

# The Glory of the New Jerusalem, part 2

Revelation 21:18-21

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-09-30

## The Glory of the New Jerusalem, part 2

Revelation 21:18-21

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-09-30

### Text

18 The material of her wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation had jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls; each individual gate was composed of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22 I saw no sanctuary in her, because the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are her sanctuary. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or the moon, that they should shine on her, because the very glory of God illumines her, and the Lamb is her light. 24 And the nations will walk in her light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into her. 25 Her gates will absolutely not be closed by day (and no night will exist there). 26 And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into her. 27 But anything 'common' or anyone perpetrating an abomination or a lie will absolutely not enter her; only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

### Introduction - summary of verses already covered

Probably the most exciting day of my life was the day I got married. Some people quake in their boots on their wedding day. I did not. I thoroughly enjoyed it. And the apostle John tries to communicate what the New Jerusalem will be like with images of a wedding celebration. He likens the time between AD 70 and the last day of history as the days of marriage feasting that preceded the consummation of the marriage. But he likened the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven to a bride adorned for her husband on the day of consummation. But the more we dig into the New Jerusalem, the more we discover that no metaphor from earth is sufficient to adequately describe the glories that God has in store for His people. We saw last week that Paul said that it's impossible to even adequately imagine it, let alone describe it.

Let me quickly review what we have discovered so far. We have seen that chapter 21 takes place on the first day of eternity, but that it is looking back at all that Jesus had accomplished in the previous thousands of years. We are not waiting for this city to be built. It is already built and we enter it the moment we die. It has not yet been merged with earth, but it is still just as glorious in heaven.

**I. It is an actual city (vv. 2,10,12-27), constructed out of materials (v. 18), that not only houses the elect (vv. 3,12,14,24,26,27; 22:2,3,14,15), but also symbolizes the corporate church or bride (vv. 2,9-10, 12,14; 22:17)**

And I tried to demonstrate that the city was both a symbol and a literal city that houses people. It's called the bride simply because 100% of its citizens are elect; are in the bride. And I have listed in your outline some of the key verses. We will see in verse 18 that it is constructed out of materials. But the materials are selected in such a way that they form a perfect symbol of the eternal state of the church of Jesus Christ.

**II. Though it was created in the first century (John 14:2-3; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:16; 12:22; 13:14 - μέλλουσιν ἐπιζητοῦμεν), and thus has features needed in history (walls, gates, healing), it is being seen on the first day of eternity (vv. 1,2,4; 22:3)**

And though the actual city began to be constructed shortly after the resurrection of Jesus in order to house the saints that were raised with him, it continued to be constructed all the way up to AD 70. Since Galatians 4:26 says that the Jerusalem above is the mother of us all, it was in existence in the first century even though it was being added to. So this explains why some of the features of this city imply the previous existence of opposition, evil, and warfare - such as gates, walls, and in chapter 22, healing of the nations. Those are no longer needed in eternity, but they show what the church has gone through.

**III. It is a glory-filled city (v. 11; cf Rom. 8:17, 18; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2)**

We also saw in verse 11 that this city is filled with the glory of God Himself. In fact, the way that glory is described makes it clear that the very glory that radiated from God in chapter 4 is radiating from the church; from the city. And it is no doubt because God is in the midst of her. This divine glory that will permeate the New Jerusalem is so awesome that Paul testifies, "...I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). The word "revealed" indicates that there is something being shown or given by God to the bride; and what is given is His glory.

#### **IV. It is a glorified city (vv. 11, 18, 21)**

Next, we saw that this is a glorified city. And by that I don't mean a repeat of the previous point. The materials that the city is made of are somehow different from the named materials in our unglorified world. Though the first foundation is made of jasper, verse 11 clarifies that it is unlike any jasper stone that exists on earth. Rather than being opaque, it is clear as crystal, yet it retains its "jasperness." Likewise, verse 18 says the gold of that city will be transparent, and the word used, ὑέλω (from ὕαλος), means to be see-through - either translucent or transparent. But an even stronger word is used in verse 21 to describe that gold - διαυγής, which clearly means transparent or see-through. It shows that it is unlike any gold that we know in this unglorified world. It is glorified gold; heavenly gold.

So just as resurrected bodies have glorified properties like Christ's body does, glorified stones and building materials are not subject to the corrosion and deterioration that our materials are. God designed these materials to last for eternity.

#### **V. It is a safe city (vv. 12,17)**

The gates and walls show that this was a safe city even when evil was around. But obviously it continues to be safe for eternity.

#### **VI. It is an accessible city (vv. 12,13)**

Yet the twelve gates of those walls indicate that it was an accessible city. Every angle that you might approach the city, there was a gate through which you could enter - twelve gates in all. This symbolizes the welcome of the Gospel that is given in chapter 22:17 where it says, Both the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' And let whoever hears say, 'Come!' And let whoever thirsts come; whoever wants to, let him take the water of life free of charge. Now, if it was built that way, it means that this city is accessible and welcoming even now. This is the city that welcomes sinners to repent, to embrace Jesus, and to find salvation in Him. It can be your home just as surely as it will be my home.

#### **VII. It is a firm city (v. 14)**

The twelve foundations may seem like overkill, but for a city as tall as this one is, it was likely needed. Now, verses 14 and 19 say that these are the foundations of the wall, which is the first thing that you see as you approach the city, but it appears that the wall is one with the city and the foundations extend under the city. And this is confirmed by Hebrews 11:10, which says

that the whole city has “foundations” (plural) that can only be made by God. While the foundations obviously symbolize God’s revelation (and we have looked at that before), the literal foundations also show a very firm city that cannot be shaken. After Hebrews 12 describes the heavenly Jerusalem, it says, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” He is saying that where we are going ought to affect how we live right now, and it ought to give us not only boldness and security but reverence for God and awe at what He is doing. Just as we can never lose our salvation in eternity, we can never lose the benefits of our salvation, such as this fantastic abode. It is secure.

### **VIII. It is a perfect city (vv. 15-16)**

And commentaries point out that the ancients considered a cube to be a symbol not only of stability, but also of perfection. Verses 15-16 point out that it is exactly the same dimensions in height, width, and length.

Continuation of verses for today

### **IX. It is a beautiful city (vv. 18-21)**

#### ***A. Walls of jasper***

Today I want to pick up at verse 18 and begin looking at the incredible beauty of this city, and what each part of this city symbolized. Verse 18 says, “The material of her wall was jasper...” Jasper can come in many colors, and usually is swirls of green, yellow, and black, or fiery red swirled with yellow, black, and other colors. It is very hard stone, measuring 6.5 to 7 in the Mohs’ scale of hardness. So if you imagine the entire wall as having psychedelic swirls of dark green, fiery red, black, and yellow, you will likely have an approximation of what this wall looks like. According to Revelation 4:3 God’s glory looked like Jasper and Sardius, so in part Jasper symbolizes the multi-faceted glory of God. And thus the multiple colors.

#### ***B. City of pure gold, like clear glass***

Verse 18 continues: “and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.” Both Solomon’s and Herod’s temple was overlaid with gold, and historians of that period tell us that when the sun shone on the temple it was so bright that you had to avert your eyes from it. Looking at the temple was like looking straight into the sun. So it too speaks of the divine presence. Gold is always

a symbol of the divine in the Bible. All the way through the Old Testament Temple's furniture and ornamentation, gold referred to deity. So this shows that the whole city is surrounded by and indwelt by God.

Being clear as crystal shows absolute purity. God's radiant presence is thus not just on the inside of the city, but on the outside and undergirding it and above it. The bride is united to God and God is united to the bride. This is perhaps one of the most astounding features of this city - you see divinity everywhere.

### ***C. Foundations adorned with twelve gemstones***

Verse 19 goes on:

And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation had jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

There is debate on whether stones were embedded in each foundation as decoration<sup>1</sup> or whether each foundation was entirely made up of that particular gemstone,<sup>2</sup> which is the way I take it. Either way, it would take God's creative work to make it happen. There are probably not enough of these gems in our current world to make 1.4 trillion acres of jasper on the first foundation, and 1.4 trillion acres of sapphire on the next foundation, and on up. And especially since this city already exists in heaven, we know that this was made by a creative act of God. These were not gemstones dug out of earth. They were glorified gemstones suited to a heavenly city. As Hebrews 11:10 words it, this New Jerusalem "has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." God alone could make these magnificent foundations.

One of the fascinating things about the twelve gemstones that you won't find

---

1 Those who hold that the stones were embedded include Caird, G. B. *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*. Black's New Testament Commentaries, edited by Henry Chadwick. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966; Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963; Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Revised ed. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by F. F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977; Aune, David E. *Revelation*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vols. 52a and 52b, edited by Ralph p. Martin. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997 and 1998.

2 Those who say that each foundation was solid gemstone include Alford, Henry. *Alford's Greek Testament, an Exegetical and Critical Commentary*. Vol. 4. 1875. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980; Beckwith, Isbon T. *The Apocalypse of John*. New York: MacMillan, 1919; reprinted, Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001; Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995; Charles, R. H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John*. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920; Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

in the commentaries is that all twelve are anisotropic gems versus isotropic gems. Isotropic stones like diamonds, rubies, and garnets will lose all their color and look black as coal when cross polarized light is shone on them, whereas anisotropic stones will radiate all the colors of the rainbow. I've seen videos of it, and it is fascinating. You would think a diamond would be more beautiful and reflect more color, but it does not. You can use a polariscope to detect what kind of gemstone you have, and the polariscope will also detect fake gems from real ones based on the way light shines on it and through it. In this city of light, God chose the perfect gem stones to dazzle the senses. Of the 28 stones normally regarded as gemstones, only 16 are anisotropic. 12 of those 16 are listed here. As far as I know, they had no way of testing whether a stone was anisotropic or isotropic back in the first century, so it shows God's hand at work - He knows. And so the question is, could it be that God was avoiding stones that would lose their color and instead chose stones that would produce brilliant rainbow effects? We don't know what kind of light is there, but if it is the pure directional light like comes out of a polariscope, then these gems were perfectly picked. Think of them as stones of light, color, and glory.

Many modern commentators believe that these twelve stones are also identical to the twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest in the Old Testament. Each of those stones had the name of one of the twelve sons of Jacob engraved on it, and it was worn over the heart. It was taken into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest as Israel's representative. So it is significant that the names of those twelve patriarchs are at least connected to the gates of this same wall. Though there is debate on the meaning of some of the Hebrew terms for those gemstones, nine of them are translated in the Septuagint with exactly the same names as nine of these, and many of the best commentators are convinced that there is a one-to-one parallel between these stones and the stones on the breastplate of the High Priest of the Old Temple. Well, if that is the case, it may be communicating four things symbolically.

First, since the same stones that were identified with the twelve patriarchs are also used on each foundation that had an apostle's name on it, that may be yet another symbol of the unity of the church from Old Testament to New Testament. The gates symbolize the fact that the church is the Israel of God and there is no getting into this church without being identified with Israel. As Romans 11 words it, unnatural branches are grafted into Israel. You go through the gates of the patriarchs and you stand on the foundations of the apostles. It's beautiful imagery. Luke 22:30 said that the twelve apostles

would soon rule with him over the twelve tribes of Israel - again, another reference to the fact that the church is Israel spiritually.

Second, since the High Priest's breastplate in the Old Testament represented Jesus wearing Israel on His heart, it symbolized five things that may be similarly symbolized here. It symbolized nearness (well we definitely have nearness to God here), remembrance (we saw last week that God remembers every one of His elect), affection (the imagery of bride and groom definitely shows affection), representation (we are represented before God by Jesus), and communication (there is definitely communication between God and His people in this city). So there are many who believe that the stones symbolize the same thing they symbolized in the Old Testament. (And by the way, I cannot vouch for which apostle each stone stands for or which patriarch each stone stands for, but there does seem to be parallels on that level as well.)

Third, since the breastplate of the High Priest was used for divine guidance, this dovetails with what we saw last week - that the twelve foundations show the finishing of all divine revelation for the church. According to Ephesians 2, which identifies the foundations with the apostles and prophets, these stones continue to speak of God's revelation to His people. All inspired revelation ended with the apostles in AD 70, when this city was finished, and you don't keep laying foundations. And thus it is appropriate that the apostles names are on them. They were the last of the Biblical prophets. According to Ephesians 2, the revelation of the apostles and prophets finished the foundational revelation of the Bible. The Bible would form the foundation in history, but since it is the Word of the eternal God, it too will last forever. We had some discussion after church on whether the Bible would last into eternity. 1 Peter 1:23 speaks of "the word of God which lives and abides forever..."

Fourth, since Ezekiel 28:13 shows these same stones to be in the Garden of Eden, the mention of them here may indicate a restoration of what was lost in Eden. Genesis shows paradise lost and Revelation shows paradise regained. And that symbolism is especially emphasized in chapter 22 where we have the river of life and the tree of life.

But apart from symbolism, this wall will be incredibly beautiful; it will be absolutely stunning to look at. Every color of the rainbow is seen here.<sup>3</sup>

---

3 Kendall says, 1. jasper—a green semiprecious stone; perhaps green quartz (4:3) 2. sapphire—a blue stone, either lapis lazuli or the modern sapphire 3. chalcedony—a gray or green stone, named for the city of Chalcedon 4. emerald—another green stone; probably the same as modern emerald (4:3) 5. sardonyx—probably a banded stone, such as onyx or agate 6. carnelian—a red semiprecious stone, perhaps red quartz (4:3) 7. chrysolite—a yellow semiprecious stone such as yellow quartz 8. beryl—a



## ***D. Gates made of one gigantic pearl***

Verse 21 says,

And the twelve gates are twelve pearls; each individual gate was composed of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Pearls were considered extremely precious in the ancient world - much more precious than gold.<sup>4</sup> Jesus told a parable of the man who found a pearl in a field, and saved up everything he had to be able to purchase the field so that he could lawfully retrieve the pearl of great price. And that is the Gospel. But to have a pearl big enough to serve as a gate on this huge city boggles the mind.

Reasoner says, “The pearl is the only jewel produced by suffering and pain and these gates of pearl symbolize the fact that the entrance to heaven is through suffering...”<sup>5</sup> But since each gate has already been identified with the names of the twelve patriarchs, we can see that salvation is the same through all time. They preached the Gospel just as surely as we do. The Gospel didn’t start in the New Testament; it started in Genesis 3:15. As you immerse yourself in the imagery of the Bible it gives you a feeling of what the city stands for that is hard to put into words. The expression is that a picture is worth a thousand words.

## ***E. The street made of pure gold***

Verse 21 goes on to say, “And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.” Again, because gold in our corruptible world is not transparent, this is likely referring to glorified gold. But it is gold; very precious. Yet that which is precious is so abundant in heaven that you can pave streets with it. Some commentators think this is the main city square;<sup>6</sup> others think it is the main street;<sup>7</sup> still others think that it is all the streets of

---

blue-green semiprecious stone such as modern aquamarine 9. topaz—probably yellow or brownish; perhaps like modern topaz 10. chrysoprase—a yellow-green semiprecious stone, perhaps quartz 11. jacinth—a blue semiprecious stone, sometimes translated “hyacinth” 12. amethyst—a purple semiprecious stone, probably like modern amethyst Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, vol. 12, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 400.

4 “In the Greco-Roman world a perfect pearl was worth more than its weight in gold. Baba Bathra 146a mentions a pearl which was valued at thousands of zuzim and Jerusalem Berakoth 9:12d mentions a pearl that has no price.” J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, vol. 38, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 336.

5 Vic Reasoner, *A Fundamental Wesleyan Commentary on Revelation*, Evansville, IN: Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, 2005), p. 535.

6 Aune, David E. *Revelation*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vols. 52a and 52b, edited by Ralph p. Martin. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997 and 1998.

7 Beckwith, Isbon T. *The Apocalypse of John*. New York: MacMillan, 1919; reprinted, Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001; Bratcher, Robert G. and Howard A. Hatton. *A Handbook on The Revelation to John*. New York: The United Bible Societies, 1993.

the city.<sup>8</sup> And there are good arguments for each of those views. In any case, all of this illustrates that the Builder of this temple is fabulously wealthy and has miraculous building powers. But since gold is a symbol of divinity, it points once again to the fact that God's presence pervades the city. You cannot walk without metaphorically walking in God, under God, and on God. Your very steps are ordered by the Lord.

## **X. It is a temple-less city (v. 22) or a temple-city with God and Lamb as temple and bride as court.**

Verse 22 goes on to show that this city has no temple. Verse 22 says, I saw no sanctuary in her, because the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are her sanctuary.

And since God will constantly be with them, they never leave His presence. In Revelation 3:12 Christ had said, "The one who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never again go out." If God is the temple, and believers are pillars in the temple, it speaks of incredible closeness. In Revelation 7:15 it says, "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary. And He who sits on the throne will shelter them."

The logical conclusion that commentators have drawn from these verses is that the whole city acts as a kind of temple since God's presence permeates it and since every member is a metaphorical pillar. Austin Farrer says, "Their city of residence is their temple; it contains within it no temple whose walls or doors intervene between them and the God they adore. God is temple to the city, and the city is temple to God."<sup>9</sup> I especially like that last sentence: "God is temple to the city, and the city is temple to God."

## **XI. It is a divinely illuminated city (vv. 23-24)**

But if it is indwelt by the Glory-Cloud presence of God, then it must shine with God's light. Verses 23-24:

23 And the city has no need of the sun or the moon, that they should shine on her, because the very glory of God illumines her, and the Lamb is her light. 24 And the nations will walk in her light...

You would have to have some lighting system in this massive cube, but God opted for His own direct light. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 60, which

---

8 Caird, G. B. A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine. Black's New Testament Commentaries, edited by Henry Chadwick. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966; Charles, R. H. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John. The International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920; Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963.

9 Austin Farrer, The Revelation of St. John the Divine (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 221.

says,

Is. 60:1 Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of Yehowah is risen upon you. 2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but Yehowah will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. 3 The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... 19 “The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but Yehowah will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. 20 Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for Yehowah will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. 21 Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.

This is what you experience the moment you go to heaven. But if this light that shines from the New Jerusalem in eternity glorifies God, we can glorify God even on earth by letting God’s light metaphorically shine through us. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Always our goal should be to showcase God’s grace in our lives before the world so that God is glorified, not us.

## **XII. It is an international city (vv. 12,14,24; 22:2)**

Four verses indicate that this is also an international city. But I’ll just look at one. Verse 24 makes it explicit. “And the nations will walk in her light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into her.” And earlier in Revelation He made it quite clear that all nations without exception would be in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 7:9 says that it will be “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes...” Revelation 15:4 says, “For all nations shall come and worship before You...” If there is an international city, this would be it. And it is a great thing when individual churches model this international character of the New Jerusalem by having various ethnic groups represented in their midst. When we did our international outreach ministries, we had a lot more variety of colors and languages, but let us rejoice in the diversity we see today in the church of Jesus Christ.

## **XIII. It is a very active city (vv. 25-26)**

Some people wonder what they will do in heaven. Will it be boring? Will we only sing and strum on harps for eternity? And the answer is a resounding “No.” We will love to worship and we will love to sing and we will love to listen to musical instruments, but those things will likely be interspersed by long periods of dominion activity. Verse 25 says, “Her gates will absolutely

not be closed by day (and no night will exist there).” We saw last week that people will come and go and be engaged in all kinds of dominion in the earth - and who knows, maybe on other planets. And verse 26 says, “And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into her.” There is a God-centered focus in absolutely everything that they glory in. It will all be brought before God’s throne. We will love to show our service to the Lord. ‘Lord, I’ve done this for you because I love you so much.’

So what are some of the things that the nations glory in right now and that bring great honor to them? Well, ethnic groups glory in their skin color, their food, their culture, and their accomplishments. But unfortunately, because of sin, it is often a self-oriented glorying. Jeremiah 9:23 says that the wise should quit glorying in his wisdom, and the mighty should quit glorying in his might, and the rich should quit glorying in his riches. And it goes on to say,

But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Yehowah, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says Yehowah.

The point is, that all the things that people tend to have self-glory in, are now a glory that will be brought before the Lord to serve Him. Every legitimate culture has at least some beauty and glory in it that will become glorified and make it into heaven and every culture also has some things that will need to be cleansed away. We glory in our dominion, but we tend to serve ourselves. Chapter 22:3 reverses that when it says “His servants shall serve Him.” Throughout eternity we will be making new discoveries, taking dominion, inventing things, and in many myriad ways reflecting God’s creative powers, but it will all be done in joyful service to Him.

So this verse indicates that on the first day of eternity, all the splendor and glory of the nations over the whole course of history will have made it into the New Jerusalem and will continue to be brought into that city. In his book on heaven, Cornelius Venema says,

It has been plausibly suggested that it [Revelation 21:24] describes the way the new creation will receive all the appropriate fruits of human culture and development that have been produced throughout the course of history. Every legitimate and excellent fruit of human culture will be carried into and contribute to the [splendor] of life in the new creation. Rather than the new creation being a radically new beginning, in which the excellent and noble fruits of humankind’s fulfillment of the cultural mandate are wholly discarded – the new creation will benefit from, and be immensely enriched by, its receiving of these fruits. Far from being an empty and desolate place, the new creation will be enriched with the sanctified fruits of human culture. Nothing of the diversity of the nations and peoples, their cultural products, languages, arts, sciences, literature, and technology – so far as these are good and excellent – will be lost upon life in the new

creation. Life in the new creation will not be a starting over, but a perfected continuation of the new humanity's stewardship of all of life in the service of God.<sup>10</sup>

That means that what you do right now by the power of the Holy Spirit will last for eternity, but what is done in the flesh will not last. This means that the Dominion Mandate given to Adam in Genesis 1 will not be abolished. It will be finally lived out in its fullest perfection. Because the curse will be removed, the things we struggle to do right now will be engaged in with sheer joy. Anthony Hoekema says,

The possibilities that now rise before us boggle the mind. Will there be "better Beethoven" on the new earth, as one author has suggested? Shall we then see better Rembrandts, better Raphaels, better Constables? Shall we read better poetry, better drama, and better prose? Will scientists continue to advance in technological achievement, will geologists continue to dig out the treasures of the earth, and will architects continue to build imposing and attractive structures? Will there be exciting new adventures in space travel? Shall we perhaps be able to explore new Perelandras? We do not know. But we do know that human dominion over nature will then be perfect. Our culture will glorify God in ways that surpass our most fantastic dreams.<sup>11</sup>

He points out that people will likely retain their gifts and talents in heaven and use those gifts to God's glory. When we were at the Tyler's last week, we joked that Dr. Shepherd will likely be out of work, since no eye clinics will be needed in heaven. But really, the things that he loves to do will likely be things he will love doing even more in eternity.

This mentions that nations will be in heaven, so the cultural contributions of various ethnic groups will no longer compete, but be used to serve each other and God in creative ways.

There is one thing that I disagree with the earlier Venema quote, and that is that all the diverse languages will make it into heaven. I may be wrong, but I suspect that because languages were part of the curse at the tower of Babel, that the language barriers will be completely reversed on the first day of eternity. And I have a Scripture that I believe backs that up. Zephaniah 3:9 says, "For then I will restore to the peoples (plural) a pure language (singular), that they all may call on the name of Yehowah, to serve Him with one accord." That verse indicates that He will give to all of the nations one purified language (singular). This new language will have no cuss words. It will be purified, and all peoples will speak it so that unitedly (with one accord) they may worship. Can you imagine a worship service with trillions of voices worshiping God in unison? That alone would melt me into tears of joy. It is passages like this that make me look forward to going to heaven. These are tiny glimpses that shows us that there are so many cool things in

---

10 Cornelis P. Venema. *The Promise of the Future* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000). 480-481.

11 Anthony Hoekema. "Heaven: Not Just an Eternal Day Off," *Christianity Today* (June 6, 2003)

heaven that we can anticipate.

#### **XIV. It is a holy city entirely devoted to God (vv. 26-27)**

And verses 26-27 indicates that this will be a holy city entirely devoted to God. If it drives you crazy that you keep falling into sin, there is coming a day when you will be glorified and no sin will be present. Systematic theology proves that it will be impossible for you to sin once you get to heaven. Verse 27 says, “But anything ‘common’ or anyone perpetrating an abomination or a lie will absolutely not enter her; only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” We will be finally and forever freed from every vestige of evil. Hallelujah!

To those who are unregenerate, this may not seem like fun. But to those of us who have tasted the sweetness of salvation and fellowship with God, we yearn for it. This upward call of God to conform to the image of Jesus is a magnetic pull upon our lives that energizes us and gives us joy and satisfaction.

Paul was torn between the anticipation of heaven and the joy of serving Christ here below. He said,

For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

There is joy in serving Christ right now when we experience His strength in the midst of our weakness. But there will be far more joy when we get to heaven. We will love serving Him. Don’t dread the end of your life. The end of your life on earth is the beginning of the most glorious living that you could imagine. That’s why the Bible says that the moment you believe in Jesus, you already have eternal life. You’ll never stop living; you’ll just be living on such a better plane. So look forward to heaven. Thank God for it. Realign your life to the reality of heaven. And act as those who are headed to this glorious place. Amen.