

Revelation 21:1-44, 10-12, 15-16, 21-25
The New Jerusalem
Buildings in the Bible Series
Easter Sunday April 1st, 2018

Please repeat after me! He is risen! He is risen indeed! He went before us! He will bring us home!

Now, we together, as a congregation have confessed and proclaimed to the world the most basic confession of faith and proclamation of the Gospel that began with the Mary's on that first Easter so long ago!

Today we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead who is our present hope and future glory. As we were baptized into Jesus' death to sin we will be raised to glory in Jesus' resurrection.

Today is the culmination of our "Buildings in the Bible" series. Three themes we have traced through this series are the: Protection, Providence and Presence or the Incarnation of God. I like the 3 pees; so we will go with **Protection, Providence and Presence** today. And today we will see what the fulfillment of these will be.

Jesus promised us before his crucifixion, on the night he was betrayed at the Last Supper that there is a place waiting for us in his Father's house that he has prepared for us. John 14:2-3 say, "**My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**"

Jesus the Christ has a place waiting for us who believe for **He is the Way, the Truth and the Life**. Jesus was crucified after he spoke the words recorded in our scripture today. He rose from the dead and as the Bible says, "He was seen by many people."

Our John reading gives us a glimpse of what the Father's house might look like. It is a big, big house with lots and lots of room as the contemporary song says. It is an entire city: the New Jerusalem!

The time of which we read of in the 21st chapter of John today is the time after the Resurrection of the Dead and the Last Judgement that we speak of every time we repeat the Apostle's Creed. The place is the New Heaven and Earth. God created this earth and universe that we live on, and it is in the mind of God to recreate it in perfection.

The New Heaven and Earth will not have any sin, evil, or death. Sin, death and the devil were cast in the lake of fire after the Judgement; so all evil and the power of death are gone. Time and again in symbolic language John tells us in his vision that at this time all evil will be gone.

That is the enigmatic meaning of that short phrase in verse one, **“and the sea will be no more.”** The ancient people believed that the sea was the place that evil and the beast hid and if the sea was gone all evil was gone with it.

The theme of God being present with his people is completed or fulfilled in this chapter. God says in verse 3, **“Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”**

The word behind the phrase **“dwelling place”** is **“tabernacle”**, or the **“tent of meeting”**. It is saying that God will **“tabernacle”** or live with his people. This recalls all the buildings of worship that we have explored during this series that God used to be present among his people:

The Tabernacle



Solomon's Temple



Zerubbabel's Temple



Herod's Temple



And finally the Temple of the Holy Spirit Jesus the Christ.



The Tabernacle and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Temple these places to meet God were replaced by the Person, Jesus the Christ, and now the Persons of the Holy Trinity of God are personally present in the New Jerusalem.

In the time of the New Heaven and Earth and New Jerusalem no structure will be needed in order to be in the presence of God. That is why it explicitly states there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem for with God being intimately present a temple is not needed.

And because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross God will be so present that, **“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”** Death will be no more.

It is the perfect time and place. Humanity's relationship with God will be perfectly restored. We will have face time with God of the same magnitude that Adam and Eve had in the Garden, in Paradise.

In fact we will return to a Garden for what the word “Paradise” means is “Garden”, a garden that we will live in forevermore in a perfectly restored relationship with God and each other.

The cube of the Holy of Holies returns here. The cube of the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant resided was the place where God met humans and humans met God. It has now become the City of God the New Jerusalem. And it is a big, big house. It is 1500 miles on a side. Here’s an artist’s rendition of how it would look.



If it was set down in North America it would cover most of the land mass.

We will then live in the Holy of Holies in the very presence of God, which again is why we won’t need a temple. We will be done with the buildings of God just like we, after today, are done with this series.

In the end God never needed the Buildings we read about in the Bible,... we needed them. As psalm 66 says, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me?”

Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the Lord.”

There are curious things about the New Jerusalem; first of all, it has a wall. Why, when all evil and sin has been eliminated would you need a wall and especially such a low wall only 266 feet high setup against a city that is 1500 miles tall? Well the wall is a statement, or symbol of God’s protection and providence.

Next the City has gates that always stand open. Each gate is a single large pearl. Again it is a statement that there will be a time when all sin, evil, death and things that would hurt us in the night will be gone. There will be a time when there will be no need to shut the doors and

lock the gates. God's perfect providence, protection and presence will be immediately available.

And in that all the gates are open it is a statement that heaven, eternal life is open to all who would believe in Jesus.

So what do we do with this and the event of today that we celebrate: the resurrection of Jesus the Christ from the dead? The answer is we live courageous lives of faith!

Jesus' resurrection validates all his promises that he has prepared a room for us, that there is a New Heaven and Earth and New Jerusalem.

So in the time, between now and the New Jerusalem: **serve mightily, give richly, love radically, proclaim the Gospel boldly**. Knowing that the end of the story is already written; the victory is already won. So we can take risks with our time and resources in the present.

This is what you see happening in the 25 households who have stepped forward and committed over \$513,000 to our New Vistas Building campaign.

This is what you see in our Live Stream worship ministry that touches and encourages the lives and faith of 100s every month. Those who have brought this ministry into being have contributed 100s and 100s of hours and their own resources in many cases to give birth to this new vital ministry.

This is what you see in the multitude of Mission projects our congregation supports that touch and help 1000s of people a year in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is what you see in our music ministry whose members give so much and gave so much this last week to bless us by bringing us into the presence of God through music.

Truly, Christianity is not just a hope of perfection, and a close relationship with God in the New Jerusalem, the sweet by and by.

Christianity is the courageous, committed, sacrificial living of that hope in the here and the now!

We can do it because we know (repeat after me):

He is risen!

He is risen indeed!

He went before us!

He will bring us home!

Amen!