

THE FUTURE (13)

—H. L. Heijkoop

The New Jerusalem

We have seen that the Assembly will have a task to fulfill in the government of Christ over the earth. Yet, sharing with Christ in His government is not the highest position and glory of the Assembly. We will, as Christ, return to earth, but our actual dwelling place remains in heaven. We are then "the people of the saints of the most high places" (Dan. 7:27). The dream of Jacob has been fulfilled (Gen. 28:12; Jn. 1:51). There is then a continuous connection between heaven and earth.

In Revelation 21:9-22:5, we find our actual position in the Millennium. The Assembly is not on the earth; she is pictured as a great city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Yet she is connected with the earth for "the nations shall walk by its (the city's) light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it." The glory and the honour of the nations will be brought to her (21:24-26). And in the midst of its street is the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations (22:2).

That is obviously not the eternal condition; for then nations will no longer exist and healing will no longer be required. Neither is it the present time, for at this moment the kings of the earth do not bring their glory to her. Today the gates must remain closed since at present something that is common or that makes an abomination or a lie often enters it (21:24-27).

What is characteristic for the heavenly Jerusalem, the bride, the wife of the Lamb? It is *not* that the glory of the nations is brought to her but rather that she comes down from God out of heaven, *having the glory of God*. It seems that the Holy Spirit can hardly stress this point too strongly. First of all Revelation 21:10 says that she had the glory of God, then verse 23 says that the glory of God has enlightened it. Furthermore, the jasper and the sardius, which according to Revelation 4:3 speak of the glory of God, are mentioned in the description of the city in verses 11, 18, 19 and 20.

Most significant is, however, what verses 22 and 23 say: "And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb. And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb."

The earthly Jerusalem will have a temple. And although the glory of the Lord will fill that temple, there will be a veil closing off the entrance to the holy of holies. But in the heavenly Jerusalem, there is no separation between God and His people. They themselves are characterized by the glory of God, and the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb is her temple.

Righteousness and peace will kiss each other. (Ps. 85:10).

Yes, it will be a glorious period on earth during that time. When we hear the groaning of the creation today, when we see the suffering and the misery on earth, when we notice how unrighteousness rules, when we experience from day to day how little knowledge of God is present on earth, when we hear His Name blasphemed, then we long for that moment when that glorious reign of peace will come.

Think of what it will be when man will no longer need to wonder how to obtain his daily bread, when fear of war will have disappeared, when man will not grow old in just a few decades and die but will be a young man although a hundred years old, when no child or adult (provided he does not publicly sin) will die. "There shall be no more thenceforth an infant of days, nor an old man that has not completed his days; for as the days of a tree shall be the days of My people" (Is. 65:2-22). Then righteousness will reign on earth. Then the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Then from year to year, the nations will go up to worship at Jerusalem!

Anxious looks creation,
Groaning in its lot,
For the revelation
Of the Sons of God.
Hasten then Thy coming
Jesus, that to Thee,

To the Father's glory,
May bow ev'ry knee.

Yes, come soon Lord Jesus,
For Thy blood-bought bride;
Sighing, saints are longing
For their Bridegroom's side.
Lead them to Thy Father,
Don Thy priestly gown,
Rule with them together,
Wear Thy royal crown.

To be cont'd

WHO ON EARTH IS NATHANAEL?

—G. W. Steidl

We've heard about Peter, James and John. Even Thomas comes in for a bit of dubious distinction as the doubting disciple. But Nathanael? Sure, he was one of Christ's disciples, but what about him?

The Bible records very little — chiefly a brief account of his introduction to Jesus in the first chapter of John's Gospel. But that brief account clothes Nathanael with flesh and bones. We find it easy to identify with his sincerity, his honest doubts, his openness to truth.

Take for instance his response to a friend named Philip. Filled with enthusiasm about Jesus Christ, Philip exclaimed, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Nathanael wasn't impressed. Nazareth was not his idea of the city from which the Messiah should come. Honest doubts — but Philip didn't argue. He simply advised, "Come and see."

And Nathanael changed his tune in a hurry when he met the Lord. Perhaps because Christ didn't condemn him for his doubts... or because He pegged him accurately and recognized his sincerity... or because He saw right through him. Whatever it was, Nathanael recognized this unusual Man as the awaited Messiah — the One Who alone could meet his need. Philip had called him the son of Joseph, but Nathanael saw more clearly. With astonishment and joy he confessed Christ as "... The Son of God... the King of Israel."

Spiritually, Nathanael changed gears that day. His doubts gave way to Christ's promises; his emptiness was replaced by the joyful experience of every child of God — to know and follow the Son of God.

Any more Nathanaels around?