

## The Glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem

### Revelation 21:9 – 22:5

#### Introduction

- 1) Our world has certainly changed a lot over the past 500 years. I would imagine most of us cannot really imagine just how different things were then, though there are some interesting reminders that give us a clue! Here are some of the facts about the 1500s:
  - Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June, hence the popularity of “June Weddings!” However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of going first and enjoying the nice clean water, then came all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children - - last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it - - hence the saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”
  - Houses had thatched roofs - - thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the dogs, cats and other small animals ( mice, rats and bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery, and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof - - hence the saying, “It’s raining cats and dogs.”
  - However, there was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could really mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That’s how canopy beds came into existence.
  - The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt, hence the saying, “dirt poor.”
  - Most people had very little meat, but sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man “could bring home the bacon.” They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and “chew the fat.”
  - Lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination would sometimes knock them out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up - - hence, the custom of holding a “wake.”
  - England is old and small and they started out running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a “bone-house” and reuse the grave. When re-opening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they thought they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the “graveyard shift”) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be “saved by the bell” or was considered a “dead ringer.”
- 2) Yes, things have changed quite a bit in 500 years, but these changes pale in comparison to the way things are now, and the way things will be in heaven, in the New Jerusalem. In 21:1-8 John gave us a glimpse of the glory of eternal life. Now in 21:9 – 22:5 John is given a magnificent vision of heaven’s capital, the New Jerusalem. It is breath-taking to compare the 1<sup>st</sup> and last

books of the Bible, Genesis and Revelation, at this point. For what was begun and lost in Genesis, is finished and regained in Revelation.

### Genesis

Heaven and earth created, 1:1  
 Sun created, 1:16  
 The night established, 1:5  
 The seas created, 1:10  
 The curse announced, 3:14-17  
 Death enters history, 2:19  
 Man driven from paradise, 3:24  
 Sorrow and pain begin, 3:17

### Revelation

New heavens and earth recreated, 21:1  
 No need of sun, 21:23  
 No night there, 22:5  
 No more seas, 21:1  
 No more curse, 22:3  
 Death exits history, 21:4  
 Man restored to paradise, 22:14  
 Sorrow, tears and pain end, 21:4

- 3) Indeed, one of the wonderful things about the Bible is that in its first two chapters the devil is not there and in its last two chapters the devil is not there. Examine Genesis 1 & 2 and you will find no mention of Satan. Examine Revelation 21 & 22 and you will likewise find no mention of Satan. He is not there. He is in the Lake of Fire.
- 4) Still, when it comes to heaven there are many different ideas and opinions held by different religious persons. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses have fixed the number of persons who will be there as 144,000. Mormons are not so much concerned with its population as they are its dimensions. They divide heaven into three spheres, the telestial, terrestrial and celestial, the latter being reserved only for very good Mormons and those united in Mormon marriage in a Mormon temple. Islam on the other hand believes that those whose good works outweigh their bad will make it to heaven and that heaven will be filled with big bright brown-eyed beauties that men will enjoy forever and ever along with wine unending.
- 5) Add to this the words of media mogul Ted Turner. (RNS) "Nobody was going to heaven but just us. ... It just confused the devil out of me because I said heaven is going to be a mighty empty place with nobody else there. So I was pretty confused and turned off by it. I said it just can't be right." Media mogul Ted Turner, who funded a large portion of the U.N. Millennium Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, speaking at the conference on Tuesday (Aug. 29, 2000). Turner was talking about his early Christian upbringing and why he turned away from plans to be a minister.

### Transition

So, our task is clearly before us. Setting aside wild speculation and unfounded, uniformed skepticism, let's dive into the Holy Scriptures and find out what they have to say about this glorious destiny for those who know, love and serve the Lord Jesus.

#### **I. We will enjoy a city of perfect sanctification. 21:9-10**

- 7 angels, bowls, last plagues (ch. 16)
- Bride, the Lamb's wife
  - \* Bride is the Church, the people of God, who are identified with the city in which they live: the New Jerusalem.
  - \* The Lamb – Christ, called the Lamb 28 times in Revelation.
- "Carried me away in the Spirit" - 4<sup>th</sup> and final time in Revelation (cf. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3).

- Great and high mountain (contrast with the woman, the great harlot, and the desert in 17:3). Here are 2 very different women.
- Carried to a great mountain to see a great city, a holy city, coming down (cf. 21:2), emp. its heavenly origin.

Sum:

The New Jerusalem is a great city, a holy city, a heavenly city, the Lamb's city. She is a city of perfect sanctification, perfect holiness.

**II. We will enjoy a city of perfect representation. 21:11-14**

- John's description is accurate but inadequate given the limitations of language.
- She has the glory (*doxan*) of God.
- Her light is indescribably beautiful (like a clear, translucent diamond).
- Here is the "great wall of heaven," symbolic of stability and security.
- 12 gates, 12 angels, 12 tribes of Israel.
  - \*12 gates – abundant access from any and every direction (v. 13)
  - \*12 angels – "honor guards!"
  - \*names written (W.A.R.) – permanence, identification
  - \*12 tribes – God keeps His Word in covenant faithfulness to Israel.
- All of this is reminiscent of the 12 tribes encamped around the tabernacle in the wilderness (Num. 2) and of the tribal arrangement around the millennial temple (Ezk. 48).
- Foundation stones contain the names of the 12 apostles and testify to God's covenant faithfulness to the Church of which the apostles are the foundation (Eph. 2:20).

Sum:

Old Testament and New Testament saints, all believers of every age is represented in this perfect city. As one people they now enjoy the blessings of God's great heavenly city.

**III. We will enjoy a city of perfect dimension. 21:15-21**

- Gold reed – to measure this priceless city (cf. 11:1; signifying it belongs to God), its gates, its walls. All of it is the Lord's.
- Verse 16 teaches it is cube shaped, 4-square. 1,380 miles in every direction, including up!
- Verse 17 teaches the thickness of the wall at 72 yards or 216 feet.
- Verses 18-20 describe the inexpressible value of the city's materials (note each foundation is adorned with a different stone).
- Verse 21 says each gate was a single pearl 1400 miles high! The street of the city is pure, translucent gold! Pearls were costly. They are created from a wound to living flesh! Is there a hint of redemption here?

Question: Is this description to be taken literally? Answer: The description is more than literal not less than literal. It is what John describes and more.

- Perfect cube harkens to the dimensions of the Holy of Holies.
- Dimensions and materials speak of perfection and splendor, beauty and magnificence, holiness and absolute purity.

Question: Is it big enough? Taking, for argument's sake, its dimensions literally, adding in the new heaven and new earth, eternity will be big enough for billions of angels and billions of humans with plenty of room to spare!

**IV. We will enjoy a city of perfect illumination. 21:22-26; 22:5**

- No temple is not a contradiction with 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-8; 16:1, 17, for there is now a new temple: the Lord and the Lamb are its temple! Symbol gives way to reality. The temple represented God's presence, believers now have His presence!
- No need (does not say they are not there) of the sun or moon to shine, for God's glory illuminates it, and the Lamb, who is the "Light of the World" (John 8:12) is its light (lit. lamp).
- Nations (*ethe*), peoples, will "walk about" in it, where the greatest on earth, shall bring their glory and honor here, into it. All the redeemed from every people group will come here, worship here, give glory and honor here!
- Gates never shut – perfect safety and security.
- No night – time of fear and terror is gone.
- Verse 26 restates verse 24 for emphasis.
- 22:5 is a fitting summary of this section
  - \*No light → God is their light (physically, spiritually, morally)
  - \*No lamp → Will reign forever (because of Him!)
  - \*No sun

Sum:

This is heaven's spectacular "light show." Here is a city of perfect illumination.

**V. We will enjoy a city of perfect redemption. 21:27**

- No means (*ou me*) is a double negative, "no not" will enter anything that defiles (profane, unclean, impure), or makes an abomination (*NIV*, shameful) or a lie (*NIV*, deceitful) recalls 21:8. All these and those like them are excluded from the holy city.
- In contrast are the ones having been written (W.A.R.) in the book (scroll, *biblio*) of Life of the Lamb. They come and go as they please and stay as long as they want. Why? This is their home. This is where they want to be.
  - O they tell me of a home far beyond the skies,*
  - O they tell me of a home far away.*
  - O they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise;*
  - O they tell me of an unclouded day!*

**VI. We will enjoy a city of perfect restoration. 22:1-3**

- River of Life – symbolic of eternal life (cf. Ezk. 47:1-12), it is "an eternal life giving stream" clear as crystal whose source is the Lord and the Lamb. No more death.
- Tree of Life – heavenly counterpart to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24). Does the river flow under and through the tree?! It likewise pictures eternal life, but also abundant life with its plentiful fruit reproducing every single month. Further the "leaves for the healing of the nations" symbolizes the absolute absence of physical and spiritual disease. Life here is eternal, abundant and whole. It is celebrative, joyful and satisfying.
- No curse – Gen. 3 is reversed and undone forever (cf. 21:4). Sin, Satan, sickness, suffering are forever gone!

*No chilling winds nor poisonous breath can reach that healthful shore;  
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death are felt and feared no more.  
I am bound for the Promised Land.*

## VII. We will enjoy a city of perfect satisfaction. 22:3-4

What is our response to all of this?

### 1. We will serve the Lord. 22:3

- His servants (slaves, *douloi*) shall serve Him. Heaven is not eternal boredom, sitting on a cloud, strumming a harp. We will not be idle, bored or disappointed. We will serve Him.

\*To be a heavenly street sweeper or janitor...that would be enough for me!

### 2. We will see the Lord. 22:4

- See His face – perfect fellowship
  - Bear His name – perfect relationship
- When, by the gift of His infinite grace, I am accorded in Heaven a place,  
Just to be there and look on His face, will for eternity be enough for me.*

## Conclusion

1. *Do people who commit suicide go to heaven?* If a person has trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior they will go to heaven. Suicide is a sin, but it is not the unpardonable sin.
2. *Will animals go to heaven?* The Bible is not clear as to whether or not animals go to heaven, though we have every reason to believe that there will be animals in the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem. Rom. 8:19-23 speak of the whole creation groaning and waiting for its redemption. Certainly animals would fall into this category.
3. *Why do even Christians sometimes fear death and going to heaven?* Because death is unnatural and was never intended by God for us. If Adam and Eve had never sinned, they would have never died. Therefore, there is a sense in which it is natural, even for those who know they are going to be with God, to have some fear of death. Yet the Bible is also clear, that through Christ we can overcome that fear.
4. *Will we know everything in heaven?* Of course not. Often people confuse heaven and deity. We will still be human in heaven and therefore finite. As a result, our knowledge will be finite. One of the joys of heaven will be that we will go on forever and ever learning more and more and more about the greatness and the glory of our God.
5. *Will we all be equal in heaven?* No. The Bible teaches that there are both degrees of punishment in hell and degrees of reward in heaven. However, there will be no jealousy in heaven. Every vessel will be completely filled concerning its capacity. No one will have more than they are capable of holding and no one will have less than they are capable of holding. Everyone will be satisfied perfectly with who they are and what they have. “Though every vessel of mercy shall be full completely in heaven, yet one may hold more than another.” Thomas Watson.
6. *Will we have emotions in heaven?* Yes. Just as we now exist as complete persons with mind, will and emotion, so in heaven, mind, will and emotion will function perfectly as we enjoy fully all that these various components of the human personality provide.

7. *Will we be free to sin in heaven?* No. We will be free not to sin in heaven. Just as God is completely free in His will and sinless, so we in our glorified state will be completely free and sinless. We will be free to be our true selves as God created us to be and that involves both full freedom and the absence of sin.
8. *What will we possess in heaven?* Nothing and everything! There is no private property in heaven, no ownership. Yet we will also possess in its fullness, goodness, truth, beauty, love, life, and most of all, God. It is these things that make heaven heaven.
9. *Will we wear clothes in heaven?* Yes. Although the Bible seems to indicate that our clothing will be a natural outgrowth of our glorified humanity. In heaven, light is the supreme entity and it reigns in all of its fullness. Therefore, as 1 Cor. 13 teaches we will be fully known and know in a way that we have never known before.
10. *How big is heaven?* Heaven is big enough so that billions and billions of saved people are never crowded yet small enough so that no one ever gets lost or feels alone.
11. *Is heaven serious or funny?* Yes. In heaven there will be joy and happiness, seriousness and solemnity. All of these things will indeed comprise our experiences in heaven.
12. *Will we be bored in heaven?* Absolutely not. In heaven we are with God who is infinite. We will never come to the end of knowing Him, loving Him, exploring Him and growing in our knowledge of Him. In heaven, even though it is eternity, each day will be a new day as we learn more and more about the magnificence and glory of our great God.

Who will get to go to heaven? Those who have put their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. The Bible is crystal clear. Jesus, and only Jesus, is the way to spend eternity with God in heaven.