

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR CHRISTIAN DESTINY

21 ⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came and spoke to me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰Then he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹Possessing the glory of God, her brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates [stood] twelve angels. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³There were three gates on the east, and three gates on the north; three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴The walls of the city had twelve foundations, and [written] on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵[The angel] who spoke with me had a measuring rod, a golden reed, with which to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶The city was laid out as a perfect square, its length was equal to its breadth. He measured the city with the reed [and found it to be a total of] one thousand four hundred miles,* its length and breadth and height were all equal. ¹⁷He measured its wall [and found it to be] one hundred and forty-four cubits** [high], by man's measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸The wall was made of jasper, and the city [itself was made] of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the city walls were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; ²⁰the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, carnelian; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; and the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate [was made] of a single pearl. The street of the city [was made] of pure gold, like transparent glass. ²²I did not see a temple in [the city], for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. ²³The 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. ²⁴The nations shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵The gates will never be shut, because there will be no night there. ²⁶They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷By no means shall anything unclean enter into it, nor anyone who makes an abomination or a lie, but only those [whose names] are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22 Then [the angel] showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²down the middle of the street [of the city]. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve types of fruit, yielding its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³There shall no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there, and his servants shall serve him. ⁴They shall see his face, and his name [shall be written] on their foreheads. ⁵There shall no longer be any night. They will not need the light of a lamp, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever. (Rev. 21:9-22:5)

*Literally, "twelve thousand stadia," (about 1400 U.S. miles, or 22,000 kilometers.)

**approximately 200 U.S. feet, or 65 meters

Introduction

Their destination was the top of the Bavarian Alps. These summer vacationers climbed into their little rented Opal and set off for that distant destination. They traveled the winding roads of southern Germany's Badensee, all the while shrouded in fog and a thick, cold mist. The only indication that they were beginning to climb into the mountains was the whine of the engine, that signaled them to shift into lower gear. For several more hours they rode through the gray and monotonous fog.

Then, suddenly, they were flooded by the warm and golden rays of the sun. They had reached their destination—the top of the Bavarian Alps—and the sight was breathtaking. They describe the scene that lay before them:

... the world is transformed into an ancient hill-top village, gray cobblestone streets that wind, and white church spires that tower toward the blue sky. There is not a trace of fog. We have entered sunshine—and celebration. It is Sunday and through the streets come the worshipers. First the clergy in flowing white, followed by acolytes and choir robed in purple and gold. Jubilant villagers march to the toll of bells. The moment is glorious and sacred. (*POWER*, 7/22/90, p. 8)

That scene experienced by those summer vacationers at the conclusion of their long and dreary journey to the top of the Bavarian Alps is to some degree illustrative of the experience granted to the Apostle John and recorded here in Revelation 21-22. In order to stimulate our faith and fortify our perseverance, the Lord provides us with a revelation of the glories of our Christian destiny. Because of the glorious heritage that is reserved for us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us not lose sight of our Christian destiny.

I. Don't Lose Sight of Your Christian Destiny, ...Which is to Gain Access to the City of God

John sees the heavenly city radiating with the glory of God: *"the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹Possessing the glory of God, her brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal"* (vs. 10b-11.) The new Jerusalem is coming down from the presence of God and, consequently, it is reflecting the glory of God—as did Moses when he came forth from the immediate presence of God, note Exodus 34:29, *"When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with Jehovah."*

The brightness of the heavenly Jerusalem is compared to *"a jasper, clear as crystal."* In Revelation 4:3 the LORD Himself is compared to a jasper stone; and in Revelation 4:6 John sees a sea of glass like crystal stretching out before His throne. Our Christian destiny in the New Jerusalem will be to radiate with the glory of God—perfectly reflecting the awesome beauty and purity of the Lord Himself. Jesus declares, *"The disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when*

he is perfected shall be like his teacher" (Lk. 6:40.) The Apostle Paul explains to the Ephesian Christians the process of sanctification Christ is presently undertaking in the lives of His people, and the final purpose of that process:

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water by the word—²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in glory, without blemish or wrinkle or any [other] such thing, but being holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:25b-27)

The heavenly city is securely enclosed by a great and high wall (vs. 12-14.) This majestic wall depicts the divine protection and security God ministers to His people. Speaking of Jerusalem, representative of His people, the LORD declares, *"And I myself will be a wall of fire around it," declares Jehovah, 'and within it I will be its glory'"* (Zech. 2:5.) At the twelve gates stand twelve angels. The cherubim stood guard at the entrance to the Garden of Eden: *"[Jehovah God] drove the man out; and he placed the Cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and also a flaming sword that turned in every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3:24.)* So, too, the angels of God guard the entrance to the heavenly Jerusalem. But whereas the angels stood guard at the gates of Eden to prevent sinful man from gaining admittance, they stand guard over the New Jerusalem as a means of portraying the absolute security the redeemed enjoy as the children of God, purchased by the blood of Jesus.

According to verse 18, the material out of which the walls are constructed is jasper. Again, in describing the Lord God as He is seated upon His throne, the Apostle John compares Him to jasper (Rev. 4:3.) Thus, we are made to understand that the LORD Himself forms the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem (note, again, Zechariah 2:5.)—the LORD is the sure and perfect Refuge for His people. What the LORD declared Himself to be to Abram, He proves to be for all His redeemed people: *"the word of Jehovah came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram, I am your shield, and your reward shall be exceedingly great'"* (Gen. 15:1.)

Our Christian destiny in the New Jerusalem shall be the enjoyment of a life of perfect security and tranquility under the watchful protection of God and His holy angels—consider Isaiah 33:20b-22, for a beautiful Old Testament description of this divine tranquility:

Your eyes will see Jerusalem [as being] a peaceful dwelling place, a tent that shall not be removed—its stakes will never be pulled up, nor will any of its cords be broken. ²¹But there Jehovah will be with us in his majesty. [It will be] a place of broad rivers and streams, along which no galley with oars will travel, neither shall any mighty [war] ship sail upon those rivers. ²²Because Jehovah is our Judge, [because] Jehovah is our Lawgiver, [because] Jehovah is our King, he will save us. (Isa. 33:20b-22)

It is significant that the names of the twelve apostles form the **foundation** of the city, while the twelve tribes of Israel form the **gateway** into the city (vs. 12.) The point being made is that the gospel preached by the apostles—the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son—has always been the way of salvation from the time of Adam’s sin, it did not originate with the New Testament church. Consider what the Lord Jesus taught His disciples when He appeared to them following His resurrection:

[Jesus] said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself ... ⁴⁴He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Lk. 24:25-27,44-47)

The fact that the twelve tribes of Israel are described as the gateway to the heavenly city is portraying the fact that *“salvation is from the Jews”* (Jn. 4:22.) That is to say, God ordained that the Savior of the world would come from the nation of Israel.

The heavenly city is nothing less than the sanctuary of God (vs. 15-17.) In verse 22 John notes that he saw no temple, (literally, no sanctuary,) in the heavenly Jerusalem. The reason is the fact that the entire city is the temple, (or, sanctuary,) of God. Note: The measurement of the city indicates that it is a perfect cube (vs. 16,) corresponding to the Holy of Holies (the sanctuary) of the Old Testament temple, which was also a perfect cube: *“The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high”* (1 Kgs. 6:20a.) The perfect cube shape of the sanctuary symbolically represents the perfection of the LORD God.

Our Christian destiny in the New Jerusalem shall be to experience the awesome wonder of dwelling in God’s immediate presence and having God fill us with His own divine presence; as Paul relates to the Ephesians, God’s own people will be His spiritual sanctuary:

You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, [with] Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and grows into a holy temple for the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together [with the saints] to become the place where God dwells by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:20-22)

The heavenly city is precious to the Lord (vs. 18-21.) Verse 18 describes the city as being made of pure gold; verse 21 describes the twelve gates as being made of twelve pearls and the streets as being made of pure gold. The twelve stones that adorn the foundation (vs. 19-20) are reminiscent of the twelve stones set in the breastplate of the Old Testament high priest. In making the breastplate, Moses was instructed as follows:

... mount four rows of precious stones on it [i.e.; the breastplate]. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; ¹⁸in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; ¹⁹in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; ²⁰in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. (Ex. 28:17-20)

The precious stones worn on the breastplate over the high priest's heart depicted the fact that the LORD's people are precious in His sight and dear to His heart.

Our Christian destiny in the New Jerusalem is to be the object of God's love—to know that we are precious to Him and dear to His heart—to be the object of His divine favor and attention. There we will experience in full measure the blessing of being God's people, His own cherished possession, *"the apple of His eye"* (Zech. 13:9b.)

The heavenly city is illuminated by the light of God (vs. 23-25.) The glory of God provides the light of the city, and the Lamb of God is its lamp. That is to say, the divine truth of God, (which is an integral part of His glory,) as it is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ shall bathe the whole city in its light. The nations of the earth once walked in spiritual darkness, refusing to come to the light:

And this is [the reason for] the condemnation: the Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his works will not be exposed. (Jn. 3:19-20)

But they will finally be compelled to acknowledge the light and truth of God.

Our Christian destiny in the New Jerusalem will be to experience the joy of living in the fullness of God's light and God's absolute truth. Then will be fulfilled the promise of 1 Corinthians 13:12, *"At present we see an obscure image in a mirror, but then [we will see] face to face. At present I know things partially; but then I will know fully, just as I am fully known."*

Let us not lose sight of our Christian destiny, one aspect of which is to gain access to the city of God, the New Jerusalem.

II. Don't Lose Sight of Your Christian Destiny, ...Which is to Enjoy Life in the Paradise of God

In the center of the New Jerusalem John sees a luxurious park; and in the midst of the park there stands *“the tree of life.”* Throughout the park there flows the *“river of the water of life.”*

John’s attention is first focused on *“the river of the water of life”* (22:1.) The river, bright as crystal, flows out from the throne of God and the Lamb. This river is depicting the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit; compare the picture presented in Revelation 22:1 with the promise made by the Lord Jesus on the Last Day of the great Jewish feast of Tabernacles:

Now on the last day, the great [day] of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, From within him shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹Now he was referring to the [Holy] Spirit, whom they who believed in him were to receive. (Jn. 7:37-39a)

Our Christian destiny in the paradise of God is to know and experience what it means to be filled to overflowing with the presence of the Holy Spirit. We will forever experience in the fullest degree the Holy Spirit-inspired life as it is defined in Ephesians 5:18b-21,

... be filled with the Spirit—¹⁹speaking to each other with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and praising the Lord in your heart, ²⁰always giving thanks to our God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for all things, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph. 5:18b-21)

Next John’s attention is turned to *“the tree of life”* (vs. 2.) This tree derives its life from the river—the river flows directly through the trunk of the tree. What is depicted here is spiritual life; life generated by and sustained by the Holy Spirit. This tree yields twelve varieties of fruit, one variety each month—depicting the abundance of eternal life. The Lord Jesus declares, *“I have come so that they may have life and have it abundantly”* (Jn. 10:10b.)

Whereas Adam and his descendants, because of their sin, were barred from the tree of life situated in the original Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24,) our Christian destiny is to gain access to the tree of life, which represents the blessing of life in the presence of God. In the paradise of God we will experience to the full that of which the Psalmist anticipated when he wrote, *“you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand”* (Psl. 16:11.) Furthermore, our own lives will bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in full abundance unto the glory of God, the fruit of the Spirit that consists of *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, integrity, ²³meekness, self-control”* (Gal. 5:22-23a.)

We are informed that the throne of God shall be there in the paradise of God and His servants shall serve Him (vs. 3b.) Note: The sovereign rule of God never is set aside or comes to an end; the paradise of God is not a “spiritual democracy,” but

is rather a blessed theocracy, (the rule of God over His people and over His creation.) What does undergo a transformation is not the role of God as King and sovereign Lord; but rather the disposition and attitude of His people: His servants shall serve Him willingly and wholeheartedly.

Our Christian destiny in the paradise of God is to respond to God as do the angels of heaven: perfectly, willingly, wholeheartedly, free from every remnant of self-will and rebellion. We will do so because we shall be completely transformed into the likeness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Savior, who testified with regard to His relationship with the Father: *"I tell you the truth, The Son can do nothing by himself, but [only] what he sees the Father doing; for whatever [the Father] does, the Son also does in the same way"* (Jn. 5:19.)

Verse 4 informs us that God's servants shall see His face, and shall bear His name on their foreheads. In the Old Testament era only one tribe of Israel (the tribe of Levi) served as priests; and only one of their number (the high priest) entered the presence of God; and he did so only one day of the year (on the Day of Atonement.)

Our Christian destiny in the paradise of God is the supreme privilege of serving as the priests of God. In Revelation 22:3 the Greek word translated, "to serve," (λατρεύω,) means, "to perform priestly service." It is our Christian destiny to render this service continually, fulfilling the exhortations of Scripture:

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Heb. 13:15-16)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. (Rom. 12:1)

At the conclusion of verse 5 we are informed that God's servants *"shall reign [with him] forever and ever."* Our Lord Jesus Christ (in His capacity as the incarnate Messiah,) because He fully submitted Himself in service to His Father, was exalted to share in the very dominion of God:

... he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. Being found as a man in appearance, ⁸he humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death, even death on the cross. ⁹Therefore, God exalted him to the highest position and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name. (Phil. 2:7-9)

What is true of the Savior shall also be true of those who are united to Him and who follow Him. Our Christian destiny in the paradise of God is to be received by God to His very throne in order to share with Him in the carrying out of His

divine dominion. Jesus makes the promise, *“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne”* (Rev. 3:21.)

Let us not lose sight of our Christian destiny, another aspect of which is to enjoy life in the paradise of God.

Conclusion

In order to stimulate our faith and fortify our perseverance, the Lord has graciously provided us with a revelation of the glories of our Christian destiny. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us not lose sight of our glorious Christian destiny; rather, may our faith be stimulated and fortified by it.