

New Jerusalem: The Eternal Home of the Church

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Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
(John 14:1-3)

The fourteenth chapter of John was given by our Lord in the Upper Room, and He introduces something that is entirely new. The first part of the chapter was given to a man to cushion the shock of failure that was to come into his life. Also it was to comfort and put down the fears of this little band of apostles across whose pathway the shadow of the Cross had fallen. Sin was knocking at the door in the Upper Room, demanding its pound of flesh. These men were frightened men, and our Lord was speaking to their hearts. He begins by saying,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (John 14:1)

He is putting, as essential, faith in Himself along with faith in God – which, of course, is the thing that makes a Christian today. I was in a hospital visiting a Christian friend, and after I had prayed with him, the man who was in a bed across the room called to me, “Preacher, will you pray for me?” I went over and talked to him and asked, “Are you a Christian?” “Well, yes, I believe in God.” “That does not make you a Christian,” I said, “it simply means that you are not an atheist.” Then I gave him this verse, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe *also* in me.” Our Lord begins with His men on that plane, and He continues.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)

Now the word *mansion* is a very unfortunate translation. It surely gives the wrong impression. I was a Presbyterian preacher for many years, and I lived in a home that the Presbyterian church calls a *manse*, a shortened form of the word *mansion*. I lived in a Presbyterian mansion – in fact, I lived, I suppose, in a half dozen of them. I moved into my first mansion when I was ordained to the ministry in Nashville, Tennessee. It was an antebellum home – that is, it was built before the Civil War. It had fourteen rooms, and they were spacious rooms! I used to say to folk that on a clear day you could see the ceiling in the living room. I was then single, and I moved into the corner of one of the rooms. Years later I drove by it and shuddered when I looked at it. I thought of this verse, “In my Father's house are many mansions,” and I said, “Oh my, I don't want one of those up there!” I certainly would not want to go to heaven and find myself assigned to another mansion! And I am thankful that it does not mean that, my friend. Actually, the Greek word is *moni*; it has no reference to a great big home but means “abiding place.” “In my Father's house are many abiding places.”

What is the Father's house? When you go out tonight, look up into the vaulted sky above you, and you will see the Father's house. That is His house. Our Lord said, “In My Father's house are many *moni*, many abiding places, many places to live.” Now I do not know this, but it is my personal opinion that God has a universe filled with created intelligences, and I do not think He has a vacancy sign out anywhere. I think all the abiding places are occupied, for abiding places are living quarters for some sort of intelligences. I do not mean to suggest that His universe is peopled with human beings – this planet has enough! God does not need any more

folk like us, nor any that would compare with us. But God has other created intelligences. In the Book of Revelation John tells us that he could not even number them when he got a look at them. They are in the Father's house.

When the two-hundred-inch mirror for the Palomar Observatory was being ground, the man who had charge of the mechanical part of the grinding was my neighbor and a very fine Christian. He would come down from Palomar every weekend, and when I would see him I would ask, "What do you see?" Every weekend I would head him off with that question, "What do you see?" Finally, one day after my usual question he wondered why I was so interested. So I told him, "You have that big eye poked into the window of my Father's house, and I want to know what you see up there."

In my Father's house are many abiding places.

He enforces this statement with,

If it were not so, I would have told you.

Then He says,

I go to prepare a place for you.

This place is different from any other in His universe – "I go to prepare a *special* place for you." It is a prepared place for prepared people. The One who was the carpenter of Nazareth down here about two thousand years ago is at this moment preparing a place up yonder for those who are His own. Have you ever wondered about that place He is preparing? Do you wonder what it is like? We are going there someday, and we shall live there eternally.

Then He makes the statement,

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:3)

As far as I know, this is the first time in the Word of God where it mentions that He is going to take someone off the earth out into space. You will not find that in the Old Testament at all. God did not promise anyone in the Old Testament that He would take him off this earth to a place called heaven. The hope of the Old Testament saints was that there might be a heaven down here on this earth, and that is what I understand the expression, *the Kingdom of Heaven*, to mean – the reign of the heavens over the earth, the day when this earth becomes a heaven. That is the hope of the Old Testament.

When God called Abraham, He called him into a *land*. His promise was not that He would take him out into space but that He would give him a land. God marked it out – north, east, south, and west – put boundaries around it and said, "I am giving you this land for a permanent possession." Abraham took God so literally that when his wife Sarah died, he went to the sons of Heth and said, "I want to buy the cave of Machpelah for a burial place." Why did he want a burial place in the Promised Land? Because he expected to be raised someday from the dead there. God promised Abraham, "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven," but He never

said that He would take him out to one of the stars or give him one of the stars. A heaven on earth is the hope of the Old Testament.

You find that Isaac also was buried in that land. Then you find that old Jacob, who died down in the land of Egypt, had commanded his sons, "Bury me with my fathers in the cave of Machpelah." And when he died they carried him, with a long funeral procession following, into the land of Canaan and buried him in the Promised Land. Why all of that? Because he expected to be raised from the dead in that land someday. Now, if he is to be carried away in a rapture out yonder in space, what difference would it make if he was buried in Egypt or the Promised Land, London, or Los Angeles? But it would make a lot of difference if he is to be raised from the dead in that land.

Even Joseph said, "The day will come when you will leave Egypt and return to the Promised Land. I want you to take my bones with you." Joseph died as a national hero, and his people could not have removed him from Egyptian soil. But there came a day when there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, and then the children of Israel went out; and the night they left Egypt behind them, they had with them the bones of Joseph. They were taken and interred in the Promised Land. Why? The hope is that someday they will be raised from the dead there. Such is the hope of the Old Testament saints.

But when our Lord took into the Upper Room the men whom He had called out of Judaism, He gave them something that was entirely new,

... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

(John 14:2, 3)

The hope He is giving believers today is that someday we are to travel out into space to that place He has prepared. It is interesting that man, in all his recorded history, has had his nose to the grindstone and his eyes fixed on the earth. It is only recently that man has turned his face upward and has started looking into space. Today the great aspiration of our generation is to be able to travel in space. Well, that has been the hope of believers for more than nineteen hundred years! The glorious hope of the church is the coming of our Lord Jesus to take us into space to that home He has prepared.

Now, where is that place? What kind of place is it? I turn to the only chapter I know of in the Word of God where there is a description of it, the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Revelation.

As we look at this chapter, I shall not try to make a comprehensive study, but rather I shall make a few suggestions that may intrigue you into probing deeper into this fascinating subject. I believe that if Christians were more interested in the place to which they are going, they would be more concerned about the way in which they are living down here.

If you have read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is actually the experience of Bunyan himself, you will notice that when he got up out of the Slough of Despond and started out, the hope that he had from the beginning was this: "I am a pilgrim, and I am on the way to the Celestial City." And when he would fall down, he would always get up, brush himself off and say, "I am a pilgrim on the way to the Celestial City." And when he was incarcerated in Doubting Castle, the key that unlocked the doors and set him free was this promise. When he had mountains to climb, when the way was difficult and discouraging and it seemed as though he would not make it, he got his mind and his heart fixed on that Celestial City.

I believe there are many believers today who have lost sight of this city. They have become discouraged along the way. I say to you, friend, that this world is only a camping place for the night. We all are here temporarily – we are merely pilgrims down here on this earth. We are on the way to the Celestial City. We are on the way to the New Jerusalem. The thing that would encourage the hearts of many today would be to know a little about this place to which we are going.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)

John here tells us that God is going to trade in this old earth and the old heaven on a new model. He is going to get a new earth – not get rid of earth entirely but merely get a new one. He calls attention to only one great change in His new earth: there will be no more sea. That which covers three-fourths of the earth's surface today will be entirely removed. What a tremendous population can then be put on this earth! Someone asked the other day, when I made the suggestion of the population explosion that will probably take place during the Millennium, "Where in the world will they go, when we don't even have room today?" May I say to you that there will be three-fourths more surface on the earth, plus the fact that the curse of sin will be removed from the earth so that it will produce as it never has before. You will be able to find a parking space in that day; there will be plenty of parking spaces! That appeals to me, because we need more parking space in Southern California, and if we could use the Pacific Ocean, we would have the problem solved!

But these are things that concern the earth, and we are not an earthly people. We are to leave this earth. The thing that interests us is what John sees in the next verse:

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)

Now, this is the first time the New Jerusalem comes into view. The question is asked, "Is it in existence before this?" I do not know, but I rather think that at the Rapture the church will be brought to this place. I believe this city is to be our permanent home. I think that during the Millennium it will be a matter of commuting back and forth from the earth to the New Jerusalem. Yet the New Jerusalem does not come into view until this point because now eternity opens up and reveals the eternal home of the church.

Notice that the city is a *holy* city. The inhabitants have been made holy in Christ and in no other way. *He* is there. That makes it a holy city.

The *new* Jerusalem is in contrast to the *old* Jerusalem down here on the earth, and it is coming down from God out of heaven.

Now there are men today – better men than I – who believe that the New Jerusalem comes to the earth. I never have been able to see that, I cannot move it that far. I think it comes out into space, and it comes, apparently, within sight of the earth.

The loveliest thing that God could say about it is that it is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. As a preacher I have had the privilege of seeing over two hundred couples stand before me to be married. This has been one of the delights of my ministry. And I can truthfully say that I never yet have seen an ugly bride. It always is a thrill to me to stand and look down the aisle and watch her come in. I never have seen a bride who was not pretty. I believe that if any girl has

a right to be pretty it is on her wedding day. Now don't think that I am being a sentimental old preacher, because I am not. I have seen them before they were married and, frankly, have looked them over and wondered how in the world they would meet the standard. But always on the wedding day they were beautiful. Then I have seen them afterward, and I do not think *beautiful* is the word that should be used in their connection at all. Yet when each one came down the aisle, adorned as a bride for her husband, she was beautiful. Thus God uses the figure of a bride to characterize this city. It is a thing of exquisite beauty.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Revelation 21:3)

The New Jerusalem is the temple for the universe of God. This will be the place, apparently, where Israel and the gentile nations of the earth will come to worship. They will come to worship and then return to their homes on the earth.

Now I want you to notice several things that are said concerning this city. Though they are negative, they are very important.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

Would you like to move to a city where no one sheds a tear, a city where you would never know disappointment and you would never have occasion to weep? All of us who do counseling have discovered that under the veneer of prosperity and pleasure there are tears.

It is uprooted humanity here in Southern California. Very few have been born and reared here; they have come from some other place. As a result many get into sin, awful sin. At home in their normal environment they might have weathered the storm, but they break their home ties and are carried away. Some have been regular churchgoers at home and have given an appearance of being Christian, but they came out to California and the first Sunday they went to Disneyland, the next Sunday they went to the mountains, the third Sunday to the desert, the fourth Sunday to the beach, and by then they had met a couple down the street who drank cocktails. Now they are drinking cocktails with the couple down the street. The next thing you know they are having marital trouble. They go to a marriage counselor or to a psychiatrist, then in desperation they call and want to talk to a pastor. When they come in, we see the tears.

A member of my staff, who has been with us only a couple of years, came to my study the other day and said, "I am tired of seeing tears." I said, "Buck up, old boy, we are going to a city where there will be no tears." He said, "Yes, but I am tired of it here; I see so much." I understood how he felt, because I have been here for forty years, and I am tired of seeing tears also. It will be wonderful to go to that city where there will be no more tears, no more broken hearts.

A columnist in New York made the statement years ago, "For every light that burns on Broadway there is a broken heart." That probably is true. When flying over Los Angeles at night, I hear many exclaim about the beautiful carpet of lights beneath us, and it is a thrill to see; but for every one of those lights there is a broken heart also. Oh, the broken hearts and lives and homes! Can you imagine what it will be like to live in a city where there are no tears?

The second thing that makes the New Jerusalem a wonderful city is “there shall be no more death.” No death. That makes it different from any city I have heard of down here. There will be no cemeteries, there will be no undertakers. They all will be out of business in the New Jerusalem. I mentioned this some time ago, and after the service a man came up to me and said, “My little boy was sitting beside me this morning and when you said the mortuaries and cemeteries would be out of business, he looked up at me and said, ‘Dad, *you* will be out of business too.’” He was an insurance man. The little fellow was right. I had not thought of that, but the insurance man will be out of business also in the New Jerusalem. No more death. Would you like to go to a place like that? Never again would you have to follow a hearse to a cemetery; never again would you see a loved one encased in a casket and buried. No more death. What a wonderful place this will be!

And then it says, “neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” All the hospitals will be closed, doctors and nurses will be out of a job, “for the former things are passed away.”

Then we come to something that is quite wonderful:

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new....

(Revelation 21:5)

I love that. Would you like to start all over again? I want to make a confession. I never have been the preacher that I have wanted to be. I never have preached the sermon that I longed to preach. I honestly never have been the man that I have wanted to be. I have not attained, really, my ambition. I have not reached my goal in life. I never have been the husband that I have wanted to be, and I never have been the father that I have wanted to be. As I come to this place in life and look back, I have regrets. I would like to go back and do things differently. And God is going to let me! He says to my heart, “In that city, McGee, I want all things new.” We are going to start over, and there will be nothing to hinder us. The sin and weights that beset us and hold us back are going to be removed. I don’t know about you, but I want to go to that place where I can *be* and *do* the thing that I have wanted to be and do. When I finish this life, I shall look back and thank God for a Savior who has forgiven me for my sins, but I wish I could live my life over again. “Behold, I make all things new.” I would like to move up to that city tonight. Wouldn’t you?

Now I want to make a suggestion concerning the shape of this city.

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. (Revelation 21:16)

Twelve thousand furlongs is 1,378.97 miles – roughly fifteen hundred miles. It is fifteen hundred miles long, fifteen hundred miles wide, and fifteen hundred miles high. Some men have concluded that it will be a cube; others see it as a pyramid. It is difficult to conceive of either a cube or pyramid projected out in space. Cubes and pyramids are appropriate for earth’s buildings but are impractical for space, as spheres are impractical for earthly buildings. I cannot believe that, since God has made everything in space globe-shaped, He would make this square. I do not say this in a dogmatic fashion, for there are many fine Bible students who disagree with me, but I believe that the New Jerusalem is a sphere and these measurements that Scripture gives are the

dimensions on the inside of the sphere, a cube within a crystal-clear sphere. I took this problem in solid geometry to a man in the field of theoretical engineering. He worked it out for me and came up with a sphere that is slightly larger than our moon. The diameter of the moon is about 2,160 miles, and that of the New Jerusalem sphere is about 2,600 miles. We live on the *outside* of the planet called earth, but if my theory is correct, our eternal home will be *within* the planet called the New Jerusalem.

Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (Revelation 21:11)

The jasper stone is evidently similar to our diamond. The city from the outside looks like a diamond. I like to think of its being the wedding ring of the church. It will be like a diamond flashing out through God's vast universe. I believe it will be the most beautiful thing that you have ever seen because the twelve foundations, which would be the outer surface, are all precious stones through which the light passes. Varied hues and tints form a galaxy of rainbow colors:

- *Jasper* – perhaps the blue diamond
- *Sapphire* – opaque with a greenish or yellowish color
- *Chalcedony* – perhaps green
- *Emerald* – green
- *Sardonyx* – white and yellow
- *Sardius* – red
- *Chrysolite* – golden luster
- *Beryl* – sea green, aqua
- *Topaz* – greenish yellow
- *Chrysoprasus* – golden green
- *Jacinth* – violet
- *Amethyst* – purple or rose red

The presence of the primary colors suggests that every shade and tint is reflected from this city. A rainbow that appears after a summer shower gives only a faint hint of the breathtaking beauty of the city of light. I believe it will be the most thrilling sight in the world to see this city. Nothing in all God's universe will compare to it.

The One who is the source of light and life dwells within the city. The New Jerusalem is a light giver. It does not reflect light as the moon, nor does it generate light by physical combustion like the sun. Rather, it originates light and is the source of light, for the glory of God will lighten 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. (Revelation 21:23)

The New Jerusalem will be independent of the sun and moon for light and life. What a contrast to the earth which is utterly dependent upon the sun and the moon. The sun and moon may even be dependent upon the Celestial City for power to transmit light, since the One who is the source of light and life will dwell within the city. Neither will light be furnished by the New Jerusalem Light and Power Company. The One who is light will be there, and the effulgence of His glory will be manifested in the New Jerusalem unhindered.

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. (Revelation 21:24)

The New Jerusalem will be the center of the universe. All activity and glory revolve about this city. The nation Israel and the gentile nations of the earth will walk in the light of it and bring to it their glory and honor. They will not live in the city but will come, as the priests of old came to the holy place in the tabernacle and temple, for the purpose of worship. There will be no need to bring a blood sacrifice, for the Lamb is there in person.

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Revelation 21:22)

This city has no temple because it *is* a temple – God is there and Christ is there. It is the holy place, if you please, because Christ is present. That is the thing that makes it such a wonderful place. The Lord Jesus said,

... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:2, 3)

We are to be with Him throughout eternity. That, after all, will make it heaven – Christ will be there.

Many folk ask, “Will I know my loved ones in heaven?” We shall certainly know our loved ones in heaven. As Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said years ago when someone asked that question of him, “I do not expect to be a bigger fool there than I am here, and I know them here.” Yes, we shall know our loved ones in heaven.

But the wonder of it is that we shall know the Lord Jesus. We say today that we know Him. Actually, we know Him as Savior, but we do not yet *know* Him. I think the thing many of us will want to do is to spend eternity just being with Him and coming to know Him. And if you think you will know Him in an evening’s conversation, you are wrong. Did you ever stop to think of all the books that have been written on any one of the sciences such as geology or chemistry? They are the record of man’s probing into His work. He did it all. And today He is the One who is holding it together.

I was talking to a man who is working in the field of theoretical science. He pointed out, “The center of the building block of the universe, the nucleus of the atom, has in it protons. Each proton has a positive charge. Like charges repel, unlike charges attract. Here in the center of the building block of the entire universe you have a force that is trying to blow itself apart! What is holding it together? Science does not know. The Bible tells us that by Him, by the Lord Jesus Christ, all things consist or are held together. He is the holding force of the entire universe.”

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:16)

The reason the universe is not flying to pieces at this moment is that *He* is holding it together! It will be wonderful for Him to tell us in that day about this vast universe which He has made. That is something that will engage the brain power of all His redeemed creatures.

I hope you will want to go to this city. Someone may ask, “Well, how do you get there?” That brings us back to where we started.

When our Lord was talking to His men in the Upper Room, He said, “And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know” (John 14:4). Sitting there was one of His disciples, a man who had a question mark for a brain, Thomas. This man had doubts. He raised questions about everything and he always saw the dark side of things. He really was not a very pleasant fellow to have around, and I do not know why our Lord called him. In fact, I have never figured out why He called any of them – who would want Simon Peter, Thomas, Andrew, James, or John? All of them were problem children, every one of them. But I am glad He called them because if He will use them there is still hope for me and there is hope for you. This man Thomas is a doubter. He says, “Wait a minute, Lord. You say that we know where You are going and we know the way. We don’t!”

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? (John 14:5)

I am glad he was there. He raised my question – he saved me from having to ask it.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

My friend, Jesus is the way to the Celestial City. He has gone before us, and He is preparing an eternal home for all of us who have become children of God through faith in His name.