

## Revelation 21

Nancy Guthrie points out how this all shows everything escalate from the garden of Eden

- I. John's vision, the new Jerusalem (verses 1-8)
  - a. What John sees (verses 1-2)
    - i. A new heaven and a new earth (verse 1)
    - ii. A holy city descending from heaven (verse 2)
  - b. What John hears (verses 3-8)
    - i. *The words of the angel* (21:3-4)
    - ii. He says God himself will mingle among his people (21:3).
    - iii. He says God himself will minister to his people (21:4).
  - c. *The words of the Almighty* (21:5-8)
    - i. He will be the Father to all the saved (21:5-7).
    - ii. He will be the foe to all the unsaved (21:8): They will be cast into the lake of fire.<sup>1</sup>
- II. John's visit to the new Jerusalem (verses 9-27) The apostle records the following facts.
  - a. **John describes what he sees (21:9-18, 19-21, 26).**
  - b. *The city itself* (21:9-11, 18b): It is filled with God's glory and shines like a precious jewel and pure gold.
  - c. *The gates and walls* (21:12-14, 18a, 21a)
    - i. the gates (21:12b-13, 21a): There are twelve gates, each made of solid pearl, guarded by twelve angels. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates.
    - ii. The walls (21:12a, 14, 18a): The walls are made of jasper, supported by twelve foundations, on which are written the names of the twelve apostles.
  - d. *The size and dimensions* (21:15-17)
    - i. The city measures 1,400 miles long by 1,400 miles wide by 1,400 miles high (21:15-16).
    - ii. The walls are two hundred feet thick (21:17).
  - e. *The foundations* (21:19-20): Each of the twelve foundations is inlaid with a different precious jewel.
    - i. *The street* (21:21b): It is made of pure gold, like transparent glass.
    - ii. *The worship* (21:26): All nations bring their glory and honor to the temple.
  - f. **John describes what he does not see (21:22-25, 27).**
    - i. *There is no Temple there* (21:22).
    - ii. *There is no need of the sun* (21:23-24).
    - iii. *There are no closed gates* (21:25).
    - iv. *There is no impurity or evil* (21:27).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 21:3-8.

<sup>2</sup> H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 21:9-27.

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Dr. Mulholland:

Following this vision, Revelation provides a collage of prophetic images that fulfill God's old covenant purposes and promises:

<b>TEXT FROM REVELATION</b> <b>21:3–4</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PROMISE</b>
“Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them.”	Lev 26:11–12	Ezek 37:27; 43:7; Zech 8:8
“They will be his people.”	Gen 17:7	Jer 31:33
“He will wipe every tear from their eyes.”		Isa 25:8; 30:19; 61:3
“There will be no more death.”		Isa 25:7
“These things are gone forever.”		Isa 43:18–19 (cf. 2 Esdr 7:113–114) <sup>3</sup>

I. John’s vision, the new Jerusalem (verses 1-8)

*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. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>5</sup> 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.” <sup>6</sup> 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*

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<sup>3</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 587.

*the water of life without cost. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. <sup>8</sup> 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.”*

Moody:

*This section provides information not revealed in the other visions of heaven. The eternal state is pictured as a physical place. It includes land, buildings, trees, and water. Believers will interact with one another and engage in meaningful service for God. This corrects some long-held misconceptions. Heaven is not a place of passive rest, or endless, blissful contemplation of God.<sup>4</sup>*

Dr Constable:

*Is the new heaven and earth that John saw the same new heaven and earth that Isaiah predicted (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; cf. Ps. 102:25–26; Isa. 51:6)? We would normally assume that the entities are the same since the terms that describe them are almost identical. However the descriptions of these places vary. Isaiah wrote that people will die in the new earth (Isa. 65:17–20), but John said there will be no more death there (Rev. 21:4). Isaiah predicted that the moon will shine in the new heavens (Isa. 66:22–23), but John implied that there will be no moon there (Rev. 21:23). Apparently Isaiah spoke of both the Millennium and the eternal state generally as new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17–66:24), which is accurate since even in the Millennium the world will experience renovation. John, in the progress of revelation, distinguished these two aspects of the eschaton and applied the name “new heaven and earth” only to the eternal state, which is appropriate since God will eventually destroy the present world and create a new world (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10). Isaiah’s view of the future was more general while John’s was more specific.<sup>7205</sup>*

- a. What John sees (verses 1-2)
- b. Moody: *John saw an eternal state in which a beautiful city was descending from heaven (v. 2). Some interpreters understand it to be suspended above the earth, while others say that its sturdy foundation argues for it being grounded. This is more likely. Each entity is described as new. The emphasis is not on time, but on freshness or better quality. This place superseded everything that had ever come before it. The city brings to mind Eden, and is set in contrast to Babylon (17:1–18:24). The absence of a sea indicates safety from enemies (12:18; 13:1; 17:2). It will bear the name Jerusalem (v. 2). Like the earthly one, it will*

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<sup>4</sup> The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83407-83409). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>720</sup> 720. Similarly the Old Testament prophets spoke of Messiah’s coming but did not distinguish the first coming from the second coming. Later revelation clarified that there would be two comings. This is in harmony with how God has revealed many things in His Word: first generally, then more specifically (e.g., the biblical covenant promises).

<sup>5</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:1.

be loved by God. Unlike its namesake, it will never rebel. It is the place that Jesus has prepared for His followers (Jn 14:2-3).<sup>6</sup>

- c. ESV Study Bible: “All Things New.” *The destruction of the last enemy, death, and the last judgment will finally lead to the renewal of the entire created order, heaven and earth, to be the perfect home in which the Lamb will live forever with his bride, the people whom he has redeemed out of all the nations through his atoning death.*<sup>7</sup>

- d. Again the ESV Study Bible brings out some important things:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The removal of the first heaven and earth eliminates the fatal infection of evil in the cosmic order and gives way to God’s creation of a new cosmic order where sin and suffering and death are forever banished. The old order was in “bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:21) and “groaning ... in pains of childbirth until now” (Rom. 8:22), awaiting the day when “the heavens ... will be dissolved” and “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell” will be established to forever replace the old (2 Pet. 3:12–13). This represents the specific fulfillment of the prophecy given to Isaiah: “Thus says the Lord GOD ... ‘I create new heavens and a new earth ...’” (Isa. 65:13, 17; cf. 66:22). Scholars differ, however, as to the extent and way in which the “first heaven and the first earth” will pass away and be transformed into something new—especially as to whether this represents an entirely new creation, or whether (and to what extent) this represents a “renewed” creation that retains some degree of continuity with the old order. As seen in the example of 1 Cor. 15:35–44, it is clear, with respect to the believer’s resurrection body, that although there is some kind of continuity between the old and the new order, the new reality will also be qualitatively different—for example, as different as a kernel or a seed is from a full-grown wheat plant (1 Cor. 15:35–39). Thus “new” (Gk. kainos) is best understood here in terms of something that has been qualitatively transformed in a fundamental way, rather than as an outright new creation ex nihilo (Latin, “out of nothing”), as in the case of God’s original creation in Genesis 1. By comparison to the old order that is coming to an end, the new cosmic order is radically different—a place where “righteousness will dwell” (2 Pet. 3:13), where God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 21:4; cf. Isa. 25:8 and Rev. 7:17), where “death shall be no more” (Rev. 21:4; cf. Isa. 25:8 and 1 Cor. 15:26), where “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:21), and where all that is “perishable” will be raised and transformed into a glorious new “imperishable” reality (1 Cor. 15:42–43), where the redeemed will rejoice in the eternal presence of “God and the Lamb” (Rev. 14:4; cf. 22:1–5). **The sea was no more does not mean there will be no bodies of water in the new earth (cf. 21:6; 22:1–2) but refers to the source of earthly rebellion, chaos, and danger—the sea from which the beast emerged (13:1; Dan. 7:3). This symbolic (or literal) source of rebellion will no longer threaten creation’s perfection.***

- i. A new heaven and a new earth (verse 1)
- ii. There is important cross reference here: Is 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13<sup>8</sup>
- iii. As has been noted above, “new,” may not mean totally new. Randy Alcorn believes it is like new.

<sup>6</sup> The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83413-83416). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.esv.org/Revelation+21/>

<sup>8</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

- iv. The first Heaven and the first earth passed away, again, new or like new.
- v. There is no longer any sea.
- vi. I like what the ESV Study Bible says about that: **The sea was no more does not mean there will be no bodies of water in the new earth (cf. 21:6; 22:1–2) but refers to the source of earthly rebellion, chaos, and danger—the sea from which the beast emerged (13:1; Dan. 7:3). This symbolic (or literal) source of rebellion will no longer threaten creation’s perfection.**
- vii. In contrast Dr Constable take this literally, but I do not agree: *The new earth will have no seas, but oceans will exist in the Millennium (Ps. 72:8; Jer. 11:9, 11; Ezek. 47:8–20; 48:28; Zech. 9:10; 14:8). This is another indication that what John saw in chapter 21 was not the Millennium but the eternal state that will follow it. The sea is the first of seven evils that John said would not exist in the new creation, the others being death, mourning, weeping, pain, night, and the curse (vv. 4, 25; 22:3, 5). Since these other evils are literal entities, we should probably understand the sea as literal too. The sea is an evil in the sense that it opposes humankind. For example, it was the sea that kept John on the Island of Patmos separate from the churches of Asia.<sup>721</sup> Presently the seas cover over three-quarters of the earth’s surface. Therefore an earth without seas will be a radically different planet. The seas affect the atmosphere, the climate, and other living conditions as well as human transportation. The absence of any sea is the chief characteristic of the new earth, as John described it.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>721</sup> <sup>721</sup> 721. Swete, p. 275.

<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:1.

- viii. A holy city descending from heaven (verse 2)
- ix. the “holy city” is the new Jerusalem.
- x. We will here more about that in the rest of this chapter.
- xi. **It seems clear that these verses are summarizing what the rest of the next two chapter will talk about.**
- xii. This “holy city” is coming “down.”
- xiii. Literally down? It could be that John is again describing the indescribable.
- xiv. Notice the modifiers: the city is described as “holy” and that means “set apart” or sanctified. We will see how it is holy later on.
- xv. This city is coming from God.
- xvi. It is like it is coming from God’s realm. It is coming out of Heaven.
- xvii. This city is made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
- xviii. Later (in verse 9) we will see that she is called the bride.
- xix. But this seems to mean that the city is all beautiful like we would expect a bride on the wedding day.
- xx. Isa 52:1 calls Jerusalem the “holy” city.

- xxi. **“Revelation as a whole may be characterized as *A Tale of Two Cities*, with the sub-title, *The Harlot and the Bride*.”<sup>7249</sup>**

Dr Constable:

*There have been several explanations of the relationship of the New Jerusalem to the new earth. It may be that John saw as a city what he had formerly seen as a new heaven and earth. In other words, the New Jerusalem and the new heaven and earth may be two different figures for the eternal state. I favor this view. Thus the eternal dwelling place of believers will be a completely new creation by God that John saw in his visions first as a new world and then as a new city.*

*Alternatively the New Jerusalem could be a satellite rotating around the new earth. Some hold that the New Jerusalem will be a satellite of the present earth during the Millennium, and when God creates the new earth it will descend out of heaven and be on the surface of the new earth.<sup>725</sup> Some believe that the New Jerusalem will be within the new earth.<sup>726</sup> The text does not say the New Jerusalem will come down to the new earth, only that John saw it coming down out of heaven from God (cf. v. 10).<sup>10</sup>*

- e. What John hears (verses 3-8)
- i. *The words of the angel (21:3–4)*
  - ii. He says God himself will mingle among his people (21:3).
  - iii. Dr Constable: *Verse 3 describes the benefits of the New Jerusalem positively, and verse 4 does so negatively.*<sup>11</sup>
  - iv. *ESV Study Note: He will dwell with them. The greatest blessing of heaven will be unhindered fellowship with God himself. The goal of God’s covenant, “God with us” (Isa. 7:14, ESV footnote; Matt. 1:23), foreshadowed in the OT tabernacle and temple, will be achieved. his people ... their God. See Lev. 26:11–12; Ezek. 37:27.*
  - v. John hears a “loud” voice, again, this is a modifier and it is coming from the throne.
  - vi. The people are God’s people and God will be with them.
  - vii. These Old Testament passages also say that they will be His people: Lev 26:11f; Ezek 37:27
  - viii. He says God himself will minister to his people (21:4).

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<sup>724</sup> 724. Beasley-Murray, p. 315.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:2.

<sup>725</sup> 725. Pentecost, *Things to . . .*, p. 580.

<sup>726</sup> 726. McGee, 5:1068–72, believed it will be within the transparent sphere of the new earth rather than on its surface.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:2.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:4.

- ix. God wipes tears away. ESV Study Note: *By wiping away every tear and eliminating death, mourning, and pain (Isa. 25:8; 65:19–20), God will reverse the curse that entered the world through human sin.*
- x. No more death.
- xi. No more mourning.
- xii. No more crying.
- xiii. No more pain.
- xiv. **The first order is over.**

Is 25:8 *he will swallow up death permanently. •The sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from every face, and remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. Indeed, the LORD has announced it!*

1 Co 15:26 *The last enemy to be eliminated is death.*

Re 20:14 *Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire.*

Is 35:10 *•those whom the LORD has ransomed will return that way. •They will enter Zion with a happy shout. •Unending joy will crown them, happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and suffering will disappear.*

Is 51:11 *•Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return; •they will enter Zion with a happy shout. •Unending joy will crown them, happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and suffering will disappear.*

Is 65:19 *•Jerusalem will bring me joy, and my •people will bring me happiness. The sound of weeping or cries of sorrow will never be heard in her again.*

- f. *The words of the Almighty (21:5–8)*
- g. God says that He is making all things new.
- h. John is commanded to write.
- i. These words are faithful, that means “trustworthy.” What he is writing is something that he can count on. These words are true.
  - i. He will be the Father to all the saved (21:5–7).
  - ii. First in verse 6 we see the truth about God, He is outside of time. He is the alpha and omega... This is used two other times in Revelation: Rev 1:8; 22:13

## God and Jesus Are Alpha and Omega

God is the Alpha and the Omega ([1:8](#); [21:6](#))

God is the beginning and the end ([21:6](#))

Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega ([22:13](#); cf. [2:8](#); [22:13](#))

Jesus is the beginning and the end ([22:13](#); cf. [2:8](#); [22:13](#))

- iii. God, the Father provides, example of water.

Is 55:1 *“Hey, all who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come! Buy and eat! •Come! Buy wine and milk without money and without cost!*

Jn 4:10 *Jesus answered •• her, “If you had known the gift of God and who it is who said to you, ‘Give me some water to drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”*

- iv. Overcomes: in Rev 2:7 we see similar language.
- v. He will be the foe to all the unsaved (21:8): They will be cast into the lake of fire.<sup>12</sup>
- vi. Verse 8 brings out the contrast between verses 7 and verse 8.
- vii. In verse 8 we see many synonyms to describe the ungodly.
- viii. Cowardly, unbelieving (could be translated as untrustworthy), abominable, murderers, immoral person, sorcerers, idolaters, liars... these people go to the lake of fire.
- ix. ESV Study Note: *Sorcerers is also used of Egyptian and Babylonian magicians in the OT (e.g., Ex. 7:11; Dan. 2:2); on ancient magic, see note on Acts 13:6.*
- x. **NET:** *On the term φαρμακεία (pharmakeia, "magic spells") see L&N 53.100: "the use of magic, often involving drugs and the casting of spells upon people—'to practice magic, to cast spells upon, to engage in sorcery, magic, sorcery.'* φαρμακεία: *ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου ἐπλανήθησαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη 'with your magic spells you deceived all the peoples (of the world)' Re 18:23.*"<sup>13</sup>
- xi. This is the second death.
- xii. This is a description of hell.
- xiii. These are not struggling believers. These people did not trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- xiv. Dr Constable:
- xv. *Since the lake of fire still exists after the passing of the present heaven and earth, hell is probably not in the center of the present earth nor is it connected to this earth. It will exist separate from the new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem.<sup>733</sup> Even though this passage does not say there will be no more sin in the eternal state, it seems quite clear that there will be none since the consequences of sin will be absent.*<sup>14</sup>

For a TOTALLY DIFFERENT VIEW see Dr. Mulholland:

*In this section of Revelation, we see that God's holiness is the ultimate reality, the enduring norm against which all creation is measured. God's throne is the seat of absolute holiness. **Anything unholy is repelled by such holiness.** But since God is the reality who encompasses all, where can unholy go to avoid the presence of holiness? As the psalmist knew well, it is impossible to escape from the presence of God (Ps 139:7–12). God's holiness is a fire that burns against all that is unholy. For those who desire to be holy, the fire of God's holiness is a refining fire that burns out all that is unholy in them. For those who desire to be unholy, God's holiness is a consuming fire that continually burns against the very essence of who they have chosen to be.*

<sup>12</sup> H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 21:3–8.

<sup>13</sup> Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Re 21:8.  
<sup>733</sup> 733. See Peterson, "Does the . . .," pp. 25–26.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:8.

**Holiness, however, is primarily a matter of being, not doing.** The holiness movement has often gone astray in placing its focus upon behavior. When holiness is defined only by behavior, the most destructive forms of legalism and works-righteousness can result. A person can be in perfect obedience to some holiness code, but their spirit can remain selfish, bitter, judgmental, and hard. If holy deeds are not the outer manifestation of holiness of being, they are empty and meaningless. In the terms of John's vision, our "book of deeds" may be exemplary; but if we are not in the Book of Life (i.e., we don't have holiness of being), then we have no part in God's realm.

**The community of believers is the "holy" city (11:2; 21:2, 10; cf. 20:9), believers are "holy ones" (5:8; 8:3-4; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 19:8; 20:9), those who participate in the first resurrection are holy (20:6), and the holy are to continue being holy in the midst of a fallen Babylon world (22:11).** Furthermore, and perhaps most telling, is John's contrast between the "unclean" and those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life (21:27; see NLT mg). In Jewish tradition, "unclean" items are always profane and thus the antithesis of "holy" (cf. Lev 10:10; Isa 35:8; 52:1; Ezek 22:26; 44:23; cf. Paul's use of the terms in 1 Cor 7:14; 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:26). John seems to be indicating that holiness of life is commensurate with being in the Lamb's Book of Life.<sup>15</sup>

II. John's visit to the new Jerusalem (verses 9-27) The apostle records the following facts.

<sup>9</sup> 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."

### The New Jerusalem

<sup>10</sup> 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, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. <sup>18</sup> The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. <sup>19</sup> 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

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NLT New Living Translation  
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<sup>15</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1-2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 588-589.

fourth, emerald;<sup>20</sup> the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.<sup>21</sup> 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.

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

- a. **John describes what he sees (21:9–18, 19–21, 26).**
- b. Moody: *John was carried to a high mountain rather than the harlot's wilderness (17:1). Wife of the Lamb (v. 9) indicates the faithful city, new Jerusalem, in contrast to the harlot (17:3). It reflected the glory of God (v. 11). God's glory is intrinsic divine light that emanates from His person. Her brilliance (lit., shining star) was like top-grade jasper.*<sup>16</sup>
- c. *Like any city, "Jerusalem" meant both the place and the people who lived there; the new Jerusalem is thus a bride because its residents are a bride (19:7)*<sup>17</sup>
- d. **ESV Study Note:** *The New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Pure Bride. As in the disclosure of the prostitute Babylon (17:1–3), an angel with one of the seven bowls helps John see the bride, the wife of the Lamb. She is the holy city Jerusalem. **Some take this as a literal description of this new city; others understand it as a complex symbol for the life in heaven of the Lamb's redeemed people.***
- e. *After Gog and Magog's destruction (Ezekiel 38–39), Ezekiel was transported to "a very high mountain" (Ezek. 40:2–3) to view God's future temple. Although believers are exposed to suffering on earth (Rev. 11:2), their true life in the holy city has been secured in heaven, from which it will suddenly be revealed (Col. 3:3–4).*
- f. We now see one of the seven angels again. We saw them in Rev. 15:1 and 6-8. This seven angel had the 7 bowls and last plagues which we talked about.
- g. The angels wants to bring John up to show him the bride, the wife of the Lamb. We know these are titles of the New Jerusalem.
- h. We saw this phrase "come up here" in Rev 17:1.
- i. *The city itself (21:9–11, 18b):* It is filled with God's glory and shines like a precious jewel and pure gold.
- j. Verse 10 has John being taken up to a very high mountain. It is like he is getting a birds eye view. Though he has great specifics, so it seems like he is being shown things in a spiritual state.
- k. Verse 10 says that he is "in the spirit."
- l. Once again, he calls Jerusalem the "holy" city.

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<sup>16</sup> The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83425-83426). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>17</sup> Craig S. Keener, [\*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 21:2.

- m. Once again, Jerusalem is coming down from God.
- n. This section is very similar to Ezekiel chapters 40-48.
- o. Verse 11 begins the descriptions. Notice that Jerusalem is repeatedly described with a feminine pronoun.
- p. Jerusalem has the “glory” of God.
- q. →that is a big deal.
- r. Brilliance, like a costly stone. Think of jewels.
- s. John says “like” crystal clear jasper.
- t. In fact, we see the repetition of that word “like.” John is stretching the vocabulary.
- u. *The gates and walls* (21:12–14, 18a, 21a)

ESV Study Note: **The gates bear the names of Israel’s twelve tribes, and the Lamb’s twelve apostles are named on the wall’s foundations (Eph. 2:20), signifying the unity of OT and NT believers.**

- v. Dr Constable:

*The city’s wall with 12 gate-towers was what caught John’s attention next. The city evidently looked square (v. 16). Its high walls suggest its security and inviolability. Certainly its inhabitants will need no defense from attacking enemies there. The 12 gate-towers (Gr. pylon, cf. [Luke 16:20](#)) stood three to a side (v. 13). The gate-towers provided access into the city. In the case of this city, the many gate-towers also suggest great freedom of access.*

*The angelic guards also present a picture of great security (cf. [Gen. 3:24](#); [Isa. 62:6](#)). The names were apparently on the gates, not on the angels stationed beside them (cf. [Ezek. 48:31–34](#)).<sup>740</sup> The fact that each gate-tower bears a name of one of Israel’s tribes probably indicates that Israel will have a distinctive identity and role in this city as it had through history (cf. [7:1–8](#)).<sup>741</sup> God will perpetuate the memory of Israel throughout eternity.<sup>18</sup>*

- i. the gates (21:12b–13, 21a): There are twelve gates, each made of solid pearl, guarded by twelve angels. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates.
- ii. Moody: *Some equate the twelve tribes with the Church, which is represented by the apostles, but it is better to see the apostles not only as the foundation stones of the Church (Eph 2:20), but also as distinct representatives of Israel and the leaders of the faithful remnant of Israel (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rm 11:1-6). It appears, therefore, that Israel and the Church maintain distinct identities throughout eternity, though together they comprise a unified people of God. Whether or not this suggests different functions for the two in heaven is not clear. Although some have envisioned*

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<sup>18</sup> 740. [Ezekiel 48:31–34](#) describes Jerusalem in the Millennium, not in the new earth.

<sup>741</sup> <sup>741</sup> 741. Thomas, [Revelation 8–22](#), p. 463.

<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 21:12.

the city as a pyramid, it will probably be a cube, extending 1,500 miles in each dimension (v. 16). Seventy-two yards (v. 17) is more likely the thickness of its wall than its height. Apparently angelic measurements are similar to those used by humans. The material of the wall was “like” a costly stone, and “as” jasper, which has been compared to clear quartz. The material was not jasper, but similar to the earthly stone with which John was familiar. Other materials listed in the passage should be probably be understood in a similar fashion. The street was “like” gold and the gates “like” pearls, and so on. The interior buildings were as pure gold (v. 18). The colors of the stones covering the wall spanned the spectrum of a rainbow, from yellow and green to fiery red, purple, and blue. Each gate consisted of a single pearl (v. 21). The street of gold was so free of impurities as to be clear.<sup>19</sup>

- iii. Verse 13 tells where the gates were.
- iv. The walls (21:12a, 14, 18a): The walls are made of jasper, supported by twelve foundations, on which are written the names of the twelve apostles.
- v. IVP BBC: *Jesus had made clear the continuity between the twelve tribes in the Old Testament and the first apostles in the New Testament by his initial numbering of those apostles (see the introduction to Acts 1:15–26); Asian Christians would easily recognize the symbolism (Eph 2:20).*<sup>20</sup>
- vi. Ezekiel 48:31-34 is very similar.
- w. *The size and dimensions (21:15–17)*
  - i. We have seen the measuring rod before: Ezek 40:3; Rev 11:1
  - ii. The city measures 1,400 miles long by 1,400 miles wide by 1,400 miles high (21:15–16).
  - iii. Dr Mulholland: *It is very likely that the dimensions of the city are significant in at least two ways. First, as noted above, each of the 12 edges of the cubic city is 12,000 stadia for a total of 144,000—the image representing the citizenship of God’s covenant people. Second, this 1,400-mile cube makes a powerful statement when considered geographically. If you take a map of the Mediterranean and overlay upon it a square 1,400 miles on a side, with its center on the island of Patmos, the place of John’s vision, you find that the western edge of the square is where Rome is found, the eastern edge is where Jerusalem is located, and the northern and southern edges roughly follow the northern and southern limits of the Roman Empire in the first century. While this in itself is interesting, what is most significant is that when John received his vision, almost every Christian alive in the world lived within the boundaries of that square! John was seeing that God’s New Jerusalem is set down right in the midst of the fallen Babylon world of the Roman Empire.*<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83439-83442). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>20</sup> Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 21:14.

<sup>21</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 593–594.

- iv. The walls are **two hundred feet** thick (21:17).
- v. IVP BBC: *That the dimensions are equal on all sides indicates that the city is shaped like a cube—like the holy of holies in the Old Testament temple (1 Kings 6:20), indicating that the presence of God would always be with them in its fullest intensity. Ezekiel’s city was also square, although not clearly cubed (48:32–34; cf. 45:2; 48:16, 20); but the cubing illustrates the point of Ezekiel 48:35—God’s presence—all the more graphically. In some Jewish traditions, the future Jerusalem would expand in all directions (based on Is 54:2–3) and would become so tall that it would ascend to God’s throne (based on Ezek 41:7). None of these descriptions is literal; if it is difficult to breathe atop the world’s highest mountain (about five miles high), a city fifteen hundred miles high would not be very practical (at least under current laws of physics!). John elsewhere uses “twelve thousand” symbolically (7:4–8).<sup>22</sup>*
- vi. According to human measurements which are also angelic measurements. Interesting.

Dr Mulholland: *The tremendous thickness of the wall is an image of total impenetrability. Since the walls are jasper, symbolizing the nature of God (see note on [21:11](#)), this seems to be an image of God’s holiness, which is an impenetrable barrier to all that is unholy.*<sup>23</sup>

- vii. Verse 18: talks about the material of the wall. It is jasper and gold like clear glass. We see this again in verse 21.
- viii. Dr Mulholland: *The final confirmation of the idea that the wall is the holiness of God comes when John sees that walls are made of jasper, the vision’s first representation of God at 4:3.*<sup>24</sup>
- ix. IVP BBC **Jewish descriptions of the costly stones used to build the new Jerusalem included miraculous elaborations, hence absolutely pure gold that looked like clear glass would have fit the genre. Metal was used in mirrors, so it could mean that the gold gives a perfect reflection.**<sup>25</sup>

**Twelve stones were normally used in the Old Testament (Ex 28:17–20; Josh 4:2–3) and Judaism (e.g., Pseudo-Philo) to signify the twelve tribes. The image is from Isaiah 54:11–12, where every part of the city (walls, foundations, gates, etc.) would be constructed with precious stones. Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls interpret this passage in Isaiah figuratively and apply it to the righteous,**

<sup>22</sup> Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 21:16.

<sup>23</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 591.

<sup>24</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 591.

<sup>25</sup> Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 21:18.

*who displayed God's glory (including the twelve leaders of the community). Tobit applies it literally to the future Jerusalem but includes streets that cry out praises to God.*

*That the Septuagint of Ezekiel 28:13 lists a variety of precious stones may inform Revelation 17:4, but the use of twelve different precious stones, each signifying a tribe of Israel, is from Exodus 28:17–20; John's list is roughly equivalent to the Hebrew one in Exodus. (Both Josephus and Philo also link the twelve stones on Aaron's breastplate with the twelve signs of the zodiac, but John characteristically avoids the astrological associations that some writers linked with the symbols he employs.)<sup>26</sup>*

- x. *The foundations* (21:19–20): Each of the twelve foundations is inlaid with a different precious jewel.

NET Bible:

**sn** *Agate* (also called chalcedony) is a semiprecious stone usually milky or gray in color (L&N 2.32).

<sup>49</sup> **sn** *Onyx* (also called sardonyx) is a semiprecious stone that comes in various colors (L&N 2.35).

<sup>50</sup> **sn** *Carnelian* is a semiprecious gemstone, usually red in color (L&N 2.36).

<sup>51</sup> **sn** *Chrysolite* refers to either quartz or topaz, golden yellow in color (L&N 2.37).

<sup>52</sup> **sn** *Beryl* is a semiprecious stone, usually blue-green or green in color (L&N 2.38).

<sup>53</sup> **sn** *Chrysoptase* is a greenish type of quartz (L&N 2.40).

<sup>54</sup> **sn** *Jacinth* is a semiprecious stone, probably blue in color (also called “hyacinth,” but that translation is not used here because of possible confusion with the flower of the same name). See L&N 2.41.<sup>27</sup>

- i. *The street* (21:21b): It is made of pure gold, like transparent glass. We saw this in verse 18.
- ii. We see great detail about the stones.

Ex 28:17–20 •*You are to set in it a setting for stones, four rows of stones, a row with a ruby, a topaz, and a beryl—the first row; <sup>28:18</sup> and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; <sup>28:19</sup> and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; <sup>28:20</sup> and the fourth row, a chrysolite, •an onyx, and a jasper. They are to be enclosed in gold in their filigree settings.*

Is 54:11f “*O afflicted one, driven away, and unconsolated! Look, I am about to set your stones in antimony and I lay your foundation with lapis-lazuli. <sup>54:12</sup> I will make your pinnacles out of gems, •your gates out of beryl, and your •outer wall out of beautiful stones.*

Eze 28:13 *You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, the ruby, topaz, and emerald, the chrysolite, onyx, and jasper, the sapphire, turquoise, and beryl; •your•• settings and mounts were made of gold. On the day you were created they were prepared.*

- iii. Verse 21 describes the 12 gates once again, pure gold, like clear glass.
- iv. *The worship* (21:26): All nations bring their glory and honor to the temple.

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<sup>26</sup> Craig S. Keener, [\*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 21:19–20.

<sup>27</sup> Biblical Studies Press, [\*The NET Bible First Edition Notes\*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Re 21:19–20.

y. John describes what he does not see (21:22–25, 27).

- i. *There is no Temple there* (21:22). The Lord and the Lamb are the Temple. The Lord is modified as almighty.
- ii. Moody: ***The most glorious feature of the city was not, however, its beautiful architecture. Far more impressive were its rulers, the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (v. 22).*** *The glory radiating from the two would provide all necessary light. The presence of light (v. 24) and absence of night are literal here, but still reminiscent of Johannine theology of purity and sin (Jn 1:4-5; 1Jn 1:5-7; 2:8-9). The Godhead dispels all negative influence. The nations were Gentiles who had persevered in resisting the beast and Babylon, finding their joy in serving the Lamb in the new city. The words nothing unclean (v. 27) introduce another set of exclusions (21:6). Unbelievers who lived in habitual sin while on earth would have no part in the new Jerusalem. What should most excite believers about heaven is not its admittedly astounding beauty and bliss. Instead, they should look forward to being with the wonderful Father and the Lamb forever, without sin or physical distance to limit fellowship.*<sup>28</sup>
- iii. *There is no need of the sun* (21:23–24). The glory of God will illumine it. The lamp is the Lamb.

Isa 60:19-20:

*The sun will no longer supply light for you by day,  
nor will the moon's brightness shine on you;  
the LORD will be your permanent source of light—  
the splendor of your God will shine upon you.  
60:20 Your sun will no longer set;  
your moon will not disappear;  
the LORD will be your permanent source of light;  
your time of sorrow will be over.*<sup>29</sup>

- iv. Verse 24 is an allusion to Isa 60
- v. There will be nations in the new heavens and the new earth. We don't know if there will be a democracy w elections, etc<sup>30</sup>
- vi. So other leaders are bringing glory to this city.
- vii. *There are no closed gates* (21:25).

IVP BBC: *Like the gates of ancient cities, the temple's gates in the old Jerusalem were closed at night (cf. also the closing of gates in Ezek 46:1); but in the world to come, Jerusalem's gates will never need to be closed, because tribute rather than aggressors will come to them (Is 60:11). Revelation adds that the gates will also remain open because there will be no night, since the Lord will be the light (21:23; cf. Is 60:19–20). Night was also associated with sorcery, demons*

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<sup>28</sup> *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Kindle Locations 83446-83450). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>29</sup> Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), Is 60:19–20.

<sup>30</sup> Dr Rydelnic . Open Line. Moody Radio. 08.01.20

*and robbers, and was considered a good time to stay inside. Contrast the city of wealth in Revelation 18:11–19.*

**21:27.** *Outcast groups (e.g., prostitutes) sometimes lived outside city gates, but an Old Testament allusion is in view here. There will be no more abominations in the house of God (Zech 14:21) or unbelievers in Jerusalem (Joel 3:17). The unclean had always been excluded from God's house so long as they remained in that state; this text refers to spiritual or moral uncleanness. The whole city is God's temple, or dwelling place (21:3, 16, 22).*<sup>31</sup>

viii.

ix. No sinners outside the city. It is saying compared to previous times where there were sinners outside there will not be anymore.

x. *There is no impurity or evil (21:27).*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Craig S. Keener, [\*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 21:25–27.

<sup>32</sup> H. L. Willmington, [\*The Outline Bible\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 21:9–27.