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A Building More Glorious Than The Taj Mahal

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In January and February of 1980, I spent more than 7 weeks visiting the nation of India. I spent more than half of my time in this large country at just the 2 locations that I thought would prove to have the most impressive of all the sights that I could possibly encounter in India. I thus spent 3 weeks living in Agra while renting a cheap hotel room that was within easy walking distance of the Taj Mahal.

I spent at least 5 full days walking about at the Taj Mahal, making lots of observations and taking hundreds of photographs. My Swiss pal Werner was with me for the first day in Agra, which we spent touring the Red Fort and the Taj Mahal. After that, he went off on his own for about 3 weeks while I remained in Agra, determined to make more visits to

the Taj. In my 4 subsequent visits to that monumental attraction, I captured on film the beautiful building which is the Taj, and I also got a lot of shots of all the natives of India as they poured in and out of the memorial and its grounds.

About that same time, I also purchased an India-published comic book that told me (in English) the story of Shah Jahan's achievement, relating the details of how he had built the Taj Mahal. I learned that it had been built by this emperor as a tomb and memorial for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal ("Chosen One of the Palace"). Shah Jahan wanted to immortalize his favorite wife with a glorious building that would be constructed over a mausoleum complex. She had died in childbirth in the year 1631, but she had become the emperor's inseparable companion after their marriage in 1612. The name

Taj Mahal, which was later applied to this beautiful memorial structure, is actually a corruption of the words in the title for this favorite wife of Shah Jahan, Arjumand Banu Begam, who was once called "Mumtaz Mahal."

I greatly enjoyed my 5 days of visits to the Taj Mahal, which I found vastly inspirational, and I spent much of my remaining time in Agra just doing a lot of creative writing in my hotel room. I was then a proponent of Evolutionism and Humanism, but I also liked a lot of the ideas in Buddhism and science-fiction stories. So I was often busy in my hotel room trying to create a kind of New Age scripture that would glorify Mankind, Evolution, Buddhism, and Space Travel. I did a lot of writing with that very aim in mind. I thought then that the world could

really benefit from a kind of New Age scripture that would exalt Scientism, Evolution, and Space Travel.

I then saw the Taj Mahal as possibly one of the most wonderful achievements of human history... a sure sign that the grand process of Evolution would soon be bringing the human race to new heights of exaltation!

At that time I was not a genuine follower of Christ, so I made absolutely no effort to evangelize even a single one of those hundreds or thousands of native Indians who poured in to view the Taj. If I had been a real Christian at that time, I might have tried to at least tell *some* of the native Indian population about another memorial building that actually

outdoes the Taj Mahal in terms of beauty and glory, but back then I didn't even know about its existence myself.

Then I spent almost a week living in Varanasi, where I again rented a cheap hotel room... this time one that was only a tiny distance away from the River Ganges. The site of all the ritual bathing in the Ganges was then merely a block away from my hotel room, and it could be reached easily with a short walk. Once again I spent several days strolling around, following along the edge of the Ganges River with my 35 mm SLR Pentax camera gripped firmly in my hands. I went walking among the milling throngs of people who came to the river for ritual bathing and the like, and again I took hundreds of photos of the brightly-garbed Indian population that came in droves to visit the River Ganges.

Werner had already gotten back from his time of independent sight-seeing in other parts of India, so he had joined me for that first day of photographing all the Hindus who were coming to Varanasi for the experience of ritual bathing in the Ganges River. But after that, I had several times come back alone for subsequent observations and more photos. I went to see the Ganges activity quite frequently during the 5 days I stayed in Varanasi. How could I do otherwise, when my hotel room was so very close to this famous river?

I saw a vast number of Indians all around me at that time, but since I was not a real believer in Jesus Christ back then, I said nothing to anyone about the prophet from another part of Asia Who had always maintained that He was the Son of God. I did absolutely nothing to tell anyone about Jesus Christ

during that time when I was visiting India for more than 7 weeks. If I ever mentioned Him at all, I probably said that He was a good example of how Evolution and spiritual dedication could elevate a human being to Godlike powers and Godlike consciousness. I was a New Ager at that time, and I thought it was Science and Evolution that would someday bring Earth to a grand New Age, a utopia that we had not yet created.

About two months later, I came to the Pacific Isle of Guam, where I would be living and working for the next 5 years. Soon after I arrived there, I became a genuine believer in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Scriptures of the Christian Bible. I repented of all my own sins, and most especially for the sin of pride and arrogance; then I accepted forgiveness through the

sacrifice of Jesus Christ, realizing that He had been tortured on a wooden cross and had died there for the sins of humankind.

But I also knew that Jesus had come back to life again in a glorious new Resurrection Body, and that He had returned to His disciples and spent 40 more days with them before He had ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives. He had offered all of His followers a chance to join Him in a Heavenly Paradise that He had gone to prepare for us.

I then rejected Evolutionism, Scientism, and Humanism; I rejected Buddhism and Eastern mysticism and all New Age concepts, and I became a genuine follower of Jesus Christ. I began to understand and believe the Holy Scriptures of the

Christian Bible with my whole mind and heart... and this was made possible for me with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

As a new believer in Jesus Christ, I started to understand that God The Son, Who had appeared on Earth more than two thousand years ago in the body of Jesus Christ, had gone off to prepare a Memorial Building and Eternal Home for the Saints of God.

This monumental palace which Christ prepares for His True Followers is a Heavenly City called the New Jerusalem, and it is an edifice that is far more glorious than even the giant Taj Mahal monument that Shah Jahan once created to serve as a tomb complex which would house the remains of his beloved wife Arjumand Banu.

Jesus Christ also has a beloved Bride whom He wishes to honor, a beautiful lady to whom He is joined by the Holy Spirit of God. His bride is the Christian church, an invisible entity that is composed of all the millions of True Believers who have lived on Earth since the time of His crucifixion. Many of these True Followers of Jesus have been persecuted and victimized by people of other religions, and many of them have already died as Christian martyrs in the hands of cruel and violent oppressors. Jesus Christ has chosen to build for all His followers a great Memorial Building that is also a Spirit-Home... an eternal edifice that is far more grand and glorious than anything ever before created on the surface of the Earth!

He calls it the New Jerusalem, "the New City of Shalom." This means that it is "the New City of Peace," and yet the book

of *Revelation* tells us that this Heavenly Memorial measures 12,000 furlongs in every direction, by its height or by any one of its sides. Using the metric system, that gives it a size that is approximately 2,414 kilometers wide and 2,414 kilometers high. In our U.S. system of measurement, it stands about 1,500 miles high and 1,500 miles wide. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Its vast width would indicate that any one level must cover an area that is almost half the size of that region which forms the mainland section of the United States. We are told in John's *Revelation* that this City of God has a great high wall with 12 gates, and 12 angels are at the gates.

The Heavenly structure called the New Jerusalem is so huge that it is difficult for human beings to even conceive the vastness of this building. Still, it doubtless utilizes its space

very well; I'm sure it can easily hold a vast number of stacked levels that are quite capable of containing all of its many rooms and mansions. This colossal City of God is the largest "skyscraper" that could ever be built in our Universe. The exterior wall measures to be approximately 216 feet thick, and the material of the wall's construction is jasper. The city itself is described by John as being constructed of a pure and semi-transparent form of gold— a material that is almost as clear as glass.

Robert H. Schuller once helped design a Crystal Cathedral that was constructed in California, a rather large architectural structure which has walls of glass and even a glass ceiling. But even Rev. Schuller's grand design for a Crystal Cathedral utterly pales before the immense size and beauty of God's

New Jerusalem. This wondrous and supernatural building is an architectural achievement designed by Jesus Christ Himself, and it is one that is totally without equal— nothing that exists on Earth could even begin to compare with it. It is the largest palace/memorial building that anyone could ever conceive, and each one of its levels is more expansive than any of the largest cities found on modern-day Earth. It is much more expansive and glorious than mortal humans could ever even imagine.

Almost all Bible authorities seem to agree that the Heavenly City of the New Jerusalem, as it is described in the book of the New Testament called *Revelation*, must be a cube-shaped structure. However, there are a few, like J. R. Church and Gary Spearman, who have suggested that it might be a structure that is shaped very much like a pyramid. These two Bible

scholars in America believe that a pyramid shape might explain other references in the Bible that speak of God's home as "Mount Zion."

Rev. J. R. Church and Gary Spearman think the glorious building which is the New Jerusalem has already existed in some form for thousands of years, and they think a pyramid shape might explain how God's home is sometimes referred to in Old Testament Scripture as being "Mount Zion." They speculate that these references might indicate a pyramid that is so gigantic that it reminds one of mountain... a mountain with a truly colossal size. These two scholars are among a few that now visualize the New Jerusalem as a giant pyramid with many levels and a vast number of palatial rooms, but most Western

interpreters of the New Testament continue to be convinced that it is shaped more like a giant cube.

This, then, is God's Memorial Building for the human race, a paradisaical building which is much like a Heavenly Palace, and yet it is also quite a bit like the Taj Mahal, since it also serves as a memorial to all the Christian martyrs... and will serve as an eternal home for the spirits of all those deceased Christians who were True Believers during their lifetimes on Earth.

The Bible teaches that God The Son was there at the Creation of the Universe, and says that all things were created through Him and for Him. This means that God The Son is the Divine Architect who also designed the New Jerusalem for all

of His devoted followers, whom He regards as His Holy Bride. They are holy only because they have believed and have been washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God Who died on a cross for the sins of humankind. It is because they are covered with the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus... because of this only, that God Almighty can view them as sinless. Indeed, God The Father regards the Christian faithful as being even as sinless as His Son, and makes Himself blind to any wrongdoing of which they may once have been guilty.

That's why it is possible for God to view the True Believers of the Christian church as a spotless "Bride of Christ." Christians who come to "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb" are also said to be like wedding guests who have come to the marriage ceremony dressed in clothing of pure and spotless

white... because they have had their clothes washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ, Who is the Perfect and Sinless Lamb of God.

In an interesting way, the great love which the emperor Shah Jahan showed toward his dead wife Arjumand Banu when he built the Taj Mahal for her is rather like the unlimited love which the Lord Jesus Christ shows to the faithful Christians of His church, which He regards as "the Bride of Christ."

The emperor Shah Jahan constructed the Taj Mahal so that it would stand for a long time as an enduring memorial to Arjumand Banu. This Indian emperor intended his architectural structure to stand strong as a glorious tomb and a near-

perpetual monument for his wife, knowing that it would last for many centuries.

The love that the emperor Shah Jahan showed for his wife when he built this monument for her is a bit like the generous and expansive love which Jesus Christ has shown for His Bride, which is the Christian church. Jesus said that “In my Father’s House are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you.” The place which Jesus has prepared for all of His worldwide followers is a truly glorious edifice, a palace filled with many mansions and unimaginable beauty. It is a memorial palace which we call the Heavenly City, the City of God, and the New Jerusalem. It is “the New City of Peace.”

It seems to me that in a rather peculiar and interesting way, the Taj Mahal is a human-engineered structure that foreshadows the New Jerusalem which will be revealed to the human race at a later time. In a way, the Taj Mahal is just an Earthly symbol for a Heavenly reality that is yet to be unveiled for the population that is currently living on the surface of Planet Earth.

The New Jerusalem is a Heavenly City, and it is currently unseen by the part of the human race which still knows biological existence on the face of our Earth. But it is already a permanent domicile for many departed human spirits— for all those Believers who once lived on the planet’s surface as True Followers of Jesus Christ.

Even the ancient Hindu reverence for the River Ganges seems to me to be foreshadowing a future revelation that will come to Christians when they arrive in the glorious New Jerusalem, that “New City of Peace” which is the Heavenly City of God. Hindus in India have long venerated the River Ganges as a Source of Life, and they have offered a vast amount of respect and ritual to this one natural feature in all the spacious and thickly-populated land of India.

I cannot help but wonder if perhaps their reverence for the water of the River Ganges, while a distorted view and a misinterpretation, may have a deeper meaning. Perhaps this idea of a river existing as a Source of Life comes from an unconscious awareness of a Heavenly reality. Maybe it is still a recognizable symbol... a sign that acknowledges and points

toward a Heavenly feature that already exists in the realm of God’s New Jerusalem.

Perhaps this reverence for the River Ganges represents, in a strange way, an unconscious human awareness of the great reality of Heaven that is currently not visible to us. There is indeed a great River of Life, but it is not found anywhere on planet Earth. It is found, instead, only in the Heavenly City of God.

So I suggest to you that perhaps the River Ganges is just an Earthly symbol for a spiritual reality that is found only in the Heavenly City which is the New Jerusalem. The New Testament book of *Revelation* tells us that the New Jerusalem is the City of God where Jesus Christ is forever on His throne.

It says that in the New Jerusalem we will see that the water of the River of Life, as clear as crystal, will be flowing from the Throne of God and of the Lamb, right down the middle of the great street of the Heavenly City. On each side of the River will stand the Tree of Life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit and yielding its crop in every month. The leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be any curse on the Earth or on the human race. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the Holy City of God, and His servants will there serve Christ eternally. They will see His face, and His name will be obvious on their foreheads.

There will be no more night in the New Day of that New Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the City of God will not need the light of a lamp nor the light of the Sun, for the Lord God Himself will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever with the Sun of Righteousness, Who is God The Son, the Holy One. Our King and Ruler for all eternity will be Jesus Christ our Lord, the Sinless One who is the Spotless Lamb of God.

Humans do have a fixed purpose in this Universe. God has created us to serve Him and to glorify Him eternally. With His help, we can not only enjoy an eternal communion with Christ... we can also make His praise glorious!

This is the purpose for which God has created all the humans on our planet. It is the destiny of all those who have experienced the Second Birth. Jesus taught that no person can find God unless he has been “born again.” Those who never find Jesus Christ will never experience a Second Birth, but they will experience what the Bible calls “the Second Death.”

The Second Death comes after physical death and the Judgment Day of God Almighty, Who will judge every human being according to His own strict laws of Righteousness. Those who fail His test of Righteousness will be consigned to the Second Death, which is an eternity of remorse, torment, and isolation from God.

If you are one of those who must suffer the Second Death, you choose it of your own free will, and you will find that it does not actually bring an end to your existence. The Second Death does not terminate your existence as a living spirit.

God has given every human soul the gift of eternal life, but when you experience the “Second Death,” there is a really terrible implication. If you choose to experience the “Second Death,” you will then have to keep company with many evil and reprehensible beings in a horrible place called Hell. Hell is rather like “God’s Mental Asylum For Those Eternal Spirits Who Are Incurably Insane.” Once you go to Hell, God will never again give you another opportunity to come into His Presence. You would be forever lost and stuck in Hell for all of Eternity.

You have two choices before you now. If you choose Life, you will be spiritually “born again” and will become a New Creature in Christ.

That’s what a Christian is: A New Creature in Christ is an individual who has experienced a Christ-inside revolution. You choose to repent of your sins, ask for forgiveness through the blood-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and you then turn away from the bad habits and evil activities with which you were involved in the past. You become separated from the rest of this world, a human spirit who has dedicated himself to Jesus Christ... one who has committed himself to a life of devotion and to the service of Jesus Christ. You stop loving the world and the ways of the world. You declare that Jesus Christ will be your Savior

and Lord. The Holy Spirit of God then comes inside your heart and will remain with your spirit for all of eternity.

It changes your whole way of life.

That’s called Salvation in Jesus Christ. It’s a wonderful gift that is worth far more than the most valuable jewel on Earth. It allows you to become a Child of God and a brother to Jesus Christ. Jesus will then claim you as His friend and His brother.

If you do not choose to accept the offer of Eternal Life with Christ, then you are in a very dangerous situation. If you should die tonight without repentance for sins and without the blood of Jesus Christ upon you to cover up your own iniquity,

you will be one of those consigned to the Second Death, which is actually a fate far worse than mere death.

Choose Life rather than Death. Jesus says, “I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He is the Door to Heaven and the only route to God. Jesus also says, “All those who hate Me love Death.”

I hope you will choose Jesus Christ and love Life, being grateful for the Eternal Life with God that Jesus provides for you. I hope you will hate Death instead, and will not let it vanquish you. Jesus Christ died on that wooden cross for the sins of humanity, but He conquered Death when He came back to life on Earth in the glorious new form of His Resurrection Body. He will conquer Death for you too if you

become His genuine follower and a True Believer of Jesus Christ. And someday, at the time of the great Resurrection Day, Jesus will even give you a Resurrection Body that is rather like His own!

Choose Life rather than Death!

You can do this by placing Jesus Christ, **Who in the Trinity of God created our Universe**, upon a throne at the center of your heart! *He deserves that position and that kind of respect.* He was first **God The Son**, but when born in human flesh He became the only sinless and righteous person who ever lived. Yet He sacrificed Himself on a cross for your sake, taking all guilt and sins upon Himself— for you and for me, and for all

people everywhere on Earth— **that whoever wishes for salvation might be rescued from the due punishment of sins.**

If you will do this, you will gain a new contentment and peace as you accept God's organizational plan for the Universe. . . because you'll be letting God be the Ruler of All Things in this world. . . and in your own life.

All it really takes is a simple but sincere little prayer— one that you should make up in your own words. The prayer for deliverance and for God's leadership should come from your own heart!

Some important elements that you might include are:

- 1) your desire to turn away from the wrongness or evil of your past life, and your remorse over the sins of your previous life,
- 2) your desire for God's forgiveness and mercy through the act of sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son (Jesus Christ),
- 3) your desire to know God's leadership in your life,
- 4) your desire to learn more of God's truth through Bible study,
- 5) your desire to find fellowship with genuine believers.

When you're saved, you'll know Jesus is King of the Universe and the Lord of your life. You'll know the three faces of God Almighty: God The Father, God The Son, and God The Spirit. His Holy Light will start to be visible in your own face and actions!

Jesus said of the people of God that "The kingdom of heaven is like a **net** that God has cast into the sea, and it gathers of every kind: When it is full, it will be pulled up on the shore, where they will sit down to sort the catch, and they will **collect the good fish in baskets, but the bad things will be thrown away. This is the way it will be at the end of the world:** The angels shall come forth, and they will **separate** the unrighteous persons from among those justified by God..."

Excerpt from the Book of Matthew, who was a constant companion of Jesus and his devoted disciple [13:47-50].

Jesus spoke of the people of God as being like a seed that is growing secretly, saying, "As for the kingdom of God, it is as if a person should cast seed into the ground; and then

he sleeps, and he rises up night and day to see that the seed is springing forth and always growing up, although he knows not exactly how. The Earth is bringing forth fruit from itself; first the blade, then the ears of corn, and after that the fullness of the ears of corn. And when all the **fruit of the Earth** has come forth, immediately God will use the sickle to reap the fields, because the **harvest-time** has come."

Excerpt from the book of Mark [4:26-29].

It's also important for all of us to remember this:

- 1) **WE SPEAK TO GOD** by our prayers.
- 2) **GOD SPEAKS TO US** by the words of Holy Scripture.

So we must try to read His words and His Book just as often as we possibly can!!

God wants to bless you for all your long efforts to understand this very confusing and difficult Universe in which we live— so let Him reward your search with the grace of His forgiveness and enlightenment!

THIS GUIDE WAS WRITTEN FOR YOU BY . . .
Ken Street, a baptized follower of the Way.

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God is continuously harvesting the Earth... as His long-range plan for the Earth's transformation goes ever forward...!