

The Traveling Pulpit

Published Quarterly By

Covenant of Grace Ministries

2704 Fairway Drive

Greensboro, NC 27408

Burley W. Moore-Bible Teacher

Wilson W. Moore-Bible Teacher, Church Planter

Bob Merrill-Bible Teacher, Web-Developer

e-mail: burleymoore@att.net

www.covenantofgraceministries.com

Phone 336-292-2408

Listen to Covenant of Grace Radio on the audio page over

www.covenantofgraceministries.com



Volume 14, Number 4

October

Fall 2019

A Description of Heaven

Part II

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the

foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Rev. 21:6-22)

Heaven is a Protected Place v.6-14

There were times in this vision when God used an “angel” to speak to “John” and other times, “Christ” (Rev. 1:1), spoke directly to him as He did in reminding us that He is the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (v.6). These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and a title given to Christ indicating that He is Sovereign over “all things” even in quenching spiritual “thirst” with the “fountain of the water of life.”

We have a picture of this “water of life” all the way back to the early portion of Scripture in the Book of Exodus. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness and became thirsty, God told Moses to “smite the rock ... in Horeb” (Ex. 17:6) and bring forth “water.” Just as this “water” quenched their physical thirst, the “water of life” quenches one’s spiritual thirst. The smitten “rock” in “Horeb” is an Old Testament Type (picture) of Christ, the Antitype, meaning that He alone can provide life giving “water” for all eternity. Jesus told the woman at the “well” that He was the “living water” (Jh. 4:3-26) and later said anyone who believes in Him shall have “rivers of living water” flowing out of him (Jh. 7:38). No spiritual thirst can be satisfied outside of an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ and only God can give man that kind of thirst (Ps. 143:6). He alone is the “Rock” (I Cor. 10:1-4) from which the “fountain” of “living water” flows.

This passage begins by telling us that “he that overcometh” will receive an eternal inheritance (v.7). Scripture declares the overcomers to be God’s redeemed children who were “born” into the kingdom of God by “faith” (I Jh. 5:4-5). Verse 7 makes it vividly clear that a believer is a “son” (child) of God with a guaranteed inheritance (Rom. 8:13-18). Being a “son” of God gives us the privilege of praying (Matt. 6:5-13) to Him as our “Father” and for this future “kingdom” to be consummated.

In contrast to God’s redeemed children, God reminds us of the unregenerate who “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (v.8). As we read this list, we must keep in mind that we are all sinners in need of salvation (Rom. 3:23, 6:23). All these named sins can be forgiven, just as any sin can be forgiven when confessed, repented, and “faith” is placed in Christ (I Cor. 6:8-11). This language simply lets us know that Hell is going to be a miserable place of eternal torment for those who don’t trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness. It’s referred to as “the second death” because it follows the physical death of the human body, but points to

the resurrected spiritual body of every lost sinner who will be separated from God for all eternity and never find relief from their misery.

When God showed John this vision, he was apparently taken “to a great and high mountain” (v. 9-11). I don’t know if this was a literal mountain on the Isle of Patmos or a “mountain” in the vision, but God took him upwards toward the heavens. Scripture records many wonderful happenings on the top of mountains. Such as, when “Abraham” willingly offered to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22), “Moses” received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 34), “Elijah” covered his sacrifice with water on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18), “Christ” appeared in His transfiguration on Mt. Hermon (Matt. 17), and most of all His death on Mt. Golgotha (Matt. 27). Many great happenings have been recorded on a “mountain” and for that reason we often use the expression, mountain top experiences.

In these verses, it’s clear that what He saw was “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” as a picture of “that great city, the holy Jerusalem,” with both being one and the same. The imagery is absolutely spectacular and we must glean the spiritual truth from the figurative and symbolic description. The “bride” of Christ is literal as well as the place of our eternal residence, but the truths of what it’s like is painted in ways that the human mind can relate. The most wonderful thing that John saw was “the glory of God” radiating the “light” of His presence.

“A wall great and high” with an angelic guard at each of the “twelve gates” let us know that it’s secure, guarded and protected (v.12-14). God has promised eternal security to His saints from the moment of their salvation (Jh. 10:28-29, Rom. 8:35-39). The world as we know it today is filled with crime, burglaries, and mischiefs of all sorts. Law enforcement at its best efforts can only protect us to a certain extent. Scripture promises that God’s people will be so well protected that we will never again be bothered with temptation or sin of any description. The devil and his demons will be bound, we’ll never be troubled with evil, and nothing will ever harm us in Heaven.

“Angels” have always played an important part in the lives of the saints in both the Old and New Testaments. All we have to do is look at how God sent His “angels” to shut the mouth of the “lions” for “Daniel” (Dan. 6:22) and sent an “angel” to release “Peter” from “prison” (Acts 12:3-9). Scripture teaches how “angels” may very well watch over children (Matt. 18:10) and also minister to the saints in times of need and protection (Heb. 1:14). It appears from our text, that the heavenly “angels” will serve a purpose throughout all eternity while “the devil and his angels (demons)” will suffer in eternal torment (Matt. 25:41).

The “twelve tribes of Israel” and the “twelve apostles” most likely refers to and represents believers from both the Old and New Testaments that will be in Heaven. Once again declaring that saints on both sides of the cross will be there. God called out “Abraham” from “Ur of the Chaldees” (Gen. 11) and raised up a nation to bring forth the Messiah. I remind you that God has only had one plan of salvation on both sides of the cross and that is “by grace ... through faith” (Eph. 2:8). Scripture records that “by faith Abraham ... looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:8-10) indicating his expectation of what is found in our text. Out of Ethnic Israel, God called out Spiritual Israel which included not only the Jewish race,

but races from all over the world (Rom. 9) making them a true Israelite, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. God used the “twelve apostles” to lay the “foundation” of the New Testament Church of whom Christ is said to be the “chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19-22). Upon this spiritual “foundation” of the church is found believers from “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:7).

Heaven is a Peculiar Place v. 15-22

The vision that John saw was a peculiar one in relation to associating it with a group of people, but let’s not forget that God’s people are called a “peculiar people” (I Pet. 2:9). In other words, Heaven will be a peculiar place for a “peculiar people” just like the Old Testament temple was a peculiar place in the eyes of the heathen culture of that day. We must keep in mind that this is a vision and a proper understanding of our text is based upon understanding the vision of Ezekiel, the Old Testament prophet. John’s vision of the “new Jerusalem” as God revealed it to him on the isle of Patmos reflects Ezekiel’s prophecy of the temple that was yet to come after the Jews returned from their exile (Ezek. 40-48).

Many, in the dispensational camp, literally interpret the “city” in our text, that is called the “new Jerusalem” (v.2), as a precise geographic space that will exist when Christ returns to earth. However, two things in this chapter make this interpretation impossible from my perspective.

First, the “new Jerusalem” is called “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife” and is described as “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (v.9-10). There is no doubt that this is speaking of God’s Kingdom of believers coming down from the throne of God having reunited with their glorified bodies in the resurrection. It’s not a “city” that houses the “bride,” but according to Scripture it is the “bride” herself descending for her Bridegroom. When we think of a “city” we think of people and Scripture refers to the people of God as a “city” that Christ takes to be his “wife.” The Bible uses the analogy (comparison or similarity) of “husband and wife” to liken His relationship to the “church” in both the Old Testament (Jer. 3) and New Testament (Eph. 5:25-33). As we see from this study, the “church” is comprised of both Old and New Testament believers. In Revelation 19, we see that the “bride” of Christ are the “elect” (I Pet. 1:2) people of God “chosen ... before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4-6) who have placed their trust in Christ alone for salvation (Rev. 19:6-9). Therefore, if the “saints” (Rev. 19:8) and the “new Jerusalem” are both implied and referred to as the “bride of Christ”, then the term “new Jerusalem” must be symbolically representing the church that is now, in this passage, triumphant after the final consummation.

Secondly, the vast size of the “new Jerusalem” implies that we are not to read the physical dimensions as a restored city on earth. It’s not the exact measurements that claim our attention, but the fact that it is so large in size. I’ve read of one man who believed this was a literal city that was going to descend in the shape of a pyramid which has absolutely no biblical grounds. This “city” is described as a perfect cube which translates to be 1,365 miles wide, long, and high (Rev. 21:16). The massive

dimensions of this “city” are symbolic, referring to the massive number of believers comprising the church. To us, it would be a countless multitude, but to God everyone is known by name and is precious to Him (Lk. 12:7). If it were a literal city this size, it could not fit on Mt. Zion in Palestine as some speculate that it will, and besides, it would reach far into the atmosphere beyond the orbits of man-made satellites.

In the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, only the Most Holy Place was a perfect cube which is where heaven and earth intersected, so to speak. In other words, it was the place where God communed with His people in the Old Testament and the symbolism continues in the pages of the New Testament when Scripture describes the church as “the temple of the living God” (I Cor. 6:16). The New Testament makes it clear that a picture of God’s redeemed people is “the city of the living God” which is the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:18-29).

This cube of communion is the “bride” of Christ that came down out of Heaven comprising the Kingdom of God. It’s not a literal “city,” but a literal people whom Christ considers His “bride.” It’s the consummation of God’s “kingdom” for which believers have prayed (Lk. 11:2). The massive cube speaks of the massive number of believers who will have eternal communion with God. Therefore, this cube of communion can be seen as the celebration of our ONENESS with God through Jesus Christ in the consummation of God’s eternal kingdom for which Jesus prayed (Jh. 17:21-26). Both words, communion and consummation, can be used in a spiritual sense to describe something that is intimate. Communion can refer to an act of sharing. Consummation can apply to fulfillment or completion. Just as these words can find meaning in a husband and wife relationship, they can also find meaning in the relationship of “Christ” and His “bride.”

The Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, looked forward to when this perfect cube would be rebuilt in Jerusalem (I Kings 6:20, Ezek. 41:4) and God’s people could once again commune with their God. This did happen to some extent regarding the building of the temple in the Old Testament. However, the greatest of this fulfillment will take place when Christ comes again for the consummation of His Kingdom.

Considering this background, it appears that the Most Holy Place and the people of God will be one and the same in the consummation. In other words, the “bride” of Christ will be so pure and spotless that there will be no separation between Him and His people (Rev. 21:3). Ezekiel anticipated a day when God’s people would know this kind of purity (Ezek. 36:22-38) and today, as the people of God, we also look forward to this kind of holiness. John’s vision uses the same imagery to remind us that in our final state of Heaven, God will commune with His people forevermore. When Christ returns, all sin will be gone and we will be perfected forever (I Jh. 3:2). Until our Lord returns, the Holy Spirit is sanctifying believers and conforming us into the “image” of Christ (Rom. 8:29). We’ll not be fully perfected until we see Jesus face to face, but now as we grow in holiness, we’re aware of how far short we have fallen and anticipate the day of our perfection in glory.

The “pure gold” with “foundations ... of precious stones” and “gates” of “pearls” paints a picture that only our imaginations can behold. Instead of describing building material such as brick and mortar, this is likened to that of “gold ... pearls” and “precious

stones.” All of these precious stones and elegant metals reflects upon the magnificent beauty of God. When we stop to think about it, this is in keeping with the rewards for a believer’s works (I Cor. 3:11-15) and to the beautiful jewels on the “breastplate” of the Old Testament high priest (Ex. 28:15-21). I certainly don’t have all the answers as to the meaning of this chapter, but I cannot help but believe that this description of “precious stones” has something to do with heavenly rewards and priestly intercession.

In the Old Testament, the high priest would put on his ephod covered with beautiful jewels when he entered into the temple in service to the Lord. In Heaven, God has promised to make his people “priests” (Rev. 1:6, 5:10), having direct access to the throne of Christ. Perhaps the heavenly rewards may have something to do with our service that we render to God. Heaven will be Heaven, but there appears to be various rewards given to believers when it comes to the judgment of our works (I Cor. 3:1-17). Not all gems and metals are the same, but they are all beautiful in and of themselves. With all the lovely descriptions given of gems and metals, the loveliest thing of all about Heaven is that there will be “no temple therein” (no need for theological arguments nor doctrinal disputes any longer) because “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

This doesn’t mean that God will not have a “throne” (Rev. 22:1) in the midst of His people, but in fact, if a “throne” there must be a “throne” room. In all likelihood, this is the “throne of God” that has come down with the “holy city” (v.2). Verification of this is found in the very first verse of the next chapter where it describes “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1). Herein, we are reminded of God incarnate and His glorified body that He will bear the scars of our redemption throughout all eternity (Jh. 1:29, 20:27). In the Old Testament, lambs were used in sacrifice pointing to the all sufficient Sacrifice that would come in the New Testament. “Christ” is the Supreme Passover “Lamb” Who “is sacrificed for us” (I Cor. 5:7). Not only do we see that God has a people whom He has “chosen ... before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), but God ordained “from the foundation of the world” that the “Lamb” be “slain” (Rev. 13:8) for the “elect” (I Pet. 1:2). Praise His Holy Name!

A Ministry Update

I had originally planned for this study on the 21st chapter of Revelation to be in two-parts, but the more I studied, the longer it became. Therefore, it will be presented in three-parts with the final edition being next quarter, the first of next year. When it comes to future prophecy, such as we find in the Book of Revelation, there are many different interpretations due to the fact we are living on this side of the prophecy being fulfilled. I’m simply sharing with you from my study the way I understand it. Therefore, as long as we can agree on the literal truth of the passage, let us treat one another in grace despite our differences of interpretation.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM