

## Our Great Treasure in Heaven

In the name of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, dear bride of Christ:

One of my greatest joys as a pastor is seeing how the hope of heaven lifts downhearted people high above their problems. Jesus is our living hope, and whenever we focus on Him, we live in hope. From this hope then flows wisdom beyond wisdom, religion beyond religion, God's power to live in love.

Yesterday again I got to see this while calling on shut-ins. God's amazing peace from the Prince of Peace flows into their hearts and lives. You can see it in their quiet confidence and hear it in their voices. One of our members is able to speak volumes in only a few words. He was feeling quite down when I came because of the death of his stepfather. As he listened to God's Word and received Holy Communion, it was as if a great weight was lifting off his shoulders. When I was ready to leave, I said, "You're smiling! God has comforted you!" He replied with two words: "He wins."

**Our Great Treasure in Heaven** is what we receive when God wins. He wins our hearts now to hope and peace and joy – for an eternity of joy and peace and eager expectation of good from God that far exceeds our imagination. To help us see and understand God paints word pictures in the last two chapters of Revelation. He wants us to enjoy the anticipation of **Our Great Treasure in Heaven**.

**21:1-7** *Everything New!* Maybe this tired old earth is feeling a bit worn. Your patience is wearing thin as storms come and go from society as much as the weather around us. How irritating if you just replaced your hail-damaged roof to have another storm come through and start the hassle all over again! But Jesus says, "***I am making everything new!***" We could stop right there in picturing **Our Great Treasure in Heaven**. If your car and house and neighborhood, family, country, this body – were all new and could never wear out or grow old again, would you not already be rich beyond imagination? But God's got marriage wrapped up in this by picturing newlyweds: Jesus is the Bridegroom coming to take home His beautiful bride. That's us, His Church, everyone who believes in Jesus as his or her personal Lord and Savior. You're in a beautiful, passionate, intimate relationship with God that time cannot steal and eternity can only increase. You get to live together – with God! No more girlfriend, boyfriend, maybe this and maybe that. "***The dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.***" You won't even be able to cry or get upset when Jesus makes *Everything New*. Tears and death and mourning and pain are part of the old order of things which will have passed away. Gone for good and forever!

**21:6-8** **Escape!** Sometimes you feel thirsty. A tall cold one won't help you here, not even a "Silver Bullet" straight out of the Rockies! Your soul is downright thirsty when anger and frustration get the best of you, when life seems so hopeless and you wonder why you're even around anymore. Jesus has an ever flowing artesian well for you in heaven called "***the spring of the water of life.***" He already paid the cover charge. Free refills all around forever! It's your inheritance from God. And it means you have escaped from the waterless pit, "***the fiery lake of burning sulfur [which] is the second death.***"

**21:9-14** **Security!** In the Bible *seven* stands for *judgment*. *Seven* angels with *seven* plagues deliver God's condemnation on His enemies. But God's *perfect seven judgment* ruled in our favor when Jesus rose from the dead. With John we get to see Christ's Bride, the Church, pictured as a city. On earth Jerusalem was called "the city of bloodshed." In heaven the New Jerusalem is holy, set apart for God and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. City gates in ancient cities were the most vulnerable spots in the wall, but New Jerusalem has *three* gates in *four* directions = *twelve*. Later we hear that they are never shut. See the invitation to people from everywhere? See how there is no more threat? That's **Security!**

21:15-21 **Space!** This beautiful Bride-City is a perfect *twelve – cubed!* *Twelve* is the Bible number of God’s Church in the Old and New Testaments – all saved by the same faith in the same Savior Jesus Christ. Take *twelve* times *ten*, the number for completion, *three* times in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and you have 12,000 stadia in a perfect cube. No city on earth is over a thousand miles wide and long and high. These walls are  $12 \times 12 = 144$  cubits thick, over 200’ by our measurement. We could ask any bride on earth how much she spends on cosmetics, and nothing can compare. Christ’s bride of heaven, the New Jerusalem, is all decked out in priceless gems. They’re used for cement in heaven. Each of her *twelve* gates is a single pearl. Pure gold like transparent glass paves Main Street in God’s city.

21:22-27 **All wealth and no crime!** No temple is needed in heaven, no church building because Jesus the heavenly Bridegroom is everywhere. We will live in Him like eternal sunshine. No sun or moon are needed, no flashlight, because *“the Lamb is its lamp.”* All earth’s ethnic groups who heard the Good News of Jesus’ forgiveness will walk about in total freedom in a land with no more shadows. Queen Elizabeth said she hoped someday to lay her crown at the feet of Jesus. All the rulers will that trusted in Christ’s righteousness and despaired of their own. Our greatest glory on earth is a dim reflection of the blazing brilliance of heaven. Your name written in God’s good book by faith at your Baptism means you get to go. With all the security of those *twelve* gates guarded by *twelve* of God’s invincible holy angels, the gates of heaven will never be shut. **All wealth and no crime!** How great is that?

22:1-5 **Authority!** In another apocalyptic book of the Bible, the Holy Spirit showed Ezekiel the prophet the river of life flowing from the throne of God in Jerusalem. The farther it flowed, the deeper it got until it was *“a river that no one could cross.”* (47:5) In the Garden of Eden our first parents disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree. Suffering and death invaded God’s perfect creation. Adam and Even were shut out of Paradise and prevented from eating of the tree of life. Otherwise, they would have been stuck in death, separated by sin forever from God. In heaven the clear crystal river of the water of life flows down the middle of New Jerusalem’s Main Street. And the tree of life is growing on both sides for everyone to enjoy its constant *twelve* crops of fruit. Body and mind will be healed for all because the Name of Jesus will be written on our foreheads like the radiant smile of a young bride. We belong to Him body and soul, freed from the curse of sin and death, no more frustration on this shadowy planet. No need for the sun when Jesus is shining in all His glory and everywhere our new eyes can see only joy.

22:6 **Total truth at last!** All God’s revelation in the Bible will prove that God never lies.

22:7-9 **Perfect worship!** Now we hear the comforting voice of sweet Jesus Himself: *“Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps [guards, treasures] the words of the prophecy in this book.”* God is on your side. Never alone. We would all get excited, but, Oops! John did it again. Jesus and His holy angels are so very, very patient with us! This is the second time an angel said, *“Do not do it!”* (19:10; 22:9) when John tried to worship him. Angels are our fellow servants. They say, *“Worship God!”*

22:10-11 **Sealed!** But not the Book; Revelation is for everyone. Stop texting. Get off the phone. Shut down your computer unless you’re on a Bible website. This Book can keep you from sin until God seals you in perfection, just as He plans to seal the wicked in their vile ignorance. They will be wrong for all eternity cast away from God into *“outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 8:12 ESV) Hell is God’s eternal, *“Thy will be done,”* to all who rejected His saving will.

22:12-21 **Vindication!** God’s people will be right for all eternity and have the eternal *“right to the tree of life.”* All who hated God and His Son and showed it by their godless practices and attitudes will have a place just for them. They won’t be able to see each other, lost in darkness, stuck in their graves. They will suffer forever in a superhuman torture chamber designed for the devil and his evil angels. If you feel the fear, you’re thirsty. *“Come!”* says the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ holy bride, the Church. Freely you can share in the thirst quenching *“water of life”* forever with the Lord.

With my brother and fellow parishioner, I say about God, “He wins!” Jesus says, *“Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.*

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