

## God With Us

*Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10-22:5; John 14:21-29*

*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love – send forth your spirit as you recreate and renew us – give us a vision this day Lord for the wonderful way you are re-ordering all creation, through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, your Son, our Lord. AMEN*

Imagine...

Actually, I'd like for the next few minutes to close your eyes and imagine this scene before you:

An angel of God has just told you he is going to show you the bride of the Lamb of God, Jesus – and this is what he shows you...*(keep your eyes closed)*

You see a grand Holy City floating on the clouds coming from God, from heaven. It is sanctified by God, His city and it is dazzling to behold. It is made of jewels and pearls and gold, and the names of the 12 tribes of Israel adorn its walls, while the foundations are adorned with the 12 Apostles. It is the place where the Old and New Covenant come together and are now one, truly one, having been completely fulfilled.

While the wall encompasses the city, there are 3 gates on each of its 4 sides, the gates themselves are massive pearls and they are always open because all are welcome, and there is never a threat to this great city from anywhere. While it is a place of complete security and safety, there are no threats to its security because all is fully under God's loving sovereignty. *(eyes still closed?)*

And neither is there a need for a temple or church building in this city – a TEMPLE being a place where heaven and earth come together – a place of worship - for now God Himself dwells with us – His light is our light – no more night or shadows – no need for sun or moon for the glory of God will illuminate and shine through Jesus Who enlightens everything with a light that never fades – darkness is vanquished forever.

And you see multitudes of people and nations and rulers stream towards this light, everyone wants to bask in this illuminating presence of God that you are experiencing, It is warm, enveloping, secure, radiant and good. You feel at home in it because you are. (home)

And everything in this city is clean and good and trustworthy, and everyone and everything loves God – knows Jesus and is at peace with one another.

But wait, there's more...

There is this beautiful pristine river – like crystal flowing from the throne of God where the Father sits with His son Jesus at His right hand – and this river is teeming with life.

As this river proceeds from the throne it forms the middle street, the main thoroughfare of this grand city and at its center, bridging the river is this spectacular tree – **THE TREE OF LIFE** – the tree that was in the center of the Garden of Eden you see in the center of this **garden city** straddling the **River of Life**.

And this tree is always laden with fruit; every month new fruit is born so there is food and nourishment for all, available all the time for God's people so there is no hunger, no greed –

children are scampering round the tree and gleefully pick and eat the fruit, relish its sweet nectar as the juice dribbles down their chins. And all are fed and healthy, fully nourished and well.

But that's not all, the leaves of this great tree are a **healing balm** for the wounds of all that is past – all fear, jealousy, anger, dis-ease, pollution and pestilence are healed – even the scars of wars, of inner wounds are healed by the balm of the leaves of this life-giving tree – and there is **peace, God's peace**, prevailing over all.

And the light of **God casts our all darkness, mistrust, guilt and shame**. His peace triumphs over everything. We are all with each other and with God in His great Holy City – and we're worshipping Him in complete fellowship with each other as we are one in God.

...God dwells with us...

SILENCE –

Did you see it? Could you get hold of that vision, the very vision Jesus shared with John in His revelation to him? It's our revelation too you know.

And it is introduced as the **“bride of the lamb”**

Paul tells us in Ephesians and it is revealed to John throughout the revelation that the Church is the Bride of Christ. – not the institution, or the building or the service, **but God's people**.

This place, this Holy City is the Church of God – Revelation tells us there will be a time, when all creation will be the church of God, under His sovereignty, all nations and rulers and people will flock to be part of God's Holy Garden of Eden City. Nothing will be that is not of GOD.

But what about now, what about us?

Are we not called to be the bride of Christ, to be as Jesus put it in Matthew 5:14-16 *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

Does God not call us to be this new illuminating city on a hill?

John 14:21-29 his disciples are to be the light of the world by their love...Holy Spirit - River of Life

<sup>21</sup> *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.* <sup>22</sup> *Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will **manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?**"*

<sup>23</sup> *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.* <sup>24</sup> *Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.* <sup>25</sup> *"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.*

<sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. <sup>30</sup> I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, <sup>31</sup> but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

Maybe you're thinking – but we're not there yet, the devil is still running rampant in the world – we still have war & disease – we're just not there yet.

While you're right – we are not yet to the time of complete fulfillment, we're in the in-between times (RESURRECTION > ... > ESCHATON)

But God has equipped us in every way. The river of life proceeding from the Throne of Grace where the Father and Son preside and reside, is none other than the Holy Spirit himself, who although has not yet permeated all creation as in the end times, has been available to permeate us, His Church, for every good work. If we are truly God's Church, we are truly equipped to be a part of God's plan for the Salvation of all creation, to be the light of the world, and to be instruments of God's grace for the healing of the nations.

The Season of Easter is winding down. Today, perhaps you'll consider recommitting yourself to be the light of the world. I'll remain here after the sermon while we sing and praise God to anoint you and pray a prayer of recommitment for those who would like to do so.

My prayer today is that not just as individuals we would recommit ourselves, but this body of Christ, CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES would recommit itself to being God's great City on a Hill, the light of the world around us, and to receive His grace, His blessing and His direction on how we are to live into this great call.

LET US PRAY:

*Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before His passion prayed for His disciples that they might be one, as you and He are one: Grant that your Church - Church of the Apostles, being bound together in love and obedience to you, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in Him whom you have sent, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

May the Holy Spirit who has begun a good work in you, bless, preserve and empower you in the service of Christ and His Kingdom. Christ is counting on you.