

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 10-27-13 PM NOTES
"THE NEW JERUSALEM"
REVELATION 21:9 – 22:5
#32 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

GENESIS

Heaven and earth is created (1:1)
The sun is created (1:16)
The night is established (1:5)
The seas are created (1:10)
The curse for sin is announced (3:14-17)
Death enters history (3:19, 21)
Man is driven from paradise (3:24)
Sorrow and pain begin (3:17)
No mention of Satan in the first two chapters

REVELATION

New heavens and new earth recreated (21:1)
No need of the sun (21:23)
No night there (22:5)
No more sea (21:1)
No more curse (22:3)
No more death (21:4)
Man is restored to paradise (22:14)
No more sorrow and pain (21:4)
No mention of Satan in the last two chapters

—Danny Aiken

John 14:1-3 (NKJV) "1 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also."

Colossians 3:2 (NKJV) "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

I. The Description of the City (21:9-10)

2 Peter 3:10 (NASB) "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

A. The Source of the City (21:9-10)

Revelation 21:2a (NKJV) "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God..."

B. The Sights of the City (21:11-14)

Galatians 3:28 (NKJV) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

C. The Size of the City (21:15-16)

Revelation 21:17b (NIV) "... by man's measurement, which the angel was using."

D. The Splendor of the City (21:17-21)

II. The Distinctives of the City (21:22-27)

A. There Is No Sanctuary (21:22)

B. There Is no Sun (21:23)

John 8:12b (NKJV) "I am the light of the world."

C. There Is No Seclusion (21:24-26)

D. There Is No Sin (21:27)

III. The Delights of the City (22:1-5)

A. The Life of the City (21:1-3)

1. The River of Life (22:1)

John 4:13-14 (NKJV) ¹³Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'

John 7:38 (NKJV) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

2. The Tree of Life (22:2)

Revelation 2:7b (NKJV) "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Proverbs 11:30a (NKJV) "The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life..."

Genesis 3:24 (NKJV) "So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

"Some people find it hard to understand why perfectly healthy people will need food, water, and health-giving vegetation on the New Earth. It appears that we still have needs, but they will all be met. The organic nature of edible fruit and medicinal leaves emphasizes the tie of mankind to Earth, suggesting that eternal life won't be as different from life in Eden as is often assumed."
—Randy Alcorn

3. Service (22:3)

B. The Lord of the City (22:4)

Matthew 5:8 (NKJV) "Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

C. The Light of the City (22:5)

"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 joy and incessant praise."

—John MacArthur

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It is interesting to both compare and contrast the first book of the Bible (Genesis) with the last book (Revelation).

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[From Danny Aiken sermon]

What a gracious God we serve! In Genesis we see the undoing of paradise by our sin and in Revelation we see the restoration of paradise through God’s grace and the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

In this message we are going to focus on a city called the New Jerusalem. This city is what Jesus was referring to in **John 14:1-3 (NKJV)** ¹ "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare **a place** for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also." In our text this city, the new Jerusalem (where all the redeemed who died in the Lord dwell) comes down from Heaven to the newly remade earth in a recreated atmosphere. This is where the saints of God will spend eternity. In Revelation 21:1-8 which we looked at in the last message, we were introduced to this city of God called New Jerusalem. In today’s text, we will see some details about this place where the people of God will spend eternity. The chapter division between chapter 21 & chapter 22 shouldn’t be there. Actually the theme of the New Jerusalem goes through Revelation 22:5.

There is a natural curiosity that believers have about Heaven. There are so many questions that the Bible doesn’t answer. However, there are a lot of things that we do know about Heaven because many of them are revealed in Revelation 21-22. This much I know: God tells us all we need to know about this eternal abode of those who die in Christ. The details that we are given about the New Jerusalem are mind boggling. If you didn’t already know that, you will after the message.

I have two main goals in the study of Heaven. The **first** is that you can spot and refute error about the final destination of believers. That is important because there is much error concerning Heaven. The Jehovah’s Witnesses say that only a fixed number of people (144,000) will be there. The Mormons are not so much concerned with the population of Heaven as they are its dimensions. They divide Heaven into three spheres: the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial. The celestial is reserved only for very good Mormons and those united in Mormon marriage in a Mormon temple. Muslims believe that their version of “Heaven” that they call “paradise” is for those whose good works outweigh the bad. They believe that paradise will be filled with beautiful women that the men will enjoy forever along with an unending supply of wine. The only way you can be assured of getting there is to die in a holy war. I want you to know all that it is possible for us to know about the real place so that you can recognize error. **Second**, I want you to know what it is that you are to set your mind on while you are here on this earth. **Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)** “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

I. The Description of the City (21:9-21)

The best way to think about the New Jerusalem is to think of it as being the capital city of Heaven. Heaven is located on the re-made, purified, and cleansed earth in a remade and cleansed atmosphere. The New Jerusalem is likely suspended somewhere above the earth until the earth and atmosphere are re-made as it is described in **2 Peter 3:10 (NASB)** “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” Those who die in Christ go to this “holy Jerusalem” or New Jerusalem. It is likely that during the earthly reign of Christ it will come close to the earth so that those who enter the millennial kingdom will abide in the New Jerusalem, but have duties on the earth as we rule and reign with Christ.

A. The Source of the City (21:9-10)

In verse 9 John meets an angel that we last saw a little more than 1,000 years earlier before the millennium when he facilitated the pouring out of God’s judgment on the earth during the time of the great tribulation. The angel tells John that he will show him the bride, the Lamb’s wife. What he showed John was the city, the New Jerusalem. The city called New Jerusalem is not only the home of the bride of Christ; it is called the bride. A city is not buildings; it is people. The bride of Christ resides in the New Jerusalem. The bride of the Lamb was a title originally given to the church, but now it is expanded to encompass the redeemed of all the ages – Old Covenant saints and New Covenant saints.

The angel takes John to a very great and high mountain. This gives me a thrill. What John sees here is the New Jerusalem coming down to a remade earth and on that earth is at least one great and high mountain. I love the mountains! There is nothing about beaches in this description of the New Jerusalem. I dislike the beach. The main point here is that you see that the source of the great city, the bride, the New Jerusalem is in Heaven. It is coming down from the third Heaven where the special manifest presence of God dwells. We saw that same truth in **Revelation 21:2a (NKJV)** “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...” If it is coming down from the third heaven, it is today located in the third heaven where Jesus went to prepare it for us.

B. The Sights of the City (21:11-14)

Whenever we see the visual manifestation of the glory of God, it is light, really bright light. The glory of God emanating from the New Jerusalem is so stunning that John describes it like the beauty of a jasper stone (probably a diamond) refracting a bright light – brighter than anything on earth. So bright is this glory of God that there is no need for the sun in the New Jerusalem. The visual magnificence of the New Jerusalem is beyond the capacity of human words.

In verses 12-14, we see the exterior design of the city. John describes a great and high wall, 12 gates watched over by 12 angels – much like honor guards I suspect. On the gates (3 facing each of the 4 points of the compass, symbolizing access from every direction) are the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. This city as I said earlier is for the Old Testament saints just as it is also for the New Testament saints. In verse 14 we see that on the foundation stones of the wall are the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. The city has a great high wall (we will see how great in a moment). Why is there a need for walls in the New Jerusalem? They are not there to keep the inhabitants in, nor are they there to keep the “riff-raff” out because there is no riff-raff in existence. The wicked are in the lake of fire as we saw in chapter 20. These walls are for the glory of God! With the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on the top of the gates and the names of the 12 apostles on the foundation of the walls, we see God glorified in the “made righteous Jews” and “made righteous Gentiles” being together for all eternity. It is the ultimate fulfillment of **Galatians 3:28 (NKJV)** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

C. The Size of the City (21:15-16)

A reed was often used in Bible time as a measuring stick. A reed of gold is appropriate for measuring a priceless city. The New Jerusalem is huge! It is a cube 1,400 miles in length, width, and height. Is that literal? I don’t see any justification for making it symbolic. Verse 17 even says that this is not some kind of heavenly measuring; it is “the measure of a man” or as the NIV says **Revelation 21:17b (NIV)** “...by man’s measurement, which the angel was using.” A city this size in the middle of the United States would

stretch from Canada to Mexico and from the Appalachian mountains to the California border. We don't have to worry about Heaven being overcrowded! Remember that it is 1,400 miles high. That is room for 600,000 stories. But just the ground level of the New Jerusalem is nearly two million square miles!

D. The Splendor of the City (21:17-21)

Verse 17 probably speaks of the thickness of the walls and not their height. These walls are over 200 foot thick. Notice the beauty and splendor of the walls. The names of these stones have changed over the centuries which make their identification uncertain. Jasper seems to be a clear crystal (perhaps a diamond), sapphire is a blue stone, and chalcedony is probably greenish-blue. The emerald today is green and the sardonyx is possibly like our onyx. A sardius is a red stone and Chrysolite is a yellow quartz like our modern topaz. Beryl is green. We don't really know about some of the others, but the main point is that you see the amazing variety of colors. When the amazing glory of God shines off of these colors, what beauty! It is beyond anything that we can imagine. Our God loves beauty. Really, is there any earthly, utilitarian use for a sunset? Can you do something with them? What use are they? They simply glorify God by demonstrating that He loves beauty and the fact that man was made in His image explains why we love beauty. Heaven will take the best of this fallen earth's beauty and ramp it up a million times to a level of beauty that is breathtaking.

Verse 21 describes the gates and the streets of the city. Each wall is likely 1,400 miles high and that means the gates are also 1,400 miles high. Each gate is one pearl. Why pearls? A pearl in the natural realm is formed when a tiny grain of sand gets inside an oyster's shell and causes pain. The oyster relieves its pain by covering the irritating grain of sand with a substance called nacre or mother of pearl that hardens to become a beautiful and valuable pearl. The pearl we might say is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. Gates of pearl serve as a reminder to the residents of that celestial city that access to the New Jerusalem is only because Christ suffered in our place. What grace that the response of the One who we sinned against was to hang on a rugged cross to pay the debt we owe for our sin so that we could live in His home forever.

The streets of the New Jerusalem are made of pure gold. This gold is so pure that it is like glass. This is unlike anything we know on earth today.

II. The Distinctives of the City (21:22-27)

John notes that there are some things that are not in the New Jerusalem.

A. There Is No Sanctuary (21:22)

There was a temple in the earthly Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom, but in the New Jerusalem, there is no temple. Why is there no temple in this heavenly city? It is because the entire city is indwelt with God's presence. In a sense God the Father and God the Son are the temple! There is no need for a material temple. The temple represented God's presence, but in the New Jerusalem, we will have God's presence. Symbol has given way to reality. There is no need to go anywhere to worship God; His presence permeates Heaven.

B. There Is No Sun (21:23)

The present earth is dependent on both the sun and the moon, but the remade earth has no need of them and the glory of God and of the Lamb lights the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus, the Lamb of God says in **John 8:12b (NKJV)** "I am the light of the world." The light is not from some new type of fuel or mysterious power; it is the glory of God manifest as light.

C. There Is No Seclusion (21:24-26)

Nations can be translated "peoples" or "Gentiles". People from every tongue, tribe, and nation will be united as God's people. There will be no one secluded, no one segregated from others. Those who had great power and honor will be on par with everyone else. The phrase in **Revelation 21:24b (NKJV)** "...and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it", may mean that all who enter the New Jerusalem will surrender their earthly glory. The gates of pearl will never be shut to keep some out. All of those who are evil will have already been cast into the lake of fire. There is no fear of the darkness because there is no more night.

Verse 26 reiterates verse 24 for emphasis. The glory of nations will dissolve when it comes into the presence of the glory of God. All will be equal there. The only one who will be bowed before is our great triune God!

D. There Is No Sin (21:27)

Rev 21:27 tells us that there will be no fall from this New Jerusalem. Nothing that defiles will enter in. The only ones there will be those whose name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and they have all been born again and have a new nature that longs to please God. This fact explains why the gates remain open.

III. The Delights of the City (22:1-5)

At this point, John takes us inside the city. The emphasis shift to the provisions for the saints provided for in the New Jerusalem.

A. The Life of the City (22:1-3)

Notice what is spotlighted in the New Jerusalem.

1. The River of Life (22:1)

This crystal river symbolizes eternal life. We see that symbolism in **John 4:13-14 (NKJV)** "¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'" We see it again in **John 7:38 (NKJV)** "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." This river has no pollution! It is clear like crystal. Notice the river's source. **Revelation 22:1b (NKJV)** "...proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." This dazzling sparkling never ending stream flows unhindered and unpolluted from the very throne of God and the Lamb to God's people. This symbolizes the never ending flow of eternal life from the Lamb of God who is eternal life!

2. The Tree of Life (22:2)

The tree of life is a Jewish concept that stresses blessing (**Revelation 2:7b (NKJV)** "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." **Proverbs 11:30a (NKJV)** "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life..."). We first hear of the tree of life in Genesis. It is mentioned 3 times in Genesis 2 as being in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis, it seems that eating from the tree of life is the source of ongoing physical life. We are told that after Adam and Eve sinned God banned them from the Garden of Eden lest in their fallen sinful state they ate of the tree of life and lived continually in this miserable sin cursed existence. **Genesis 3:24 (NKJV)** "So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." Now on a new earth, the tree of life is available to all. It is not a specific singular tree, but a kind of tree. It is no longer of a sin cursed earth; it is in the new earth.

Notice that even the leaves of the tree are used for the healing of the nations. By nations, John is simply referring to the peoples who populate Heaven. The word "healing" can be translated "health". Just as eating of the tree of life perpetuates eternal life, the leaves of the tree of life perpetuate health. Randy Alcorn gives us great commentary here: "Some people find it hard to understand why perfectly healthy people will need food, water, and health-giving vegetation on the New Earth. It appears that we still have needs, but they will all be met. The organic nature of edible fruit and medicinal leaves emphasizes the tie of mankind to Earth, suggesting that eternal life won't be as different from life in Eden as is often assumed." [Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, Page 250].

3. Service (22:3)

With the curse of sin gone, service loses every negative associated with it on this current earth. Here, we struggle with fatigue, boredom and ineffectiveness. We will spend the vast majority of our time in Heaven worshipping and serving, but the serving will not be boring, fatiguing, or ineffective. We are not "cloud potatoes" in Heaven spending our days strumming a golden harp. There will be amazing tasks to perform and projects to complete. I look forward to doing plumbing in Heaven because I am so frustrated

with it on earth. Everything I “fix” still leaks! As we serve Him our stifled creativity will be unbound and it will be a blast.

B. The Lord of the City (22:4)

His name on our foreheads signifies ownership. We will belong to Him for all eternity. We will see Him! That is the main thing that make Heaven so amazing. **Matthew 5:8 (NKJV)** will finally be fulfilled in its totality: “Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for **they shall see God.**”

C. The Light of the City (22:5)

As we saw back in Revelation 21:23, the glory of God lights all of Heaven. He is the source of light.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most amazing statement in this description of Heaven and our activity is that last phrase in 22:5: “And they shall reign forever and ever”. Allow me to close with this great quote. “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 joy and incessant praise.” [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Revelation 12-22*, Page 288]. (3411)