

I.N.I.

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 13, 2012
Revelation 21:9-14,22,23

In Christ Jesus, our Bridegroom and Lamb, whom we will live with forever in our heavenly Home,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday we were introduced to the **NEW JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, PREPARED AS A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND.**

This of course was a symbolical picture of the Holy Christian Church, all believers in Christ in heaven. This morning's text goes into more detail as to what we will be like and what it will be like in our heavenly home.

Remember John is writing to struggling believers who are going through trials, tribulations and persecution for their faith. Their sinful flesh is plaguing them with doubts, fears and worries. The glorified and risen Christ is encouraging John and these struggling believers to remain faithful, to grow in the Word and to continue in their worship of Him who gives life and in our text we see that we are given the assurance that

OUR RISEN LORD GIVES US A HEAVENLY HOME

Once again we have a symbolical portrait of the Church triumphant, painted by the Holy Spirit to picture some important truths in regard to the relationship between Christ and His Church in heaven.

Our text begins with one of the seven angels saying to John, **"COME, I WILL SHOW YOU THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE."** Scripture makes it very clear that the bride of the Lamb Jesus is the Church, all believers in Christ.

So once again we see the Bride, the Church pictured as **THE GREAT CITY, THE HOLY JERUSALEM, DESCENDING OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD.** But how do we get into that city? How do we become part of that city? There is only one way—

I: WE ENTER THROUGH ITS GATES

We read vs. 12-13: **ALSO SHE HAD A GREAT AND HIGH WALL WITH TWELVE GATES, AND TWELVE ANGELS AT THE GATES, AND NAMES WRITTEN ON THEM, WHICH ARE THE NAMES OF THE TWELVE TRIBES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: THREE GATES ON THE EAST, THREE GATES ON THE NORTH, THREE GATES ON THE SOUTH, AND THREE GATES ON THE WEST.**

In Old Testament times a great and high wall served the purpose of protection for the city's inhabitants and the only way in was through the gates. Our heavenly home is pictured as a city with great and high walls where we are permanently protected, forever free from all threats to body and soul.

The number 12 symbolizes the Church. In our text there are 12 gates, 12 angels at the gates, and the 12 tribes of Israel written on the gates. All of this is a picture that reminds us that only God's spiritual Israel can enter heaven. And we enter only through faith in the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus. He Himself clearly stated: **I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME... I AM THE DOOR. IF ANYONE ENTERS BY ME, HE WILL BE SAVED.**

The 12 angels guarding the gates pictures that only believers are brought into and enter the city. The picture of three sets of gates on each of the four sides of the city pictures how the Old Testament Israelites would camp around the Tabernacle---three tribes were assigned to camp on

each of the four sides of the Tabernacle. This also represents that heaven will be filled with believers that have come from the east and the west, from the north and the south—from all around the world—from all tribes, peoples, nations, and countries.

II: WE BUILD ON ITS FOUNDATION

As the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on the 12 gates symbolized all believers in Christ, the same symbolic representation is found in the names of the 12 apostles being written on the 12 foundations of the city. What does Paul write in Ephesians 2:20-22? **NOW, THEREFORE, YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, HAVING BEEN BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE, IN WHOM THE WHOLE BUILDING, BEING JOINED TOGETHER, GROWS INTO A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD, IN WHOM YOU ALSO ARE BEING BUILT TOGETHER FOR A DWELLING PLACE OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT.**

The inspired Word of God through which the apostles proclaimed the saving truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world, establishes the foundation of a church that is so secure in Christ that even all of the power of hell cannot overcome it.

This Gospel that proclaims that the Lamb of God has been slain to take away the sins of the world and that this Lamb has arisen to assure us of a resurrection to eternal life is the very foundation upon which we base our faith life, and it is the symbolical foundation to the New Jerusalem.

It is important to note that the Church is not built on the persons of the apostles, but upon the Word of God which they spoke and wrote. This is so clearly seen when we read this exchange between Peter and Jesus in Matthew 16: **SIMON PETER ANSWERED AND SAID, "YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD." JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID TO HIM, "BLESSED ARE YOU, SIMON BAR-JONAH, FOR FLESH AND BLOOD HAS NOT REVEALED *THIS* TO YOU, BUT MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. AND I ALSO SAY TO YOU THAT YOU ARE PETER, AND ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HADES SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.**

Jesus did not build His Church upon Peter, but upon His Word, the testimony that Peter gave that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. That is why Jesus is the chief cornerstone of the Church.

III: WE WORSHIP IN ITS BEAUTY

Our text tells us that this New Jerusalem has **THE GLORY OF GOD. HER LIGHT WAS LIKE A MOST PRECIOUS STONE, LIKE A JASPER STONE, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL... THE CITY HAD NO NEED OF THE SUN OR OF THE MOON TO SHINE IN IT, FOR THE GLORY OF GOD ILLUMINATED IT. THE LAMB IS ITS LIGHT.**

When Israel finished setting up the tabernacle in the wilderness the glory of the LORD filled it. When Moses finished speaking with God in the tabernacle, his face shone. When the Ark of the covenant was brought into Solomon's temple, the glory of the LORD filled His temple. When the angels praised God at Jesus' birth in the fields of Bethlehem, we are told the glory of God with heavenly light shone around the shepherds.

This appearance of the glory of the Lord was a special way in which God displayed His promise to be with His people. In heaven His full glory will shine. He is the light source, the luminary. There will be no need for a sun or stars to shine.

God's greatest glory is not His power or might, but His grace in Christ. That is why we are told that Jesus is the Light of heaven. Jesus told us that while He was here on earth when He said: **I AM**

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. HE WHO FOLLOWS ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE. This light of Jesus is the source of life. Just like the sunlight gives life to plants, so also Jesus our Light shines on us with His Word and gives spiritual life to us. In heaven He will be the only Light we need.

When John looked inside the city's walls, he saw something that puzzled him. Actually it was what he did not see that puzzled him. The most important thing in the earthly city of Jerusalem, was the Temple---the place where God dwelt with His people in His Word. The place where the people came with their sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving and praise. The place where the Gospel promises were proclaimed through those sacrifices and ceremonies. There was no temple!

Why was there no temple in this heavenly Jerusalem? Our text reads: **FOR THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY AND THE LAMB ARE ITS TEMPLE.**

No temples or church buildings are needed in heaven because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be there forever and ever. Their presence will always be there. The grace we receive through the Gospel message of salvation we will enjoy continuously in heaven in God's presence. It will be like laying out in the sun basking in its warm rays, only we will be basking in the warm rays of the great love and presence of our Savior-God.

There will be no more need of confessing our sins, coming before the Lord acknowledging our sinful thoughts, words and deeds. No more will be we plagued by our sinful doubts, worries and fears. We will be in the visible presence of our Savior-God with direct, personal, intimate spiritual communion with our God.

One last thing. We skipped verses 15-21. In those verse we are told that the length, breadth and height of the city are equal. It is a perfect cube. Another symbolic picture of the perfectly squared Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. This was the special dwelling place of God, where the Lord spoke with Moses face to face and where the High Priest appeared before the Lord with the atoning sacrificial blood and sprinkled it on the Ark of the Covenant. Symbolism throughout.

The picture of the city's walls is beyond fantastic. Listen to these words from verses 18-21: **THE CONSTRUCTION OF ITS WALL WAS OF JASPER; AND THE CITY WAS PURE GOLD, LIKE CLEAR GLASS. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WALL OF THE CITY WERE ADORNED WITH ALL KINDS OF PRECIOUS STONES: THE FIRST FOUNDATION WAS JASPER (multi-colored), THE SECOND SAPPHIRE (dark blue), THE THIRD CHALCEDONY (sky-blue), THE FOURTH EMERALD (green), THE FIFTH SARDONYX (bright red), THE SIXTH SARDIUS (purple), THE SEVENTH CHRYSOLITE (golden color), THE EIGHTH BERYL (pale green), THE NINTH TOPAZ (gold colored), THE TENTH CHRYSOPRASE ((golden green), THE ELEVENTH JACINTH (golden yellow), AND THE TWELFTH AMETHYST (violet/purple). THE TWELVE GATES WERE TWELVE PEARLS: EACH INDIVIDUAL GATE WAS OF ONE PEARL. AND THE STREET OF THE CITY WAS PURE GOLD, LIKE TRANSPARENT GLASS.**

Last Sunday we sang these words: "I know not, oh, I know not, what joys await us there, what radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare." Even though we have this picture from God's Word, we cannot fully fathom the beauty, the joy and the bliss of our heavenly home.

But how comforting it is to know that

OUR RISEN LORD GIVES US SUCH A HEAVENLY HOME!

Amen.