

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight. We're going to have communion as well, so let's get right into it. Revelation 21:9.

We began our studies in this book on January 6<sup>th</sup> and have journeyed with the old apostle John down this path that the Lord gave to John this vision of the last things. It all started with John's view of the risen Lord in chapter 1. We then were taken by the Lord through the Church Age, chapters 2 and 3, and Jesus' letters to the church and what He would have from us. In chapters 4 and 5, it is the rapture of the church into glory. It is the heavenly scene. And then, beginning in chapter 6, the seven years of Great Tribulation as the Lord pours out His wrath upon an unbelieving world in the form of seven seals and seven trumpets and seven bowls. In the midst of all of that reporting - and there're some horrifying things to read - the Lord constantly stops to tell us the fruit that will come out even in the midst of the judgment; the grace of God that will still be at work as millions of folks will come to the Lord during this time - a countless number of souls, we read in the Scriptures. But we're also shown the formation of this rebellious and last attempt for man to govern the world without God, the rise of the devil and the Antichrist and the false prophet. And we rejoice at the return of the Lord at the Battle of Armageddon, at the judgment of the Lord of the nations; the Millennial Kingdom, which was just given to us in six verses; and with a great detail, we looked at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end, which will, we read, have the earth and the seas giving up their dead, standing before the Lord on His throne, and the books will be opened, and all that appear there will be cast into Hell. There'll be this second death. And it says the heavens and the earth will flee, and they'll be no more.

Which brought us to these last two chapters, where the Lord gives us a lot to ponder our new eternal dwelling place, the new heaven and the new earth. It's very mystical. There is a lot that we don't understand nor are we given much information about. We entitled these chapters "New Housing" because we are told that God will create - the word "*bard*" in Hebrew - out of nothing these new heavens and new earth. This won't be reassembled. This'll be made from scratch, if you will, and there'll be nothing there but God's will.

Last time we looked at the first eight verses of this chapter, our eternal place. We were told there'll be no more sea, that Jerusalem will come out from God's presence like a bride dressed or adorned for her husband. The greatest aspect of this New Jerusalem is that God is with us. In fact, that's mentioned three times just in verse 3 alone; that there will be peace and joy and rest, and all of the former things will be forgotten. John didn't write it down. I think he was in awe. And the Lord said, "Write it down. This is for sure." And then we are receiving, in verses 6, 7 and 8, the first of the final kind of three warnings and invitations from the Lord to come to Him if you're thirsty, that He can give you the waters of life; but if not, then the second death, verse 8, awaits you because this is really the final judgment. And the new heavens and the new earth are marked by the fact there's nothing else waiting. Right? It's not the Millennial Kingdom and at the end Satan gets released for a little while. This is all that there'll be. This is the eternal state of man.

Tonight we are going to finish chapter 21. Next week, we will finish this book. Two weeks from now, Jason Lisle will be here with Creation Research Institute. And then we'll start on the book of Romans.

But for now, tonight, we're going to take a look at this New Jerusalem. A little overwhelming for the brain, but I can't wait to see it in person. Verse 9, "Then" (John says) "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.' 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, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." So one of the seven angels - we don't know which one - came to John, invites John to come see the bride. Having warned us about the need to come to Jesus (in the verses right before), the focus quickly turns again to the future, to this new heaven and this new earth which will be the home not only of the saints but of the bride, of the church itself. And it is the bride in the sense that it is beautiful, and a city is known by its inhabitants. And so John had seen - you remember back in verse 2 - that the city looked like a bride dressed to go to a wedding already, adorned for her husband, and now that same picture is used. And so the angel takes John to a high place. You see it a lot in these visions. It's almost like a high mountain view, if you will, of this future city.

John's first impression - back in verse 2 - that he said it just looked like the.....it was the glory of God. And we see that here, too, that the glory of the Lord is descending - verse 11 - from heaven. In Hebrew, the word "glory of God" is the word "*Shekinah*." You hear it a lot, especially in Pentecostal circles, I guess. The word "*Shekinah*" is actually not in the Bible, but it really means the place of God's presence, and so it has been picked up by the church. In Greek, the word is "*doxa*," which means praise or worship. So, the Lord has always been with man in some form. He was in the tabernacle, He was in the Temple. Tonight He lives in your hearts if you've been born again. In the future city, this city - because it is God's glory - will reflect the character and the nature of God. He is with us. In fact, that's what separates this city from all else. Now I should say to you, from what we're going to read in this new created place, the New Jerusalem is the centerpiece, but it isn't the only place people live. In fact, the kings and the nations live about this city. But we are just told of this city where the Lord's glory dwells.

I don't know how John was handling this. He's almost 100 years old. He is seeing what no man has ever seen. It had to just blow his mind, I would think. It is an eternal vision. It is the cornerstone of this new creation. But John's first comment about it is that the light of the city looked to John "like".....it's a metaphor word, a simile word.....a jasper stone, a most expensive - precious is the word for expensive - stone, and it was clear as crystal. So not sure whether it's a diamond or a quartz, but it is because the Lord is in it that it is shining. In fact, if you look at verse 23 - just kind of flip over for a minute - it says, "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." So it'll be God's presence with us that really causes this place to shine, if you will.

The jasper stone we will find mentioned in the walls of the city here in a minute, also in the foundation of the walls of the city. So it's quite an interesting looking building.

Verse 12 tells us, "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: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." So, most cities in John's day had walls around them. Most ancient cities did.

They were there for protection. Oftentimes they had moats around them, places where you could embattle and shoot arrows, if you will, out at your enemies. But the description of this New Jerusalem is almost just designed as a glorious accoutrement. It's just beautiful. There's no protection here or is there any needed. This is kind of a building and a city that's presented just to God's honor, to His glory. Isaiah, in writing about this city, writes, "Violence 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" (Isaiah 60:18). So it's going to be a place of tremendous honor to the Lord that we serve. The glory that God has, for a long time, hidden in us (Colossians 3:3). Right? The glory of God living in your heart, if you will, not so clearly seen.

Notice that the walls of the city are "great," and they are "high"; twelve gates, three on each side. An angel at every gate, a name on every gate with the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve layers of foundation upon which the walls are built. The name of the twelve apostles written on them.

So within the names of the Old Testament tribes, the New Testament apostles, this is the building for all of God's people. Right? Old Testament and New. The church itself is said to have been built on the foundation of the apostles. Right? Ephesians 2:19-22. So is this city.

Well, if you'll keep your finger here for a minute, would you go with me to Hebrews 11 for a minute? Just go back about oh, I don't know, four books or so, five books. Hebrews 11. I want to take a look, just for a few minutes, at these Scriptures which talk about Abraham's faith way back in Genesis 15. But it is Hebrews 11:8 where we read these words, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." You might remember the story in Genesis that the LORD called him to go out; took him a while, actually, to go. He waited until his father died. He kind of moved but didn't really move in the direction the LORD wanted. At some point he decided, "No, no. I'm going to walk with God." And so he began that long journey, not knowing where he went, but he did it by faith. Verse 9 says, "By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." So, for several generations, Abraham and his family had God's promises that He would give to them the land in which they lived, but they really lived there like foreigners; there were other people that ran the land. They didn't own any of it. They were

just visitors, if you will, but they believed one day God would give them the land even as He had promised. And Abraham handed that down to Jacob and to Isaac and to their generations as well. But we are told, in verse 10, "For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Which is an interesting commentary on the faith of Abraham considering there's virtually no Old Testament promise or insight that this city would ever be built. We have no description of the city at all. We just have a promise of they were waiting for something that God had built. Abraham looked by faith for a heavenly home. And it pleased the LORD.

Then we read in verse 13 (we'll skip over the child that was born), "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." The result of Abraham's faith and that of his family was that they were left living in a land that they were promised but yet, not even looking at the land that God promised them. They were looking for something even more. They were looking for a place, a city, a country, if you will, that God has prepared, one that they would find walking with the Lord. And their confession and understanding made them walk through this life kind of passing through. Didn't hang on to things very well, didn't put roots down here, if you will. They were campers on the move. They handled things kind of lightly. They had the city that God was preparing gripping their hearts.

And I think, to that extent, this explanation that we get in such little detail here should be something that grips our hearts. This is where we want to get. Right? This is the final place, man. This is where the running ends and the waiting ends, and this is the end game for the Lord. This is where He wants you and me to come. It is a dangerous thing for us as Christians if we feel at home in the world. That will create, I think, a spiritual dilemma. If you can mix in and settle in and feel at home here, that's problematic because this certainly is not your home. You want to be sure that we're living for that place that God has prepared for us. And if you read these descriptions in Revelation, the description of this new city has walls and gates and a foundation. It all speaks of very.....it was permanence, but yet in our life here, there's no really permanence. This is not the place we need to live.

Peter said this is going to burn up (2 Peter 3:11-14). So we have to look forward to what is coming and what God has prepared. We are in the world, but we're not of the world. When Jesus prayed for the disciples, there in John 17:15, He said to the Father, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They're not of the world, and neither am I." So, we've got to get through this time looking for the promise that God has given to us and what God has made available to us. And this world is far removed from God's will, and we are certainly out of step with the ways of man.

So we are citizens of heaven. Right? And our intention is not to be here forever. God's intention is not to leave you here forever. He has better plans for you. Just look what does it say in verse 3, "I saw the tabernacle of God was with man, He'll be with us, He'll dwell with us, God will be with us, and we'll be His people." That's His plan. And both the Old and New Testament will have to learn that we live here today while we look forward to one day being there.

So, Abraham's life was emblematic, I think, of our life - waiting for a place that God would prepare. Well, this is the place.

Well, let's go back to Revelation 21:15 now. And then John says this, "And he who talked with me" (the angel) "had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 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. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."

John now watches the angel pull out a golden reed. In the Bible, most of the time reeds are 10' long. They're a measure that is used even in the Old Testament. They were certainly used as 10-footers in secular measurements from historical settings. And it really doesn't matter in this case anyway because we're told what the measurement was. But that's usually how they worked. A golden reed, I suspect, because in keeping with the glory of the city. Notice that we read that the city was a perfect square. The width, length and the height are the same. So the shape could be a cube, but it could also be a pyramid. It doesn't matter. We have the volume of it, if you will. But the measurement of this city, the New Jerusalem, staggering. Twelve thousand furlongs. A furlong is 660' long or  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile, which would mean that the sides of this thing were, in every direction, 1500 miles. Right? That is, of course, that nobody has to live on the bottom floor, if

you will, if we're thinking of traditional living spaces. But this is glory. I have no idea. But the measurements are very similar as John tells us these numbers are the measurements of a man. Let me give you an idea how this feels as far as calculations. If you were to live 175 miles up, and 55 miles in, and there were 12 billion of you, you would each still have  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile for a yard. It's just a huge place. And this is just the city itself. This is downtown. "Hey, welcome to downtown Jerusalem!" You don't live in the suburbs. It is far bigger than the earth, and this is just the city.

The walls: 144 cubits. A cubit is the measurement from your elbow to your finger, roughly 18" or so, which either makes the walls 216' high or, most likely, 216' thick. It would be silly to have a 200' wall around a 1500-mile....forget it. It'd be like a little skirt on the thing. It wouldn't be good. So it is most likely the thickness of the walls.

We then read, in verse 18, "The construction of its wall was of jasper;" (we just read about that stone) "and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation" (of course) "was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 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." So, I don't know. Wrap your mind around all that. The walls and the foundations, as described, and we come to the conclusion this was more about gems than botany. Right? In Ezekiel 28, when are given the description of Satan's fall from glory (being the chief worship leader in heaven) and from God's presence, the very same stones that you find here in the walls were around God's throne in glory. You can read about it there in Ezekiel 28:13, that "every precious stone was your covering:" and then you'll find these written out for you as we read them here. When Adam and Eve were placed into the Garden, there was much more botany. It was the plants and the growth and the care. This New Jerusalem, at least from John's focus, was all about a jeweler's delight. I mean, it was absolutely just amazing.

The wall was made of jasper, 216' or so, 217' thick, and yet it was clear as glass. Can you imagine? So the city was made of pure gold, and then it was so clear it was also like clear glass. So imagine the light of the Lord's presence hitting this place.

In verse 19, the twelve foundation layers - each one of them had the name of an apostle, but also they were all representative by these expensive jewels. Now usually foundations are out of sight. There's a lot of work that went into our building that's underground. Right? Just like this place. You just don't see it. It's buried, it's deep, it's wide, it's designed to carry stress and load and especially in places that have earthquakes like we do, a lot of stuff is under the ground; far more sometimes than what you see above ground. But not here. This is not.....this is all about being visible and decorated and beautiful and all the colors of the rainbow. And then we're given, in verses 19 and 20, these jewels, if you will. Jasper is glass, clear. Sapphires are hard as a diamond; they're blue in color. Chalcedony is an agate. It comes from Turkey. It's usually sky blue but has stripes of colors in it. Emerald, you know, is green. Sardonyx is red and white. Sardius, I think, is red. Chrysolite is gold and very transparent. Beryl is kind of sea green. Topaz is real green. Chrysoprase is kind of a greenish stone as well. Jacinth is violet. Amethyst is purple. So you get all of these colors on the spectrum, and they're the foundations of the city itself that then runs 1500 miles up and down and over through 215' or 216' thick walls.

And add to that understanding, verse 21, twelve gates, each gate made out of one pearl. Now I don't know how big the gates have to be in a city with 1500' high walls, but this is where the expression the "pearly gates" comes from. So it is in your Bible. And each one of them has the name of one of the tribes of Israel written on it. So, I don't know, man. Can't wait to see this place.

But I think as you read about it, and you think about it, and the Lord gives you insight, I think it's one of the strongest statements in the Bible about how eternity values things differently than we do. Because these are the most expensive things that man knows. You don't make streets of gold. Right? We use asphalt, and then we complain about the cost. In fact, at least for us for a little while, we couldn't get asphalt to do this parking lot because of whatever.....supply and demand. It wasn't around. So, here you have diamonds and precious jewels and gold, and heaven goes, "Well, let's use those for walls, for foundation, and then let's just pour the streets with gold." And you go, "What're you doin'?" I think what the Lord is telling us is our valuing is pretty different than His. Right? When we start to learn about the true valuing of things before the Lord, I think it changes things. I always think about tithing. I remember as a young Christian beginning to tithe, and I remember complaining to the Lord every week about, "This is pretty hard!" And then someplace along the line I realized God doesn't need anything I have.



This is ridiculous! So tithing for me then became..... it wasn't God's ways of raising funds, it was God's way of raising children. That I began to just trust Him for things that mattered to me. So, I wonder if this brief description - and it's just very brief, and to me, it leaves more questions than answers - is here at least in part to tell us that we should value the greatness of God and His presence more than we should ever value the things that we try to hoard and get in this life. Because God'll just put it into the walls to maybe.....He fills the walls with jewels and the gates with pearls. And then you say to yourself, "Well, then, what really is valuable to the Lord?" And the answer is: you are. And the glory of the city is not what we just read. Verse 3 says the glory of the city is the Lord shows up there. And I don't know His glory.....it's gonna be dazzling. Right? It's gonna overwhelm the senses, but it is what God is interested in is you. It was in Luke 16:15 that the Lord said to His disciples, "For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." What man counts as valuable, God just doesn't value in the same manner. In Psalm 147:10-11, the psalmist writes, "He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy." That pleases the Lord. So I think this beautiful city, however it's going to look, is going to be amazing.

It's probably a testimony to the fact that what God really cares about is who shows up there, who arrives there, who has come to honor His Son, and I think it's all to His honor that we read of these things here. Psalm 149:4, great words, "For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation." God takes pleasure in you. Not in this. This is to His honor and to His glory. He certainly deserves all of it and more. But from God's perspective, He's interested in the heart. Which is why I think when Peter wrote his first letter to the churches that were scattered, he said (1 Peter 3:3-4), "Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God." We read of all these precious stones. God has plenty of those. Gold for asphalt. I like that. But it's you that He's after. It's you that He sacrificed for. It's you that He sent His Son to go get. And when John, back in verse 3, heard with a loud voice to declare what is valuable to the Lord, it was His intimacy with us because though the city is beautiful in appearance, its quality is found in the inhabitants, and the inhabitants are there with their God, who is the light of the place. And then verses 6 and 7 say those who trust Him will be found there to the joy of the Lord. So I don't

know how this place is going to look, and most of the books I've read over the years on the New Jerusalem spend an inordinate amount of time on the jewels. But I think you're missing the point because God kind of lays them out there, but He introduces all of it by saying, "The glory of the city will be that God's with us." So I think we shouldn't lose sight of that.

Verse 22 says this, "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." You know, the purpose of the Temple in the Old Testament was always a place of meeting between God and man. But it required sacrifice. Right? It required an animal, it required a sin, it required a priest, it required a process, if you will, that all were given so that we could understand what we are going to have in communion tonight; that God would send His Son to be sacrificed for us. The thing is when we now arrive at this New Jerusalem, there is no more sacrifice that's required. There's no more ritual that needs to be followed. There's no more symbolism, if you will, to observe. We all have made it to a place of fellowship with our Lord in our life, the Lamb, and now that's really what ultimately God wants to accomplish. The word for "Temple" here is "*naos*," and "*naos*" is the typical word in the Old Testament for the Holy of Holies. It's that place where the priests could only go once a year, but it is the most intimate and sacred place where you get closest to the Lord, if you will, for that moment, and yet now all of us can come as He desires and have that same intimacy, and there's no separation. Anything that spoke of all of that.....this is at the end of things. Right? So there's no more looking back. There's no more needing to embrace something to learn something else.

In fact we read, in verse 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." The Lamb is its Temple, the Lamb is its light. Most of the descriptions of the new heaven and the new earth - if you put all of the verses together - are in the negative. Which means these are things that you won't find there. You won't find death, sorrow, crying, pain, remembrance of the past, no sun, no moon, no sea, no Temple. And on and on it goes - there're a lot of "nots."

But here's what we do have: the Lord's presence with us, and He's the light of the place. He'll be the light of the city. He'll be the light.....in fact, He'll be the light of the whole earth. Isaiah writes, in chapter 60:19-20, "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. Your 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." That's the way it ought to be. Right? There's a conclusion to all of these things, and it's a time of tremendous joy.

Well, having said all of that as he did earlier, we are told, in verse 24.....imagine, by the way, the glory of a city shining with God's presence, and it's 1500 miles up and down, everything's crystal and everything shines, and there's.....oh, that's gonna be blinding, I'm thinking. I don't know. We won't be able to look right at it.

Verse 24, "And 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. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 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." So, what survives, obviously, this Great White Throne Judgment only are the people that have loved the Lord. They won't appear there. They'll have beaten the second death. They'll have the first resurrection. But I want you to notice that we get this description of the city, but then we're told that the nations around will get light from this city which kind of sits in its middle, if you will. The gates will never have to be shut. There isn't going to be any night; it's just day and the light of the Lord. And everyone's going to bring honor to the Lord. And so, some more negatives: no night, no closed gates. And the nations which, for generations, have always sought to glorify themselves, now live to honor the Lord and to bring honor to His name. Again, the prophet Isaiah, chapter 60:11, "Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession." They're going to.....life is going to go on, and we don't know what that's going to be all about. But we know that this is going to be a place of no sin, no struggle, no difficulty at all.

But, again, notice - like if you read in verse 8 last week - the warning about those who aren't ready for this time to come, again the warning in verse 27: if you're living in sin, if your name is not written in the Book of Life, this is a warning to you. Right? Because in this place, where God is preparing, there'll be no evil or sin or danger. It'll be a place of worship, and only those found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be there, and they'll be recorded permanently.

Now I can't even get ahold of how all this works in my mind. I believe it is meant to pique your interest, to make you look forward to this, to value as the Lord values, and to, like Abraham, walk through this life saying, "Man, I can't wait to get there! I can't wait to get there." We're going to go there together! That's why we're having two services (9:00 & 11:00 Sunday morning when the new sanctuary is completed and opened) - so we'll get to know each other before we go. (Laughing) I just noticed. That's the sign right there. See how that worked right there? That's perfect. All right.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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