

THE HOLY CITY

– *DECEMBER 17. – REVELATION 21:1-4,22-27. –*

THE NEW JERUSALEM – THE NEW SPIRITUAL GOVERNMENT OF THE MILLENNIAL AGE – THE NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH SYMBOLIC EXPRESSIONS INDICATIVE OF NEW CONDITIONS TO PREVAIL UNDER MESSIAH'S RULE – THE NEW SPIRITUAL GOVERNMENT TO BE INVISIBLE – IN ANOTHER FIGURE CALLED THE TEMPLE OF GOD – THE EARTHLY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM – THOSE WHO WILL CONSTITUTE THE HEAVENLY PHASE.

"Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples." – Verse 3. R.V.

PARADISE, the Garden of God, was applicable as a name to Eden, where our first parents resided while they were still in harmony with God – before their disobedience. The same name is Scripturally applied to the new earth when Restitution blessings shall, during the Millennium, have brought it to perfection as the abode of those who under Divine favor shall then prove worthy of life everlasting.

It was to this Paradise that the Apostle Paul was in vision "caught away" when given a glimpse of various features of the Divine Plan, not then due to be understood by the Church in general – "things not lawful to be uttered." (2 Corinthians 12:4.) The Apostle St. John was similarly caught away in vision, and shown some of the wonders of the Paradise epoch. But these were only in symbols, which he was permitted to report, and which have been comparatively misapprehended, until now, in the Lord's due time, the Holy Spirit is guiding His people into the Truth of this subject, as well as upon others; for "the time is at hand," and the information is "meat in due season" for the Household of Faith.

Elsewhere this Paradise of the future is referred to by the Apostles as "the third heaven," and as "a new heavens and a new earth." (2 Corinthians 12:2; 2 Peter 3:13.) They are not referring to new planets, nor to heavens ranged one above another, as many have supposed, but to the third of three great periods of time, beginning with man's creation and extending into the illimitable future. The first of these periods, termed the first heavens and earth – the old order of things – passed away with the Deluge of Noah's day. The second period, "the heavens and the earth which are now," the present order of things, are reserved of God to pass away with a great symbolic fire of trouble – revolution, etc. – which will utterly destroy the present spiritual powers and the present social arrangements. – 2 Peter 3:6,7; Galatians 1:4; Zephaniah 3:8,9.

The third great period is to be a "world without end," under Divine administration. This will be the third heavens and the third earth, or the new heavens and the new earth, which will differ from the present condition of things in that they will be righteous! whereas the present arrangement is imperfect, unrighteous. The "new heavens" will consist of the new spiritual ruling powers of the future – Christ the Head, and the Church His Body. The present heavens consist of the nominal religious systems which, while claiming Christ for their Head, nevertheless bow in a very large degree to Antichrist, "the god of this world," "the prince of this world," "who now worketh in the children of disobedience," and who is captivating and blinding the whole world, with the exception of the few whose eyes of understanding have been opened, who are under special blessing and leading, who are taught of God – the Little Flock, "heirs of the Kingdom." – Ephesians 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4.

"THE PARADISE OF GOD"

It is to this new heavens and new earth condition, this Paradise of God, that today's Study introduces us. As the "new heavens" do not mean a new place for God's Throne, so the "new earth" does not

mean another planet. The "new heavens" are a new condition, the spiritual power and control of Christ and His glorified Church; so the "new earth" means a new social order on this planet – "the new heavens and earth" – constituting the world to come – "wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3:10-13.) The declaration of our lesson is that the former heavens and the former earth – which are now – will then have passed away and will be no more. All present institutions are to perish utterly in the great Time of Trouble with which this Age is very shortly to end.

"And there shall be no more sea." As we have already seen, the sea is a symbol for the masses of people in a restless and unstable, anarchistic condition – just as the land represents the social order, and as the mountains represent the kingdoms of the present time. As there is no reference to the physical earth and the physical heavens being destroyed, so there is no reference to the physical sea being obliterated. The symbol signifies that under the new arrangement, under the control of the new Heaven – spiritual powers – the reconstructed social order will be so satisfactory, so complete, so thorough, that there will be no more sea class – no more restless people, no more dissatisfied masses, no more anarchists. Everything will be reduced to law and order; and under the new regime law and order will secure justice to every creature, obliterating the differences of wealth and power as they now exist. – Isaiah 2:12-22.

THE NEW JERUSALEM

In the symbolism of Scripture a city represents a government; as, for instance, symbolic Babylon is denominated "that great city [government] which ruleth over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:18.) The New Jerusalem symbolizes the new spiritual Government of the Millennial Age. It is not earth-born; it is not reared by men; but, as pictured in today's Study, it descends from God out of Heaven. That is, it is spiritual in every sense of the word – of God and not of men. It is for this Kingdom, this Government,

that our Lord taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven."

The declaration that the City is adorned as a bride for her husband implies its beauty, grandeur and perfection, as a bride's adornment on such an occasion is particular and elaborate to the last degree. Additionally, the statement reminds us that in the government of the future the world's judges are to be the saints selected throughout the Gospel Age and qualified through faithfulness in trial and tribulation. (1 Cor. 6:2.) In the Scriptures these are frequently called "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife" and Joint-heir in the Kingdom.

We are not to think of this Holy City as being composed of literal stones, coming down through the air. On the contrary, we are to remember that the saints of the Gospel Age are "living stones," as the Apostles explain. (1 Peter 2:4-7; Ephesians 2:19-22.) This glorious City will not be visible to the natural eye. Neither Christ nor the saints in glory can be seen of men. Only those who are changed from human to spiritual nature will see these matters in full. But the whole world will quickly be made aware of the fact that a new Government has been instituted – a government of righteousness and all power – and that thereafter whosoever doeth righteousness shall be blessed, but that whosoever doeth evil shall be punished proportionately. **[R6024 : page 393]**

The entire Gospel Age has been devoted to the preparation of this New Jerusalem. As a whole, it comprises all of the saints, from our Lord Jesus Christ down to the last member of the Church. Not until all of the members of the Body of Christ have been chosen, found faithful, fitted and prepared for their places will this City of God descend to earth in power and come into possession or control of the earth. The coming of the New Jerusalem to the earth is the symbolic representation of the establishment of God's Kingdom in the earth; for a city is a well-known symbol representing

government, control. Thus Washington City represents the United States government; Petrograd, the Russian government; Paris, the French government; Rome, the Italian; Berlin, the German; London, the British; etc.

THE GLORIFIED TEMPLE

The third verse of today's Study associates this City with the other figure of a symbolic Temple which the Lord is now preparing, and of which the saints will constitute the "living stones" and "pillars." It is declared that the Tabernacle of God [His Dwelling] shall be with men in this City [Government or Kingdom]. It will be His Temple; and the world of mankind will approach God in it, to receive the Divine blessings, just as Israel approached the typical Tabernacle and the Temple in their typical religious services. Thus God, represented in His Church – The Christ, Head and Body – will dwell with the world of mankind during the Millennial Age, and they shall be His people; that is to say, all mankind will be treated from the standpoint of reconciliation. The Propitiation-price for the sins of the whole world having been paid, and the due time having come for the manifestation of Divine favor, all peoples shall be treated as the Lord's people. None of them shall be treated as aliens, strangers, foreigners from God and His promises.

While the Millennial Kingdom will be the Kingdom of God's dear Son, it will also be the Kingdom of God; for God's dear Son and His Joint-heir, the Church, will be in absolute accord with the Father; and all that shall be done under their control will fully and completely represent the Divine will respecting men. Nevertheless, it will be a Kingdom separate from the remainder of the Universe, as the Apostle Paul indicates. (1 Cor. 15:24,25,28.) "He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet....And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also be subject to Him that did put all things under Him....Then cometh the end, when He

shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father" – at the close of the Millennial Reign.

THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM

Since God is the Author of all the blessings of Redemption and Restitution, and since every good and every perfect gift cometh down from Him, the record appropriately declares that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" – the eyes of mankind. Though Christ and the Church will do it, nevertheless the Heavenly Father will be recognized as the First Cause, the Fountain of Blessings. The wiping away of tears implies a gradual work, such as we see shall be the process of that glorious time. At the beginning of the Messianic Reign mankind will not be exempt from weakness, trial and difficulty; but as they conform to the laws of the Kingdom all cause for distress will gradually pass away; and the Restitution blessings will gradually lift them out of death into perfect life. – Acts 3:19-23.

In verse 4 the work of the whole Millennial Age is summed up in a few words. What a glorious sunburst of blessing is in these words! What a grand fulfilment of St. Peter's declaration respecting the Times of Restitution! This declaration, however, applies to the very end of the Millennial Age rather than to any previous part of that Age; for other accounts show us unmistakably that there will be imperfections, chastisements and stripes throughout that Age, while mankind are being lifted up. As our Lord expressed it, the raising up of mankind throughout the Millennium will be a "resurrection by judgment" – chastisements, disciplines. – John 5:28,29. R.V.

Even at the close of that Age, as we are shown in another picture of that time, there will be a severe trial and testing to demonstrate to what extent the enforced obedience of the Messianic Reign shall have rightly affected the hearts of those who experience its blessings, so that they shall love righteousness and hate iniquity. (Revelation 20:7,8.) In that final test any who shall manifest that his

heart contains anything aside from loyalty to God and to the principles of righteousness shall have his part in the Second Death.

Verse 5 comprehends the entire Millennial Age. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then in the Throne of earth's dominion, declares, "Behold, I make all things new." This expression does not relate merely to rocks, trees, etc., but to the great work which our Lord undertook; namely, the regeneration of humanity – of as many of Adam's race as will, under favorable conditions of knowledge, develop characters in full accordance with the Divine will. The end of the Millennial Age will see the work completed. All of the wicked – all who will not hear the voice of that Prophet, Teacher, King – will be cut off from amongst the people in the Second Death. But all the willing and obedient will be made new, brought to the complete perfection contemplated in the original Divine Plan.

THE HEAVENLY CITY RESPLENDENT

Here our Study turns to a consideration of the City, the glorified Church, the Kingdom class, those who during the Millennial Age will be "Kings and priests unto God, and reign upon the earth" for "a thousand years." (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4,6.) This City class, the glorified Church, it is declared will have need of neither sun nor moon. Nothing in this statement indicates that the world will not both need and have sunlight and moonlight during the Millennial Age and subsequently. – Psalm 72:5.

While it will be true that the Church, as spirit beings, will not need the literal sunlight and moonlight, nevertheless this is not the thought of Verse 23. Both sun and moon here are symbolical, as in Revelation 12:1. The sun signifies the light of this Gospel Age. The moon signifies the typically reflected light of the Gospel in the Law and the Prophets of the Jewish Dispensation. The glorified Church will have no need of the light which in the present time she so much enjoys through the Word and the Spirit. Instead, she will have a much more excellent glory. To this St. Paul refers when he

says, "Now [with all the light, privileges and opportunities which we enjoy, as respects the representations of God through the Law and the Prophets and through the instructions and leadings of the Spirit in the present Age] we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part; then we shall know even as we are known." – 1 Corinthians 13:12.

The Church, the Temple of God, will be so filled with all the fulness of God, when made like her glorious Lord (1 John 3:2), that nothing could add to her blessings of knowledge and Divine favor. She will be so filled with the glory of God that from her, as from her Lord and Head, shall proceed the light of the glory of God, which shall heal and bless the world during the Millennial Age. This is the Sun of Righteousness to which our Lord referred in Matthew 13:43: "Then shall the righteous **[R6024 : page 394]** shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father" – our Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, of course being included. The Prophet mentions the same Sun of Righteousness, saying, "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams." (Malachi 4:2.) Nevertheless we are not to lose sight of the fact that Christ is the Head of the Church, even as the Father is the Head of Christ Jesus. (1 Cor. 11:3.) Hence the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will always be an inner Temple in this great Temple which God has provided for the world's blessing during Restitution Times. – Verse 22.

THE BLESSINGS SHED FORTH UPON MANKIND

When this Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth, its blessings of healing, refreshment and life – mental, moral and physical – shall fall upon all mankind; and the nations shall walk in the light therefrom. Old MSS. do not contain the words "of them that are saved" (Verse 24). Indeed, it is because the nations are NOT SAVED that they need this special light during the Millennial Age, in order to their enlightenment, their salvation, their Restitution. Nor

do the words "and honor" occur in old MSS. "And the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it."

The expressions, "nations" and "kings," are not to be understood as signifying that during the Millennial Age the world of mankind will be divided into nationalities and kingdoms as at present. The word "nations" here signifies peoples, and is intended to show that all peoples, not merely the Israelites, will be thus favored under God's Kingdom. The word "kings" represents those princes, or chief ones, who during the Millennial Age will be the representatives of the Heavenly, spiritual, invisible Kingdom of Christ.

These princes, as we have already seen, will be Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the faithful Prophets of the previous Ages, who loved God before the Call to the Kingdom and to the Bride class went forth. Therefore they cannot be of the Bride class; but because of their faithfulness they will be the princes whom the Lord will establish in all the earth. First, however, He will make them perfect human beings and will qualify them for their office, as a reward for their faithfulness to God in the dark times in which they lived – their manifestation of love for righteousness and their trust in the Omnipotent One. – Psalm 45:16; Hebrews 11:39,40; Luke 13:28.

The bringing of their glory into the City, the Kingdom, signifies their acknowledgment of this Heavenly Kingdom, their rendering of tributes of praise, thanksgiving, worship and obedience to it as God's Agency. This rendering of glory to the Kingdom will continue throughout the entire Millennial Age; for the princes throughout the earth will make known to the peoples that not in their own name or authority do they rule and execute judgment and establish righteousness, but in the name of the glorified Christ, Head and Body, whose representatives they are. The result will be that all peoples will ascribe honor, praise, majesty and glory to the Lord's

Anointed, through whom Redemption and Restitution is being accomplished. – Verse 26.

Then, in consideration of the fact that this book of symbols, while relating to the future, is addressed to God's consecrated Church of the present time – The Elect – and in view of the fact that this message would be more or less understood by those who would seek to make their calling and election sure to a part in the glorious New Jerusalem, Verse 27 is added, declaring that "in nowise shall there enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination nor maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

The Lamb's Book of Life we must understand to include only those who attain to the position of joint-heirship with Christ, those whose names are written in Heaven during this Gospel Age and who are faithful to their Covenant. (Psalm 50:5.) What an incentive we have here to faithfulness! What a warning against the slightest sympathy with anything unclean, untrue, or in anywise contrary to the Divine standard of holiness! If we appreciate the glorious Divine provision for the Church and for the world, these promises will have their influence upon us; and under that influence we shall strive to keep our garments unspotted from the world, to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that thus we may abide in our Lord's love, and in the due time be "meet for the inheritance of the saints." – Col. 1:12-14; Heb. 4:14-16.

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