

## Revelation 21 (NASB)

Revelation 21 appears to be the start of a new section of the book of Revelation. In the first 3 chapters, Jesus was Lord of the churches. In chapters 4 through 20, Jesus was Lion over the nations. In the final two chapters, we shall see Jesus as the Lamb of believers. In this chapter, we move from judgment of the lost to something new, what a breath of fresh air.

### The New Heaven and Earth

*21:1 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.*

Many prophets in the Bible, both Old and New Testament, wrote about a new heaven and a new earth.

Isaiah 65:17-19 - Isaiah 65:19 tells us that we will NOT grieve for the old heaven and old earth because we will NOT remember (Isaiah 65:17).

Psalm 102:25-27 – We will live on the new earth forever.

2 Peter 3:12-13 – Peter says that righteousness dwells in the new heaven and on the new earth.

One obvious difference between the new earth and the old one was the new earth will have NO seas. These were very important in the old earth. The heaven that John is referring to here as the new heaven, is the Third Heaven which is where the throne of God is located. This “newness” is physical and not a spiritual change. Throughout Revelation, numerous judgments have damaged the old earth. The seals judgment brought destruction to one fourth ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the old earth and seas. The trumpet judgment brought destruction to one third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of the earth and seas in the Tribulation period.

“In this chapter, we see that the history of time is finished; the history of eternity is about to begin.” (Barnhouse)

*21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

In the Old Testament, God gave the specifications for the Tabernacle and the Temple. Here in Revelation 21:2, God does not tell “man” how to build Jerusalem but this new Jerusalem is God made and given. New Jerusalem comes directly from God or from God out of heaven.

The following verses describe the New Jerusalem:

Hebrews 12:22 –Heavenly Jerusalem

Galatians 4:26 – Jerusalem above but the NLT which says heavenly Jerusalem

Philippians 3:20 – the place of our real citizenship

Hebrews 11:10 tells us the Abraham was looking forward to a New Jerusalem the city with heavenly foundations and whose designer and builder was God.

*21:3 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,*

This verse sounds like a return to the Garden of Eden after Creation but before the fall. Instead of God in heaven and Man on the earth, we will be in the presence of God and Jesus.

*21:4 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."*

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. The absence of these things proves what we read in Isaiah 65:17 because if we remember everything then there will be these things.

*21:5 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."*

If God said that He would make all things new, then it is absolutely true. He has told John to write these things down, therefore it will happen as He said. The Greek word for "It is done" is 'gegonan'. We saw it in Revelation 16:17 at the end of the bowl judgments. On the cross Jesus said 'tetelestai', "It is finished." These words are not different. They are the same because they are the ending.

The mystery described in Ephesians 1:9-10 is resolved. Everything in heaven and on earth are unified under the rule of Jesus Christ. Just as on the old earth, there is a spring that gives Living Water or Water of Life for the thirsty. John 4:13

Verse 8 tells us who will join Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. It says that the "cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars". This list is comparable to the list of 7 things that are an abomination to God listed by Solomon in Proverbs 6:16-19. Solomon lists haughty eyes – the kind that looks down on others, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil(vile), a false witness who utters lies, one who spreads strife among brothers.

*21:9 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."*

*The New Jerusalem*

*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,*

It is good to see that this angel has more than one purpose. John remembered this angel because this angel had poured out the seventh and final bowl in Revelation 16:17-21. Here the angel is going to show John the Bride which is New Jerusalem.

*21:11 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.*

There must be some connection between New Jerusalem and the Church or the saints. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul says that the Church is the Bride and here in Revelation 21 the Bride is New Jerusalem. One possible explanation for both being the Bride is that the saints will live forever in New Jerusalem. Are these verses to be taken literally or figuratively? Is New Jerusalem a place or people? As we go through these verses consider both.

In the next few verses, the beauty of New Jerusalem is described. There will be twelve gates with 3 in each direction which are named for the twelve tribes of Israel. Why will we need walls at that time? We don't really know. There will be no more enemies. It shows that some may be excluded from the city.

The twelve foundations of the walls will bear the names of the twelve disciples of the Lamb. Of all of the glorious things in New Jerusalem, this is a peculiar thing to honor them with. Ephesians 2:19-20 tells us that we are to be members of God's "household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

*21:15 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.*

John sees an angel holding a measuring rod made of gold. One possible explanation for God telling us the size of New Jerusalem is to give us comfort in knowing there is plenty of room. John Walvoord said "Whatever its shape, a city of large dimensions would be proper if it is to be the residence of the saved of all ages including infants who died before reaching the age of accountability. It is not necessarily true, however, to hold that everyone will live continually within its walls throughout eternity. The implications are that there is plenty of room for everyone and this city provides a residence for the saints of all ages."

I can't imagine walls that are 216 feet thick.

*21:18 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, chrysoprase; 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.*

John goes into more detail about the walls. The description of the walls tells us that God's resources are limitless. Getting enough gold and precious gems to build these walls will not be a problem for our God. The only other place in the Bible where such an assortment of gemstones was seen, is the High Priest's Breastpiece. (Exodus 28:15-21).

"The symbolism is not meant to give the impression of wealth and luxury, but to point to the glory and holiness of God." (Johnson)

Numerous songwriters have written about the gates of pearl and the streets of gold. These songs are about Heaven but the description in Revelation 21 is about New Jerusalem. The confusion about Heaven and New Jerusalem may be because people call the place that we go after death Heaven. Heaven may be the model for New Jerusalem.

The description of the gates is commonly misinterpreted. They are made from a single pearl. Previously we discussed how gold can be made clear. If gold is rolled very thin, then it becomes clear. Another option is that the gold is so pure that it appears to be clear. When we think about the purification process of gold, the saints are like that gold because they both are purified by fire. For the saints, that is trials and tribulations.

"The constant mention of transparency indicates that the city is designed to transmit the glory of God in the form of light without hindrance." (Walvoord)

*21:22 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.*

God and the Lamb will provide the light in New Jerusalem. There will be no Temples in New Jerusalem. We don't need them because God and Jesus are there. When the Hebrew nation was in the wilderness, every time that Moses was in the presence of God, his face or appearance was changed. (Exodus 34:33-35) Moses was walking in the glory of God.

The significance of kings in New Jerusalem is not known.

"How encouraging to note that not all were destroyed when the nations came to do battle against Jerusalem and the Lord Himself. There will also be 'kings of the earth' who will be a part of the eternal state." (Hocking)

*21:25 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.*

New Jerusalem will be a place of glory and honor of God and the Lamb and the gates will never close. The mention of evil is surprising. Just as in the battle of Gog and Magog, I have trouble understanding what is evil in the world evil at that time. It just shows the potential for man's ability to become evil.

The chapter ends by reminding us that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will come into New Jerusalem.