

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 21

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

<sup>5</sup>And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup>And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup>The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

<sup>9</sup>Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup>And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup>having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed-- <sup>13</sup>on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. <sup>14</sup>And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup>And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup>The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. <sup>17</sup>He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. <sup>18</sup>The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, 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 of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. <sup>22</sup>And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

<sup>23</sup>And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup>By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup>and its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup>But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. [ESV]

## Notes

### Revelation 21:1

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

“new” – This is from the Greek word *kainos* which refers to something qualitatively new (fresh). We could say “a new type of heaven and earth” or “a renewed heaven and earth.” Because of this, some commentators claim that God will simply renovate the existing heaven and earth. However, in the previous chapter John saw the destruction of the current heaven and earth:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (**Revelation 20:11**) [ESV]

Remember also what the Apostle Peter said:

waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (**2 Peter 3:12**) [ESV]

This was predicted by Isaiah:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. (**Isaiah 65:17**) [ESV]

For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. (**Isaiah 66:22**) [ESV]

In **Isaiah 65:17**, the Hebrew word translated “create” is *bara*, which means “to create from nothing.” This is the same word translated “created” in **Genesis 1:1**. However, in **Genesis 2:7**, God “formed” man from the dust of the ground. The word translated “formed” is *yasar*, which means “to form something from something else.”

Therefore, according to these verses, this is not a renovation of the current heaven and earth, but a new creation of them. And, since the present heaven and earth will be destroyed at the Great White Throne, this will be a new creation, not a re-creation.

John sees the new heaven and the new earth as they will be created. The first thing that he notices about the new earth is the fact that there is no sea. Without the hydrologic cycle of evaporation and rain created from the vast oceans of our planet, life as we know it cannot exist. Currently our life depends on water. In the new heaven and earth, things will be different.

Perhaps, the new earth will be watered like the Garden of Eden was, by a mist which rises up from the earth:

... for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground (**Genesis 2:5-6**) [ESV]

## Revelation 21: 2

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

The next thing that John sees is New Jerusalem coming down toward the earth. This New Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God. It is perhaps what we currently refer to as the third heaven, or the throne room of God.

According to John M<sup>ac</sup>Arthur in *The M<sup>ac</sup>Arthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*:

All of heaven is currently contained in the New Jerusalem; it is separate from the present universe, which is tainted by sin. Believers who die go to the “heavenly Jerusalem,” where Jesus has gone before them to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-3). But when God creates the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem will descend into the midst of that holy new universe (21:10), and serve as the dwelling place of the redeemed for all eternity. Since the throne of God will be in the New Jerusalem, which will come down to the new earth, that city will be the bond between the new earth and the new heaven.

“**adorned**” – From the Greek word *kosmeō*, meaning “to put in order” or “to adorn.” This is the word from which we get our English word “cosmetics.”

New Jerusalem is pictured as a bride, perhaps because it contains the bride. In the notes on Revelation chapter 19 it was pointed out that there are three phases to a wedding as pictured in the Bible: the betrothal, the presentation, and the consummation. This coming of the New Jerusalem out of heaven to the earth, uniting the two of them for eternity is the consummation of the marriage between God and His chosen people.

## Revelation 21:3

**<sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.**

“**dwelling place**” (noun) and “**dwell**” (verb) – These are both from the root *skēnos*, meaning “a tent.” No longer will God be far off in heaven separated from His people. In the new heaven and new earth God will make his dwelling place in the midst of them.

The fulfillment of Christ’s prayer in the upper room after the last supper will be completely filled:

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (**John 17:24**) [ESV]

## Revelation 21:4

**<sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.**

“**wipe away every tear**” – Some have supposed that this means there will be tears in heaven, perhaps sorrow over the sins that were committed in this life, and that God will personally wipe them away. The context, however, indicates that tears simply will not exist, since there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain.

This heavenly existence will be so different from our earthly existence, and so indescribable, that John can only talk about what won't be there.

### **Revelation 21:5**

**<sup>5</sup>And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."**

From His seat on the throne God reminds John that He is making (present, active, indicative – implying current action) all things new. Nothing that we know in heaven will be the same as it is here on the earth.

Apparently, John is so in awe from the thoughts of the new heaven and earth that he stops writing and God has to command him once again to write.

### **Revelation 21: 6**

**<sup>6</sup>and he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.**

**"It is done!"** – Though similar sounding to what Christ proclaimed on the cross (It is finished!), however this is a different statement. Christ's proclamation on the cross means that what He started out to accomplish has been completed (He fully satisfied the Law of Moses and completed the offering of Himself as payment for our sins). What God is proclaiming here is that He has done all things. Not just that He has completed what He started, but that He is the source of all things and He is the end of all things.

In his gospel account, the Apostle John said of Jesus:

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (**John 1:3**) [ESV]

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he spoke of this very event:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (**ICorinthians 15:24-28**) [ESV]

### **Revelation 21:6b, 7**

**<sup>6b</sup>To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup>The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.**

**"To the thirsty"** – Those who thirst are those who desire fellowship with God. They are the chosen and called. The resulting thirst which necessarily exists in the mind and heart of believers is described in the following:

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (**Psalms 42:1, 2**) [ESV]

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (**Isaiah 55:1**) [ESV]

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (**Matthew 5:6**) [ESV]

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (**John 4:13, 14**) [ESV]

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (**John 7:37, 38**) [ESV]

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (**Revelation 22:17**) [ESV]

**"The one who conquers"** – Each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three was ended with a promise to the overcomers (conquerors). And, according to John in his first general epistle,

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (**1John 5:4, 5**) [ESV]

In the new heaven and new earth God promises us that we will finally fully realize the promises regarding our inheritance. He will be our God and we will be His children.

### **Revelation 21:8**

**<sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."**

Once again, by way of describing how incredible the new heaven and new earth will be, John tells us what (or who) won't be there. Instead of enjoying God's eternal presence with us, these souls will all be suffering as a result of God's eternal absence in the lake of fire. One of the great blessings of the eternal state will be the total absence of sinners and sin and the total presence of God.

### **Revelation 21:9**

**<sup>9</sup>Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."**

Though John has been seeing visions of the Great White Throne and the new heavens and new earth, in spirit he is still standing in God's throne room from where he watched the tribulation events played out. Now, one of the seven angels who had one of the seven bowls of God's wrath approaches John and offers to show him the bride of the Lamb (Lambkin).

### **Revelation 21: 10**

**<sup>10</sup>And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,**

He is now transported in spirit out of the throne room of God to a great high mountain. Either this great high mountain is on the new earth or John is simply taken high up over the earth (described as up

to a high mountain) where John sees the holy Jerusalem (called New Jerusalem in verse two) coming down out of heaven. Literally, the text says that John saw “the great holy city Jerusalem.”

## Revelation 21:11

**11** having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

“glory” – God’s shekinah glory, unmasked and undiminished will shine out from the city.

Consider the following verses regarding the glory of God:

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.** (1John 1:5) [ESV]

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from **the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.** (James 1:17) [ESV]

which he will display at the proper time--he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, **who dwells in unapproachable light**, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1Timothy 6:15, 16) [ESV]

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and **his face shone like the sun**, and his clothes became white as light. (Mat 17:1, 2) [ESV]

As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about **noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me** ... And since I could not see because of the **brightness of that light**, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. (Act 22:6, 11) [ESV]

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and **the glory of the Lord shone around them**, and they were filled with fear. (Luke 2:8, 9) [ESV]

“glory” – This is from the Greek *phostēr*, which means “luminance, brilliance, or shining light.”

“jasper” – This is most likely a diamond, for it is described as being clear as crystal.

“clear as crystal” – From the Greek verb *krustallidzō*, a form of *krustallos*, meaning ice (water which has been frozen by cold). The verb literally means to be acting like an ice crystal. Hence, it probably refers to the brilliance and dazzling, sparkling effect of a huge diamond.

God is present in the New Jerusalem in His entire magnificent, glorious splendor and His glory will shine throughout the city in the most dazzling display of radiance imaginable!

## Revelation 21:12-14

**12** It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed-- **13** on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. **14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

“at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names ... were inscribed ...” – Literally, this is “and over (or above) the gates twelve angels and names having been written ...”

This is a literal city with a literal wall and twelve gates, three on each of the four sides. The twelve gates have angels over them and the twelve names of the twelve tribes of Israel written over the gates. This is reminiscent of the twelve tribes encamped around the tabernacle during the exodus, where the twelve tribes were encamped three to the north, three to the west, three to the south, and three to the east of the tabernacle.

Additionally, the walls had twelve foundations upon which are written the names of the twelve apostles

### **Revelation 21:15, 16**

**<sup>15</sup>And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup>The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.**

The angel now measures the city. This reminds us of the measuring of the millennial temple and the measuring of the tribulation temple.

And behold, there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area, and the length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed. (**Ezekiel 40:5**) [ESV]

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, (**Revelation 11:1**) [ESV]

In each of these instances, the measuring signifies the marking out of God's ownership. The New Jerusalem is measured to be 12,000 furlongs (from the Greek word *stadion* which is somewhere between 600 and 625 feet in length). Hence the city measures approximately 1,400 miles in length, width, and height. Some assume that the city is in the shape of a pyramid but a cubic shape (or a sphere) is more reasonable. As a point of reference, the moon is about 2,150 miles in diameter and the earth is about 8,000 miles in diameter.

“**foursquare**” – Literally this reads, “lays four cornered.” This expression refers to four square corners. This expression would not likely be used if it were square on the base and pyramid shaped.

Based on the shape being that of a cube and making assumptions about the number of redeemed in the city, John Morris in his book *The Revelation Record*, calculates that each person's “cube” would occupy about seventy-five cubic acres (approximately 2000 ft long, wide, and high).

### **Revelation 21:17, 18**

**<sup>17</sup>He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. <sup>18</sup>The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.**

The wall is measured to be 216 feet (probably thickness) and is made of diamond, whereas the city is pure gold, like clear glass. Gold, like other elements, is made up of a lattice of atoms. If all the impurities of gold are taken out, leaving only pure gold, this lattice of atoms may very well line-up in such a way as to allow light to pass through it.

### **Revelation 21:19, 20**

**<sup>19</sup>The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth onyx, the sixth**

**carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.**

Nobody knows for sure what all twelve of these stones will look like, but they may be:

jasper (diamond – crystal clear)  
sapphire (blue)  
agate (blue with colored stripes)  
emerald (bright green)  
onyx (red-orange with white stripes)  
carnelian (blood-red ruby)  
chrysolite (golden-yellow topaz)  
beryl (blue-green or yellow emerald)  
topaz (topaz, blue, green, or yellow)  
chrysoprase (apple green)  
jacinth (reddish-blue zircon)  
amethyst (deep purple)

### **Revelation 21:21**

**<sup>21</sup>And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.**

The twelve gates are each made of a single pearl. John Phillips, in his book *Exploring Revelation* writes:

*How appropriate! All other precious gems are metals or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster – the only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster receives an irritation or a wound, and around the offending article that has penetrated and hurt it, the oyster builds a pearl. The pearl, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. The glory land is God's answer, in Christ, to wicked men who crucified heaven's beloved and put Him to open shame. How like God it is to make the gates of the new Jerusalem of pearl. The saints as they come and go will be forever reminded, as they pass the gates of glory, that access to God's home is only because of Calvary. Think of the size of those gates! Think of the supernatural pearls from which they are made! What gigantic suffering is symbolized by those gates of pearl! Throughout the endless ages we shall be reminded by those pearly gates of the immensity of the sufferings of Christ. Those pearls, hung eternally at the access routes to glory, will remind us forever of One who hung upon a tree and whose answer to those who injured Him was to invite them to share His home.*

The street (notice it is singular), like the remainder of the city (see verse eighteen), is of pure gold.

### **Revelation 21:22**

**<sup>22</sup>And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.**

The temple (the holy of holies) in the Old Testament was the place where the high priest could go to meet with God and offer the sacrifice for the people once a year. In the eternal New Jerusalem, there will no longer be a need to make a blood offering since Christ, as our high priest, offered up His blood once for all of us (**Hebrews 7:26, 27**). And, since God will no longer be veiled from us, there will be no need for a temple. We will not need to go to a temple to access God's full presence, for He will be there, and we will behold His glory!

### **Revelation 21:23**

**<sup>23</sup>And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

Since the city is translucent gold and crystal clear diamond, the glory of God will shine everywhere.

### **Revelation 21:24-26**

**<sup>24</sup>By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup>and its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.**

Though we will all be redeemed and will exist with new perfect bodies, it appears from this verse that there will still be national distinctions and that the people of the new earth will walk around in the light of the city. There also will be kings of the earth. Since we are told that we will be priests and kings, it is possible that this is talking about all the saved. God does not create anything without purpose. Hence, the new earth will have a purpose and the kings of the earth will have a presence on it.

“**By its light will the nations walk**” – Literally this says “walk in her light.” Since God is never referred to in the feminine, this is a reference to the city. Hence, the nations will walk in the light of the city. This presents a dilemma (based on current laws of physics). Since a city situated on the earth cannot shed light throughout the earth, the city must be above the earth, circling about it. Verse 25 says that there shall be no night there, but that is referring to the city, not the earth. On the other hand, it is possible that the atmosphere will reflect the light of the city all around the earth. We simply don’t know, and won’t know ‘till we get there.

### **Revelation 21: 27**

**<sup>27</sup>But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

Only the redeemed will be there. The unsaved dead will be in the lake of fire.

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