

101. The Book of Revelation—21:17-27

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(11-30-22)

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Revelation 21:9–16 (NKJV)

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

There are many who argue that this 'city' isn't a *real* or a *literal* city—that it is 'symbolic' and they spiritualize everything away.

I personally believe that this city is literal not *symbolic*—and I believe that in part because the measurements are given which I believe would serve no purpose if this wasn't a real city but was only a symbolic or allegorical depiction. (Elaborate using Ezekiel 40-43)

The results of the angel's measuring revealed that the city is laid out as a giant cube—its height, depth and width all measuring 12,000 furlongs (Greek is 'stadia').

A stadion was about 650 feet—thus, the city walls are about 1,500 miles in height, depth and width—a perfect cube (not a pyramid as some commentators suggest).

Pyramids are always associated with the occult where pagan priests would ascend to worship the hosts of heaven. Whereas a cube was the shape specified by God in the Tabernacle where the Holy of Holies was a perfect 15 by 15 by 15-foot cube.

And later Solomon also made the Holy of Holies (where God was to "dwell" between the cherubim) into a perfect cube. (1 Kings 6:20)

So again, the dimensions of the New Jerusalem measures 1500 miles high, wide, and deep.

This city is so large (about 3/4th the size of the moon) that it would cover from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Atlantic Ocean to Colorado (America is 3000 miles from coast to coast).

Again, Morris also points out that a cube-shaped city is well suited for the existence of glorified beings:

“It should also be remembered that the new bodies of the resurrected saints will be like those of angels, no longer limited by gravitational or electromagnetic forces as at present. Thus it will be as easy for the inhabitants to travel vertically as well as horizontally, in the New Jerusalem. Consequently, the “streets” of the city (verse 21) may well include vertical passageways as well as horizontal avenues, and the “blocks” could be real cubical blocks, instead of square areas between streets as in a present-day earthly city.”

➤ *Just how many people could a city this big hold?*

Well, in his commentary on Revelation Morris (who was a scientist before going to be with the Lord) gives some interesting speculation on this—he says,

“It can be calculated that the total number of people who have lived between Adam’s time and our time is about 40 billion. Then, assuming that a similar number will be born during the Millennial Kingdom, and allowing another 20 billion for those who died before or soon after birth—it is then reasonable that about 100 billion men, women and children will be members of the human race from Adam through the thousand year Millennial Kingdom...Let’s assume that 1 out of 5 or 20% of these will be saved including those who die in infancy (this is obviously a guesstimate). If this estimate is correct—then the New Jerusalem will hold about 20 billion people.”

➤ *“Yes, but how will they all fit?”*

Morris says that—

“If every person living in the New Jerusalem was given a 75-acre cube to live in it would only take up 25% of the entire city leaving 75% for parks, streets, lakes, rivers, public buildings (?) and whatever else the Lord wanted to include in this city.”

The average size home in America is 2500 square feet. If Morris is right, an acre is 43,560 square feet. Multiply that by 75 and it equals 3,267,000 square feet.

But then you’d have to multiply that by (?) to equal the square footage in a 75-acre cube.

The bottom line is that we won’t be smashed together in the New Jerusalem!

Revelation 21:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The angel next measured the city’s walls (thickness) at **“one hundred *and* forty-four cubits.”**

There are different lengths of cubits (the distance between the elbow and tip of your middle finger)—the average cubit is about 18 inches—which means these walls are 216 feet thick.

Then, as if to emphasize that the city’s dimensions are literal and not *allegorical*—John adds the parenthetical footnote that those dimensions were given **“according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.”**

In other words—a yard is a yard, a foot is a foot, and a mile is a mile, whether you’re talking about humans or angels—and whether it be in the physical realm or the spiritual realm.

Revelation 21:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.**

So, this gold is so pure it's *translucent!*

(Mentioned how some of the Pharaoh's of Egypt had gold that was 28 carats in purity, and I'm told if it was sliced thin enough you could begin to see through it!)

We don't know, but maybe in heaven, the gold that God uses for the New Jerusalem could be 100 carats pure or 200 or 500 carats pure making it totally translucent!

Revelation 21:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ **The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation 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, and the twelfth amethyst.**

This indeed is the city "*which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*" (Hebrews 11:10)

John next turns his attention in the vision to the foundation stones of the city wall—which he describes in amazing detail.

The names of some of the stones have changed through the centuries, making their identification uncertain.

- **The first foundation stone** (each sitting on top of the other) **was jasper** which, as previously noted, is best identified as—a diamond.
- **The second was sapphire**—a brilliant blue stone.
- **The third was chalcedony**—an agate stone from the Chalcedon region of what is now modern Turkey, *sky blue* in color with colored stripes.
- **The fourth was emerald**—a bright green stone.
- **The fifth was sardonyx**—a red and white striped stone.
- **The sixth was sardius**—a common quartz stone found in various shades of red.
- **The seventh was chrysolite**—a transparent gold or yellow-hued stone.
- **The eighth was beryl**—a stone found in various colors, including shades of green, yellow, and blue.
- **The ninth was topaz**—a yellow-green stone.
- **The tenth was chrysoptase**—a gold-tinted green stone.
- **The eleventh was jacinth**—a blue or violet-colored stone in John's day—though the modern equivalent is a red or reddish-brown zircon.
- **The twelfth was amethyst**—a purple stone.

I personally believe that what John sees is not really different kinds of precious stones—but different layers of multi-colored lights that the city is sitting on which have some kind of *physical* properties to them allowing these lights to be the foundation the New Jerusalem is built upon.

Not only that—but as we already said the glory and radiance of God will be shining through the crystal walls of the city acting like a giant prism that will be shooting multi-colored lights in every direction.

Don't forget that the Bible says of the redeemed—

Judges 5:31 (NKJV)

³¹ "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But *let* those who love Him *be* like the sun When it comes out in full strength." ...

Daniel 12:3 (NKJV)

³ Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

Can you imagine 20 billion people all flashing back and forth, up and down throughout this city like shooting stars!

One author put it this way—

"The scene was one of breathtaking beauty, a spectrum of dazzling colors flashing from the New Jerusalem throughout the re-created universe."

Revelation 21:21 (NKJV)

²¹ **The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**

This is where we get the "pearly gates" of heaven from.

Each of these 12 gates is made from a *single* pearl—as someone has said, "I'd like to see the oysters these came from!"

A pearl is the only natural gem created by a living organism.

When an irritant like a tiny speck of dust or sand becomes trapped in a mollusk (such as an oyster or a mussel), the mollusk begins to coat the irritant with a secretion called *nacre* to protect itself (the same substance that makes up the mollusk's shell). Over time, the iridescent layers of nacre build up to form the pearl (6 months to 4 years depending on the size of the pearl).

Jesus likened all of His disciples to 'the pearl of great price (singular because we are together one body)' (Matthew 13).

He likened us to a pearl because we started out as an irritant to God because of sin—an irritant that God covered with the blood and righteousness of Christ—causing us now to be 'precious' in His sight!

So here we see the 12-gates made up of one pearl each no doubt spaced evenly several hundred miles apart on every side of the city (mention the perfect symmetry of the city)—and we don't see St. Peter standing next to any of them!

Henry Morris—

“Although the description is not specific enough for us to be sure, it seems probable that these twelve gates extend upward through the entire height of the great walls, thus permitting access at all levels [into the city].”

Also, these gates we are told are never closed—

Revelation 21:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

The gates of the city are never closed because they are not needed for *protection*.

In ancient times, the gates of a city were always closed at sundown to protect the city from invading armies or marauding bands of robbers while most of the city slept—but this won't be a problem for the New Jerusalem.

The gates of the city are not ever closed because: first, there is no night there: second, there are no criminals to worry about in the New Jerusalem (verse 27)—and third, even if there were it wouldn't matter because the Lord is there!

This means that the angels who stand by these gates (verse 12) are not *guards* but 'angelic doormen' whose job it will be to welcome it's citizens back into the city, and also say 'good-bye' to the people of the city who are going out of it on planetary explorations or missions for the King (Revelation 22:3).

Revelation 21:22 (NKJV)

²² But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The word for “**temple**” (Greek, *naos*) is the word used for the *sanctuary*, or the *dwelling place* of God.

In the New Testament the word 'temple' could be referring to the temple *proper* (the actual building)—or the temple *precinct* (the Greek is *hieron*) which consisted of 35 acres.

God's *dwelling place* identified the actual building consisting of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant sat—first of all in the Tabernacle and then later in the Temple of Solomon.

In the New Jerusalem there won't be any actual temple building—**God will be its virtual Temple.**

In fact, I imagine the whole city will be one big 'Holy of Holies' with God's throne being in its very center!

At that time, Believers will have access to the most sacred, intimate fellowship with the Lord their God in fulfillment of the many promises given to the Saints—

John 14:2-3 (NKJV)

² In My Father's house are many mansions ['dwelling places']; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And 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 whole city is the Father's house (as the Temple was called in Jesus' day).

Revelation 21:23 (NKJV)

²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

1 John 1:5 (NKJV)

⁵This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

1 Timothy 6:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Now, verse 23 doesn't necessarily mean that the sun and moon and stars will be no more in the New Heavens (new universe)—

Psalms 148:3, 6 (NKJV)

³Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light!... ⁶He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

So, the sun and moon and the stars will not be gone in the new universe, but their light will no longer be needed to illuminate the holy city—for the city itself will radiate the glory of God and, could in fact, be the brightest luminary in the universe!—

Isaiah 60:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; But you shall call your walls Salvation, And your gates Praise. ¹⁹"The sun shall no longer be your light by day, Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory. ²⁰Your sun shall no longer go down, Nor shall your moon withdraw itself; For the Lord will be your everlasting light, And the days of your mourning shall be ended. [Revelation 21:4]

Some think the New Jerusalem will orbit the earth during the Millennial Kingdom—that it will be in existence and visible from the earth during the thousand-year reign of Christ but will then 'land' on the earth and remain forever during the eternal state—

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2)

Some believe that only the Church Saints (Bride of Christ) will be living in the New Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom and that after we serve the Lord on the earth each day—we will 'zip' up to the orbiting city to stay at night.

However, it could also be that after the Millennial Kingdom as we then enter into the eternal state that—all of the redeemed (Old and New Testament saints) will eventually move into the New Jerusalem where we will all live together with one another for eternity.

And that during the eternal state all the nations of the earth will make pilgrimages to the New Jerusalem periodically to pay homage to our King, the Lord Jesus Christ—

Revelation 21:24 (NKJV)

²⁴And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

Nations translates *ethnos*, a Greek word that can be translated ‘*people*’—but is most frequently translated in the New Testament as ‘*Gentiles*.’

Matthew 8:10–12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! ¹¹ And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Acts 13:47 (NKJV)

⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘*I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.*’

The New Jerusalem will truly be a diverse and yet undivided city of total harmony and love!

Revelation 21:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ **Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).**

Now that doesn’t mean there won’t be night in other places around the world—as we just pointed out the sun, moon and stars will be in the new creation and will be new themselves.

Verse 25 is simply saying that there won’t be any night in the New Jerusalem—“*there shall be no night **there**.*”

Many believe that the New Jerusalem will be the primary source of light for the whole earth—and that it will act as a giant beacon of light for all to see!

Revelation 21:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ **And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.**

Does verse 27 mean that such people will threaten the city? No because—

Revelation 21:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ **He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**

One commentator warns:

“The exhortation warns present readers that the only way to participate in the future city is to turn one’s loyalties to the Lamb now.”

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