

My favorite place in the whole world is sitting on the end of the pier on the lake in northern Wisconsin where my family has vacationed for 32 years. The smooth waters of the lake reflect the slowly setting sun dipping below the tree tops. A few fishing boats you can almost touch and there's not a sound. What's your favorite place? A favorite chair in the house, grandma's kitchen table, or a lake, campsite, or island you've vacationed at before.

Do you have your spot? If it's just a picture it's probably not your favorite. Favorite spots you smell without being there. Favorite spots you reach out and you know the feeling of that place. Favorite spots you hear the familiar sounds around you. Favorite spots are real, even if you're not there right now. Did any of you have heaven as your favorite spot? You might hope that your favorite spot is what heaven is like, but you probably didn't have heaven as your favorite. Why not? Heaven's smells aren't real to you. The feel and sounds of heaven aren't in your mind. You haven't been there so you can't even know if it's your favorite spot.

Almost to the end of the Bible is the book of Revelation chapter 21. Read the whole chapter sometime, it's a grand picture. What was the second lesson is a part of the vision the apostle John received from Jesus meant for us. It shares the triumph believers will experience someday. It takes us to heaven, gives us a picture, like having your favorite place always in your mind so you can go there anytime you want. Let Jesus speak to you through the apostle John about your new favorite place and remember...

**We'll be in that Holy City
God gives us entrance into his presence
God gives us light in the Lamb**

City to us means streets clogged with traffic, flashing lights everywhere, homes and buildings as far as you can see. City means New York City or Chicago. Even our city. The Holy City John got to see coming down from heaven wasn't like that. No streets, no cars, no homes or buildings. Not a physical place in time. Yet to describe the perfection of this Holy City Jesus had to use human terms. **"It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations."** Can you picture it? The symmetry with three gates on all four sides of a perfect cube. The repetition of the number twelve. What does it mean? Twelve Old Testament tribes, twelve New Testament apostles chosen by Jesus. Twelve is the number representing the church, all believers of all time. This description of the Holy City is really describing all believers as they will be in heaven.

All the perfection and symmetry and multiples of twelve leave the impression of glory. Angels guard the gates for the safety and security believers will enjoy in this Holy City in the presence of God. Entrance past the angels and through the gates only can come from God. The inhabitants of this Holy City gain entrance into the presence of God and are secure.

Normally foundations are the part of the building you don't see. That's the behind the scenes stuff no one wants to see but you sort of know has to be there. This church building has foundations, but you don't see them. Yet without them the whole place would fall down. God wants you to see the Holy City has foundations. He wants you to know not only what granted you entrance into his presence but where we will find security and safety. **"The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."** Not as important as knowing the names of those twelve apostles of Jesus is knowing what they did. Those disciples were largely responsible for much of the New Testament of the Bible. Inspired by God they wrote every word God wanted them to write. That record has been passed to each generation to this very day. The Holy City stands secure in Christ who the inspired Word of God speaks about and gives that Holy City its foundation.

I know you think you'd feel better about your faith if you could see Jesus. You figure it would confirm all the things you now hold on to only by faith. It's not easy when we don't see and when we can't touch. Other people might tell us if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true. The things we can't see and the things we can't touch aren't real. Science can't prove it so it must not be true. Doctors and lawyers and college professors speak against it so it must not be real.

John received this picture so you would know you'll be in that Holy City. While we wait to dwell there Jesus dwells within us here. He is your entrance into that Holy City. He is your entrance into God's presence. Christ's death and resurrection have pronounced you worthy of entry. You've been made holy in Jesus. Your final glory yet to come is a union with God standing in his presence with the holiness and glory of God shining down like a jewel. Connected to Christ you will be safe and perfect in this glory forever. Now you can live like your citizenship is already there. The resurrected Christ Jesus assures you it's true. You can live to serve and love. You can live in repentance. You live like you're already in that Holy City standing in the presence of God because of Christ.

Every great city has certain buildings people just must see. Paris has the Eiffel Tower. Chicago has the Sears Tower. Oklahoma City has Devon Tower. When John saw his vision he was surprised at what the Holy City didn't have. **"I did not see a temple in the city."** One specific building he expected to see and just had to see, but it wasn't there. There was a reason.

For centuries throughout the Old Testament the temple was the focal point of God's presence. To come into contact with God you needed to be at the temple, facing the temple, or at the very least thinking about the temple. The Ark of the Covenant was there, the box like container signaling God presence among the people. The Holy of Holies was there, the perfect cube room inside the temple where no one could go because God was present there. God's presence and grace were at the temple. In the New Testament the focal point changed from a building to a person. Jesus was God's presence and grace on earth. Today you might think of our building as the focal point. This is where you come into contact with Jesus. In heaven everything changes. No temple, no building, no physical place is required for God's presence or for a connection with grace. The Lord is the temple. The Lord and the Lamb are also the light for the Holy City.

You can't imagine life without the sun and the moon. Without them no life would exist. It sounds foolish to think about. But in the Holy City where God is the light shining so bright it outshines the sun and moon. That much light, so bright, is so much we get uncomfortable. We don't deserve that brilliant light. In fact the light gets a little hot when it shines on our lying cheating hearts. The light pierces when it highlights our great number of sins. The light just hurts when it reveals our shameful and deceitful actions.

Now remember you'll be in that Holy City because of Christ. There God gives light through the Lamb. The Lamb gave his life so you might receive the light. Jesus is the lamp that lights the entire Holy City. **"The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."** That light coming from the Lamb who gave his life for you might be undeserved but it shines on you. It's a light and love that shines into your heart and life. The ones who sinned, lied, cheated, and did any number of shameful things will be in that Holy City because of God's grace in Christ. We will receive God's glory as a saving light forever with all the saints in that Holy City of heaven.

Picture your favorite place again. Do you see the radio tower blocking the picturesque view? Do you hear the car horns around you? Do you touch the person standing with you who you know has hurt you before? No matter what your favorite place on this earth is, it's still on this earth and this earth is still sinful. Ready for a new favorite place? It's a Holy City, protected and secure by a gracious and loving God. This God sent his Son for all people including you. He secured you a place in that Holy City. You will be there because of him. It's perfect in every way. It's in God's presence. It's in God's light in Christ. That Holy city is the place you'll want to be.