

DCF:

Rebecca grew up in a Victorian house with a great big back yard. It had a huge front porch where she played on summer days with her brother and sister. It had a mysterious basement where you could play hide and seek. It had an attic filled with all sorts of treasures that had been accumulating since grandma and grandpa had built the house. Out back there was an orchard where you could pick and eat apples. Raspberry bushes, green bean plants and fresh carrots were all treasures that could be found. Oh, it was glorious! Her cousins would often drop in, and the house would be filled with laughter and love. It was a great house to grow up in.

Too bad Rebecca wasn't there now. She was living in a 2 room walk up in New York City, following her dream of being a lawyer. She worked long hours and sometimes it seemed she was living light-years away from her loving family. When things got tough, when the snow was flying, the subways were crowded, the people were rude, she often thought about her childhood home. She knew she was going home for Christmas, and that gave her the strength to keep on going as she battled life in the big city.

Today we finish our dive into the book of Revelation for a few months. These last few Sundays we've had our Lord encouraging us to look ahead as we live in this sinful world. Come with me today as we take a last look at **“OUR GLORIOUS HOME!”** Once again we see that it's built on Christ and also that it's lit by Him.

Part One: It's built on Christ

Just a reminder about the book of Revelation. In it, God is using pictures and symbols to show us what the end times will be like. He shows us that there will be troubles galore because of sin. But here at the end of the book, He focuses our eyes on the final outcome of His plan for this world. He shows us our eternal home in all its glory.

Now, this part of Revelation is a vision of what heaven will be like after the events of Judgment Day. The devil has been conquered and thrown into the pit. Sin has been swept out of this universe. Now, in this vision that John receives, he sees only peace, joy and safety. He sees all believers of all time gathered into God's presence. The New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, is complete. Everyone chosen by God has been gathered in.

And, oh, how precious we are to the Lord! That's the point God wants to make to us. One of the seven angels says to John, ***“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”*** He describes us with a picture of absolute magnificence. Shining with brilliance, paved with gold. Huge precious jewels and pearls.

We are precious to the Lord. That's what this description is meant to get across to us. Those 12 gates? Not real gates, but a picture to show us that all those called by God - the true Israel - are inside. The 12 foundations of the apostles? They symbolize the teachings that the apostles spread - the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The new Jerusalem is not based on human beings. It's not founded on the personalities of the apostles or on the fact that they were close to Jesus while He was here on earth. No, the New Jerusalem - all believers of all time - is founded on what they proclaimed. Those 12 angels? That's meant to teach us that in heaven we will have perfect protection. No evil can get in. Those 12 angels remind me of the angel that guarded the tree of life in the Garden of Eden after the fall into sin. God will not allow anything sinful to enter His holy city, His heaven.

Our glorious home is built on Christ. Jesus had talked about Himself as the foundation of eternal life in Matthew 7. We sing this truth in the hymn “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”. This picture of all Christians as a glorious city reinforces the fact that our eternal life is built on Christ.

Wonderful pictures! Delightful words! Using the picture of all believers as the New Jerusalem, we can truly say that Jesus has built you into His city. It is in Baptism that He began this construction project. On that day He gave you a saving faith. Then, as you grew, He molded you through the Word and Sacrament. And now, in Revelation, He shows you just how precious you are to Him.

Does this vision remind you of your life right now? Despite all the problems you may be experiencing in life, do you see how precious you are to God? Do you realize how much He treasures you? Perhaps there's even more you have in common with this vision. Not only are we treasured by God, we are also lit by Christ as we live right here and now.

Part Two: Lit by Him

As John gazed upon this wonderful sight, something seemed a bit off to him. ***"I did not see a temple in the city."*** That struck him as strange, because the temple was the center of a believer's life in his time. That's where you went to worship the Lord. That's where you went to offer sacrifices and learn more about Him. That's where the Lord came to meet with you. On this sinful earth, there's a separation between sinful people and a sinless God. So, you needed to go to His house to meet with Him. But in heaven, there's no temple.

This pictures the difference between our lives now and our lives in heaven. Now, we need a separate place to worship. We need a place to disconnect from this sinful world. We need a place to eliminate distractions, to focus on the Lord. We need a sacred place. Why? Because the devil loves to distract us. He loves to distract us by sometimes using God's blessings to turn our eyes away from worshiping Him. The devil distracts us by using God's blessings of nice weather. It can be a blessing. It can be a distraction. A comfortable couch - sometimes a blessing, sometimes a distraction. Friends, hobbies and money? Sometimes a blessing from God. Sometimes a distraction from worship. So, we need a sacred place to gather and tune out the distractions so we can worship God from our hearts. We need a place, a ritual to quiet our minds so we can listen and respond to our Lord's loving voice.

But not in heaven! In heaven there is no separation from Jesus. There are no sinful distractions. No interruptions. Jesus will be everywhere, personally present and attentive at all times. Our interaction with Him will be perfect. No cellphones ringing. No commercials, no urgent needs of a neighbor or an urge to do something else. He will be with us face to face. We will have full communication with our Savior God.

Jesus further pictures this complete communication with us by saying He is the light that lights the city. Now, light is often used to describe the Savior. He calls Himself the light of the world. The Old Testament talks about the light for the Gentiles. Light is a good thing, isn't it? It dispels the darkness and shows the truth.

So, what does Jesus, the Light that lights the New Jerusalem, want to show us when we're in heaven? God's love in all its fullness. He will shine God's favor into our lives every minute of every day. He will shine His care, His concern, all the blessings He can think of. He is always present, always caring, always showing us how much He treasures us.

Don't you wish that you could have that light right now? So many things get in the way of Jesus' presence in our lives. There's the flooded basement, braces for the kids, our medical challenges, our financial challenges and family challenges. We've got to take care of all the little things (and sometimes the big things) in life. We don't always see Jesus' presence, His light, in our lives because of the shadows of sin.

Rebecca did make it home for Christmas that year. Her parents, her brother and sister and their kids were there as well. Oh, did they have fun! They spoiled one another with gifts. They reconnected with one another over coffee at the breakfast table and remembered memories after supper. "Oh," Rebecca thought, "it's good to be home!"

When our Lord comes on Judgment Day, we'll say the very same thing! We will be with Him. We shall see Him face to face. We will be bathed in the light of God's love forever. We'll be in **"OUR GLORIOUS HOME!"**

AMEN