

The Holy City, New Jerusalem

As seen in Revelation chapter 21 and 22

The Bible gives God's wonderful purposes for His beloved Son and His redeemed people and also His ways with men. This history of His ways ends chronologically with **Rev. 21:1-8**, the eternal state, where we have the new heavens and the new earth where righteous dwells (**2 Pet. 3:13**).

That which follows, **21:9 - 22:6**, is a retrogression giving a more detailed description of the heavenly city, but as seen in the MILLENNIUM rather than in the ETERNAL STATE.

In **v.2** the holy city is described as "*a bride adorned for her husband*" in the eternal state in the new heavens and the new earth of **v.1** which begins after the millennium has ended. The heavenly bride in those "*bright and blessed scenes*" is seen as fresh and lovely in HIS glory and beauty at the end of the thousand years as she was at the beginning. This is a precious contrast to the public ruin which befell her on earth so soon after the apostles had passed from this scene.

Beginning at **v.9**, the bride is seen in her millennial glory. She is the true bride, in contrast to the false one, Babylon, which will have been destroyed in her wickedness and bold pretension (**Rev. 17 & 18**).

As in the case of Babylon, one of the seven angels comes to show her to John, for she is the result of the judgment and cleansing of the earth and is the introduction of better and higher blessings. God does not willingly afflict the children of men and His purposes, His glory, human blessing and His perfect will are for man's true and perfect happiness and His government and will are inseparably bound together. They run throughout Scripture without conflict.

The apostle John is taken, like Moses (**Deut. 34**) at Pisgah, to view a panoramic scene of promise infinitely higher and more glorious than Moses could have ever imagined. He views "*that great city, the holy Jerusalem* in its heavenly character and millennial connection with the earth, descending out of heaven from God.

This is its *double* character from God-divine in its origin and also heavenly in its destiny.

This is what it is NOW- "*a building of God, an house not made with, hands, eternal in the heavens*" (**2 Cor. 5:1**), but THEN she will be publicly manifested as such. She is clothed with divine glory. It could not be otherwise, for she is founded on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her glory is described as being like transparent jasper; jasper being the symbol of divine glory, as seen in **Rev.4:3**.

Of this great city, the fruit in glory of Christ's redemption work, angels are become the willing doorkeepers, whereas man, brought into glory in the church, possesses the highest place in the creation and in the providential order of God, of which angels had once been administrators.

The gates of ancient cities were where the judges sat, where rule, administration, government, judgment was rendered. This city had **TWELVE GATES** being full of human perfectness of governmental administrative power. This power is vested in man and administered by him. The number twelve is the smallest number divisible by 2, 3, 4, and 6 being adequate witness, complete witness, universal witness, and human perfection and completeness. Twelve is repeatedly seen in scripture denoting perfection of governmental or administrative power.

Hence Paul's words, "*Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*" (**1 Cor. 6: 3**). This judging is administrative not punitive. Men, not angels, are thus seen in this city in the place of administrative authority.

"For unto the angels hath He NOT put in subjection the world to come ... What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst Him with glory and honor, and didst set Him over the works of Thine hands?"

"For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." **Heb.2:5, 16.**

He passed angels by to come down to the terrible bed of corruption and misery in which our sin had placed us; *went lower than any man*, that He might raise us up to where HE is - "*seated in heavenly places*" and soon to reign over all things, and we are with Him as sharers of all His glory; as His bride, the Lamb's wife.

The **TWELVE TRIBES** symbolize administrative perfection for God had so appointed them. This administrative character of power was found in the city, but the tribes are not the foundation.

The **TWELVE APOSTLES** in their ministry and labours were the foundation of the heavenly city and they were they who had "*continued with Him in His temptations and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me*" **Lk. 22:28, 29**. They were principally used in the propagation of the gospel from Jerusalem and thus they are the creative and providential display of power here. They are the governmental or ruling display and the assembly founded at Jerusalem (**Acts 2**) is

brought together with them in the heavenly city which is the organized seat of heavenly power with Christ.

The bride, the Lamb's wife, is not so much seen here in the character described in the Pauline epistles in the character of nearness of blessing to Christ, but here as the assembly founded at Jerusalem under the twelve which was the new and now heavenly capitol of God's government over the earth. They had suffered and served with Him in the earthly Jerusalem; now under Him they are found in the heavenly one. They are as the first tier of stone laid upon the foundation; the superstructure being then built upon them.

"the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone" **Eph. 2:20**

In **v 15** is seen a *"man with a measuring with a golden reed to measure the city"* assessing the accomplished reality, the divine rule and measure finding and displaying all as owned of God and perfect and not as seen in **Ezek. 40:3** where the man is seen rather preparing to build the earthly temple.

It is described by the figure of a cube, six-sides (human perfection). It has not divine perfectness, for it is human but it has divinely given perfectness. A cube is equal on every side showing finite perfection which is comprehensible to man. In this day the truth will be in perfect proportion and nothing neglected. This city is vast being 1200 furlongs (1500 miles) and the height; breadth and length are equal. The city is secure, for its **WALL** is *"great and high"* 144 cubits (216 feet high), walls of jasper; divine glory being the display of all that God is. What power could assail such a city? God's glory is displayed in the salvation of sinners who compose the city. Hence *"Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks"* **Isa. 26:1**

The city was formed in divine righteousness pictured as gold transparent as glass, the like of which is not seen on earth. **GOLD** is divine righteousness displayed in grace and **GLASS** is that reality and integrity which, when scrutinized through and through, is found to be only perfect and without blemish in all of its parts.

The righteousness which NOW is wrought in and applied to men by the Spirit through the Word will be the very NATURE of the whole city. The counterpart of this NOW is *"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"* **Eph. 4:23.**

The **PRECIOUS STONES** garnishing the foundation symbolize the varied display of God's nature and character for He is light. The precious stones have previously been seen in connection with the creature and creation in **Ezek. 28** and in the high priest's breastplate in **Ex.28: 15-30** showing Christ's perfect, varied and glorious intercession. These precious stones shine then in permanent glory and adorn the foundations of the city.

The entire **FOUNDATION** of this city was open to view from the earth, for the city is seen "*coming down from heaven from God*" hovering over the earthly Jerusalem during the entire millennial age. It is through Christ, the chief corner Stone that these divine glories shine down on the earth.

The **GATES** are each of one huge pearl having thus the moral beauty that attracted Christ to the church, but here seen in full heavenly and eternal glory.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman (Christ) seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found ONE PEARL (the church) of great price (He reckoned it worth His death and blood), went and sold all that He had (His Life and bought it" with His precious blood
Mat.13: 45-46.

How precious is the church to Christ and what a delight to His heart to display her thus as the medium through which the glory of God shines down upon the renewed earth!

The **STREET** on which men walked, instead of defiling the feet of the saints as now, was itself righteous and holy. Here all that men will come in contact with is righteousness and holiness-gold transparent as glass.

Oh, beloved, these wondrous descriptions are not given us merely to satisfy our curiosity as to what heaven is like. This is what **WE** shall be, what God has destined for us, what His mind and desire is for **US**, and it is no different **NOW** from what it shall be then. Hence, our earnest desire **NOW** should be that our walk down here should answer to these glorious descriptions and thus display **NOW** and in our measure those divine glories and perfections which we shall so perfectly display **THEN**.

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing on another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... being renewed in the spirit of

your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” Eph. 4:1-3, 24.

There was **NO TEMPLE** where men only approached but could not draw nigh to God to be in His presence as in Israel where God was hidden and neither came out to man nor man go in to Him. There was no concealment of God's glory in that which only awed men by its display but could not meet them in grace.

The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were its temple. John often speaks of God and the Lamb as One, as they indeed are. They were freely approached in their own nature and glory and therefore created light was not needed. The glory of the divine nature lighted all, and the Lamb was the Light-Bearer as He was down here, and is now through His people. *“I am the Light of the world” and now “Ye are the light of the world”.*

It is not the Father here, but God as the unseen Ruler over all through all dispensations and the Lamb who has perfectly displayed His glory. This characterizes the city.

V.24 shows the bride's relationship to **THE NATIONS** on earth who were spared in the previous judgments. They walk in its light and bring their glory UNTO (not into) it. How feebly does the world see the light of the glory of God in the church now! But as now, the redeemed in the city enjoy the **DIRECT** light within and in their intimacy with the Lamb; the world receives transmitted light; albeit it will then be **FAITHFULLY** transmitted; not hidden under a bushel as so often now.

Bringing their honor and glory unto it, the **KINGS OF THE EARTH** thus pay homage as owning the heavens and the heavenly kingdom to be the source of all blessing.

There is **NO NIGHT** there, for we shall never rest from our holy occupation of praise and worship and service.

NOTHING DEFILING enters there, nor idols nor falsehood. Neither human evil nor the enemy's deceit or wiles can exist or produce corruption there. What a sad history has been witnessed here of everything that God has set up in perfection and turned over to man to administer it

Paul, with a broken heart, warned the Ephesian elders, *“I KNOW that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” Acts 20:29*

But here in this vision there was not only the absence of evil but the impossibility of its entrance which characterized the city. Only those whose names were in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain were found there. Their affections for the Lamb are all pure, blessed and holy and have their source in perfect love, grace, and divine life. Disobedience will be impossible.

The **CONNECTION OF THE HEAVENLY CITY WITH THE EARTH** is constantly seen in the vision, though "they are physically separated, for *"the glory of the terrestrial is one, and the glory of the celestial is another"*"; and this will be true even in the day of manifested glory seen here.

The **RIVER OF WATER** of eternal life, flowing from God its Source and the Lamb refreshed the city. Eden had been the type of what is seen here (**Gen. 2, 10-14**).

The **TREE OF LIFE** grew here but now not as that which man must be excluded lest he eat and live forever in his sin, but as that whose ever ripening **FRUIT** was the joy, delight and sustainment of the redeemed and glorified where sin can never come. Only the heavenly saints ate the fruit, but the leaves were for the healing of the nations below on earth. Thus, the heavenly city was the vessel of this in fullness and perfection. The church, which now feels and manifests Christ's sympathies, will then be the vessel of total healing for the nations so often torn by warfare as seen in the **LEAVES**. The assembly in glory is thus characterized by grace, and it is in grace that she rules the earthly Jerusalem which preserves her earthly royal character as metropolis of all the earth and the nations joyfully serve her. (**Psa.72**)

There is **NO MORE CURSE** for the throne of God and of the Lamb is there. They are the Source of blessing; not of curse.

His servants serve Him; not imperfectly as now, nor with "lispings, stammering tongues but as "conquerors o'er the grave!"

His servants shall **SEE HIS FACE**; enjoy the fullest privilege of His perpetual presence; and their belonging to Him as His own peculiar treasure will be evident to all.

They are said to reign, not merely for a thousand years, as they do over the earth, but "forever and ever" **Rev. 22:5; 2 Pet. 1:11**.

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