

Glimpses of the Kingdom

2. The city (Part 1)

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“Blessed be the LORD: for He hath shewed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city” (Ps. 31:21).

LOOK UPWARDS! What’s that stretching far above us? It is almost further than the human eye can see, with strong walls, great gates, gilded buildings, ramparts shining in the ethereal air. It is a city, but what a city! Jerusalem the free, beautiful for elevation. She is the capital city both of the Land and of the whole earth, the centre of all government and worship and knowledge, the city of our solemnities; there has never been anything like her before!

She is a city whose builder and maker is God. Some there were, a precious few, who searched for a city, a place of habitation for the family of God, knowing themselves to be strangers and sojourners in the earth. Here she is, builded as a city that is compact together, holding open her arms to those who come to her, but ruthlessly keeping out all those who have forfeited the right to enter in, everything that loveth and maketh a lie. She is the eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. She is Mount Zion, which cannot be removed but abideth for ever. From her walls gush the living waters of the great river, the streams whereof make glad the City of God. Upon her there is a cloud by day, and fire by night, speaking of the continuing presence of the Almighty.

Moses foretold that the Lord would bring in the people He had purchased and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, in the place which He had made to dwell in. So, out of all the earth He ordained there would be a place where He would meet with His people, where the Divine would make contact with the earthly, like the mercy seat and finally the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be a place of God’s choosing, not man’s, the place which His own hands had established.

The Almighty is beyond space and time, and, in order to commune with His creation, there has to be a meeting-place, a door into our three-dimensional world. This door was to be, not just a place or even a city, but a Man, born of a woman but begotten of God, promised as the one who would be like unto his brethren, but like unto the Lord too. An angel kept Israel in the way

and brought them into the place which the Creator had prepared; and the building of the sanctuary for the Almighty to dwell in commenced *from within*, with the making of the ark, that potent symbol of God’s presence and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though the Lord is everywhere—“in Him we live, and move, and have our being”—Scripture confirms God’s promise finally to dwell in the midst of Zion, the place that He loves and has desired for His habitation. He loves her gates more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and chose no other city among all the tribes of Israel, but ordained that His Name might be there. It is the apple of His eye.

We should prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy. God’s angels are the heavenly doorkeepers. Revelation tells us each portal of pearl had an angel, and this is why the psalm says, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates . . . and the King of glory shall come in”; gates don’t have heads, but angels do! Beautiful for situation, the *joy of the whole earth*, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north. The Lord promised He would never forget Jerusalem; she was graven on the palms of His hands, her walls were continually before Him.

In the midst of Jerusalem is the house of the Lord, established in the top of the mountains, more “exceeding magnificent” than David could have dreamt, of fame and glory throughout all countries. Like David, Christ prepared himself to build a house for God, having been shown the pattern by the Spirit, as Moses was. He is the great Master Builder, and by his sacrificial death he prepared a place for us. Tribes go up to Jerusalem to worship year by year, the judgement thrones of the house of David are there for all to see, and kings and princes, riding in chariots and on horses, enter in at the gates. Jerusalem is called a city of truth, it is the centre of excellence for instruction in righteousness. Those who visit her will do as the psalmist says: “Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following”. The law of the Lord streams forth from Jerusalem like endless light. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.