

The Splendor of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22—22:5)

The celestial city, the New Jerusalem, our future heavenly home will be stunning in appearance. Its design, as revealed in Revelation 21:9-21, will captivate our imagination for all eternity. Revelation 21:22—22:5 further describes the New Jerusalem, focusing on its splendor. In order for us to begin to grasp the splendor of our heavenly home we can compare it to our present existence—specifically comparing things that will be missing, things that will be restored, and activities that will take place in the New Jerusalem. Simply stated, sin will be absent, abundance will be restored, and God’s people will reign in the eternal city of the Lamb. Our glorious future compels us to live fully for Jesus Christ today.

Some things will be missing in the heavenly Jerusalem, replaced by better things (21:22-27).

Generally speaking, John described the things he saw in his vision of the future but now he identifies several things that he didn’t see in the New Jerusalem.

The city has no temple because God and the Lamb are its temple (21:22).

First, John noticed that there was no temple in the New Jerusalem. The temple was for God’s ancient people the pinpoint of God’s presence on earth (2 Chronicles 7:1-3) and the focal point of sacrificial worship. The temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., rebuilt, and again destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The temple will be rebuilt in the future and become again a center of worship during the millennial reign of Christ (Ezekiel 40-48). However, in the New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem there will be no temple. It will no longer be needed because God will be personally present among His people. In this way “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” God the Father and God the Son in eternal union with one another will be manifestly present. All worship will be directed to them without need of sacrifice because Jesus, “the Lamb,” is our eternal sacrifice. Jesus Christ will forever be known as the Lamb of God.

The city has no need for the sun and moon because God and the Lamb give it light (21:23-24).

Next John states that the New Jerusalem has no need for the sun or the moon to give light. This doesn’t mean that there will be no sun or moon—there may or may not be. But the light from these heavenly bodies will be unnecessary because the glory of God will give light to the city, and the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, will be its lamp. The glory of God is the radiance of His holy character often described as light, even unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). Jesus claimed that He is the Light of the World (John 8:12), and this reality will be most evident in the New Jerusalem. The nations (many manuscripts add “who are saved”) will walk in the light that emanates from Jesus Christ. In addition, the kings of the earth will bring (continually, based on the Greek verb) their glory into the New Jerusalem. These statements seem to indicate that all who enter eternity as saved people will maintain a level of national or ethnic identity and even the dignity of positions of leadership. Their previous earthly authority as kings will be attributed

to Jesus Christ, thereby bringing their glory into the New Jerusalem. This description may imply that there will be activity outside the New Jerusalem, activity that takes place on the New Earth, with access to the New Jerusalem.

The city has no night so its gates are never shut (21:25-26).

In addition, the gates of the New Jerusalem will never be shut. Revelation 21:12 mentions the existence of twelve gates giving access to the New Jerusalem. These gates will never close because there will be no night, only daytime in that celestial city. This ready access will allow the kings of the earth to bring their glory into the city continually, and the nations of the earth will bring their honor, that is, their worship to the Lamb. The fact that there is no night in the heavenly Jerusalem may imply that our resurrection bodies will be less dependent on sleep (unless the rest of the New Heaven and the New Earth relate in a different way to the light of the New Jerusalem).

The city has no sin because only those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life will live there (21:27).

Finally, the New Jerusalem will be void of sin! John states that those who are characterized by the presently common sinful human condition will have no place in the New Jerusalem. Likewise, those who make things that are detestable or who are deceitful will be excluded from the Holy City. After all, their names were not written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb (compare Revelation 20:15). Their destiny will be the Lake of Fire. Sin will be absent because God is present in the New Jerusalem.

Some things will be restored in the heavenly Jerusalem, reflecting previous things (22:1-2).

While certain things will be missing from the New Jerusalem, other things will be restored to a place of holiness as in the original creation. The New Jerusalem will be in many ways a new Garden of Eden.

As in the Garden of Eden, a river will run through the city (22:1).

The Garden of Eden had a beautiful river that broke off into four headwaters, a refreshing source of water (Genesis 2:10). In John's vision of the New Jerusalem the angel showed him a river that flowed with the water of life (compare John 4:10; Revelation 7:17; 21:6; 22:17). This water will be crystal clear, delicious and satisfying. No one will thirst in the New Jerusalem. The river of the water of life will flow from the throne of God the Father and of the Lamb, again viewed in unity.

As in the Garden of Eden, a tree of life will continually bear fruit (22:2).

Among the trees in the Garden of Eden was the tree of life (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24), apparently a tree whose fruit would sustain life indefinitely through regular consumption. John

noted that the tree of life will be present in the New Jerusalem. This tree will be in the middle of the city's street, the street of gold (Revelation 21:21). The tree of life will also be in the midst of the river, "here and there" or "on this side and that side." The wording of this verse may point to a central avenue paralleling the river and lined with trees—the tree of life—or the tree of life might straddle the river. The final image portrayed leaves much room for the imagination, but it will be a beautiful promenade including a street of gold, a crystal clear river, and a luscious, beautiful fruit tree.

The tree of life will produce twelve different fruit, a different fruit each month (implying the continuity of monthly cycles in the New Heaven). In addition to its sustaining fruit, the tree of life will have leaves that will provide "healing" for the nations. The idea of healing in the heavenly Jerusalem doesn't imply the presence of illness or injury. Instead, the term "healing" could refer to the ongoing sustaining of health. Much like all tears being wiped away due to God's eternal comfort (Revelation 21:4), all illness will be absent due to God's eternal provision through the tree of life. Again, there is much room for imagination in this description. However, we do know that in our heavenly existence there will be perfect health, fullness of life, constant refreshment, and eternal beauty—all for our enjoyment and God's glory.

**God's people will be active in the
heavenly Jerusalem, surpassing present things (22:3-5).**

Sin will be absent in the heavenly Jerusalem and all that is beautiful and refreshing will be continually present. With such provisions, God's people will actively serve the Lamb who is Lord.

Relieved from the curse, God's people will serve Him (22:3-4).

Absent from the New Jerusalem will be any curse. God's curse fell on the old world order when sin entered the Garden of Eden. But God's curse is removed in the New Heaven and New Earth. Again, John states that the shared throne of God the Father and of the Lamb will be a central feature of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, God's "servants" (literally bond-servants) will "serve" or carry out religious acts of worship directed to "him," specifically the Lamb. We will see His face (compare Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 12:14) and we'll have His name on our foreheads as an indication of relationship, security, and loyalty (compare Revelation 3:12; 7:3; 14:1). It will be our eternal joy to celebrate the Lamb and worship our God.

Relieved from darkness, God's people will reign with Him (22:5).

Again, John mentions that there will be no night in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:25). Nighttime is often a time of danger or fear, but there will be nothing to fear in the New Jerusalem. There will be no need for the light of a lamp or the light of the sun in the heavenly Jerusalem. "The Lord God will shine on them." God's people will walk in the light of the Lord and we will reign with Jesus Christ forever and ever. To reign in eternity hints at the existence, not of oppressive rulers, but dominion activity over the New Earth as God intended for the Garden of Eden. The Lamb who is Lord will reign over all that exists, and we will share in His holy reign. Some things will be missing in the New Jerusalem, replaced by better things. Some

things will be restored in the New Jerusalem, reflecting previous things. God's people will be active in the New Jerusalem, surpassing present things. When we reflect on our eternal home, that glorious future compels us to live fully for Jesus Christ today.