



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 21:9-22:5

"The Metropolis of the New Earth"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're reading for our Scripture reading this morning chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation verse 9 through chapter 22 and verse 5 of this great apocalypse and so beginning with verse 9 the apostle writes,

"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, and I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. And there were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he

measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone 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; and the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street and on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need by the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for these magnificent visions that the Apostle John was given and, Lord, we acknowledge that as much as we have pondered the things the apostle has written still there are things that he has written that suggest to us that we shall never have the full understanding until we are there. We thank Thee for the hope that we have that one day by Thy grace through Jesus Christ who died for sinners that we shall walk on the streets of that great city and above all else shall see our Lord's face.

We thank Thee for the hope that we have in the world of which we're a part with so many things that would cause us naturally to lose hope. We thank Thee for the great solid certainties of the word of God through the teaching of the apostles that we know and believe, and which comfort us and console us, and strengthen us in our day.

We ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ wherever the word of God is preached today. Not only here, but wherever Christ is lifted up and his saving sacrifice proclaimed. Bless those who minister and those who hear the word. Build up the church of Jesus Christ and increase the number of those who belong through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And, Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon the sick. Particularly minister to them; some are truly suffering. We ask that Thou wilt give them encouragement, and physical help, and spiritual uplift, and consolation. We know that ultimately all of us face the deepest experience of life, death, unless our Lord comes, and we pray, Lord, for those who are suffering at the present time. We commit them to Thee and those that minister to them, their family and their friends.

And Father, we pray for those who minister the word in the chapel. We ask Thy blessing upon the meeting this evening and upon the ministers of the chapel, may they be fruitful. We commit our day to Thee, our president and all who are associated with him in government, give them wisdom and guidance we pray. Now, Lord, as we sing, as we

hear the word of God, minister to us the things that are important, the great spiritual truths of the word of God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we come near the end of our study of the great apocalypse is, "The Metropolis of the New Earth". Cain built the first city according to the word of God, but he built it in independence of God. Man's innate desire to have a common life evidently is good. Nothing is said in Scripture about the fact of the building being contrary to his will, but characteristic of human cities is that they are failures, for God is forgotten. In the Bible, we've just had occasion to reflect upon Sodom, which appears in the Book of Revelation, incidentally also, and especially upon the great city of Babylon, the city of the future.

Bismarck the German Chancellor once said that "great cities are great sores upon the body politic". I think he was right. Our cities are great sores upon the body politic, and as you look around at the cities of the world today, you cannot help but think that they seem to be becoming greater sores than they have been in the past.

The author of the Epistle of the Hebrews had the right idea. He wrote, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." John witnessed this eternal city in the visions that we are looking at in the Book of Revelation, the metropolis of the new creation. A literal city although described in symbolical language is said to be the new Jerusalem. One of the things that we can learn from this, I think, is that embodiment is the end of all the ways of God. There is no pallid, anemic beyond for the soul. We look for a real city.

Now we know even from science that things that cannot be seen are nevertheless real and it is definitely in accordance with the word of God that even though at the moment we cannot see lots of things, there are things that are real and this city is a real city symbolically presented in the word of God, but still a real city.

Suzanne de Dietrich who wrote a very interesting book relating to the Book of Revelation, incidentally, said that, "the future city is not some pale paradise peopled by pure spirits", but we are talking about a truly real place; the new Jerusalem. And it's also helpful to remember that the Bible teaches the redemption of the body not the redemption from the body.

We're taught in Scripture that we look forward to the resurrection of the body, but when we look forward to the resurrection of the body, we are looking forward to the resurrection of this body, not some other body, but this body. In other words, there is an identity between this body and the glorious resurrection body that we shall have.

The Apostle Paul illustrates this in many ways, but one way sticks with me, and that is that when you put a seed in the ground (and this is one of his illustrations), when you put a seed in the ground and a beautiful plant comes up from the seed, you're looking at the same plant, which at one point is the seed, but now has bloomed and blossomed. We are looking at identity and, consequently, with reference to the resurrection body, we in the Bible learn that our body is part of our divine redemption. We have not received it yet, but we shall receive it at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not delivered from the body, but we experience a bodily redemption as well as a spiritual redemption. That body that we receive, Paul tells us also in that chapter, is a spiritual body. He writes about this in Romans chapter 8 also when in chapter 8 and verse 21 he says,

"For the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of the body."

As Christians get older and older and their bodies begin to reflect the age of the individual, they learn to appreciate that text even more. When we're young and when we're beautiful and handsome, as all of you I know were at one time (really you are now), but still, as the years pass, we reflect upon what the apostle is talking about and I think I'm beginning to understand the meaning of that term "groan". So we're groaning, looking forward to the future.

Now I have this particular view of these chapters, which is partly speculative because I don't think it is taught specifically in the word of God, but nevertheless find some support from the word of God, and in history goes all the way back to some comments that one of the 3rd Century fathers, Irenaeus made. Irenaeus actually lived in the 2nd Century as well as the 3rd Century and was one of the leading students of the word of God then, and has been regarded as that down through the years. But Irenaeus suggested that the new heavens and the new earth was related to the old heavens and the old earth in this way. Just as, for example, when man sinned in the Garden of Eden and fell under the curse, and the curse touched the creation as well as the individual, we look out and we see the thorns and thistles in the creation and we recognize that the creation is also under the cursed. As a result of man's fall, the creation suffers and it follows in consequence of man's sin.

So in the story of the Scriptures and the story of the creation in the word of God is that the time is coming and this kingdom of the thousand years, that we have been reading about from time to time in the Book of Revelation, there is going to be a renewal of this creation when our Lord rules and reigns for a thousand years upon the earth.

Now we can expect this creation about us to be renewed. Isaiah writes about it in chapter 35 of his book and in other places as well. But then there is to come, the new heavens and the new earth and Peter tells us that this is to result from a great conflagration. So we assume then that as a result of the future work of the Lord God, he's going to burn up everything like, as I mentioned last week, you would take a piece of

coal and put it in intense heat, turn it into liquid, and then out of it make a diamond; so the Lord will take the creation and ultimately make it into what we know as the new creation described in these chapters.

So just as we pass from the curse through redemption to the resurrection of the body, so the creation passes from the curse through renewal and redemption and ultimately to its own resurrection as a result of our resurrection. And so we have, for example, in verse 11 of our chapter that "the new heavens and the new earth" and particularly now, "the new city has the glory of God". So I just suggest to you that that same procedure: curse, redemption, resurrection, is to be experienced by the creation except in the next step, as a result of our experiences in the light of the teaching of the word of God.

So if that is true, just as my body will one day be placed in the grave, if our Lord doesn't come while I'm living, and it will decay and corrupt, but I look forward to the resurrection of the body, this body, so the creation will ultimately corrupt and even though it experiences a renewal will ultimately pass through the experience of resurrection. But just as that body of mine that is placed in the grave and then is resurrected when our Lord comes, is the same body (that's very disappointing to some of you. Some of you have some frowns on your face because you were hoping that I wouldn't look the same way that I am looking now) [Laughter], but you'll recognize me and you will recognize the improvement also, and I'll recognize the improvement in you. There is identity, Paul says, between this body and that body that we receive forever. Furthermore, there is a specific continuity just like between the seed and the plant, there is continuity and reality.

So as Paul speaks about that body, he uses the terms that are used here, some of them. Glory, it's a body of glory. It's a spiritual body. It's a heavenly body. So to put it in scientific terms, evidently there is some kind of new arrangement of energy that God will, in his omnipotent power, accomplish the details of which I leave to the scientists or

if they're sensible scientists, they probably will say, "Well, that we can probably understand some of those things, but even we do not understand everything."

Now having said that, as a rather lengthy introduction, I want to turn now to our passage and note first in verses 9 and 10, the vision of the city that John describes. There is an intentional contrast here. We've been hearing in the preceding chapters about Babylon. That's man's city. The great city Babylon of which we read in the Old Testament and the New; Babylon the Great. Babylon the Great is fallen, but now we have God's city and this city is the bride of the Lamb. That language, incidentally, is the language of the Bible because individuals who come, who were prominent people, who came to cities often were regarded as the bridegroom of the cities; the cities that belonged to them, but at any rate, in this instance, we have the city described as the bride; the wife of the Lamb. So just as Babylon is an earthly, Satanic, illegitimate city, so this city is the heavenly city; the divine city; the ideal city.

And John describes it as if it were just that because with verse 11 through the 21st verse, he gives a lengthy description of this city. It's physical make up first; having the glory of God. That's characteristic of it and that's why I suggest that it is a glorified city. Just as the earth is renewed at the kingdom, now passing through something like a resurrection, it is a glorified city. Verse 11 says, "Having the glory of God" but that's not the only place.

For example, we read in verse 23, "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." So "glory" characterizes it. Also in one other place here, we have mention of that in verse 18, "And the material of the city was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass".

Now look down at your ring, you who are married, and look at it. If it's a gold ring, you look at it and it's not something you can see through, is it? But the gold of the city of the new Jerusalem is described as "pure gold, like clear glass". So I suggest to you that the gold of the streets of the city of Jerusalem and of the other gold associated with it

is not the same kind of gold that you and I know as gold. It's more beautiful for that matter. It's like gold experiencing a resurrection. Now I don't have any jewels made of this so beyond that I cannot go, but at least this gold is different from the gold that we know, which I think supports the idea, perhaps that we have something like a resurrection.

In verse 11, "having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper". Someone has made reference to this as, "shimmering like a sheet of ice". The city displays the perfections of God and because the city displays the perfections of God, the use of gems is made to describe it and the only way in which we can think of the great perfections of the person of our God, is to use such things as jewels or gems to reflect them because to understand fully, we're not qualified or capable of doing that. The walls are described as being about two hundred and fifty feet high suggesting at least the security of those who are within it. Someone has said "They're not to be scaled by human effort".

Now those are applications that may have some relation to it, but are not taught specifically in the word of God. But I'd like for you to note the continuity that exists in this city. We read, for example, that "the great white wall" in verse 12, "...had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. And then, in verse 14, we read, "The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb".

Isn't that interesting? There's a continuity between the Old Testament and the revelation of the redeemed people there, and in the New Testament. We have "the great wall with the twelve gates and the names of the tribes of the children of Israel and then the foundation stones are named after the twelve apostles of the Lamb". I suggest to you that this very plainly points to the continuity between the people of God in the Old Testament and the people of God in the New Testament. Whatever change took place on

the day of Pentecost, and there was a change that took place there because the Holy Spirit came and from now on permanently indwells the true genuine people of God, it is still one people of God. That's made very plain by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11 when he says that, "The Gentiles who believe are grafted into the olive tree (the olive tree being those who inherit the promises of Abraham)."

As I said this morning, and I've said this before several times, if we're going to get salvation from God, we must get it through Abraham. Now what do I mean by that statement? Simply this, that the promises of salvation through the seed were given to Abraham and that's why, when the Apostle Paul in Galatians points out that through faith we are the sons of God, he says, "We are the sons of Abraham". So we gain our salvation through Abraham. That's rather shocking to people. In fact, when I left this room this morning and walked out to the automobile, someone came over to me and said, "I want to ask you a question about something you said" and that was the question. And I just said one sentence. She said, "Oh, I see it." So I won't say anymore because you see it too.

Scripture tells us that there is one people of God, things did happen on the day of Pentecost, things very specific happened, and what we know as the church is indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit. And the Scriptures, in more than one place, tell us that Old Testament saints were not permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord has to suffer and die on Calvary's cross for the full benefits of his redemption to be ours.

The foundations then are the foundations of the Lamb's twelve apostles. I think it's justified also for us to make another point here. Incidentally, you'll notice the term "Lamb" is used about seven times in these sections here emphasizing the importance of our Lord as the saving sacrifice. There is no salvation apart from the cross of Jesus Christ. All true biblical salvation is grounded in Christ's saving sacrifice for sinners in which he bears the sins of sinners and satisfies God's claims; his righteous and holy claims against each one of us, for we are sinners and, therefore, are under the curse. But will you notice

also, I think, that what this suggests is that the apostolic message of the Lamb of God is the only foundation for the Christian religion. So when we look and try to find out what is Christianity, we look at the full expression of it in the teaching of the apostles of the New Testament.

Now they do not teach anything different from the Old Testament. They ground what they say in the things of the Old Testament. But there is progress in the divine revelation and they write at the conclusion of the progression and give us the full understanding of the word of God. That's why if you were to come to me and say, "Which would you rather be, a professor of Old Testament or a professor of New Testament?" I would say, "The New Testament is the completed revelation, I prefer that". But I don't want to have to make a decision like that because the New Testament apostles tell us that they build on the foundation of the Old Testament. We have one Bible; one book of divine revelation.

Now the physical measurements are beyond me, three thousand million cubic miles. Verses 15 through 17 make it very plain, the city is a cube. The cube was the symbol of perfection in ancient times and I can understand that, but the vastness of the city is astonishing. The perfect symmetry of it, we might expect, but the vastness of it, the Lord Jesus once said, "In my house are many mansions", I'm not sure at all that he had any reference to this, but it certainly fits because a city that stretches for fifteen hundred miles on one side, and then fifteen hundred miles on another, and then fifteen hundred miles on another, and then fifteen hundred miles on another, is beyond anything that even a Texan [Laughter] could think about. It's amazing, astonishing, and we have to wait, it seems to me, the time when we enter that city to appreciate what God has in mind.

The physical materials, as I mentioned, are the gems and jewels that we know. Jasper is stressed, a translucent crystal perhaps, or even as some commentators have suggested, the diamond. Think of the diamonds of this world. The largest of all the

diamonds, so far as I know, is one from Borneo that weighs three hundred and sixty-seven carats. That's two-and-a-half ounces. I wouldn't mind having it. Koh-i-Noor the "Mount of Light" has been famed for long centuries. It's today among the British crown jewels. It weighs one hundred and six carats and we "ooh" and "ahh" over it, when we see it. So when we look at the size of it, it's just about one ounce; not quite one ounce. Orlov, the diamond on the point of the scepter of the former Russian Empress, weighs one hundred and ninety-five carats, about an ounce and a half; but here is a wall of precious stone some six thousand miles long and two hundred and fifty feet high all of crystal, or perhaps if this word means diamond, all of diamond. It's astonishing. At least lets us know that this city is a reflection of the glory of God in that sense.

We also notice that the gates are made of pearl. The twelve gates were twelve pearls. Now you all have seen pearls, and most of you ladies probably have a little pearl necklace, if you don't have a genuine pearl necklace, then you probably have something that's supposed to look like it and the rest of us don't know the difference, but to think of one pearl that is large enough for a gate is again, mind boggling [Laughter] even speech boggling! [Laughter]

The pearl, in the Bible, is a kind of emblem of redemption and our Lord uses it in that sense. He talks about a pearl of great price. It originates through especially strong secretion of mother of pearl by the pearl shellfish as a reaction against injury from without. When the inrush of inanimate objects like conferva or water mites and the like come into the shellfish, then the pearl is secreted. So, to put it very simply, it's the answer of a wounded life to injury from without.

And so in that sense it forms an illustration of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ because that cross is the answer of a wounded life to injury from without and as he was on the cross suffering from without, redemption is the result of what he was accomplishing. A mother of pearl or a pearl that is far more valuable than any of the pearls of this great city, for it's the pearl of divine redemption.

I think it's very interesting, incidentally, that the twelve jewels that are mentioned here are the same jewels that are on the sign of the zodiac. In other words, it's almost as if God is saying, "There is no city of the gods as the ancients thought. There is no need to read your horoscope because there is no such thing". The true city of God is the one that is set forth here. The true jeweled city is the city of God in the heavens.

Now John turns to the conditions of life in the city with verse 22, and I must say, this is almost impossible to expound these verses. "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple". We can only say that's the perfection of worship. To worship directly our Lord and to worship him with no temple involved is the completion of all of the teaching of the word of God in glory. Every one of us who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ is an "Enoch". We walk with God, all of us, personally. We know him and we worship him. There is no temple, no need for a temple, or a place in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb, to be worshipped.

"The city (also we read) has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." Now I think this is the perfection of security. The sovereignty and glory of God is the security of eternity. I wish it were possible to expound the significance of that, but we don't have time to do that.

In verse 26 and verse 27 we read, specifically in verse 27, "Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it." The perfection of the divine holiness, the one of whom we read in the Old Testament, "Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts", is the one whom we worship and we worship him in the holiness which he has given to us by virtue of what Christ has accomplished on Calvary's cross. We read also in verse 2 of the tree of life, "In the middle of its street and on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding the fruit of every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations".

That's an interesting expression "were for the healing of the nations" because I think we tend to think that it seems strange for us to even think about healing of the

nations in this great city, but this expression is probably just as little to be pressed to mean that a then present sickness of the nations is supposed, as we are permitted to draw the inference from Revelation 21:4, that the tears that God will wipe away from the blessed are signs of then still present pain.

We understand that to mean something like when it rains. Do you in Dallas know anything about rain? [Laughter] Well, you remember how the water rolled off the trees and if the sun comes out, as it occasionally has, the sun is out, it's bright, but the leaves are still dripping. That's the tears that are spoken of when we read "God shall wipe away all tears from our lives". It's God accomplishing the fullness of the redemption that he has promised. And so here it much rather means that just as the tears, which they had shed on account of earthly sufferings will be wiped away in the eternal life, so the healing leaves of the tree of life serve for the healing of the sickness from which the nations had suffered during their earthly life, but you'll never suffer again in the new earth. I think that Professor Dustadeich [ph37:56], when he expressed that, is expressing what probably is the sense of those words.

Now we read in verse 3, "that there shall no more curse". No more curse suggests the perfection of the environment. And then we go on to read in verse 3, "and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; (the perfection of government and the perfection of divine service), Jesus the Lamb and also the Lord."

And no better illustration of this, I think, can we find than the illustration of Scripture itself in one of the great types of our Lord. Joseph. Joseph, we know, was one who was exalted in Egypt after humiliation. "See, I have set thee over all the land and the people cried before him, 'Bow the knee!' And he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt", so Pharaoh said when he took Joseph out of his confinement and made him what he made him, the prime minister of Egypt. But one other thing he said about him was

very interesting. He said of Joseph, "Without Joseph no man shall lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt".

There's no exaggeration, if we apply the words to Christ, for it's the fact that every man living is responsible to him for the thoughts and imaginations of his heart, and our Lord is King forever. And so, I'm not surprised then that we read of the perfection of the divine government and service and our Lord is the Lamb in the Lord and climactically in verse 4 we read, "And they shall see His face". That's the perfection of knowledge, therefore, the confidence that we have from knowing him. I love this because it says "we shall see his face." In other words, it's not the skirts of his garments, not the hem of his garments, not his feet, not his back parts as Moses had a glimpse of in Old Testament times, but "we shall see his face." "We shall see his face" and we shall understand his heart, and understand his work, and the freshness of the eternal life that we enjoy. I don't know of any anticipation of that better than the Lord's Supper. When we sit at the Lord's Table and reflect upon what our Lord has done for us.

When we think about theology, we think of Augustine. Someone has said, "Augustine came very close to the truth", a great admirer of the great church father. Others have liked others, like Luther and Calvin. They built upon Augustine. As a matter of fact, in their doctrine of grace they derived, most fully, from Augustine and we think of these great men of the past and even into the present.

In the Twentieth Century, Herman Bavinck of benevolence; Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield of this particular country; the great theologians, but listen, my Christian friend, a five-year-old in heaven moved from this earth into heaven by God's determination knows more in five seconds about Christian theology than all the great theologians of the past knew when they were here upon this earth. It's astonishing, isn't it, to think about? It almost makes you want to say, "What's the use of studying theology?" except it's through theology we come to understand something like this.

They shall see his face and we shall know him. Occasionally people say, "Are we going to recognize one another in heaven?" Bible teaches also all like to say "My goodness, we will have as much knowledge as we have now won't we?" And so, surely, we shall understand one another in heaven. We're not wondering hieroglyphs, as someone has put it, in heaven. We shall know one another, and we shall know him, and we shall rejoice in the knowledge that we have. "His name shall be in their foreheads"; the perfection of a resemblance to him. When he comes, we shall be like him in holiness, preeminently, because we shall see him as he is.

John says, "And they shall see his face and his name shall be on their foreheads" and that, I suggest, is the perfection of character as well and finally, "they shall reign forever and ever"; the perfection of divine rule and the glory of it. We shall serve, but we shall also reign; for when we serve him, we truly reign. Oh, the pleasure of serving him! "And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need by the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever."

Well, I think if you just read through this passage, and with the kind of exposition which I have given, which does not shed a whole lot of light upon the reality of it, it's I think, largely beyond us, it's surely beyond me, it becomes very evident that here we have no continuing city. We are men and women of faith; a faith given us by the Lord God. It's not a faith as over against the evidence. It's a faith grounded in a sound epistemology based upon the presuppositions that all reasoning must have. But our presuppositions are true to reality. We are men and women of faith. We are individuals who have a solid reason for our hope found in the divine revelation.

When Abraham and the Old Testament saints walked on this earth, there were three things that characterized their life; the first thing was the promises of God. In other words, the word of God given to them; the second thing was the altar which they built, in which they acknowledged that of themselves and in themselves, they had no right to

approach the Lord God in heaven; so the altar representing ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ's cross; and, the third thing was the tent. They didn't build mammoth dwellings upon the face of this earth. They lived in tents because they recognized that this earth, as it is now, is not our home. It's not our home. Our citizenship is in heaven. So we are strengthened by the promises. We are finding our hope in the altar and, in the meantime, we move our tent, and also recognize it's only a tent, until we pass into the presence of the Lord as Christian and Hopeful did or the Lord comes.

I read this morning of Christian and Hopeful and how they came to the river and they began to swim in the river. Bunyan was likening it to death and as Christian went in, he began to sense that he was going to drown in it, and then his feet found the bottom and he said he remembered the promises of God, "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee". How marvelous it is to recognize that fact, that when we pass through the river, if it's the river of death, our feet have solid ground. And I love what Mr. Bunyan says at this point, he's recounting his dream and he said something like "I want to be there too"; something to that effect. That expresses my views perfectly.

Well, the last clause points to our responsibility. What the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says was "we seek one that is to come." *Zeteo*, the Greek verb, this place is constructed with the addition of a particle that suggests that it's a directive use of the verb and so we seek one that is to come. We look forward to one that is to come. Not mere gazing, we're under the Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit with the word in our hands, and we serve him in the meantime. We seek one that is to come.

Do you seek that city? Is that your hope? Can your life be paralleled in any way by Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the great saints of the Old Testament who were strengthened by the promises, expressed their faith in the altar, and recognized the world about them as a passing world and themselves as strangers and sojourners upon the face of this earth with their citizenship in heaven? May God in his grace give you that true understanding of yourself?

If you're here and you've never believed in Christ, we invite you to come to him, who on Calvary's cross, has offered the sacrifice for sinners. For all sinners have that opportunity to respond to the word of God. So by God's grace, may you come? May you believe in him and by his grace receive everlasting life. Not by culture, not by education, not by your good works, not by the ordinances of the church. The Scriptures say, "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." No one can come of himself, but we can come with God's help. Will you not appeal to the Lord God in heaven that he by his marvelous grace touch you, enable you to come to Christ and receive eternal life?

I know that someone in the audience may say, "You mean I cannot come of myself?" Yes, that's precisely what the Scriptures say, "We cannot come of ourselves". We don't say, "You cannot come!" We say, "You cannot come of yourself, but you can come by divine ability". And if you should say, "I don't like that" then I can only say, "Then you have no excuse for you're getting precisely what you want. So there is no reason for complaint." For the invitation is come, come. Come to Christ. Trust in him, in his saving blood. May God enable you to come. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent expressions found in the vision of the great apostle, which are such a deep comfort to us as we reflect upon life. We thank Thee for the word of God, for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and that which he accomplished by dieing for sinners on Calvary's cross. For we surely are sinners and we need him. Oh God, touch hearts in this audience. May at this very moment, if there should be any who do not know him, we sense there are; they may turn to him at this moment receiving him as their own personal Savior. For Jesus' sake. Amen.