

The Heavenly City

Book of Revelation

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All right, if you will, look with me in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 21 and we will be reading from verse down to verse 27. I would like to speak with you on this subject of the heavenly city. We hear different ones talking about heaven as a place and certainly if natural minds would read the portion that we are looking at here you might come away with that view, that somehow there is a city up there, a physical city and at a certain time all of that is going to be just lowered down here to earth. But let's remember that the book of Revelation is a figurative book and what we see written in language of men is really designed to teach us of those things spiritually. It is just like when the Lord told Moses to build that tabernacle, to build it exactly as he instructed. It is because it represented things heavenly. And that is what we are going to see here.

I would have us, by God's grace, not be thinking in terms of material things or a physical city, but what this represents and here in Revelation 21 beginning with verse 22 we see this revelation given to John. He said:

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.¹

Now up to this point in the last message we have seen this city represented as a strong city with a strong foundation. And, again, that is a picture of Christ. The foundation. There is no other foundation that can be laid than that which is Christ. We have seen that strong wall which represents the salvation that the Lord Jesus Christ procured. And stately gates, a gate with a pearl. Christ is the pearl of great price. He is the gate. He is the

¹ Revelation 21:22-27.

door, the way in and the glorious guards, those which are designed to keep out any who are not the Lord's by his grace and by that redemption that Christ wrought.

So to now in this chapter we have been looking from the outside in. On this particular portion that I have just read for you, we are led through the gates into the city itself. And here is a marvelous lesson that we see. The first thing to be observed here in verse 21 is the street of the city. It is described in verse 21, which I did not read, but I will go back to being:

“...of pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”²

Now here, again, people get all excited. They talk about the streets of gold and they talk about it almost as something visual that you would look at when you go on vacation somewhere and the way it is preached is imagine a place where there is nothing but gold everywhere. And what preachers do is excite people's material emotions and thinking about, wow, what a rich place. Maybe I am poor here, but there everything is gold. Can you imagine how rich it is going to be? This is how heaven is sold by hucksters, by false preachers.

No, everything here has a significance. And, I believe in the context when you understand what heaven is, or should I say who heaven is, because when Christ said to that thief on the cross that day when he said, “Remember me when you come I your kingdom,” he said, “Today you shall be with me in paradise.” It is all about Christ. And the streets of gold represent his glory. And when you think about what it is to be in this fleshy and to walk in this earth, even as Christ described needing to wash Peter's feet, you cannot walk in this world without sullyng your feet. Everything about this world is depraved and fallen.

And yet in contrast here the saints, the glorified ones, the ones who have been declared righteous by God the Father because of that imputed work of Christ, they tread upon gold. Gold streets represent that which does not have dust, nothing with which to sully our feet. It is a perfect environment, pure. We talk about pure as gold and certainly that is what is depicted here.

Now heaven is a place of rest. We rest in Christ. But it is not a rest in the sense of being inactive. You know, for me even in this life when people say, “Did you get some rest this weekend?” I did. It doesn't mean I laid in bed the whole weekend. For some that is their idea of rest, it is just a couch potato. Just lay there. I don't rest that way. I am about doing things that are different than I normally do and I am resting in doing them, but it is doing things that you enjoy. And I wanted you to see here that when it speaks of streets of gold, this a place where there is life. And you can see there in verse 24, for example, when it says:

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk...”³

² Revelation 21:21.

³ Revelation 21:24.

That is activity. There is a direction. There is an enjoyment.

“...they shall walk in the light of it.”⁴

And so there is communion not only with God, but with one another. I don't know how that will be. A lot of people speak as if as soon as they get to heaven they are going to look for so and so and so and so. I don't believe that is the case. Our desire, our focus is going to be worshipping Christ and seeing him. Certainly there will be a rejoicing in glory with others that he has redeemed. I think of the Mount of Transfiguration when the disciples were there with Christ. He was transfigured before them. But it says that Elijah and Moses appeared in glory and talked of the death that the Lord should accomplish.

To me this is the subject of heaven. It doesn't change. And worthy is the Lamb that was slain. He will be the subject of glory for eternity. But every step when you think of walking, every activity will be based upon that righteousness, that pureness which the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for his people. That is why it speaks of pure gold in verse 21, as it were transparent glass, clear, clear glass.

So there is an active walk, but there is also an active worship. In verse 22:

“And I saw no temple therein.”⁵

Now this is going to be difficult for religious people, because they can't live without a building. They can't live without ceremonies. They can't live without something physical in their minds because they are natural minded. But here in glory is no material temple. There is no building that this been made with men's hands. As beautiful as that temple of Solomon was, the Lord destroyed it. As beautiful as the temple of Zerubbabel, when they rebuilt after the 70 years, was, and even the disciples in the day of Christ, because Herod had added on to it, they remarked how beautiful it was. And what did our Lord say? There is coming a day when not one stone will remain upon another. It will all be destroyed. And he said, “Destroy this temple,” he was speaking of his body, “And in three days I will raise it again.”

And certainly that has been the case. Ever since 70 AD that temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed and there are a bunch of well wishers over there still. There is a bunch of congregations here in the United States that still send money over there to a fund for the rebuilding of that temple. I can't imagine what they have done with this money. When you consider how many years since 1948 when Israel was reestablished all the way to today, you think of how much money has gone somewhere over there for the rebuilding of a temple, who is getting the interest on all that?

And yet how foolish to think that God would be in such a place. Here we see it described

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Revelation 21:22.

as a place where there is no temple. No physical building made with hands and here is the reason. What does it say? Verse 22.

“...for the Lord God Almighty...”⁶

And the word “and” is the word “even” in the originally.

“...[even] the Lamb are the temple of it.”⁷

Here is the place where those that are the Lord’s do not need any ordinances. There are some people today that can’t worship. They can’t come to a place like we meet in. I have had some tell me that. It doesn’t look like a church building. And I am saying, “Well, what is a church building supposed to look like?”

I have told you the story of a man that was to come here and spray around to kill the bugs and I was sitting in my study waiting for him and he kept calling and says, “What is your address again?”

I said, “2970 Baird Road.”

He said, “I have been up and down Baird Road. I do not see a church.”

And I said, “Well, don’t look for a building with a steeple.” I said, “In fact, our looks like a regular old building. It is probably about the size of the old tabernacle in the wilderness used to be. And it has got the address right on the side of the building.”

And he said, “Oh.” He said, “I see it. I am right across the street.”

He was parked over here calling me. I got up and went to the door and sure enough he came in. People’s conception of what a church building should be like would not be comfortable in heaven. They are a lot of people who talk about heaven ain’t going there. They wouldn’t be comfortable because men’s works are not preached there. There is only one work. It is the work of Christ. And no physical, visible things that men are accustomed to in their worship because of idolatry. That is really what idolatry is, having to have crosses hanging different places and pictures of a so-called Jesus.

You know, I had one man argue. He said, “Well, we don’t worship these things.”

Well, why are they in a place of worship?

Here the Lord’s people, their hearts being drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ alone they find all of their fellowship in him. And this is truly heaven. It is to worship in that place where Christ is all. And when you think of him being the temple, I mean, he is the sacrifice, he

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

is the high priest, he is all in this matter of worship. And all of the godhead dwells in him bodily.

So that is the first thing we see in this city is the street paved in gold representative, again, of perfection, no sin and the pure worship. Even now our hearts are divided. We come for worship, but we have to ask the Lord to help us to see Christ and to come before him in all of his glory and yet in our minds are divided already thinking about what we are going to do afterward, where we are going to go, how we are going to pay the bills, how we are going to take care of this, how we are going to do that. Here perfect worship where none of that will be an issue.

But, secondly, I see here the light of this city. There is no temple therein. Christ himself is the temple, the Lamb, but verse 23:

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”⁸

There we see the deity of Christ. The glory of God, the Lamb is the light thereof. The Lamb is God. And when you think about heaven it is the inheritance of the saints in light is the way the apostle Paul wrote about it. But the light is Christ. And I have often said that the Revelation of Christ in the heart of a sinner is heaven on earth. There is not really going to be any difference between now and then other than then I will not be burdened down with this body of sin and depravity. But as far as Christ, he is the same, yesterday, today and forever. The light which has been revealed in a sinner's heart, one that Christ has redeemed is that same light that will continue to shine throughout eternity. I truly believe that those that are the Lord's that he has redeemed and the Spirit has taught, when they wake up in glory they are not going to be any surprise that Christ was different than what the light of his Word and the light of his Spirit had revealed. It will just be a fuller manifestation. It is like when you meet somebody for the first time and you have seen their pictures all along. And in a crowd suddenly you pick them out and someone says you look exactly like your picture. You look exactly like I have imagined. That is the way it will be in glory.

In contrast to many who have been preached a false Christ and rather than wake up in glory they wake up in judgment and to their shock and to their amazement the very Christ that they had been preached doesn't exist. There is another Jesus, Paul said, that is being preached, another Christ. But for those that are the Lord's there will be no surprises. Here it says the glory of God did lighten it.

Again, these are biblical terms when you stop and think of the Word glory. It takes you all the way back to the Old Testament, doesn't it? The Shekinah glory that was the very glorious presence of God that filled that temple, the temple of Solomon, shone around even the shepherds at the incarnation of Christ it says and the glory of the Lord shown round about them.

⁸ Revelation 21:23.

And that glory in Christ, again, on the Mount of Transfiguration when for a minute, a moment, the veil was removed and the disciples were able to see that glory veiled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of this is that light that is described here. The glory of God. That is where his glory resides. It is in the person of his Son.

And then the third aspect of this city we see here is the inhabitants. It says there in verse 24:

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”⁹

Who are these inhabitants that are described here? Well, they are described, first of all, by their numbers. You know, I think that sometimes we who are taught of the Lord feel as if there are few, and there are, even those I preach to regularly, we think about many who profess to be Christians today who will not even make an effort to come and sit and listen to a message that does nothing but glorify Christ. They are busy about their works. They are busy about their projects. They are busy about their profession. But let us not lose sight of the fact that there is a number which no man can number, even though we don't all meet in the same place in this world on this earth, but there is a number which no man can number that Christ has redeemed. And it is a number out of every tribe, nation and tongue and I believe that is why this word “nation” is important. They are known by their numbers.

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.”¹⁰

We don't know how the Lord is working throughout the world. We get kind of narrow focused, don't we? We think, well, there is few here listening to this message now and yet, you know, as soon as I get home take the time to put this up on the internet, the next thing you know, you can just sit there and watch it. This message has been listened to in the last 20 minutes. This message has been listened to in the last 15 minutes. And at the end of the month when you get the report from SermonAudio you can see the different countries where the Lord directed someone to go on the internet and click and listen. How the Lord is pleased to use that, I don't know. We may never know. But it is not important. What matters is that the glory of Christ is set forward. But we know that in that day and here in distinction to all those that are being deceived by Satan...

Remember in Revelation 20 and verse eight it says that the Lord will loose Satan and he shall go out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth. But in distinction to that, you know, we have spent a lot of time talking about how many are deceived. And yet our focus should be on those that the Lord has redeemed. One thing is for sure. Those that he has redeemed, there is not going to be one missing in glory. And it is going to be a multitude of those who have been sealed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has redeemed them. The Spirit has called them out of all the nations of the earth and they are saved, not by their works. You know, even the way it is written,

⁹ Revelation 21:24.

¹⁰ Ibid.

salvation, the word saved here is passive, to be saved. That means someone else did the saving. Any that are in heaven will not be there because of any works of their own. It will be purely because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who wrought out that salvation in his own body and paid the sin debt for this people and rose again, ascended on high and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high his work being completed. And in time drawing these. That is who these inhabitants are. That is those that inhabit heaven.

So they are known by their numbers, but they are also known by that glory which the Lord has given them. It says in verse 24:

“...and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”¹¹

Now some think that this refers to actual kings, but I believe, just as it says over here in Revelation chapter one and verse six that it is describing every one of the inhabitants. They rule and reign with Christ. And in Revelation 1:6 and 1:5 it says:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.¹²

You know, there is no earthly king that is going to bring their glory into heaven. But this glory of being a king and being honored as such, to be named a prince with God, taken off the dung hill and raised up to reign with Christ is a grace. But we know this. Those that enter in, described here as kings, those that rule and reign with Christ, if you remember Revelation chapter four, again, describing heavenly worship each one, it says, clothed in white raiment and had their gold ... had their heads crowned with gold. That describes the Church. It describes those that are the Lord's. But do they do? It says in verse 10 that they cast their crowns before the throne saying:

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”¹³

But they carry this glory in with them, the glory belongs unto Christ and Christ alone. There is none that can claim any glory for their forgiveness. It is through the blood of Christ alone. There is none that can claim any glory for their righteousness. It is through that work that the Lord Jesus Christ worked out. All the honor belongs unto him.

So they are known by their numbers. They are known by this glory which is given them in Christ. Christ prayed that in his high priestly prayer that they might be glorified in him.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Revelation 1:5-6.

¹³ Revelation 4:11.

But they are also described here by their continual entrance into this city. It says:

“And the gates of it shall not be shut.”¹⁴

Verse 25.

I can't imagine a world like that. We spend our days locking our doors, checking behind it. you get halfway down the road and you think, did I lock the door? You turn around and go back and check. You know, such is the world in which we live. But here heaven and glory are described as a place where there is no need of shutting up the gates, that there is freedom, there is a coming and going, there is an abundance of entrance into this kingdom.

And, again, in verse 26:

“And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”¹⁵

I would ask you there not what is the glory and honor of the nations, but who? It is Christ. That glory and honor which belongs unto him, which he has given to his people they bring in to him. That is their entrance into it. Apart from that there is no entrance.

What we see in verse 27, finally, concerning these inhabitants, is the unmixed purity of all those that belong to this heavenly glory. It says:

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth.”¹⁶

Now if you just pause a minute and think what does the Scripture say? All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. So any that hold to, defend or peach up man's righteousness in any way will be excluded. That is a lot of preachers. That is a lot of congregations. Remember, broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be that are therein. Strait its he gate and narrow is the way.

You know, it is interesting. It is only straight and narrow to those that are outside, because it excludes anything that man brings. For those that the Lord has redeemed and taught, it is not straight. It is not narrow. It is a freedom. It is a rejoicing. Just as much as we see here, the coming and going and knowing that we are sinners saved by grace and we are saved by Christ alone.

But outside, you know, I know people don't like to be told they are lost today. It is one of the things that gets people upset. And I am talking about even in so-called grace churches. People think because they are sitting in a place where the gospel is preached in truth that they are safe. Not necessarily so. That is one of the fastest ways to hell is in a

¹⁴ Revelation 21:25.

¹⁵ Revelation 21:26.

¹⁶ Revelation 21:27.

place where the gospel is preached and yet a person remains lost. The reality is, you know, whether men want to know it or not, that if Christ has not redeemed and has not paid their debt they stand outside even now. They are outside. Outside the gate. And if the Lord has not redeemed them, left to themselves, they will be found outside the gate of heaven, glory.

“...neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.”¹⁷

I have heard so many take this and say, “Ok, so you have got to straighten up. You better start living right.” That is not what it is talking about. It is talking about people that give themselves to supposed good works and they live by it. Remember what our Lord said in Matthew seven verses 20 and 21.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.¹⁸

Workers of iniquity, that which defileth, whatever works abomination. I will tell you what works abomination. A lot of people say, “Well, it is the bars or it is the brothels. No, it is the places of the world of entertainment.”

You hear so many preaching against these things. That word abomination, that which worketh abomination has to do with false worship. It has to do with coming in another way. And the abomination is to give glory to anything or anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ and his shed blood. It is talking about religious people here.

“...or that maketh a lie.”¹⁹

You know, someone started a lie on God and it continues to be propagated that God loves everybody. That is a lie. It is an abomination, especially when the Scripture says:

“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”²⁰

Don't try to change that. Someone started a lie by saying that Christ died for everybody. And they don't see that as anything wrong. They think they are doing a good deed by preaching that God loves you and Christ died for you. What you are doing is taking the very precious blood of Christ and making it a common thing, especially when the Scriptures say that Christ didn't die for everybody. He said:

“I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.”²¹

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Matthew 7:22-23.

¹⁹ Revelation 21:27.

²⁰ Romans 9:13.

²¹ John 17:9.

So there is a distinction, a clear distinction. But men they wan to do away with all of that and come in a way that they purpose to come much like Cain. There is really only the way of Cain and the way of Able. I don't care what denomination you put on it. The way of Cain is an abomination. It makes God a liar. You know, it is the lie of Satan. When Satan said to Adam and Eve at the beginning, "Hath God said?"

You know, I don't have any qualms at all about preaching a God that is different than this world knows, making that distinction. And what I know today by his grace is because of his grace toward me the sinner and it pleased God one day to reveal Christ in me and it has meant losing friends. It has meant losing associations, but it has really meant nothing at all as far as that.

Paul said, "I consider that dung for the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Herein is all the sinner's glory that Christ has redeemed. It says:

"...they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."²²

You know, I don't care to be associated with men's organizations of earthly ways of worship. But to have my name written in the Lamb's book of life, what a blessing and what a salvation. All others will be outside. You know, these preachers that have talked people into a profession or prayed with them into a profession, unless in time the Lord shows them that they are lost and turns their heart to the Lord Jesus Christ alone they will spend eternity in condemnation in hell with those that follow them.

What did Christ say? When the blind lead the blind both together fall into the ditch. And such is the end that awaits all that are outside of Christ. May the Lord be gracious to our hearts and, you know, if indeed he has bought us, he will indeed seek us, draw us and what I have described for you will truly be your hope of glory. It certainly is mine.

²² Revelation 21:27.