

The New Jerusalem

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[0 : 00] It's great to worship with you all. Please turn your Bibles to Revelation chapter 21, verses 9 to 27. If you don't have a Bible, if you raise your hand, we'd love to bring over a copy to you that you can have and use.

We're getting close to the end of our sermon series in the book of Revelation. We're in chapter 21 today, verses 9 to 27. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean.

I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and it is my great joy and honor to preach God's word to you this morning. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, we humble our hearts before you and incline our ears to you now.

Speak to us from your inerrant, infallible word, and impress deeply upon our hearts your love for your church.

And captivate us with the beauty and the glory that will be New Jerusalem, that will be ours in eternity, so that it shapes our perspectives and our priorities here and now.

[1 : 32] Meet with us now in your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand and join me as I read out loud Revelation 21, 9 to 27.

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me saying, come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper clear as crystal.

It had a great high wall with 12 gates and at the gates 12 angels. And on the gates, the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed.

On the east, three gates, on the north, three gates, on the south, three gates, and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had 12 foundations. And on them were the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the lamb.

[2 : 52] And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies four square, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia.

Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.

The wall was built of jasper while the city was pure gold like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel.

The first was jasper. The second, sapphire. The third, agate. The fourth, emerald. The fifth, onyx. The sixth, carnelian.

The seventh, crystallite. The eighth, beryl. The ninth, topaz. The tenth, chrysoprase. The eleventh, jacinth. The twelfth, amethyst.

[3 : 52] And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each of them, each of the gates made of a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Jesus said in Matthew 6, 19 to 21, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

But throw up your treasures in heaven where the moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus teaches us there a very important principle. He's commanding us, choose your treasure carefully. Because your heart, the direction of your life, always follow your treasure.

If you treasure climbing the career ladder and being successful and making loads of money, then that's where your heart, the center of your being, will be preoccupied with.

[5 : 08] If you treasure your children above all things, then all your exerting and spending and warring will orbit around them.

If you treasure the approval and affection of men, then the bulk of your time and energy and money will be spent around trying to impress other humans. So choose your treasure carefully.

Make sure that your treasure is in heaven where it will be safe and secure forever rather than here on earth. And that's what really Revelation 21 and the entire book of Revelation has been about.

It's been portraying to us eternal realities through visual symbols such as to capture our spiritual imagination. To tell us, here's something really worth living for.

Here's something really worth treasuring. Here's something that will never depreciate in value. A currency that will never expire. An inheritance that never wears out.

[6 : 17] The resurrection life. The kingdom of God. A new heaven and a new earth. The new Jerusalem. Eternal, unbroken fellowship with the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.

What we treasure in our hearts, what we love is like a rudder that determines the direction and guides the ship. Treasure this and your heart will follow.

Treasure this and you will have heavenly perspectives. Treasure this and then you will have heavenly purposes and heavenly priorities. And if we don't this morning feel a homesickness for a new heaven and a new earth, then that may be a warning for us that we are probably not treasuring the things of heaven.

That's the main point of my sermon this morning. Looking forward to the new Jerusalem in which we will have unhindered fellowship with God.

We should live holy lives and hold on to the testimony of Jesus. And I'm going to talk about the new Jerusalem in three different facets. First, it's unassailable in its security. Second, it is unflawed in its symmetry.

[7 : 35] And third, it's unparalleled in its splendor. First, we can look forward to the new Jerusalem because it will be unassailable in its security.

It says in verse 9, Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

This might sound familiar to you, and that's no coincidence, because one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and made a very similar announcement about Babylon the great prostitute earlier in chapter 17, verse 1.

He said there, Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters.

So these are parallel introductions of two opposite realities. And it intentionally draws a contrast between the great prostitute and the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

[8 : 36] Remember, they're both depicted as women, and they're both depicted as cities. And that's how we know these are metaphors and symbols, because you cannot be a woman and a city at the same time.

The great prostitute is Babylon, the city of man. And the wife of the Lamb is the holy city, Jerusalem, that comes down out of heaven from God.

Babylon has written on her forehead the name, Babylon the Great, Mother of Prostitutes and of Earth's Abominations, it said in 17.5. But the New Jerusalem has the name of God and of the Lamb on her forehead.

In Revelation 21, verse 4. Babylon the harlot is seated on many waters. That's a symbol of how she committed adultery with the kings of the earth.

Her idolatrous maritime commerce represented by these many waters. But in stark contrast, the New Jerusalem has only one source of water, the spring of living water, the river of life that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb in the new city, the holy city, because she is the faithful one, the faithful bride.

[9 : 49] In the end, Revelation 17.16 told us that the prostitute will be made desolate and naked, but the bride of the Lamb will be clothed in white.

The prostitute is used by men selfishly.

The wife is loved by men selflessly. He says in Ephesians 5.25, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

That's what wives deserve. Do you want to be a prostitute that is used and abused and discarded? Or do you want to be the bride, the wife of the Lamb, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and be cherished by him forever?

If you want that, then hold on to the testimony of Jesus and endure to the end and forsake the idolatrous desires of this world.

[11 : 02] Early in Revelation 12, the woman who represented the people of God took shelter in the wilderness, where she was spiritually protected by God, but physically vulnerable and persecuted by the dragon.

But in a new heaven and a new earth, as we see here, we will no longer be in the wilderness. It says in verse 10, And he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

We'll be on the mountaintop in eternity. Throughout scripture, wilderness is the place of journeying. It's the place of testing. Think of Israel's journey through the wilderness when they are tested for 40 years, and finally they arrive in the holy land, in Canaan, Mount Zion, where they worship God in the temple.

Or compare that to Jesus' journey into the wilderness where he is tested and tempted by Satan for 40 days. And then after that, he begins his ministry and climbs up to give his sermon on the mount.

In scripture, wilderness is the place of not yet. The mountaintop is the place of finally here. The mountain is the place of arrival, the place of promise, place of revelation, the place of God's presence and communion with him.

[12 : 28] And that's why Ezekiel 40 verses 1 to 2 prophesied that the end time city and temple will be set on a very high mountain. And so the new Jerusalem is on a great high mountain.

And it says in verse 11 that this holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God has the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

John reported something very similar in his earlier vision of the throne room of God in heaven in Revelation 4. He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

And before the throne, there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal. The glory of God is resplendent. It's brilliant. And on that day, the glory of God will be our glory also.

Know what it says in verse 11. The new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. The fact that this new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, the fact that this new Jerusalem is not built up from the bottom up here on earth, but whether it comes down from God, shows us that our fellowship with God, our eternal destiny, is not a human achievement.

[13 : 52] It is a gift from God. And the fact that the glory of the new Jerusalem will not be our own glory, but the glory of God, it says, tells us that God's people are those who have humbled themselves before God, those who do not seek or boast in their own glory, but rather seek the glory of God alone.

Unlike the city of Babel, remember that? Genesis 11, which was a monument to human hubris, built by sinful men who said to themselves, come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.

That was their motivation. The holy city of Jerusalem, in contrast, comes down out of heaven from God as a gift. And it will have the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel inscribed on the gates, and the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb written on the foundation.

People who have pledged their allegiance to Jesus, they're the ones who ultimately get their names inscribed forever. It's those who deny themselves and take up the cross and follow Jesus.

Those who lose their lives for the sake of Jesus, who ultimately find it. Brothers and sisters, where do you want your name to be remembered and inscribed at the end of the ages?

[15 : 27] For whose glory are you living? Do you want to see your name published in the Fortune magazine's 40 Under 40? Do you want to see your name engraved in Kendall Square's Entrepreneur Walk of Fame alongside Bill Gates and Bill Hewlett and Bob Swanson, David Packard, Mitch Caper and Steve Jobs and Thomas Edison?

Listen, I assure you that all of those names will be forgotten one day. And only the names that are written in the Lamb's book of life, only those who belong to the church of Christ, the people of God, they will have their names inscribed forever on the 12 gates, the 12 foundations of the New Jerusalem.

Only they will be remembered forever. So where is your treasure? Choose your treasure carefully. Make sure that your treasure is in the new heaven and the new earth and not on this earth which is passing away.

And don't miss the radical unity of the people of God. It says both Jews and Gentiles, the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel, the old covenant people of God are inscribed on the gates, and the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb, are written on the 12 foundations because it says in Ephesians 2, 19 to 20, that both Jews and Gentiles are fellow citizens and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

There are not two segregated cities in the new Jerusalem. There's only one new Jerusalem because there is neither Jew nor Greek for we are all one in Christ Jesus because we have one body, one spirit, just as we are called to the one hope that belongs to our call.

[17 : 23] One Lord, one faith, one baptism, which we'll celebrate shortly. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Right now, the people of God are plagued by many kinds of divisions along ethnic lines, radical, you know, racial lines, political lines, doctrinal lines, geographical lines.

And we long for the full expression of our spiritual unity, which is not yet. But in the new Jerusalem, we will be perfectly one.

Verse 12 continues the description of the city. It had a great high wall with 12 gates and at the gates, 12 angels. Earlier in verse 10, we were told that the new Jerusalem sits atop a great high mountain.

And now we are told that on top of that great high mountain, there's also a great high wall. As if the mountain itself were in sufficient defense. And this wall must be exceedingly high since it's protecting a city that it says is 12,000 stadia in height, according to verse 16.

[18 : 34] One stadion is about 607 feet. So that's about 1,400 miles or 2,200 kilometers in height, this city.

The Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, is the world's tallest building and it stands 2,717 feet. The new Jerusalem is 7,392,000 feet tall.

As I said earlier, this is a metaphor. It's figurative and symbolic. It's conveying, but it is conveying a spiritual reality. It's supposed to boggle our minds. If a city is that tall, then how tall is the great high wall that's already sitting on a great high mountain to protect it?

And that's why I think the measurement of the wall that's given in verse 17, 144 cubits, is not referring to its height or the length of the wall, but to the wall's width, to its thickness, which is how the NIV translates it.

The Great Wall of China at its widest point, most of it is much narrower than this, at its widest point is 32 feet thick, but 144 cubit wall is 216 feet thick.

[19 : 50] That's about the width of a professional soccer field. So it's going to take us a while to just walk through the gates. And the point is this, this is a completely impenetrable fortress.

Not only that, over each of the 12 gates, there are 12 angels. The Lord says in Isaiah 62, verse 6, on your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen.

These are guardian angels, heavenly sentinels. If you have been with us throughout our sermon series in Revelation, you know how powerful even just one of these angels are. Can wipe out vast swaths of creation.

One fell swoop with divine authorization. And there's 12 at each, one in each gate guarding over the new Jerusalem.

Not that that's actually necessary. There's actually no need for a wall at all because all the enemies of God and his people have been vanquished already.

[21 : 02] And that's why later in verse 25, that it says that its gates will never be shut because there is no more danger. But nonetheless, God shows John a vision of the new Jerusalem with a great high wall to impress indelibly upon our minds this picture of an unassailable, impregnable fortress and city in order to convey to us the idea of the eternal security of the saints.

Imagine what a source of comfort these walls would have been for city dwellers in the ancient world. These walls keep wild beasts out of the city.

These walls keep warring intruders out of the city. It's why they can sleep at night. And God is sending to us an unmistakable message to Christians who are persecuted and sorely oppressed.

As we saw in Jesus' seven letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three, the church of Christ in the present world often has little power. They must face toil.

They bear up on their suffering for Christ's name's sake. They experience tribulation and poverty. They are slandered by Satan and his minions. They are thrown into prison and sometimes they even face death.

[22 : 23] But with this glorious vision of the new Jerusalem's great high wall, Jesus is assuring us, hold on. Press on in this life, even though you are reviled, slandered, imprisoned, beaten, and killed for my name's sake.

Because in the new Jerusalem, you will be untouchable. You will be invulnerable and you will be unassailable. There on the great high mountain, behind the great high wall, you will finally be safe.

It's only in the new heaven and a new earth that we will be safe and secure forever. Our culture today idolizes safety.

So-called safe spaces are sacrosanct. They are the holy ground built on the temple of self upon which everybody else that approaches and the churches must remove their sandals.

But when did Jesus ever promise us safety from discomfort and danger in this life? Jesus said in Luke 21, 12, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons.

[23 : 44] Does that sound safe? Matthew 24, 9, they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

Brothers and sisters, don't seek your ultimate safety here on earth. Where is your treasure? Is it in the new heaven and the new earth or is it here? Your body can be harmed here on earth.

Your feelings can be hurt here on earth. Your life can be taken here on earth. But in the new heaven and the new earth, we will be safe and secure forever.

The new Jerusalem will also be unflawed in its symmetry.

It's, sorry, in symmetry. Here in verse 15, an angel of God uses a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. This is an allusion to Ezekiel 40 to 48 where the prophet Ezekiel sees an end time vision of a glorious new temple where the glory of God will dwell.

[24 : 59] And an angelic being at that point in Ezekiel 40, verse 3, takes a measuring rod and starts to painstakingly measure every dimension of the new temple. And the measurements here we see in Revelation 21 are symbolically laden.

It's meaningful. Verse 16 says that the city lies four square, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia, its length and width and height are equal.

The meaning of the word four square is explained in the following clause. Its length and, or it's the same as the width, meaning it's got four equal sides. It's a square. And then not only the length and the width, but it also says that height of the new Jerusalem are equal, meaning the city is a perfect cube.

And that's significant because there is no structure in the entire Old Testament that is shaped as a cube except for one. That's the holy of holies, the most holy place in the tabernacle and the most holy place in the new temple and the most holy place prophesied of in Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 41 verse 4.

This allusion to the most holy place indicates that as the new Jerusalem, we will enjoy perfect fellowship with God forever. Remember in the old Jerusalem, only the high priests could enter the most holy place and that only once a year and only after making sacrifice for sin.

[26 : 30] But in the new Jerusalem, we will all be in the most holy place. In fact, we will ourselves be the holy of holies upon which God dwells.

And this is why in the glorious passage that Andrew will preach next week, he says that there is no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb. And we will see God's face.

We will no longer have a mediated view of God. We will have a direct, unmediated vision of God face to face. But how can that possibly be?

How can sinners like us face the Almighty God and still live? How can we possibly be the holy of holies? It's not because we're so special.

Hebrews 9 reminds us that in the old Jerusalem temple, only the high priest went into the most holy place and he but once a year and not without taking blood. But Christ entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

[27 : 44] On the cross, Jesus made the atoning sacrifice for our sins once and for all by offering up himself as the sacrificial lamb. And then he was raised from the dead on the third day and because of that, that eternal redemption of Christ secured for us 2,000 years ago is what guarantees to us this eternal future as the new Jerusalem and being the holy of holies indwelt by the Almighty God.

This is why the new Jerusalem is a perfect cube. But the dimensions of the city, it's only 20 cubits in the temple, but it's enlarged to the nth degree with this glorious eternal city of New Jerusalem.

The city measures, I mentioned, 12,000 stadia in length, width, and height, which I mentioned to you is 1,400 cubic miles. If you plop down a metropolis of that size in the middle of the United States, it would stretch north to south from Canada to Mexico and then from east to west from the Appalachian Mountains to the border of California.

That's nearly 2 million square miles, which is over 4,000 times the size of New York City. And that's only the ground floor because remember, the height is just as tall as the width.

So if you use standard measurements and say that every story is 14 feet tall or something like that, this will be a building about 528,000 stories tall.

[29 : 18] Jesus wasn't joking when he said in John 14, in my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am, you may be also. The sheer scale, the size of this new Jerusalem conveys a sense of grandeur and welcome and hospitality because the people of God in that end, in the eternity will be from every nation and people and tribe and tongue will be a numberless multitude and God's assuring us, yes, for you, there is room.

I will dwell with you forever. But this number is not meant to be understood literally, but figuratively, like the other numbers we have seen so far in the book of Revelation.

The great high wall of New Jerusalem is 12 gates guarded by 12 angels, has names of 12 tribes of sons of Israel as inscribed on it. It has 12 foundations which has the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

12, 12, 12, 12. Why? Because 12 is a number that represents the people of God. The 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of the Lamb. That's why the dimensions of the city is 12,000 stadia, 12 times 1,000 which represents the multitude.

[30 : 52] This is also why the thickness of the wall in verse 17 is 144 cubits because that's the square of 12, 12 times 12. All of these measurements confirms the symbolism that the New Jerusalem is the people of God.

So, don't imagine yourself not quite accurate to say we're going to be walking on streets of gold because you are the streets of gold, right? But that's okay. We mix metaphors when we talk about this.

And the bride of the Lamb is going to be ravishing in her beauty. I cannot wait to see the church in all her splendor. Look at verse 18 to 21.

The wall was built of jasper while the city was pure gold like clear glass. Even the wall of the city is made of jasper which is reminiscent of the glory of God from earlier in verse 11.

The city itself is made of pure gold. Imagine a city of this scale made entirely of gold. gold. It's unfathomable and supposed to be. And God is so, the gold is so pure that it is described as being like clear glass.

[32 : 03] Who has ever heard of a gold that is clear like glass? Gold is an opaque metal. So, I'm not sure what that means but we need to remember that John's reporting a prophetic vision and the beauty of New Jerusalem is so transcendent.

It stretches his imagination. It stretches his knowledge of the material universe. It stretches his vocabulary so that the only way he could quite describe something that is indescribable is to mash together two contradictory things and say this pure gold is clear like glass.

We can't quite imagine how beautiful this city will be and that's precisely the point. not only is this city itself made of pure gold verse 21 says the street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass.

There are temples throughout the world that have been made of gold not purely of gold but still made of gold to a certain extent but I assure you there are no streets in any part of the world that is made of gold.

None. Because that's just a little wasteful. That's too extravagant. Streets we walk on that.

[33 : 23] You're going to make that of gold? Nobody does that but in New Jerusalem even the street of the city is of pure gold which highlights the no expense spared luxury and beauty and glory of the city.

Similarly verse 21 says the 12 gates were 12 pearls each of the gates made of a single pearl. Some of you guys have pearl jewelry someone wearing pearl right now?

Pearls are exceedingly rare and costly because they're produced by these shelled mollusks takes years to produce.

That's why even a small pearl earring is so expensive and the larger the pearl gets the harder it is to produce the rarer it is and the more exponentially expensive it is.

The largest pearl in the world is appropriately named the Giga Pearl. It weighs 61 pounds and is about the size of a cow's head.

[34 : 28] It's valued at about 90 million dollars. That's nothing. Remember how big the wall of the New Jerusalem is and how big this gate is and it says that each gate is fashioned out of a single pearl.

Not a whole bunch of little pearls glued together a single pearl like the statue of David Michelangelo's David is made of a single pearl block. Not pearl sorry marble that cannot possibly be pearl sorry marble yeah and the pearls are not even the only jewels in this city.

The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every kind of jewel it says in verse 19 and these jewels are precious variegated colors gemstones that put the tawdry jewelry of Babylon the prostitute in Revelation 17 4 to shame.

what's most significant about the precious stones listed here in verses 19 to 20 is that they match almost exactly and probably meant to reproduce the list of the 12 precious stones that were set on the breastplate of the high priest who enters into the most holy place to intercede on behalf of the people of God in Exodus 28 17 to 20.

those 12 gems on the breastpiece of the high priest had the names of the 12 sons of Israel inscribed on them and like us we have the names of the 12 sons of Israel on the gates inscribed on the gates and the names of the apostles of the Lamb inscribed on the foundation of this new Jerusalem.

[36 : 11] Again driving home the point only the high priest wore those gems you'd think the common Israelites could dream of even one of those gems but now in the new Jerusalem all of us all of God's people we have those gems we're bedecked with those jewels for eternity and those precious stones function as a visible representation of what God says to his people in Exodus 19 5 you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples do you know saints of God every single one of you do you know people of God how precious you are to him the new Jerusalem is not going to be constructed with cheap plywood and cold steel and dull boring concrete it's going to be made up of gold and crystals and be decked with all kinds of jewels and that demonstrates your inestimable value to God you are no reclaimed good from dumpster diving at the end of the summer or beginning of the summer you're not used good purchased from

Facebook marketplace you are God's treasured possession Taylor Swift Beyonce Lionel Messi Cristiano Ronaldo they're all lowly plebes compared to who you are in Christ Jesus do you believe that?

now don't let it get to your head you're we should be humble because we are sinners saved by the mercy and grace of God but at the same time have an amazing confidence in Christ you should all walk out of here with your heads held high the political elites the intelligentsia the wealthy 1% the Hollywood stars have nothing they have nothing on even the simplest and the most humble believer in Christ they have nothing on him or her they are the dwelling place of God the bride and wife of the land in addition to being contrasted with Babylon the prostitute this perfected bride of Christ is also being contrasted with the still imperfect bride of Christ at the beginning of the book that we saw in chapters 2 and 3 I have this to show Revelation began with a prologue and then a vision of the imperfect church and then a vision of

God's throne and Christ's inauguration of God's judgment and then at the end of the book in matching reverse order Revelation ends with the vision of God's throne and Christ's consummation of his judgment and a vision of the perfected church followed by an epilogue and this chiasmic structure intentionally highlights a contrast between the still imperfect church and the future perfect church of Christ remember what you saw in chapters 2 and 3 that some churches today have abandoned the love they had at first that some tolerate false teaching and false teachers that some have soiled their garments by practicing idolatry and sexual immorality that some churches have the reputation of being alive but are dead and they're spiritually asleep some churches are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold they're self deluded and wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked but incredibly despite all of that Jesus addresses every single one of those seven churches as his church that still has an angel representing them in heaven that still has the lamp burning before the throne of God

Jesus does rebuke some of those churches in utter sincerity saying in Revelation 3 19 those whom I love I reprove and discipline so be zealous and repent but Jesus never speaks derisively or dismissively about his church why because he knows two things that we often forget he knows the church's true identity that the church is the bride the wife of the lamb and because two he knows the church's eternal destiny Jesus knows and sees what she will be in the new Jerusalem and will do well to keep these two realities in view also non-Christians of course do this sometimes but sadly sometimes even Christians speak in a demeaning and dismissive manner about the church of Christ well it's because of hypocritical Christians there are countries in a downward spiral well it's the church's failure of witness is to blame for the cultural decadence and the spiritual degeneracy all around us homosexuals hate

[41 : 20] God because of the church because of Christians if only the church would be the church then the world wouldn't be such a mess maybe there's a kernel of truth in some of these things but sometimes people make it sound like the church is the root of all of the world's ills and evils well that's news to the book of Revelation have you heard of the great red dragon the beast the false prophet and Babylon the great prostitute these are real and they are at large in the world yes the church is imperfect I'll be the first person to admit that and yes we are hospitable for sinners but let's not forget that the church of Christ is also the bride and the wife of the lamb people say things about Jesus wife to my face that they will never dare to say about my wife

Hannah and trust me Jesus is a lot more awesome a lot more to be feared yes we must at times speak as a prophetic witness against the sins of the church but when we do we must do so with profound humility and out of love not out of pride and immaturity Jeff Eorg who is the president of gateway seminary begins his book the character of leadership this way he says quote in my 20s I was determined to change the world in my 30s I tried to reform the church in my early 40s I discovered I was the problem the church is imperfect yes why because you and because I am a part of it but even still it is the bride the wife of the lamb of

God so let us treat her and let us speak to her and speak of her with the dignity that she deserves and secondly let us not forget the church's eternal destiny yes we're beset with sin and sore oppressed here and now but our eternal destiny is the new Jerusalem made of pure gold like jewels there's a fairy tale that I enjoyed reading as a child I didn't have that many books growing up so I read this one over and over again it's called The Ugly Duckling have you guys read that before I think Disney made a movie of it or something it was written by Danish poet Hans Christian Andersen in the 19th century mama duck lays eggs and keeps them warm so that they hatch and then they all hatch except for one which takes some extra work it's an unusual looking egg and when that egg hatches the duckling that comes out is not like the others he says in the book yet yet my goodness how different this one looked he was much larger than the others he was not yellow but dark gray all over and after he stepped out of his egg he walked with a funny wobble one of the yellow ducklings pointed what's that he can't be one of us

I've never seen such an ugly duckling said another and this last duckling this ugly duckling doesn't belong to the brood and is driven from place to place suffering much verbal and physical abuse wherever he goes and when he is swimming on a lake one day as the loner he is a flock of swans come and descend upon that lake and frolic around him and by then he is used to being bullied and pushed around and so he says he anticipates what they will say and he says oh don't worry I'm leaving I won't make any trouble for you but as he puts his head down and starts to swim away from the flock of swans he sees a beautiful swan that is following him and he why is this swan following me so closely but then he notices that every time he moves this swan's movement reflects his own movements and then he comes to the realization oh I've never been a duck I'm a swan a beautiful swan and he's welcome to the flock and then he soars and flies away with the rest of his family and if those bullying animals knew what this ugly duckling was they would not have treated him that way my brothers and sisters the church of

Christ is no ugly duckling your majestic swan that has not yet fully spread out its wings to fly so choose your treasure carefully our eternal destiny is the new Jerusalem in a new heaven and a new earth when the United Nations the World Trade Organization and the World Bank are no more when Harvard and MIT and Oxford are no more when Apple Microsoft and Amazon and Alphabet and NVIDIA are no more when China and the United States of America are no more the church of Christ the new Jerusalem will stand forever that's why the church is the most important institution in the world comparing the significance of the United States of America to the significance of the church is like comparing a sand castle that a two year old made that's about to be wiped out by the next incoming wave to the great pyramids of

[47 : 12] Giza that's been standing for 4,500 years in a sermon on 2 Corinthians 8 5 which talks about how the Macedonian Christians gave themselves first to the Lord and then in extension by the will of God to the church to us 19th century English pastor Charles Spurgeon talks about the importance of giving oneself to the body of Christ that giving yourself to the body of Christ necessarily follows giving yourself to Christ who is the head of the church because how can you be joined to the head when you are not joined to the body and he talks about how he basically had to kind of force himself into church membership when he first became a Christian by pestering the minister who was kind of slow to act five times he writes about it this way I remember the difficulty that I had when I was converted and wished to join the Christian church in the place where

I lived I called upon the minister four successive days before I could see him I'm still waiting for the day when someone will come to me begging to become a church member like this this is four successive days before I could see him each time there was some obstacle in the way of an interview and as I could not see him at all I wrote and told him that I would go down to the church meeting and propose myself as a member he looked upon me as a strange character but I meant what I said for I felt that I could not be happy without fellowship with the people of God I wanted to be wherever they were and if anybody ridiculed them I wish to be ridiculed with them and if people had an ugly name for them I wanted to be called by that ugly name for I felt that unless I suffered with Christ in his humiliation I could not expect to reign with him in his glory beloved friends give yourselves first to

God and afterwards to his church as these people did cheerfully and promptly can you identify what Charles Spurgeon is talking about here why does he feel this way because they are the adopted brothers and sisters in the family of God washed by the blood of the lamb born again by the spirit of God because you guys are my fellow citizens and comrades in this kingdom of God because you are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight as Psalm 16 3 says because you know the God I know because you love the God I love because you serve the God that I serve that's why I want to be associated with you before I'm associated with anyone else in the whole world and that's why we do membership that's why new member induction

Sunday like today is a special day we have 10 new member 10 new Christian brothers and sisters who are eager to join our local church why because they want to be a part of this the new Jerusalem