

Articles and Sermons :: The Holy City**The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 9:32**

This item requires carefulness while reading it. Read it with your heart.
Do not put it away if it stands as a provocation in the mental realm.
It will do you much good in the spiritual realm.

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, Nov-Dec 1966 (Volume 44-6) through May-June 1968 (Volume 46-3), from messages given at the Aeschi (Switzerland) Conference in September, 1966.

Chapter One**The Nature of God**

"And there came one of the seven angels... and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:9,10).

"Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22).

"But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother" (Galatians 4:26).

We are going to occupy the first part of our time with trying to see where we are, and those passages do tell us quite precisely where we are. The Word says: "Ye are come unto... the heavenly Jerusalem", and that "the Jerusalem that is above" (that is, the heavenly Jerusalem) "is our mother". Well, that says where we are, but it does not explain, and this week we are going to be occupied with that to which we have come.

Now when you read these last chapters of the book of the Revelation you are inclined to think that it is all in the future. "The holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" - surely that belongs to some future time? Well, it may have a future aspect, but these Scriptures say that we have come there already. I know that that sounds rather mysterious, but in these hours which we spend together I think we shall be seeing exactly what it means. At the beginning, then, we must lay the foundation for our studies.

WHY WERE THESE CHAPTERS WRITTEN?

First of all, we must understand why it was, and when it was, that the Apostle John wrote all this about the new Jerusalem. This was written at a time when Christians were undergoing very severe persecution. The great wave of persecution of the Christians was proceeding, and Christianity was being subjected to very strong opposition from this world, so that Christians were finding that it was a matter of very great cost to be faithful to the Lord Jesus. As you know, the Apostle John himself, who wrote this, was in exile on the isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus.

That very first thing makes these chapters very contemporary. A new wave of persecution of Christianity has already begun on this earth, and it is spreading from the east to the west. While we are here in this place quite a number of the Lord's servants are in prison for the testimony of Jesus. So this book does not just relate to something which happened centuries ago, nor to the future, but we are going to see that it has a very real application to our own time.

The second thing about the writing of this vision of the heavenly Jerusalem was that it was written in a time when the churches were losing their first love. A change was coming over them, and the first chapters of this book show us what that change was. The first love, the first life, the first glory were being lost. Surely we all realize how true that is in many places in our own time! The great cry today is: "Let us get back to the things of the beginning!"

The third thing that led to the writing of these chapters was this: It was a time when many false prophets and teachers were bringing confusion into Christianity, and the faith which was "once for all delivered unto the saints" was losing its purity. One Apostle, who wrote a very short letter, said he was constrained to write in order "to contend earnestly for the

faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Is that not another condition in which we are living today? Many false teachers are bringing the people of God into confusion so that they hardly know what to believe.

Perhaps there is no book in the Bible which is more confused than this book of the Revelation. Many Christians have given up reading it, saying: "I don't know what to think about it. This Bible teacher gives this interpretation, while that one gives another." If I tried to do so, I could not tell you how many different interpretations of the book of the Revelation there are!

Well, that is how it was in the time when John wrote. You know that in his Letter he said that many false Christs had arisen (1 John 2:18). We must remember that this revelation of the heavenly Jerusalem was given because of all these conditions.

But let us note one more thing. This book was written at a time when judgment upon this world was beginning. You have only to read through it to see the judgments that were coming upon the world, and they began at the earthly Jerusalem. I think there is nothing in literature so terrible as the account of the destruction of Jerusalem given by the historian Josephus! But when the earthly Jerusalem is destroyed and removed, the heavenly one comes into view.

The judgment upon this world began at Jerusalem, and then it came upon the Roman Empire, and upon Rome itself. The time was not far ahead when great and wonderful imperial Rome would be devastated. From all its wealth, its luxury and its plenty it was reduced to famine and pestilence, and the economic situation became so bad that the most wealthy people were begging for food. And so you read in this book of these pestilences, famines and wars, and all these conditions which were coming upon the world. The judgments of God upon this world were beginning - and who shall say that those judgments are not beginning in our world today? We leave that for the present.

So we have here conditions of suffering and corruption and loss of glory, the decline of the Lord's people from their first love, a state of falsehood and spiritual weakness - and when things were like that, and are like that, the heavenly Jerusalem is presented and is the answer to all those conditions. It is just exactly the opposite of all those things.

Now we leave that for the moment and move nearer to the heart of these last chapters in the book of the Revelation.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 11:48

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

We want to know what is the meaning of this holy city, and I think that before we get very much further many of your ideas are going to be thoroughly upset! We are going to spoil many of the hymns that you sing, but we are going to have something better, and I hope that you will be singing a new song before we have finished.

The Christian who takes his, or her, Christian life seriously is always seeking for something which will explain his experience. Such Christians may not be actually searching for this, but in their hearts they are asking for something which will explain everything. In our Christian lives we are asking: What does it all mean? What is it leading to? Men in the world are asking the question: What does it all mean?

When I was in hospital some years ago there was a man who had both his legs amputated, and I heard him groaning in his bed almost every day: "What does it all mean?" You remember that in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul speaks about the groaning creation - "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" (verse 22) - and if you put your ear to the groaning creation, what do you hear? I feel sure you would hear this: What does it all mean? And then the Apostle Paul goes on to say: "We ourselves groan within ourselves" (verse 23). We have a deep question in our hearts: What does it all mean? What does all this difficulty, trial and suffering in the Christian life mean? What is it all leading to?

Now, of course, it is the business of the Christian teacher to provide the answer to that question and so to help God's people to understand what it means. So we have to ask this question: Is there an explanation which can be found in the Bible which will provide us with light upon the way?

Re: The Holy City - posted by INDEED, on: 2004/9/10 15:58

QUOTE;

A change was coming over them, and the first chapters of this book show us what that change was. The first love, the first life, the first glory were being lost. Surely we all realize how true that is in many places in our own time! The great cry today is: 'Let us get back to the things of the beginning!'

QUESTION;

Does it all boil down to the Heart the New Heart spoken off in Ezekiel? This is what the Lord has been showing me.

Re: The Holy City - posted by INDEED, on: 2004/9/10 16:02

Quote;

'We ourselves groan within ourselves' (verse 23). We have a deep question in our hearts: What does it all mean? What does all this difficulty, trial and suffering in the Christian life mean? What is it all leading to? Now, of course, it is the business of the Christian teacher to provide the answer to that question and so to help God's people to understand what it means. So we have to ask this question: Is there an explanation which can be found in the Bible which will provide us with light upon the way?

I can relate to this!

Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 16:06

What happened in these churches was a process in which spiritual maturity was quenched, the new heart denied right to develop and the work of the Spirit bluntly stopped by earthly desires and rulings.

Lars W.

Re: - posted by INDEED, on: 2004/9/10 16:56

Thank You, for your quick response.

Quote;

The Christian who takes his, or her, Christian life seriously is always seeking for something which will explain his experience.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 17:32

THE KEY TO EVERYTHING

I want to say that there is an explanation, and I think these last chapters of the Bible are the best explanation in the Bible. If only we understood these two last chapters a great light would break upon our hearts, and we would say: 'And now I see. I have the key to everything.' Now that is making a great claim for two chapters - the key to everything!

I am not just using words. I have dwelt upon this for many days and weeks, so that these are not just empty words. What is the explanation of everything? There is one thing which governs everything in the Bible, and it is that which comes out in fullness in the last chapters. What is that key to everything? When I put it into a short phrase, of course, you will not grasp what it means, but the more you think about it the more you will see that it is true. The thing which governs everything in the Bible from beginning to end is the nature of God. Have you got that phrase? The nature of God governs everything, and by 'the nature of God' we mean the very constitution of God Himself. We say about people: 'Well, he, or she, is constituted that way. That is how he thinks, how he feels and how he speaks, and because he is made like that, he speaks and thinks like that. That is just his constitution.' It does not matter what you do, you cannot get away from your own constitution. It is your constitution that makes you behave as you do.

That is what we mean by 'the nature of God'. If I may put it in this way: It is just how God, because He is what He is, looks at everything.

Well now, one of the real lessons of our Christian life is that we learn that God looks at everything quite differently from ourselves. He looks at things from the eyes of His own nature. If anything satisfies the nature of God His eyes fill with life, and He says: "In whom I am well pleased", but if anything does not satisfy the nature of God and He does not accept it, His eyes become dark. God judges everything according to His own nature, and He decides everything according to His own nature. The value of anything is always decided by God as to how it answers to His nature. God determines destiny for eternity on the standard of His own nature. Is that too difficult for you to grasp? You will never understand this city until you understand that, and you will never understand why Jesus Christ came into the world until you understand that. God is deciding the destiny of this world from the standpoint of His own nature, and His Son Jesus Christ is His standard of decision.

There is one question which stands over everything, and that is: Does it satisfy the nature of God? The Bible begins with the FACT of God and ends with the NATURE of God in perfect expression, and this perfect expression of God's mind and nature is presented to us in the symbolism of a city and a garden. Do you notice the word that I have used? The SYMBOLISM of a city and a garden - and this is where we upset your hymns and you have to have an absolute revolution in your mentality. Have you the idea that you are going to the heavenly Jerusalem as to some thing and some place?

I am sorry to tell you that you are wrong! When you sing:

"Jerusalem the golden!

With milk and honey blest,"

What do you mean? When you sing:

"We're marching upward to Zion"

What do you mean? When you sing:

"We shall tread the streets of gold"

What do you mean? When you speak about "drinking at the river" and "taking of the fruit of life", what do you mean?

If I did not see the real meaning I should be very sorry to spoil all your lovely pictures! There is no such thing as a literal new Jerusalem and there is no such thing as a literal heavenly city answering to John's vision, but there is something very much better, and that is what we have to consider more fully.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/11 1:06

WHY THIS SYMBOLISM?

I will just close by telling you why all this book of the Revelation, especially the last chapters, was written in symbolic terms. This book throughout is almost entirely symbolism. Why? Because so much of it was not only prophetic as to a more distant future but had to do with the history of those times. Supposing that, instead of speaking about a great dragon or a terrible beast coming up out of the sea, John had said: "Caesar is an awful dragon and wild beast. Caesar is like THAT." Well, you know what would have happened!

So these historic truths were presented in symbols, and the Christians understood. You know that Peter called Rome 'Babylon'. Well, the Romans, in reading that, would have said: "Oh, he is talking about Babylon. Where is Babylon?", but the Christians understood that Peter's Babylon was Rome. So it was all written in symbols and the Christians were the only ones who understood, and that is true of the holy city. It is not something literal; it is something which represents something spiritual, and it is for Christians to understand that this is not some imagination but some SPIRITUAL reality. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables" (Luke 8:10). That is: You understand, they don't. So these chapters are for spiritual understanding. This city, this heavenly Jerusalem, is that which fully answers to the nature of God. Every detail about it represents something of the Divine nature, so the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says to Christians: "Ye are come unto... the HEAVENLY Jerusalem."

Now that introduction was very necessary. It might not be very inspiring at the moment, but we must understand what it is that we are having to deal with, and why this has such an important message for our own lives and our own times. If you forget all that I have said this morning, try to remember one thing and take it away with you, think about it and keep on thinking about it: All God's work in our lives is on the basis of His own nature. We are called to be "partakers of the Divine nature", and when God has finished with us - if we let Him have His way - we shall be a full expression of the nature of God. Then, when you have a great multitude of people like THAT, a full, living expression of God's heart, then y

ou have the heavenly Jerusalem.
Now you can sing again, if you like, "We are marching to Zion", but be sure of what you mean!

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/11 2:29

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM
by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter Two
THE NATURE OF THE CITY

We are engaged upon a consideration of the last chapters of the book of the Revelation, especially with those parts that deal with the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. In that connection will you look at three verses of Scripture in the Letter to the Hebrews:

"By faith he (Abraham) became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (11:9,10).

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (12:22).

"For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (13:14).

Before we continue with our consideration of this city I do want to say a very serious word about the purpose of these meditations. I want to say to you that this is not just a subject for a conference, nor just some Bible study for a series of meetings. My own strong conviction is that this is a word from God in this serious time in which we are living, and we are living in the most serious time in the history of this world. If we knew what was happening in the nations of this whole world today, one question would fill our minds: How much longer can it go on? Things are happening which make it very possible that many alive today will see the great change in this whole world. We are not exaggerating if we say that it is quite possible that within the next twenty or twenty-five years the end of this present world order could come. That would mean that this could happen in the lifetime of the middle-aged people, and certainly of younger people. It is not my desire to be an alarmist, but what I have just said is very possible, and so many things are happening in the world as to make the time very short.

I am not prophesying, so no one will be able to say that I was a false prophet if it does not happen! I am only saying that it is very possible, and if this is true, then we might expect that God would send a message to His people to prepare them. So I repeat: this is not just some bit of Bible teaching for a week. This could be a message from the Lord to prepare us for what is coming very soon.

Now I must take you back to the main thing which we said earlier, because that is the thing which is right at the centre of everything else. It is that the thing which governs everything in the history of this world is the nature of God. When God created this world He created it to be an expression of His own nature, so that wherever you looked you could see what God is like. When God created man He intended him to be an expression of Himself. He, said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26), which just means that when man is as God meant him to be, we should see what God is like. When He finished that creation He said "it was very good" (Genesis 1:31), and when you think of what God is like, for Him to be able to say 'It is very good' of anything, it means that it really must satisfy His nature.

Then everything went away from God and became displeasing to Him. When He looked out in the world He could not see His nature being expressed, so He put a curse upon everything. In effect, He said: "That no longer satisfies My nature. I do not want it." From that time onward God was always seeking to find something that would satisfy His nature. That is the story of the Old Testament - it is just the story of that which does satisfy God and that which does not satisfy God. And God accepts or rejects just according to how far His nature is satisfied. It is a long story; but running through that long history was one golden line, like a golden thread in a black fabric.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/11 7:36

ABRAHAM'S QUEST

It is a long history. It reaches right back to the beginning, and then it was taken up by Abraham, who, it says, "by faith... looked for a city" - now note - "whose builder and maker is GOD". Not a city built by sinful man. However wonderful such a city might be, it would never satisfy God. It had to be a city which satisfied the nature of its Maker, God. That vision was put into the heart of Abraham, and he could say: "Somehow I have come to understand that God wants a city, and if He wants anything, it will have to be like Him, and be made by Him. It is a city whose builder and maker is God".

So we have read that Abraham went up and down the land, and as he did so he saw some cities. He saw the city of Sodom, and said: "No, that is not it. That could never satisfy God." Then he saw the city of Gomorrah. "No," said he, "that is not the one." And then he saw the city of Salem, the original Jerusalem. "Now this is very much better than Sodom and Gomorrah," but the Spirit said to Abraham: "No, not even that one." So he went on moving up and down the land, and this Divine conception of the city never materialized. Seventy years, eighty years, ninety years... and then he died, and he never found the city! This Letter to the Hebrews says: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises... God having provided some better thing for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (11:13,40).

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/11 14:15

THE END OF THE QUEST

And then this same Letter says: "But ye ARE come... unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." It has been a very long spiritual pilgrimage, but it is at an end now. Abraham has got it now. He is a co-inheritor with us. Yet once more we have to change our ideas. There is a long, long story of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, but that Jerusalem, even in its best days, never finally satisfied God's nature. Everybody who knows his or her New Testament knows this. Have you read Peter, Paul, John and Stephen? They very largely make up the New Testament, and everybody knows from them that the things in the Old Testament were only patterns of some spiritual thing in the New Testament. Read Peter's Letters again, and there you will find that he is speaking of God's new Israel, and the NEW House of God in Israel. He calls it "God's spiritual house", and speaks of the offering of "SPIRITUAL sacrifices". This is the new Israel. Read Paul again, and you will find him writing to the Galatians: "Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother" (4:25,26). And then he will say in his Letter to the Philippians: "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour" (3:20). That is the transition from the earthly to the heavenly, from the temporal to the spiritual.

You know, John builds his Gospel around Jerusalem; that is, the Gospel by John is centred in and circles around the Jerusalem which is below, but when you move on to the book of the Revelation, written by the same man, the centre is the heavenly Jerusalem. He is walking around her, noting her walls. In these two great writings John has moved from the earthly to the heavenly. And then this wonderful Letter to the Hebrews says that we, the believers of this dispensation, "are come unto mount Zion... the heavenly Jerusalem".

But, you see, this is all spiritual language. It is that of a spiritual character which God is seeking to possess.

Well, let us say it again, very strongly: This is only symbolism. What does it really mean? It just means what all the Bible is about: God is going to find His full satisfaction in His Son, and in a people conformed to the image of His Son. It is not a thing, nor a place - it is the Son of God and the sons whom He is bringing to glory.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/12 1:37

THE PRESENT PREPARATION

Let us bring that city right here. Dear friends, if you are really a born again child of God, you are a part of the city which God is now building. God is now building something, and this building is going on inside of us - or it ought to be! God is, by His Spirit, building His Son into us. Christ is being built up in us, and we are being built up into Christ.

This is a tremendous business! When we are born again the Holy Spirit gets hold of these pieces of rough stone - and what poor bits of humanity we are! What poor pieces of material we are for a heavenly city! We have a lot of corners, like a piece of stone, and the Holy Spirit says: "We will knock off some of those corners," and so our spiritual experience is one of having the corners knocked off. You know what I mean by "corners"!

If you don't think that you have any corners, you know that other people have! We are very awkward people and do not fit in anywhere, so we have to be made to fit into this heavenly city. You see, this heavenly city is very practical. It is all very well to sing about "Jerusalem the golden," but when the Holy Spirit is knocking off the corners, that is not what we mean when we sing. The symbolism may be very wonderful, but the actuality is through suffering. But when the work is finished we will say: "God has done a wonderful thing in me. What a difficult person I was! How difficult it was for me to fit in with others! Indeed, I often wanted to run right away from everyone because I did not fit in, but God has done His work faithfully. All the awkward corners have gone and Jerusalem is a city that is "compact together". Do you remember those words from Psalm 122? "Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compact together" (verse 3). and Peter says: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). Yes, God is building His city.

Not only are we people with corners: we are people with a very rough surface, and when we rub up against one another there is a lot of friction. You know what I mean! We just do not get on smoothly together, and then the Holy Spirit takes the sandpaper to smooth us down. But, oh no, He does not take a piece of paper and rub us smooth - He puts us up against someone else who is not smooth, or He puts us in a situation in life which is not smooth. We want to get away from that person because he, or she, rubs us up the wrong way, and we want to get away from that situation because it does rub us up the wrong way so much. We want to have a smooth time, but the Holy Spirit does not let us have it. We shall never have a smooth time until we are smooth - and do you know what it is that makes us smooth? It is the grace of God in suffering. We have to say a lot about that when we further consider the city.

Now you have got away from symbolism, have you not? We have come to spiritual reality! And this city is just the embodiment of these spiritual principles.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/12 1:38

BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

When you are talking about the heavenly Jerusalem you are talking about something eternal, and that is something of which we are very conscious now. Here again we have come into the realm of what is spiritual and not temporal. The point is this: What God is doing in the small fragment of time in our lives is going to be revealed to His glory for all eternity. To use the words of the Apostle Paul: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). God is doing in these little lives that which will correspond to the city "coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God".

I do trust that you are already beginning to see what God is working at, and what He is now building for all eternity. So we cease to think of the city as a place, and think of it as a people conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. "Partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/12 9:59

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter Three

COMING TO THE CITY

Up till now we have been making our way toward the city. Now we arrive, so I want you to open your Bibles at the twenty-first chapter of the Book of the Revelation:

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” (verse 2).

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; her light was like unto a stone most precious, clear as crystal” (verses 10,11).

As we have contemplated this city of God we have been breaking our way through the symbolism to the spiritual reality, and I hope that now we have succeeded in realizing that we are not considering some THING, or some PLACE, but that this is only a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ and His Church. In this presentation at the end of the Bible we see what God is working toward: bringing the fullness of His Son into His Church for final manifestation. That is the explanation of the Christian life, and there is no other explanation. It begins with Christ, it goes on with the increase of Christ, and it ends with the fullness of Christ.

Now I trust that we are quite clear about that. We need to have our minds converted, and that conversion has to be from the imagination to the reality, from the symbolism to the spiritual meaning. You know, in this western world where everything is so practical, THAT conversion is a very big thing! So we are not thinking about some time, some place, something, called the New Jerusalem, but about the Lord Jesus Christ becoming more and more full in the Church, until that day of fullness and glory comes when what has been done is manifested in the whole universe.

So we come now right to the city. That is, let me repeat, to Jesus Christ and His Church represented here in the terms of the new Jerusalem.

Now there are four words that we have just read upon which we want to put our finger:

“He carried me away in the Spirit” First, then: “IN THE SPIRIT”.

“The new Jerusalem”... and the word is “NEW”.

“OUT OF HEAVEN” is the third.

And the fourth: “HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD”.

I trust you have those four things. I shall begin with the last.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/12 14:56

HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD

What is the glory of God? We know quite well from John's other writings that the glory of God was in His Son, Jesus Christ, and we also know, especially from the Apostle Paul, that the Church is to be the vessel of that glory: “Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the ages for ever and ever” (Ephesians 3:21). But those are statements of truth. They do not define or explain anything, or tell us what the glory of God is, and it is important for us to understand what it is.

Let us remind ourselves that it is that word ‘glory’ which governs everything where God is concerned. The one thing that God had in view from the creation, and right through the Old Testament, was His own glory. When we open our New Testament and find God's Son present in this world, we hear the Apostle saying: “And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14). Again we ask: What is the glory of God?

The glory of God is the absolute satisfaction of the Divine nature, when God is able to say, really from His very nature and all that He is, ‘I am well pleased with that. That perfectly satisfies My very nature.’ If you and I were in the presence of that Divine satisfaction we should feel a tremendous joy, and would just exclaim: ‘Oh, this is glory!’

Let us consider this in the opposite way. What is it that robs our lives and our hearts of glory? What is it that makes us sigh about the great day when “that will be glory for me”? What is it that makes us long for the glory? I can tell you quite simply. The glory in our hearts and in our lives is limited because of our consciousness of how unlike the Lord we are. Oh, how different our natures are from God's! That worries us every day and hides the glory in our hearts. We live so little in God's satisfaction and so much in our own dissatisfaction. We have not yet come to really grasp the great truth of our justification in Christ Jesus, nor have we come to understand that what God is doing with us is to change us from what we are into what He is.

I am going to be very simple for a minute or two. When you first come to the Lord Jesus you have a wonderful sense of

glory. You do not understand all the teaching about coming to the Lord Jesus, but you just come and give yourself to Him, and take Him to be your Lord, and something happens almost immediately. A great burden rolls away from your heart. A great cloud is removed from your life and you have to say: "Oh, this is wonderful! This is glory!" Why is that? Because there is One who knows a great deal more of what it means than you do. The Holy Spirit has come to lead every one of us to that final glory, and this is the beginning. He says: "I have got him - or her - on the road to glory," and so He registers glory in our hearts. All the meaning of justification by faith - that is, being made righteous in Christ - is in that first step, and so God the Holy Spirit says at the beginning: "I am well-pleased." The heart and the nature of God are satisfied, and, without a great deal of teaching, you just know it.

Glory is just that wonderful sense, or sensation, of God being well-pleased. The pathway of the child of God is intended to be the pathway of glory. The Holy Spirit has taken possession.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/13 1:25

IN THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has taken charge. Now, after you have taken the first step and tasted something of the glory, you will come into a situation, or a temptation, where the whole question of the glory is involved. There is something in your life upon which the Holy Spirit puts His finger and says, in effect: "That belongs to the world you have left behind, so you must leave it behind. Now, what about it? What are you going to do about it? Are you going to hold on to it, or are you going to let it go?" The continuation of the glory depends upon your decision. If you hold on, and do not let go, that glory of the Divine satisfaction will be clouded. A cloud will come over your heart, and people who saw you when you first came to the Lord will say: "Something has happened. The light has gone out of his - or her - face." And then you have a big battle, and if you get through it and let the Lord have His way fully, some of the old glory will come back and you will feel: "Oh, the burden has rolled away."

Those of us who have gone on with the Lord through the years have had many battles. We have had to come to new positions as to the will of God, and as long as the issue was not settled it seemed as though the glory was lifted up and waiting for something, but when we have fought that issue through and got clear with the Lord, the glory has come back. Perhaps the biggest battles will come at the end - this book of the Revelation says so - but then, through the last and greatest of all battles, we come right through into the eternal glory: that is, we come to the place where God's nature is fully satisfied with His work in us.

Do you understand the meaning of glory now? Glory is a wonderful influence of God in our lives. We shall see that all the way through our meditations, "Having the glory of God". What an influence it is when the glory of God is in our hearts!

You see a little child who is absolutely satisfied and delighted with everything, and don't you like to be where that little child is? That has a wonderful influence upon you! Put it the other way - a little child who is discontented with everything. What a miserable effect that has upon you! I heard of such a little child. It was bed time and mother said: "Darling, it is time for bed. Put your dolls away." The little child said: "I don't want to put my dolls away." The mother saw that she was going to do nothing with the child, so she said: "Well, would you like to play with your dolls for a little longer?" "I don't want to play with my dolls any longer!" Poor mother did not know what to say next! So she said: "Well, darling, you just do what you want to do." And the little child said: "I don't want to do what I want to do!" Poor mother! What a miserable time for her! There is no glory in that! But when God's nature is fully satisfied and we come into harmony with that nature, there is glory in our hearts. Do you see that the Holy Spirit is trying to produce in us that which satisfies the heart of God?

It is perhaps a hard school. It means much discipline, and much testing of our love for the Lord. It constantly raises the question as to whether we really want the Lord to be well-pleased with us, but this life is the school of those who are to be the sons of God dwelling in His glory.

So you see how two things are joined together: "In the Spirit... having the glory of God." Be out of the Spirit and you are out of the glory, because, as you know, one of the names of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of glory. That means that the whole purpose and work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to glory, to the satisfaction of God.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/13 10:33

NEW
Now we have two other words left. "In the Spirit I saw the NEW Jerusalem." That is only a symbolic way of saying that you have to be under the government of the Holy Spirit if you are going to see God's new things. One of the characteristic words of the New Testament is this word 'New': "In Christ Jesus there is a NEW creation... In Christ Jesus there is a NEW man... In Christ Jesus there is a NEW life... In Christ Jesus there is a NEW way of life", and so you lift that word out from your New Testament until you come to the end, and it says: "A NEW heaven and a NEW earth" (Revelation 21:1), and then "the NEW Jerusalem". The word 'new' has no meaning unless there is something old. It is a comparison and a contrast. There was an old Jerusalem, but it has gone. It has been put away under judgment, and when the old is put away, the new is introduced. We have yet to see the meaning of the city of Jerusalem, but for the moment it is just this word 'new' with which we are concerned. It is something completely fresh, and there is something about it that has never been true of anything before.

When you consider the history of the old Jerusalem, what a sad and tragic story it is! And it is a tragic story because of its sin. It had its days of glory, but they were very few. The glory soon departed and the tragedy is written through the Old Testament. The last words for that Jerusalem were pronounced by the Lord Jesus: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens, under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37,38), and two thousand years have told the story of that desolation.

This NEW people that God is bringing into being is just the opposite of the old Jerusalem. This is something which is called "unto his ETERNAL glory" (1 Peter 5:10). This is something which is not called unto tragedy at the end, but glory; something over which all the powers of evil are not going to prevail, as they did over the old Jerusalem. This is a NEW Jerusalem.

Now I must just very briefly touch on the other thing, upon which we shall enlarge later in the week.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/13 13:42

OUT OF HEAVEN

Of course, if you just use your imagination, you do not know what that means. You begin to think of some great object called a city descending out of heaven. Dear friends, we shall not have gone much further before we shall see that that is absolutely impossible. You hold that for a little while I try to explain this, but I shall remind you more than once of what I have just said about the impossibility of it being a literal city.

If this is going to come down out of heaven, it must be there before it can come down. What does this mean? The Apostle Paul tells us that the Church is seated together with Christ in the heavenlies now (Ephesians 2:6), but we might answer: "We are not in heaven; we are very much on this earth. Everything down here is much more real than things in heaven." Are you quite sure that you are right? Is that really true? What is the very first thing that comes into your consciousness when you are born again? It is: "I do not belong to this world any more. Something has happened to me which has separated me from it. Things in this world are different now, and the things that were once my life are no longer my life. The things which I once sought after I now no longer want. The people who were once my true friends are no longer my true friends. My true friends are now the people of God, and my true family is the family of God. What has happened to me? They say that I am "born again", but when they say that they do not put it right. What the Bible says is "born from above"."

You know, if you have been born, and have spent your childhood, in a certain place, there is a strange link between you and that place in your life. Now, I spent much of my childhood and my schooldays in a certain place, and somehow, through all the years, I have wanted to go back to that place again and again, so, from time to time, I have gone back. But, oh! how everything has changed! All the old friends have gone, all the old scenes have changed, and I do not think they have changed for the better. Sometimes when I have left that place I have said: "I will never go back again!", but wait a year or two, and I am back again. I cannot keep away. There is some pull inside. Do you see what I mean? If we really have been born from above there will always be a pull away from below. We may have some bad times, and we may be tempted to give it all up, but somehow or other we just do go on.

“I was in the Spirit... and I saw the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven.” The most powerful work of the Holy Spirit in a life is to make that life know that it belongs to heaven and not to this world.

I expect most of us know what is meant by this. Paul says: “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20), and the Psalmist says: “This one was born THERE” (Psalm 87:4). We do not belong to this world, and we ought to know it. If we can settle down and be satisfied with this world, then we know nothing about the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit sent down from heaven to link us with heaven.

Well, that is what it means to come to the new Jerusalem. It is not just an abstract idea, nor a symbolic imagination, but a powerful reality in the life. We are not going to the city: we ARE the city.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/13 16:10

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM”

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter Four

IN THE SPIRIT OR IN THE WORLD?

“And there came one of the seven angels... and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, ...clear as crystal” (Revelation 21:9-11).

There are those people who think that I am wrongly spiritualizing everything, and they say that I am wrong when I say that this city is not a literal city, but represents a spiritual people. But I hold to my position! One would think that it only needs one phrase here to justify that position. The angel said to John: “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb,” and when he got John there, there was no wife or bride at all: he showed him a city. And there is so much more like that in this book. There was a time when there was a book sealed without and within, and John wept because there was no one who could open it. The angel said: “Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book...” (Revelation 5:5). And when John turned to see this Lion: “I saw... a Lamb” (verse 6). Well, what is there in common between a lion and a lamb? You can only explain it if you get the spiritual principles. I think it is worth while taking just a few minutes on this particular point, especially for the Bible students, but, of course, for everybody.

It is essential that we really understand the particular form that John’s ministry took, and this was his method more than of anyone else in the New Testament. John was most concerned with the spiritual meaning which lay behind material things. You know how true that was in his Gospel - everybody will accept this principle in his Gospel! He called all the miracles of Jesus ‘signs’, and did not just say: ‘Now this is something that Jesus DID’ but: ‘This is what Jesus MEAN T when He did that.’ When Jesus turned the water into wine, John meant it to teach us that Jesus can give us an altogether new kind of life. When the old wine - or life - fails and disappoints us, Jesus can give a new life. When Jesus raised a poor man from his bed after he had been there, unable to walk, for thirty-eight years, John says: ‘That is a sign.’ Jesus can take a poor moral and spiritual cripple and put him on his feet: He can give him the power to walk in a new kind of life. When Jesus gave sight to the man who was born blind, John says: ‘That is a sign: a sign that Jesus can give us a new sight so that we can see spiritual things that we never saw before.’ And so it is with all the eight signs in the Gospel by John.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/14 1:57

You accept that in John’s Gospel and say: ‘Now these things in the natural world are signs of something in the spiritual world.’ But if you accept that in his Gospel, why will you not accept it in his book of the Revelation? This city, the new Jerusalem, is a sign of something else. Every part of it signifies something spiritual, something in relation to the Lord Jesus.

Do you accept that? If you do, we can go on.

We come again to this tenth verse of chapter twenty-one: “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great an

d high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem.Â”

Well, Â”a mountain great and highÂ”, and Â”he carried me away IN THE SPIRITÂ”. In spiritual terms that just means that John was alive in the spirit. Do you think that this angel took hold of the Apostle John when he was on the Isle of Patmos and lifted him right away to some great high mountain? There would have been trouble in Patmos if that had happened! The Roman authorities would have been saying: Â”John has escaped!Â” Do you see what I mean? This was a spiritual experience. It may have been a dream, or a vision. You know that in our dreams we can travel a long way. I have some times dreamt that I was in America, and then I have awakened a few minutes afterward and found that I was still in London, but I had been travelling a very long way. You will accept that in the natural. Why will you not accept it in the spiritual?

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/14 9:55

Now there are two things here, and you must remember that these are fundamental laws of the New Testament, or of the Christian life.

Firstly there is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a great reality. You believe in the reality of the Holy Spirit as a fact, but you cannot see Him, or hear Him with your natural ears, and you cannot know the reality of the Holy Spirit until something happens in you. Early in his Gospel this same John speaks about being Â”born of the SpiritÂ”. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, Nicodemus’ mind was just working in the natural realm and he said: Â”Impossible!Â” Jesus said: Â”That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit IS spiritÂ” (John 3:6). What is that which is born of the Spirit? It is our human spirit. Because it has become separated from God it is looked upon as dead, and death is just separation from God, whether it be in time or in eternity.

Now, being Â”born againÂ” means that our spirit is brought into life union with God, and what the New Testament means when it speaks of Â”being alive in the spiritÂ” is Â”in living union with God, the Holy SpiritÂ”, that is, our spirit being alive unto God and unto Divine things. Here John was only saying in principle that his spirit was alive to the Holy Spirit at this time, and when that is true, as it should be of every one of us, we see a new world. Â”And (he) shewed me the holy cityÂ”, and the Holy Spirit will do that with every one of us, so that we are able to say: Â”I have seen something that God has shown me.Â” Will you believe me when I say that that ought to be true of every Christian? The Christian life is not just a matter of reading the Bible, saying prayers and going to church. Those things may be good and necessary, but the Christian life really is a walk with God in the light. It is a matter of being alive unto God in the spirit and God being able to show us in our hearts what is His will, so that the true Christian should be able to say Â”The Lord is showing me thingsÂ”.

Now, you mature Christians, be very patient with this, because there are some young Christians here, and we can never go on very far until we have laid a proper foundation. What I have just said, then, is fundamental to the Christian life from its beginning.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/14 11:37

Now we can go on to the next step. You say: Â”Well, that is very wonderful and I want my life to be like that, but how can it be?Â” We have our answer here, but in spiritual principle. What the Lord shows to your heart will depend upon how far up the mountain you are. Again you say: Â”Oh, Mr. Sparks, what do you mean?Â” Well, I am not talking about climbing the Jungfrau or the BlÃ¼mlisalp. What does this mountain mean? What does it mean to go up any mountain? It just means getting away from this world. When you get up the mountain you have left the world behind; there is a great separation between you and the world, and you will never see heavenly, spiritual things until that has happened.

Do believe me: this is not a matter of age, or years. There are multitudes of Christians who have been saved for many years, and they are still down on the earth. They have still got their interests in this world - this world, and the things of this world, still have a large place in their life. They are what are called Â”worldly ChristiansÂ”. Of course, that is a contradiction in terms, because it is not true Christianity. Listen to Jesus as He is praying to His Father about His disciples: Â”They are not of the world, even as I am not of the worldÂ” (John 17:16). Â”They are not of the world. They do not belong here. They belong somewhere else. This world is not their life; their life is above.Â” That is in John’s Gospel, and it is just clear, straight language, is it not?

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/14 11:50

In the book of Revelation John puts it in this way of illustration - of a great and high mountain - and he is saying: "The people who make this city are heavenly people, not earthly people. They are people who are separated in spirit from this world." The Apostle Paul put it in this way: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is" (Colossians 3:1), and that only means: "Get up on the mountain. Leave this world in spirit, in heart, and come up with the Lord Jesus."

Let me go back again to what I began to say. This life in the spirit, in union with Christ, is not a matter of years or of age. It is possible that you were only born again yesterday and yet you are high up the mountain, and that is because you have said "good-bye" absolutely to this world. You are very utter about this matter of new life with the Lord.

As we move about this world we meet many people who call themselves Christians, and the strange thing is that we cannot talk to them about the things of the Lord. These professing Christians open their eyes and their mouths when you begin to talk about the things of the Lord. To them it is as though you were talking the language of another country, and the reason is that they have not yet come right away from this world in spirit. Let me say to the young Christians that this mountain is for you from the day that you are born again.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/14 14:54

Now I want to say a very strong thing, and it may be difficult for you to accept it. Do you realize that this world lies under a curse? God has pronounced a curse upon this world as it is, and what is the expression of a curse? The law of frustration operates where a curse is. You just go so far, and you can go no further. Human life just goes so far, and that is the end. It does not go right through to fullness and perfection. Everything is imperfect, and is frustrated by death. A man spoken of by Jesus Christ accumulated great stores in his lifetime, and then he rubbed his hands together and talked to himself: "Soul, you can retire now. You have great stores laid up for yourself, so just eat, drink and be merry." But God said: "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (Luke 12:20).

The curse and death mean the frustration of all the purposes of man, and what is true of human life is true of the world. Oh, what a lot man has done to try to break through the sound barrier of frustration! What a long way he has gone today! Why, if you had been told twenty-five years ago how things would be today, you would never have believed it. Yes, man has gone a very long way, even to the moon - and then someone just puts his finger on a button, the nuclear bombs begin to fall and all his work is wiped out in a moment. Everybody knows of that possibility, and the Word of God has told us quite clearly that that is exactly how it will be. Because a curse rests upon this world it can never go right through to perfection.

What I am getting at is this: If you and I in spirit get bound up with this world we shall come under spiritual death. Any Christian who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit will register something wrong when they touch this world and their reaction will be: "I have come down. I have touched this cursed world and death is registered in my spirit."

You will never see the things of God until you get above the fog of this earth. If you come down into the self-life, then it is frustration. If you touch the world's life it is frustration, and you will never see the things of God until you get above this world in spirit. The language is very simple and very significant: "I was in the Spirit, and I was on a great, high mountain, and then I saw something." You see, these are spiritual laws of the Christian life and they are very real. I hope we do know something about this.

May the Lord explain to our hearts just what it means where we individually are concerned!

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/15 1:19

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM
by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter Five
THE LOVE OF GOD

“And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth; and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal” (Revelation 21:15, 16).

For the sake of friends who have not been with us before let me just give this word of explanation. We are considering in these days the meaning of this new Jerusalem, this holy city, which the Apostle, in a vision, saw coming down from God out of heaven. We have pointed out that this is not a literal city, but a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ and His Church as God is going to have it at the end.

So now we come to the greatness of the city. The Apostle says that in his vision he saw an angel, in whose hand was a golden reed with which he was measuring the city, and then the Apostle tells us that the measurement was given by the angel - twelve thousand furlongs high and twelve thousand furlongs on every side. And the city was made of transparent gold. That, of course, is something that you have never seen on this earth! The reed with which the city was measured, and the city itself were of the same material: the measurement of the city was by a reed of pure gold, and the city itself was of pure gold. In the Bible gold is always the symbol of the Divine nature, and the supreme thing in that nature is love. It is this same John who says: “God IS love” (1 John 4:8), and everything that is of God is measured according to the standard of Divine love. When we approached this city earlier in the chapter John told us that he saw “the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God”, and the supreme thing about the glory of God is the love of God.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/15 11:48

THE GREATNESS OF HIS LOVE

Now look at the size of this city. The measurement is given as twelve thousand stadia. I don't know whether any of you have worked that out, but in English that is one thousand, three hundred and seventy-nine miles, and in metres it is two million, two hundred and twenty thousand. Do you recognize what that represents? That is many times higher than the Jungfrau, and, indeed, many times higher than the highest mountain in this world, Mount Everest. Do you understand now why I say this cannot be a literal city? It is as high as that, as long as that, as wide as that, and is as great as that on every side. This is impossible of literal interpretation, and must therefore represent spiritual principles.

Now understand that we are speaking about the love of God in Jesus Christ expressed in a redeemed people and manifested in its fullness in eternity. If this measurement is something beyond all natural conception, the love of God in Christ Jesus toward us is completely beyond our imagination, and this immense city is a symbol of the immensity of the love of God. The Apostle Paul mentions this in one place, when he prays that the Church may be “rooted and grounded in love”, and that it “may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge...” (Ephesians 3:17,18). The love of God surpasses knowledge, just as this symbolic city is something altogether beyond knowledge. That is why we sang that hymn which is all about that Divine love:

“It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine...

Oh, fill me, Jesus, Saviour, with Thy love!”

It will require all eternity to understand that love.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/15 14:44

Do you remember what the Apostle Paul says about this love? His description of how great this love is is that it is beyond the greatest things that are known in our human life. He says, in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (verse 35), and here are some of the big things in human life: “Shall tribulation?” Perhaps you do not know very much about tribulation, but there are some of God's people in various parts of the world who do know the meaning of that word, and for them the second greatest thing in life is tribulation. “Or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” These are all very big things! If you know anything about them you know that they are bigger than anything else except the love of God. But the Apostle has not yet completed his list. He goes on like this: “I am persuaded, that neither death... Is death a big thing? “...nor life” - and life is a big th

ing, for it can hold a great many big things - "nor angels..." Well, now, you will have to have a good Bible study with that word!

Read all the great things that angels did. On one occasion the earthly Jerusalem was besieged by a great foreign nation, who came with their chariots and their horses, and their men in armour, and they spread themselves like locusts over all the land. The servant of God prayed, and God sent one angel. In the morning, when the men of Jerusalem awoke, that whole army consisted of dead corpses. Only one angel - and a vast and mighty army lay dead! Shall angels separate us from the love of God, whether they be good or bad angels? "Nor principalities..." They are the spiritual authorities that govern the nations of this world, and you must remember that they are SPIRITUAL forces. They are evil forces, and today you are seeing what they are doing in the nations of this world. They are doing very terrible things: but the Apostle goes on: "Nor things present..." and there are plenty of things present today, enough to frighten anyone. It would not do for me to begin to speak of all these terrible things which are now present. We have read in our papers today of the assassination of the Prime Minister of South Africa, and that within the last few years twenty-six world rulers have been assassinated. These are only a few of the things which are now present. "Nor things to come..." - and the Bible tells us of terrible things that are going to come on this world. On he goes: "Nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation..." Think of anything that would be terrible and great, and the Apostle says: "Put them all together and they will NOT be able to separate us from the love of God." How great is the love of God!

This same John wrote in his Gospel: "God so LOVED the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). How great is His love!

It takes something that man cannot measure even to consider the love of God. These measurements of the city are only symbolic of the greatness of the love of God toward you and toward me in Jesus Christ, and when God has done His work in His people eternity will show how great His love was. We may not be able to grasp it or understand it now, but then we shall fully understand, and I think that the thing about which we shall all be talking for all eternity will be: "Oh, how great was His love!"

Presently the Apostle will tell us who are outside of the city, for he says that there will be many outside. These are the people who never accepted God's love, and for all eternity they have lost this wonderful thing - the immense love of God. What a great thing, therefore, it is for us to accept God's love!

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/16 1:43

THE STABILITY OF HIS LOVE

If these measurements represent the greatness of God's love, this immense city must be a very, very stable thing. It would be a very big thing to be able to move the Jungfrau, but if you put a hundred Jungfraus on top of one another, no Samson would be able to lift that! Here we come, year after year, year after year, and the mountain is still just in the same place. When I was a little boy I lived where there are some mountains, and I go back there now - and I won't tell you how long it is since I was a little boy! - and see the mountains in exactly the same place. They have not moved nor changed one little bit. You see what I am coming to - how reliable is this love of God! "They that trust in the Lord", said the Psalmist, "Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever" (Psalm 125:1). One of our New Testament texts says: "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22), and in spiritual language that just means: "You are come to the love of God, which is unchanging and immovable." Stability is a characteristic of Divine love.

The Lord Jesus has given us a picture of this in His well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. That son was a son of his father's love, but he despised it and packed up, and went right away from where that love was. He spent all his father's resources in sinful living and brought shame and dishonour upon his father's name. Then, at last he remembered his father's love and said to himself: "I will arise". He did not say: "I will arise and go home", but: "I will arise and go unto my father". So he turned his footsteps toward his father again, and Jesus gives us the picture of the father on the top of the house looking to the horizon. I suppose that father had been praying every day: "Lord, bring my son home." So every day he went out to see if his prayer was being answered - and then this wonderful day arrived. He saw a black spot on the horizon and said: "Someone is coming." He watched, and then he said: "It is my son!" He did not wait for the son to arrive. Down the stairs he went and out on to the road. The boy began to make some excuses and give explanations, but the father smothered it all and he could not get it all out. It says: "He (the father) fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). He brought the son back into the house and said: "Let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Now Jesus was saying: "That is the love of God for man, for sinful man, for man who has gone away from God. God's heart just longs to have that man back again." The unchang

ing love of God! The father did not say: 'He is a bad boy. He has not appreciated my love. I wash my hands of him and will have nothing more to do with him!' Oh, no, God's love does not change when we go wrong. How strong is this city! How immovable is this city! How unchangeable is this city! And all that is true of the love of God.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/16 10:12

THE EQUALITY OF HIS LOVE

One more thing: I did not expect to be preaching the Gospel in this way this evening, but I have the feeling that this is what the Lord wanted said, and I think He wants us all to have a new understanding of the greatness of His love.

It says that this city is equal on all its sides. It is all the same on the east, on the west, on the north and on the south. The love of God is not bigger for people who live on the east than it is for people who live on the west. It is not different for those who live on the north from what is for those who live on the south. There are the people who have everything that they need and want. We say that they were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. On the other side there are the people who have nothing, the poor, miserable people of this world. There are the people who live in the sun of the east and the people who live in the cold winds of the north. There are all kinds and conditions of people in this world, but the love of God is equal to them all. God has no favourites. There is no partiality about the love of God. It does not matter what we are, or where we are. On every side the love of God is the same.

How equal is the love of God! Are you not glad that it is like that? There are those people who have all the advantages. They have godly parents and grandparents, were born into a Christian home and brought up in a Christian atmosphere. There are those people who never had any godly parents or grandparents. They were born into very sinful homes and families. You know, General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said a very strong thing about those people, and used a word that we don't like using: 'My work is for the people who were damned into this world!' Well, it does not matter which side it is. God's love is no greater for the people who have all the advantages than it is for those who have none. God's love is a very righteous love. It just levels everyone out, and in eternity it will not matter what we were here - we shall have to say: 'It is the love of God that got me here.'

The greatness of His love; the stability of His love; the equality of His love - how wonderful is the love of God! And you and I are called by that love that we, through eternity, shall show it forth to the whole universe.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/16 13:45

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter Six

"CLEAR AS CRYSTAL"

"...and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius" (Revelation 4:3).

"Having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were jasper stone, clear as crystal... And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper... and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie" (Revelation 21:11, 18, 19, 27).

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (John 8:44).

"And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie" (1 John 2:27).

We have now passed the half-way line of this consideration, and it is very important that we should understand clearly what it is that the Lord is wanting to show us. There are many words, and there is much teaching, and we just ask ourselves: 'What is it all about?' The one thing about which we shall have to be clear at the end is: 'What is it that the Lord has really said?' Therefore, leaving all the symbolism, that is, the means the Lord uses to lead us to the truth, let us seek to understand exactly what the Lord is saying.

THE END TOWARD WHICH THE LORD IS WORKING

It can all be gathered into a few words: The Lord is trying to show us what is the great end toward which He is moving in the lives of His people, and that end is the expression of His own Divine nature in them. That Divine nature has been brought to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit has come to reproduce Jesus Christ in the Church, so that when God's work is done in His people there will be a manifestation in His universe of the Divine nature in a people. God is not doing two things, but one thing. Evangelism is just the gathering of the people, the adding of believers to the Lord Jesus. From that time it is the work of the Holy Spirit to conform those believers to the image of God's Son, and the end of the work of the Holy Spirit is the manifestation of Christ in and through the Church.

The Christian's life is progression in the increase of Christ. That explains all the dealings of the Holy Spirit with us, for His one object is to bring the Church to the fullness of Christ. If you want to know what the fullness of Christ is, then you have it in this symbolic presentation of the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Every aspect of this city represents some spiritual feature of the Lord Jesus, that is, it represents some feature of the Divine nature which is to be reproduced in the Church, the people of God. Is that quite simple? Now do you understand what it is all about? If you do, we can go on.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/16 16:10

JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO THE JASPER STONE

We will come to another feature of the Divine nature to be produced, not in some imaginary thing called the Church, but in you and in me.

We have already seen that the all-inclusive character of the city is gold. Pure gold is the dominating presentation of this city, and we have seen that in the Bible gold is always the symbol of Divine character, especially love. We considered that last time. Now we are going to look at the first feature of that Divine nature. If you have read carefully those passages cited you will have noticed that there was one idea in all of them - that which is "clear as crystal". It says that the city is like "a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Jasper, as a symbol of clearness, is mentioned in all the main connections of this book of the Revelation. Immediately the Lord has dealt with the seven churches in Asia, the second part of the book begins, and the Apostle John says that he saw "a door opened in heaven... a throne set in heaven... and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone" (Revelation 4:1-3).

The churches have been judged, and now all the world, and everything else, is going to be judged, for the throne means judgment. It is the governing of everything from heaven, and everything is going to be judged in the light of the jasper stone, that is, according to that Divine nature which is absolutely clear. The churches have been judged in that light, and the world is to be judged in that light. It is judgment according to what is absolutely TRUE. Did you hear that word? Transparent - you can see right through it. There is nothing here that is not perfectly clear and true. There is no darkness whatever in the Divine nature - it is perfectly transparent. There is nothing false about God, nothing that is not real. There is no mixture of two contradictory things in the nature of God, nothing that is imitation or artificial. There is no hypocrisy in the nature of God and nothing that deceives or pretends to be what it is not. It takes all these words, and many more, to get to this characteristic of God, which is complete purity, clear as crystal.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/17 0:52

THE LIE AN ABOMINATION TO GOD

In this description of the city John says that nothing can enter in that makes a lie, and he calls the lie "an abomination". That which is not absolutely true is an abomination to God. In this way the Lord Jesus showed what God's nature is like. The strongest and most terrible things that came through His lips were against hypocrisy. I would not like to have been there on that day when He looked at the Pharisees and said: "Ye hypocrites!" "Hypocrite" just means "play actor" - he is on the stage of this world playing a part which is not real and true. In the face of the Lord Jesus there was an anger against what was not genuine. We read those terrible words from John 8 when He said to those Pharisees: "You are of your father, the devil, and the works of your father you will do. He is a liar and the father of lies. When he speaks a lie he speaks of what he himself is."

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/17 0:54

THE ENTRY OF THE LIE INTO THIS WORLD

That brings us to an issue which has a very long and terrible history. Jesus was thinking of what happened right back at the beginning in the Garden, when Satan told a lie about God and Adam accepted it. The whole history of the terrible tragedy of this world came from that lie. There is a lie right at the heart of this universe, and there is no truth in this universe outside of God. The history of this fallen creation is the history of a lie.

Jesus said of Satan that he "abode not in the truth". Therefore he must have been in the truth at some time, and at some point he abode not in the truth. He departed from it and the terrible judgment of God fell upon him and all those who shared the lie with him. So he came to impart his own lie and nature to man, God's creation, and the Apostle says: "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19). This is a very long and terrible history, but it is coming to its climax now. One of the most powerful influences in this world today is that which does not believe there is truth. It says with Pilate: "What is truth? There is no such thing as truth. It is just as good to live by lies as it is to live by anything else." That ideology is spreading over all the world - cynicism as to truth. This world is a deceived world, and Christians know how artificial, unreal and empty this world is. Here we are face to face with one of the most solemn issues in the whole history of this world.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/17 10:40

GOD'S ANSWER TO THE LIE

It was in relation to this historic lie that the Son of God became incarnate in this world. Jesus said: "I am the truth" (John 14:6), and "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). Jesus is the embodiment of the great answer to the history of the lie. That is why the devil hated Him so much, and why those who were children of the devil, according to His word, hated Him so much. He tore the mask of their hypocrisy and their play-acting in religion off from them. He exposed their true nature and, driven by the devil, they took counsel to destroy Him. Truth with the Lord Jesus was not just some abstract thing. It was not just that He spoke the truth - He WAS the truth. He became a personal power in this universe, a mighty, effective witness against all that was not true. When Jesus came into this world the battle was on between the truth and the lie, and He was only just born into the world when that great hypocrite, that false man, Herod, sought to destroy Him.

Jesus is the truth. In Him there is no darkness at all, and that is why He could also say: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/17 15:55

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

The Holy Spirit is called "The Spirit of Truth" (John 16:13). Jesus said: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth", and: "The Spirit of truth... for he abideth with you, AND SHALL BE IN YOU" (John 14:17). Jesus was saying: "What I have been outside of you the Holy Spirit will be IN you." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) - free from the lie. So John says: "As His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie."

Now you can see how we are coming to the city. Dear friends, do try and be patient with me, for I am dealing with something of very serious consequence and this is God's solemn truth. If this city represents any great spiritual principle of the Divine nature, and if the One upon the throne of government is as a jasper stone, we are all going to be judged according to what is now being said.

A GLORIOUS CHURCH

Well, then, here in the symbolism of the city the Church, in relation to Jesus Christ, is presented. The Apostle Paul said that He is going to "present the church to himself a glorious church" (Ephesians 5:27), and here it is at last, "having the glory of God". But then the Apostle defines what he means by "a glorious church" - "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." That means not having any dark thing in it, or any of the marks of this deceived creation - in a word, nothing that is not absolutely true.

All this may sound very terrible to you, and I expect some of you are saying: "Why is he talking to us like that?" Well, I

am talking to myself just as much as to you. What is the Holy Spirit seeking to do in you and in me? He is seeking, on the one side, to deliver us from that nature of ours which is so impure, and, on the other side, to bring into us the nature of the Lord. The Lord, the Spirit, is trying to purify the gold until it is like transparent glass, that is, a gold which is quite different from what is natural. Is there anyone who has seen transparent gold like glass? A piece of gold which you can look right through as you can look through a window? Well, I have seen a lot of gold in many parts of the world, but I have never seen any like that! This is something that is not natural: it is Divine. This is not what we are by nature, but it is what we are going to be by grace. To change the metaphor: 'Whiter than the snow'. That is why I chose that hymn this morning. I had been looking out of my window upon the Blåfjället and I saw that perfectly white snow glistening in the sun. I said: 'Is there anything whiter than that snow?', and then the Word of God came: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow' (Isaiah 1:18). Later on we shall have to see the place of the Lamb in the city and then we shall see why the city is transparent like pure gold.

You see, this book of the Revelation gives us a picture of the Church at last arrayed in white robes, clothed in that pure, righteous nature of God and 'they shall walk with me in white' (Revelation 3:4).

The message of this book of the Revelation comes from one who says: 'He that is true' (Revelation 3:7).

Dear friends, the Lord wants us to be people who are real, genuine and transparent. You know, fellowship is impossible unless there is absolute transparency. It says that the street (and there is only one street) of the city is PURE gold. It is going to be the fellowship of the Lord's people in absolute transparency. You cannot have that fellowship while you are suspecting one another, while you are not sure about the motive of the other person, and while you have to say: 'Now, I wonder what he - or she - is after! I wonder if he is trying to find something out! I wonder if he is trying to get hold of something that he can use against me! I don't trust him. There is something about him that is not transparent.' You see, that is the world. You cannot have fellowship when it is like that, and if you want to mingle on the golden piazza it will only be if all that is not true, real and genuine has been removed.

The Lord cleanse our hearts and our minds from all that is not true!

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/18 0:41

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter Seven

'A WALL GREAT AND HIGH'

'And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were 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 twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb... And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper' (Revelation 21:10-14,17,18).

We remember that this city, and all connected with it, is a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ and His redeemed Church. Everything here is a representation of the spiritual characteristics of Jesus Christ, and of those characteristics to be expressed in the Church; and here we are in the presence of the foreshadowed fullness of the realization of that.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/18 0:44

WHY A WALL?

We now come to the wall of the city: 'Having a wall great and high.' The measurement of the wall is given - one hundred and forty-four cubits, or twelve by twelve. Just keep that in mind for a minute. I suppose one hundred and forty-four cubits does not mean much to you, but if I tell you that the height of this wall is seventy-two metres (216 feet), you will realize that it is a pretty high wall, and the fact that this city should require such a high wall has a very real meaning. I said t

hat it was twelve multiplied by twelve, and in the Bible symbolism of numbers twelve represents government. We are going to come upon the number twelve quite a lot of times in this connection. So when we contemplate this wall we are contemplating that which governs everything. It is what this wall represents that governs what can come inside and be a part of the city. Why do you put up a wall? Why do you have walls to your houses and around your ground?

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/19 2:20

A BOUNDARY

The answer is that a wall represents a boundary. It demarcates an area. People may come toward your house, but your wall will limit their progress. The wall says "So far, and no farther. What is outside may be yours, but what is inside is mine." So it is with the wall of this city. It determines what is of God and what is not of God. Presently you will be told what is outside the city, and if you look at those things you will see that they are all things which are not at all acceptable to God. In our last chapter we spoke about the lie, and it is said that that which makes a lie cannot come into the city. So, in the first place, the wall is a boundary between what is of God and what is not of God; and when you examine this wall and see what its foundations are - "all manner of precious stones" - then you are seeing, in a symbolic way, the character of God in its many aspects.

So the wall is a testimony of God; firstly, the testimony to what God is like, and then the testimony that only that which is like God can come into this Church.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/19 14:41

PROTECTION FROM EVIL

Then the wall is "great and high". Like the city, it is very substantial, and you are not going to get through, or over, this very easily. If you try to get into THIS Church of God in a way that is contrary to Him, you are going to meet God. We are told in this connection that this is where God dwells. The tabernacle of God is here, and it says: "He shall dwell with the man" (21:3). Therefore, anything that tries to get in where God is has to meet God.

I think we are too careless in our language about going to heaven. If you ask anyone if he, or she, is going to heaven, they will say: "Well, yes, I hope so." You all hope to get to heaven, but there is a great and high wall round heaven and we have to get through that wall to get in where God is in order to dwell with Him. Again I say: it is a "great and HIGH wall". This wall is not an easy thing to negotiate.

The wall is nothing other than the nature of God. That is why I mentioned twelve times twelve. It is government twelve times repeated, and it is the government of the very nature of God.

So we come to the second thing about a wall: A wall is for protection, to keep out all things that are harmful and dangerous. That is what the nature of God is - a defence and protection against everything evil.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/20 0:39

HOW DO WE GET THROUGH?

Now I am coming to something very practical in this. You know, men put up walls around the Church. They have put up thousands of walls around it. There is the wall of denominationalism, which men have put up, and the wall of certain men's names, such as Lutheranism and Wesleyism, and I could go on with a lot of other names that you know, and if you want to come into the Church you have to come in under one of these names. Sometimes it is the wall of a particular kind of teaching, and if you do not accept that teaching you cannot come into the Church. Sometimes it is a technical system of "how it is done", and if you do not conform to this particular way of doing things, you cannot come into the Church. Well, I could go on like that. The walls that men have put up are so many, but I have studied these verses about the wall and I don't think I have made a mistake - I cannot find what is of man as defining this boundary.

What can I find on this wall? All I can find is the nature of God manifested in Jesus Christ, and that is the only exclusiveness that God recognizes. You will get in here without any trouble if the nature of Jesus Christ is in you. There are twelve

angels at the twelve gates, and when you come to a gate no angel will ask you: 'What denomination do you belong to? What particular line of teaching do you hold?' The angel will look at you and at me, and everyone who wants to get in, and angels do not have to ask questions. They know at once without asking any questions, for the only thing they want to know is: 'Is Jesus Christ in your life? How much are you like Him? How much of Jesus Christ is there in you?' That is the only standard of judgment for being where God is. Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ into your life? Since you did that have you been allowing Him to possess you more and more fully? Has there been a continual increase of Christ in your life? That is the basis of Judgment, and that is the thing which determines whether we can come in or whether we stay out.

Do you think that that is mystical and abstract? Well, let us be very practical. When you travel about this world, as I do, you meet many people. Then one day you meet a certain person. It may be that he or she gets into a train where you are, or it may be in some other place. There are other people there, but there is something about this person that makes you say to yourself: 'He is a Christian, I am sure', or 'I am quite sure that she is a Christian.' No word has been spoken, and up to that point you have not said anything, but presently you begin to ask questions, and it is not long before you discover that you are right. This is another child of God! You say: 'I knew you were!' 'Oh, how did you know I was a Christian? I never told you I was.' 'You did not have to tell me. There is something about you that tells me that you belong to the Lord, something quite different from the other people.'

Now that is very simple, but is it true? Why, you can tell in a meeting like this who are really the Lord's people, and any one who is not the Lord's. That will be what the angels look for at the gates.

Of course, that is only an illustrative way of putting it. We are speaking about dwelling with God in time and in eternity, but it is only possible to dwell with Him if His nature is in us.

I just want to repeat one sentence: That is the only exclusiveness that God recognizes. We are in, or we are out, according to the measure of Christ in us.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/20 10:49

VALUING JESUS CHRIST AS THE LAMB OF GOD

That leads us to one other thing before we close. We are told that this wall rests upon the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It does not say that the twelve apostles are the foundation, but the foundation is the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The apostles were the 'sent ones' by the Lord, and when they were sent out into the world what did they preach? What was the foundation of all their preaching? It is all gathered into this one word: the Lamb. You know that when the Apostle John, who wrote this book, wrote his Gospel he very soon wrote: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29), and in different ways all the Apostles who preached Jesus Christ preached the Gospel of the Lamb of God. In this book of the Revelation the words 'the Lamb' occur twenty-six times.

To begin with, the Lamb means the taking away of sin. That is the very beginning of everything which is going to come into God's presence - the taking away of our sin. That is the foundation of this wall.

Then, not only the Lamb of God which takes away sin, but in this book another phrase is used: The marriage of the Lamb. Of course, that is strange language, but what does it mean? What is a marriage? It is a covenant made between two parties, a covenant of love, and the marriage of the Lamb just means that, by the blood of the Lamb, a covenant is made which unites us with the Lord Jesus. It is the covenant of His eternal love for us, and our covenant with Him, because of His sacrifice, to love Him for ever. The marriage of the Lamb is a covenant of love between Christ and His Church for ever, and it is only those who have entered into that covenant who will be found abiding in God for ever.

And when you come to the end of this book it is: The Lamb's book of life. What is that? Again it is only a figure. I do not think that when we get to heaven they are going to open a literal book. Of course, we have hymns which say that, such as our little children's hymn:

'Is my name written there
In the book grand and fair?'

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/21 2:14

In the First World War I was out in the Mediterranean with the troops, and on Sunday nights we had a great gathering of soldiers for a service. There were twelve hundred men who had come back, wounded or sick. We used to say: "Now, boys, what shall we sing?" Do you know what they chose every time as the first hymn? "When the Roll is called up yonder, I'll be there!" Well, the idea is all right, but the Lamb's Book of Life just means the record of those who have received that eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now that again is very practical. There was a day, when the Lord Jesus was here on earth, that a great crowd gathered around Him, and in it was a poor woman who had had an infirmity for twelve years. She had spent all her living on physicians and no one had been able to help her. She stood on the outside of this great crowd and began to wedge her way through the people. She was pushing this way and that way, and the man who wrote the Gospel tells us that she was saying to herself: "If I do but touch his garment, I shall be made whole" (Matthew 9:21). At last, after a lot of trouble she got behind Him, reached out her hand and just touched the edge of His garment. Immediately she was made whole. But Jesus turned round and said: "Who touched Me?" The disciples said: "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus said: "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me" (Luke 8:46, A.V.). "Virtue" is another word for "life", and life had gone out of Him into that woman. The woman saw that she could not hide herself, indeed, this new life meant so much to her that she came forward and fell on her face before the Lord and confessed. Jesus said: "Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (R.V. margin).

Being in the Lamb's Book of Life just means that life has come out from Him into us by faith in Him. You know, the Lord Jesus knows when life has gone out from Himself into someone else. He knows when anyone has touched Him in faith and received His Divine life. He said: "I came that they might have life" (John 10:10). And when, by faith in Him, we reach out to Him and receive His life, that is recorded in heaven.

When the disciples came back to the Lord Jesus from a mission they said: "Master, even the demons are subject unto us." But He said: "Don't rejoice in that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." The greatest thing is to have our names written in heaven, and that depends upon our having received the life of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God who gave His life for us. I hope that everybody here has his or her name written in the Lamb's Book of Life! There are no physicians who can heal you of the disease of sin. but the gesture of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can do it, and it is those who have made it who are in the Lamb's Book of Life.

This is what determines whether we belong to the Church and to Jesus Christ, and, in this pictorial language, it is this that decides whether we can enter through those gates and into the city - it is just how much we value Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. That is why we sang:

"Tis the Church triumphant singing
Worthy the Lamb!"

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/21 11:52

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 8 - The Many-Sided Riches of God's Grace in Jesus Christ

"The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones" (Revelation 21:19).

The following passages are a commentary on that verse:

"Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For you therefore which believe is the preciousness" (1 Peter 2:1-7).

"In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his g

race" (Ephesians 1:7).

"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach... the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Ephesians 3:16).

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

"That he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!" (Romans 11:33).

Now we have to come back to the first passage, in Revelation 21:9: "The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones."

THAT TO WHICH GOD IS WORKING SET FORTH IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

I think you know that the order in which we have the books of the New Testament is not the order in which they were written. The chronological order would be quite different from the one which we have in our arrangement. The Book of the Revelation was not the last book of the Bible to be written, but there is a Divine order in the arrangement, and this is a very real mark of the government of the Holy Spirit. When the books were put together in the way in which we have them, perhaps the men did not know what they were doing, but the Spirit of God, who inspired the writing, also governed the arrangement, and everybody recognizes that this book of the Revelation is in the right place. It is the summary and consummation of all that is in the Bible, and its dominant note is the coming again of the Lord Jesus. These words stand over every section of this book: "Behold, I come quickly", and almost the last words are: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come" (22:17). It is the Person of the Lord Jesus who stands supreme over this whole book, in all its sections. He is given various names: The Word of God, the Faithful and true Witness, King of kings and Lord of lords, and other names, all of which only occur once, but there is a name which is repeated again and again, and that name stands over every section of the book from the beginning to the end, and that name is "The Lamb". Jesus as the Lamb of God stands over this whole book, so that the book is a record of the power, the authority and the glory of Jesus Christ in His cross. It is His place of supremacy in the Church and in the nations by virtue of His sufferings.

This book is therefore a presentation of what Christ is through His Cross, that is, through His suffering and death, and all that He is through His suffering and death is here, in this book, reproduced in the Church. The Church here, as we have been seeing, is represented in the symbolism of the city, and that city is the Church embodying all the features of what Christ is by His suffering and death.

I only have to remind you of those words in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12:22,23:

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven."

You see, the city of the living God is the general assembly of the firstborn, the Church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven, in other words, whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life. The letter to the Hebrews corresponds to the book of the Revelation.

So this book of the Revelation, and especially these last chapters, sets forth that to which God is working in the Church now. It tells us what it is that God is seeking to do in believers now, and the goal to which He is working, which is a full revelation of Christ in the Church at the end. That statement is a very important statement for us, for it means that if God has got hold of our lives, if we are truly under the government of the Holy Spirit, He is doing a work in us throughout our lives, and that work is that at the end all that is symbolically true of the New Jerusalem will be found true in us.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/21 14:34

“ALL MANNER OF PRECIOUS STONES”

Having already considered many aspects of this city, we have at last come to the wall. We have read that “the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones”, so that the wall represents the many-sided riches of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. We did not read all these precious stones, but if you will just pass your eye over them you will see how precious they are, and what a variety of preciousness is represented here: the jasper, the sapphire, the chalcedony, and so on, and you will notice that they finish with the amethyst.

There was a little Methodist church in the country in England, and they were having a conference. For the lesson an old farmer read this twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and he came to the part about the precious stones. Everybody saw his face getting more and more excited. He started off: “The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony...” and he was getting more and more excited. “...the fourth, emerald; the fifth... and the sixth... and the seventh... and the eighth... and the ninth... and the tenth... and the eleventh... and the TWELFTH was a METHODIST!” Well, it is something to be excited about. If we could put ourselves into the description of an ‘amethyst’ it would indeed be something glorious!

We have said that all these stones set forth the many-sided riches of God’s grace brought to us in Jesus Christ. It is quite impossible for us to comprehend the many aspects of God’s grace, and that is why we read all those passages about the riches of His grace, the riches of His glory, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and also why we read Peter: “For you therefore which believe is the PRECIOUSNESS.” But perhaps we can understand this a little better if we take note of two things.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/21 15:28

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR JACOB

It says here that there were twelve gates to the city, “and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (verse 12), and then it says: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (verse 14). Now, you Bible students, don’t expect me to exhaust all the meaning of that! But I want to suggest to you just one thing about those two verses.

On the gates were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul tells us, about Israel, that “it is the remnant that shall be saved” (Romans 9:27). While all Israel may now be cast away, a remnant shall be saved. Israel will be represented at the last, but why and how? This is what I suggest to you to be a meaning: The twelve tribes of Israel sprang from Jacob, and if ever there was a man who ought not to have had the position that Jacob had, it was Jacob. No man of character has any respect for Jacob. He was a deceiver, a man who was always seeking to get his own advantage at the expense of someone else. It did not matter how much others had to lose or suffer so long as Jacob got what he wanted. The earlier years of Jacob’s life are a story that is not pleasant to read. You say: What a mean and despicable man was Jacob! And you agree with the prophet when he says: “Thou worm Jacob” (Isaiah 41:14). Jacob had very little naturally to commend him. Why, then, should Jacob come to occupy the great place that he has in the Bible? Why should his name be changed from Jacob to Israel, ‘a prince with God’? There is only one answer: Sovereign grace! God took hold of THAT man to make HIM a ‘vessel of mercy’. We know the mercy and the grace of God when we see it taking hold of a character like that! “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!”

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/22 3:07

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR THE TWELVE TRIBES

But not only the man, the twelve tribes. What a story of tragedy, failure and shame is the story of the old Israel! God’s patience was tested to its utmost by that people. There was a time when He said to Moses: “Stand aside! Let Me destroy them and I will make of thee another nation.” One day Moses himself cried: “You rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?” Yes, it is a long and a terrible story is the story of the twelve tribes of Israel, but their names are on the gates of the New Jerusalem. Whatever other things this may mean, I am quite sure that it means this: Here you have a wonderful, wonderful testimony to the unspeakable grace of God in Jesus Christ. “For you which believe is the precio

usness.Â” A remnant of Israel shall believe and be found in the holy city. So that, whether it be Jacob himself or his twelve sons and the tribes, here at the last is this testimony to the sovereign grace of God.

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR US

Why is this written at the end of the Bible? Just to say that there is hope for you, and there is hope for me. The grace of God for Jacob and the twelve tribes is big enough for us. This Church city is a great monument to the unsearchable riches of His grace.

There is always a note of warning in these things, and the Apostle Paul warned Christians to beware of failing of the grace of God. We read that verse in Romans 2:4: Â”Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering?Â” It must be a very terrible thing to fail of this grace if it is so great! But let us proceed.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/22 13:16

THE GRACE OF GOD FOR THE DISCIPLES

On the foundations of the wall were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Now this means much more than I am going to say, but I am quite sure that it means this one thing.

I read the story of those twelve men before Pentecost, and it is not a very happy story. They were men who were constantly quarrelling with one another, and they all had something of Jacob in them - trying to get an advantage for themselves at the expense of the others. Two of them came round the back of the others with their mother. There has been a little family conspiracy, and this mother was very ambitious for her two sons, and the sons fell into her ambition, so that while the other disciples were not looking (you see, this is Jacob!) they came round to the Lord Jesus and the mother said: Â’ Master, I want to ask you for something. Will you promise me something?Â’ But Jesus was always awake to anything like that - Â’You tell Me what you want and then I will tell you if I will give it to you.Â’ And so the mother said: Â’Master, when you come into your kingdom, will you let THIS boy be on your right hand, and THIS boy be on your left hand? Will you let my two sons have the first two places in the kingdom?Â’ Well, Jesus just said: Â’That is not Mine to give. That is for the Father.Â’ But it was not all over then - the story does not end there. When the others knew it they were very angry: Â’ They tried to steal OUR place!Â’

Well, I could go on like that about these disciples - and you know how that story ended! The chief one amongst them denied the Lord Jesus three times, most vehemently. When it was said to him: Â’You are one of them!Â’ he said: Â’I don’t know what you are talking about.Â’ And then, when later on it was said to him: Â’You WERE with Him,Â’ he said: Â’I tell you, I know not the man!Â’ We can hardly believe that the leader of the Apostles should fall so low! Surely, we would say, there is no hope for a man like that, and the others are not much better, because it says that they all forsook Him and fled. All right - their names are on the foundation of the wall! The riches of His grace are at last manifested in them. Peter needs grace in one way - I don’t know whether he corresponds to the jasper - and John needs grace in another way - perhaps he corresponds to the sapphire. But they all needed some form of Divine grace in a special way.

And that is true of us all. My nature needs Divine grace in a special way, and everyone here needs the grace of God in some particular way. But the grace of God in Jesus Christ can meet every one of us in our particular way, and right at last, whether it be an amethyst or a Â’MethodistÂ’, we will be in the city.

We have only just touched the very fringe of the unsearchable riches of grace, but may we from this time have a larger appreciation of this wonderful grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/23 3:27

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 9 - Divine Life

Â”He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the garden of GodÂ” (Revelation 2:7).

Â”And he shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month... Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of

life... And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city" (Revelation 22:1,2,14,19).

THE PLACE OF THE TREE OF LIFE

So with this last chapter of the Bible we are taken right back to the beginning of the Bible and find ourselves in the presence of the tree of life. In this connection, the ending of everything is found to correspond to the beginning, but, of course, with one great difference: the end is the full realization of the meaning of the beginning. In this form of a symbolic tree of life we are quite evidently in the presence of the main issue of the ages - all the ages are compassed by this one issue. When Jesus, here at the end, calls Himself the "Alpha and the Omega, ...the beginning and the end" (verse 13), He is referring to Himself as the tree of life. The tree of life is the first thing, and it is the last thing.

But although the tree of life was there in the midst of the garden at the beginning, man never partook of it. The partaking of that tree was on certain conditions. Those conditions were faith and obedience, and because man failed in those conditions, and because man disbelieved and disobeyed God, he was removed from the presence of the tree of life. Then God set up a protection for that tree and made it impossible for man without faith and obedience to partake of it.

Of course, these are spiritual principles set forth in a symbolic way. This question of Divine life is the supreme question in all history. It is the issue of all the ages - just whether man will receive this Divine life or not. Man's eternal destiny is decided upon that issue. This was God's supreme purpose in the creation. This life is the life of God, Divine life because of the Divine nature, and it was God's desire and purpose to share His life with His creation.

The symbolic place that this tree had is very significant. It was in the midst of the Paradise of God. This question of Divine life is at the very centre of the creation, and, having the central place in all things, it governs all things.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/23 9:58

SPIRITUAL DEATH

This life was available to man. It was God's thought and desire that man should take this Divine life, but, as we have said, it was on the condition of faith and obedience, and man never partook of this Divine life because he failed in those two things. So God said, quite effectively: "That kind of man shall never have My Divine life", and death, and the prince of death, reigned over that realm and that kind of man. What the Bible means by death reigns over the whole creation of unbelieving men. Disobedience is the positive aspect of unbelief. If man says that he believes, God says: "Prove it by obedience!" Spiritual death is the hallmark of unbelief and disobedience.

And if you want to know what spiritual death is, the Bible makes it quite clear: it is separation from God. God is the source of this life, and separation from God means separation from the very source of life.

But that is not sufficient explanation. What is the effect of spiritual death? It is that nothing is ever allowed to come to perfection apart from God. It will just go so far, and no further. In our cemeteries in England we have stones set up over graves, and many of these gravestones are in the form of a pillar which is just a certain height, and then it is broken off. It is meant to say: This life just went so far and could go no further. Life apart from God can never go through to fullness.

There was a great atheist once who thought he knew a great deal. He boasted of his wonderful knowledge of philosophy, and made a great name for himself as what is called a "free-thinker". Then the day came when he was dying, and on his deathbed he was in a state of mental torment. His last words were: "I am taking a terrible leap into the dark!" It does not matter how much we gain in this life. If it is apart from God that is all left behind. Nothing can come to perfection that is separated from God, and that is the mark of spiritual death.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/23 14:48

THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE AGES

Now because faith and obedience are the way out of death, this matter of faith and obedience has been the battleground of all the ages. There is no greater ground of conflict than the ground of faith, and this great issue was headed up to its climax in the incarnation of God's Son. The whole purpose of God being manifest in the flesh in His Son was to take up this issue and settle it for ever. "A Final Adam to the fight and to the rescue came."

This whole issue, then, becomes a matter of faith in the Son of God, and a life of obedience to Him. That is the pathway of eternal life. Now you see that the tree is not just a tree, it is a Person, and that Person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God

. We have been considering this New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, and we have been seeing how its many features are the features of Jesus Christ. Now what we have to see as we are coming near to the end is that all the features of the city are summed up in the tree and the river of life. All that the city represents is found in these final things, the tree and the river, and it is the tree of life and the river of the water of life.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/24 1:12

THE PRACTICAL NATURE OF DIVINE LIFE

I want to say here, quite emphatically, that life is a very practical thing. That is true of natural life. We know what a tremendous thing it is to fight for someone's life. All the vast resources of medical supply and surgical care are concentrated into this one issue, and that vast realm of activity is concentrated upon this one thing - life. Everything and anything to save life. It may be just a little life in some poor body, but all the resources of medical science and care will be employed just to save that bit of life. What a tremendous amount is bound up with this matter of life! When that life has gone all the activity and energy and concern ceases.

This matter of life can make us very busy. I expect most of you have heard of the great missionary David Livingstone, and some years ago I was associated with a great movement for the celebration of the centenary of his birth. You know, for nearly a whole year we were busy, almost night and day, making the arrangements. We took the greatest hall in London, got the Archbishop of Canterbury to promise to preside, we had a special oratorio composed, and had special biographies of David Livingstone written. My word, we had to work hard! One day the man with whom I was working said to me: 'Old David Livingstone is not dead! He is still knocking us all out by his vitality!'

Well, you see, life is a very practical thing. Electricity is a very practical thing. You do not need that I should demonstrate that! If you want proof of that, just unscrew the lamp, pull down the switch and put your thumb on the point. If you did that to the lamp over there, the next moment you would be sitting in another corner and you would be believing in the practical aspect of electricity!

Now all that is only to come to our point. If all that is true of natural life, how much more true it must be of Divine life! Divine life is immensely practical. It is not just something which we receive; it is a power in us. The Apostle Paul said one of his very great things about this: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20) - 'Exceeding' ... 'Exceeding abundantly... 'Exceeding abundantly above' ... 'Exceeding abundantly above all... according to the power that worketh in us.' It is the power of this Divine life by the Holy Spirit.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/24 2:29

THE LIMITING OF DIVINE LIFE

Now we have been seeing that this city, in every part, is an expression of the Divine nature, and that is brought down to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. Where there is anything contrary to the Divine nature, that is death and not life. Recall some of the features of this city.

We said that it was clear as crystal. You can see right through it - there is no dark thing. It says that it is like transparent gold. That is only a symbolism for absolute honesty, absolute truth, and absolute purity of mind, and where there is anything that is not absolutely honest and true and transparent, there is not life. If you were to try to deceive me, or someone else, or I tried to deceive you, that would seriously limit the Divine life in us. If we as Christians are not absolutely honest in our business, we are working against the life of God in us. If our Christianity is only a profession and not a reality, there is no life in it. I think I need not labour that any more. This place where God is is completely free from everything that is dark and dishonest. There are several things in the Bible which are said to be an abomination to God. We pointed out that at the lie is an abomination to Him, and the Bible says that pride is an abomination, too. It says: "The proud he (the Lord) knoweth afar off" (Psalm 138:6). Pride cannot come near to God. What is pride? It is making believe something that is not true.

Let us look at another thing about this city. A city, ideally, is the symbol of order. In a true city everything is in proper order, and everything that is governed by it is put into order. God is a God of order. Disorder is contrary to His nature. Whether it be in the personal life, or whether it be in the home, or whether it be in the church, or wherever it may be, disorder is contrary to the nature of God. Disorder is lawlessness, and all lawlessness has come from Satan. Satan is called the 'Prince of this world' (John 14:30). Now, look at the world! There is only one word to explain the world situation, and that is CHAOS. More and more, and ever more chaos is coming over this world. The prince of this world is making for disorder everywhere in his world. In the realm of Divine life things are ordered if that life is having its way, for it is Divine life that will bring order into your personal life. When I see a disorderly life, a life in which you cannot see any real order, then I have to say: 'Divine life is suffering in that person'. When there is disorder in a company of the Lord's people we know quite well that the life is limited. We have to say: 'When I go there, amongst those people, I do not come away feeling renewed in my life.' When things are in Divine order, then you always feel life.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/24 8:24

THE FRUITFULNESS OF DIVINE LIFE

Just two other things about this life. Divine life is always fruitful. You see, this tree is planted by the river of the water of life, and it bears all manner of fruit. It does not matter whether it is seventy, eighty or a hundred years old, it bears fruit every month. You have never seen a natural tree do that! It just means that fruit goes on and on and on. Divine life never grows old. What does that mean? You are saying: 'Well, what do you mean by fruit?' Life is influence. Somehow or other this water of life has an influence upon its surroundings, and that influence is seen in green leaves and much fruit - you have to say: 'Well, that water is having a great influence on this whole area!' If we really have this life in us, our lives will be influential. They will have an effect upon what is around us.

THE PLACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN OUR LIVES

The last thing for this time. The city is the seat of government, and you notice that the river of the water of life flows from out of the throne, so it is the throne that produces everything. You know what that means! It is the throne of God and of the Lamb. In a word, it means the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ. Right at the very centre of everything is the government of Jesus Christ, in virtue of His Cross, and as the Lamb. All the other things will depend entirely upon the place that Jesus Christ has, and will depend entirely upon how much we are committed to Him. If we are WHOLLY committed to the Lord and He is ALTOGETHER Lord, then the life will flow and all these things that we have said about life will be true in us. It will be the testimony to absolute committal to Jesus Christ.

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/24 10:29

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 10 - The Greatness of God's Grace in Jesus Christ

Reading: Psalm 51

'I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star' (Revelation 22:16).

I think it is a very wonderful thing that the Bible almost finishes with a word about David, and I think that you will agree with me. Here, right at the end, our Lord is saying: 'I Jesus... am the root and the offspring of David.' 'As the root, David came from Me. As the offspring I came from David.' That is why the Lord here calls Himself by the simple name of Jesus. He says: 'I Jesus have sent mine angel.' Now the Apostles and New Testament teachers very rarely used that name, for they almost always spoke of Him as the LORD Jesus, or Jesus Christ our Lord. It was very rare for them just to use His name 'Jesus', because that was the name before His resurrection and exaltation. 'Jesus' was the name of His humiliation, the name of the One who died for us, the One who was made sin in our place. 'Jesus' was the name of the Saviour: 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). 'Jesus' was the name of the One who 'humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of t

he cross" (Philippians 2:8). And here, right at the end of everything, He says: "I Jesus" - "I Jesus... am the root and offspring of David."

David! That name brings back many things to us. David was the greatest king that Israel ever had, but what was his greatness based upon? We have read that Psalm, but did you notice the inscription at the head of it? Here it is:

"A Psalm of David:

when Nathan the prophet came unto him,
after he had gone in to Bath-sheba."

This Psalm is one of the most terrible things in the Bible! It is the Psalm of a man whose heart is broken because of his sin and because of the terrible nature of it. Do you remember the story?

There was a man named Uriah and he had a very beautiful wife. At a time when Israel went out to battle David, instead of going out with his forces, went up on to the housetop, and from there he saw this very beautiful woman. His passions rose within him and he said: "I must have that woman! She is already married to Uriah, but I must have her somehow." So he said to his captains: "I want you to put Uriah in the front rank of the army and then go forward to meet the enemy. Then, when the enemy attacks, let the army fall back and leave Uriah alone." That is what they did and, of course, the plan succeeded. Uriah was killed, and then David's captains came back and said: "Uriah is dead." David sent to Uriah's wife, Bath-sheba, and said: "Uriah is dead. Come and be my wife." So David got Bath-sheba, as he had planned, but the Lord said to Nathan, the prophet: "Go to David and tell him a parable of a poor man who had but one sheep, and of another man who had many sheep, but this man who had the many sheep stole the one little sheep belonging to the poor man." And as David listened to the story his wrath rose within him and he said: "The man who would do a thing like that is worthy of death. He shall die!" And Nathan said: "Thou art the man!" David had committed murder by planning to do so, and, do you know, by doing that he had put himself right outside side of all the Lord's sacrifices for sin. The laws of God through Moses had provided for a sacrifice for every other kind of sin. There was even a sacrifice for the man who killed somebody by accident, for the man who did kill somebody but had never intended to do so, but for the man who thought it out and planned it, then carried it out, there was no sacrifice. That was called "blood-guiltiness", and there was no sacrifice provided by God for that. Such a man might bring his offerings, his sacrifice and his burnt offerings, but God would take no pleasure in them, and that is where David was in Psalm 51:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness... Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... My sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me... Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation... Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering."

David is saying: "I have not anything that I can offer. I have put myself outside of all God's provision. My condition is absolutely hopeless, but for one thing, and that one thing is Thy grace."

Re: The Holy City - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/24 15:52

Do you think now that it is a wonderful thing that the Bible ends with: "I am the root and offspring of David"? To put that in another way, the Bible ends by saying that God's grace is greater than the greatest sin, and is sufficient for the man who has no hope. I think it is a wonderful thing that after this God did make David so great, so that his name is one of the greatest names in history.

Solomon was the second son of that woman Bath-sheba, and the very name "Solomon" means for us the greatest glory in the Bible. Jesus Himself will acknowledge that. He spoke of "even Solomon in all his glory" (Matthew 6:29), but "a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). First of all, you have this wonderful greatness of Solomon from a man who had sinned like David. How can you explain that? It is explained because a "greater than Solomon is here". In what way is Jesus greater than Solomon? Because He will take someone who has gone to the deepest depths of sin and raise them to the highest place in glory. That is greatness indeed! It is the greatness of the grace of God which has been brought to us in Jesus.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches." What is the greatest testimony of Jesus in the Church? It is what Paul calls "the exceeding riches of his grace" (Ephesians 2:7).

So we end our studies in Revelation upon this very high and glorious note. Jesus says: "I am... the root and offspring of DAVID". Fancy Jesus associating Himself with David! That is grace indeed!

But remember that there was something in David. "If there is no sacrifice provided by Moses for my sin, there is a sacrifice provided by Jesus." David said: "Thou delightest not in sacrifice... thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The message speaks for itself. It is too great, too wonderful for words! How great is the grace of God in Jesus Christ! And the way into that grace is not by any works that we can do, nor by any offering that we can make. It is by a broken and a contrite heart that comes to the cross of Jesus and sees there God's sacrifice for sin which no other sacrifice can put away.

And so we sing:

“Plenteous grace with Thee is found;
Grace to cover all my sin.”

END

Re: - posted by MarkOne, on: 2004/9/25 3:36

I have been reading all night.
My first contact with this web event.
Immensely pleased.
Immensely blessed.
Mark

Re: - posted by MarkOne, on: 2004/9/25 11:56

What were your impressions while reading this piece?
Mark

Re: - posted by ANewInHim, on: 2008/6/5 13:54

I have posted the writings of Iwpray, so that you would see how through the depth of T. Austin Sparks, the writer was able to search deep within himself and produce such a wealth of inspirational teaching on the The Holy City.

Was, the writer merely copying and posting text? Deep calls unto Deep!

Several questions arose yesterday pertaining to leadership, Let not your questions, the questions that rest upon your heart reach the anointed of the Lord, for this my friend is sin. -----

What will you render unto the Lord? TRUTH! God is searching for a people that will speak what thus says the Lord, and not merely what he/she would have to say, but What God would have you to say or post. What will you render unto the Lord, even if it hurts?