city with a great, high wall with twelve gates. How great and how high were these walls? If you read more verses in this chapter it says the city was 12,000 stadia in length, height and width, a perfect cube, a thousand miles long, wide and high. The walls are made of jasper and the streets are paved with gold. The gates to the city are carved from one massive pearl. The walls are 144 cubits thick or about 200 feet. The gold, the pearls, the precious stones and the emphasis on the number twelve indicate the Holy Christian Church is absolutely perfect and holy. The high walls indicate safety and security at the highest level. When you transition from the church militant to the church triumphant, Satan will have been cast down into the lake of fire. Nothing will hurt you or harm you. You will be save and secure with the Lord forever.

The heavenly Jerusalem is so beautiful compared to all the ugliness we see in this life and even in ourselves. How can I be sure that someday I will be part of this heavenly Jerusalem? Oh, if I look to myself for some assurance of being this heavenly Jerusalem, then I am lost. My situation is hopeless. Look at your life this week. Were there great shining moments that qualify you for citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem? Hardly! What we see in ourselves deserves nothing but God's wrath and punishment forever in the place reserved for Satan and his evil angels, the lake of fire.

Jesus gives you hope. The Revelation tells us in chapter 12 we overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of the testimony. Because of Jesus we can sing, "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there." We can find comfort in the words we read to you last week from Hebrews 12. "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven." It does not say, "We will come to the heavenly Jerusalem." It says we have come.

The night before he died, Jesus prayed to his Father in heaven to give him the glory he had with the Father from all eternity. Then he prayed that we might see this glory and be part of it. He prayed these words for you, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am going, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." Walls over a thousand miles high, streets of gold, pearly gates, foundation stones of precious stones- all picture the perfect love you will share with Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit. Human words are totally unable to communicate the full extent of this glory and this love. How can we begin to comprehend the love Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit had together from all eternity? That love will be our glory when Jesus returns. That future hope allows us to put up with difficult and dark moments as we head into the last days.

I see a foundation of the apostles and the prophets

This beautiful heavenly Jerusalem rests on some very strong foundation stones. "The wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." It also says in verse twelve that "On the gates were written the twelve tribes of Israel." We just heard this past week that construction workers in New York were placing the final portion of the Freedom Tower built at the former site of the World Trade Center. It will be the highest building in the Western World. It took several years for them to lay the foundation for this tall building.

The Christian church is built on the foundation of apostles and the prophets. There were twelve tribes of Israel and twelve apostles. Listen to these words from Ephesians 2:19-20 "Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, but on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. 1 Peter 2 says, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Jesus is the cornerstone, but it is the Word of God that brings us Christ and helps us build our lives on Jesus. God's Word, Old and New Testament, leads us to see where our righteousness fails to measure up to what God expects of us. Romans 3 tells us "No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin." The X-ray can reveal a break in the bone, but it cannot heal the bone. The law shows me how far I have fallen short of God's glory and how much I need Jesus to rescue me. In God's word, the message of the apostles and the prophets, you discover that in Jesus you have a righteousness given to you by Christ that allows you are his beloved Bride. It is so important that the pure teaching of God's Word be upheld in the last days. It is through the Word of God, the foundation of the apostles and the prophets that people are brought into this heavenly Jerusalem.

I see the lamp is the Lamb of God

Great cities of the world have lights in the streets so people can drive and walk at night. There will be no street lights in the heavenly Jerusalem because our God is all the light we will need. John says, "I did not see a temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty

and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord gives it light, and the Lamb of God is its lamp.”

In the heavenly Jerusalem there will be no need of candles, or flashlights, or incandescent bulbs, or halogen lights, or fluorescent lights or LED lights. There will be no need for the sun to shine or the moon to reflect the light of the sun. There will be no temple of the Lord as there was in the Old Testament. There will be no church buildings such as we are worshiping in here this morning. Jesus will give us the light of his glory. We will see him in his glory. “The Lamb will be our lamp.” He will be our light. He will be our glory.

It has been said that the devil can build walls around you, but he cannot keep you from looking up. May your blessed Holy Spirit, your wonderful comforter, show you again and again throughout your life the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Holy Christian Church, the bride of Christ. Then you will find yourself praying repeatedly, “Come Lord Jesus, even so come quickly. Amen.