

Henry C. Morrison was a missionary who served the Lord in Africa with his wife for over 40 years. On the way back to United States, he began to wonder “will anyone remember us? Will anyone recall who we are? Will anyone meet us at the dock?”

Well, unknown to Henry and his wife, Teddy Roosevelt, the President of U.S., was also on board that same ship as he had gone to Africa for a hunting trip. When the ship pulled into New York harbor, Henry and his wife went up on the deck to see if anyone had come to welcome them back home. They saw thousands of people cheering. A band was playing. There were signs, banners, and billboards everywhere saying, “Welcome Home.”

Henry and his wife were excited about the crowds of people who were there. They went down below to get their luggage, but when they came back to the deck to get off the ship, they realized all the people were gone or in the process of leaving. They had only come to welcome Teddy Roosevelt who had gone on a hunting trip.

Henry went to his hotel room with a heavy heart. As he sat there on the bed, he said to his wife, “Honey, I just don’t get it...for 40 years we poured our lives into ministry and service, and yet we come back to America and not a single person comes to welcome us home!” His wife came and sat down next to her husband, she put her hand on his shoulder, and comforted him with words that he would never forget, “Henry, you have forgotten something, you’re not home yet!”

This morning, I am going to be talking about this home she referred to, but before I do, I need to quickly get us caught up since we stepped away for the Easter break. If you recall, in this vision of the future given to the Apostle John – the seven-year Tribulation period is over. The Second Coming of Christ has occurred. The Battle of Armageddon really wasn’t much of a battle. The 1000-year earthly reign of Jesus has come and gone. The last rebellion by Satan is over. The earth and the atmosphere are destroyed. The Great White Throne judgment of the spiritually dead is adjourned, and all the ungodly are cast into the lake of fire.

That’s a lot, and with all that, it might seem to be all wrapped up – but not so fast, for we come to **Revelation 21** where God does something totally amazing and creates a new beginning for His people, and John is given the monumental task of trying to describe it all. John begins and tells us in **verse 1**,

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

If you remember, the Bible begins in **Genesis** with the words, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*” and now as we find ourselves at the opposite end of the Bible, we read very similar words – words that speak to the creation of a **new heaven and a new earth**.

If you recall the **Genesis** story, God created man to dwell on the earth in a perfect Garden of Eden type environment to enjoy a relationship with Him. That was God’s grand design from the very beginning; however, as we know, sin entered the picture and broke man’s relationship with God, but not only that – it corrupted the earth – sin affected creation with decay and contamination and death. It was no longer a perfect environment, so God promised that in the fullness of time, according to His grand design, He would recreate – a new heaven (*referring to the atmosphere and the solar system*) and a new earth for His people.

Now, I want to assure you that I am not taking this one single passage and pushing some crazy theology about a new heaven and a new earth, for this reference of a new heaven and a new earth is mentioned several times in the Bible – in both the Old and New Testaments, and as an example, I want to share what the Apostle Peter tells us. He says in **2 Peter 3:12-13**,

¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

So, God is creating a new heaven and a new earth, and I want to point out that the Greek word for “**new**” is “*kainos*”, meaning it’s new in quality, it’s fresh, it’s previously unknown, it’s different, and I say all that to say this – our present earth will not be given a makeover or be remodeled – instead, our present earth will be destroyed, dissolved with intense heat as Peter described, and a whole new earth will be created by God out of nothing. It’s all going to be brand new, but not only that – we are also given a clue that it will be radically different.

Notice John said there is “**no longer any sea**” on this new earth, and for clarification – he’s not saying there is *no water* – just no seas. Now, I don’t mind telling you I wish we were given more information on this – but we are not, and as you might imagine there are a lot of ideas about it, but the idea that most resonates with me is that the seas will be absent because they separate people. In our current earthly configuration, about three quarters of the earth is covered in water, and some say that is a lot of wasted space – space that separates people. That idea

makes sense to me, but whatever God plans to do, for whatever reason He might have, we can safely conclude this new earth will be radically different.

Now, if that vision wasn't enough for John to take in – he sees something else just as amazing. Let's continue beginning with **verse 2**.

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

John sees the **holy city** descending from heaven – it's the Father's house, the house where Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us. If you recall, Jesus said in **John 14:2-3**,

In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 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.

The Father's house is the holy city, the new Jerusalem, and someday the whole thing will descend from where God is to the new earth like a **bride** walking down the aisle toward her husband. This will be heaven on earth – where God dwells with His people, and that's what God wanted all along. It's what He wanted when He created Adam and Eve – to be among them. That's what the Ark of the Covenant represented in the Old Testament – God's presence with His people. This is why Jesus is called ***Emmanuel*** – God with us. It's why God dwells with us now in the person of the Holy Spirit. God wants to dwell with His people – He wants to be at home with us, and that's what we see here.

This new reality was so amazing that there was nothing John could compare it to, so the best way he found to describe it was by contrast – by using the words “**no longer**.” In our final home, there is no longer any **death**, no longer any **mourning** or **crying** or **pain**. I suspect people could share tears of joy and laughter, but there will be no cause for tears of pain or sorrow from the experiences in this life – for all those experiences belong to **the first things** where sin and death are present, but here the first things will be gone – it's the beginning of something entirely new.

Then John repeats something which is both encouraging and sobering. He says beginning with **verse 5**.

⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” ⁶ Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ⁸ But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Here it appears, God the Father breaks His silence and says, **“Behold, I am making all things new.”** The Father sums it all up – His words are **faithful and true**, and for John, this was apparently so overwhelming, that he forgot to **write** and had to be reminded to do so. And just like in the Garden – before there was sin, God promises that His relationship with His people will be intimate and thriving – and what He promises will come to pass for He is the **Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end**. What He says is **done** – is done.

Now, the rest of **verses 6** through **8** appear to be addressed to the seven churches – John’s original audience. We can’t forget that the Book of **Revelation** is actually a very long letter to these churches who were being pressured to compromise their allegiance to Christ, and here, in the midst of describing the wonders of God’s new creation, John reminds them that only those who **overcome** will **inherit** and experience and enjoy all these things. **And who are those who overcome?** Well, John asks and answers that very question in **1 John 5:5** where he says,

Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Those who overcome are those who place their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and follow Him. They will inherit and experience and enjoy this new heaven and earth in God’s house – but unfortunately, on the flip side, there will be countless numbers of people who miss it all, and John gives us a sampling.

For example, he says, those who miss out are those who cowardly compromise with the world instead of trusting and following God. He describes their behavior as continually sinful and wicked, they are murderous, they engage in sexual

immorality, their worship is misplaced on false idols and gods, and they are deceptive. These are the ones who rejected Jesus, rejected His love, rejected His grace and mercy, and rejected His forgiveness. Yes, they may say they *know* God, but they live their lives as if there is *no* God – their behavior reveals what they truly believe about God – and once again John tells of their final destination – it’s the lake of fire.

Both believers and nonbelievers will live eternally, but in two completely separate and opposite locations. For those who trust Jesus Christ and follow Him, they will experience and enjoy heaven on earth – but for those who reject Jesus and remain in their sin – it’s the lake of fire. Like it or not, that’s the reality – a reality we just can’t ignore.

Now, for what comes next, John has to be assigned a tour guide, and he describes what he sees on his tour beginning with **verse 9**.

⁹ 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.” ¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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 angel goes to John and directs him to come so he can see the **bride**, but what he shows John is not a people – it’s a city. **Why is the holy city called the bride?**

For the same reason we often call this building a church. It’s because of the people in it. We don’t go to church – we are the church, and likewise, the city is called the bride because the bride resides in it. The city takes on the identity of its residents – and if you noticed, both the twelve Old Testament **tribes** as well as the twelve New Testament **apostles** are mentioned, and collectively, they represent the redeemed of all times who reside there. So, this angel begins the tour by showing John the exterior of the city – a city that shines like a diamond in a bright light, and

it has **twelve gates** – later we are told open gates, which suggests that the residents will have the freedom to go in and out to enjoy the rest of God’s creation.

Now, we come to some really interesting passages concerning the design of the holy city – but before we go there, I need to say something. There is a tendency by some to take the description of the city as being nothing but symbolism of some deep spiritual truth. That’s how some interpret the following passages, but I completely disagree. What we are about to read is not symbolic because John is getting a personal tour of this city where a vivid description is given and measurements are actually taken. So, I believe, no matter how wonderous and amazing it sounds, what we are about to read should be taken literally – meaning John is describing a real, physical city.

So, with that said, let’s continue with John’s tour beginning with **verse 15**.

¹⁵ The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.

In this passage, we are given the dimensions of this city. It is **1500 miles** in length, 1500 miles in **width**, and get this – it is 1500 miles in **height**. In other words, it’s an enormous cube, which I find interesting. **Do you remember the most sacred place in the Jewish temple?** It’s the inner sanctuary called the “Holy of Holies” and it’s where the Ark of the Covenant – the symbol of God’s presence was kept, and if you look in **1 Kings 6**, you will see that this inner sanctuary also had the dimensions of a cube – 20 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 20 cubits high. So, in many respects, we could describe this cubed city as the “Holy of Holies” – a place where God dwells.

Well, how big is this cubed city? I calculated that the base would be 2.25 million square miles, and to give you a comparison – the State of WA is just over 71,000 square miles. So, 2.25 million square miles is just the base alone, but when considering that the city is cubed, that would be 3.4 billion cubic miles.

Now critics say this massive city could never fit on the present earth – it would defy physics and atmospheric conditions – and I understand that, but keep in mind that first and foremost – this is God’s doing, it’s His creation, and secondly, we are

never told how large the new earth will be. We have already been told there will be no seas, so from that, we know that the new earth will be vastly different from our current earth – and maybe much larger in size.

So, will this city be large enough to get all of us in? Henry Morris, who was a scientist and apparently had a lot of free time, says this: *“Although there’s no way to know precisely how many people will be there, one can make at least a somewhat accurate guess.”* In his calculation, he estimated that from the time of Adam through the Millennial Kingdom, about 100 billion people will have populated the earth – that’s past, present, and future.

Then Morris says, *“Assume, for the sake of argument, that 20% of these will be saved, including all of those who die in infancy. It’s obviously only a guess, but the Lord Jesus did make it plain that the large majority will never be saved. If this figure is used, then the new Jerusalem would have to accommodate 20 billion residents. Also assume that 25% of the city is used for the dwelling places of the inhabitants, with the rest allocated to streets, parks, public buildings, et cetera.”*

Then he figures out in some exotic calculation – that the average space assigned to each person in this city would be 75 acres. So, we are not packed into this city like sardines. There’ll be plenty of room, and besides that, we’ll all be coming in and out of the city.

In regards to the **wall**, which is probably a memorial to God’s protection of His people, we are not told what the measurement of **seventy-two yards** refers to. Some suggest it is the height, but that would be really odd – a 216 feet high wall in comparison to a city that is 1500 miles high. This measurement might refer to the thickness of the wall rather than its height, but that’s only a guess.

Now, surely at some point, someone is going to say, *“Well, this can’t be literal – the dimensions can’t be right”* to which we are told in **verse 17**, that the angelic measurements are no different from our human measurements.

But John is not finished, as he continues with his description beginning with **verse 18**, and says,

¹⁸ The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ 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; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth,

sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoptase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

The city's construction is definitely something to marvel at, for we are told the walls are jasper – like diamond, but the city itself will be made of **pure gold** – so pure it is clear as crystal. Then we come to the **foundation**, and when we think of a building foundation, we know they are typically underground and out of sight, but that's not the case here. The foundation of this city will be constructed with precious stones and gems and visible to all. **Can you imagine how light will bounce off all these colors of gems and gold?**

Then we get to the **twelve gates** made from single pearls and I can't even guess what they will be like, but I will say that of all the building materials, the **pearl** is the only one produced by a living creature – formed in response to suffering. Maybe as we go in and out of the gates, the pearl will remind us that our access to God's house is only because of the Lord's suffering on our behalf.

So, that was the outside of the city. Now the tour takes John inside beginning with **verse 22**.

²² I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ 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. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷ 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.

In this city, there is **no temple** – there is no church. We won't need to go to a place of worship because it is a place of worship – the whole city is a tabernacle where God dwells in full fellowship with His people. God is everywhere.

We are also told this city has **no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it**, and many take that to mean there will be no more sun or moon, but the passage does not actually say that. It only tells us that the city had **no need** of their light because God's glory is in its midst, and if you remember back to the original

creation story in **Genesis**, the presence of light came before the creation of the sun and the moon.

Then John tells us the **nations** will walk by its light and the **kings** will bring glory into it – meaning all of the redeemed who are **written in the Lamb’s book of life**, from all times, from every tribe and tongue, will be walking in the light of the city – a city where one’s former status, even the status of a powerful king, will no longer matter – for all human glory will be gone in light of the glory of God.

Only the redeemed – only those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ will inherit and experience and enjoy all of this, but those who have rejected Jesus and remain in their sin will never enter the city because they will have been thrown into the lake of fire.

One day the great preacher George W. Truett was invited to dinner at the home of a very wealthy man in Texas. After their meal, his host led him to a hill where they had a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells, punctuating the landscape, the wealthy man boasted, “Twenty-five years ago, I had nothing. Now as far as you can see, in every direction, it’s all mine.”

*The wealthy man paused expecting a compliment on his great success; however, Dr. Truett placed one hand on the man’s shoulder, pointed to heaven with the other and asked, “**How much do you have in that direction?**” The wealthy man admitted he had never thought of that.*

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