

Restoring the City of God

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2

In Revelation 21 and 22, we see a glorious vision of a great city, the new Jerusalem. This city portrays the consummation of God’s eternal purpose through the ages - the full expression of Jesus Christ in His church, His bride. The old Jerusalem was but a shadow and symbol of this heavenly Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem was the capital of Israel, the only kingdom that God had thus far established on the earth. It was called the city of David since within its walls were the throne of David and the tabernacle of David. For King David not only made Jerusalem the royal city from which he ruled; he also made it the holy city by installing God’s Ark of the Covenant on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

The new Jerusalem is the city of God. This is the heavenly city whose architect and builder is God and whose foundation is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11). This divine city is the body and bride of Christ, the church of the living God. *“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God... to the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23).”* Jesus the Messiah King is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with David (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:31-33). For the throne of David foreshadowed Christ’s Sovereignty over His church and the tabernacle of David foreshadowed Christ’s Presence in His church. *“God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23).”*

When God’s people were not faithful to Him, the city of David was overrun by its enemies and its foundations and walls fell into ruin. Just as the old Jerusalem was destroyed, the new Jerusalem, the church of the living God, also fell into ruin. Within just a few generations after our Lord

ascended to heaven, the church began to lose its spiritual connection to Christ its sovereign head (Colossians 2:19). More concerned with outward order and form than the reality of Christ’s Sovereign Presence, the city of God fell into disrepair. Its spiritual foundations and walls finally collapsed and lay desolate for centuries. Yet God has always preserved for Himself a remnant of survivors or overcomers.

After a long period of physical desolation, God raised up Ezra and Nehemiah from His band of faithful survivors to rebuild the old Jerusalem. In the same way, God is raising up His body of overcomers to restore the new Jerusalem. In the first century, the apostle James addressed the Council of Jerusalem to this end, *“With this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, ‘After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen and I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it (Amos 9:11; Acts 15:15-16).’”* Isaiah also prophesied of this glorious restoration, *“Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called the repairer of the breach; the restorer of the streets in which to dwell (Isaiah 58:12 & 61:4).”*

In restoration, the foundation has the priority. Everything else in the city - its walls, its gates and streets - rests on its foundation. If the foundation is not properly laid, everything else is askew. Five centuries ago, God began to restore His beloved city, His church, when He gave divine revelation to Martin Luther that the just are saved by faith. The foundation of justification by faith in Christ and His completed work on the cross began to be laid anew (1 Peter 2:6). Since then, much has been added to this beginning foundation to rebuild the church. However, the church’s complete foundation has not yet been fully restored. Because we have built on an incomplete foundation, the entire structure is now at risk (1 Corinthians 3:10-13). The city’s walls may outwardly appear impressive, but they are inwardly compromised and weak. God’s watchmen, His prophets, are now warning the

city to restore its ancient foundation; otherwise its walls will be breached and overrun by the enemy.

What crucial part of God’s sure foundation is missing? For the past five hundred years, the church has acted on only half of the gospel - the just are *saved* by faith. Yet the whole gospel is *“the just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17).”* God’s people know they are saved by faith but they do not know how to live the overcoming Christian life by faith. Yet Christ’s death on the cross not only provided us salvation by faith; His death also provided us sanctification by faith. For Christ not only died to forgive us from the penalty of our sins; He also died to deliver us from the power of sin by removing our sinful nature (Romans 6:6). God’s people need to believe not only that Christ has died for their sins (Romans 5:8), they also need to believe and act on the Biblical truth that they have died with Christ (Romans 6:8). They need to know (believe and act) that they are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:7). Then they will not try to live as Christians by the best of their natural ability and mistake their self-effort for Biblical faith (Galatians 3:3).

In ancient times, the prophet Daniel effectively interceded for the old Jerusalem when God revealed the city’s restoration was close at hand. In these last days, God’s watchmen are sounding the trumpet once again to restore the full foundation of the new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. When God’s faithful remnant believe and act on the truth that they have died with Christ, they will overcome the world by the power of Christ who indwells them. Then Jesus Christ will triumphantly return for His holy bride, the glorious city of God (Revelation 19:6-16; 21:2-11).

“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Isaiah 62:6-8