The Glory of the New Jerusalem, part 1

Revelation 21:9-17

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-09-23

The Glory of the New Jerusalem, part 1

Revelation 21:9-17

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-09-23

Text

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me saying, "Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb's bride." 10 So he transported me in spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the splendor of God. Her radiance was similar to a most precious stone, like a crystalline jasper stone; 12 she had a tremendous, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, namely the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel; 13 looking from the east, three gates, and from the north, three gates, and from the south, three gates, and from the west, three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names, of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 Now he who spoke with me had a measure, a golden reed, so that he might measure the city and her gates. 16 The city is laid out as a square; that is, her length is equal to her width. So he measured the city with the reed at twelve thousand and twelve stadia. Her length and width and height are equal. 17 And he measured her wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man (which is of an angel). 18 The material of her wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation had jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls; each individual gate was composed of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Introduction

Last week we began looking at some of the awesome things that are in store for the church - both in history and in eternity. The first vision shows Jesus in eternity (after Judgment Day) showing John what He has achieved over the previous thousands of years. Nothing of the curse will be left. In eternity there will be no more pain, sorrow, tears, death, or any other aspect of the curse. And a vast multitude will be saved.

And this new world will be so different from what we are experiencing that John struggles to adequately describe it. For example, in verse 11 he says that the city will be like a jasper stone in some ways, but different in that it will be clear as crystal. Jasper isn't clear as crystal in this world. So he compares it to things in this world, but makes it clear that it is also unlike anything we have seen before. I think of it as a glorified jasper stone. Likewise in verse 21 he says that the street of the city will be made of pure gold, but it won't be any kind of gold that we have on earth because this gold will be transparent like glass. The gold that we know of on this earth is

never transparent like glass. Even the materials used to make the city are in such a glorified state that it is hard to describe using descriptors from our as-yet unglorified world. And that should not be suprising. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." In other words, Phil Kayser cannot even imagine, let alone adequately describe, the glories of heaven. That's what he is saying - no one can even imagine it, let alone adequate describe it. It is simply not possible.

And I think it is this other-worldliness of the New Jerusalem that has led to the controversy of whether it is literal or purely symbolic. Originally (just for fun) I was going to give you eleven slam dunk arguments I have collected from other authors on why this has to be symbolic and not literal, and then immediately follow those with seven slam dunk reasons why it has to be literal in some sense.[1] But it would have made the sermon way too long, so I ditched it and started over. But I mention that because you can make a good case for either side. But all through the book of Revelation I have chosen to hold to both. Symbols and literal are not mutually exclusive. As I have mentioned many times, the rock that Moses struck was literal, but it was also a symbol of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. So this is an actual city but it also symbolizes the bride. I will admit that the other-worldly magnificence of the New Jerusalem is so incredible that the word "literal" may not even be meaningful. Nevertheless, I think the New Jerusalem is a real city that really symbolizes the bride of Christ. But some of the features of it do defy explanation. And we are picking up at verse 9.

---

1   Here are a few of the arguments both pro and con: Arguments that it cannot be literal 1. The gigantic size of this city seems unbelievable to some (vv. 16-17) 2. The walls are said to be "hopelessly disproportional" to the size of the city (vv. 16-17) 3. The composition of each foundation would require more gems than the world has (vv. 18-20), gold would not be strong enough to bear the weight (v. 18), and Old Testament Israel was described with similar gems (Is. 54:11-12) 4. Pearls are made by oysters and there are no oysters large enough to make a pearl the size of a gate (v. 21) 5. It uses the term "like" to compare (vv. 11,18,21) 6. It would be impossible for trillions of humans to eat from one tree (22:2) 7. Literal gold is not transparent (v. 21) 8. Literal jasper stone is not clear as crystal (v. 11) 10. Kings of the earth still exist, so this must not be eternity (v. 24) 11. There are still nasty people outside the city (v. 27 with 22:15) 12. The city is called a "her" and a "she" (vv. 2,11,12,15,16,17,18,22,23,24,25,26,27)
Arguments that it can't be symbolic: 1. It is contrasted with the earthly Jerusalem (v. 9 with 17:1) 2. When verse 21 says there was "no temple in it" it implies a spacial or geographical entity 3. The angel uses "the measure of a man," implying real earthly measurements (v. 17) 4. If the Majority Text is correct, then the length is 12,012 - an exact number that would be hard to account for if it were not literal. 5. Why the detail if the description is not literal 6. The bride inhabits the city, so must be different from the city (see vv. 24,26,27; 22:2,3,14; cf. Heb. 13:14) 7. There is precedent for a city being married to a king (Is. 62:4)

A. The bride is compared and contrasted with the harlot (v. 9 versus 17:1)

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me saying, "Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb's bride." 10 So he transported me in spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the splendor of God.

Commentators have pointed out that very similar language was used in Revelation 17 when the angel showed him the false bride, the harlot city of Jerusalem. That harlot symbolizes the people who claimed to be in covenant with God, but really were not. So this language introduces a deliberate comparison and contrast between two women. The similarities are:

- In both chapters it was one of the seven angels who had carried the seven last plagues that came to John with the vision
- In both chapters the angel spoke to John
- In both chapters the angel said, "Come I will show you…"
- In both chapters the angel then transported him in the spirit to a location where he could view things a bit better.
- And then in both chapters the angel shows him a woman.

Where they differ is:

- In chapter 17 he is taken to the wilderness; here is is taken to a high mountain
- In chapter 17 he is shown the earthly Jerusalem; here he is shown the heavenly Jerusalem.
- In chapter 17 Jerusalem is symbolized by a harlot who persecutes the saints and is filled with blasphemy and evil; here the New Jerusalem symbolizes the bride of Jesus Christ who is pure and has no evil.
- In chapter 17, the harlot is in covenant with Rome and rides the Beast for a short time; in this chapter, the bride is covenanted to and married to Jesus forever.

For Jewish Christians who were tempted to abandon Christianity because of the pressures of family and the persecutions of the synagogues, this contrast would have been a tremendous motivation to not compromise. They would be giving up incomparable beauty and life of the New Jerusalem for the demonic evil and death of the Old Jerusalem.

This bride missed the plagues that the harlot received (v. 9a)

Verse 9 says, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me saying…" He mentions the plagues that this angel had previously poured out on the harlot to showcase the fact that this bride missed those plagues. This bride was secure in her husband and in her mansion. Because she was seated with Christ in the heavenlies, she was far above this wrath being poured out.

This bride is now married to the Messiah who died for her (v. 9b)

The angel says, "Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb's bride." The word for "woman" could be rendered "wife" as the New King James does. From AD 70 to Judgment Day was the marriage supper of the Lamb where the King continues to send His servants out into the highways and byways to invite people to the ongoing banquet because the banquet hall has room for more and there is plenty of food. So until Christ's Second Coming, we keep getting invited to this feast. He told us to eat and drink until He comes.

But now that the banquet is finished, it is the time for the marriage to be consummated. Obviously it is not a literal consummation because the church is not the literal; she is just what the literal marriages of earth symbolize. But it is is a figure to show that in eternity the church will experience God's presence and the presence of Jesus in a way far beyond anything she has ever experienced before. And though there is no sin in eternity, her security is in the fact that she is married to the Lamb. Forever she will know that Jesus gave His life for her.

This bride is higher than the highest mountain (v. 10)

Verse 10 says, "So he transported me in spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God…" Though John is on the top of an incredibly tall mountain, the New Jerusalem still towers way above this mountain and off into space. It is so far exalted above the highest mountains that even when it rests upon the earth, it will still reach out into space. God exalts the bride, and calls her "great" and "holy" and coming down from Him. And we looked at each of those expressions last week, so I won't repeat what they mean today. But it is clear that God Himself created her into the incredible beauty that she is. And according to Ephesians, God started that preparation of the bride in history. Your sanctification is a part of that process of making the bride beautiful. It says,

Eph. 5:25   Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

That has finally been accomplished on this first day of eternity. And he will go on to describe her beauty in terms that are hard to fathom.

B.   Astonishing! The church has God's glory!!!

But what I find even more astonishing than all the symbolic and literal beauty of the gates and walls and gemstones that the New Jerusalem is made

of, is the first phrase of verse 11 - "having the glory of God." The bride herself has the glory of God. I want us to think about that and not just slide over it like most commentaries do. That is astounding statement. And I'll tell you why it is astonishing. In Isaiah 42:8 God says, "I am Yehowah, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another…" Let me quote Douglas Kelly at length because I think he captures the astonishing nature of this statement quite well. He says,

God firmly says through Isaiah that he does not give his glory to another, for his glory is so essential to his deity, that it is not given to another; that is, to anyone less than God. Yet, wonder of all wonders, after Christ has come and done his glorious work we are told in verses 10-11: 'The holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal…' What a stunning contrast. God says in Isaiah 42, "I do not give my glory to another', and now 'that great city, the holy Jerusalem' is full of the glory of God. God has given his own divine glory to the Church.[2]

This is a mystery on the same level as our justification is. In Exodus 23:7 God says, "I will not justify the wicked," yet in Romans 4:5 Paul makes the astounding promise that when the wicked put their faith in Jesus as their substitute, God "justifies the ungodly." That a just judge could declare the guilty not guilty is a miracle that is bound up in the Incarnation, perfect life of Jesus, His substitutionary atonement, His resurrection, the imputation of our sins to Him, the imputation of His righteousness to us, and the fact that throughout eternity we are united to Him and have our identity with Him. As Colossians 3:3 words it, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Where is your life hidden? It is hidden with Christ, in God. That is how God can give His glory to the bride. She is united to Christ, the Perfect God-Man, and through Christ she is united to God. This sends shivers down my spine - that God would give His glory to the bride.

The more you meditate on the wonders of our salvation, the more it makes you love Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We could have just as easily been born into the corporate harlot and been destined to hell, but because the Father sent the Son, and because the Son bore God's wrath, and because the Holy Spirit pulled us up out of the sewer and cleaned us up with salvation, we can be a part of this glorious bride. Dennis Johnson pulls together the strands of glory throughout this chapter rather well in one paragraph, and I want to read it to you so that you can appreciate the miracle of God's glory in us. He says,

Dazzling light is the first impression that imprints itself on John's consciousness, for the city has the glory of God and shines with the brilliance of a costly, crystal-clear-jasper

2   Douglas F. Kelly, Revelation: A Mentor Expository Commentary (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor Imprint by Christian Focus Publications, 2012), p. 405.

(Rev. 21:11). Semiprecious jasper, as it appears in nature, may have a mustard or gold color, but it is opaque, not 'crystal clear.' John is straining the limits of his hearer's experience to try to communicate a beauty that lies beyond the capacity of the 'first earth.' Light will pervade his description (21:23-26; 22:5), as will the loveliness of jasper and other precious stones (21:18-21) and the transparency of crystal (21:18,21). In other words, the radiance that John once saw emanating from the throne of God, whose glory appeared like jasper and sardius (4:3), now permeates the city. The Lord of glory indwells his people and floods his new community with the beauty of his holiness.[3]

Brothers and sisters, this is the destiny of the church that God loves and that Jesus is betrothed to. This is the destiny of the church that we too should love.

But if that is the astonishing reality of heaven in eternity, we should be pressing into that glory even now. That is our destiny and our identity. We should long for God's glory. In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul shows how Moses even under the first covenant radiated God's glory when he spent time in God's presence. And he concludes,

8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

He then went on to show how too many people have a veil over their eyes that prevents them from seeing God's glory. He says that is entirely unnecessary in the New Covenant. He says,

Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The point is that just as every description of the New Jerusalem that we looked at last week should have a magnetic pull upon our lives, we should long for God's glory now. Moses begged God, "Please show me your glory" (Ex. 33:18). That is the heart of revival, to desire to experience more and more of God's glory that He freely gives to the church. What an astounding truth!

C. The church includes the saints of the Old Testament (vv. 12-13) and those of the New Testament (v. 14)

But this passage makes clear that all the saints from Adam to the end of time will be in the New Jerusalem and will share in God's glory. And this is a very important corrective to Dispensationalists who divide between Israel and the church and deny that Israel will be part of the bride.

---

3 Dennis E. Johnson, Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation (Phillipsburg: P&R PUblishing, 2001), p. 309.

There are so many indicators that the New Jerusalem is a symbol of the bride and is called the bride. Notice the "she" at the beginning of verse 12 and the repeated use of "she" and "her" to refer to the New Jerusalem all the way through this chapter. He had said, "Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb's bride" and He showed John the New Jerusalem. The city is the bride and the bride is the city. The New Jerusalem is at minimum a symbol of the bride. So keep in mind the "her" and the "she" as I read verses 12-13.

12 she had a tremendous, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, namely the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel; 13 looking from the east, three gates, and from the north, three gates, and from the south, three gates, and from the west, three gates.

It's pretty clear that Israel is part of this bride. And I will talk about that a bit more in a minute. But there are a couple of other details that I want you to notice. I want you to notice that there will still be geographical direction, with north and south poles, and an east and west direction. It may even be yet another indication that I was wrong on there being no sun or moon in the New Earth. This is a shout out to Mark Nilson who showed me a verse that says that the sun and moon will last forever too. It's Psalm 89:36-37. Referring to Jesus, it says,

36 His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; 37 it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.

And Mark Nilson pointed out that technically, Revelation 22:23 says that the city has no need for the sun or the moon to shine in it. It makes no mention of the rest of the earth. And chapter 22:5 says that there will be no need for a lamp in the city because God Himself will give His light to light the inside of the city. And it will need lighting. Since the city is a cube that is 1400-1500 miles long, wide, and high, there would be need for some way to light the interior. The interior would be pitch blackness otherwise. Everywhere in that city there is going to be this indirect lighting from God Himself. And some of these crystalline structures may be designed to carry the light from the throne room.

But there is an east and west. So it may be that the sun and moon will still provide time indicators to the rest of the earth and will still provide east west orientations and that there will be a north and south pole. So I appreciate his correction.

Later in verse 25 he will say that these gates are never under any circumstances closed again. Perhaps they were closed in history on occasion (we are not told), but not in eternity.

Will there be literal names written on literal gates of a city and names of

apostles on literal foundations? I see no reason why not, though I cannot be absolutely dogmatic. But what the literal symbolizes is that the Old Testament saints, as represented by the patriarchs, are part of the bride; are in the New Jerusalem together with the apostles and New Testament saints. This is as strong a repudiation of the heart of Dispensational thought as you could get. Charles Ryrie wrote a book defending Dispensationalism. In that book he approvingly quotes Chafer in order to define what is at the heart of Dispensationalism. He says, "The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity."[4] Dispensationalism blasphemes by calling current Judaism a religion of God and by keeping true Israel and true Church as two utterly different peoples with utterly different laws, purposes, and destinies and some even say two utterly different ways of salvation. But this verse affirms that the twelve patriarchs (representing the Old Testament people) and the twelve apostles (representing the New Testament people) are part of the bride, have the same salvation, the same destiny, the same purpose, and the same focus. Actually they have the same revelation since they have the same foundations. There is only one people of God. Unbelieving Israel was broken off and Gentiles were grafted into Israel, but Jews can be grafted into the church and unbelieving Gentiles can be cut off. But there is only one people, one bride, one temple, one New Jerusalem, one vineyard, and one Olive Tree.

Verse 15 says, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names, of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The Greek word for "foundations" is used in Hebrews 11:10 to refer to the New Jerusalem and again in Ephesians 2 where Old Testament saints and New Testament saints are said to be in the same household, the same kingdom, and the same building as the Old Testament saints. And in Ephesians 2-3 that foundation was said to be the revelational foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. I've dealt with that in depth in previous chapters, so I won't say more about it right now. But just as there is one people, there is one revelation for the people of God.

D. The church has an exact size; no more and no less (vv. 15-17)

Continuing on we see that this city has an exact size, implying that the

---

4   Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, p. 45 citing Chafer.

church has an exact size - no more and no less who can fit into her.

15 Now he who spoke with me had a measure, a golden reed, so that he might measure the city and her gates. 16 The city is laid out as a square; that is, her length is equal to her width. So he measured the city with the reed at twelve thousand and twelve stadia. Her length and width and height are equal. 17 And he measured her wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man (which is of an angel).

I'll just make a brief mention that the measurement of 12,012 is different from your versions. Most versions have just a straight 12,000. But 12,012 is in the Majority of Greek Manuscripts, in two out of three independent lines of transmission (which is an even stronger proof), and is in the Ecclesiastical Text. So you see it in Pickering's edition of the Majority Text, and in his translation. There is really no textual critical rule that could explain how the extra twelve could creep in there as a mistake, and very good reasons why a scribe may have missed it or rounded the number. And while this more precise measurement maintains the symbolic multiples of twelve, the exact figure shows this was not a rounded number, but a real measurement. It's one of the arguments that it is a real measurement of a real city.

If Jesus went to prepare a place for His people after His resurrection, and if Hebrews 13:14 said it was about to come in AD 70, then that means that people have been living in the New Jerusalem (which is currently in heaven) since AD 70 (and actually before as well, while it was under construction). Once it is full, it will come to earth. In eternity people can come and go from the city and live and go wherever they want to on the earth, but right now, there is only one place for dead saints to live - in the New Jerusalem. Once the New Jerusalem above is filled, no more will be saved; it will signal the end of history.

So if the city represents the entire bride, the dimensions of this city indicate the saved will number at least in the trillions, but perhaps in the quadrillions, or even upwards of one quintillion. I doubt it will be a population of a quintillion because Jesus promised us mansions, and a quintillion would give everyone only a small studio apartment if you allowed for meeting rooms and common areas. But a quintillion would be the absolute maximum number of people that could ever be saved if we are to base things off the literal measurements here. This would include conceptions that didn't last but a few days. A quintillion is a 1 with 18 zeros after it.

Why do I even bother with these calculations, when Chilton mocks the need for them? Well, as you know, I am far more literal in this book than Dispensationalists are. And they squirm a bit over this passage. Those who agree to the enormous size think it will be like a Borg Cube hovering over the earth - only much larger. But its fun to read the commentaries of those

who try to get this city to fit into Israel. No matter how they finagle the numbers, it doesn't fit. They claim that the 12,000 stadia size of the structure is its cubic dimensions. So they claim that to get the true length you have to divide by four, making the city 350 miles long and 350 miles high. But even at this greatly reduced size, it would still stand so tall that the top would be 100 miles above the International Space Station. So some assume that it will be a kind of space station, or a second moon orbiting the earth. But the text really doesn't allow for that because people are coming into and out of this city onto the earth. So the vast majority of commentators (even those who hold that it is entirely symbolic) state that the text necessitates that it come onto the earth and that the 12,000 stadia measurement is indeed the measurement of one side, and then clarifying that the height and width are the same size. The vast majority of commentaries take that position, and I think it is correct.

And seeing it as a cube that is roughly 12,000 by 12,000 by 12,000 stadia has been the interpretation of the church going way back to the early church. For example, the church father, Andrew of Caesarea, treats it this way.[5] He said that it was a cube, to symbolize the stability of the bride. It's a great symbol of stability. Some people imagine a pyramid because they are trying to fit fewer people into it, but the Greek almost mandates that it be a cube. Andrew of Caesarea said that it was 12,000 stadia to symbolize the immense numbers of saints who will comprise the bride - like the grains of sand on the seashore. The twelve gates and twelve foundations shows the completeness and unity of the bride. And he goes on to speak of the other symbols that show heaven merged with earth.

Now back to the measurements: I gave an introduction to these measurements last week, using the smallest estimated size of a stadion, which is the singular for stadia. Unfortunately there is still debate on the precise size of a stadion. If you used the Egyptian and Phoenician measure of 229 yards per stadion, then this would be 1,561 miles long and 1,561 miles tall. That was a very widely used measurement, and most commentaries round it off to 1500 miles. If you used the Babylonian measure of 214 yards, then it would be 1459 miles long. If you used the old Greek measure of 202 yards, it would be 1377 miles long, or almost 1400.[6]

---

5   Andrew of Caesarea, Commentary on the Apocalypse, ed. David G. Hunter, trans. Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, vol. 123, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 226.

6   See Edward Gulbekian (1987). "The Origin and Value of the Stadion Unit used by Eratosthenes in the Third Century BC." Archive for History of Exact Sciences 37 (4): 359–363. Also see D.R. Dicks (1960). The Geographical Fragments of Hipparchus. Edited with an Introduction and Commentary. (London: Athlone Press.) Cited in: J. L. Berggren, Alexander Jones. Ptolemy's Geography: An

So if you read various commentaries and study bibles, you will see them saying that it is approximately 1400 miles or approximately 1500 miles. Commentators are not agreed on which measure of a stadia Revelation is using. It's probably 1561 miles, but it could be 1459.

So to be conservative, last week I used the smallest Greek measure of approximately 1400 miles used by Harold Mare[7] and showed how even that is astronomically huge. Even based on the smallest measure, more than half of the city's stories would loom above our atmosphere and extend out into outer space. But if it was the largest size, you would have to add an additional 161 miles onto everything I talked about last week.

And as to the amount of land it would cover, I've put a couple of maps into your outline to show its massive size. If you place a 1500 mile square over the Middle East with the center being the Old Jerusalem, you will see that this square covers far more than Israel. In fact, it covers far more than the Middle East. This map gives Dispensationalists heartburn because for most of them it has to fit into Israel. So you can see on the map that this square includes all of Georgia, Armenia, Greece, Turkey, and Iraq, most of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea, and much of Iran, Buglaria, the Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea, and Black Sea. That means that there would be no Israel, or Egypt, etc. As far as I am concerned, this makes it impossible to refer to history (as some Dispensationalists claim), because Isaiah 19 clearly indicates that there will be vast open spaces in Egypt, Assyria, and Israel during the millennium, and there is going to be trade between those countries. If this city was sitting on top of all of those countries, it would completely obliterate those countries. They would not exist. So this clearly happens in eternity with a new, and possibly much larger earth.

Placed over the map of the United States, it covers almost two thirds of the States and part of Mexico. Those who have done more precise calculations say that it is almost 60% of the continental USA.

To give you a bit of an idea of the height, I've put two additional diagrams of the New Jerusalem in your outline. One has a proportional cube sitting on top of the planet. Note that each side is 1500 miles long and tall, but it has a figure of 2,121 miles from corner to corner. That's almost exactly the same as the diameter of the moon. Jeff Krutz quickly calculated a similar scenario during my sermon last week and figured you could put the city inside the

Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

7   Dennis E. Johnson, Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation (Phillipsburg: P&R PUblishing, 2001), p. 309.

moon with each corner almost touching the surface. Well, if you use the largest measure of a stadia, the corners would poke out. So that's a pretty large city.

Well, critics use physical laws of science to show how any view of a literal city is impossible. The weight alone would collapse the lower parts of the structure. And it would mess up the earth. Using the smallest reasonable figure of 1400 miles, one critic said,

At 1,400 miles high, it would be over 1/6 the diameter of the earth. We don't know how massive it would be, but something that big resting on one side of the earth would move the earth's center of gravity well away from its current center of gravity, which is roughly the same as the center of the spheroid of the earth. This offset center of gravity would cause the whole earth to wobble and shake in its rotation like an off-balance washing machine. The results would be catastrophic.

Such a large mass added to the earth's mass would also throw the earth out of its current orbit around the sun. If a violently off-kilter and shaking earth didn't destroy all higher life forms on earth, getting thrown out of its orbit would finish the job.[8]

So he would be one who would say that this not a real city. This is an image of the bride of Christ. What most of these critics miss is that the New Jerusalem is already in existence in heaven. That is the city that Hebrews 11 says that we are seeking. Heaven is another dimension. Does it have similarity to our dimension? Yes. And thus the word "like" in verse 11 - "like jasper stone" and yet it is different. Since when does earthly jasper have transparency as this jasper stone does? Since when is gold as transparent as glass (as the gold of verse 21 is)? It appears that these are glorified materials.

And as to laws of physics, who is to say that the same laws of physics will be in place in the new world? It certainly appears that the chemistry of gold will have changed in some way. Now, there may be the same or similar laws, but God may indeed make things quite different. Think of Christ's glorified body. It passed through walls, even though it was His same body. When bodies, things, and planets are in a glorified state, they will not have the limits that things below have had. Since this city comes from heaven, it is obviously a glorified structure, not a structure subject to decay like ours are. So I reject all objections based on laws of physics.

I've often wondered how people will travel outside the city. If it is 750 miles from the middle of one floor to the outside, and you lived half way up, it would be another 750 miles from the middle floor to the ground floor (and even greater distances if you lived on the top floor). So the question is, how

---

8   Andrew of Caesarea, Commentary on the Apocalypse, ed. David G. Hunter, trans. Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, vol. 123, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 226.

do people come and go from the city? It would take days to drive to the edge and perhaps take days to get an elevator ride to the bottom. Yet later in this chapter it seems that people can come into and go out of the city. Will we be able to teleport? Possibly. Many have speculated that our bodies will not be subject to gravity. There is much that we do not know about this city. But God will have the transportation figured out for us, and it won't be tedious. Revelation has already said that all tedium and exhaustion will be gone. So however we travel into and out of the city, it will be cool.

E. But this size encompasses far more saints than have yet existed (vv. 15-17)

But the enormous size of the city hints that we are not even remotely near the end of history. There may well be a hundred thousand years of history left on earth. Why do I say that? The early church father, Andrew of Caesarea, believed that the dimensions of the city give us hints as to how many people will be saved. And I tend to agree, as do many other commentators. After all, Jesus said that He went to prepare a place for His people. He is not sticking people into a city that was made for some other purpose. He has tailor made the New Jerusalem as a gift for His people; His bride.

So how many people could fit into this city? It depends on if you use the lowest figure of 1400 miles long and high or the highest figure of 1561 miles long and high. If we round down from 1561 to the 1500 mile rounded figure that you see in most commentaries and study Bibles, there are a number of scenarios people have invented to try to give a hint (and its only a hint) of the size of the population.

If you made each floor 30 feet high, you would have 264,000 floors, each of which has 1,440,000,000 acres.[9] So there will be 1.4 trillion acres on each floor. If you were to give each resident a 30,000 square foot mansion (which is about the size of Mark Wahlberg's mega mansion), then there would be well over two trillion (2,090,880,000,000) mansions on each floor. Multiply that times 264,000 floors, if you can do it. You might need an online calculator for big numbers. I've calculated it and it comes to 552 quadrillion (551,992,320,000,000,000) people who would each have a 30,000 sq ft mansion with 30 foot vaulted ceilings.

How long will it be before there are 552 quadrillion people who have even existed? Standard estimates of the total number of people who have lived

---

9   Each floors square is 1500 miles x 1500 miles = 2,250,000 square miles. With 640 acres in a square mile, that comes to 1,440,000,000 acres on each floor.

ranges from 90 to 110 billion, with current estimates of the Population Reference Bureau being 108 billion. And keep in mind, they falsely think humans have been around for 50,000 years. I don't. I think they have been around for 6000 years. But let's take their estimate as true. The number of people that could fit in the New Jerusalem with a 30,000 sq ft mansion is more than 5 million (5,111,040) times the total number of people who have ever lived. Multiply the total number of people who have been born times 5 million and you will have the number of mansions that could fit in this city. It gives you a little bit of a feel for why I believe that we have a lot of history left and a lot more people who will yet be saved.

But just for fun, if a 30,000 square foot mansion is not big enough for you, how about each person getting a 250,000 square foot mansion. That's almost twice as big as the Biltmore Estate, 3.6 times bigger than the Hearst Castle, 3.8 times bigger than Donald Trump's biggest mansion, and more than 20 times bigger than a bunch of other famous mansions. Even with every individual getting that size of a mansion, the city could house 198.7 trillion people. A trillion is a lot; it's a thousand billion. 198.7 trillion is staggering. Yet I believe that the population of the city will likely be much greater than that. It gives you a bit of perspective when you consider that up until now, the majority of people have been lost. But many Postmillennialists believe that the number of the elect will greatly outnumber the non-elect by the end of history. And by the way, none of these numbers have calculated miscarriages that happen before women know they are pregnant. That will add enormously to the population of the New Jerusalem, but I have no way of calculating that. The size of the city seems to indicate that it has been designed for far more people than have ever existed in the world.

Another scientist who is a pessimillennialist is skeptical that there will be more than 20 billion believers in the New Jerusalem. But he realizes that this has been designed to fit the number of the elect. So he had to make the living space much bigger for each individual. He calculated that each occupant would need to receive 40 billion cubic feet of living space. That's each person living in a 14 square mile house with a 100 foot ceiling. I think we are getting a little ridiculous on the size that the mansions need to be in order to maintain pessimillennialism. Yet even with 40 billion cubic feet of living space for each person, there would still be far more people in the New Jerusalem than anyone has figured have already been saved. Those accommodations would house three times the current population of the earth.

One dreamer thought that was too many people for heaven, so he divided the

city into only 15 floors, with each floor being one hundred miles high. With 100-mile-height to the atmosphere, he said that the sky in each floor would look blue, and each floor would have its own ecosystem with rain, mountain ranges, horse trails, forests, and cities. In other words, each floor is a country that is self-contained. So if each floor had a Mount Everest on it, there would still be 94.5 miles above that Mount Everest before you hit the 100-mile-high ceiling. And let's be even more generous. Assuming that half of each floor was left for forests, meadows, and other non-residential land, that would leave 720,000,000 acres on each floor for residential. Assuming a 6000 sq foot house with a one acre lot, there would still be 10.8 billion houses on even that ridiculous scenario - far more houses than there are currently people living on earth today.[10] I cannot imagine that each floor will have 100 mile high ceilings. You have to be the ultimate eschatological pessimist to come up with a plan like that. And yet you still have more people than have yet become Christians.

Do you get the point? Even though no one knows how many elect will be in the New Jerusalem, even the most bizarre and wild-eyed theories of how spacious each property will be still mandates that far more people need to get saved before the end of history. These measurements are a rebuke to pessimistic eschatologies. The New Jerusalem is designed for such vast numbers, that the early church father, Andrew of Caesarea actually thought there might literally be as many people saved as there are grains of sand in the world. I don't think so, since scientists have roughly estimated 7.5 quintillion grains of sand on the beaches and deserts of the world, and that would be 7.5 times more than can comfortably fit into the city. I think that is just an expression of being innumerable; uncountable.

In a sense these calculations are ridiculous. But I hope they at least illustrate how unbelievably generous God's grace really is. Yes, His wrath against the reprobate is amazing, but His grace is even more astounding.

F.   The city had walls, implying a long existence where protection was needed (vv. 15-17), but in eternity the gates will always be open implying the danger no longer exists (v. 25)

The last thing I will mention today is that the presence of walls, when no walls are needed, and gates, when no gates are shut, shows two things. It reinforces once again that this chapter is in eternity when all evil has been

---

10 1,440,000,000 acres on each floor = 62,726,400,000,000 sq ft. = 2,250,000 sq miles. 1 acre = 0.0015625 sq miles.

banished from the world. And secondly it illustrates that gates and walls were once needed.

Verse 25 says, "Her gates will absolutely not be closed by day (and no night will exist there)." Well, that means they are never closed. So if you don't need the gates, why are they there? And if we won't need walls to keep the enemy out, why does verse 17 describe its measurement? Verse 17 says, "And he measured her wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man (which is of an angel)."

Well, we have already seen that though this chapter takes place from the perspective of the newly begun eternity, it is looking back on all that Jesus had previously accomplished. When did Jesus build the new Jerusalem? We are not waiting for it to be built. According to Hebrews, it was being built in the first century and was about to be finished. Simple logic tells us that it was built between AD 30 and AD 70. Now, people were inhabiting it while it was being constructed, but it wasn't finished till AD 70. But the point is, it existed in history. Well, that explains why walls and gates were needed. Gates and walls speak of protection from the attacks of evil beings, like demons. In Revelation 12 we saw the long protracted war between Satan and his angels and Michael and his angels in heaven, and Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven and no longer had access to God's throne room. What kept him out? It could be that part of what kept him out was these newly built walls and gates guarded by angels. So yes, there was a need for protection in history.

Why are the gates no longer shut? Because we are now in eternity and there is no danger. The walls and gates remain, and will perhaps have other functions, such as decoration, reminder of the covenant, etc. But he emphasizes that they absolutely will not be closed because closing implies exclusion. All who were to be excluded are now in hell. Since there is nothing to exclude from the New Jerusalem, the gates are left open.

But commentators have been puzzled over the disproportionate size of the walls to the city. Two commentaries say that it is grossly disproportionate. I don't think so. I think it has perfect symbolism.

The Bible had three cubits. One was 18 inches or five palms, another was 21.6 inches or six palms, and the royal cubit was 25.2 inches or seven palms. Since Ezekiel is the only other place where an angel measures with a reed (as we see in verse 15) and marks off cubits with that measuring reed, and since that angel is referred to as a man (because he looks like a man in the vision) and yet Ezekiel goes on to clarify that he is actually an angel (Ezek.

40:5; 47:3), I think this verse is directing us to the Ezekiel cubit for the measurement. It says, "And he measured her wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man (which is of an angel)." Well, the measure of a man, which is of an angel, in Ezekiel, was the longer cubit of seven palms. So now we know exactly how tall this wall is. The wall is 302.4 feet. Many commentaries give a smaller measure, but if this was Ezekiel's cubit, then it was 302.4 feet high. (And by the way, I think that may also indicate that the largest stadion is the measuring unit used here too.)

Now, to you, a 302 foot wall may seem enormous, but compared to the 1500 mile high city, it seems insignificant. And to me it signals the relative time needed by both. The walls would be needed for its time in history, which perhaps will be in the hundreds of thousands of years, but the city will be occupied for eternity. So the time that protection was needed is long, but it is disproportionate to the eternal safety and bliss we will experience. After history is done, this wall will simply be a fond reminder of God's loving protection of His people in history.

But one other point that needs to be made is that this wall includes all peoples whereas the walls of Jerusalem and the Old Temple excluded. Beale points out that this city was shaped as a perfect cube, just like the Holy of Holies was. Whereas only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the whole bride consists of the Holy of Holies. Whereas a wall separated Jews from Gentiles in the temple, verse 24 indicates that Gentiles will inhabit the New Jerusalem. Whereas the Old Jerusalem had a wall to keep out invaders, this wall is so gorgeous, that it beckons the nations to enter. Beale says,

…the Solomonic temple, the second temple before Herod, and the temple of Ezekiel 40–48 were divided by a wall into inner and outer courts (cf. Eph. 2:14; see further on 11:1–2). In contrast, there will be only one wall in the new Jerusalem, and it will surround the entire city, thus stressing the unity of the city's inhabitants with one another and with God.[11]

All of these symbols will be fulfilled in their fullest measure in eternity. But we should long for more and more of their fulfillment even now. We should love what God loves. To reject or to malign the bride of Christ (as so many Christians today are doing) is to disrespect and malign the church's husband, Jesus. But to agree with Jesus in working towards her purification, her holiness, her unity, her protection, and all of the other things symbolized here, honors Him greatly. May we love Zion and seek her welfare. Amen.

---

11 G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1078.