**REVELATION CHAPTER 21**

There probably is no other part of Revelation where it is more necessary to remember that all its principal elements are symbols, and all its principal statements, symbolic, than in the last two chapters of the book. In our studies of the former chapters we have watched the dark and angry clouds of papal superstition, bigotry, pride and arrogance, rise and spread their murky shadows over the earth. We have witnessed the storms of persecution and blood, and cyclones of woe and death, till the world was frantic with rage at the church – so called; and the true remnant church was weary of its life, groaning for deliverance from the savagery of priest-craft, impudently masquerading in the name of Christ. The world itself, aged and tottering with centuries of sin, and selfishness and tyranny, was sighing to be renewed.

We saw judgments poured out and the installments of wrath descend like earthquakes, hail and thunder, until Romanism – huge, and hoary and horrible – died of shock; and the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the world and of the church were purified. The night of the dark ages was passed; and a morning of joy, the dawn of a golden day, had come. Great spiritual light gleamed over the flickering tapers of Roman and also Protestant creeds, like so many morning stars after the clouds of a stormy night had disappeared.

The church, now arrayed in white, came joyfully from beneath the altar, no longer fearing the Anti-Christ, and now walked with Christ. Historians describe the change which the world presented after the fall of the papacy, in language approaching the boldness of the Revelator.

*Alison says: There are few periods in the history of the world which can be compared in point of interest and importance, to that which embraces the progress and termination of the French Revolution. In no former age were events of such magnitude crowded together, or interests so momentous at issue, between contending nations. From the flame which was kindled in Europe, the whole world has been involved in conflagration, and a new era dawned upon both hemispheres from the effects of its expansion. It is not surprising that the higher ranks mistook the signs of the times. They were advancing into a region in which the ancient landmarks (old heavens) were unknown, where the signs of a new heaven, and hitherto unseen constellations were to guide the statesman.*

Turning now to the text of chapter 21, the first verse begins with these words: **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”**

In several preceding chapters (11-20) we have watched as the revelator described in awesome and graphic symbols, the fall of spiritual Babylon, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Babylon the great is fallen, and with her fall the entire superstructure and underpinnings of essentially all the nations of Europe underwent a radical, earth-shaking revolution of all the old regimes of the dark ages. The religious-political dominance of the world by the Holy Roman Empire- church-state system, came crashing to earth from its lofty (heavenly) throne of religious tyranny.

The landscape, both religiously and politically, of the world dramatically changed at the end of the 18th century. From the beginning of the 16th century until the end of the 18th century, a life and death struggle waged between the forces of the Roman hierarchy, the tyrant of the dark ages, and the reformation movement. In reality it was a struggle between the abominable creeds, claims control and utter tyranny of the hierarchy of the Roman Church and the emerging restoration and authority of the word of God, the Bible.

It should be noted by each faithful student, that even though it was basically through the work of the Protestant reformation that the centuries-old system of Romanism was confronted, exposed and brought down, yet this does not give a blanket endorsement to all that was taught and done by the Protestant movement. It certainly was a major instrument in God’s hands for the overthrow of Romanism. The Protestant movement itself was emerging from the papal system, and undoubtedly brought some unnecessary baggage with them. We must remember that all through history, God’s people of all times have always been a “remnant”. They still are.

The centuries of entrenched dominance of papal hierarchy had fashioned and carved the civil and religious landscape of the world into a robotic system, manipulated by its greed for power, deception of religious teachings, and by its inhumane treatment of the slightest variance to papal decrees. Europe was a stagnated cesspool of religious anarchy, unbelief, corruption, and pagan rituals. Civil powers were usually in lock-step with the religious hierarchy and religious powers were “married” to civil functions and power.

If you will simply put this civil and religious scene, atmosphere, landscape and condition into a symbolic perspective, immediately the picture revealed in Revelation 21:1, becomes very clear. The civil powers of Europe (throughout the dark ages, Europe essentially comprised the majority of the inhabited world), represent in this vision the mundane or “earthly” level or arena of activities; while the religious powers represent the “heavenly” or ecclesiastical level or arena of activities. We have seen all through Revelation that “heaven” and “heavenly”, along with “earth” or “earthly” scenes or conditions have consistently represented two levels or arenas of activities. We have documented this with a specific lesson, to which you are hereby referred for added clarification.

Thinking of “earthly” and “heavenly” as contrasting levels of elevation; cast down versus lifted up, you can see how totally the civil and ecclesiastical arenas of the dark ages can be well symbolized by them in their relative perspectives. The world, both religiously and politically, was in a chaotic mess. The storm clouds of judgment, wrath and destruction wreaked havoc on these conditions, as described in Revelation 17, 18, and 19. It reached its climax in the French Revolution of the last decade of the 18th century (which we have previously covered). Governments were overthrown and re-formed. In France for example, the old monarchial system that had ruled for centuries, was replaced by the French Republic. The religious system under papal rule was completely de-frocked of its power, possessions and control. The old (or first, or former) (religious and civil) heaven and earth were done away with. In Rev. 20:11, speaking of events in this same time frame, it was described as “earth and heaven fleeing away and there was no place found for them”. With their passing, **John now sees a new heaven and earth, for the former (heaven and earth) have passed away.**

Following these revolutionary, world-changing events, the many centuries wherein the papal power denied the free and open use and teaching of the truth of the Bible were gone. Almost, as it were, overnight, freedom has come and tyranny has ended. Now the word of God, like a well-watered plant in the spring time, flourished in a phenomenal explosion of hunger, teaching, printing and distribution of God’s word around the world. Within 20 years of the overthrow of “Babylon the Great”, there were 128 Bible and tract societies formed, distributing millions of copies of the word of God. The 19th century was marked, not by the oppression of Roman tyranny, but by world-wide revival and a turning from sins to the Lord. Even governments of the world, long under a monarchial-type system, were reformed into some form allowing greater freedom to the people. It was in this very era that our own United States government of, by and for the people was founded.

There was a “new heaven and a new earth”; the former things had passed away. The church has been transformed by the freedom of the gospel, the Spirit of the Lord working thereby to bring a totally new atmosphere of Christianity. Governments began breathing the air of freedom’s holy light. “And there was no more sea”. That is, the restless masses of people, once under the tyranny of an abominable church-state system, were restless no more. God has brought judgments on the apostate system by both his providential sovereignty and the transforming power of the word of God. By that same providential sovereignty and word of truth, God also brought an entirely new day to the church, his beloved bride. John saw these events and characterized them in the magnificent symbolism of the vanishing of the first heaven and earth and the appearing of a “new heaven and earth” upon the scene of the world-wide atmosphere and conditions, both religiously and governmentally.

With this new heaven and earth before us, John next informs us, V2: **“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”.** If the emotional and breath-taking phenomenon of a new heaven and a new earth is almost too sensational to absorb, we now have added to it, “the holy city, new Jerusalem **coming down** from God out of heaven”. And to further dramatize this astounding scene of a ‘city coming down”, it is pictured as a “**bride dressed up for her husband”.** This entire scene is couched in such awe-inspiring symbolism, that we need to try to glean each distinct portion of its amazing imagery, that most surely holds for us an enlightenment of divine truth that far exceeds the carnal and impractical offerings of vain interpretations of man, and instead seek that which glorifies the harmony and majesty of divine revelation. To do this we will first counter the notion of orthodox teaching that says that “at death man goes to that golden city in the sky”, by pointing out the simple statement that “the city is coming down; not man going up”. Further this text is not describing a last day scene, nor is it about a literal city in the sky.

The city is called “holy” and “new Jerusalem”, so exactly what is this phenomenon that John sees coming down out of heaven? Let us stop here for a moment and consider some absolute realities that are unavoidable. (1) If there is a literal city in the sky somewhere, and if it is enormously huge as orthodoxy would have us believe, how did it leave the sky and come down to earth? The logistics are mind-boggling, and a simplistic answer that “God did it, only adds insult to injury; God does not impose unanswerable dilemmas upon the majesty of divine truth. (2) Why didn’t someone see it and tell us about it”? (3) Is there any record of it ever ascending back to heaven? (4) If not, then what has happened to all of the people who supposedly have gone there? (5) According to verse 17, the city measures 144 cubits around it. This translates into a total distance around the city of 216 feet, if you use the literal 18 inches per cubit. That is no larger than your local MacDonald restaurant. We are dealing with symbols, and this includes a symbolic heaven, earth, city measurements, walls, gates, street, foundation and every other detail of the city. If you try to literalize it, or even mix it with both symbols and literal interpretation, you create insurmountable problems.

Let’s now go back to that question again: “What is this city”? As we have done consistently with all cases, let us look to the scriptures for an answer and not to discombobulated orthodoxy. Hebrews 12:22-23, tells us exactly what this city is. These verses tell us that the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, is the general assembly and **church** of the first born. The picture then is as perfect as any exacting mind could demand. The city John sees coming down in the midst of the new heaven and new earth, is the restored church in all of her glory, light, beauty (as a bride prepared for her husband); coming down from God through his sovereign providence and glorious will.

This also perfectly conforms to the history of the time which we have been considering; the 19th century with the explosion of interest in the Bible, followed by heart-rending convictions and repentance, followed by the most amazing spiritual awakening since Pentecost in the first century of Christianity. It is the glorious restoration of the church of the living God. It is the church now prepared, not dressed in the abominable rags of dark-age corruption, creeds and ceremonies, but “as a bride adorned for her husband”. It is the church, not controlled and deceitfully manipulated by the papal hierarchy, sitting in the temple of God, seeing itself as though it was God, but instead the church “coming down from God” in purity, restoration, truth and glory. In short, it is the church (generally speaking) of the 19th century with true spirituality restored and not the church of dark-age corruption.

John next hears a great voice (V3) saying, “**behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them”.** We have reviewed the “new heaven and earth”, clearing away the rubble and tyranny of the old; we have seen the church and the gospel rising high in the ecclesiastical heavens, and now God comes down in the outpouring of his Holy Spirit to dwell with man. He is no longer a God far away because of unscriptural creeds, doctrines, and impersonal rituals; he is a God that through the restoration of the gospel and the church has come back into the hearts of man. This is Pentecost restored! An example of restoration of true spirituality is so well described in Is. 65:17-25. In this chapter of Isaiah, the prophet is foretelling the day of Christ; the beginning of the church and gospel era, and the marvelous new heaven and earth created by the inauguration of the day of grace. The wonderful things Isaiah describes are for the church age under the auspices of the saving gospel of Christ. In verse 25 he describes how the wolf and lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. Orthodox theology can only see this happening in the eternal age. I would declare vehemently that this is an illustration of the marvelous peace and tranquility that occurs in two lives formerly filled with hate and bitterness, but now totally and completely transformed by the phenomenal work of God’s grace in the human heart. It is the brotherliness, kindness, relationship and love that comes about in the lives of those who have been dramatically changed from their old carnal, sinful nature to the new nature like Christ.

To verify that Isaiah’s (and also the Revelator’s) prophecy refers to the work of grace in the age of the gospel, let the text certify for itself. V21 says they shall build houses, plant vineyards and enjoy their fruits: obviously a process of this earthly life. Verse 22 says they shall long enjoy the work of their hands. That is not what you expect in eternity. Verse 23 speaks of their “offspring”, which verifies human productivity which would only occur in this life. V24 is a key verse, and one you have no doubt quoted many times before: “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will here. This is a promise that God is faithful to hear our prayers, which is not a function of eternity, but is a part of this text and the day of gospel grace, that many would push into the far distant future. With the coming of Christ and his sacrifice at calvary for us all, to as many as received him, gave he a new kind of life, full of grace and glory.

Then we come to verse 4, which, on the surface, seems to pose an impossibility of being applied to any time other than eternity. Listen to its powerful and distinct declarations. **“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”! “There shall be no more death”! “Neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain”! “For the former things are passed away”!** These are wonderful promises from God to provide desperately needed relief from the bitter pain and hurt that affects the human family. The question these life-changing promises raise for us is, “under what condition and by what process of interpretation could they possibly apply to any era other than eternity”? after all, it could be successfully argued, we still have death every day, and sorrow, crying and tears are as common place as they have ever been in all history.

**Let me step aside from the specific points we are trying to make from Isaiah, Revelation and other scriptures, and affirm an unshakeable and grateful belief and hope in the second coming of Christ and the utter and final destruction of all the sin and hurt that has plagued the human family since the fall of Adam. Of that hope we are absolutely certain. When that day comes we have no doubt whatsoever that all of the physical and emotional pain, heartache, suffering, sickness and death facing us every day of this earthly life, will be completely and eternally eliminated. We look forward to that day with joyous anticipation and certainty.**

**There is another enormous and glorious truth that we cannot afford to overlook, not for one moment, as we otherwise become enthralled in a study of the captivating scenes of prophetic visions. That truth is the magnificent, life-changing experience we can have in the Lord and his work of salvation in our hearts and lives now. In fact this very experience is the foundation stone and mold that sustains and shapes, or otherwise completes those prophetic visions. Let me explain further.**

**In all of our Christian experience, church going, preaching, worship and testimonies of praise to God for his gift of salvation and its precious work in our own individual heart, we have used some of the most graphic, passionate and glorious phrases to express our joy and gratitude that the human mind can conceive and the tongue can frame. We declare that God has given us “unspeakable joy”; “a deep and profound peace”; “a completely new life”; “our burden has been rolled away”; “we have passed from death unto life”; “we have unsearchable riches and inheritance in Christ”; “our emptiness, desolation and longings have been filled”; “our famine has been replaced with a harvest of plenty”; “we were dead in sin but now we live by faith in Christ”; “outcasts but now accepted in Christ”; “we are a part of his lovely bride”; “we have found a friend in Jesus”; “we have been gloriously delivered from the ravages, tyranny and hopelessness of sin”; “those we once hated we now have sweet fellowship with”; “we are crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live”; and, like the apostle Paul, God took our wasted, blasphemous sin-filled lives and made us a glorious dwelling place for his truth and his Spirit. And we shout, Hallelujah!, for his marvelous grace that has made us totally a new creation in him. As Isaiah 25:8 prophesied, Christ would swallow up death in victory. This he did by his resurrection and we are risen with Christ to walk in newness of life. Isaiah also declared, in that same verse, that the Lord God would wipe away all tears from our faces. Thus in the provision of the resurrection, hope has come, the dark night of sins’ bondage and destructive consequences have been lifted. And the “tears of hopelessness have been dried from the faces of the redeemed”. We know this; believe this; experience this, and shout its heaven-sent victory.**

**YET IN THE MIDST OF ALL OF THESE BOUNTIFUL, REPETITIVE AND GLORIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF TRUTH AND REDEMPTION IN CHRIST, OUR THREE-SCORE-AND-TEN LIVES ARE EVERY DAY SURROUNDED BY HEARTBREAK, SICKNESS, SIGHING, TEARS AND DEATH! But we faint not, because we know that our “tears are but for a moment and joy comes in the morning”, while we look not at the things which are seen but the things which are eternal. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel, waiting for the coming of the Lord, when he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body.**

**The secret to understanding this seeming conflict of tears being wiped away while yet there are tears daily, and of death being swallowed up while yet we still die, is that we now walk by faith. By faith we see the glorious liberty of the sons of God, through the redeeming grace of Christ, to be consummated at his glorious appearing, when we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. The Christian experience we now know is a work in progress and is not finished, but he that has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. So the elimination of tears and sorrow and death is a work in progress that will not be finished until Jesus comes. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Therefore now – in the midst of the sorrow, tears and death of this fleshly life – we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, knowing that while we endure “this body of death”, that we are looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ and the crown of ceaseless joy, peace and perfection he will give us at that day.**

Now return to Rev. 21:4, and apply all of this wonderful truth of our hope by faith in Christ and you will have a beautiful interpretation of it.The church has come through the dark ages, when, like Judah of old, it was held captive by ungodly forces. Now God has removed all of those shadows, pain and the “system of death” (Rev. 6:8), and now the glorious liberty and hope that a “new day in the gospel” provides has dawned upon it. In great symbolic truth those whose names were written in the book of life, and did not have the mark of the beast, have their “tears and death” of dark-age tyranny wiped from their faces and the former things are passed away. The sunshine of a “new heaven” is flooding their souls with new light of truth and joy. For some additional reading and inspiration about this joy and deliverance of the gospel, the following are suggested: Is. 35:1-10; 51:11; 60:18-20; Hos. 2:14-23; Mic. 4:1-3.

Rev. 21:5. “**Behold, I make all things new”.** God is the creator of this new (gospel) day.

V6. **“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely”.** People can still come to the Lord and be saved because this chapter is about the work of God in the church restored, and not about the eternal age after the return of Christ.

V7. **“He that overcometh”…..** This can only apply to those of this life who endure the struggles of a normal, fleshly existence day by day.

V8. Those who remain in their sins at this time when the opportunity of a glorious new heaven and earth, spiritually, is being offered, will have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death. I refer you to the lesson on the “Lake of Fire and Second Death” for an explanation of this verse.

V9. **“Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife”.** We know this refers to the church. Verse two described that city coming down from God out of heaven, as a “bride adorned for her husband”. She is not a gaudy wretch like Jezebel, but like a beautiful woman dressed as a bride.

V10. However, instead of a woman in a white gown and bridal attire, we are shown: **“The great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God”.** This is exactly the same city as verse two which we followed Paul’s description of the city of God from Heb. 12:22-23, where he declared that the church of the first born, the general assembly, was this city.

What follows in verses 11-27, is a masterful assembly of symbolic descriptions of the church, which was so beautifully restored to her original glory during the 19th century. These verses lay out in every architectural detail, the church as God intended for it to be, without all of the abominable creeds, dimensions, functions and blasphemy of “Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”. To take the many elements of the graphic, intricate descriptions of these verses and portray them as some carnal, literal city, perched in the (literal) sky, (when the specific declarations of verses 2 and 10 reveal this city as coming down to earth) is a total disregard for the clear statements of the text and a wanton disregard for obvious truth, not to mention the sheer impossibility of fitting the text into such literal explanations. But such is the blindness and bondage of hoary tradition. We invite the thoughtful reader to follow closely as we look at verses 11-27, to see if they do not in every detail apply to the church that Jesus built and filled with his own Holy Spirit.

V11. First, this “city” has the glory of God in it. The Old Testament temple, when finished was glorified by God’s holy presence. The church which began at Pentecost was filled with the glory of God’s Holy Spirit. The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of Mount Sinai. Surely then, the presence of God which is both all pervasive as well as specifically displayed and apparent, is never more manifestly present anywhere as much as in the church. It is this city – coming down from God --- which is described as having the glory of God, and ---

**“Her light was like unto a stone most precious”.** The light of God in the church of the dark ages was virtually extinguished. Now the glory of God is restored in the church (of the Philadelphian era), and its light is like the brilliance of a precious gem. Jesus was the light of the world, and he has conveyed that same light to his church, telling them, “Ye are the light of the world”. Are hearts so carnal that they cannot discern that the light from the word of God, revealed through the pages of the Bible, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is the only true spiritual light available to us. The Psalmist said: “Thy word is a light to my pathway”. Every statistic and indication today is that church people are so far aloof from the deeper truths of the Bible, that we readily interpret such passages purely from our imaginations and traditions.

\_\_\_\_\_**”And the walls had twelve gates and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written thereon”.** Gates afford access or entrance inside the walls into the city. The twelve tribes of Israel comprised the complete and only access into the church, the kingdom of Christ. They were a servant nation through which Christ came and through him alone there is access into the church. He is the door.

V13. The order of the twelve tribes in their camps during the wilderness journey were specifically placed with 3 tribes northward, 3 tribes southward, 3 tribes eastward and 3 tribes westward. Likewise there were 3 gates to this city facing every direction of the compass.

V14. “**The wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”.** It is of the church whereof Paul declared that it was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. No other foundation can any man lay, except the teachings of the apostles whom Christ chose, anointed and commissioned for the work of the church. Conversely, there is no other city in God’s universe besides the church, of which the apostles are the foundation.

V15. This city has very specific dimensions, beyond which there is no foundation for it to rest upon. The entire structure of the church must conform to the measurement of the rod which “he that talked with me” had.

V16-17. The city is perfectly square in its circumference, being the same dimension on each of its four sides. The measurement of the city is said to be twelve thousand furlongs, with the length, breadth and height each having equal dimensions. A literal furlong in Bible days is said to be 600 feet long. Twelve thousand times 600 feet, equals approximately 1363 miles. Next the wall of the city (which would have covered the entire dimension of the city) was said to be 144 cubits around the wall. One hundred and forty four cubits @ 18 inches per cubit, equals approximately 216 feet around the wall. The disparity between these two numbers, if taken in a literal sense, is obvious; one covering hundreds of miles and one covering only a few feet. There is no “literal” mathematical way to reconcile these differences, and that, friends, is just another absolute proof that we are dealing with symbolisms and not with literal dimensions. The number of 144 is a square of 12 (12 X 12 = 144). Since there are twelve foundations and since the foundation covers the entire structure (of the church), the one hundred and forty four represents a complete foundation on apostolic truth. In other words, spiritually speaking, the city is not discombobulated dimensions of creeds and traditions and errors, but it is a city of truth.

V18. The wall was of jasper stone. This is a red-colored precious stone. Its significance would be that the walls of the church are constructed of a very precious commodity. We are given specific identifications for the gates and foundations, but not for the walls. The walls of a city were the obvious outline and visible identification of it. In that sense, the walls of the city would be the general population of the church. They are the ones visibly apparent in all of the dimensions, sides and structure. You are a small stone in the great wall of the church, and, symbolically speaking, you are a “precious stone” in his sight.

The city was of pure gold, like unto clear glass. The Old Testament temple, which is a type of the church, was covered with gold on its floors, walls and ceilings. But the church is covered with the blood of Christ, which is far more precious than gold and this gold can only symbolize that which truly covered the church. Which honors and glorifies God and his truth the most, a literal city of literal gold, or a church covered with the precious blood of Christ? You decide.

V19-20. In the twelve foundations were found all manner of precious stones, which are named here. This should call our attention to how valuable and priceless the foundation of the church is. Have we come to the place in Christianity where the express doctrinal teachings of the apostles are not of essential value to us anymore? The church has a foundation upon truths that are beyond price. I once asked a guard at the crown jewels of London museum, what their value was”? He replied: Priceless! That is the value of the spiritual foundation of the church.

V21. The twelve gates were of pearl, with each gate made of one pearl. Folklore and hoary orthodox religion have in their vain imaginations the “pearly gates”. This is the only verse of scripture in the Bible that speaks of gates of pearl. Under verse 12, we pointed out that these 12 gates representing the 12 tribes of Israel, symbolized the entrance into the city, through the Hebrew nation. This entrance is as priceless as pearl; there is no other access into the kingdom of God. It has absolutely nothing to do with some imaginary entrance to a celestial city at the time of death. This city is on the earth and applies to time, and we enter it through the access of the Hebrew family, in which was incorporated all the types and shadows of the Old Testament. When we get into the city (the church) we must be standing on the foundation of apostolic teachings.

This verse further declares: **“the street of the city is pure gold”.** And thus we get all the stories, imaginations, messages, etc., about streets of gold that people will be walking on when they die. Don’t start a grand parade down such streets just yet. First of all, it is “street”, not “streets”. There is only one street, not many, and this is a significant point. Jesus said that he was the way, and we might safely add, the only way. There are not many paths, ways or streets to enter in and traverse this city of God. Nowhere else in the Bible is there any mention of “streets of gold”. That should get our attention and cause us to question what it really means. To the Laodicean Church Jesus counseled us to buy of him gold tried in the fire. That gold symbolized truth. The street of gold in this city, likewise, symbolizes a pure walk, which would have been part of the restored church after the dark ages.

V22. There was no temple in this city like there was under the law, which was a type. In this city the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb is the temple thereof. Our dwelling place is in God and not in some literal structure, whether on earth or in the sky.

V23. This city does not get its light from the sun or moon. This is another assurance that we are dealing with symbols and not with literal objects. The church does not get its light from the sun or moon, naturally, but from the light of God through his truth. The only “city” of all time and every place that does not need the natural sun and moon to give it light, is the eternal city of God, the church. To make this city some dominion in the sky with literal walls, foundations, gates, etc., is purely carnal and offers no redemptive value whatever.

V24-27. The people who are saved are they who walk in the light of this city. This also describes a condition applicable only to time and in the church age. The gates won’t be shut by day and there is no night there. That is a condition of the restored church after being nearly shut down and in darkness for centuries. Paul told the Thessalonian church that they were children of the light and not of darkness. The restored church, now filled with the light of gospel truth, would not be closed down by the darkness of the former night of Roman unbelief. Their darkness is exposed and people again are walking in the light of truth in Christ and his church. God keeps the doors of the church. Only those who have been adopted by him are allowed entrance therein. We may fill our modern church rolls with thousands who have never met the entrance requirements of the “door keeper” of the kingdom of God, but to no avail.

By this lesson we have tried to present a picture of the church of Jesus Christ, buried for centuries under the bondage of Papal dogma, but now delivered completely and restored to its biblical pattern, experience and glory. Regardless as to whether or not you agree with this interpretation of this chapter, yet the facts of the 19th century church, with the world-wide distribution and study of the Bible, followed by world-wide revival, perfectly fits this symbolic pattern.

It will probably disturb some theologians for me to interpret this chapter and this city in a symbolic manner instead of literal. There simply is no way to sensibly interpret all of its many components in a literal fashion. This means that I have set forth the position that there is no literal city in the sky. I do not waiver from that position at all. Orthodox religion would sweep under the rug many statements of this chapter in order to hold on to little phrases that will accommodate their own agenda. The only acceptable way to deal with the chapter is in its entirety. We may not know the full details of every single part, but the overall picture of the chapter certainly must harmonize.

This chapter does not mention anything at all about “mansions” in the sky or in this city. The only time the thought is expressed is in Jn. 14:2. “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. The word mansions here, as every Bible student should know means “dwelling”. The entire 14th chapter deals with the in-dwelling comforter, the Holy Ghost, which would be sent upon the disciples shortly. The individual Christian is the “dwelling” (mansion) of the Holy Ghost. Then a play is made on the words: “I go to prepare a place for you”. At almost every funeral, the preacher will make some expression about the deceased being already in their mansion which Jesus “went to heaven to prepare”. The statement is interpreted to mean that when “Jesus ascended back to heaven”, that he started a construction project to build huge, gold covered mansions, beside streets of gold, with precious stones everywhere. So I have one simple question: Did Jesus go to calvary to prepare a place for us or did his ascension almost 2 months later prepare a place for us? The answer is obviously calvary.

Let me remind you that the church (in this chapter) has just come from the superstition and mysticism of the dark ages, and it is evident that some of it followed along the way.

I will close this lesson with copies of pages of the book “When The fire Fell”, which offers one eyewitness account of just how powerful the revivals of the 19th century were. Oh how we need them again today!