

**Readings:** *Acts 14: 21 – 27; Psalm 144 (145); Apocalypse 21:1 – 5; John 13: 31 – 35.*

The lectionary skips over several chapters of the *Revelation to Saint John* and brings us over this and the next two Sundays to the last of John's visions.

These visions come after the final destruction of all evil in the universe. God has issued his final judgement, and Satan, Death and the Realm of the Dead are all burned up.

Now John has visions of what will last for ever after God's final judgement.

In today's reading he sees *a new heaven and a new earth* replacing God's original creation. He makes a point of telling us that *there was no longer any sea*. The reason for this is that, in the Old Testament and in earlier chapters of this book, the sea and the beasts that come up from it are hostile to God. [For example: Psalm 74: 13 & 14 – *You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons on the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan. Daniel 7: 3 Four great beasts came up out of the sea. Apocalypse 13: 1 – I saw a beast rising out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads.*]. So the disappearance of the sea is a symbol of the absolute triumph of God over evil and death.

John now sees, descending into this new heaven and earth, *the holy city, the new Jerusalem*, which is to be the eternal home of God's holy people. *Here God lives among them. He will make his home among them.*

The vision takes up two other themes from the Old Testament – Jerusalem as the Bride of God and Jerusalem as the Mother of God's People. In the prophecy of Isaiah (chapter 63) God speaks of the city of Jerusalem as it will be: *As a young man marries a virgin, so shall your Builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.*

And Psalm 86 (87) tells us that *Sion shall be called 'Mother' for all shall be her children.*

In this city joy will take the place of weeping: *God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness.*

All this is possible because *the One sitting on the throne* makes the solemn declaration: *Behold, I am making all things new.* In that city – for which we all long – there will be nothing that can mar our joy, because *the world of the past has gone.*