

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

We have already seen that the woman in Genesis 2 is the same woman seen in Ephesians 5 and in Revelation 12. Now let us look at another woman, recorded in Revelation 21 and 22.

Although there is a long distance between them, the last two chapters of Revelation correspond with the first three chapters of Genesis. God created the heaven and the earth in Genesis, and the new heaven and the new earth are in the last two chapters of Revelation. In both Genesis and Revelation there is the tree of life. In Genesis there is a river flowing out from Eden, and in Revelation there is a river of living water flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In Genesis there is gold, pearl (bdellium), and a kind of precious stone (onyx), and in Revelation there is gold, pearl, and all kinds of precious stones. In Genesis 2 Eve was Adam's wife. In Revelation 21 the Lamb also has a wife. The Lamb's wife is the New Jerusalem, and God's eternal purpose is fulfilled in this woman. In Genesis 3 man's fall was followed by death, sickness, suffering, and the curse. But, when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven in Revelation 21, there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain because the former things have all passed away. If we read the Scriptures carefully, we will see that Genesis 1 through 3 does indeed correspond with Revelation 21 and 22. They face each other at the two ends of the expanse of time.

Now we have seen four women: Eve in Genesis 2, the wife (the church) in Ephesians 5, the woman in the vision of Revelation 12, and the wife of the Lamb in Revelation 21. These four women are actually one woman, but her history can be divided into four stages. When she was conceived in the plan of God, she was called Eve. When she is redeemed and manifesting Christ on earth, she is called the church. When she is persecuted by the great dragon, she is the woman in the vision. When she is completely glorified in eternity, she is the wife of the Lamb. These four women reveal God's work from eternity to eternity. The woman in Genesis 2 is the woman purposed in God's heart in eternity past, and the woman in Revelation 21 is the woman who fulfills God's purpose in eternity future. Of the two women in between, one is the church, prepared for Christ by God, and the other is the woman who will bring forth the man-child at the end time. In other words, these four women show us the four stages of the history of one woman: one stage is in eternity past, two stages are between the eternities, and another stage is in eternity future. Even though these four women appear to be different when we speak of them separately, they are the same when we put them together. The wife of the Lamb is the woman of Ephesians 5. Since the Lord Jesus is the Lamb, it is impossible for the woman in Ephesians 5 to be anyone other than the wife of the Lamb. The woman in Ephesians 5 is also likened to Eve, and Eve is also likened to the wife of the Lamb in Revelation 21. When there are overcomers, whose work represents that of the whole church, the woman in Revelation 12 will introduce the woman in Revelation 21. As a result, God in eternity future will indeed obtain a woman, a ruling woman who has dealt thoroughly with Satan. God will truly obtain a wife for the Lamb, and His purpose will be fulfilled. Let us see how the woman of Revelation 12 becomes the woman of Revelation 21.

THE FALL OF BABYLON

Of the two women spoken of in Revelation 17:1-3 and 21:9-10, one is called the great harlot, and the other is called the bride. Revelation 17:1 says, "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits upon the many waters." Revelation 21:9 says, "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." Revelation 17:3 says, "And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman." Revelation 21:10 says, "And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." When the Holy Spirit inspired man to write the Scriptures, He purposely used a parallel structure in pointing to these two women so that we would have a clear impression.

Let us first consider the things relating to the harlot. The harlot spoken of in Revelation 17 and 18 is Babylon, whose deeds are extremely displeasing to God. Why is her conduct such an offense to God? What does Babylon represent and what is the principle of Babylon? Why does God deal with Babylon and why is it necessary to wait until Babylon is judged before the wife of the Lamb appears? May God open our eyes so that we would really see Babylon according to the Scriptures.

The name Babylon originates from "Babel." We remember the story of the tower of Babel in the Bible. The principle of the tower of Babel involves the attempt to build up something from earth to reach unto heaven. When men built this tower, they used bricks. There is a basic difference between brick and stone. Stone is made by God, and bricks are made by man. Bricks are a human invention, a human product. The meaning of Babylon relates to man's own efforts to build a tower to reach unto heaven. Babylon represents man's ability. It represents a false Christianity, a Christianity which does not allow the Holy Spirit to have authority. It does not seek the Holy Spirit's guidance; it does all things by human effort. Everything consists of bricks baked by man; everything depends upon man's action. Those who are according to this principle do not see that they are limited; rather, they attempt to do the Lord's work by their own natural ability. They do not stand in a position where they are truly able to say, "Lord, if You do not give us grace, we cannot do anything." They think that man's ability can suffice for spiritual things. Their intention is to establish something upon the earth that will reach to heaven.

God, however, can never accept this. One man has some talent and thinks that he can preach after he has studied a little theology. What is this? Bricks! Another man who is very clever receives some help and possesses some knowledge and then becomes a Christian worker. Again, what is this? Bricks! A certain man is capable of doing things, so he is asked to come and manage the affairs of the church. What is this? Bricks! All of these things are man's endeavors to build something from earth to heaven by human ability, by bricks.

Again we must emphasize that there is no place for man in the church. Heavenly things can only come from heaven; the things of this earth can never go to heaven. Man's difficulty is that he does not see that he is under judgment, nor does he see that he is just dust and clay. Man may build high, but heaven is higher than man's highest height. No matter how high men may build

their tower, they still cannot touch heaven. Heaven is always above man. Though man may climb and build and though he may not fall, he still will not be able to touch heaven. God destroyed man's plan to build the tower of Babel in order to show man that he is useless in spiritual matters. Man cannot do anything.

There is another incident in the Old Testament which outstandingly manifests this principle. When the Israelites entered into the land of Canaan, the first person to commit sin was Achan. What was the sin which Achan committed? He said, "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle of Shinar...I coveted them and took them" (Josh. 7:21). A Babylonian garment seduced Achan to commit sin. What does this beautiful garment imply? A beautiful garment is worn for the sake of appearance. When one puts on a beautiful garment, it means that he adorns himself to improve his appearance and to add a little luster to himself. Achan's coveting of the Babylonian garment meant that he was seeking to improve himself, to make himself look better. This was Achan's sin.

Who were the first ones to commit sin in the New Testament, after the church began? The Scriptures reveal that they were Ananias and Sapphira. What was the sin that they committed? They lied to the Holy Spirit. They did not love the Lord very much, but they wanted to be looked upon as those who greatly loved the Lord. They were just pretending. They were not willing to offer everything cheerfully to God. Before man, however, they acted as if they had offered all. This is the Babylonian garment.

The principle of Babylon, therefore, is hypocrisy. There is no reality, yet people act as if there is in order to obtain glory from man. Here is a real danger to God's children—pretending to be spiritual. There is a great deal of spiritual behavior which is acted out in falsehood. It is put on as a veneer. Many long prayers are counterfeit; many prayerful tones are unreal. There is no reality, but it is made to appear as if there is. This is the principle of Babylon. Whenever we put on a garment which does not match our actual condition, we are in the principle of Babylon.

God's children do not know how much falsehood they have put on in order to receive glory from man. This is entirely opposite from the attitude of the bride. Everything done in falsehood is done in the principle of the harlot, not in the principle of the bride. It is a great matter for God's children to be delivered from pretending before man. The principle of Babylon is to pretend in order to receive glory from man. If we set our sight upon man's glory and man's position in the church, we are participating in the sin of the Babylonian garment and the sin committed by Ananias and Sapphira. False consecration is sin, and false spirituality is also sin. True worship is in spirit and truthfulness. May God make us true men.

Another condition of Babylon is seen in Revelation 18:7: "For she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and I am not a widow." She sits as a queen. She has lost all of her character of being a widow. She has no feeling about the Lord Jesus being killed and crucified on the cross. Rather, she says, "I sit a queen." She has lost her faithfulness; she has missed her proper goal. This is the principle of Babylon, and this is corrupted Christianity.

Chapter eighteen shows us many other things about Babylon, especially regarding the luxuries she enjoyed. Concerning our attitude toward the inventions of science, we can

use many things when we have a need. Just as the apostle Paul spoke of using the world (1 Cor. 7:31), our purpose with these things is simply to use them. However, luxurious enjoyment is another matter. There are some Christians who refuse all luxury and all things which contribute to the enjoyment of the flesh. We are not saying that we should not use certain things at all, but we are saying that anything in excess is luxury. Regardless of whether it is clothing, food, or housing, if it is excessive or beyond our need, it is luxury and in the principle of Babylon. God allows all that we need, but He does not permit things which are beyond our necessity. We should order our living according to the principle of need; then God will bless us. If we live according to our own lust, we are in the principle of Babylon, and God will not bless us.

We have seen that the principle of Babylon is mixing the things of man with the Word of God, and the things of the flesh with the things of the Spirit. It is pretending that something of man is something of God. It is receiving man's glory to satisfy man's lust. Therefore, Babylon is mixed and corrupted Christianity. What should our attitude be toward Babylon? Revelation 18:4 says, "And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues." Second Corinthians 6:17-18 also says, "Therefore 'come out from their midst and be separated, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you'; 'and I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me.'" According to God's Word, His children cannot be involved in any matter containing the character of Babylon. God said that we must come out from every situation where man's power is mixed with God's power, where man's ability is mixed with God's work, and where man's opinion is mixed with God's Word. We cannot partake of anything that has the character of Babylon. We have to come out of it. God's children must learn from the depths of their spirit to separate themselves from Babylon and to judge all her actions. If we do this, we will not be condemned together with Babylon.

Babylon had her beginning in the tower of Babel. Day by day Babylon is becoming larger and larger. But God will judge her in the end. Revelation 19:1-4 says, "After these things I heard as it were a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God. For true and righteous are His judgments; for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He avenged the blood of His slaves at her hand. And a second time they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!" When God judges the harlot and shatters all her work, and when He casts out all that she is and the principle she represents, voices from heaven will say, "Hallelujah!" In the New Testament, there are very few hallelujahs, and they are all expressed in this chapter because Babylon, she who adulterated the Word of Christ, has been judged.

The passage in Revelation 18:2-8 tells us the reason for Babylon's fall and judgment. The sinful deeds of Babylon are announced and the consequences of her judgment are set forth. All who are of the same mind with God must say, Hallelujah, for God has judged Babylon. Though the actual judgment is in the future, the spiritual judgment must take place today. The actual judgment will be performed by God in the future, but

the spiritual judgment must be made by us today. If God's children bring many unspiritual things into the church, how do we feel about it? Does the fact that we are all God's children and the fact that we should love one another mean that we should not say, Hallelujah, to God's judgment? We must realize that this is not a matter of love, but a matter of God's glory. The principle of Babylon is confusion and uncleanness; therefore, her name is the harlot. The few passages in Revelation which God uses to describe Babylon show us His exceeding hatred toward her. "Those who destroy the earth" in Revelation 11:18 are of this woman, of whom it is written in chapter nineteen that she "corrupted the earth" (v. 2).

God hates the principle of Babylon more than anything else. We must note in His presence how much of our being is still not absolute for Him. Anything which is halfway and not absolute is called Babylon. We need God to enlighten us so that in His light we may judge everything in us which is not absolute toward Him. Only when we judge ourselves in this way can we confess that we too hate the principle of Babylon. By His grace, may the Lord not allow us to seek any glory and honor outside of Christ. The Lord requires that we delight and seek to be one who is absolute, not one who is living in the principle of Babylon.

Revelation 19:5 says, "And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all His slaves and those who fear Him, the small and the great." A special feature of the book of Revelation is the proclamations from heaven. We read such things as a "voice out of heaven" and "a voice came out from the throne" (18:4; 19:5). These are declarations from heaven, signifying the time when God speaks, the place where God speaks, and what His emphasis is on. There are definite reasons for the proclamation in Revelation 19:5. On the one hand, it is because the great harlot is judged, and on the other hand, it is looking toward the marriage of the Lamb which is to come. Therefore, there is a proclamation from the throne to give praise to our God. God has been working from eternity and has expended much energy on His work so that He might obtain praise. Ephesians mentions that God has an inheritance in the saints. What is God's inheritance in the saints? There is only one thing that man can render to God—praise. Praise is God's inheritance in the saints. The voice from heaven proclaims that all of God's servants, all who belong to God, both small and great, must praise Him. God's purpose must be fulfilled, and it will be soon. God must obtain what He is after; we all must praise Him.

When the voice from the throne declared that praise be given to God, there was a host of echoes resounding throughout the universe. Revelation 19:6 says, "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns." On one hand, there was a declaration from the throne, and on the other hand, there was a response of thousands upon thousands, and ten thousands upon ten thousands. As John was listening, he did not hear the voice of a single person; rather, he heard the voice of a great multitude as if it were the voice of many waters and the voice of mighty thunders. When you listen to the noise of a great waterfall or the waves of the ocean, you will realize how loud a voice of many waters can be. The voice of thunder is great enough; how much greater is the voice of mighty thunders! All of these mighty and thunderous

voices were saying, Hallelujah! The declaration from heaven, the response from the whole universe, and every voice was saying, Hallelujah, because of a special event which was about to take place. The event is "the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

As we read this proclamation, what are our hearts set upon? This passage does not say that we will reign and that we should therefore rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Neither does it say that we will receive a crown and that we should therefore praise God. It says that the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. God's mind is that He should reign, that He should exercise authority. When God rules, it is Christ who rules. Let us turn back to Revelation 11:15: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." "Our Lord" refers to God, and "His Christ" refers to Christ. But the pronoun "He" which follows is used rather strangely. Since the passage begins with "our Lord and...His Christ," it seems logical to continue with the phrase, "And they will reign forever and ever." This would be grammatically correct. But it is not written in this way. It is followed by the phrase, "And He will reign forever and ever." This enables us to understand that the Lord's reign is Christ's reign, and Christ's reign is God's reign. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of Christ. The reigning of God is the reigning of Christ. Because God reigns and Christ reigns, everyone rejoices with exceeding gladness and shouts, Hallelujah!

Revelation 19:7 continues, "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him..." This is the time when God will be glorified. Following this, the verse says, "...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Wife is the correct translation, though some translators use bride.) Not only has God's authority commenced, but the kingdom has been ushered in. Furthermore, the corporate man, the eternal Eve whom God desired, has been obtained. The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. There are two reasons for praise. First, God reigns. To this we say, Hallelujah! Second, God has obtained what He determined to have in eternity past. To this we also say, Hallelujah! We too should rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because one day God will surely obtain what He desires. When the marriage of the Lamb has come, the wife has made herself ready.

When we look at ourselves, it seems impossible that such a day will ever come when Christ presents a glorious church to Himself, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things. But since this will happen, how can we refrain from saying, Hallelujah! Regardless of how much weakness there has been, both yesterday and today, God will obtain His determined will in that day. Never forget this—in that day the wife will be ready. Therefore, we must give Him the glory, and we must say, Hallelujah!

Let us read verse 7 again: "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." We must take note that this passage refers to the wife of the Lamb, not to the bride of the Lamb. Now let us go on to 21:1-2: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth....And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." When do the events in chapter nineteen, concerning the wife who has made herself ready, occur? It is before the millennium. When do the events in chapter twenty-one, concerning the bride who is ready, occur? It is after the millennium. Since the New Jerusalem must wait for the new heaven

and new earth before it is the bride of the Lamb, why does it say that the wife of the Lamb is ready before the millennium? Please note that chapter nineteen does not speak of the marriage of the Lamb, it simply says that the marriage of the Lamb has come. At that time, if we look back, we will see that the harlot has fallen, and if we look forward, we will see the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, the declaration that the marriage of the Lamb has come is made. In reality, however, there are one thousand years in between. Only when these one thousand years have passed will the actual time for the marriage of the Lamb come. The woman is actually the wife of Christ in the new heaven and new earth, not during the time of the kingdom.

There is one more thing which we must notice. In chapter twelve there is the woman with the man-child and many other children. But in chapter nineteen there is only the wife. Where are the man-child and the many children? It seems as if they have disappeared. How can the woman, the man-child, and the rest of her children become the wife of the Lamb?

In order to be clear, we must look at the principle of the man-child. Remember that the man-child accomplishes everything as if representing the whole church. In chapter nineteen, the declaration that the wife has made herself ready is spoken while looking upon the overcomers. The whole body of the church must wait until the time of the new heaven and the new earth to be the bride. She will not be ready until then. But one thousand years prior to this, there is an announcement that the wife has made herself ready. Why is this spoken? What kind of readiness is there? This proclamation refers to the readiness of the overcomers and to no one but the overcomers. Because the overcomers are fully ready, a declaration can be made that the wife has made herself ready.

We must bear in mind that what the overcomers accomplish is not for themselves alone, but for the whole church. The Word of God says that when one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it (1 Cor. 12:26). The overcomers war with Satan on behalf of the whole Body. Their victory brings benefit to the whole. Therefore, the readiness mentioned in chapter nineteen has to do with the matter of life. Because the overcomers have more maturity of life, they are ready. Because the overcomers are ready before God, He reckons their readiness as the readiness of the whole Body.

Do we sense the preciousness of this? We must remember this one thing—all of our seeking and all of our growth is not for us as individuals, but for the Body. What each member receives from God is for the whole Body. When your ears hear a word, you cannot say that you have not heard, because your ears are united to your body. When your mouth says something wrong, you cannot deny that you have spoken wrongly, because your mouth and body are united. In the same way, whatever the overcomers accomplish is the accomplishment of the whole Body. Since our Lord is the Head of the church, whatever He has accomplished on the cross belongs to the church. Likewise, as we receive benefit from the Head, we also receive benefit from the Body. As we partake of what the Lord has accomplished, we also partake of what the other members have accomplished. When God sees the readiness of the overcomers, He reckons it as the readiness of the whole church. Therefore, it can be said that the wife has made herself ready.

The readiness of the wife especially refers to the garments of the wife. Verse 19:8 says, "And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." The Scriptures reveal that there are two kinds of garments for Christians. One is the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is our clothing. The other is the fine linen garment, bright and clean, spoken of in verse 8. Whenever we come before God, the Lord Jesus is our garment. He is our righteousness, and we put Him on when we approach God. This garment is our common clothing; every saint is clothed before God and cannot be found naked. On the other hand, when we are presented to Christ, we must be arrayed with fine linen, bright and clean. This is the righteousnesses of the saints. "Righteousnesses" means a succession of righteous deeds, one after another. All of these righteous deeds together are our fine linen garment. When we were saved, we began to obtain a fine linen garment for our adornment—the righteousnesses of the saints.

We can also see these two sets of garments for the Christian in Psalm 45. Verse 13 says, "The King's daughter is all glorious within the royal abode;/Her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold." The material of her clothing is gold, beaten gold. Then verse 14 says, "She will be led to the King in embroidered clothing." The clothing mentioned in verse 13 differs from that in verse 14. In verse 13 the clothing is of gold, but in verse 14 the clothing is of embroidered work. The fine linen garments in Revelation 19 are embroidered, they are not of gold.

What then is gold? The Lord Jesus is gold. He is gold because He is entirely of God. The righteousness which the Lord Jesus gave us, the clothing which He put upon us when we were saved was something of gold. Besides this clothing, we have been embroidering another garment from the day we received our salvation. This relates to the righteous acts of the saints. In other words, the clothing of gold is given to us by God through the Lord Jesus, while the clothing of embroidered work is given to us by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit. When we believed in the Lord, God gave us a gold garment through the Lord Jesus. This garment is the Lord Jesus Himself, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with our conduct. It was furnished by Him, ready-made. The embroidered garment, however, is related to our deeds. It is wrought one stitch at a time by the working of the Holy Spirit in us day by day.

What is the meaning of embroidery? Originally, there is a plain piece of material with nothing upon it. Later, something is sewed into it with thread, and by this sewing work, the original material and the thread become one. This means that when the Spirit of God works upon us, He constitutes Christ into us—this is the embroidery work. Then we will not only have a garment of gold, but also a garment embroidered by the Holy Spirit. By this work Christ will be constituted in us and expressed from us. This embroidered garment is the righteous acts of the saints. It is not done once for all, but repeatedly carried on day after day until God says that it is ready.

Perhaps some may ask what the righteous acts are that are specifically spoken of here. The Gospels record many righteous acts, such as Mary's act of expressing her love to the Lord by anointing Him with ointment. This righteousness may be one of the crosswise or lengthwise threads in her fine linen garment. There were others, such as Joanna, the wife of Chuza, and

many other women, who because of their love for the Lord ministered to His material needs and those of His disciples. These also are righteous acts. Our heart is often touched by the love of the Lord, and we make an outward expression of it. This is our righteousness, our fine linen garment. This is the embroidering work which is being done today. Any expression which results from our love for the Lord and which is done through the Holy Spirit is a stitch among the thousands of other stitches in the embroidery work. The Bible tells us that whoever will give only a cup of cold water unto a little one will by no means lose his reward. This is a righteous act done out of love for the Lord. When we have some expression or act of love for the Lord, it is righteousness.

Revelation 7:9 says that the garment is a white robe. It has been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. We must remember that we can only be made white by being cleansed from our sins through the blood. Not only must we be cleansed from our sins, but we must also be cleansed from our good behavior. It too can only be made white by being washed in the blood. Not a single deed of any Christian is originally white. Even if we have some righteousness, it is mixed and not pure. We often have been kind to others, but inwardly we have been unwilling. We often have been patient with others, but when we have gone home we have murmured. Therefore, after having done some righteous deed, we still need the cleansing of the blood. We need the blood of the Lord Jesus to cleanse us from the sins we commit, and we also need the blood of the Lord Jesus to cleanse our righteous acts.

No Christian can ever make a garment which is pure white. Even if we could make one which was ninety-nine percent pure, there would still be one percent of mixture. Before God no man is entirely without blemish. Even good deeds done out of our love for the Lord need the cleansing of the blood. A very spiritual man once said that even the tears he shed for sin needed to be washed by the blood. Oh, even tears of repentance need to be cleansed by the blood! Therefore, Revelation 7:14 indicates that their robes were made white in the blood of the Lamb. We have nothing of which we can boast. From the outside to the inside, nothing is entirely pure. The more we know ourselves, the more we will realize how filthy we are. Our best deeds and our best intentions are mixed with filthiness. Without the cleansing of the blood, it is impossible to be white.

But the garments are not only white, they are bright or shining (19:8). The meaning of bright is shining. Whiteness has a tendency to become dull, pale, and ordinary. But this garment is not only white, but shining. Before Eve sinned, she might have been white, but by no means was she shining. Before the fall Eve was sinless, but she was only innocent, not holy. God does not merely require that we be white, but also that we be shining. Whiteness is a passive, quiescent aspect, but brightness is a positive, active aspect.

Therefore, we must not be afraid of hardship, neither must we long for a smooth pathway, because days of difficulty can make us shine. With some Christians we do not sense that they have sinned or that they are wrong in any way. On the contrary, we feel that they are quite good in almost every aspect. But we also do not sense any brightness. Their goodness is just ordinary goodness. They are white, but they do not shine. However, there are other Christians who are frequently tried and faced with suffering. Often they are so shaken that it seems as if they will surely fall—but they continue to stand. After a certain period of time these Christians attain a

shining quality. They are shining in their character and in their virtue. They are not plain, but shining; they are not only white, they are bright.

God is working in us all the time. He is continually expending much effort upon us so that we may be white, and He is continually laboring upon us to make us shining. His desire is for us to be bright. Therefore, we must pay a great price. We must be willing for every kind of difficulty to come upon us. Otherwise, we can never be bright. Merely being white is not enough; God requires a positive brightness to be seen in us. The fear of hardship, the fear of trouble, and the longing for an easy way and a smooth path will cause us to lose our brightness. The more sufferings and difficulties we encounter, the more we can shine. People whose lives are spent in an easy and ordinary way may be white, but they will never be shining.

This garment is of fine linen. According to the Scriptures, wool has a different meaning than linen. Wool denotes the work of the Lord Jesus and fine linen denotes the work of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 53:7 describes the Lord Jesus as a sheep that is dumb before its shearers. From this verse we can see that wool possesses the character of redemption. However, there is no character of redemption involved with fine linen. It is produced from a plant; it is not associated with blood. Fine linen is the product of the Holy Spirit's work within man. The fine linen garment tells us that God not only requires man to have God's righteousness, but also his own righteous deeds. God not only intends to obtain His righteousness in us, but He also intends to obtain many righteousnesses in us.

"And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean" (Rev. 19:8). All the deeds, all the outward righteousnesses, are produced by grace. "It was given to her..." The deeds are not manufactured by the natural man, they are the product of the Holy Spirit's work in man. We must learn to look to the Lord and expectantly say, "Lord, give it to me. Lord, grant me the grace." How good this is—the garment is given by grace! If we say that the garment is made by us, this is true; it has indeed been wrought by us. But on the other hand, it is given by God, because we cannot produce a thing when we depend upon ourselves. The Lord accomplishes it in us through the Holy Spirit.

Many times we feel that a burden is indeed great. We want to escape, almost pleading with the Lord, "O Lord, release me!" But we have to change our prayer and say, "Lord, make me able to carry the burden. Lord, cause me to stand up beneath it. Make me white and grant me to be clothed in a shining garment."

Revelation 19:9 says, "And he [the angel] said to me, Write..." God spoke, and He asked John to write it down. What did he write? "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb." The angel said, "These are the true words of God." Oh, there can be no other privilege, no other position higher than this—to be called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. "These are the true words of God." God makes it especially clear that these are His true words. We must accept them, we must heed them, and we must remember them.

What is the difference between those who are called to the marriage dinner and the bride of the Lamb? The bride is a chosen group—the new man. But those who are called to the marriage dinner are a great many individuals—the overcomers. The marriage dinner of the Lamb refers to

the age of the kingdom. Those who are called will be together with the Lord enjoying a unique and special fellowship, which no one has ever tasted before. The Lord said through the angel, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb....These are the true words of God." May God cause us, for His sake, to be able to enjoy this special fellowship with Him. May He make us those who will humbly seek to satisfy His heart's desire. May He cause us to seek to be those who supply life for the sake of the church. And may He cause us and enable us to be the overcomers for the sake of the kingdom.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

Verse 21:1 says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more." Here again, from a distance, we are standing opposite to Genesis. In Genesis 1, the heaven and the earth are the original heaven and earth, but in this verse we have a new heaven and a new earth. In Genesis there was the sea, but in this verse the sea is no more.

Verse 2 continues, "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In chapter nineteen there is a declaration that the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready. But in this chapter, the New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This is the actuality. There are many declarations in Revelation, but the most important declaration is Revelation 11:15. According to the order of occurrence, the rapture of the man-child and the casting down of the dragon from heaven take place after this declaration. Then how can the words, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ," be spoken at this time? It is possible because this declaration was made at the beginning of things, not at the point of their accomplishment. This means that a turning point has come. When there is a definite turn towards God's eternal purpose, God can make such a declaration in heaven. In chapter nineteen God makes another declaration, saying that the marriage of the Lamb has come and that His wife has made herself ready. This declaration is also made at the starting point of events which are about to occur. Because before Him the overcomers represent the bride and because this group of people is ready in His sight, God is able to declare that the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready. However, the "has come" is fully realized in the new heaven and the new earth. In Revelation 21:2, John actually saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. At that time the bride was truly ready in every sense. This is not merely the readiness declared in chapter nineteen, but the readiness in actual fact.

Now we must turn back to read Ephesians 5:26 and 27. "That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish." "That He might present the church to Himself" is fulfilled in Revelation 21. Now, before God, the bride is ready to be presented to the Lord. "Prepared as a bride" is no longer difficult to comprehend. By the end of the kingdom age, the whole church will be brought to this place. What we fail to see today will be fully seen in that day. Today we may say that God's standard for the church is high and ask how the church will ever attain to such a condition. We may not know how God will do it,

but we do know that the church will attain to that position at the time of the new heaven and new earth. Some may think that the church will reach the stage of Ephesians 5 before the age of the kingdom. However, the Lord did not say this. The church will not arrive at that place until Revelation 21. At the time of the new heaven and new earth, there will not be just a group of saints who are perfected, but all the saints, the whole Body, from all the nations throughout all the ages. They will all be together before God and glorified in His presence.

Revelation 21:3 says, "And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God." This verse reveals what it will be like in the new heaven and new earth. The new heaven and new earth are in the eternal blessing, and positive blessing is spoken of here. This verse is followed by statements that say there will be no more of this and no more of that. These are the negative aspects, not the positive aspects. What is the positive and eternal blessing? It is that God will be with us. The presence of God is the blessing. All that the Scriptures have ever said about the blessing in eternity is summed up in these words, "God Himself will be with them." The severest suffering is to be without God's presence. But all of the enjoyment in eternity will be God's presence. The blessing of that day, is nothing other than God being with us. Solomon once said, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27). The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but we may say that the New Jerusalem can contain Him. God dwells in the New Jerusalem, and God's throne is established there.

The New Jerusalem is the woman whom we have been considering. In Genesis we saw a garden and a woman. This woman sinned, and God drove her out of the garden. Now in the new heaven and new earth, the woman and the holy city are one; they are no longer two separate entities. Since the New Jerusalem is the woman, the New Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb; therefore, the woman and the holy city are one. Not only so, but God's throne is established in the New Jerusalem, or we may say that God Himself dwells within this woman. The Almighty One is dwelling in her. Therefore, it does not matter how great the force or temptation that can come from without. Evil powers can no longer enter, nor can man fall again, because God dwells within her. The blessing of the new heaven and new earth is the presence of God. All who have tasted something of God's presence in their experience know that it is indeed a blessing. No other blessing is greater or more precious than this.

Let us read again the last part of verse 3: "He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God." Do we see the relationship between God and man? What does it really mean for us to be the people of God? It means that God will dwell with us, and therefore, we will be made His people. What does it mean that God will be our God? It means that God will be with us, and therefore, He will be our God. When we are away from His presence, God cannot be our God. The greatest and highest blessing in eternity is that God will be with us and be our God.

Verse 4 says, "And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor will there be sorrow or crying or pain anymore; for the former things have passed away." All men have experienced the shedding of tears, but in the new heaven and new earth they will receive this blessing—God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death is wholly a consequence of the fall. But in the new heaven and new earth, there will no longer be any death. The last enemy will be abolished. Sorrow or mourning is the aching of our heart, the feeling of inward suffering; crying is the weeping without, the outward expression. Pain is the suffering of our physical body. But God will put an end to all of these things. They are all summed up in the words: every tear, death, sorrow, crying, and pain. But they will be no more; they will all pass away.

Verse 5 says, "And He who sits on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." The difficulty that we face today is that even though we are the new creation, we still live in the old creation. But in that day all things will become new; all things will be in the new creation. Not only will the inward being be new, but the outward will be as well. The entire environment and all things within it will be made new. This is called eternity. The new creation is for us. Our hearts will be satisfied only when all things are in the new creation. Isaiah 6 speaks of a painful experience which we all share: "I am a man of unclean lips." In addition, another painful experience is recorded: "And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell." But in that day, everything around us will be in the new creation. That day will be absolutely glorious.

Revelation 21:5 continues, "And He said, Write, for these words are faithful and true." How good it is to have this written down. God gave these words to John and asked him to write them down. Not one iota or one serif of what is written can pass away. These words are faithful and true! Our ultimate faith will be to see God win the final victory.

In verse 6, God told John, "They have come to pass." On what ground could God say to John that it is done? He can say this because He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." It often seems that God's work has not been successful, but He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega." God made the original design, and God also will bring it to its final completion. How we thank God that He is the Alpha, the initiator of all things. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God..." When the heavens and the earth were created, God purposed all things. All things had their beginning in God. At the same time, He is also the Omega. Man can and will fail, but God is the Omega. Man may say this and man may say that, but God has the last word. He is the Omega.

God spoke these things because He wants to tell us that He will bring His plan to fulfillment, He will reach His goal, and He will accomplish what He has begun. We acknowledge that Satan's work has indeed interrupted the work of God, but we further acknowledge that God is not only the Alpha who purposed in the beginning, but also the Omega who will finally succeed. God never gives up, and He will never let any of His purpose remain unfulfilled. Regardless of the church's condition in her present experience, she will have no spot, wrinkle, or any such things in God's goal. Furthermore, she will be clothed with glory and presented to His Son.

When we see God's children differing so much with each other in faith and doctrine as well as in practice, we wonder how it is possible for them to ever come to the oneness of the faith, as spoken of in Ephesians 4. We often sigh and say that this could never happen, even if we waited for another two thousand years. But God said that He is the Omega. The day will come when He will have a glorious church before Him. He may use water or He may use fire, but He will certainly have a glorious church. We cannot hinder God. He will obtain that which will satisfy Him. No matter how weak, how indifferent, or how hardened we are, there will be a day when God will smash us to pieces. He will break us and shatter us so that we will become what He desires us to be. God is the Omega. Since God is doing it, He will pursue it to the end. He will never let up. Let us praise Him with rejoicing. He must attain His goal!

Verse 6 continues, "I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely." The emphasis here is not upon redemption but upon our need for God. The meaning of thirst is a need for God. To be without God means that we are without water. Therefore, the fountain of the water of life is for the satisfaction of those who are thirsty.

Now we must pay close attention to verse 7. How we thank God for the especially precious promise in this verse, telling us what the overcomers will obtain. The overcomers spoken of here are different from those mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. The overcomers in chapters two and three are a group from the whole church, while the overcomers spoken of here are connected with "him who thirsts." The preceding verse says, "I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely." Then verse 7 says, "He who overcomes will inherit these things." In other words, those who drink of the fountain of the water of life are the overcomers spoken of here. These overcomers differ from those who do not drink of this water. This kind of overcoming is the same as that which is spoken of in 1 John 5:4: "For everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which has overcome the world—our faith." Those who are begotten of God, those who belong to the Lord, have faith. Those who do not belong to the Lord do not have faith. And this faith causes us to overcome the world. This surely should make us glad and make us rejoice and shout, Hallelujah! In the new heaven and new earth we are all overcomers! The man-child in the age of the kingdom is constituted of a minority, but in the New Jerusalem, the entire Body overcomes. In the New Jerusalem it is only a matter of whether or not we have faith. If we have faith, we are an overcomer.

In that day God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; and death will be no more, neither will there be sorrow, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. But all these things are negative aspects. The positive is that "He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples." In verse 7 God also says, "I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me." Therefore, our position before God as Christians is not only as people, but as sons. God wants to have many sons enter into glory. We thank and praise God that He said, "I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me." There is no higher blessing in eternity than this.

Verse 8 says, "But the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all the false, their part will be in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Just as the blessing in eternity is a fact, so the punishment in eternity is also a fact. The punishment from the God of love is unavoidable and inescapable. This is a severe warning to everyone.

THE HOLY CITY DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN

Now let us see the details of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21:9-10 says, "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

When the angel wanted to show John the great harlot in Revelation 17:1-3, he led him into the wilderness. In God's eyes and in the eyes of those who are inspired by the Holy Spirit, the harlot is one who dwells in the wilderness. She lives in a place where there is no life and no fruit—a barren land. Men today can behold high church buildings, they can take part in well-prepared Sunday services, and they can admire the ability of man, but in the sight of God, everything that has its origin in Babylon is in the wilderness; it is deserted.

When the angel showed John the wife of the Lamb, he brought him up to a great and high mountain. There he showed him the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It was from a great and high mountain that John beheld this sight. This reveals that if we desire to see the eternal vision of God, we must be brought by Him to a great and high mountain. If we are not standing spiritually on a high mountain, we will not see those who are living on the plain, we will not see the New Jerusalem, nor will we see the ultimate work of God. When Moses reached the Jordan with the children of Israel, what did God tell him to do? He commanded him to go up to the top of Mount Pisgah and lift up his eyes to behold the land which He had promised. This also tells us that in order to receive vision and revelation and to behold the plan of God, we must be upon the height.

Never think that just being an ordinary Christian day by day, not committing any great sin, is good enough. We must realize that whenever we take this position, God's eternal plan is nothing more to us than doctrine and knowledge. We must hope to do some spiritual climbing and have some spiritual attainment. We should expect to climb a high mountain. Only when we do this will we be able to see the New Jerusalem.

What God desires to do, He will accomplish. What God has purposed in eternity past, He will obtain in eternity future. First, there must be overcomers to bring in the kingdom, and then there must be overcomers to bring in the new heaven and new earth. But the problem is, who will be the overcomers? To be an overcomer, we must have revelation. If there is no revelation, it is easy to receive anything as a teaching. But we must remember that knowledge can never produce fruit; only revelation is fruitful. However, in order to have revelation we must go up to the high mountain; we cannot dwell in the plain. There is some difficulty in climbing a mountain because we must exercise our strength to climb. We cannot reach the peak unless we make some effort. May God grant us this spiritual attainment and deliver us from the low plain. We should not think that just being saved and not wanting anything more is enough. God must save us from this low level of living and show us His heart's desire. Only when we are on the high mountain will we receive revelation.

After John saw the New Jerusalem, he did a very foolish thing—he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel. This action of his, though foolish, is quite meaningful. John was the last among the twelve disciples to leave this world. His knowledge, his deeds, his love, and his experience were far beyond ours; yet in the book of Revelation, we see that he did this foolish thing twice. There were two instances in which he wanted to worship the angels—once in 19:10 and again in 22:8. Although this act of John's was unlawful and he was told, "Do not do this," yet it still reveals what a wholehearted person John was and how greatly he appreciated God's plan and work. In such a situation he was not able to restrain himself; he did something foolishly. His deed was wrong, but his heart was revealed to be right. This shows us the attitude we should have when we see God's vision. May the Lord also grant us to see such a vision. May He enable us to go up to the height to see the New Jerusalem. Oh, that everything within us would be for the success of this vision and for nothing else!

The angel said to John, "I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (21:9). The angel said that he would show him the wife of the Lamb, but John saw "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (v. 10). The wife of the Lamb whom John saw was the holy city, Jerusalem. Therefore, the description of the city is also the description of the wife of the Lamb. The city is a figure, describing the characteristics and spiritual condition of the corporate Body whom God chose before creation.

This city comes down out of heaven from God. This means that God not only is concerned about the destination of this corporate man, but also about the place from which this corporate man comes. It is not just a matter of the future, but a matter of the source. The wife of the Lamb comes down out of heaven. The New Jerusalem is from heaven, not from earth. God is not showing us a man with a history of sin, who was later saved. (This is not to say that we do not have a history of sin and that we do not need to repent and be saved by grace.) Rather, this passage shows us only that portion which is out from God. It shows us the glorious church of Ephesians 5 which is to be presented to Christ.

In the Old Testament, one woman represents in a special way the church which is to be offered to Christ. She is Rebecca. Abraham said to his old servant, "Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Gen. 24:3-4). Rebecca was not an inhabitant of the land west of the Euphrates, nor an inhabitant of the land west of the Jordan, but she was of the kindred of Isaac.

God desires to have a corporate man of the kindred of Christ. Since Christ is from heaven, the church too must come from heaven. Thus Hebrews 2:11 says, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers." What are brothers? Brothers are those who have been born of the same mother and father. How we thank God that on one hand we were purchased with the precious blood of the Lord, and on the other hand, we were truly born of God. There are two aspects to the history of every Christian: one is that we were outwardly purchased of God, and the other is that we were inwardly born of God. From the standpoint of our history with sin, we were outwardly purchased; but from the

standpoint of our history apart from sin, we were born of God, for whoever is born of God cannot sin. This portion has no beginning of sin nor history of sin. The fact that the New Jerusalem comes down from God implies that the church has never been on this earth. It appears that the church is coming down to earth for the first time. This is not to say that we did not come to God as sinners, but that there is a portion in us which is from God and is entirely of God. How we must thank the Lord that the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God!

This city is completely different from the city recorded in chapter seventeen. That city is called the great city, and this city is called the holy city. The characteristic of Babylon is its greatness, and the characteristic of the New Jerusalem is its holiness. Among Christians there are some who are taken up with greatness, but there are some who pay attention to holiness. Those who concentrate on greatness are in the principle of Babylon, while those who pay attention to holiness are in the principle of the New Jerusalem.

What is the meaning of holiness? Since God alone is holy, anything which issues from Him must also be holy. Saying that "both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One" means that Christ is holy because He is of the One and that we also are holy because we also are of the One. Only those who are of the One are holy. Only that which issues from God is of value; that which comes out from God, and only that, is the New Jerusalem. Everything that is of man must be left aside. The matter of the rapture is based upon this. Why will some be left out? It is because they have so many things which are not of Christ, and anything that is not of Christ cannot be brought to heaven. Nothing which is not of heaven can return to heaven. Everything that is of earth must be left on earth; while everything that is of heaven can return to heaven.

THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY CITY

Revelation 21:11 describes this city as "having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal." Jasper has been already mentioned in Revelation 4. John saw One sitting upon the throne whose appearance was like a jasper and sardius. The One whom John saw sitting upon the throne was the same as jasper. In other words, the meaning of jasper is God seen, God made visible. When man stands before the throne, God will be known to him as jasper. This is how we will recognize Him when we go there, but not while we are here. What we realize today is quite obscure in many areas, but in that city the glory of God has the brightness of jasper. This means that when the New Jerusalem descends to earth we will be able to see God Himself. We shall never again misunderstand Him, nor will we ever need to ask the reason for anything. The light of the New Jerusalem is as clear as crystal, without a trace of mixture. In that day, everything will be transparent and clearly shown to us. In that day we will see God, and we will know God.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE HOLY CITY

Verses 12-14 say, "It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons

of Israel: on the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." How many are included in this corporate man? We are told that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written upon the gates, and the names of the twelve apostles are written upon the foundations. This shows us that the city includes the saints from both the Old and the New Testament.

This can be proved by reading the following passages of Scripture. Luke 13:28-29 says, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you being cast outside. And they will come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and will recline at table in the kingdom of God." Here we see that the kingdom of God includes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who represent the Old Testament saints. Those who come from the east, west, north, and south represent the New Testament saints. These two groups of people are participants in the kingdom of God; therefore, they will all enter into the New Jerusalem together.

Hebrews 11:8-10 says, "By faith Abraham...dwelt as a foreigner in the land of promise as in a foreign land, making his home in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise; for he eagerly waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God." The city referred to in this passage is the New Jerusalem. Only this city is a city with foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God. Verse 13 says, "All these died in faith." "All these" are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many others. Verse 16 continues, "But as it is, they long after a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." "They" in verse 16 are the "these" in verse 13. This shows us that the Old Testament saints have a portion in the New Jerusalem. From Abel at the beginning and for all the saints in the Old Testament, God has appointed a city, the New Jerusalem. They all have their share in it. Verses 39-40 say, "And these all, having obtained a good testimony through their faith, did not obtain the promise, because God has provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect." God has kept all the Old Testament saints waiting; they have not yet obtained that city. He has bid them to wait so that both we and they might go there together. From this we see that both the saints of the Old Testament and the saints of the New Testament will be in the New Jerusalem.

Ephesians 2:11-14 says, "Therefore remember that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, those who are called uncircumcision,...that you were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have become near in the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition." From verse 11 to 13, the pronoun "you" is used, but in verse 14, it changes to "our." When "you" is used, it refers to the saints in Ephesus, but when "our" is used, it refers both to the Jewish saints and the Ephesian saints as well as all the saints of both the Old and New Testaments. Christ is our peace and He has made both one, breaking down the

middle wall of partition. Verse 15 says, "Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace." The "two" in this verse corresponds with the "both" in verse 14. This also refers to Old Testament saints as well as New Testament saints. It does not refer to the relationship between man and God. Could God and man be created together to become a new man? No. This passage refers to both the saints of the Gentiles and the saints of the Jews, the Old Testament saints as well as the New Testament saints.

Verse 16 says, "And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it." To reconcile "both in one Body" to God means that the Old Testament saints as well as the New Testament saints are reconciled to God. Verses 17-19 say, "And coming, He announced peace as the gospel to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near, for through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." The saints in Ephesus were no longer strangers but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Verses 20-22 say, "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone; in whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." Thus, the habitation of God includes all the saints of the Old and New Testament. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are there, and we also are there. In conclusion, at the time of the new heaven and new earth, all those who have the life of God will be included in the New Jerusalem.

THE CITY, THE GATES, AND THE WALL

Let us continue in our reading of Revelation 21. We must give special attention to the wall of the city. Verse 12 says, "It had a great and high wall." Verse 15 says, "He who spoke with me had a golden reed as a measure that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall." Verse 17 says, "And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."

In the beginning God made a garden in Eden, and the serpent was able to come into this garden to speak to Eve. This shows us that there was no wall surrounding the garden. God originally intended for Adam to keep the garden. In other words, His intention was that Adam would be the wall of the garden. However, Adam did not guard it, and Satan entered. But what about the New Jerusalem? The New Jerusalem has a wall. On one hand, a wall includes, and on the other hand, it excludes. It includes and keeps everything that is within the city, and it excludes and rejects everything that is outside the city. When there is a wall surrounding a city, it serves to separate everything that is within the city from everything that is outside; it serves to make a difference between them. The New Jerusalem is the new man whom God has desired to obtain. The new man is in God's presence and separated from all that is outside. The serpent can no longer creep in. There is a wall, a separation, a distinction. Every possibility of the serpent entering again has been eliminated.

When describing the New Jerusalem, the first thing that is mentioned other than God's glory is the wall. Separation, therefore, is one of the most important principles in a Christian's living. If there is no separation, the Christian is of no value. There must be a line that is drawn to differentiate that which is spiritual from that which is fleshly. The New Jerusalem has a separation, a boundary line, and we need to learn a lesson from this. Everything that is of Babylon must be rejected, while everything that is of God must be protected. To build a city wall is not an easy thing, because Satan hates a wall more than anything else. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to build the wall, Sanballat and Tobiah came and made every effort to stop the building. Nehemiah held a spear in one hand, and with the other hand, he built the wall. We must pray, therefore, that God will enable us to bear spiritual arms in order to wrestle with spiritual wickedness in high places and in order to maintain the principle of separation.

The city has twelve gates and twelve foundations, and on the foundations are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This tells us that everything in the city is based upon the principles of the kingdom of God preached by the apostles. Ephesians 2:20 says, "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." This means that the revelation which the apostles obtained is the foundation of the New Jerusalem.

The gates are for going in and out, but why are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them? The Lord Jesus said that salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). We have learned everything related to God from Israel. The law was given to Israel, redemption is known through Israel, and salvation has come from Israel. Therefore, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the gates.

The city has three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. There are three gates in each direction. Gates are usually located in a convenient place to go in and out. Therefore, the fact that this city has gates on all four sides indicates that it is located in a very central position and that it is the center of everything. The New Jerusalem is the masterpiece in the center of God's heart.

Praise God. At the gates there are twelve angels to keep the entrance (Rev. 21:12). Formerly cherubim guarded the way of the tree of life, but now the tree of life in the city is guarded by angels at the gates. The angels are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14), and the day is coming when angels will be subject to the church.

Revelation 21:15 says, "And he who spoke with me had a golden reed as a measure that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall." Gold in the Bible represents all that is of God. The city being measured with gold means that the city can be measured by God's standard and corresponds with God's standard. We need to seek God's glory, hoping that we will be able to meet God's standard when we are measured in that day.

Verse 16 says, "And the city lies square, and its length is as great as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed to a length of twelve thousand stadia; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." There is another place in the Bible where the measurements of length, breadth, and height are equal, that is the Holy of Holies in the temple. "And the oracle in

the forepart was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof" (1 Kings 6:20). The length, the breadth, and the height are all the same. In the Bible, only the Holy of Holies in the temple and the city of the New Jerusalem have equal measurements of length, breadth, and height. In other words, in the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem becomes the Holy of Holies to God. When David gave Solomon the pattern for the temple, he said, "All this...the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chron. 28:19). Everything in the temple was built according to divine revelation. In the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem is the very temple of God. Everything that constitutes the city is something in God. There is nothing that is outside of Him.

Revelation 21:17 says, "And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel." Today can we say that the measure of a man is that of an angel? No, never. At what time will the measure of a man be equal to that of an angel? The Lord Jesus said that in the resurrection man will be equal to the angels (Luke 20:36). The one hundred and forty-four cubits will be revealed when man's measure is equal to an angel's measure. In other words, everything within this city is in the reality of resurrection. Thank God, of all the things included in this city, there is nothing which is not in resurrection. Everything that is dead and everything that is of man is outside the city, but inside everything is resurrected and of God. Resurrection means that which is of God. Everything that is of man, once it dies, can never be raised up, but everything that is of God, though it passes through death, will rise again. Whatever cannot be bound or held by death is called resurrection. When that which originates from us passes through the cross, it is brought to an end, but nothing of God can be touched by death.

When John recorded the description of the city, all the numbers he used were twelve or products of twelve—twelve gates, twelve foundations, twelve apostles, twelve tribes, etc. The measurement of the city wall is one hundred and forty-four cubits, the product of twelve times twelve. Twelve is the number used in eternity. It is the most precious number in the Bible. In the first part of Revelation, there are many sevens—seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven angels, etc. But in the latter part, there are many twelves, such as those already mentioned. Seven means perfection, and twelve also means perfection, but they are not altogether the same. Seven is composed of three plus four, while twelve is composed of three multiplied by four. Since God is the Triune God, the number three represents God, while four is the number which represents creation, such as the four winds, the four seasons, and the four living creatures. When three is added to four, it means that God is added to man. How complete and perfect it is to have the Creator plus the creature! But anything which is added can also be subtracted and thereby lost again; so this completion is not a lasting one. But in the New Jerusalem, the union of God and man is no longer seven, but twelve. It is no longer three plus four, but three multiplied by four. Multiplication is a perfect union, something which can never be separated. When the Creator mingles with the creature it is twelve, and twelve is the number of perfect union. In the new heaven and new earth, God and man will become one, and God and man can no longer be separated.

GOLD, PRECIOUS STONES, AND PEARL

Of what materials is this city built? Verse 18 says, "And the building work of its wall was jasper." We have noted jasper already. We have seen that the brightness of the city is as jasper. The meaning of this is that when we behold the glory of the city we are looking at God's real image. By knowing God's real image, man can know the God who is sitting upon the throne. God is not far away from man, nor is He an unknowable God.

The function of the city wall, as we have seen, is to separate that which is within the city from that which is without. The fact that this wall is made of jasper means that the separation is based upon what is seen in God's true light. The basis of separation is the seeing of what God requires, the seeing of what God is after. If man is not clear about God's requirement, he will have no separation.

Let us read further in verse 18: "And the city was pure gold, like clear glass." In other words, all that is in the city is of God. Gold signifies that which is of God, that which is placed in God's new creation. Peter said that we are partakers of the divine nature. Within everyone who belongs to God, there is a portion which is of God. Before we were saved, everything in us was of the flesh, everything was natural; there was nothing whatever of a spiritual nature. But when we received the Lord, God imparted His life to us. This is the gold which He has given us. Within us there is a portion of gold; there is something which is truly of God. It is regrettable, however, that although we have this gold in us, it is mixed with many other things; it is an alloy. We have God's nature, but at the same time, we also have many things in us which are completely different from God. For this reason, the greater portion of God's work with His children is to reduce them, not to add to them.

Many times men would like to obtain more of God, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to know Christ better. All of these things have their place. We dearly need to obtain more of God, to be filled with the Spirit, and to know more of Christ. But there is another work—it is not of increasing but of reducing. God's basic work is to reduce us. From the day we were saved, God has been doing this work, and the instrument for this work of subtraction is the cross. The work of the cross is to cancel out. It is not to bring things into us but to take things away from us. Within us there is so much that is refuse. There are so many things that are not of God, which do not bring glory to Him. God wants to remove all of these things through the cross so that we may become pure gold. What God has put into us is pure gold, but because there is so much dross in us, so many things which are not of God, we have become an alloy. Therefore, God must expend much effort to make us see those things in us which are of self and those things which cannot bring glory to Him. We believe that if God speaks to us, we will discover that what needs to be removed is much more than what needs to be added. Christians who are especially strong in the soul must remember that God's work in them through the Holy Spirit is to remove things from them and to reduce them.

The outstanding feature of the New Jerusalem is that of gold, pure gold. There is nothing there which contains a mixture; everything is entirely of God. The one lesson which God wants us to learn today is to see that everything coming from us is but dross.

Apart from the gold in us, everything which comes from us is refuse. When added to the gold, our goodness is dross; when added to the gold, our zeal is also dross. Everything from us is dross. In other words, anything which is not of God is dross. No one can stand before God and say that he has something to contribute to Him. God demands pure gold. In the New Jerusalem everything is pure gold, without any dross. The day will come when we see that everything that is not of God is on the cross. Everything that is in the New Jerusalem is of God. God must attain His purpose. When God says that it will be pure gold, it will be pure gold. There is nothing which can be mixed with God's work.

Verses 19 and 20 say, "The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst." What do precious stones imply? There is a basic difference between precious stones and gold. Gold is a chemical element, while a precious stone is not a chemical element, but a compound. Gold is an element because God created it as gold; it was made directly by God. But a precious stone has been formed from various kinds of elements, which have been composed together through chemical combination through countless years of heat and pressure in the earth. In other words, the precious stones do not signify something given directly by God, but something which the Holy Spirit has produced in man by much effort and many years of burning. The work of the Holy Spirit on earth is to continually put us into trials so that we may have all kinds of experiences and become precious stones before Him. The precious stones, therefore, are the product of our being disciplined by Him.

Let us illustrate. Isaac's birth represents gold, but Jacob's experience represents precious stone. Isaac was born a son through the promise of God. He never suffered, nor was he ever seriously at fault. Jacob's case, however, was quite different. He suffered very much and passed through many trials. God's hand was upon him all the time. Day after day and year after year, God wrought something into Jacob which caused him to become a precious stone.

That life which God has imparted to us is the gold, while the life which God is constituting in us is the precious stone. Day after day, in all kinds of circumstances, He is making us in the image of Christ. This is the precious stone. God does not stop by just giving us a portion of Christ's life; He wants to have the life of Christ wrought into us. On one hand, we must realize that except for the Lord's life in us we are not any different than we were prior to our salvation. But on the other hand, after following the Lord for five or ten years and being disciplined and dealt with by Him, a portion of the life of Christ has been constituted in us by the Holy Spirit. There is something within us which has been formed by the Lord, and this is the precious stone.

You should not be surprised when God continually puts you into the fire to burn. It seems that the things which other people encounter are all good, but the things which you are up against are not prosperous or easy. You are even misunderstood and attacked by others; more things have happened to you than to anyone else. But you must realize that it is not without a cause. God is continually burning you; the Holy Spirit is working

to constitute more of the life of Christ in you so that you may be transformed into His image.

In Revelation we find not just one kind of precious stone, but all kinds of precious stones. Some are jasper, some sapphire, some chalcedony, some emerald, some sardonyx, some sardius, and other kinds. All of these precious stones are the product of burning. They were not formed by God in a moment of time but obtained after being wrought upon through long years of God's working. Precious stone was not given to us at creation, nor is it something we obtained when we became a new creation. Precious stone is formed in us through God's burning day after day. It is a substance which is constantly put into the fire. When the fire burns in a certain way, a certain kind of mineral is melted into that substance, and it becomes a certain kind of precious stone. When the fire burns in another way, it causes another kind of mineral to be dissolved into that substance, causing it to become another kind of precious stone. Different ways of melting certain minerals together form various kinds of precious stones.

The precious stones represent the work of the Holy Spirit. When we were saved we obtained God's nature, but from that time, day after day, the Holy Spirit has been working the nature of God into us so that we may bear the fruit of the Spirit. There is not just one fruit of the Spirit. There are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and many others. The Holy Spirit must continually work in us to cause us to bear all these different kinds of fruit. When we were saved, God imparted His life into us. But the fruit of the Spirit is not something imparted to us by God. We bear these fruits when the Holy Spirit works within us to a certain extent. Even so, precious stone is something formed in us through the Holy Spirit by means of many different circumstances.

Not only has God shared His nature with us, but day by day He is making us a certain kind of people who can bring glory to His name. When you were saved, you obtained God's nature, and when I was saved, I obtained His nature. In this regard, all Christians are the same; they all have obtained God's nature. But in the ensuing days, God may have put you into certain circumstances in order to give you certain kinds of experience. He may have let you go through certain trials, certain difficulties, and certain sufferings so that you will become a Christian like chrysolite, chalcedony, sardius, or some other precious stone. God is working in every Christian so that each one may become a certain kind of precious stone. We all have gold in common before God, but after we become precious stones before Him, we will each be a certain form.

What the Holy Spirit forms in us by means of the environment will abide forever. When a Christian receives more dealings in a certain way, he will learn more lessons in that way. This will produce an outstanding character in him, a character which will not come to an end after several years, but which will abide for eternity. What he has obtained will forever be a precious stone in the New Jerusalem.

In many of God's children who have walked with Him for ten or twenty years, there is something which God has wrought through the Holy Spirit. It is not just that God has imparted something to them, but they themselves have become that something; it is their very constituent. They have been disciplined by the Holy Spirit for many years. By passing through many trials and

experiences, the Holy Spirit has formed a certain kind of life in them. Those who are acquainted with them acknowledge that something has indeed been accomplished in them. They not only possess the life that is given to them by God, but they also have a transformed life which the Holy Spirit has wrought within them. Not only do they live an exchanged life but also a transformed life. This is the precious stone. Precious stone is that which has been formed in us by the burning work of the Holy Spirit. The New Jerusalem will be filled with these precious stones.

At this point we must realize how useless it is to put our emphasis merely on doctrine. We must never think that we will benefit if we only know a little more theology or scriptural teaching. These are not of much use. Only that which is burned into us by the Holy Spirit is of value. If something has not been burned into an article, a little rubbing will remove it. What spiritual value is there in something which can be wiped away from us with a little rubbing? This does not mean that we should not read our Bible, but it does mean that what we read is of value only when the Holy Spirit burns it into us. All precious stones have come out of fire. To have precious stones, we need the fire. Without fire, there will never be any precious stone.

For this reason we should never refuse the trials that come upon us through our environment. We should never refuse the discipline of the Holy Spirit, nor complain when God's hand encircles and encloses us in every way. How bound and pressed we feel many times! How we would like to break through all the bondage and limitation and be released for a while. But we must remember that we are in God's forming hand. He is forming us so that one day we will come out as precious stones. God has not only given us His life, but He is also working in us to the extent that we may possess a special quality. This is what the Holy Spirit is forming in us through all the circumstances which God allows, and this is called precious stone. What use is it then to merely have knowledge or doctrine? Only that which the Spirit burns into us is of any value. Only when a Christian has received something through burning will he be able to preach messages from what he really knows rather than from books. Only that which has been burned into us by the Holy Spirit is precious stone. Otherwise, it is wood, grass, and stubble.

Sometimes when we sit in the presence of an elderly person, we feel that he is one who is really walking with the Lord. There is a life in him which very much characterizes him; it has become his special nature. We can only bow down before him. There may be others who have a greater ministry than he and others who have undertaken a greater work, but he has an abundant life; something has been formed within him by the Holy Spirit. He has a special quality, something which has come out from the fire; he is a precious stone. In the presence of such a one we can only bow and say, "How we wish that we also may have something that is so inspiring, so touching." It is not words which inspire and touch people, but something which has gone through the fire.

In the New Jerusalem there are precious stones. Without precious stones, the New Jerusalem will never come into existence. God needs precious stones. He needs a group

of people who will manifest the quality of precious stones. Oh, may God deliver us from being shallow! Only what the Holy Spirit has wrought into our life is of any value or use.

Verse 21 continues, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl." The New Jerusalem consists not only of pure gold and precious stones, but also of pearls. Pearls are not formed by burning; they are the result of a gradual formation within a sea creature after it has been wounded. Therefore, the meaning of pearl is life which issues from death. Pearl signifies the life released by the Lord Jesus in the non-redemptive aspect of His death.

Matthew 13 also speaks about a pearl. To whom does this pearl refer? It is a reference to the church, which the Lord has formed out of His death. He was willing to sell all that He had in order to purchase this pearl. Pearl signifies something positive, not something passive or negative. It is the church, the new man, that God desires to create. Within such a One there is no problem of sin, nor of redemption. He was willing to sell all to obtain this pearl. This shows us how precious is the life which is wholly out of Christ. How precious it is to God, and how precious it is to Christ!

In the New Jerusalem, pearls function as the gates of the city. This means that everything of God starts from here. In other words, in order for man to obtain life before God, the life must not be something of man, but of the death of Christ, of the non-redemptive aspect of Christ's death.

First Corinthians 3:12 says that spiritual building should have materials of gold, silver, and precious stones, not wood, grass, or stubble. In 1 Corinthians 3 there are gold, silver, and precious stones; but in Genesis 2, in the garden of Eden, there were gold, precious stones, and pearl—there was no silver. In Revelation 21, in the New Jerusalem, there are once again gold, precious stones, and pearl; there is no silver. What is the significance of this? Gold, precious stones, and pearl—these three items—are found both in the garden of Eden and in the New Jerusalem. This means that gold, precious stones, and pearl are from eternity to eternity.

In eternity God did not plan to have silver, because silver represents redemption. God knew that men would sin and need redemption, but this was not something of His eternal plan. In God's work there is redemption, but in His eternal purpose there is no redemption. Therefore, the New Jerusalem in this respect is the same as the garden of Eden—there is no silver. This means that in eternity future, we will be brought to the place where there is no trace of sin. Today, however, we cannot disregard or lightly esteem the silver. If anyone thinks he has no need of silver today, he must ask God for mercy. We cannot go on without silver. If we have no silver, we have no redemption, and we can do nothing. But redemption has no part in God's purpose. In the New Jerusalem we will not be able to find any silver. This shows us that God will wipe away all history of sin, because redemption is not included in that city. In the New Jerusalem man will no longer need redemption, because they will sin no more. God will bring us to such a firm ground that there will be no possibility for us to fall again. There is a life within us which has nothing to do with sin and which requires no redemption. That life in us is from Christ and it is Christ Himself. As Christ Himself needs no redemption, we who have a

portion of His life will no longer need redemption. Thus, in eternity there is no need of silver.

Thank God that we have His redemption today. Thank God that although we have sinned, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from every sin. However, God has shared the life of His Son with us, a life which forever needs no redemption. One day we will live completely by this life and the history of sin will pass away. Redeeming silver will no longer be of any use.

We must see that the fall is not in the purpose of God, redemption is not in the purpose of God, and neither is the kingdom something in the purpose of God. The fall is not in God's purpose; it is something which happened on the way. Redemption is not in God's purpose; it is the solution to the fall. And the kingdom is also not in God's purpose; it is also the solution to the fall. Because of the fall there is redemption, and because of the fall there is the kingdom. All these things are but remedies; they are not in the purpose of God. Even so, we would never make light of redemption and the kingdom. If there was no redemption, there would be no way to solve the problem of the fall. If there was no kingdom, could the matter of the fall be solved? Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that God did not create man that he might sin. God created man for His own glory. This line is straight; this heavenly line is straight.

Revelation 21:21 also says, "And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." A street is a place for communication, and since the street of this city is of pure gold, the people who walk upon it will never be dirty. Today those who have bathed still need to have their feet washed (John 13:10) in order to maintain their fellowship with God. When we walk on the street of this world, we cannot avoid gathering some dust, and our fellowship with God is thus frustrated. But in that day nothing can dirty us; nothing can frustrate our fellowship with God. In eternity there will be nothing which can defile us; all our life and living will be holy.

The end of verse 21 tells us that the city is "like transparent glass." How much of our situation today is not transparent! But in the future, in God's presence, we will all be transparent. Even so, today we should not have many hiding places and many veils. We should not pretend to be godly before men in order to win their praise. Hypocrisy, pretense, and veils—none of these are transparent. When our actual condition is not so good and we pretend to be good, we are not transparent. Many times our words and our actions are quite unnatural. We imitate others in our speaking, in our conduct, and in the way we do things. In so many ways we imitate others instead of being ourselves. This is not being transparent. All artificiality and imitation are not transparent. We certainly do not need to live before God by any self-made holiness. We must remember that real spirituality is to bear the cross. Holiness which is full of bondage is not the holiness of the Holy Spirit. All play-acting and all pretense must be abandoned.

Therefore, we need to confess many things. Among the brothers and sisters we need to learn to confess to each other and not to cover our sin. Whenever we have sinned against others, we should not try to rationalize it away, but confess it. Every Christian should be transparent today, for in that day, in the presence of God, we will all be transparent. The

street in the New Jerusalem is transparent as glass. Everything is visible there. Since it will be so in that day, we must learn today to be such people—those who are real, those who are transparent, those who never act what they are not.

THE TEMPLE AND THE LIGHT OF THE CITY

Verse 22 says, "And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." These words are especially precious. We know that in the Jerusalem of the Old Testament there was the temple. Whenever man wanted to have fellowship with God at that time, he had to go to the temple. The temple was the place set aside for God, and it was to that place that man had to go for fellowship with God. In the New Jerusalem, however, there will be no temple, because God and the Lamb are the temple of the city. This means that the fellowship between God and man in that day will be intimate and direct; it will be face to face. Man will no longer need to go to a specified place in order to have fellowship with God.

In the Old Testament there was a veil in the temple. No one could pass through this veil and enter into God's presence except the High Priest, and then only once a year. Today in the church the veil has been split. Now we all can enter into God's presence to worship Him in spirit and in truthfulness. But in that day God and the Lamb will be the temple of the city. We will not have to go to God; He will be right where we are. Today we go to God, but in that day we will live in His presence. God and the Lamb are the temple of the city. Therefore, if we do not learn to live in the Holy of Holies today, we are the most foolish people. Today the veil has been split, and we can enter into the Holy of Holies with boldness. We must not stay outside.

Verse 23 says, "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." This passage is connected with the previous verse about the temple. God and the Lamb are the temple of the city, and the glory of God lights the city. Therefore, there is no need for the sun or the moon to shine. We know that in the temple of the Old Testament the outer court was lighted by the sun and the moon, and the Holy Place by the light of the lamp. But in the Holy of Holies there was no window; the light of the sun and the moon could not shine in. Neither was there a lamp as in the Holy Place. The glory of God provided the light. Even so, the New Jerusalem is not lighted by the sun or the moon, but by the glory of God. This reveals that the whole city will be the Holy of Holies. The church in the future will become the very Holy of Holies.

"Its lamp is the Lamb." God's glory is the light and the Lamb is the lamp. This shows us that in the New Jerusalem there will still be something indirect. God as the light will shine through the Lamb as the lamp. This is not a reference to redemption but an indication to us that no one can know God directly. If anyone wants to know God, he must know Him through the Lamb—this remains true, even in eternity. Only through Christ can man know God. Apart from the lamp we cannot see the light; likewise, without Christ we cannot see God. Regardless of the environment, God still dwells in unapproachable light. Only when we are in Christ can we see Him.

Verse 24 says, "And the nations will walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it." We should notice one thing here. All the people whom God has obtained from the dispensation of the patriarchs, the dispensation of the law, and the dispensation of grace will

become a bride to be presented to Christ in that day. All the people who are still living at the end of the age of the kingdom and who have not been deceived by Satan will be transferred to become the people on the new earth. These people are the nations mentioned in verse 24. All those who are living in the city will have resurrected bodies; they are the sons and the kings. However, those who are on the new earth will still have a body of flesh and blood; they are the people and the nations of the earth. The kings of the earth are the rulers of the nations.

In the Old Testament the tabernacle was arranged so that it was in the center of the Israelites' camp. Three tribes dwelt on the east, three on the west, three on the south, and three on the north. This is recorded in the book of Numbers. The position of the New Jerusalem is similar to that of the tabernacle of God. The wall of this city has three gates in each direction: on the east, west, south, and north—a total of twelve gates. As the twelve tribes dwelt around the tabernacle, the nations will dwell around the New Jerusalem. The fact that the nations will "walk" by the light of the city means that the nations on earth will come to the New Jerusalem, and their walk to the New Jerusalem will be guided by the light of the city.

The "glory" which the kings shall bring refers to that glory which belongs to the kings of the earth. They will give the city the glory of their domain. "Glory" here has the same meaning as "glory" in Genesis 31:1. It means the best produce of the land. In other words, in the new earth the kings of the earth will bring the best produce of their localities and present it as a gift to the holy city.

Revelation 21:25 says, "And its gates shall by no means be shut by day, for there will be no night there." The fact that the gates will not be shut by day reveals that in the new heaven and new earth there will still be the difference between day and night. The nations can come to the city in their day time. But "there will be no night there"—in the city there will be no night. Since all those who dwell in the city will have resurrected bodies, they will never feel tired; they can serve God constantly day and night.

Verse 26 says, "And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it." This refers to the kings of verse 24. The kings of the earth will not only bring their glory to the city, but they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

Verse 27 says, "And anything common and he who makes an abomination and a lie shall by no means enter into it, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Everything that is of man and everything that belongs to the flesh are common. Therefore, whatever belongs to man and the flesh cannot enter into the city. Only what is of Christ and the Holy Spirit can enter; anything else cannot get in. "He who makes an abomination" in the Scriptures especially refers to idolatry, and he who makes "a lie" refers to a relationship with Satan, because lies are from Satan. Those who are related to idols or to sin cannot enter into the city. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter.

In the new heaven and new earth there will only be two kinds of inhabitants: First, there are those who have been saved by the blood—they will dwell in the city and have their

names written in the book of life. Then there are those who will be transferred from the millennium—they will continue to live and become the inhabitants of the new earth. Their names are also written in the book of life, but they will not live in the city. They can only go in and come out of the city.

THE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE AND THE TREE OF LIFE

We have yet to see what God will show us at the end. Verses 22:1-2 say, "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Here we are reminded of verse 2:7, which says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." The tree of life is planted in the Paradise of God. Since the tree of life is in the city, this tells us that the New Jerusalem is the Paradise of God.

Recalling the book of Genesis, God created man as a type of Christ and the woman as a type of the church he desired to obtain in Genesis 2. God then put them, husband and wife, in the garden of Eden. Thus we have the man, the woman, and the garden. Then in Genesis 3 the serpent came in and they fell; as a result, God drove them out of the garden. In Revelation 21, whom do we see in the New Jerusalem? There is the Lamb, the One whom Adam typified in Genesis 2; He is wholly for God. There is also the wife of the Lamb, who was typified by Eve in Genesis 2; she is wholly for Christ. The New Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb and is also the Paradise of God. In Genesis 2 there were three entities—Adam, Eve, and the garden. But in Revelation 21 and 22 there are only two—the Lamb and the city. The city is the bride and also the Paradise; the woman and the Paradise have become one. The woman in Genesis could be driven away, while the woman at the end of Revelation can no longer be driven out.

Some people may worry and ask, "What will happen in eternity? What if the devil should come in again—then what would we do?" We can answer that it is impossible for this to happen again, because in eternity God Himself will dwell in the holy city. Praise God! He set up a garden in Genesis, a garden which had no wall and which was not guarded well. Therefore, the serpent and sin could enter. But God finally obtains a city for the sake of protection. It is impossible for this city to be ever involved in a fall. The woman and Paradise have been so joined that nothing can ever separate them again. Henceforth, this woman cannot be driven out by any means.

Verse 22:1 speaks of a river of water of life being in the middle of the street of the city. In Genesis there were four rivers, two of which have always oppressed the children of God. Babylon was built upon the river Pison, and Nineveh upon the river Hiddekel. God's children have always been persecuted by these two rivers. But in the New Jerusalem there is only one river—the river of water of life. This river gives life and joy to man. Psalm 46:4 says: "There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God,/The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." This river especially gives gladness to God. The water of this river proceeds "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The throne is

singular because God and the Lamb are sitting on one throne. This means that the reign of Christ is the reign of God.

Verse 2 says, "And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month." Once again the number twelve is used. What does it mean that the tree bears twelve kinds of fruits and yields its fruit every month? This is a way of saying that everything is satisfied, and that this satisfaction is for eternity. Every month there is life. In eternity we will continue to know Christ and continue to receive the life of the Lord without any interruption—there will not be a month when there is no fruit. This means that there will be no regression. Today we see something which is very sad—that which the Scripture shows as the evaluation of man. Men from twenty years of age to sixty years of age were given a certain valuation, but the value was lowered for those over sixty years of age (Lev. 27:3, 7). This is going backward, but in eternity there will be no going backward. There will be new life and new fruit every month.

Even so, before the New Jerusalem comes into being, we need to seek a new experience of life every month. The particular experience we had twenty years ago is no longer fresh, nor can it be of any help to us today. Neither can the experience of five years ago be fresh or of any profit to us now. We cannot live by the fruit of the tree of life from former months. Each month we must continue to have fresh fruit. Before God we must receive life continuously; we must receive Christ. Not only do we need fruit each month, we need a different kind of fruit each month. We cannot be satisfied before God only having a little portion, a certain part. We must learn to know the Lord in many aspects; we must bear all manner of fruits.

Verse 2 continues, "And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Fruit represents life; leaves, the clothing of the tree, represent our external behavior. The Lord Jesus cursed the fig tree because it only had leaves; there was no fruit. It only had the outward behavior without the inward life. In the new heaven and new earth, the people of the nations will have no sin, no death, no pain, no curse, nor any demons. This group of people, the nations, will continue living in the earth with the holy city in their midst. Being healed by the leaves of the Lord Jesus means that the deeds of the Lord Jesus will be their example. We will obtain the fruits of the tree of life, and they will obtain the leaves. By following the behavior of the Lord Jesus, they will be able to live on in well-being; and this way the nations will dwell together in peace and blessing.

In these verses the street, the river of water of life, and the tree of life are all linked together. In the New Jerusalem, wherever you find the street, you will find the river of water of life, and wherever you find the river of water of life, you will find the tree of life. In other words, wherever there is activity, there will be the river of life and the tree of life. This means that as we learn to follow the Lord, all our conduct should include the river of water of life and the tree of life. Then everything will be well. The street is a place for people to move about. In order to move about we need to have all of our activities based upon the tree of life, not upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When the life within us generates the activity, the result will be the outflow of the river of the water of life in the Spirit. The outflowing of life is our street, our way. If the life of the

Lord Jesus is not moving in us, we simply cannot walk. If there is not the life of the Lord and if there is not the outflow of the river of water of life in the Spirit, we cannot move. If, according to our own wisdom, we judge whether a certain way to act is good or bad, we are planting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not the tree of life. But if we act according to the moving of the life within, the result will be that the water of life will flow out to others. All of these things are linked together. All of God's work is based upon the tree of life and results in the river of water of life.

FOREVER AND EVER

Verse 3 says, "And there will no longer be a curse." Thank God, Genesis 3 will completely pass away and there will no longer be a curse. Everything introduced in Genesis 3 can be summed up in the word curse. Even death is a kind of curse. However, in the new heaven and new earth there will be no more curse, nor will there be any death. All of the history of sin will be over; man will glorify God well.

Verse 3 continues, "And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it." The situation here is unlike Genesis 3, where God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. Here God is reigning; His very throne is located here. Now the garden has become the city, the place where God is enthroned. "And His slaves will serve Him." What will the slaves of God do in eternity? They will serve Him. We should never think that in eternity we will have nothing to do. No, we will forever be His slaves, serving Him.

Verse 4 says, "And they will see His face, and His name will be on their forehead." All of our work for the Lord must be led by fellowship. True service to the Lord is in fellowship. Serving alone is not enough; there must be the fellowship. They will serve Him, and they will see His face. Oh, how many times when we see God we have already done His work. But I must say that we can do His work only after we see God. We should not be doing the work and constantly regretting—this is not fellowship. May God deliver us from any service which is not in fellowship, and may He save us from ever accomplishing any work without being able to fellowship after we have finished. We should never feel proud, self-content, or self-sufficient upon finishing the work. May God save us and deliver us from any kind of service which does not issue from fellowship and which is not in fellowship, and may He enable us to remain in fellowship even after we have finished the work. God's servants will not only have fellowship with Him, but "His name will be on their forehead." This is their testimony; this is what others who behold them will see. Everyone will know that these people are the people of God.

Verse 5 says, "And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them." In this city night is over. The lamp is the man-made light, and the sun is the natural light. All of man's work and all natural means will no longer be of any use because everything will be visible. Today we may be confused and not see clearly. Even after we have accomplished some service, we may not know where we are, but it will not be so in that day.

The last clause of verse 5 is the most important. "And they will reign forever and ever." This was the purpose of God in creation. In Genesis God's purpose was that man should

rule, and now he has obtained that purpose—man is ruling. This is not something in the millennium. This passage of Scripture, Revelation 21 and 22, is not a description of the millennium, but of eternity. They will reign unto eternity, and they shall reign forever and ever. God's original goal is reached.

God wanted man to have dominion over the earth and to destroy Satan. Now man is reigning, and Satan has been cast into the lake of fire. God's purpose for the man He created has been attained. On the one hand, God wanted man to be like Himself, and on the other hand, God's appointed work for man was that he should rule. Now we have seen a bride—golden, glorious, and beautiful—with all kinds of treasure within her. She lacks nothing and is without spot, wrinkle, or any such things. Furthermore, she is holy and without blemish. She is truly clothed with glory. The glorious church spoken of in Ephesians 5 has been fulfilled in this way. What kind of work will those in the church do? They will reign forever and ever.

We may say that God's plan can be frustrated, but His plan can never be stopped. Since creation God's work has suffered much frustration. In fact, it seemed as if His work was being destroyed and that His plan would never succeed. But in Revelation God has reached His goal. There is a group of people full of pure gold, which is something of God. They are full of pearl, which is the work of Christ. And they are filled with precious stones, the work of the Holy Spirit. They will reign forever and ever.

Now that we have seen God's purpose and how He is working, what should we do? Should we hold a revival? Should we open a seminary? Or should we go back to our housework as usual? What are we doing here? God is doing a great thing. When we compare our work with His, how short we feel! May God be gracious to us, that having seen such a vision we will pay the full price. Once a man sees a vision he will be changed. May God give us a vision of what He is doing and what He is after. May He show us the kind of people He desires to obtain and how precious is that which He has set His heart upon. If we see these things, we will cry out and say, "Oh, how small I am! How much attention I have paid to myself!" And we will say, "If God does not work in me, I will never be able to do His work. Only when God Himself moves in me with His mighty power can I go on well." This great vision must overthrow us. It must cause us to see that our condition today can never satisfy God's heart. Our hope is that God would give us this vision. Once we have seen it, we will give our whole being to it; every part of us will be changed. Today we are standing between these two alternatives—being an overcomer or being a failure. How can any of us afford to be slack in prayer? If we neglect to pray, we will never be God's overcomer.

May the Lord Jesus, who has risen from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, sustain us and lead us by His own mighty power that we may henceforth and forever belong to Him, forever consecrate to Him, forever serve Him, and forever go His way. May the Lord be gracious to us now and to eternity. Amen.