

I AM GOING TO A CITY

6142 words

INTRO: Once a year at least, I like to give a message on the soon return of Christ. I pondered how I might remind us of that this year and nothing came to me. And one evening I listened to a number of Gospel songs on youtube and I listened to one of my favorites, "Where The Roses Never Fade." Well, it kept going over this song by different singers and then played some more on heaven. And then I thought, "I have to do a message on the wonderful hope of the Christian." Later I saw that maybe I can combine these two ideas, the soon return of Christ and heaven. And so I have called this message, "I Am Going To A City."

Maybe what further triggered this interest was the passage I had just been studying in Ephesians. Ephesians 5:5 says this:

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

In studying that I pondered the believer's inheritance. Again my mind was drawn to what lies ahead for the true believer. Life after Adam and Eve sinned is difficult for almost all, if not all people; believer or unbeliever. I see the purpose of life's trials for the unbeliever as being for the purpose of bringing them to faith. Nothing does that like life's difficulties. But God's purpose of life's trials for the believer, I see as being for the purpose of making us like Christ.

In our Bible studies we have referred back to 1 Peter 6-7 numerous times, which says:

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

We rejoice in our salvation, though in this life we may be grieved by various trials. The believer's salvation from sin is past tense. He has been saved. Then it is present tense. The believer is presently being saved. And last, his salvation is future tense. Sometime in the future, whether by the rapture or by death, the believer will be delivered out of the very presence of sin.

Life is not always easy. Sometimes it is downright difficult. Sometimes burdens come crashing down and it is like the wind gets knocked right off one's Christian life. And once in a while, as a Christian, one needs to consider that some day it will be worth it all.

The special number we listened to said, "I am going to a city, where the streets with gold are laid." Well, I want to tell us about the city the believer is going to. So we begin with the first city.

I. THE FIRST CITY

Just before Jesus was crucified, He realized He would be leaving this world for some time. His own people had rejected Him, and soon they would be rejected from being God's nation for some time. Realizing He would be gone for time of the Church age, He predicted that in some of His latter parables.

But as He neared that time, He began to let His disciples know about His departure. He had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, and at this Passover, He knows He will be crucified. So go to John 13. Jesus had just had what we call "the last supper" with His disciples. Judas has just left to betray Him. And in verses 31-33 it says this:

31 *So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.*

32 *"If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.*

33 *"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.*

Peter wanted to go with Jesus but Jesus said he could not follow Him now. And Peter asked why he could not follow now. He said he would lay down his life for Jesus. And Jesus said, "Before this night is over you will deny Me three times."

That brings us to chapter 14 and look at these wonderful words of promise. The disciples were troubled that Jesus was leaving. They had expected Him to set up the Messianic kingdom on earth now. And to comfort them Jesus said this:

1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

2 *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3 *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Now I have said that when you see the word 'heart', understand it means the mind. Let not your minds be troubled. Does that ever happen to us? Look now at Jesus' wonderful words of promise:

2 *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3 *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Now let me ask you, just what is Jesus' Father's house? Adam Clarke says, "Most interpreters understand this of heaven, as the peculiar dwelling-place or palace of God; but it may include the universe, as the abode of the omnipresent God."

John Gill says, and I believe rightly so, "Our Lord alludes here to the temple, which was called the house of God, in the

precincts of which there were a great number of chambers..." The phrase, "house of the LORD," or house of Jehovah occurs 213 times in the OT. The tabernacle and the later temple were both called the house of the LORD. The phrase, "house of God" occurs 81 times.

The NT speaks of it as the house of God 6 times. Jesus refers to the temple as His Father's house twice besides our verse. There is no question to me where this place, the Father's house, is. Do you know where Jesus is right now? In His Father's house in heaven! You see, in heaven there is a tabernacle that was not made with hands. The earthly tabernacle was a replica of this one in heaven.

I believe this tabernacle in heaven, of which the book of Hebrews speaks quite a lot, was made by God after sin occurred. Some day this tabernacle will be no more as we will yet see. But this tabernacle is Jesus' Father's house. It is in that city, of which the streets are laid with gold, the heavenly New Jerusalem.

Now let me describe Jesus' Father's house in heaven for you. I get the picture from the earthly tabernacle, and the later temple. There was around this tabernacle a white fence. It pictures that no unrighteous person enters here. And there was only one gate, and that gate pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. So Jesus said this right after He said He was going to prepare a place for the believers:

4 *"And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

5 *Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"*

6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

Jesus is the way to the Father's house. There is only one gate. And at that gate is the altar, and that is where sins were taken care of. No one whose sins are not taken care of enters that city.

Now let me explain something from the temple as it was set up in Jerusalem. Around the temple, on the temple square, were all kinds of buildings. This is where all the sacrifices took place. And serving in that temple were 24 courses of priests. Each of these 24 groups served for one week twice a year. These priests would come to Jerusalem when their allotted time to serve came. And at the Lord's house, there were dwelling places where the priests stayed during their time of service. That is what I see here in John 14.

Now John 14:2 says these are mansions. I won't take time to explain, but the word mansions gives us the wrong idea. These are dwelling places. And for the priests they were temporary. Twice a year they used these for one week, then they went back home. I propose for the believer these are temporary as well and we will see that later. I deal with this in detail in our messages on sermonaudio, "In My Father's House."

When Jesus said to the disciples He was going to prepare a place for them, it is here, I believe He is preparing that place. Do you know where this temple is? I believe it is in the New Jerusalem in heaven. The book of Revelation tells us it is 1,500 miles cubed. We will see this later. And in this huge city, the place where God dwells is in this house that was made without hands. In that house is first the Holy Place. Only certain people are privileged to go in there. Further in is the Holy of Holies. It is the holiest place in existence anywhere. And in that Holiest of all places is where God dwells. I won't take time to show all of that, but you can find it if you study. And sitting at the right hand of God is the Lord Jesus Christ! And when Jesus went to prepare a place for believers, those dwelling places are right around that holiest of all places.

And what am I telling you? The people the closest to God Almighty and Jesus Christ, in this holiest of all places, are the believers of the Church age! Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places. I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there you may be also!" And

this is the city where we, as believers, are going. This is where I am going. It is the city of all cities. But I am not only going to a city. The true believer is going to place in that city that is the most privileged place in that city. These dwelling places are the nearest to God Almighty of all the places in that city!

Now we would most naturally think that the Jews would be in the place nearest to God, but not so! It is the Church! I believe this is part of what Jesus meant when He said the last shall be first, and the first last!

Now Jesus said there are many dwelling places. That is they were there already. He did not go to make them. He went to prepare them for the believer to live there for a while! You see, we may have a guest room and before special guests come, we prepare that room for them. That is what Jesus is talking about! I am going to that city! I ask you, are you going too?

Now here is what I propose to you. These are guest rooms. They are not meant to be permanent homes. The priests only stayed there when they served twice in one year. As a matter of fact, Jesus Father's house is not a permanent place. I believe it was constructed by God after sin happened, and it will disappear when all sin has been taken care of. We will see that later.

Now when are we going to this city? It will happen at one of two times. If we die before Jesus Christ comes for the Church, we will go there then. If we are alive when He comes, we will be caught up with Him to go to this place. That is the promise of Scripture!

At which ever time it is, I am going to a city. I am not boasting. I have nothing to boast about. I am saved by grace through faith. That leaves me with nothing to boast about but the Lord Jesus Christ! I am going to Jesus' Father's house. I will be there while the seven year tribulation rolls on earth. You and I need a place to stay for that time and the Lord will take us to that place He

prepared for us. Why is this not a permanent place? We will see that later.

II. THE SECOND CITY

So, that is the first city I am going. There is a second one.

You might say, "Hey, just a minute. I thought heaven was permanent." The book of Revelation clearly lays out prophecy with all the time sequences. Chapter 1 is an introduction. Chapters 2-3 speak of the Church age. In 4:1 John is caught up to heaven. That may be a picture of the Church being caught up before the tribulation. Then in chapters 4-5 John is shown various things in heaven.

Then in 6-19 we have the tribulation. Now go to chapter 19, which is a beautiful picture of the end of the tribulation. Most of the tribulation has been described in chapters 6-18. Let us begin in 19:5 now. This is just before the close of the tribulation:

5 *Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"*

6 *And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"*

7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

The Church has been pictured as the bride of Christ in the NT.

And now, here at the end of the tribulation she is the wife of Christ and she is in heaven. The Church and Christ, in this picture, are married. The time described here is almost at the end of the tribulation. All of this perfectly pictures the Jewish wedding and how it took place. If you wish to learn more of that, you can go to our ten messages

called, "In My Father's House." They are available on sermonaudio.com/mecl.

We go on in verse 8:

8 *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

9 *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

Here is the Church, arrayed in a beautiful wedding dress. And verse 9 says: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" So who are the invited guests? The guests are all the OT saints, who will be resurrected here, and those who have come alive through the tribulation as believers. The bride is never invited to the wedding supper. No bride, no supper. It is guests who are invited. This wedding supper will take place on earth, when the Lord Jesus has defeated all the evil people, the false prophet and the antichrist and all unbelievers who are alive and make war against Him at the end of the tribulation.

Verse 10:

11 *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

12 *His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.*

13 *He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.*

14 *And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

There is so much to explain here that I can't take time for. But the Lord Jesus now comes down from heaven with the Church turned army. They are leaving the dwelling places of heaven. And they all come on white horses. When the world sees Jesus coming in the clouds, I believe this whole white throng makes up those clouds!

Now the Lord Jesus is coming to earth to personally close the tribulation. Because of time we won't read that. But the rest of the chapter tells us how the tribulation ends. And when that battle is over, silence engulfs the whole world. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to rule for 1,000 years!

Now from the book of Daniel we would be able to see what will happen in the next 70 days. We would see the marriage supper of the Lamb take place. The Lamb and the Church will sit at the head of the table. And the guests will be all the saved from Adam and Eve to the last one saved in the tribulation. The OT saints will have been resurrected. Those that lived through the tribulation will have their literal physical bodies. And they will repopulate the earth in the next 1,000 years.

Now back to the Father's house and the city that we will now experience. Turn to Ezekiel. If you would read up to chapter 37 you would see Israel restored. That began to take place in 1948. Then you would see the tribulation in 37-38. Then in chapters 44-47 you will find a very detailed description of Jesus Father's house in the millennium. Let us just read a few verses in chapter 44:

1 *In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very*

same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there.

2 In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city.

That is the city I am going to. If you are truly a believer, you are going there too. Verse 3:

3 He took me there, and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.

4 And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see."

5 Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man's hand was a measuring rod six cubits long, each being a cubit and a handbreadth; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod; and the height, one rod.

What is Ezekiel talking about here? He is talking about Jesus' Father's house during the millennium! It will be in the city of Jerusalem here on earth! And now for the next 4 chapters Ezekiel will describe the place from which Jesus will rule the entire world for 1,000 years!

Now go to Revelation 20 for something wonderful. Jesus has come down to earth with the Church. The tribulation is over and we want to see the next events. Verse 1:

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no

more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

How do you like that? It will be amazing! You see, what is written here will happen!

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Now in this verse we have some people spoken of in the third person as "they" and "them." And judgment is committed to them. They are not judged, they do the judging. And what they are to judge is committed to them. And who are the "they" and the "them." The nearest antecedent that fits is the white robed throng that comes down from heaven. I believe it speaks of the Church and because we want to yet see the third city, we will not take time to give the evidence that points to this.

Verses 5-6:

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Now who has part in the first resurrection? Well, Christ was the first-fruits. The Church is next. And the OT saints and those who die during the tribulation are the last of the first resurrection. And it says they lived and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years! And where do they reign from! From Jesus Father's house in the millennium!

I am going to a city, are you coming too!

But as good as the millennium is, it is far from perfect because man still has a sin nature. And though the devil is bound, the sin nature takes a huge toll on mankind and it takes only a few verses to show what happens. So we continue in verse 7:

7 *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison*

8 *and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.*

9 *They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

10 *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

When this battle is over, for the first time since Adam and Eve sinned, there is no more sin on earth. It now only remains to take care of one last matter, and that is the judgment of all the lost from creation to this point in time. And we have it in the next few verses. Verse 11:

11 *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

12 *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

13 *The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.*

14 *Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

15 *And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Now, not only is sin over forever, but all the wrong that has been done in all of time has been justly judged! Sin is finished forever!

III. THE THIRD CITY

And now we are ready to consider the third and the last city. We go to chapter 20. We begin in verse 1:

1 *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*

I have told you numerous times about this new heaven and the new earth. I have told you that there are two words for new in the original NT. One is what we call 'brand spanken new.' It is new, new. The other is something that has been refurbished or something that is new to you. So we say that someone got a new car. Since it was the pastor that bought a new car we immediately ask, "You mean like in brand new?" And the answer is, "No, it is new to them." I always joked that when we buy a vehicle, we pick the price and the Lord chooses the color.

Well, the word for new here is not like 'brand spanken new.' It is this present heaven and earth renewed. If there are in fact real o-zone concerns, they will be taken care of here. Global warming? No concerns!

I have also told you that I did not like the idea that there would be no more sea, so I fabricated a way of keeping the sea. If you have ever been to the ocean, you most likely were as fascinated as I and my family have been. We love to go to the ocean. So, how did I manage to keep the ocean?

Well, let me tell you something on a more serious note. There is no use fabricating any view at all. There is no use believing in a rapture if the Bible does not teach one. There is no use in believing in a new heaven and a new earth if the Bible doesn't teach one. There is no use believing there will be seas, if the Bible teaches they will no longer exist.

So let me tell you what I do find here. Here is the original wording, "...and the sea will be no more." It is "the sea" singular. There are more seas. Acts 27:41, which speaks of when Paul was taken to Rome as a prisoner, says this:

41 But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground..

From the standpoint of Israel, the OT refers quite often to 'the sea.' There is one sea known as 'the sea.' It is the Mediterranean sea. This is the sea I think is being referred to here. And why will it be no more? This city is 1500 miles square. It will cover this sea!

Well, let us go on to verse 2:

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

That city, where Jesus went to prepare a place for believers and where He would come and take them to, is this city. This is the city of the Great King. It is called the New Jerusalem. And it comes down out of heaven from God. Verse 3:

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Oh, this has been a most amazing verse to me. I used to think that when we die, if we are Christians, we go to heaven to be with God forever. But here in words so plain no one should miss them, it says that God will come to that city

and dwell with the believers, and here He will be their God! Where is this city? Here on earth, when this earth is renewed! And where does this city land on earth? Israel! It is the New Jerusalem! It is the eternal capital of the entire earth!

Verse 4:

4 *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

5 *Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

6 *And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."*

Now I do not want to disappoint anyone, but I never read of God wiping away all tears until the time of the new heaven and the new earth. It may be that those who go to heaven before this no longer experience tears, but I do not find that in the Bible. Here, when sin is finally and completely taken care of, here all tears will cease forever. I am going to this city!

Verse 7:

7 *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."*

Now I ask you, who is it that is going to this city? It is not all those who get saved. It is all those who get saved and overcome. In the account of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, seven times the word to overcome is mentioned. Once to each church. It is those who overcome who enter this city. I have also told you about this word 'overcome.' Does anyone know what name brand we get from

this word? It is Nikee. The verb is nikao. It means to overcome.

Now in verse 8 we have one last sad reminder. It says:

8 *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

Now look at verse 9:

9 *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."*

Who is the bride, the Lamb's wife? The Church! The angel is saying to John, "John, come. I want to show you the Church!" Do you want to see her? Well, come with me to verse 10. Here is something most beautiful:

10 *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

11 *having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*

Then follows a further description which I won't take time for but this is what we would truly be able to call an 'awesome' city! And in verse 16 we get the measurements of the city and it is 1,500 miles cubed. Verse 16:

16 *The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.*

But let me point out one most interesting verse in that section and it is verse 22.

22 *But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

No more Father's house! Why not? No more sin! Never, ever again!

Well, there is just too much for me to tell you about here. But let me raise one more question. The angel said, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." If you read through this section, you won't see her anywhere. Let me just say that I believe this city is not the Lamb's wife. Where is she? John doesn't write about her. He gets all caught up with this spectacular city, and it is a most spectacular picture.

But let me tell you what I believe. I don't have Scripture for this, but this is what I tend to think will happen. I would be very open to other insights. Listen to a few verses in 2 Peter.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2 Peter 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

When God renews this earth it will be purged by a fervent heat. All the works, every sin mark, will be burned up. And when God makes this earth new, where are all the believers? And I think the most likely explanation is that they are taken to this city, the New Jerusalem. And when it comes down, the bride, the Lamb's wife is in that city!

However that may be, that is the city I am going to. Chapter 22:

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree

yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

6 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

CONCL: I am going to a city! Are you coming too? I trust by the grace of God to be an overcomer at every new turn. And it may be at any moment that the Lord will return, and I have every confidence that I will enter that city. On what ground? On the ground of having repented of my sins and living day by day by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Here is what I do know. There is nothing good in me that merits going to heaven. And also, it is only by the grace of God, apart from any works I have done. And it is through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that I have been cleansed. How I thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the blessed hope of the believer. Maranatha! Our Lord is coming!