

Text: Rev. 21:9-23

Title: "The Jerusalem of Eternity"

Time: 12/9/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: History tells us that the very first diamond engagement ring was given by Archduke Maximilian of Austria to his betrothed Mary of Burgundy in 1477. Theirs was a marriage that forestalled military conflict and expanded the influence of the Holy Roman Empire. Maximilian understood the pressure a young man feels under these circumstances.

Diamond engagement rings became more common in our nation after the Second World War. In 1947, De Beers came out with their slogan, "A Diamond is Forever," with the idea that the durability of the gemstone symbolizes the permanence of the marriage vow.

Well, I wonder whether the Archduke got his idea for a diamond engagement ring from this passage. Last week we noted briefly that the God of Eternity has a bride adorned for her husband (21:2). The passage we are in this morning tells us about these adornments (v. 9), and the first thing we notice about this Bride, the new Jerusalem of eternity, is that she glistens and sparkles like a diamond (v. 11, *jasper* was a broad category of precious stones at this time).

Let's notice together some of the angel's description of this Jerusalem of eternity, the city that is the bride of the God of eternity forever and ever.

I. The Jerusalem of eternity is a holy city (vv. 9-11).

Illustration: According to the American Gem Society, “A diamond's purity and sparkle have now become symbols of the depth of a man's commitment to the woman he loves in practically all corners of the world.” The purity of this diamond city is its holiness, and its sparkle is the glory of God.

Application: The first adornment we notice is that this city is a holy city. It is called that (v. 10). Holiness is the most beautiful thing in the universe. That is God’s view of aesthetics, so it is the correct view. Nothing is aesthetically beautiful if it is unholy. Psalm 96:9 commands us, “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him, all the earth.” The city is great, it is high, it is heavenly, it is glorious, and it is brilliant, and all of these characteristics are a part of the beauty of holiness. God wants our worship of Him as His bride to reflect this quality.

Illustration: I saw a religious commentary on a song called, “The Bethlehemian Rhapsody” nativity story. You can find it on Youtube sung by puppets. It is patterned after the Bohemian Rhapsody of the rock group Queen. I mention it because I want to say that that approach to the nativity lacks the beauty of holiness. There is not going to be anything patterned after the Bohemian Rhapsody of Queen in the Jerusalem of eternity, because that city will be a holy city.

It is interesting that we are told that the same angel who meted out the judgments of God upon sin is the one chosen to describe for John the beauty of holy city (v. 9). The beauty of holiness and God’s wrath against sin go together. We worship God in the beauty of holiness as we fear Him. We saw this Thursday night, where the Lord had commanded the children of Israel to destroy the Canaanites, and instead they did what they could to mingle with them and become like them. We need to be willing to take a hard line on sin

in our own life and the lives of others even as we seek to love the sinner for Christ's sake. The city God is preparing us and others for is a holy city.

II. The Jerusalem of eternity is a labeled city (vv. 12-14).

Illustration: We have had some home sales on our prayer list as a church family in recent days. Part of selling a home is the title search, a process by which it is confirmed that the seller actually owns the property he is trying to sell.

Application: I think that is why the Jerusalem of eternity is a labeled city. We read of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles, and in so doing we learn I believe that the title to this city belongs to the believers of the Old and New Testaments, Israel and the church.

In the upper room discourse of John 14, Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, told His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled . . . I go to prepare a place *for you*." No believer is truly homeless. We have a place prepared for us by our Savior. It is labeled as belonging to us. We have our title to it in Christ secured. Jesus told us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

Illustration: Last week I mentioned that Fanny Crosby, the famously blind hymn writer, wrote "God of eternity," which is the theme of the first part of Revelation 21. A less-well-known collaborator of Crosby's was the hymnist, Mary Ann Kidder. She too had suffered blindness as a teenager, but had recovered her sight. She wrote a song that I think captures why it is these labels on the Jerusalem of eternity are important to us. They cause us to ask the

question, "Do they apply to us?" "Do I have title to this city?" Kidder's song is "Is My Name Written There?"

"Lord, I care not for riches, neither silver nor gold;
I would make sure of heaven, I would enter the fold.
In the book of Thy kingdom with its pages so fair,
Tell me, Jesus, my Savior, is my name written there?"

III. The Jerusalem of eternity is a big city (vv. 15-17).

Application: In His promise to prepare a place for His disciples, Jesus assures them that "in my Father's house are many mansions." In the days of the KJV translators, *mansion* was the word for *dwelling place*. The measurements of the Jerusalem of eternity taken by the angel of this chapter indicate that Jesus has prepared a city with plenty of room for any and all who will come. The 12000 stadia of the passage equate to about the size of the continental US. It is a perfect cube, as high as it is wide and long. Its size probably means it either orbits the earth like a satellite, or the new heaven and new earth are a lot bigger than the old versions currently are.

Illustration: I saw a study published by the Population Reference Bureau that included a chart that estimated that just under 47 billion people have ever lived on the earth, not including their estimates for prehistoric people.

That is a lot of people, but the Jerusalem of eternity has a lot of room. How much room? Jesus told us how much in Luke 14:15-24. How much room? Still more for you. What is your excuse for not reserving a room? How do we do that? We simply come and ask for one. We are sinners, and Christ died for our sins so that we could come and trust Him for salvation from sin and its penalty, God's judgment. Perhaps if you were poorer you would come, or sicker. If you fail to

come, it will not be because there was no room. It will be for all your excuses, like those Jesus mentions in this passage.

IV. The Jerusalem of eternity is an adorned city (vv. 18-21).

Illustration: One of the wonderful things about Christmas is all the beautiful Christmas decorations that come out during this season. The Jerusalem of eternity will be like that, filled with amazing decorations.

Application: Men slave away for hours and hours in this life to obtain the gold that will be the dirt of the streets they walk on in this place. We are going to walk the streets of gold someday, so what should our approach to gold be today? Jesus helps answer that question as well (Luke 12:13-34). We will walk on gold someday. Let's not let it rule over our lives and define our purpose and success. Furthering the kingdom of God should be the rule of our lives and their definition of purpose and success.

V. The Jerusalem of eternity is God's home (vv. 22-23).

Illustration: Mary Ann Kidder was born in Boston and lived in New York City during the Civil War. At the war's end, the stars and stripes were raised again over Fort Sumter, and as that was done one of Mary's hymns was sung, called "Victory at Last." It goes like this:

"For many years we've waited to hail the day of peace,
When the world shall be united, and war and strife shall
cease;
And now that day approaches, the drums are beating fast,
And all the boys are coming home, there's victory at last."

Mary's husband had fought for the north in the Civil War. After surviving the Battle of Antietam, he died five days later of dysentery. In the same year that the war finally ended, tragedy struck the widowed Mary again when her 12-year-old son died in a drowning accident. That background makes the repeated phrase of Mary's song all the more striking – "And all the boys are coming home. There's victory at last." Not all the boys were coming home. Mary's victory looked to another promised day. Here are the other two verses:

"The heroes who have gained it, and lived to see that day,
We will meet with flying banners and honors on the way;
And all their sad privations shall to the winds be cast,
For all the boys are coming home – There's victory at last."

"O, happy wives and children, light up your hearts and
homes,
For see, with martial music, the conquering hero comes,
With flags and streamers flying, while drums are beating
fast;
For all the boys are coming home – There's victory at last."

Application: Our passage tells us that the Jerusalem of eternity will not need a temple, nor the light of a sun, for God will be its temple and its sun. Today we need both the sun for light and in a similar way our local church as God's temple. Now is the day of spiritual war, but then there will be the victory at last. And all the boys will be coming home. Not a one will be missing.

Conclusion: It is striking that as the passage describes, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (v. 10), the Jerusalem of eternity as God's home, it tells us that it will be the home of both the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (vv. 22-23).

They are one and yet two. With the Spirit who inspired this account (v. 10), they are one and yet three. And one of the three, for all of eternity, lives in the Jerusalem of eternity as the Lamb.

Mary Kidder's victory song spoke of the suffering of soldiers coming to an end:

The heroes who have gained it, and lived to see that day,
We will meet with flying banners and honors on the way;
And all their sad privations shall to the winds be cast,
For all the boys are coming home – There's victory at last."

For us there is one Hero who has gained the final peace. His sad privations, however, are not cast to the wind. For when we dwell in the place that He has gone to prepare for us, it shall ever be the Jerusalem of the Lamb for sinners slain. Glory to His name. Look to Him this morning. There is room for you.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching