

THE LESSON: REVELATION 21-22

*To strengthen such as do stand; to encourage the faint-hearted;
to raise up those who fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

We live in difficult times. Our world is a fallen place and we ourselves are full of imperfections – both as individual believers and churches. It can be difficult to remember the amazing reality of the invisible Church – that victorious Bride of Christ that transcends time and space to encompass all those who truly belong to Jesus – especially if we are discouraged, distracted, or disappointed with the imperfections of the churches we have known.

But we hold on to hope in spite of these challenges, because we know that victory is certain and that after “a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (2 Peter 5:10), and that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet” (Romans 16:20).

Though we are pilgrims in a hostile land, we know to whom we belong and where we are headed.

“So in these in-between times, when we are ashamed of [the Church’s] failings here on earth, or fearful when we see her maligned by the world and cruelly persecuted, we are still to love her and help her, remembering her glorious birth in Jerusalem and anticipating her glorious consummation in the heavenly Jerusalem, of which we will be a living part, if we are faithful to the end... remember, only the devil wants you to focus solely on the here-and-now and forget your glorious past and your even more glorious future” (Sue Careless).

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In the Book of Revelation, St. John shares with us his beautiful vision of the Church victorious: the new Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, and the destination towards which we press on!

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Every day this week take at least ten minutes to speak with your assigned prayer partner (in person, or via phone or video chat). Share prayer requests and pray aloud for one another.

- OPTIONAL -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

Raise up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT, BCP PAGE 102)

REVELATION 21-22: **OUR GLORIOUS DESTINATION**

21 ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” ...

⁹Then 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.” ¹⁰And 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, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...

22 ¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever...

¹⁷The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price...

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!