

the
REVELATION
of JESUS CHRIST

Session 26 - Rev 21:9 – 22:21

The New Jerusalem

(21:9-11) “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.”

The last woman-city John viewed was Babylon the great harlot whose boast toward the people of God is that she was no widow. Babylon was shown to John as the single ecumenical religion that dominates the world scene during the tribulation period under the influence of demonic and angelic powers. The epicenter of her rebellion was shown to John as a great, literal city that is the icon of the absolute wickedness that will permeate the earth.

We looked at the tremendous blessing that the Millennial kingdom will bring to this current creation that will end with one final rebellion that will bring about the end of the “first things” and the great white throne judgement. John was then shown the amazing vision of the fiat creation of the new heavens and earth that will be eternally bridged to the holy city – the New Jerusalem of God.

This city also is a literal city that is defined by her spiritual character; holy. She is presented as betrothed to God and the Lamb. Even though the bride of Christ in the order of the first things has been shown to be the church, the wife of the Lamb will be extended to all of redeemed humanity in the order of the new things. The summing up of all things in Christ has its completion in this final picture of God's glory displayed in His bride; from the vision of the man on the throne of God in Ezekiel 1 to this picture of perfected humanity taking on the brilliance of God's holiness.

New Jerusalem's Exterior

(21:12-21a) “It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human

measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl..."

No matter how difficult it may be to describe this amazing city, the one thing that is for sure is the real, physical nature of it. It has walls, gates and dimensions all of which are to be understood as actual properties. Just as only redeemed humanity will be a part of the new creation, no unholy angels will be there. They are throughout Revelation carrying out the exact assignments that the Lord gives them in the court of heaven and in the affairs of man. Hebrews 1:14 says that they are "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" and here they stand at the gates entering the city as a picture of this role. Unlike the rebellious fallen angels, these angels are pleased to live out the role that the Lord designed them for.

Once again in the eternal picture we are reminded of the distinction made between Israel and the church in their identity even though they are all part of God's holy city. The names of each of the twelve tribes inscribed above the gates serves a permanent token of God's covenant keeping nature. But it is the New Covenant that makes the fulfillment of the other unconditional covenants possible. This New Covenant is ratified in Christ's blood (Lk 22:20; 1Cor 11:25; Heb 9:15) and His name is therefore written on the cornerstone of the walls foundation. Without Jesus, salvation has no foundation:

*"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
John 3:19 (NASB)*

Paul also describes the "dwelling of God":

*"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."
Eph 2:19-22 (NASB)*

There are two views on the dimensions given for this city; that it represents a cube or that it represents a pyramid (or mountain shape). For those who argue against the pyramid view, the symbology would be pagan since so many ancient pagan structures were shaped like a pyramid beginning with the Tower of Babel. Those who argue for a pyramid would say that when the fallen angels descended and attempted to take the place of God in man's eyes, they built structures and caused men to build structures that were reflections of their original abode. Pagan pyramids always depict a deity residing on the top and so this too is a reflection of God's throne on top of the holy city, if they were, in fact, attempting to mimic the heaven that they had fallen from.

Either way the important point is that just like the measuring in Ezekiel of the Millennial temple and the measuring of the tribulation temple (Rev 11:1), the New Jerusalem has real dimensions; about 1,380 miles in each direction. If placed over the United States it would expand from Canada down to the Gulf and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean. 8 of the stones mentioned are in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex 28:17-20; 39:10-13). The role of the high priest was to be the mediator between God and His people. Hebrews (4:14-10:18) tells us that Jesus has a superior priesthood and we are through Him given permanent access to God.

The precious stones also paint a dazzling picture of God's glory put on display in His people and in the place of their habitation. There will be no one or no thing in the new heavens and earth that will cause God to have to veil His glory. Perhaps the most important detail of the gates which allow access to the heavenly city is the fact that each one is a pearl. Gold, silver and precious stones are all geological, but the pearl is formed in the flesh of an oyster when a piece of debris becomes lodged. The reaction of the oyster to the suffering is to form a secretion around the foreign object. The process eventually forms a beautiful pearl which are highly valued for their beauty. All of the access points to the holy city are giant pearls representing the suffering that Christ went through on the behalf of redeemed sinners.

New Jerusalem's Interior

(21: 21b - **“And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”**

Based on the chronology of Revelation and the fact that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem, we know that this is not merely a further explanation of the Millennial kingdom. Additionally, in order for the feasts to be celebrated properly there remains the necessity for the sun and the moon, night and day to remain. In the new Jerusalem that reaches out of heaven and touches the new earth, no celestial bodies will be used to shine forth light because of the full radiance of the glory of God. This brilliant glory was shown to Peter, James and John and the mount at the transfiguration when Jesus pulled back the veil of His flesh (Matt 17: 1-8; Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36; 2Pe 1:17,18).

Nations represent all of redeemed humanity and the kings who bring their glory into is not speaking to a system of rule, but represents the eternal royal nature of the redeemed in Christ. John speaks of the works of the wicked not being a part of the new Jerusalem by way of contrast here. He does not mean that there will be wickedness as part of the new creation, but is simply saying that there will only be those who have been redeemed that will be the residents of the new things. All of the works of evil

will have been burned up and judged in the passing of the first things.

To the Jew, the tree of life expresses blessing (Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4 and Rev 2:7). Once again we see an expression that seems to fit within the context of the first things - “months”. But how can there be months in the order of the new creation that is eternal with no day or night and no time restrictions? Anthropomorphically speaking twelve months indicates completion as we are caused to think of the full cycle of seasons within a year. The fact that this one tree has 12 kinds of fruit for every month speaks to the abundance of life and joy that will be a part of the eternal experience for the redeemed.

Additionally John states that it will be for the healing of nations, but how can there be a need for healing when all of redeemed humanity is in their glorified state forever? The word translated healing here is “Therapeia” which means therapeutic. So again the tree of life along with its abundant variety is given for the sheer joy and pleasure of redeemed humanity, not for survival. This is not hard to imagine as the resurrected Jesus ate with the disciples (Luke 24:42-43; Acts 10:41) and angels ate with Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:1-8).

Privileges extended

(22: 3-5) “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”

We saw the curse being greatly diminished during the Millennium, however not completely gone as sin and death are still a part of the reality of the reign of Christ on the earth during the order of the first things. The curse will not be apart of the new creation in any way. The reason that there will be no temple is because the throne of God is in the midst of the New Jerusalem with free and open fellowship as we will see His face, bear His name and serve Him with perfection. Yet even as we serve it will be with royal status eternally, just like our servant - King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ’s Imminent Return demands a response

(22: 6-12) “And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book." I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who

is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy. Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”

Jesus reminds the reader that He is coming quickly. He doesn't frame it with any burdens of proof, but simply states it in order to cause those who heed the warnings to be always prepared. He also reminds us that the book is prophecy which means that it will happen according to how it was written and is not simply allegorical poetry used to paint a picture of the struggle between good and evil. He reminds us of the permanency of the condition of humanity at the point of judgement. Those who are wicked will remain eternally wicked and those who are redeemed will be holy forever.

John's response is to worship the Lord and yet he forgets that he is falling before an angel who quickly reminds him that God alone is to be worshipped. The angels statement shows that they are servants of redeemed humanity and are holy in their submission to that role. Also we are reminded that heaven is not extended to everyone, but only to those who have heeded the truth of God's Word.

Christ's Final Warning

(22: 13 - 17) “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The 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 wishes take the water of life without cost.”

Men have all kinds of opinions, philosophies and religions all designed to make himself the object of superiority in his own mind. But God is not impressed and the message of salvation is not complicated. He offers the salvation that humanity needs as a free gift but it must be responded to in obedience as the Psalmist says:

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish [from] the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed [are] all they that put their trust in him.” Ps 2:12 (NASB)

Clear distinctions continue to be drawn by Jesus as He marks out distinctives that separate His own from the unredeemed. Those who have rejected the Son remain forever on the outside of blessing. For the believer it will be continual joy and satisfaction unimagined. Amazingly we are reminded that the Revelation is written to the churches and so we can never stop proclaiming the gospel and defending the whole counsel of God. It is within the church establishment that many will find themselves as those whom the Lord says “I never knew you”. True life in Christ reflects a true desire to see Him and be like

Him. Jesus is the “root of David” (Mk 12:35-37) because as God, He established Israel and all of the covenants that He unilaterally made with them and as God He created all things. Jesus is the “descendant of David” (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 132:11-12; Matt 1:1; Rom 1:3; 2Tim 2:8) as a man, but not just any man, He is the promised eternal King that will establish His people once again. He is both God and man at the same time (John 1:14).

Jesus is the bright morning star. He is the source of all light (John 8:12) and the promised star from Jacob predicted by Balaam:

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. "
Num 24:17 (NASB)

Peter reflecting on what he witnessed at the transfiguration of Christ speaks to the promised light and righteousness of God that would come to those that love and fear God:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"
2Pet 1:19 (NASB)

Jesus promises the overcomers in Thyatira Himself as the “morning star” (2:28). All of those who submit to the authority and will of God and His Christ will receive the brilliance and glory of Christ as their inheritance and enjoy His fellowship forever. For all who are of Christ our hearts cry is to say “come” as we long for His appearing.

Christ's Word is True

(22: 18-21) “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all. Amen.”

As John records the final Words of Christ in His letter to the churches, he reminds us of the severity of all that He has said will take place. We are to understand it as literal and not as some fancy story telling. This is evident in the warnings to be precise in handling this book of prophecy; we are not to add or take away from what is written. In closing it is important to remember that this was written to the churches who claim the name of Christ. It is a sobering thought to think of the fact that there are many who name the name of Christ but deny His power. Many who call themselves part of the church without having truly repented and trusted in Christ. We all need to sober minded as scripture warns and be in the practice of examining ourselves in light of scripture to be sure that we are in the faith and obeying our Fathers will.