
Title: The Church Coming Down from Heaven

Text: Revelation 21:1-4

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Introduction A church near Teheran continues to worship without 3 of its members. During Christmas eve celebrations, security forces barged into a home and hauled off 15 people to jail, 3 of which remain there without legal representation. In Iraq earlier today, churches mourned the loss of a member caught in crossfire when gunmen opened fire on a busload of Christian young people. In Somalia, a church this morning met with one less parishioner... he was executed by Islamic militants on Thursday in front of his house. He leaves behind a wife and 10 children, buried on the compound of his home because the militants would not allow a public burial. Churches in Tennessee cancelled services earlier today, some members with homes under water. In east Texas, 6 congregations met this morning without a church building. Arsonists, who were only recently caught, have torched 6 church buildings since Christmas. Church gatherings in neighborhoods in Arizona and California met this morning having been threatened of being in violation of zoning codes in their neighborhoods. Some churches around the country gathered this morning on the verge of split over church doctrine; while hundreds of other churches met where no gospel could be found. All of these churches have a common denominator. They are churches under attack, both from outside and inside the church.

What is it that keeps these churches moving forward? What is it that gives them hope? Comfort, encouragement, and challenge for a church in duress... that's our subject matter for the next few moments.

There is a piece of classic Christian fiction that begins with these words:

“As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?"

Thus begins the journey of a man we know by the name of Christian whose story is told in the classic, John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. In these opening words we are given Christian's motivation for embarking on the journey as a Pilgrim. Pilgrim wants to rid himself of this grievous burden. And for the first few chapters of his pilgrimage, Christian's is consumed with getting rid of this burden... this "sin" which makes him guilty before God.

We know, of course, that along the way, Christian is shown a wicket gate through which he is ushered to the foot of the cross, where this heavy burden on his back is released and rolls down the hill disappearing forever. Few scenes in Christian fiction are as compelling as this moment in which the Pilgrim is relieved of his burden at the foot of the cross, but this is not the end of Bunyan's story.

Ridding himself of this tremendous burden is not the only motivation for Christian to leave the city of Destruction. Another motivating factor for Christian's journey is the Celestial City. Early in Pilgrim's journey, while Christian is most concerned to get rid of the burden, the Celestial City lies in the backdrop. But as Christian moves from the city of Destruction to the Wicket Gate to the cross to the Porter's Lodge, the further Christian moves on his journey away from the city of Destruction, the Celestial City is more and more prominent in his thinking. Not only is the Celestial City a goal; it is what motivates Christian to continue his journey.

The journey for Christian is not an easy one. It is fraught with difficulty. These difficulties come in multiple forms. Some are enemies of the gospel. Some difficulties are the Pilgrim himself... his lack of faith, his despondency, his weariness. Some are worldly distractions. Regardless of the difficulty, what keeps Christian going is what lies out in front of him... the Celestial City.

At one point, Christian comes to the House Beautiful, a lodging place where weary Pilgrims are refreshed and recharged for the journey. Here, Pilgrim meets not only the porter of the lodge, but 4 women of his family: Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity. As part of their hospitality of encouragement and refreshment, these ladies put Pilgrim's journey in perspective. At one point, Prudence asks Christian, "Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances at times as if they were vanquished?" Christian responds, "Yes: when I think what I saw at the cross, that will do it; and when I look upon my brodered coat, that will do it; and when I look into the roll that I carry in my bosom, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it."

Prudence then asks Christian, "And what is it that makes you so desirous to go to Mount Zion?" Christian responds with an answer that runs straight to the heart of the gospel, "Why, there I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things that to this day are in me an annoyance to me: there they say there is no death, Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4; and there I shall dwell with such company as I like best. For, to tell you the truth, I love Him because I was by Him eased of my burden; and I am weary of my inward sickness. I would fain be where I shall die no more, and with the company that shall continually cry, *Holy, holy, holy.*"

What is it that motivates Christian to press on when the journey gets to be difficult? What is it that compels Christian to keep moving forward, even when there are distractions and disappointments? What is it that provides buoyancy to Christian when the waters get deep? It is the same thing that continues to motivate churches in Iran, in Texas, and Palm Beach. It's a vision of something bigger and grander and more magnificent than the pain and the suffering and the difficulty of the here and now. It is the cross. It is Christ's imputed righteousness. It is the Word of God. And it is the anticipation of the grandeur of the Celestial City. John Bunyan, the Puritan writer, understands well the nature of difficulties in the Christian life, and what it is that motivates the church to persevere through the hard times.

7 Churches Under Attack

We find this to be the case in the book of Revelation. And indeed, Bunyan draws much of his inspiration from the book of Revelation. John Bunyan understands

what the Apostle John is compelled to understand as he writes down the series of visions given on the Isle of Patmos. What goes largely unnoticed when we read the book of Revelation is that this book was written to churches in Asia Minor, or what is now known as Turkey... and these churches, founded by John, were experiencing great difficulty.

The recipients of the book of Revelation were the seven churches we find in chapters 2 and 3 (Revelation 1:4). And if we were to spend the time reading those two chapters this morning, we would find that these 7 churches are facing severe difficulties from within and without. **These churches are being tempted to compromise the gospel. They are beset with complacency and lethargy. And they are under threat of persecution from Rome.** Increasingly, the Caesar is imposing his will on this fledgling movement called "The Way". These churches are under attack both from inside and outside of the church. And it's not just these churches facing much difficulty... The apostle John, the likely founder of these seven churches, himself has been exiled to the island of Patmos as the result of his faith witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Seven churches and a founding apostle facing are some stiff opposition and challenges. Some of these churches seem as though they are beginning to wilt, giving in to fear, temptation, and compromise of the gospel. Into this situation, comes "One like the Son of Man, whose head and hair were white like wool, whose eyes were like a flame of fire, whose countenance was like the sun shining in its strength, out of Whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

The risen and exalted Christ, the Great I AM who holds the keys of Hades and Death, appears to John, and through John delivers the book of Revelation. What is it that provides those churches and the exiled Apostle John with hope when things get tough? What is it that they need in order to persevere? That leads us to our text this evening. Turn to Revelation 21:1... :this is what the Word of God proclaims to us:

Revelation 21:1-8 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The Book of Revelation

Throughout the book of Revelation, **these seven churches (and churches associated with them) are given visions** of what is taking place behind the scenes to bring about their full and final redemption. **What they see on earth is misery, compromise, and persecution.** But the curtain is pulled back so that the church can see the unseen realities behind the misery, compromise, and persecution.

What they see behind the curtain, in heaven, is war, war against them, war against the church, war against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And throughout the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is portrayed as the Divine Warrior, the Risen and Exalted One who conquers sin, death, and all of His enemies on behalf of His church. As we near the end of the book, the drama begins to crescendo into one final showdown between the Divine Warrior and His enemies. The Great War between Jesus and all that oppose Him is brought to a stunning and final conclusion. Satan, sin, and death are defeated, once and for all. Which brings us to chapter 20.

For those of you who like to keep track of such things, the phrase **“I saw” marks off the final visions in the book of Revelation as the end of history unfolds.** The sixth “I saw” occurs in chapter 20 at the beginning of the scene of the Great White Throne, verse 11: "then I saw a great white throne". This sixth "I saw" marks off a vision of untold horror, the end of history with the full force of God's eternal fury unleash in a final judgment against his enemies.

As we come to the end of Revelation chapter 20, the Lamb of God is no longer in submission to the humiliation that characterized his first advent in the Incarnation. At the culmination of human history, every vestige of that humiliation, save the scars on his body, have vanished. Everything the Apostle John wanted in a Savior, everything Israel ever dreamed of in a Champion, everything the elect for all time ever attached their hopes and their dreams to, everything the seven churches ever hoped for in relief from their own impending persecution finally descends from heaven, riding on a white horse to deal with His enemies once and for all. As chapter 20 draws to an end, these seven churches are shown the finality of human history coming to a dramatic conclusion. The Son of Man, who first appeared "behind" John in blazing shekinah glory in Revelation 1:13-16, from His shekinah glory throne, **vindicates His name, vindicates His people, and executes God’s justice.** The finality of human history is so sweeping, Christ’s exaltation so consummate, and His judgment so final, even **heaven and earth flee from His presence in the end.**

Among the details of the end of chapter 20 and the vision of the Great White Throne is this in verse 11... **“from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”** And the chapter ends like this: **“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

That’s the end of human history. That’s all she wrote. The last sad chapter of the tale of Adam’s fall in the garden of Eden is closed.

Or is it? Put yourself in the shoes of those seven churches hearing this for the first time. In the scene of the Great White Throne, they have been given a picture of human history coming to a violent and cataclysmic conclusion. Human history just had the wind sucked out of its sails. Christ’s holiness, majesty, and supremacy are

so bright. His judgment so final. Some might even say, “how depressing”. John the Apostle wants us to feel the weight of what has just happened.

As God's enemies are tossed into the lake of fire forever and ever, John wants us to wonder, “but what of the church that has been seemingly rescued?” What of this “book of life”? Some in these seven churches in Asia Minor are given to wonder, “where is the hope?” “Is that all?” “Is that it?” One question that arises coming out of chapter 20 is this: what happens if there is no heaven and earth? Heaven and earth have fled. What if chapter 20 were all there was to the story? What if John's visions were to end there? What if John were to put down his pen and write no more? What of the Old Testament promises? What of the Christ-figured who was supposed to redeem for himself a people of God? The imagery of death and hell being cast into the lake of fire is both horrific and shocking. You can hear a pin drop at the end of chapter 20.

The Final Vision

Into this silence John writes in chapter 21 verse 1... “and I saw”. No, it’s not over. No, churches of Asia Minor, that’s not all there is. This is the seventh “and I saw” and it is set up as a contrast with the sixth “I saw”. The seventh “I saw”, found in our passage, Revelation 21:1, not only **provides a stark contrast with the sixth “I saw”** that ends in the lake of fire, this “I saw” emphatically **marks a break** with chapter 20, so that we get the sense that there is even more to say about Christ’s rescue of the church and judgment of his enemies.

And indeed what follows in chapters 21 and 22 is so much more magnificent and stupendous against the backdrop of the Great White Throne scene at the end of chapter 20. John wants us to see a stark contrast here between the judgment of God's enemies and the church for which He died; and those words “and I saw” must have come as great relief to the seven churches hearing this for the first time. “And I saw” breaks into the deafening silence, the beginnings of a stunning conclusion.

The hope of Revelation 21: The New Creation

“And I saw”... what is it that John saw? What is it that gives these seven churches **hope** in the face of great difficulty? What does John see that they need to see and hear as they face persecution and resist compromise of the gospel? What does the future look like for these churches in Asia Minor? Where will they end up? What is to be their ultimate destiny? In the next 8 verses, John is going to summarize what follows in the remaining verses of Revelation. The entire end unit of Revelation, Revelation 21 and 22, are summarized in these eight verses. And in these 8 verses, with one final vision marked off by “I saw”, John gives these seven churches promises from the Scriptures to hold onto in the face of increasing persecution and great temptation to compromise the gospel. Christ answers these questions through the series of visions in the book of Revelation and in this final vision, this final “and I saw”, these churches get a glimpse of what is to be their destiny.

It's easy for us to miss this, because we're so used to reading Revelation 21 and 22 as if the eternal bliss is a given... but John's readers, having been given a glimpse of the cataclysmic end of God's enemies must be wondering, “what of the church”?

And against the backdrop of ultimate judgment, the first thing John sees is a glorious New Heaven and New Earth. **What lies in store for the church in the midst of difficulty is a New Creation.** When these churches first read or hear the language being used here, what is brought to their mind? This language calls to mind the original creation, the words that open our Scripture: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There in the pages of Genesis 1 and 2 we are told that God made all things and when he had finished what he saw pleased him. He saw that everything he had made was very good. In this created order God placed man and woman in a beautiful, magnificent garden where Creator and creature enjoyed sweet and unhindered communion. In this garden, God dwells with his image-bearing people who are given mandates to fill the earth and rule it as stewards of the Creator.

But of course, we know that the promise and potential of Adam and Eve fulfilling their purpose in the garden never comes to fruition. The storyline of humanity from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 is filled with violence, sin, and death. And ultimately, in Revelation 20, that storyline of man’s rebellion ends in a spectacular “train wreck”, with the enemies of God being cast into the lake of fire. Yet there is another storyline in the pages of this book, a storyline of redemption. The Creator takes on human flesh in the very first advent. This Creator redeems for himself a people in his death and resurrection. Jesus becomes the great reconciler between God and man, the Last Adam who restores the communion between God and his people.

As we come to chapter 21, heaven and earth have fled the presence of the One who created them. And in the wake of judgment against his enemies, this same Creator makes a New Heavens and a New Earth, a new worshipping environment where the Creator and Creature will forever enjoy sweet and unhindered communion. **In this new garden, Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of Man on his throne, dwells with his image-bearing people who fill the earth with His glory.** This is the destiny of God’s people. This is the comfort for a people who must be thinking that strife and difficulty are inherent to their religious assembly. But not only are they given assurance that there will come a day that **God’s enemies will be dealt with** in finality, but they are given the hope that **the entire earth order that has contributed to their pain and misery will be regenerated and transformed.**

This New Heavens and New Earth are in stark contrast to the old heaven and old earth that have fled the scene, old creation running from the Creator that made it. As we see in verse four, the old order things, with its death, sin, disease, sickness, sorrow, and pain is gone. All that is left is a new order. What we find here in the New Heavens and New Earth isn’t simply a restoration of the old order, but a radical transformation, a creative act that results in a new, grander, greater, and better order than the first. In this new order there is no threat against Christ or His church. This New Heavens and New Earth is forever safe from anything that would rise up against the Exalted One and His people. This new, grander, greater, and better order has been secured by Jesus who died and rose again to make it so. This is the destiny, this is the hope, this is the comfort of a church facing the threat of persecution, or the temptation to compromise the testimony of the gospel.

The hope of Revelation 21: The New Jerusalem

The second “I saw” is actually a continuation of the first one here. Verse 2: “and I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem”. This New Creation doesn’t simply involve the cosmos, the general created order. **This New Creation involves a New City, a New People of God.** Here in chapter 21 John is alluding to and referencing promises that were made back in Isaiah 52, that God’s people would someday be redeemed and restored to God’s presence. **Jerusalem, throughout the Scriptures, is the symbol and type of God’s rule on earth** and expressed in the throne of David. **Jerusalem was home to both** the throne and the temple, from whence the rule and the worship of the One true God of Israel was to extended to the ends of the earth. But, **in the old order**, Jerusalem rejected the rule of the Messiah and was reduced to rubble. In the new order of things, a new Jerusalem which is a new creation and a new garden of Eden is home to the communion between God and His people.

What comfort this was to these seven churches in Asia Minor. The jewel of jewels, the city on a **hill is their destiny.** These churches are to see this new Jerusalem as their celestial home.

But it’s more than that. You see, early on in Revelation, in chapter 3 verse 12 identical language is used as a promise to the church in Philadelphia. Listen to this language:

Revelation 3:12 **He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.**

Already, these churches are to understand themselves as identified as the New Jerusalem. So that by the time they are hearing this final vision, they already understand themselves and their destiny as that of the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven. What gives them comfort and hope in the throes of difficulty is that already the New Jerusalem is coming down from heaven as **the local body of believers.** This destiny of a celestial city will be theirs because it is already theirs. The prospect of the grandeur of the New Jerusalem is all the more real in what they are experiencing now as God’s chosen people.

The hope of Revelation 21: A Heavenly City

However, there are two qualifications given by John the Apostle (in Revelation 21) that make this New Jerusalem substantially different than the Jerusalem of the old order. Unlike the first Jerusalem which had been built by David, this Jerusalem’s builder and maker is God. **This New Jerusalem has a heavenly origin.** Its substance is spiritual. It does not arise from the earth, but comes down from heaven. **It is an objective reality, not a subjective experience.** This New Jerusalem is a dwelling place for God that cannot be created by human hands. **This New Jerusalem is a divine kingdom from which Christ will rule and reign that cannot be conquered or established by human effort or ingenuity.** This is the destiny, the hope, and the comfort of a church being challenged with the prospects of persecution or the temptation to compromise the testimony of the gospel.

But, in the midst of their own difficult situations, John is also showing these seven churches in Asia Minor something about the nature of the church that **is already true for them**. By already identifying these churches with the New Jerusalem in chapters 2 and 3, John here is showing them that their existence as bodies of believers in Asia Minor is not of human origin. Even the much-maligned church at Laodicea (and rightly so) has its origins in heaven. This One **whose head and hair were white like wool, out of Whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword**, bringing comfort to John on Patmos in chapter 1, provides comfort and assurance to these seven churches by reminding them that He is the one who has brought them to life as a New Creation.

These seven churches are churches that have come down from heaven; some of them will be ravaged by wolves in sheep's clothing, those anti-Christos who lead them astray. Some of them will feel the fury of Rome, shedding blood because they dared to declare Christ as King and not Caesar. Some of them may feel like they are fading away in malaise and complacency. Yet for those who overcome, who persevere, those who are Christ's redeemed, Christ gives them a grand picture of what lies in store for them and in so doing, reminds them of who they are *right now* in difficult circumstances. It may seem to them that they have gathered themselves together in Asia Minor as around a central idea of the risen Christ as baptized believers, but the greater, unseen reality is that Jesus Christ, the Divine Warrior who will conquer all of their enemies on their behalf, has himself called them out and gathered them together as a people unto himself. These churches didn't gather themselves together. These churches didn't create the faith community. These churches didn't simply decide to meet together, and as a result of their decision to meet, became "the church". No, these churches are of heavenly origin.

The hope of Revelation 21: A Bride

And these churches are not simply of divine origin, **but a people on whom this Divine Warrior, the Exalted and Risen Jesus, has lavished his unending and unending love**. This is found in the second qualification pertaining to this New Jerusalem that we are not used to thinking about... one that is aimed at tilting our thinking about this New Creation and New Jerusalem. This New Jerusalem isn't simply a place. This New Jerusalem is a people. How do we know this? Because of the second qualifier here: this New Jerusalem doesn't simply come down from heaven; **this New Jerusalem is a bride adorned for her husband**. All of the marriage imagery of the Scriptures lands here in this vision of the New Creation, which is the New Jerusalem. **This New Jerusalem will be intimate union between the Savior and his redeemed people**. Here John invokes the language of Isaiah 61:10,

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

From Isaiah 62:4-5:

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah:

for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”

This Isaiah passage finds its fulfillment in the New Creation, the New Jerusalem, the seven churches that come down from heaven. John wants these churches to see their destiny as a bride that has been adorned for her bridegroom, just as Isaiah had prophesied. Throughout all of the history of redemption, God has been preparing a bride for himself, a people that he would redeem and claim as His own. God has been preparing an adorned bride, a bride that radiates with Christ’s image and glory. And this bride *is* the New Jerusalem.

This bride is “adorned”, an allusion to the righteousness of salvation. This bride for whom Christ died is forever identified in the New Heaven and New Earth as a people on whom Christ lavished his own righteousness, a righteousness without which it is impossible to enjoy God in face to face communion. **The church coming down from heaven is given a righteousness not her own, but a righteousness imputed to her from Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.**

What is it that will carry these churches going through much difficulty to their final destination? The Divine Warrior, in the midst of all of their difficult in Asia Minor, is preparing for himself a bride, a bride on whom he has abundantly and extravagantly lavished His own righteousness.

Some of these churches will fade into obscurity. Some of these churches will flourish in the expansion of the kingdom. Others will meet a horrific but glorious end on the point of Caesar’s sword for swearing allegiance to Jesus. But all of them are reminded in this vision of what is to be their destiny that they are Christ’s bride whom he loved unto His own death. They are given a vision of an adorned bride bearing the image of Jesus Christ himself, descending from heaven to meet her Savior with whom there will be the most intimate union forever and ever. It is that vision providing these churches comfort and assurance to keep going even when it gets painfully difficult.

Conclusion

What then does this have to do with us? What does this have to do with this church or any other church that claims the name of Jesus Christ? I hope, if we are placing ourselves in the shoes of the churches to which the Book of Revelation was given, as we are supposed to do, that the conclusions are already obvious. We must ask ourselves, **“where are our eyes”?** Are they focused on something other than Jesus and those things that will last forever? Is the longing of our hearts for things that we can see in this world and will fade away? And we must ask ourselves **“where are our ears”?** Are we listening to the tempting sounds of disloyalty to Jesus? Are we listening to those who would have us focus our eyes on the present, looking for the easy road in following Jesus?

Where is our hope? What is it that captures our fancy? As we come to Revelation 21, we must have our eyes where the Apostle John did. First, we need to have a majestic vision of Jesus. As we turn the pages of the Book of Revelation, not only must we see Jesus as the crucified lamb who has redeemed for himself a people, but also an exalted and sovereign Jesus who is on His throne orchestrating all of history on behalf of His redeemed people. We also must keep in front of us,

as times get difficult, as the culture tempts us with disloyalty to Jesus, the promise of a New Creation, a New Heavens and a New Earth.

And then there is the question of identity: **Who are we?** Are we simply a club, a local gathering of people associating together because we think the same way about Jesus and the Bible? Is that what will keep us going this week when the world presses in? When we are tempted to think of the church and even treat the church as something that we have assembled together by human effort, we must resist that thought and cling to the fact that the church is of divine origin; it is not ours, it is Christ's. Who are we? We are the beginnings of a New Creation, the earthly presence of the New Jerusalem. The church, even as we gather together, comes down from heaven. It is Christ, from His throne and through the Spirit, breathing life into the community and bringing us together as a people of God. This is our identity, this is our motivation in a world that is broken.

Just as John holds out in front of us the sight of an exalted Christ making the New City, New Jerusalem as encouragement for the journey, so too the four women of the House Beautiful hold out in front of Christian a similar vision. Bunyan writes,

Now I saw in my dream, that thus they sat talking together until supper was ready. So when they had made ready, they sat down to meat. Now the table was furnished with fat things, and with wine that was well refined; and all their talk at the table was about the Lord of the hill; as, namely, about what he had done, and wherefore he did what he did, and why he had builded that house; and by what they said, I perceived that he had been a great warrior, and had fought with and slain him that had the power of death, Heb. 2:14,15; but not without great danger to himself, which made me love him the more.

For, as they said, and as I believe, said Christian, he did it with the loss of much blood. But that which put the glory of grace into all he did, was, that he did it out of pure love to his country. And besides, there were some of them of the household that said they had been and spoke with him since he did die on the cross; and they have attested that they had it from his own lips, that he is such a lover of poor pilgrims, that the like is not to be found from the east to the west. They, moreover, gave an instance of what they affirmed; and that was, he had stripped himself of his glory that he might do this for the poor; and that they heard him say and affirm, that he would not dwell in the mountain of Zion alone.

The risen and exalted Christ is making all things new, even as the bride is being prepared for the bridegroom. We are Christ's bride for whom He died. We are a people on whom Christ has lavished his own righteousness, a righteousness without which it is impossible to enjoy reconciliation, communion, and fellowship with God in the midst of brokenness. The church coming down from heaven has been given a righteousness not our own, but a righteousness imputed to us from Christ's life, death, and resurrection. It may not have seemed like it to Pilgrim. It may not seem like it to us, in the pain and misery and difficulty of living life in a messed up world. But the Divine Warrior, is preparing for himself a bride, a bride on whom

he has abundantly and extravagantly lavished His own righteousness. We must take our place along side these seven churches in Revelation 21. Our destiny is our present reality, imperfect as it may seem. The Bride is the City, being prepared as a dwelling place, in order that Jesus will not dwell in the mountain of Zion alone.