

The Celestial City Part 1

Text: Revelation 21:1-21

Introduction:

1. The glorious future for the saved presented in these verses is a powerful and dramatic contrast to the future of the lost described in the previous chapter.
2. The Bible's teaching on the new heaven and the new earth are to be taken literally. Verse 5 states that these words are "true and faithful." They are totally truthful and trustworthy.
3. The primary focus of this section (21:1-22:5) is on the New Jerusalem which will be the dwelling place of the redeemed in eternity. Alexander MacLaren writes, "The closing description of the city is saturated with allusions to Old Testament prophecy. It is like the finale of some great concerto, in which the themes that have sounded throughout it are all gathered up in the last majestic, melodious crash."
4. The outline for our two studies on the New Jerusalem will be as follows:
 - The Declarations concerning the New Jerusalem (Vs. 1-8)
 - The Description of the New Jerusalem (Vs. 9-21)
 - The Distinctives of the New Jerusalem (Vs. 22-22:5)

I. THE DECLARATIONS RE THE NEW JERUSALEM (VS. 1-8)

A. John's Announcement (Vs. 1-2)

John describes two new things he sees:

1. A New Creation (Vs. 1)
 - a. "a new heaven and a new earth" = notice the emphasis on the word 'new' in this chapter (See also Vs. 2 & 5). The word means "to be both new in character and in the sense of recently made." (Walvoord) God is going to make a brand-new heaven and earth. "The heaven referred to here is not a reference to God's dwelling place, the 3rd heaven, but to the first heaven, which is the earth's atmosphere, and probably also to the second heaven, which is the realm of the stars." (David Cloud)
 - b. "the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" = speaks of the entire destruction of the old earth and heaven.
 - i. Vs. 4 "for the former things are passed away".
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:10-13 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens **shall pass away** with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein **shall be burned up**. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be **dissolved**, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be **dissolved**, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

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- iii. Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth **shall pass away**, but my words shall not pass away.”
- 2. A New City (Vs. 2)
 - a. “the holy city” = this city is characterized by absolute holiness and purity. There will not be one speck of sin in the heavenly city (See Vs. 27). What a contrast this is to the cities of this wicked world!
 - b. “new Jerusalem” = it bears the same name as the old Jerusalem and demonstrates the importance of Jerusalem in the mind of God. Jerusalem as a city has been a key location in God’s program for the ages. Jerusalem will be Christ’s capital during the Millennial reign. The overcomer is promised that the name of “new Jerusalem” will be written on him as evidence of his right to live in the city (Rev. 3:12).
 - c. “coming down from God out of heaven” = the source and origin of the city. Appears the city already in existence and now brought down to the new earth (See Hebrews 12:22-24).
 - d. “prepared as a bride” = See Vs. 9. The city is referred to as “the bride” because it is the dwelling place of the church which is Christ’s bride (Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 19:6-9).

B. Heaven’s Announcement (Vs. 3-4)

Heaven makes a two-fold declaration concerning the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem we will be blessed with...

- 1. The Communion of God (Vs. 3)
 - a. Our Fellowship with God. The truth that is strongly emphasized and repeated in this verse is the intimate fellowship of God with His people.
 - i. “the tabernacle of God is **with men**” = picture drawn from the O.T. tabernacle where God’s presence was made manifest.
 - ii. “he will dwell **with them**”
 - iii. “God himself shall be **with them**”
 - iv. Heaven is all about fellowship with our God. Challenge: How important is fellowship with God to you right now? Is your personal walk a priority? Is fellowship in the local church a priority?
 - b. Our Relationship with God
 - i. “they shall be his people”
 - ii. “and be their God”
 - iii. Song 6:3 “I *am* my beloved’s, and my beloved *is* mine.”
- 2. The Comfort of God (Vs. 4)

Heaven is defined not just by what is there but by what is not there. The “no mores” of this section are so uplifting and encouraging.

 - a. No more tears = what a picture of our Heavenly Father’s tenderness, compassion and love that He would wipe away our every tear. Notice the word ‘all’!
 - b. No more death = death will be banished for eternity to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14).
 - c. No more sorrow.
 - d. No more crying.

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- e. No more pain.
- f. No more sea (Vs. 1)
- g. No more temple (Vs. 22)
- h. No more sun or moon (Vs. 23)
- i. No more night (Vs. 25)
- j. No more sin (Vs. 27)
- k. No more curse (Vs. 3)
- l. Just think of it dear Christian. No more graves, funeral homes and coffins! No more doctors, hospitals and medications! No more aches, pains and ailments! No more depression and mental torment! No more sleepless nights! No more weariness! No more dizziness! No more sickness! No more heartaches! No more family conflicts! No more sobs in the night! No more persecutions! No more temptations! No more drunkenness and drugs! No more pubs and bars! No more alcohol! No more rock music! No more Hollywood! No more evil of any kind! No more lukewarmness! No more tax! No more bills! No more politics! No more media! No more failures! No more disappointments! No more discouragements! No more devil! No more false doctrine!

C. Christ's Announcement (Vs. 5-8)

1. The Declaration of His Person (Vs. 5-6a)
 - a. Christ is Creator – “I make all things new”.
 - b. Christ is Truth – “these words are true and faithful”. Note that God has revealed his truth in “words” not just general thoughts and ideas.
 - c. Christ is Eternal – “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end”. (See Isaiah 44:6)
2. The Declaration of His Promise (Vs. 6b-8)
 - a. A promise of redemption (Vs. 6b)
 - i. “him that is athirst” = a reference to spiritual thirst (See 22:17). You were created to know God and to have a relationship with Him. Without God there will always be an emptiness in your life as you are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).
 - ii. “the fountain of the water of life” = water is one of the pictures in the Bible of salvation (See Isaiah 12:3, 55:1; Psalm 34:8; 36:8; 116:13; John 7:37-39). This is a fountain, an abundant provision. To know Christ is life (John 10:10, 17:3).
 - iii. “I will give...freely” = what a glorious word! This is God's offer of free salvation. It is something God gives and cannot be earned (Rom. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
 - iv. Challenge: Only those who drink from the cup of salvation in this life will drink of the river of life in heaven (Rev. 22:1).
 - b. A promise of reward (Vs. 7)
 - i. This is the eighth and final promise to the overcomer in the Book of Revelation. In many ways, this promise incorporates the first seven as it is a promise of “all things”. Our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven (1

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- Peter 1:4) and we will be heirs and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).
- ii. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son" = the most precious part of our inheritance is to be a child of God (1 John 3:1)!
 - c. A promise of retribution (Vs. 8)
This verse describes the inheritance of the unsaved in contrast to that of the saved (notice the word 'but'). There are 8 kinds of people described. "Specific sins are listed, because in multitude of cases, the sinner does not trust Christ because his love for sin is greater than his desire to be saved." (D. Cloud)
 - i. **Fearful** = those who refuse to trust Christ because of the fear of man. E.g. the fear of opposition from family and friends.
 - ii. **Unbelieving** = unbelief is a sinful choice that damns the soul (Mk. 16:16).
 - iii. **Abominable** = the root word is "I pollute" and refers to that which is unclean before God both spiritual and physical. Refers to those who live and practice abominable sins.
 - iv. **Murderers** = those who break the 6th commandment (Ex. 20:13). This sin can be committed in the heart (1 Jn. 3:15).
 - v. **Whoremongers** = a user of whores (prostitutes). The word encompasses all forms of sexual sins which are against the 7th commandment such as fornication, adultery, pornography, sodomy and bestiality.
 - vi. **Sorcerers** = those involved in witchcraft and the dark arts in all its forms. The word encompasses "every type of dark craft, enchantment, astrology, fortune telling, necromancy, and consulting with familiar spirits." (Cloud) Our English word 'pharmacy' comes from this Greek word (pharmakon) so would include drugs. In the ancient world sorcery often involved spell giving potions.
 - vii. **Idolaters** = those who break the first and second commandments – "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" and "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." It includes those who create their own imaginary god.
 - viii. **Liars** = notice the word 'all'. It covers lying in all its forms. God is truth so to lie is to put yourself in direct opposition to His very character. "Lies are of the devil (Jn. 8:44). Lies plunged God's creation into darkness. Fallen man is a liar by nature (Ps. 58:3). The fallen heart is "deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9).
 - ix. See also 1 Cor. 6:9-11

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (VS. 9-21)

A. The Magnificence of the City (Vs. 9-14)

1. The invitation to view the city (Vs. 9-10)

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- a. Invitation similar to the one in chapter 17:1-3.
 - b. “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” = as in chapter 17, there is a woman and a city. The Lamb’s wife and city stand in contrast to the great whore and the city of Babylon.
 - c. “that great city” = the word great is the word mega in Greek. This city is enormous.
 - d. “the holy Jerusalem” = the purity of the city again highlighted. A powerful contrast to the old Jerusalem in Rev. 11:8 which is described as spiritual Sodom and Egypt. Only those who have been made pure by the blood of Christ and have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will have entrance into this city (Vs. 8, 27, 22:15).
2. The illumination of the city (Vs. 11)
- a. “having the glory of God” = this city radiates the glory of God because God dwells there. “God’s presence is characterized by glorious light and brilliant color and breath-taking beauty.” (D. Cloud) See Matt. 17:2.
 - b. Walvoord: “As the glory of God is the sum of His infinite perfections in their manifestations, so the New Jerusalem reflects all that God is.”
 - c. “her light was like unto a stone” = the light of the city is described as being like a crystal-clear jasper stone. This is the same light of God’s presence John saw in chapter 4:3.
 - d. The city wall is made of jasper and the city is made of gold so pure it is like clear glass (Vs. 18).
3. The composition of the city (Vs. 12-14)
- a. The wall of the city (12a)
 - i. “great and high” = the wall is large and high.
 - ii. Further details of the wall are given in Vs. 17-18.
 - b. The gates of the city (12b-13)
 - i. Twelve gates - The number 12 is key number in relation to the New Jerusalem. There are 12 tribes (Vs. 12), 12 foundations (Vs. 14), 12 apostles (Vs. 14) 12 pearls (Vs. 21) and 12 kinds of fruit (22:2). As for the gates, there are 3 on each side of the city (North, East, South & West).
 - ii. Twelve angels – stationed like honorary guards at each gate.
 - iii. Twelve names – the names of the 12 tribes are inscribed on the gates.
 - c. The foundations of the wall (14)
 - i. Twelve foundations – these foundations support the wall of the city. Unlike most foundations, they are above ground and stunningly beautiful with each layer being constructed out of a precious stone.
 - ii. Twelve names – the names of the 12 Apostles are inscribed on the foundations.
 - d. Note: We see the distinctions maintained in eternity between Israel and the Church. The 12 tribes are inscribed on the gates as representatives of Israel and the 12 apostles are inscribed on the foundations as representatives of the church (Eph. 2:20). To

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confuse Israel and the church is to make a grave theological mistake. In fact, the three distinct groups of people mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:32, the Jew, Gentile and Church of God, are seen in the new Jerusalem and new earth. Note the reference to the 'nations' in Vs. 24 and 26.

B. The Measurements of the City (Vs. 15-17)

1. The measuring reed (Vs. 15)
 - a. 'golden' = it is a special measuring reed for measuring a special and holy place.
 - b. 'reed' = approx. 10 feet or just over 3 meters.
2. The measurements of the city (Vs. 16)
 - a. "foursquare" = the Greek word 'tetragonos' was a word to depict a cube-shaped stone used for building purposes. (Thomas) The city is a perfect cube, the length, width and height all identical in measurement. It resembles the holy of holies in Solomon's temple which was also a cube (1. Kings 6:20).
 - b. The measurement is "twelve thousand furlongs" which is approximately 1,342 miles or 2,160 kms. Some round up to 1,500 miles or 2,400 kilometers.
 - c. Illustration: The sort of expanse this would cover in Australia.
3. The measurements of the wall (Vs. 17)
 - a. "an hundred and forty and our cubits" = approx. 216 feet or 72 meters.
 - b. The text does not state if this is in reference to the width or height of the wall so it could be either.

C. The Materials of the City (Vs. 18-21)

1. The wall (Vs. 18a). Made of jasper which according to verse 11 is as "clear as crystal". The wall and city are designed to transmit the glory of God to the new creation.
2. The city (Vs. 18b). Made from gold so pure it is transparent like clear glass. We know nothing of gold so pure in this world. It is transparent and yet still has the appearance of gold.
3. The foundations (Vs. 19-20). Much detail is given to the foundations of the city wall. There are 12 foundations, each made out of a precious stone.
 - a. Foundation # 1: Jasper = a white, diamond-like stone.
 - b. Foundation # 2: Sapphire = similar to the diamond in hardness and blue in color
 - c. Foundation # 3: Chalcedony = a precious stone of misty grey color, clouded with blue, yellow or purple.
 - d. Foundation # 4: Emerald = a bright green color.
 - e. Foundation # 5: Sardonyx = a white stone with layers of red.
 - f. Foundation # 6: Sardius = a blood red gemstone. This stone was used with jasper in Revelation 4:3 to describe the glory of God on His throne.
 - g. Foundation # 7: Chrysolite = a transparent stone golden in color.
 - h. Foundation # 8: Beryl = a sea green
 - i. Foundation # 9: Topaz = yellow green or golden color.
 - j. Foundation # 10: Chrysoprasus = a translucent golden-green.

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- k. Foundation # 11: Jacinth = a violet color.
 - l. Foundation # 12: Amethyst = a purple color.
 - m. John Walvoord: "Though the precise colors of these stones in some cases are not certain, the general picture here described by John is one of unmistakable beauty, designed to reflect the glory of God in a spectrum of brilliant color. The light of the city within shining through these various colors in the foundation topped by the wall, itself composed of the crystal-clear jasper forms a scene of dazzling beauty in keeping with the glory of God and the beauty of His holiness."
 - n. Note: There are some striking parallels with some of the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem and the High Priest's breastplate in the Old Testament (See Ex. 28:17-20). "The symbolism is rich in meaning. The old covenant confined the privilege of direct fellowship with God to the high priest, but in the new city, the privilege will belong to all the people of God." (Thomas)
4. The gates (Vs. 21a)
- a. "the twelve gates were twelve pearls" = each gate is made of a single pearl. "The large number of gates are a reminder of the freedom of access to the city." (R. Thomas)
 - b. Why did God choose the pearl for the gates? Perhaps it is because the beauty of a pearl comes from the pain of an oyster. A pearl is formed when a tiny grain of sand gets inside an oyster's shell, causing the oyster to become irritated and uncomfortable. What a picture this is of salvation. We can enter through the pearly gates into the city because of Christ's pain on the cross. He paid for our access to the celestial city with His own blood. Don't you see? "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." (Phillips)
5. The street (Vs. 21b). We will walk on golden streets in glory!

Conclusion:

1. To the lost: Will you spend eternity in heaven or hell? In the lake of fire or by the river of life? Only those who have been cleansed and purified by the blood of Christ will be able to access the eternal city.
2. To the saved:
 - There is a message of comfort: Are you going through trials? Experiencing emotional, mental and physical pain? Our light afflictions are but for a moment when compared with the eternal bliss that awaits us (2 Cor. 4:17).
 - There is a message of challenge: Which world are you living for? The present world or the world which is to come? Are you laying up treasures upon earth or treasures in heaven? What are you investing your life in? Only one life so soon it will past, only what's done for Christ will last. See Matt. 6:19-20.
 - How excited are you about being a part of the bride of Christ? This is a big, enormous eternal truth and should change the way we live right now!