

Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation

"The New Jerusalem"

Revelation 21:9-22:5

The New Jerusalem: (21:9-22:5)

After getting a glimpse of the new heaven and the new earth, John now gets a closer look at the capital city of heaven, New Jerusalem. John receives this vision or closer look at the city from one of the seven bowl angels. The angel comes to John and offers to show him the bride, the wife of the lamb. Believers are no longer simply referred to as the bride of Christ, but are now in this future time referred to as the wife of the Lamb. John highlights four features of the believer's future residence in eternity. The place that Christ had promised to His disciples the night before His death (cf. John 14:1-3).

The General Appearance of New Jerusalem: (21:9-11)

John is approached by one of the seven bowl angels. This could possibly be the same angel that showed John the Antichrist's capital city of Babylon in Chapters 17 and 18. If that is the case then there is probably a huge contrast made here between the two cities. As previously mentioned in 21:2, the city is referred to as a bride because it draws its character from its occupants. John is transported to a great and high mountain, so that he will get a good view of the holy city, Jerusalem. John once again mentions the fact that this city descended to the new heaven and the new earth. It descended from God. This is not a newly created city, but is likely the place that Christ prepared for believers in His Father's house. It is the city, "*whose architect and builder is God*" (Heb. 11:10). John provides a general description of the city's appearance here in verse 11.

"The most distinguishing characteristic of the capital city of eternity is that it is the throne of the eternal, almighty One, and therefore had the glory of God in it...The glory of God is the sum total of His attributes (cf. Ex. 33:18-19) and is manifested as blazing light (Ex. 13:21; 19:18; 24:17; 34:29-30, 35; 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ps. 104:2; Isa. 4:5; Ezek. 10:4; Hab. 3:3-4; Luke 2:9) and in His Son (Matt. 17:2; 24:27, 30; 1 Tim. 6:16)." ⁵⁴² God's glory will radiate from New Jerusalem. The blazing, brilliant light of God's glory will be so bright that *the city has no need for the sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb* (cf. vs. 23). Isaiah also mentioned this reality in Isaiah 60:19, "*No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory.*"

John goes on to describe the New Jerusalem by saying, "*Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.*" "*Phoster (brilliance)* refers to something from which light radiates...To John, the heavenly city appeared like a giant lightbulb, with the brilliant light of God's glory streaming out of it." ⁵⁴³ This brilliant light radiating from the heavenly city *was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper*. This jasper is not what would be considered a modern jasper stone. This is a transliteration of the Greek, *iaspis*. The *iaspis* stone is a translucent stone and is probably best understood as referring to a diamond. John calls it a very costly and crystal-clear stone. The picture here is of an unblemished, flawless and pure diamond. As a diamond refracts light, so this New Jerusalem refracts the brilliant and blazing glory of God.

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The Architectural Design of New Jerusalem: (21:12-21)

"After giving the general appearance of the city, John now itemizes the specific details. Expositors have differed as to the degree in which this description should be taken literally, some believing that the city is actually nonexistent and presented only as a symbolic presentation of the blessings of the saints in eternity future. Such a view, however, is difficult to harmonize with the specific details given, which are nowhere explained in other than the literal sense in the Bible. There does not seem to be any solid objection to the concept that the saints in the new heaven and the new earth will have as their home precisely such a city, glorious in every aspect, reaching to tremendous heights into the new heaven, and embodying characteristics to remind them of their spiritual heritage."⁵⁴⁴ John first mentions that the city had a great wall with 12 gates in it. He then goes on to describe those gates, the walls foundation stones, the measurements of the city and the materials of the city.

The gates of the city: (vv. 12-13) It is important to emphasize that this passage gives a literal description of the New Jerusalem. These are 12 literal gates. After mentioning that the city had twelve gates, John informs us that there are twelve angels stationed at those twelve gates. These angels are not there to guard the city gates, but they are more likely stationed there so to serve God's people (cf. Heb. 1:14). These gates also have the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel written on them. As mentioned in Revelation 7 there are many different lists of the twelve tribes throughout Scripture. It is unclear what the exact 12 names will be, but it seems likely that it will be the same 12 tribes mentioned in Revelation 7 in regards to the 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes. John does not go into greater detail other than the fact that these 12 tribes will each have their name written on one of the 12 gates. John goes on to mention that there are three gates in each direction, east, north, south and west. "This arrangement is reminiscent of the way the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle (Num. 2), and of the allotment of the tribal lands around the millennial temple (Ezek. 48)."⁵⁴⁵

The walls of the city: (vs. 14) John goes on to mention the foundation stones of the wall. There were 12 foundation stones each with the name of one of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. "Those stones commemorate God's covenant relationship with the church, of which the apostles are the foundation (cf. Eph. 2:20). At the top of each gate was the name of one of the tribes of Israel; at the bottom of each gate was the name of one of the apostles. Thus, the lay out of the city's gates pictures God's favor on all His redeemed people, both those under the old covenant, and those under the new covenant."⁵⁴⁶

The Measurements of the city: (vv. 15-17) The angel that spoke with the apostle had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. This is similar to the measuring of both the Tribulation temple (Revelation 11:1) and the measuring of the Millennial temple (Ezekiel 40:3ff). What is of importance is that in each of these occasions the measurements are marking out what belongs to God.

What is the result of this measurement? The city is laid out as a square with its length being the same as its width. There seems to be some confusion and difference among the English versions as to the result of this measurement. The NASB says it was 1500 miles. The NKJV says 12,000 furlongs, which is about 1500 miles. The NIV says 12,000 stadia, which is 1380 miles. So which measurement is correct. The literal rendering of the Greek text is 12,000 stadia. A stadia measures about 607 feet. The city will be about 1380 miles in each direction. John emphasizes that it is the

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same distance in its length, width and height. So the heavenly city will be a cube of 1380 feet in each direction.

Dr. David Jeremiah writes: "To grasp something of the enormity of the city, consider that this figure is 40 times the area of England, 20 times that of New Zealand, and 10 times the area of Germany or France. The ground floor alone would provide enough living space for far more people than have ever lived in the history of the world. And this is just the first floor."⁵⁴⁷ "Never of course was there a city like this! If it were to be superimposed upon the United States, its area would cover all the way from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic Ocean to Colorado."⁵⁴⁸ In fact Henry Morris goes to the extent to calculate each person's "cube" and determines that each person will have about 75 acres on each side (The Revelation Record, 451).

John goes on to indicate the measurement of the walls, which came to about 72 yards (lit. 144 cubits). This measurement is most likely the thickness of the city walls. John makes the specific emphasis that these dimensions are given according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. John is emphasizing that these are real literal measurements. A foot equals a foot and a mile equals a mile, whether you are man or angel.

The materials of the city: (vv. 18-21) The material of the city wall is that of **jasper**. Jasper as previously described in verse 11 is likely that of a diamond. Imagine a 216 foot thick diamond wall around a 1380 mile city. It is difficult for our finite minds to even consider. The city itself is made out of **pure gold**, which is translucent. In verses 19 and 20, John goes on to describe the material of the foundation stones. He says that the foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone.

1-The first foundation stone is a **jasper**, which is likely a diamond. It is crystal clear and refracts all the colors of the spectrum.

2-The second foundation stone is a **sapphire**, which is the same brilliant blue stone that we know of today.

3-The third foundation stone is **chalcedony**, which was from the region of Chalcedon, now in modern turkey. It was a pale blue or milky gray quartz with colored stripes.

4-The fourth foundation stone is an **emerald**, which is the same grass-green, transparent stone that we know of today.

5-The fifth foundation stone is that of the **sardonyx**, which is an onyx stone with alternating reddish-brown and white bands running through it.

6-The sixth foundation stone is a **sardius**, which is a red translucent stone like that of a ruby.

7-The seventh foundation stone is a **chrysolite**, which is transparent and golden in color like a yellow beryl or golden jasper stone.

8-The eighth foundation stone is a **beryl**, which is a blue, sea-green or sometimes yellow translucent stone.

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9-The ninth foundation stone is a **topaz**, which is a translucent yellow or yellow-green stone.

10-The tenth foundation stone is a **chrysoprase**, which is an apple-green translucent stone.

11-The eleventh foundation stone is the **jacinth**, which in John's day was a translucent blue or violet colored stone. The modern day stone is a red or reddish-brown zircon.

12-The twelfth foundation stone is the **amethyst**, which is a brilliant purple or violet transparent stone.⁵⁴⁹

"Although stones can take on different hues or colors, it is clear that the twelve foundations will be structured to refract the effluence of God's glory and holiness. Such beauty will transcend anything mankind has seen since the inception of God's creation."⁵⁵⁰ "The scene was one of breathtaking beauty, a spectrum of dazzling colors flashing from the New Jerusalem throughout the re-created universe."⁵⁵¹

John goes on to explain that the 12 gates were actually 12 pearls. In fact each one of the gates was a single pearl. Can you imagine a single gigantic 1400 mile high pearl for each of these gates. John Phillips in his commentary effectively explains the significance of these pearls for the gates:

How appropriate! All other precious gems are metals or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster—the only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster receives an irritation or a wound, and around the offending article that has penetrated and hurt it, the oyster builds a pearl. The pearl, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. The glory land is God's answer, in Christ, to wicked men who crucified heaven's beloved and put Him to open shame. How like God it is to make the gates of the new Jerusalem of pearl. The saints as they come and go will be forever reminded, as they pass the gates of glory, that access to God's home is only because of Calvary. Think of the size of those gates! Think of the supernatural pearls from which they are made! What gigantic suffering is symbolized by those gates of pearl! Throughout the endless ages we shall be reminded by those pearly gates of the immensity of the sufferings of Christ. Those pearls, hung eternally at the access routes to glory, will remind us forever of One who hung upon a tree and whose answer to those who injured Him was to invite them to share His home.

John finishes his description of the materials of the city by noting that *the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass*. Obviously this is not a material that we are familiar with. However, everything in this heavenly city is transparent in order for God's brilliant and blazing glory to be refracted and unrestricted.

The Internal Character of New Jerusalem: (vv. 22-27)

The first aspect of the internal character of New Jerusalem is that there is *no temple* in the city. *The Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple*. Believers will constantly be in the presence of God. God will be dwelling in the midst of His people (cf. 21:3) and thus there will be no need for a temple. There will be a direct, immediate, intimate, perfect and holy communion with God.

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The second aspect of the internal character of New Jerusalem is that there will be no need for the sun or the moon. The sun and moon will not be needed to shine light upon the city because the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. "God's glorious presence in the city will illuminate every corner of the new Jerusalem; nothing will be hidden."⁵⁵² This aspect is emphasized further by the comment in verse 24, "*The nations will walk by its light.*" Many have sought to identify who the nations are. "Nations translates *ethnos*, which can also mean people."⁵⁵³ It is simply a reference to the inhabitants of the city. As we are aware from previous revelation the inhabitants of the city are believers of all ages. In fact the Greek version the *Textus Receptus* (the manuscript base for the KJV & the NKJV) includes the phrase "those who are saved" after the term for nations, which seems to provide an adequate understanding of who the nations really are. They are simply believers. Those inhabitants of the heavenly city will no longer need the sun or the moon to light their way for they will have the glory of God to light their paths.

The third aspect of the internal character of New Jerusalem is that *the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it*. There have been many different interpretations as to the identity of the kings of the earth, but most views offered are unsatisfactory in light of the immediate context. The only individuals that are allowed to enter the city are the saved. Only those who have had their names written in the Lamb's book of life are allowed to dwell in the city. Hence the kings of the earth can only refer to saved individuals. Those who enter the heavenly city will bring their glory into it. Some have suggested that this is a reference to the glorification of those believers in physical bodies at the end of the Millennium. If so then this is referring to their translation into glorified bodies and their entrance into the New Jerusalem. It is possible that it is simply referring to all believers entering into the heavenly city, which is described previously in Isaiah 60:3 and further in 21:26. Like the 24 elders, all, who enter heaven will bring in their glory and honor and surrender it, by casting their crowns before the throne of God (cf. 4:10). It is, however, admittedly difficult to come to a complete understanding of what is meant by this statement.

The fourth aspect of the internal character of New Jerusalem is that due to never-ending *daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed*. "In an ancient walled city, the gates were closed at nightfall to keep invaders, marauders, criminals, and other potentially dangerous individuals from entering the city under cover of darkness."⁵⁵⁴ That will not be the case in the future city of New Jerusalem for there will be no night in eternity and its gates will never need to be closed. "It will be a place of rest, safety, and refreshment, where God's people will "rest from their labors" (14:13)."⁵⁵⁵

A fifth and final aspect of the internal character of New Jerusalem is that *nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it*. This is a restatement of verse 8 and serves as an emphasis that only those who are true believers will ever be allowed into the New Jerusalem. All unbelievers will spend eternity in the lake of fire (cf. 21:8).

The Many Blessings of New Jerusalem: (22:1-5)

In these few verses John summarizes the many blessings of the inhabitants of New Jerusalem. In particular he highlights at least eight such blessings that we as believers will enjoy for all eternity.

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The first blessing is that of **Eternal Life** (22:1-2). John is showed by the angel *a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb*. "Like everything else in the New Jerusalem, the river was clear as crystal so it could reflect the glory of God. It cascaded down from the throne of God and of the Lamb in a dazzling, sparkling, never-ending stream. Its pure, unpolluted, unobstructed flow symbolizes the constant flow of everlasting life from God's throne to God's people. John goes on to describe the tree of life in the middle of the street (better translated "path"). It seems to spread on either side of the river. The tree of life also symbolizes the blessing of eternal life. John goes on to mention that *the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*. *Therapeia* (healing) is probably best understood has life-giving or health-giving. "The leaves of the tree can be likened to supernatural vitamins, since vitamins are taken not to treat illness, but to promote general health. Life in heaven will be fully energized, rich, and exciting." ⁵⁵⁶

The second blessing is that **there will no longer be any curse** (22:3). This is a reminder from the preceding chapter and simply means that the sorrow, mourning, pain, illness, and death will be no more (cf. 21:4). The curse inflicted at the Fall will be removed for all eternity.

The third blessing will be **The Presence of God and His throne**. John states *the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it* (22:3). This reinforces the truths already learned that God will indeed dwell in the presence of His saints. His throne will be right in the middle of New Jerusalem. The saints will have an intimate fellowship with the Lord as He dwells in their midst. They will worship God before His heavenly throne.

The fourth blessing will be that of **servicing God** (cf. 22:3). It will be a true blessing to serve the Lord forever. John does not go into specifics about how we will serve God, but simply informs us of this great privilege.

The fifth blessing will be the opportunity **to see God's Face** (cf. 22:4). What a blessing to be able to look upon the glory of God. "Being perfectly holy and righteous, they will be able to endure the heavenly level of the blazing, glorious light from God's presence without being consumed—something impossible for mortal men (Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12)." ⁵⁵⁷

The sixth blessing will be the fact that the redeemed will be the **permanent personal possession of God** (cf. 22:4). John says that *His name will be on their foreheads*. This is a reference of identification and possession. The redeemed will be identified as the Lord's and thus His name will be on their foreheads. They will forever be the Lord's.

The seventh blessing is a repetition of 21:22-26 in that there will be **no need of natural light**. There will be no need of natural light, whether by sun or by lamp, because of the glory of the Lord will illumine them. His blazing and brilliant glory will be refracted in a spectacular display of dazzling color lighting up the entire newly created universe. Truly a blessing to behold and completely unimaginable.

The eighth and final blessing is that they will **reign forever and ever** (cf. 22:5). This is a fulfillment of Christ's promise in Revelation 3:21, "*He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne*." Paul mentioned to Timothy, "If we endure, we will also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12). What a wonderful thought to think that we will reign with our Lord and Savior for all eternity.

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John MacArthur states it well when he says, "The eternal capital city of heaven, the New Jerusalem, will be a place of indescribable, unimaginable beauty. From the center of it the brilliant glory of God will shine forth through the gold and precious stones to illuminate the new heaven and the new earth. But the most glorious reality of all will be that sinful rebels will be made righteous, enjoy intimate fellowship with God and the Lamb, serve Them, and reign with Them forever in sheer joy and incessant praise."⁵⁵⁸