

# St. Paul's Dorking Sermon Notes 11<sup>th</sup> July 2010

## 'Past Imperfect Future Tense'

### The new Jerusalem - Rev 21:5 – 22:6

#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Last week we learnt about the final defeat of evil by Jesus. Then follows the Day of Judgement. Salvation is a free gift from God but if we refuse it there are consequences; all of us, even Christians, are to be held accountable for what we have done in our lives. God is Love but he is also Just. Forgiveness is ours, but only through what Christ has done. After the day of Judgement there follows an Eternity with God, in a new heaven and a new earth. Heaven and earth are renewed and integrated.

Today is all about more of this wonderful promise from God. The words beginning in v 5 actually come from God Himself, not an angel! This is authoritatively what it will be like at the end of time when Jesus has come again. God says, *behold I am making everything new*. It's present continuous tense as in **2 Cor 5:17** We are each a new creation NOW, although we still live in the "not yet" times before Jesus comes again. As we open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ has done and is continuing to do a new work within us, making us more and more into the people he intends us to be. And all this work comes to completion in the events of the book of Revelation. Read 2 Cor 5:18: because of what Christ had done for us, we have a job to do, to take the Gospel to others. Each of us will be accountable to God for what we do with our life and each of us needs to consider how we respond to this commission. Rev 21 v 5 says to John *Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true*. And that's also how the reading finishes in 22:6, the same words, so we can have real confidence that these wonderful things are a firm promise, they WILL happen.

v.6. God said, *It is done*. Jesus on the cross, just before He died, said, *It is finished*. That was the end of His earthly commission and this now is the culmination of *all* God's plans through Christ. This is what history has been leading up to. God is the beginning and the end – Alpha and Omega are the 1<sup>st</sup> and last letters of the Greek Alphabet.

v. 6b) the water of life is Jesus. In fact all this is a picture of Jesus. Water without cost from the spring of life reminds me of another scripture from the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah...**see Isaiah 55:1-3**

All that follows is our inheritance, for us, God's children. We are the bride, the wife of the lamb, the Holy City Jerusalem. Like a bride we are pure, we joyfully give ourselves to our bride-groom: but we can only be pure if He is already ours –we can only become pure through Jesus' redeeming blood, when we commit ourselves to Him, and then we become fit to be his bride. A bride is loved, adored; someone the groom wants to spend the rest of his life with; we are also described as the *wife* on the Lamb – the marriage is not just for the wedding day, this is permanent, a new status and relationship with Jesus that lasts.

v. 10 image changes to that of the Holy City, Jerusalem: strong, permanent, powerful and upright. We are already the temple of the Holy Spirit – which is a single building idea –look at **2 Corinth 6:16** - a familiar Jewish idea that appears at least 3 times in the Old Testament and used by St Paul. We are already where God lives through His Spirit, but *then* at the end of time, we will be a *whole city* built together, no longer separate but communal. This city is made of wonderful jewels which are costly, precious, bought at a price, as we are. They are brilliant, multi-faceted, many-coloured, extravagantly beautiful. They reflect and sparkle in the light. And that's how God sees us through Christ. The huge size of the city - *12,000 stadia* is the distance between London and Athens - but although this city is huge it's carefully designed: purpose-built for each of us. Square/cube and with a wall = strong. And there is plenty of room for all. N.b. Built on the plans of the tabernacle and built on the foundation of the 12 apostles. Our faith is historic and factually true. We can study it and teach it to our children. And we need to do this, in order to guard against false teachings or misunderstandings or simply not knowing what actually is in the Bible.

No longer is there any need for a temple or for lights – there is simply no darkness. The Greek word used for this light of God is one that means a light-giving body or source such as the sun or a star or the moon - it's no mere 40 watt bulb! The light of God excludes any possibility of darkness. Read **John 8:12**. The gates are never shut because there is no evil to have to keep out –nothing impure will enter the city. This means firstly that we are safe but also that we need to be pure – we need to be sure of our salvation through the Lamb who is Jesus, who died on the Cross as a once and for all, perfect sacrifice for our sins; Jesus who defeated death and who said *It is finished*. And if we have accepted Christ for ourselves we can be sure that our names will be found written in the Lamb's book of life.

From the throne of God and the Lamb – the two are clearly identified as One – flows water supplying all our needs; the Tree of Life is there, with abundant fruits of all kinds and healing in its leaves; there are no longer any curses. Curses came from the evil one, originating in the Garden of Eden with the fall. We rebelled against God and thereby sin, corruption and death entered the world. But now we see that all this has been dealt with through Christ. In the words of M. Eugene Boring, we see here "*a purified and redeemed humanity and a fallen world delivered from the bondage of evil by the God whose grace transforms pious individual souls as well as all creation*". We will clearly see God face to face and we will have His name on our foreheads. Wow! Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ WILL come again! Hallelujah!

#### Witness: questions to discuss

Before discussion, read the Bible passages and ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer, worship and ministry.



1. Ice-breakers: a) what, for you here in this present life, is heaven/heavenly? b) Who would you most like to meet in heaven and why?
2. Which of the images used for the people of God e.g. the bride, wife, city, jewels - resonates with you best? Why? How can we as individuals and as a church be more like this?
3. *Behold I am making everything new* – how is this true for you? What might we need to do to co-operate with God as he continues this work in us? See 2 Cor 5: 17-18. How have you responded to being given *the ministry of reconciliation*?
4. Bible-Study: Look at v.10-21. Compare this picture of the New Jerusalem with Ezekiel's vision (Ezek ch 40) and Isaiah's (Ch 60). There are also links to jewels in Ezek 28:13; Isaiah 54:11; Exodus 28:17. Why do you think these images are used so often?
5. We will see God face to face (Rev 22:4). Try to spend time imagining what that will be like, and praise God.