

Revelation 21:9-27

"The City Of Light"

What a privileged place to be in our bibles today. Gleaning & gaining insight into the new heaven, the new earth & the new Jerusalem. A place where tears will be a thing of the past, no more death, nor sorrow or sadness, there will be no more pain, the former things having passed away.

God will make all things new, not in the "there I made it but 1,000 yrs from now it'll be old", sense of creation. But in the "It's brand new now, & 10 trillion yrs from now you'll have the same euphoric sense that you had the moment it was formed & fashioned" sense of creation. There will be an eternal "wow factor" to everything God creates. & In Vs 5 He said to John, "Write, for these words are true & faithful." Look at Vs 6 (read)

God gives graciously, freely to whomever thirsts for the water that springs forth from the fountain of life. He is the Alpha & the Omega, the Beginning & the End, He is both the Author & the Finisher of our faith. **He is the One who has begun a good work in you & He will be the One who faithfully completes it, & by believing that Jesus is the Son of God you have entered into the company that will overcome & inherit all things; He will be your God & you will be His child.**

The bible declares, *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."*¹ If it weren't the word of God who could believe it? Yet God underscores the reality of His word, "Write, for these words are faithful & true."

Vs 9-11

Allow me to grab a quick application right off the bat here. Notice that John was carried away in the Spirit & shown this city by 1 of the 7 angels who had the 7 bowls which were filled w/the 7 last plagues. This angel went from one task to the next, really my observation & the application of this passage is one and the same. What we have here is a "multi-tasking" angel 😊.

He goes from pouring out God's judgment to being a tour guide of this heavenly city (the New Jerusalem). Here's my point, as servants of God we are just that, we're *servants* of God. God may have gifted you in a unique way specifically, yet we're all called to serve *generally*.

¹ The New King James Version, 1982 [Ro 8:14-17], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ministry is about remaining flexible. “I’m called to lead worship, I can’t help w/the grounds!” “I’m called to Pastor, I can’t sweep the floor!” “I’m in the prayer ministry, I don’t pick up trash!” You get the idea right? We don’t always get to exercise our gift at the exclusion of doing anything else. **Think about Paul the apostle, probably the single most gifted bible teacher & church planter of his day if not in church history & yet usually he was making tents, or in some way working w/his hands as opposed to operating w/in that sphere of specific gifting.**

So though we certainly desire to excel in the gifting or office to which God may’ve have called or equipped us, we also realize that at the bottom line we’re called to serve regardless of the task. From pouring out judgment to being a tour guide of the Holy City whatever God wants, that’s what this angel does. Likewise, whatever God wants, that’s what we’ll do.

We spoke last time of the fact that this city isn’t the church (though the church certainly inhabits it [& really what is a city other than those who inhabit it?]). But rather this is a literal city which John sees descending out of heaven as ravishing, as breath taking & as beautiful as a bride coming down the aisle on her wedding day. It’s absolutely stunning & words fail John to give us an accurate &/or appropriate description, he’s doing his very best. Paul wouldn’t even go this far, remember there in 2nd Cor (Ch 12) he said that when he was caught up to the 3rd heaven (people believe this happened when he was stoned & left for dead there in Acts 14) the things he heard, that he experienced, it wouldn’t be lawful for him to even try to express it or explain it. **It would be a crime to try & describe using any words available in the human language because it exceeded our ability to articulate, it was that amazing.**

But John sees this city descending out of heaven from God; notice we don’t read that it actually comes to the earth. It seems that it remains suspended in the air & possibly orbits the new earth, or more probable is that the new earth orbits the New Jerusalem (as we’ll see it’s the source of all light in this new creation of God). **This new city will be the center, the focal point (if you will) around which everything in the new creation revolves.**

After all it’s the dwelling place of God Himself & the new creation will be truly theocentric (that is, God centered). John tells us in Vs 11 that the city descended having “the glory of God” ...

Paul instructed us that we, **“...rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”** (Rom 5:2)

What is hope? Well, from a biblical perspective it certainly isn't a wish w/the plausibility of denial. I "hope" to eat after church, that's a wish w/a plausibility of denial, it may or may not happen. That's not "hope" in the biblical sense. **Biblical hope is the concrete reality & the guaranteed certainty. Paul was saying, "Rejoice, because abiding in the glory of God is a concrete reality, it's a guaranteed certainty in Christ". Here we see that realized.**

Think about that. The *glory* of God, no man has *ever* seen the glory of God. No man *can* see the glory of God & live; perhaps you recall, it's possibly the single most intimate moment between God & man in the bible. **There He is, Moses upon the Mt in fellowship with God, seeking the assurance of the presence of God... Let's look at it together, leave Rev 21 & turn back in your bible to Exodus 33 (Vs 12-23).**

Wow... but check it out, even for Moses (as close as he was to God [never before & never since has God spoken to man face to face as He did w/Moses]) he couldn't behold the glory of God & live. It would take your breath away, overwhelm your heart; the shock & awe of the glory of the Living God is simply too much for our physical frame to w/stand. **Moses got to see God's "afterglow" the "remnant" (if you will) of God's glory after He'd passed by. Yet here in the New Jerusalem you & me, we will behold w/our eyes the glory of God face to face w/the Light of the world, even J.C. our risen Lord...**

You see the word "light" here in Vs 11 is a reference to a light *source*, the city doesn't reflect light (like the moon), it gives off light, light originates *from* the city because the Light of the world abides *in* the city. Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**²

Light radiates throughout the city because it's crystal clear, it's transparent & gleaming (John uses the word Jasper, but this wouldn't be like our modern Jasper stone, more than likely closer to a diamond, transparent, clean & clear in appearance.)

Vs 12-14

You'll note the prominence of the #12 in this city. 12 gates, 12 angels (honor guards I presume ☺), 12 tribes of Israel, 12 foundations & 12 apostles, in a minute we'll see it's length, breadth & height are 12 thousand furlongs & it's wall measured 144 cubits which is 12 x12). Why the # 12? Who knows... I'd like to give you 12 reasons ☺, however we're simply not told.

² The New King James Version, 1982 (Jn 8:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

However the city itself speaks of several things to us. 1st of all we want to realize that entrance into eternity (via the gate of salvation) is only available to us through Israel. It seems only appropriate then that it's through the gates that bear their names which we enter into the city. Salvation is of the Jews, God brought salvation (even Jesus Himself) through the nation of Israel. Therefore we will enter into the city through the gates that bear their names.

We might also mention that we see Israel encamped in such an orderly fashion in Numbers Ch 2 (3 tribes each, N,S,E,W). We see an orderly lay out again in Ezek 48; it's these kinds of things that remind us that God loves order, He's into structure & symmetry. Somewhere along the lines people have gotten the idea that "spiritual equals spontaneous". Yet when you read your bible, Spirit led plans & planning seem more "spiritual" than do the spontaneous actions/reactions or impulses of men.

Something else we see here is the fact that though we are all one in Christ, Israel & the church (though perfect in unity) will maintain their distinct identity throughout eternity. Israel will be remembered forever before God (as noted by their names on the gates). The church will be identified through the names of the 12 apostles on the 12 foundations that support the walls around the city.

Of course it's only appropriate that the names of the apostles would be somehow etched or placed upon the foundations. The bible is clear that the apostles laid the foundation of the church, today we build upon the foundation that apostles laid. If we're not building upon that foundation, then we're not about the building of God's church. We may be about our own thing, but we're not about God's thing. Paul told the Ephesians, *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,"*³

Vs 15-17

Meaning either that in this case the angel is the approximate size of a man, or an angel is using a man's measuring instrument. Either way he wants us to know that these are standard measurements that we're familiar w/not some mysterious angelic dimensions.

So what are some of the things we're learning about this city? I think it's safe to gather that it's a city of *peace*.

³ The New King James Version, 1982 (Eph 2:19-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God Himself dwells there, His peace that passes all understanding certainly permeates this place. It's a city of *permanence* it has foundations, it a city that's *protected*, it has walls (now we know there's not a need w/regard to safety, but the picture is portrayed none the less) it also has *perimeters* as depicted by the walls. As we mentioned last time it's far from the mystic "Nirvana", there are specific perimeters in place here. It's a city of *perfection*, it measures equal on all sides. We might even go so far as to say that it's a city of *plenty*, there's more than enough room for everyone, roughly 1400 miles on each side!

The scope of such a city is beyond comprehension, to put this in perspective the United States is just over 1500 miles wide (on a vertical scale). So basically take the North to South measurements of the United States & make that a cube & you have the basic dimensions of this city. Now being laid out a square & equal on all sides it could be a pyramid, but my suspicion is that it's a cube, why? Because when Moses was instructed to make a model of heaven in the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube 15x15x15. (10 cubits cubed). A cubit is approximately 18" (a foot & ½).

Now, try & imagine a city that's nearly 1400 miles high, that's 7,392,000 feet high. When you fly in a jet, you fly about 6 miles high, 30-35,000 feet... Now, I don't presume that we will dwell on the surface of this cube, I believe we'll live inner-dimensionally. Check this out, Henry Morris (a man w/more brains than me) calculates that if 20 billion people (just a guess) have been saved throughout human history than each person can inhabit a block w/about 75 acres on each face (cube) to call their own. The idea is there's plenty of room, if that's not enough simply cut the ceiling down by ½ & you double your space... BTW that doesn't count for the space inhabited on the new earth.

So it's a city of plenty, because it's a city *prepared*. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us & having gone to prepare a place for us He will come again & receive us to Himself that where He is there we may be also.

Vs 18-21

It goes along w/the idea of a perfect city, but here we discover it's a *pure* city, nothing impure in it. So pure are both it's walls & it's street that they're crystal clear, the walls like a beautifully cut diamond (jasper) the city itself pure gold (perfectly clear), of course the light/glory of God that refracts through these pure jewels will flash brilliant color & unimaginable beauty as it penetrates the city.

But we note that the most precious & prized possessions on the earth are common place in the city of God. Precious jewels, pure gold, we get the impression of unrelenting, breath taking beauty. But even beyond that these things are pointing to the glory & the holiness of God...

As for the colors of these jewels, we're talking about ruby reds, emerald greens, golden hues, violets & purples, blues, crystal type light refractions busting light up into a rainbow of colors, something that we will never be able to fully absorb until we see it w/our eyes.

Vs 21 makes known to us that there really are "pearly gates!" ☺ 12 gates, 12 pearls, each individual gate was of 1 pearl, how would u like to see the size of that oyster ☺?!

However Peter doesn't stand at them, we've already noted 12 angels at the 12 gates. **But even in these gates God (it seems) is speaking to us throughout eternity. How is it that a pearl is formed? It's formed from pain, from a grain of sand, or perhaps a small parasite found in an oyster that the oyster in order to "cover" it coats w/a lustrous nacre.** To call us an irritating pain in our Lord's side is only a gross understatement as the spear was thrust into Him, through which God has coated/robed/covered us in the righteousness of Christ making us a precious gem in His sight.

It's in Matt 13 right? What did Jesus say? **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."** ⁴ There are those who want to consider Jesus the pearl & you & me as the merchant giving all that we have, in order that we might have Christ. However I disagree, there is nothing I can give, I can't purchase salvation w/all the gold on this planet. I can't give enough, I can't sacrifice enough to obtain salvation. However Jesus gave all that He had that He might purchase you at the price of His own blood. As Peter said, **"...you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."** ⁵ These gates will be a constant reminder to you & me, of the grace of God toward you & me in Christ Jesus.

I think for now they can speak to us of the many tribulations through which we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). There will be irritation, there will be tribulation, but God is refining you, purifying me, making a treasure of you & me & we through many tribulations must enter the Kingdom of God.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 13:45-46). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Pe 1:18-19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 22-23

We get the impression that John was seeking a location of the temple, he'd always known a temple. His worship of God was associated w/a temple, throughout the OT there was a temple, in the Millennial Kingdom there will be a temple, here he finds no temple. But as he expands his view he realizes that the entire city is a temple, it's one massive Holy of Holies, as God Himself & Lamb's presence in reality are the temple.

Notice it's marked as well by what's not present. No sun, no moon; the Light source is the glory of God; Jesus Himself (the Lamb) is it's light. **Hebrews Ch 1 & Vs 3 referring to God's creation & the ways in which He has spoken to man throughout history calls Jesus "the brightness of His glory"**. The Lamb is it's light, Jesus is the Light of the world; figuratively/spiritually in this world, literally in the next. We read in the book of Isaiah, in the 60th Ch & 19th Vs, **"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."**⁶

Vs 24-27

This particular passage has caused much confusion amongst commentators, who are these "kings of the earth" who bring glory & honor into the city. Are they a new order of creation, do they represent those saved after the rapture of the church, or throughout the Millennial Kingdom or even those Gentiles who were saved throughout the OT? **Not Israel, not the church, are they represented here? Some even speculate that perhaps those who were alive at the end of the Millennial Kingdom who were saved enter in to eternity as such on the new earth.**

My speculation is that they represent those saved throughout history who couldn't be classified as either Israel, or the church. However, I really don't know. Great men think different things here. It really doesn't matter, we'll see one day & we'll give God glory in His wisdom for *whatever* He does.

But we note again that the gates aren't shut by day, & there is no night (the light of the glory of God will be everlasting). Perfect peace, perfect safety, no need to shut the gates, we'll abide in the presence of Christ forever, where He is there we will be also. That's heaven family, where *He* is, that's where we'll be.

Vs 27

Does this speak of a potential threat? That these things will be around? No.

⁶ The New King James Version, 1982 (Is 60:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We've already established that every unbeliever, even death itself has been cast forever into the lake of fire. The exhortation here is to those who've yet to make their heart Christ's home. **If you are unbelieving, a liar, sexually immoral, drug abuser... (unrepentant sinner) you will never see this place. John is saying, don't be deceived, if you live like hell you will never inherit heaven, turn your loyalty to the Lamb even now.**

We get into the heart of Christ through a wound in His side, He was pierced for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was laid upon Him & it's by His stripes that we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; & the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Christ in you is the hope (that guaranteed certainty) of glory. So lay hold of Christ, be loyal to Christ, & one day you'll forever dwell with Christ. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your goodness & for Your mercy. It's hard for us to take in the reality of the things we've been refreshed & revived by today but we give You praise, for Your words are faithful, & they are true. We can't wait behold You w/our eyes & see You face to face & dwell w/You forever.

If you don't have the assurance of being in this city because you've never allowed Christ to come into your heart & change your life then I want to extend to you that opportunity today. Jesus wants to robe you in His righteousness & wash you clean through the cleansing power of His blood, which was shed for you. If you're willing to turn from your sin & trust in J.C. Salvation can be yours. Open your heart, believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.