

"The name of the city from that day
shall be, The Lord is there."

- Ezekiel xlviii,35

Ezekiel xlviii,19-end

Matthew x,1-15

Psalm 16

New Book of Worship, Psalm 19, p.45

These words are spoken of the city seen in vision by Ezekiel. We may recognize it as the same city as the New Jerusalem seen by John. And the New Jerusalem, called the bride the Lamb's wife, we know to be the New Church.

The term city is a fitting name for the church. A city has streets along which we walk. So has the church. Its principles of right conduct are paths in which the affections move. The Lord said of His thoughts and affections, "I am the Way." And when our thoughts and affections are pure and holy, when they are the expression of love from the Lord, "the streets of the city are pure gold."

A city provides conditions for business, social intercourse, education, and training. It contains dwelling places of many kinds where individuals live, gather, and rest, and at firesides enjoy companionship, love, and happiness.

So of the church. There our Heavenly Father's business is centered, and the church provides for association, spiritual education, and the training of the higher faculties. The church has dwelling places, general truths and particular truths, differing in kind and quality. Each one in the church chooses some kind of general truth in which he abides, and in it, as at a fireplace, he gathers spiritual warmth. He meets others in like principles, and from things in common they find companionship and pleasure.

One person will not excel in all the virtues any more than one man will be proficient in all the lines of business ability, art, or science. One man may think that square dealing and fair business principles are the most important thing. He believes that every man should do exactly as he says he will. His convictions are strong in this regard. He conducts his own affairs on such principles and estimates the worth of others according to the same standard. His business principles are, as it were, his house. He dwells in those principles and is at home in them. The stranger his convictions are the more he will differ from one who is not manifestly straightforward and upright, the more he will dislike the character of such people and shun dealings with them.

Or consider another type - a person who feels that generosity is the greatest virtue. He makes generosity the leading thing in his life. He does many kind acts. The stronger his convictions the more he exalts generosity, and the more he is inclined to dislike "closeness." He may not be always reliable in keeping business engagements, or in punctuality in paying debts. He does not put much value on strict business relations. He is generous, and unconsciously goes on the assumption that all should be generous in their judgment of him. The hard business man standing upon the reputation of fidelity to a promise and accuracy in dealing, cannot understand the generous man with lax methods. They live in different houses

and on different streets, in different localities, though both may be in the same city. But if they have good motives, and from the Lord are living each his ideal life, the name of the city is "The Lord is there."

The city also has walls. Even in these times no city can exist without walls. They may not be the old-fashioned walls of brick and stone. Such walls would be no protection against modern weapons of attack. Our city walls are detectives, policemen, airplanes, steel-armored ships, and atomic missiles, enforcing civil order. The church where the Lord is also has walls, which are the outward external laws of our defense against evils. To enter the city and live in it one must comply with these laws of truth, for if this is not done, the law, like a wall, will shut him out from the security and peace within the city. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may... enter in through the gates into the city."

There is nothing that a city does for us that the church does not do in a spiritual sense. In fact, we may consider a city which is beautiful, educated, thrifty, progressive, and moral as providing the external conditions wherein the church may be most fully ultimated. It is the outward form wherein the church in more complete form may exist, for a city is nothing other than the internal of its people materialized.

In cities one man's activities quicken those of others. Its active life assays and refines. Men learn from each other, and imperfections are seen and removed. Truth removes falsity, and good subdues evil. They may not like each other, but it is profitable for the generous man and the close man to meet, that the close man may learn generosity and that the generous man may acquire precision and method. It is good for these persons to meet, that their principles may come together, and that they may be mutually broadened and perfected. And when people with such purpose seek association, trying to carry out the Divine laws, though they differ in kind and quality, the name of the city is "The Lord is there."

When we come into the spiritual world, we shall not have the names by which we are called here. Our names in this world are soon forgotten there and we, like the church, are called by a new name. Our name there is one that expresses our quality. If we hear the name of a person in this world, we can form no conception of him before we have seen or talked with him. We cannot by merely knowing his name tell whether he is tall or short, a tradesman, a mechanic, or a scholar, nor can we say whether or not he is kind or religious. But in the spiritual world his name discloses his character. We can tell by the name exactly what his quality is. What would be the quality of the person whose name should be "The Lord is there?"

That is a very general name. It is the name not of one person but of all persons of a certain kind. All those who are to be of that city which Ezekiel saw are, as a body, to bear that name. Suppose a person says, "It is only a matter of time when the fires of our sun will die out and our universe will end in omnipresent death." What is the name of such a faith? Is it "The Lord is there?" In those in

whom dwells only omnipresent death as the goal of human kind eternal life is not yet manifested. Suppose one says, "I do not know that God exists; you do not know; nobody knows." Is the name of that person's faith "The Lord is there?"

One says, "I see God in His Word. I see His providence over the world and in my own experience. I see in the light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. 'Whereas I was blind, now I see'." The name of that person's city is "The Lord is there," for in the Lord's light alone can we see light.

Another feels a love in his heart that he knows is not his own. Where once he hated, now he loves. Where once he was sad, now he rejoices. He identifies this love as coming from the Lord. The city of that man is "The Lord is there."

We in the New Church believe that the time has come for the establishment of that city which has been the vision of the prophets. We believe that there are people who are waiting to build up that city of spiritual beauty and glory. It is the purpose for which men were created.

This city seen by Ezekiel in vision is not a city separated from our individual lives. It is not a mere theory or philosophy. Although everyone must have a philosophy and we are defenseless without a philosophy, the external city in which we live is but the clothing of the internal city. If religion means anything, it means that this city seen in vision must be made real on earth. We make it so in very simple ways. Our system of doctrine must govern our daily lives. In our business relations there must be justice, truth, and honor; so that we can say of our occupations carried on in the thick of this world's battles, "The Lord is there." In our dealings with others, in all our relations with them we must strive to do as the Lord would have us do, cherishing no ill will or envy, but seeking to help all those with whom the Lord grants us to come in contact. Then when all selfish ambitions and reactions are put behind us, we can say of the city of doctrine in which we dwell, "The Lord is there."

If we seek to learn and do the Lord's will, as we receive the truths of the Word and obey them, we shall be able to meet our adversities with courage and strength, and when we look to the Divine truth to overcome our temptations, then will we fill our relations to one another, to society, and to the church with spiritual intelligence and righteousness, and the name of the city in which we dwell will ever be "The Lord is there."

Amen