

THE GOLDEN STREET

Rev. Kenneth O. Stroh

Lessons: Revelation 21 & 22:1-7, 14; Apocalypse Explained 652:2

You know what a street is, don't you? A street is a way for people to go through a town or city. Often it is paved. Cars can drive on it, and people walk along the sides of it, usually on sidewalks. Most of you have seen streets in a city. You have seen the stores or houses along the sides of the streets, cars driving, men and women walking, or perhaps just standing and talking, and children playing. Yes, there are many things you can see on the streets of a city.

Think of all the wonderful things that the disciple John must have seen along the street of the city which the Lord showed him in the other world. This beautiful city was called the New Jerusalem, and John saw it coming down from God out of heaven. Because it was from the Lord and was very special, it was called the holy city. John saw that it had a great wall around it, made of precious stones. There were twelve gates in the wall. Each gate was made of one great pearl.

As he walked inside the city, John saw that it was always light there. The light was very bright because it was the light of heaven, which is the glory of God. The whole city was made of gold, and the street of the city was made of gold, too. There was a pure river with clear water, called the water of life. As John looked down the street, he saw a magnificent tree which was called the tree of life. Many years earlier the tree of life had been in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve lived there, and now John saw the tree of life along the golden street of the holy city, New Jerusalem.

Wouldn't you like to see that city? Perhaps you would like to live in it. You can live in it if you wish. For John saw the city in the spiritual world. What he saw was the Lord's own picture of what His New Church was going to be like. And the Lord told John who would be able to come into His New Church, into this new city, and who would not.

John wrote that "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie." This means that no one can come into the city who likes what is dirty, who loves to do what is evil, and who does not want to hear the truth or do what it teaches. Then it is said that the people who can come into the city are those who are "written in the Lamb's Book of Life." This Book of Life is the Lord's Word. And the people who live in that city are those who believe in the Lord and who love to do what His Word teaches.

No one else really wants to live in that city. You would not want to go to live in a house with people you did not like. You would not want to live in a home belonging to a person you felt you could not stand to be near. The New Jerusalem is the Lord's city, and the New Church is the Lord's church. So only those who want to be near Him can truly come into His church and into the heavenly city. Only those who learn to love the Lord, who believe in His power to help them, who go to His Word to find out what He wants them to do, and who live according to His commandments, can come in.

The Lord invites all people to come into His New Church, and into the golden city, New Jerusalem. This is why the city was seen to have twelve gates, always open, so that anyone who wishes may go in, walk down that street of gold, see the clear crystal water of the river, and the tree of life. And in June we celebrate the birthday of this New Church, which is the New Jerusalem, and which is now over two hundred and thirty years old.

The celebration should be a happy one. Because the Lord has told us that the greatest happiness will come to those who want to be close to Him, who want to be in His church and live according to His commandments. That is why it is written in the Word "Blessed are those"—and "blessed" means happy—"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." *Amen.*